

Pagan Christianity or Biblical Christianity?

How Christianity Absorbed Paganism and Why the True Biblical Hebraic Roots of Our Faith Need To Be Restored

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Very early in the history of Christianity, paganism was assimilated by the Church of Rome to form a false, apostate church, clearly identified as the Harlot of Revelation 17. God tells His people to come out of this apostate religious institution –

And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, “Come out of her, my people, that you may not participate in her sins and that you may not receive of her plagues” (Revelation 18:4).

The Protestant Reformation was a response to the call of God to separate from the Apostate Church of Rome. Even though Protestant churches separated from Rome, rejecting Papal authority, the Roman Catholic priesthood, and a ritualistic, works-based system of salvation, other aspects of Roman Catholicism that have their origins in paganism remained.

One of these aspects relates to the true Biblical Holy Days, the Appointed Times of the Lord (Leviticus 23), that provide the prophetic framework and timetable for God's plan of redemption and salvation – the true Biblical Sabbath (not Sunday); the true Passover (not Easter); the Feast of Unleavened Bread; the true Pentecost (Shavuot; not Pentecost as observed by Christianity today which does not follow the Biblical Calendar); the Feast of Trumpets (Rosh Hashanah); the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur); and the Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot). (For details on this subject, see our free prophecy study, *A New*

Look at the Books of Revelation & Daniel End-Time Prophecies, Part 2: The 70 Weeks Prophecy of Daniel – The New Covenant Is the Covenant of Daniel 9:27, Section: The Biblical Calendar and the Biblical Holy Days, at www.messengers-of-messiah.org.)

One of Satan's greatest accomplishments has been the replacement of God's Holy Days with pagan holidays. Christians have been deceived into following pagan holidays and thinking they are Biblical. In fact, God's entire prophetic calendar has been stolen away from believers. As a result, Satan has greatly obscured the truth about God's prophetic pattern, picture, and timetable and robbed believers of much more fully understanding God's plan of redemption and salvation, the beauty and precision of how it has been and continues to be fulfilled.

The man used by Satan to accomplish the replacement of God's Appointed Times with pagan holidays was Roman Emperor Constantine, a pagan who could not tell the difference between the pagan sun god and the Son of God. He is the Man of Lawlessness who the apostle Paul warned would establish the "apostasy", the apostate church of Rome that has deceived millions into believing it is the original true Church –

Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless the apostasy [apostate church of Rome] comes first, and the man of lawlessness [Roman Emperor Constantine] is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple [church] of God, displaying himself as being God (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4).

Constantine claimed to be a Christian and stopped persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire. However, the form of Christianity that he legalized was not true Biblical Christianity, but an apostate form of Christianity corrupted by paganism. (For details on this subject, see our free prophecy study, *A New Look at the Books of Revelation and Daniel End-Time Prophecies, Part 6: The Man of Lawlessness & the Apostasy – Emperor Constantine & the Roman Church, at www.messengers-of-messiah.org.)*

Roman Emperor Constantine appointed himself as the sole and supreme head of the church of the Roman Empire. Eventually this position passed from the Roman emperors to the Roman popes. The "Little Horn" of Daniel 7 (verses 8, 11, 20-21, 24-26)

represents Papal Rome and shows its intent to change God's Appointed times and God's Biblical law, which cannot be changed by man –

And he [it] [Papal Rome] will speak out against the Most High [God] and wear down the saints [believers] of the Highest One, and he [it] will intend to make alterations in [God's Appointed] times and in [God's] law ... (Daniel 7:25).

Papal Rome, represented by the Little Horn, persecuted and killed true believers ("saints") who would not submit to its authority (Daniel 7:21, 25). (For details on this subject, see our free prophecy study, *A New Look at the Books of Revelation and Daniel End-Time Prophecies*, Part 6: The Man of Lawlessness & the Apostasy – Emperor Constantine & the Roman Church, at www.messengers-of-messiah.org.)

In the 300s, Roman Emperor Constantine established the Church of Rome, uniting pagans and Christians into one church, a false church that corrupted Biblical truth by its assimilation of paganism. Throughout the centuries, more and more unbiblical traditions, doctrines, rituals, etc. have been added. Wherever the Church of Rome has spread, it has allowed the absorption of native pagan beliefs and practices, rather than teach pure Biblical truth and separation from paganism.

God ordained the Biblical Sabbath and Biblical Holy Days as a sign. The purpose of God's Appointed Times is to point to His Messiah, Yeshua (Jesus). The prophetic pictures, patterns, and timetable of God's plan of redemption and salvation for humanity are revealed by the Biblical Holy Days and provide irrefutable proof that Yeshua is the Messiah promised by God.

The Word of God is clear that Biblical truth is not to be corrupted by paganism. We believe that true worship of God involves separation from the paganism of Christianity and restoration of the true Biblical Hebraic roots of our faith (John 4:23-24). This includes learning about and understanding the prophetic picture of the Holy Days God ordained. It is not the ritual observance that is important, but taking into our hearts and minds the truth of what these prophetic days teach us. God is looking for a circumcised heart, not literal circumcision of the flesh. God said He would write His laws in the hearts (spirits) of human beings (Jeremiah 31:31-33; Matthew 22:37-40). That is the essence of the New Covenant and is made possible by the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit.

There are those who advocate strict observance of the Biblical Sabbath (Friday evening to Saturday evening) and the Biblical Holy Days. They are referred to as Sabbath Keepers or Torah Observant. We do not agree that this is a requirement for salvation. We stress the importance of understanding the meanings of the Appointed Times of the Lord that point to Messiah Yeshua. Salvation is by God's grace alone, by faith (trust) alone, by the atoning work of Messiah Yeshua alone. Salvation in whole or in part cannot be accomplished or earned by works of any kind –

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast (Ephesians 2:8-9).

The apostles and elders of the original Jerusalem congregation understood that salvation is by God's grace alone, and that observance of the Mosaic Law is not required –

But certain ones of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed, stood up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them, and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses." And the apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter. And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus [Yeshua], in the same way as they also are" (Acts 15:5-11).

Led by the Holy Spirit, they sent a message to the Gentiles concerning this matter –

"For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials: that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication; if

you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well. Farewell”
(Acts 15:28-29).

The apostle Paul explicitly states that believers are not to be judged in regard to observance of the Biblical Sabbath or Biblical Holy Days –

Therefore let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day — things which are a *mere* shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ [Messiah] (Colossians 2:16-17).

However, what Paul said is not to be taken as approval of or justification for replacing God’s Holy Days with pagan holidays (for example, Christmas and Easter). Paul was clearly referring to the Biblical Sabbath and Appointed Times of the Lord (“festival”, “new moon”, and “Sabbath day”), not to pagan holidays.

Many Christians believe that the Biblical Sabbath day was changed to Sunday because of the erroneous teaching that Messiah Yeshua resurrected on a Sunday. However, as documented in detail in our book, *The Rod of an Almond Tree in God’s Master Plan*, the Greek text clearly states the day of the resurrection was Saturday, not Sunday. This is also verified by the date according to the Biblical Hebraic Calendar for the year AD 31, the correct year of the crucifixion, confirming the crucifixion on Wednesday, 14th of Nisan, and the resurrection on Saturday, 17th of Nisan. (See our free book, *The Rod of an Almond Tree in God’s Master Plan*, Chapter 12: The Biblical Sabbath Day Is the Day of the Resurrection, at www.messengers-of-messiah.org.)

For those who choose to observe the Biblical Sabbath as a day of rest, time for God and family, we urge them to keep the real intent and purpose foremost in their hearts and minds. The focus should always be on Messiah Yeshua, what He did for us, our personal relationship with Him and Father God, and being led by God’s Holy Spirit. It is very important to understand that rituals associated with the Biblical Sabbath and Biblical Holy Days as they are observed today include much that is based upon rabbinic Judaism, not Biblical commandments. Ritual observance that is burdensome, or that hinders following the leading of the Holy Spirit, or that is a substitute for a real personal relationship through the Holy Spirit, is not in agreement with the Word of God or the Spirit of God.

Any legalistic, arrogant, or judgmental attitude is contrary to the Word and Spirit of God, as is the false and prideful belief that those who are ritually observant are spiritually superior to those who are not, and members of a spiritual elite. This was the attitude of the scribes and Pharisees who were religiously observant but spiritually dead –

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness” (Matthew 23:27).

“I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, but he who humbles himself shall be exalted” (Luke 18:14).

Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before stumbling
(Proverbs 16:18).

Seek and be led by the Spirit of God in all that you do, so that what you do is in accordance with the will of God, and you will be blessed. Messiah Yeshua summed up the law of God in two commandments –

“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” And He said to him, “‘YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.’ This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’ On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 22:36-40).

MESSIAH YESHUA IS LORD OF THE SABBATH

Messiah Yeshua tells us that He is Lord of the Sabbath –

“For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath” (Matthew 12:8).

The Sabbath points to Messiah Yeshua. He is our Sabbath rest at all times. And any day of the week is acceptable for the study of God's Word and worship of God.

That having been said, God did establish the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath day, the weekly day of rest for human beings to cease from their labors (Genesis 2:2-3). Yeshua said that the Sabbath was created for man, not that man was created for the Sabbath.

And He was saying to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27).

God gave human beings six days for work, and one day for rest. The body has a requirement for physical rest that is necessary to maintaining good health. Human beings also need to set time aside for God and family.

Messiah Yeshua dealt with the religious leaders of His day who condemned Him and His disciples for not observing the Sabbath as they deemed was required –

At that time Jesus [Yeshua] went on the Sabbath through the grainfields, and His disciples became hungry and began to pick the heads *of grain* and eat. But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, "Behold, Your disciples do what is not lawful to do on a Sabbath." But He said to them, "Have you not read what David did, when he became hungry, he and his companions; how he entered the house of God, and they ate the consecrated bread, which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those with him, but for the priests alone? Or have you not read in the Law, that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath, and are innocent? But I say to you, that something greater than the temple is here. But if you had known what this means, 'I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT A SACRIFICE,' you would not have condemned the innocent. For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath" (Matthew 12:1-8).

Yeshua also made it clear that there are certain kinds of activities (work) that take precedence over observing the Sabbath, particularly when it comes to the welfare of human beings and even animals –

And He said to them, “Which one of you shall have a son or an ox fall into a well, and will not immediately pull him out on a Sabbath day?” (Luke 14:5).

Based on Yeshua’s words, employment providing essential care and services for the welfare of people and animals would take precedence over Sabbath observance. And if a person must work on the Sabbath to provide for the welfare of his or her family, this is also acceptable.

In Old Testament times, according to the Mosaic Covenant, God set aside the seventh day as a day of rest for His people, and a day for time with God and family. Since New Testament times, according to the New Covenant, God has given His people the continuous indwelling of His Holy Spirit to guide and empower them to live a life in accordance with His will. We now have His law written in our hearts and His Spirit dwelling in us. Messiah Yeshua is our continuous and eternal Sabbath rest.

Therefore, let us fear lest, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you should seem to have come short of it. For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard. For we who have believed enter that rest, just as He has said, “AS I SWORE IN MY WRATH, THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST,” although His works were finished from the foundation of the world. For He has thus said somewhere concerning the seventh *day*, “AND GOD RESTED ON THE SEVENTH DAY FROM ALL HIS WORKS”; and again in this *passage*, “THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST.” Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly had good news preached to them failed to enter because of disobedience, He again fixes a certain day, “Today,” saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before, “TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS.” For if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day after that. There remains therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His (Hebrews 4:1-10).