

Should We Keep the Feasts of the Old Testament Today?

Nader Mansour

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A number of people today believe that we *must* keep the feasts of the Old Testament but they like to share this belief in a more appealing and inviting manner. They suggest that we *should* keep the feasts today if we want to be blessed in a greater measure, if we want to experience a greater spirituality, if we want to please God, if we want to truly be sanctified, or ... - (a whole variety of positive benefits that are said to accrue from the practice). Presenting the feast keeping question as a *should* rather than a *must* makes the issue more inviting and seemingly less obligatory. While this is a wiser approach, the core question needs to be examined. Despite the different ways this idea is presented, it amounts to the same practical result in the end. Does God expect His people today to keep the feasts? Feast keepers will answer yes. Is this really the case? Should we keep the feasts today? I want to explore this core belief briefly (regardless of the appealing methods in which it is shared).

I enjoy studying the Old Testament with its stories, rich symbols and abounding types. The feast days are full of symbolism and significance, but this does not mean that we should observe them regularly today. Those types and symbols of the law are referred to by Paul as shadows in Hebrews 10:1. They served a specific purpose and function – leading the people to the reality and substance of Christ. Thus when Christ came Paul says that we are no longer to be judged by these shadows (Colossians 2:16, 17). This is in keeping with his understanding in 1 Corinthians 5:7-8 that Christ is our Passover now – He is the entire package, not just one portion of it. God expects us to enjoy the full light of Christ's reality, not to remain in the shadows. It is not right for us to insist on the feast shadows as if they are still in force. We ought to insist on Christ, the great object of the law (Romans 10:4). Every emphasis on the shadow as binding is a diminishing of the reality that Christ brought.

If we truly believe that Christ came why should our actions show that his coming has had no impact on the shadowy feasts? The act of feast keeping is a louder statement than what the lips may profess. In dealing with those who advocated circumcision Paul challenged them with these words in Galatians 5:3 "For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law." The same challenge would be applicable today to those who advocate feast keeping. Why not do the whole law of types and shadows? Why only the feast shadows? To require keeping only a part of that law invites a curse, not a blessing (Galatians 3:10).

If a believer (or a group of believers) occasionally wishes to re-enact aspects of an Old Testament feast day it would be within the boundaries of Christian liberty. However, such re-enactments should be performed with a clear understanding that they are not required of Christians, convey no special spiritual benefits, do not recommend us to God and are purely of educational value. ✍

Nader Mansour
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