

'Days, Months, Times, Years'

What did Paul mean when he wrote to the Galatians in 4:10-11 about keeping special days, months, times, and years? Was he telling them they no longer should keep the seventh-day Sabbath and other holy days of Leviticus 23? Here is the clear answer.

The people of Galatia, who occupied a region of what is today modern Turkey, were not Israelites but European, Celtic immigrants, according to the **Anchor Bible Dictionary**. They were a heathen people—gentiles—who had never heard of Yahweh's truth until Paul brought them the message of salvation. Likely the assemblies addressed were Antioch, Iconium, Derbe and Lystra.

Clarke's Commentary says that the religion of the ancient Galatians *"was extremely corrupt and superstitious, and they are said to have worshiped the mother of [deities] under the name of Agdistis, and to have offered human sacrifices of the prisoners they took in war...A tall and valiant people, who went nearly naked; and used for arms a sword and buckler. The impetuosity of their attack is stated to have been irresistible, and this generally made them victorious."*

After his salutation, Paul reprimands the Galatians by writing: *"I marvel that you are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of [Messiah] unto another evangel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the Good News of [Messiah]"* (Gal. 1:6-7).

Proof of Paul's apostleship with special emphasis upon his being a chosen vessel of Yahshua to the Gentiles takes up the first chapters of Galatians. As a Pharisee, Paul had learned the Old Testament very well. He was called and then taught by Yahshua, which gave him a deeper understanding of His word.

Apostle to the Gentiles

Evidently Paul was the first to come to the Galatians with the message of the Evangel, for we read: *"Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia,"* (Acts 16:6) which took place about the year 53 C.E. The second visit came about 56 C.E. where *"he went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples,"* Acts 18:23.

Paul, along with Barnabas, was given the responsibility of teaching the gentiles, while Peter generally preached to the Jews, Galatians 2:9.

It was Paul who taught the pagan Galatians the truth of Yahweh and got them to turn from their pagan, idolatrous ways to the pure worship of Yahweh in spirit and in truth. Evidently Paul had received word that the Galatian brethren were becoming confused and dispirited by the conflicting teachings of pagans and Judaizers.

Judaizers Taught Circumcision

Teachers of the Jews had come on the scene after Paul had convinced the Galatians to accept the shed blood of Yahshua and become partakers of the New Covenant. They had left their pagan ways of worship and were keeping the Sabbaths of Yahweh. But the Judaizers presented a new problem.

These Judaizers taught that they should be both circumcised and keep the works of the ceremonial law such as animal sacrifices. Paul asks them, *"Tell me now, you who are so anxious to be under law, will you not listen to what the law says?"* Galatians 4:21. Take special note that

Paul does **not** ask whether they desire to be under the **law again**. Obviously, they never were under the ceremonial law of sacrifices of which physical circumcision was the requirement. Temple worship in Jerusalem demanded that they be circumcised before they could enter, and the Judaizers now said the Galatians must be circumcised in the flesh to worship the Mighty One of Israel.

Paul repeats, *"Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if you be circumcised, Messiah shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law,"* Galatians 5:2-3. Clearly Paul is pointing out that if they are circumcised in order to worship Yahweh, then they would have to offer ALL the animal and meal sacrifices of the ceremonial law.

Circumcision Is Nothing

Since the death and resurrection of the Messiah, physical circumcision is not a legal requirement. Emphasis is now upon circumcising of our heart, which Yahweh requires of us, and that is a willing obedience to His Commandments. As Paul taught the formerly pagan Corinthian brethren, *"Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing but the keeping of the Commandments of Yahweh,"* 1Corinthians 7:19.

Paul was here applying the spiritual meaning of circumcision as found in the Old Testament: *"Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked."* (Deut. 10:16) Clearly Paul emphasized full obedience in spirit to Yahweh.

Circumcision an Added Law

Paul explains further by telling the Galatians that a law was added because of transgressions, Galatians 3:19. Sin is breaking of Yahweh's law: *"Whosoever commits sin transgresses also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law"* (1 John 3:4). Further, Paul had said in Romans 4:15, *"Where no law is, there is no transgression."*

Paul explained to the Galatians that there was a law already in effect that was being transgressed, so another law (the ceremonial, sacrificial law) was added because of these transgressions, or broken laws. Circumcision was then added and made a token or sign in the Old Covenant that the individual had committed himself to obey Yahweh's laws.

"For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices: But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your Elohim, and you shall be My people: and walk in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you." (Jer. 7:22-23)

We can see from Jeremiah that Yahweh told Israel that He did not at first demand sacrifices and offerings. These were voluntarily brought by the offeror. But as the Israelites became more carnal, these sacrificial laws were added until the time of reformation, Hebrews 9:10.

The Judaizers had come on the scene teaching that the Galatians had to be circumcised. This also implied that they must additionally keep the ceremonial and sacrificial law. Paul takes issue with this teaching, pointing out that the Messiah has now paid the ransom price for our sins. HE is our complete Sacrifice!

Old Covenant to Vanish Away

It must be understood that the temple was still standing at this time. Sacrificing was still being carried out daily in Jerusalem by the priesthood who were actively engaged in these sacrifices until Titus destroyed the Temple in the year 70 C.E.

Confusion reigned in the minds of the Galatians. They had been taught by Paul that animal sacrifices were a temporary covering for sin until the coming of the Redeemer of Israel. By accepting Yahshua's atoning death, a believer now has direct access to Yahweh. Animal sacrifices, burnt offerings, and ceremonial washings are no longer a requirement under the New Covenant.

Hebrews 8:13 tells us, regarding the New Covenant, "*He has made the first old. Now that which decays and waxes old is ready to vanish away.*" In a short time the Temple was destroyed by Titus, the Levitical priesthood disbanded, and the Jews banned from Jerusalem. There is no Temple or functioning priesthood today. We are now under the older and initial priesthood—that of Melchisedech—with Yahshua as our High Priest.

Judaizers Confused Galatians

The Galatians were confused by teachings of Judaizers that circumcision was still required. The Temple was still standing and sacrificing continued even while Paul was emphasizing a new and better Covenant. (The Old Covenant did vanish away in 70 C.E. upon the destruction of the Temple by the Romans.)

The Judaizers insisted that sacrifice was given by Moses. They pointed out that Yahweh gave Abraham circumcision as the token of the (Old) Covenant. Thus, Paul's letter to the Galatians deals mostly with the issue of circumcision.

Going Back to Paganism

From the confusion rising from these opposing teachings, some of the Galatians decided to go back to their pagan ways and to heathen worship with which they were familiar. Paul addresses this issue in chapter 4.

He emphasizes the thought that being baptized into the Messiah's name means putting on Messiah. One then is reckoned as Abraham's seed and an heir to the promise. "*Wherefore you are no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of Yahweh through Messiah*" (Gal. 4:7). Paul points out that the Galatians at one time did not know anything about Yahweh, but worshiped pagan deities, which are powerless, Galatians 4:8.

"Formerly, when you did not know [Elohim], you were slaves to those who by nature are not [deities]. But now that you know [Yahweh]—or rather are known by [Yahweh]—how is it that you are turning back to those weak and miserable principles? Do you wish to be enslaved by them all over again?" Paul asks, Galatians 4:8-9, NIV.

The "weak and miserable elements" are the rudimentary, worldly ideas and teachings of pagan worship. Heathenism was the worship practiced by the Galatians, which Paul found when he first came on the scene to teach them about Yahweh and His plan for redeeming mankind. Yahweh's laws are never referred to as *weak* and *beggarly elements*. ALL His Commandments are righteousness, Psalm 119:172.

They had never known of Yahweh's holy days until Paul came, and had not observed them before his visit. When Paul speaks of "days, months, times and years," he is asking whether they are going to be enslaved by these pagan customs all over again. Rather than submit to physical circumcision and the ceremonial law, the Galatians decided to go back to their pagan ways and observe pagan days, months, times and years.

Paul was astounded that some of the Galatians were reverting to their former pagan worship. Paul fears that his labor in teaching the Galatians the truth of Yahweh is lost. Note the following verse, which is erroneously used as an excuse to do away with Yahweh's Sabbaths: "*You observe*

days, and months, times and years. I am afraid of you lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain," Galatians 4:10-11.

Follow Paul's Example

Paul has taught the Galatians about Yahweh's True Worship. The Judaizers' teaching that they must also be circumcised only confused them about the redemption found in Yahshua. Now the frustrated Galatians have turned back to keeping their former pagan ways and not submit to circumcision. Paul pleads with them, "*Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am for I was as you are,*" (margin) verse 12. Paul is in no way teaching the Galatians **not** to keep the Sabbath, for he himself closely observed the seventh-day Sabbath, Acts 13:42-44; 16:13; 17:2; 18:4.

Paul also observed the annual Sabbaths, for Luke tells us he did not leave Philippi until the days of Unleavened Bread were over, Acts 20:6. Paul observed Tabernacles, Acts 18:21 and also kept Pentecost, Acts 20:16. He is not teaching disobedience to Yahweh's special days given us as a covenant bond.

Nowhere in the Bible do we find the expression, days, months, times and years referring to Yahweh's appointed times. When New Testament writers mean the Saturday Sabbath, they simply state "*Sabbath.*"

Galatians 4:8-12 reveals that the newly converted Galatians were turning back to the worship of their pagan deities, which are not deities at all. Now that they know Yahweh, or rather now that Yahweh approvingly recognizes and acknowledges them, Paul asks why are they turning back to the heathen traditions of pagan worship? He encourages them to stand fast in True Worship through Yahshua His Son.

Indwelling Spirit of Messiah

The Galatians are free from the requirement of physical circumcision. Now Paul fervently desires that Messiah be formed in them, a growing fervor of loving obedience, as we see in Galatians 4:19; Romans 8:10; Ephesians 3:17, and 1John 3:24.

With the Spirit of Yahshua dwelling in us, we voluntarily seek Yahweh's will and obediently keep His Commandments. This is the message Paul is giving us through the Galatians. Paul is not teaching us to ignore or forget Yahweh's holy days. Rather, he is urging that we arrive at the level of complete obedience that Yahshua exhibited in keeping all of Yahweh's laws.

This is perhaps made clearer from Paul's letter to the Colossians, "*To whom Yahweh would make known what [is] the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Messiah in you, the hope of glory: Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Messiah Yahshua whereunto I also labour, striving according to His working, which worketh in me mightily.*" (Col. 1:27-29)

Paul desires that we be like him, keeping Yahweh's Sabbaths and holy days just as the Savior Yahshua did before him. He deplores their return to pagan ways. He reassures them that circumcision is that of a willing heart in obedience to Yahweh. He writes of the blessings promised to an obedient people.

In no way does Paul mean or imply that the "days, months, times and years" refer to keeping Yahweh's Sabbaths. The "days, months, times and years" are the PAGAN holidays such as our Xmas, Easter, New Years and Valentine's day.

Paul's words encourage all those who are called to be obedient to Yahweh's way of life. We are called out of paganism to walk in the footsteps of the Messiah and follow the example Paul gives us. How about you? Are you a part of that "little flock?" Luke 12:32.

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