

## Did Christ Abolish the Law?

By Ronald L. Dart

Jesus was sure he would be misunderstood. At the very outset of his ministry, He had to lay the groundwork for what would follow. The most aggressive teachers of the day were legalists. They had made the Law an end in itself, and were pursuing their own righteousness by means of the Law. Not content to have the Law of God, they added to it.

Their specifications on Sabbath observance alone were a book in themselves. Though Jesus would keep the Law perfectly, he had no intention of keeping the Laws and traditions of the Pharisees. On the contrary, it was essential that he tear down the fabric of their tradition everywhere it veiled the true intent of God's Law.

It was inevitable, then, that he would come into conflict with the Pharisees; and that they would accuse him of liberalizing the Law. So he made himself plain right from the start: "Do not think that I am come to destroy the Law or the prophets," he said, "I am not come to abolish but to fulfill" (Matthew 5:17, NASB).

There was no misunderstanding this statement. When he used the expression "the Law or the prophets," everyone knew he was talking about the two major divisions of the Holy Scriptures—our "Old Testament." By the term "the Law" he plainly meant the Torah, the first five books of the Bible.

Both the Law and the prophets looked forward to Christ, promised Christ, and prophesied his ministry. It would indeed be absurd for Jesus to abolish that which legitimized his work. It only made sense for him to *fulfill* it.

Jesus continued to explain: "Truly I say unto you, *until heaven and earth pass away*, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law until all is accomplished."

Even though Jesus seemed to modify the Law, he warns, "Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and so teaches others, shall be called

the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." So even though Jesus would modify some aspects of the Law, he promises he will

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### **Can You Outgive God? ...**

I was brought up believing in God. From the time I started working—I was receiving an "increase," I knew it was my responsibility as a teenager to tithe. When Ron and I got married, we tithed from the beginning. Money was scarce on Ron's Navy salary and my allotment of, I believe, \$91.30 a month. But somehow, we always had money to buy groceries, and pay our rent on time. We didn't have a car, or a credit card. So there were no other bills to pay. We budgeted and allowed ourselves a few dollars a week to eat a burger, or go to the movie. We knew our first obligation was to God and he blessed us. Throughout the 63 years of our marriage, we faithfully tithed. At one time we had an unusual amount of mishaps and bills to pay. It looked as though God was not blessing us. Ron asked me if I was paying our tithe and I assured him it was paid on schedule. That was a temporary test, and God continued to bless us. He'll bless you too. Try it, you'll like it.

# A Very Special Feast

By Ronald L. Dart

What makes the Feast of Tabernacles so special? Why is it that when we say “See you at the feast,” no one asks “which feast?”

No other festival so uniquely combines the fun of family reunion with the encouragement of understanding brethren, the comfort of fellowship, the simple pleasure of Bible instruction, and that special joy that comes from spiritual growth.

The Feast of Tabernacles is indeed *very* special.

The origins of the festival are described in Leviticus 23. In verse 34 we read: “Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the *Feast of Tabernacles* for seven days unto the Lord.

But what exactly is a Feast of “Tabernacles”?

The word “tabernacle” is an archaic word, derived from the Latin, which means, “a temporary shelter.” Later in Leviticus 23 God uses a *different* word for these shelters. He calls them “booths,” saying, “Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths” (v. 42).

It is generally suggested, based on verse 40, that these temporary shelters were made from tree branches—probably the origin of the old “brush arbor meeting,” so common many years ago in the South.

But why were they to do this? The answer is found in verse 43: “That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.”

The Feast of Tabernacles, then, was a reminder to the Israelites that they were sojourners, strangers, and pilgrims during the period of their wilderness wandering.

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It’s the reason the Feast of Tabernacles is called a “pilgrimage” festival. There were seven holy days throughout the year, but there were only three seasons in the year when the Israelites were commanded to appear in a specific place (Deuteronomy 16:16).

On only *one* of these occasions were they required to live in temporary dwellings—the Feast of Tabernacles.

This “pilgrim” concept is a powerfully recurring theme throughout the Bible. It is not just an Old Testament concept. In the New Testament, the writer of Hebrews made a strong point of this, citing Abraham as his example.

“By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he *sojourned* in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in *tabernacles* with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Hebrews 11:8-10).

Right from the very beginning of God’s association with Abraham—whom he called a friend—God underlined the temporary nature of man’s existence upon this earth, and impressed upon *Abraham and his descendants* that they were *temporary* dwellers in this world, this age, this civilization. It is the same truth that is illustrated in the Feast of Tabernacles as God’s people become pilgrims, sojourners, for the days of the Feast.

Peter chose to use similar language in writing to the early church, saying, “And if you call on the Father, who without respect of persons judges according to every man’s work, pass the time of your *sojourning* here in fear” (1 Peter 1:17).

Peter saw our time on earth as a journey—a pilgrimage. Later he said, “Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul” (1 Peter 2:11).

Peter also referred to his body as a tabernacle: “Yea I think it is meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ has

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shown me.” Again, the emphasis is that this physical body is *temporary*.

Paul used similar language: “For we know that if our earthy house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2 Corinthians 5:1).

Why, then, should you *go* to the feast? Because in the process of doing so you carry on a tradition which goes back *at least* as far as Abraham in which God’s people have been called upon to remind themselves, and demonstrate to the world, that they are *temporary* dwellers in this world and that they look for a better world to come.

But we said the Feast was special in other important ways.

### **A Family Festival**

In Deuteronomy 16, we find yet another set of instructions relative to the Feast of Tabernacles: “Thou shalt observe the Feast of Tabernacles seven days, after that you have gathered in your corn and your wine: And thou shalt rejoice in thy feasts, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that are within thy gates” (Deuteronomy 16:13-14).

In a way that seems to transcend the other festivals, the Feast of Tabernacles is a *family-oriented* festival. Because we are away from home, our normal week-to-week routine is interrupted, and we have *time* for our families in a very special way. The planning for the trip, the physical preparations for leaving, the togetherness en route, and family cooperation in establishing a temporary dwelling, be it a tent or a chalet, draw a family together in ways that never seem to happen in the home environment.

Why should you go to the Feast? Because the Feast of Tabernacles can become a powerful influence for drawing your family closer together.

But you may have a larger family than you think. Year after year, as we return to the festival, we make new friends and renew old friendships. Our children begin to look forward to seeing their friends again, to treasure hunts and fun shows, to fishing trips, and “sports” competitions. In a very real sense, the Feast of Tabernacles becomes a great family reunion for the *church*

“family.” And just as it is a powerful influence for drawing your own family closer together, so also it draws the churches together.

### **A Thanksgiving Festival**

The Feast of Tabernacles is also special because it is a great celebration of blessings of God: “Seven days shalt thou keep a solemn feast unto the Lord your God in the place where the Lord shall choose: *because the Lord your God shall bless you* in all your increase, and in all the works of your hands, *therefore* you shall surely rejoice” (Deuteronomy 16:15).

Has God blessed you this year? To be sure, that last couple of years have seen hard times for some of us. But God is not the author of hard times. He is the author of blessings even in hard times. As the Feast approaches, it’s good for a person to sit down and count his blessings. If you’re having a hard time put together a list of blessing starting with a list of the things that could have gone wrong that didn’t? Then you can follow up with a list of the things that could have been worse but weren’t. After that, follow it up with a list of things that went better than expected.

When you think about it, the Feast of Tabernacles is a sort of “Thanksgiving week.” But, instead of celebrating with turkey and football for only one day, we celebrate a full week with turkey, lamb, roast beef, steak or whatever else our heart desires of the blessings God has poured out upon us.

The Feast of Tabernacles is to be a time of rejoicing—a time of thanksgiving. And all of us are to respond to God during this season with a thank offering: “Three times in a year shall all your males appear before the Lord your God in the place which He shall choose; in the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and in the Feast of Weeks, and in the Feast of Tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the Lord empty: Every man shall give as he is able, *according to the blessing of the Lord your God which He has given thee*” (Deuteronomy 16:16-17).

When we go before God to count our blessings, we should also contemplate at the same time just what our offering should be at this season of the year. Surely, no man can give enough to God to adequately thank him

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not annul it. His modifications were in the nature of amplification, development, and exposition. He fulfilled—filled out—the Law. He did not abolish a single stroke of the pen.

He then proceeds to illustrate what he means, using two of the Ten Commandments, the Laws of divorce, vows, and retaliation (Matthew 5:21-48). While these Laws were amplified, they were plainly not annulled. Jesus saw a need, not for the abolition or replacement of the Law, but for a new administration of the Law. Faulting the Pharisees' administration, he warned, "Unless your righteousness passes that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:20).

Paul said, "The Law is good if a man use it lawfully," acknowledging that there is right and wrong use of the Law. What is the difference?

Some have assumed that the written Law is the ultimate standard of righteousness—the ultimate guide for human conduct. As it happens, the Law is quite inadequate for that role.

Consider, for example, the fourth commandment: "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." The Law is relatively simple, but it generates hundreds of questions. The Pharisees tried to answer every possible question and succeeded only in making the Sabbath a burden.

What, then, *is* the Law? What purpose does it serve? What is the "Lawful" use of the Law? The written Law is the revelation of the will of God as it applied to man in a certain time and place.

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*Time and circumstances can change the way the Law is administered without annulling the Law.* Consider the occasion where Jesus' disciples were criticized for plucking and eating heads of grain as they walked through a field. According to the Pharisees they were

doing what was "not Lawful on the Sabbath" (Matthew 12:2). Now there was nothing in the Law to specifically prohibit plucking and eating a few handfuls of grain. Obviously, to harvest a wagon load would be hard work and consequently was forbidden on the Sabbath. For the Pharisees, the difference between a handful and a wagon load was one of degree with no clear dividing line between enough and too much. It called for a decision on someone's part and the Pharisees' administration labeled the disciples Sabbath breakers.

Jesus' reply is significant: "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" (Matthew 12:3, 4)?

The Pharisees saw the Law as an inflexible absolute—a rigid standard which could never be transgressed in the smallest way. Jesus saw a need for an interpretation of the *intent* of the Law. The purpose of the Law of the shewbread was to teach the way of holiness. It was not to let hungry men faint by the wayside just because the bread was hallowed. A real human need took precedence over the letter of the Law. Both the priest who gave David the bread (1 Samuel 21:6) and Jesus himself accepted the responsibility to make administrative decisions. In fact, Jesus presents himself as the ultimate administrator of God's Law: "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 unto you that *something greater than the temple is here*" (Matthew 12:5-6).

It was not that the Law was set aside. The priests "broke the Sabbath." Yet, because of the overriding responsibility of their office, they were deemed *innocent*.

Conflict between two Laws is not uncommon, but in this case, we find something unexpected. One would think that the Ten Commandments would take precedence over a mere ceremony. On the contrary, the Temple ceremony allowed one to break one of the Ten Commandments and be deemed innocent. This implies that the Temple is greater than the Sabbath.

But the most important point made here is that Jesus is greater than the Temple. All of those Laws, both moral and ceremonial, were subject to *his* interpretation—his administration. So he concludes: "For the Son of man is Lord of the Sabbath" (v. 8).

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for all he's done. But there are two criteria we are to apply to this offering. First, we are to give according to our *ability*, and second we are to give according to our blessings.

Why should you go to the Feast? Out of *thanksgiving* toward God and to bring an offering of thanksgiving to him.

### **A Harvest Festival**

The Feast of Tabernacles is also special in that it is a *harvest* festival: "And thou shalt observe the Feast of Weeks, of the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the *Feast of Ingathering* at the year's end" (Exodus 34:22). The Feast of Weeks (Pentecost) and the Feast of Ingathering (Tabernacles) are both special because they are *harvest* festivals.

When Jesus spoke of a harvest, he applied that concept to his work which involved a harvest of *people* into his Kingdom: "Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work. Say not ye, there are yet four months and then cometh harvest? Behold I say unto you, lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest" (John 4:34-35).

The Feast of Pentecost celebrated the preceding seven weeks of harvest (hence the name "the Feast of Weeks"). Those seven weeks picture the time from Christ's Ascension to his Second Coming, when many people would be "harvested" into his Kingdom. One of the great truths of the Feast of *Tabernacles* is that there is to be a feast of ingathering at the end of the age *after* the time of the harvest of firstfruits. (Another name for the Feast of Pentecost is the "Feast of Firstfruits"). Why should you go to the Feast of Tabernacles? To remind yourself and to proclaim to the world the marvelous truth that, *after* Christ has returned and set up his Kingdom, *there is yet to come a harvest of souls* into God's Kingdom.

Why should you go to the Feast? Because the Feast of Tabernacles for the modern church is the most important time of the year for fellowship, spiritual nourishment, recharging spiritual batteries, learning more about God's plan . . . need I go on?

Don't get left behind this year. Don't miss out on the tremendous blessing of the Feast of Tabernacles. Come to the Feast! We'll see you there. Join us at Land Between the Lakes, Kentucky. Our only Feast site this year.

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## *In Memory*

Christian Educational Ministries gratefully acknowledges a generous donation in memory of Wayne Hinton, 72.

He passed away suddenly Friday, August 5th, 2016. Left to cherish his memory is his wife of 47 years, Nita Hinton of The Colony and their children: Janis Proctor and her husband Scott of Coppell, Texas, Brian Hinton and Krista Anderson of Plano, Texas; six grandkids: Quinn, Colin, Evan and Morgan Proctor of Coppell and Matthew and James Hinton of Plano, Texas and his sisters: Faye Fitzgerald, Gayle Buie and husband Jim. Wayne pastored the Fairview Texas Church of God and was loved by everyone. At one time he was a Board member for Christian Educational Ministries and gave us the format whereby we layout our Feast program.

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## **October Memory Scriptures**

*Topic: Promises*

Matthew 6:33  
Romans 8:28  
Jeremiah 29:11  
1 John 1:7  
1 John 1:9

Proverbs 3:56  
1 Corinthians 10:13  
Psalm 55:22  
1 Peter 5:7

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This is not to say that Jesus could annul or set aside the Sabbath. He has already promised to do no such thing. But it does say that he is the ultimate authority for the interpretation and application of the Law.

In spite of Jesus' clear support of the Law, he was not a legalist. He was at pains, for example, to redefine Sabbath observance. "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath," he declared (Mark 2:28). Again and again he ran afoul of the Pharisees' Sabbath traditions. He *had no intention of*

*abolishing the Sabbath, but He did cut across the Pharisees' administration of the Sabbath.*

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This subject is so basic and so vital to your beliefs that you need to hear the entire sermon as Ron Dart gives it. Also, you'll likely know a friend or another person who could benefit from hearing this as well. All you

have to do is mark the enclosed card, or call our office today, 1-888-BIBLE-44 and request your own *FREE* copy of "*Was the Law Abolished?*" We'll rush it to you.

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## **Do You Know Your God?**

By Mardy Cobb

"Know therefore that the Lord your God, he is God, the faithful God, which keeps covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations; And repays them that hate him to their face, to destroy them: he will not be slack to him that hates him, he will repay him to his face" (Deuteronomy 7:9-10).

God loves his children. He treats them with mercy. As his children we should understand that God is real: "Know therefore that the Lord your God, he is God." God is not like anyone else we know. We must not become distracted and allow ourselves to slip into thinking and acting toward God as if he was anything other than the wholly unique, Almighty Creator, Ruler, and King.

In addition, we need to "know" that his greatness is not only in power. Our God is also great because he is "the faithful God." He never lies. He never betrays. He never forsakes his own. And even more . . . our God is merciful and true to those who love and obey him.

But God is also a God of justice and unrelenting righteousness. He will not allow the wicked rulers that lie, pervert, and oppress to go unpunished. All those who are so arrogant to act with disregard and defiance

of Almighty God are showing their hatred of him. God will crush those who are cruel and evil and show contempt for God and his righteous path.

Mankind and every form of human government have been corrupted for thousands of years, but government and societies have never been more filled with lies and evil than they are now. Nevertheless, we should have faith. Our God is good, and he is great. Justice will overcome in the end. Evil will be punished. Therefore, remember these things, keep the faith, and "know your God."

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