Why don’t Christians keep the Torah feasts/holidays?

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Many Christians do not observe the Old Testament feasts because the New Testament teaches that these celebrations belonged to the Mosaic Covenant and pointed forward to Jesus Christ. Christians are free to celebrate them if they wish, but Scripture does not require followers of Jesus to keep Israel's covenant festivals as a matter of obedience (Col. 2:16–17; Gal. 4:9–11).

This is an important distinction. The question is not whether the feasts are biblical—they certainly are. The question is whether Christians are obligated to observe them under the New Covenant. The New Testament consistently answers that question with "no."

The Torah prescribed seven annual feasts for the nation of Israel: Passover, Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits, Weeks (Pentecost), Trumpets, Day of Atonement, and Tabernacles (Lev. 23). These festivals served multiple purposes. They commemorated God's saving acts in Israel's history, structured Israel's worship calendar, and pointed forward to the coming Messiah.

The New Testament reveals that these feasts ultimately find their fulfillment in Christ. Jesus is our Passover Lamb (1 Cor. 5:7). He rose from the dead on Firstfruits (1 Cor. 15:20–23). The Holy Spirit was poured out on Pentecost (Acts 2:1–4). The sacrificial system associated with the Day of Atonement pointed to Christ's once-for-all sacrifice (Heb. 9:11–14; 10:1–14). In other words, the feasts were not random religious celebrations. They were part of a larger redemptive pattern that found its fulfillment in Jesus.

This is why Paul writes:

> "Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ" (Col. 2:16–17).

The Greek word translated "shadow" (*skia*) refers to something that points beyond itself to a greater reality. The feasts were real and important, but they were never the final destination. They pointed to Christ.

We see the same principle at work in Acts 15. When the apostles gathered in Jerusalem to determine whether Gentile believers needed to keep the Law of Moses, they did not require observance of the Torah festivals (Acts 15:1–29). This would have been the perfect opportunity to do so if such observance were mandatory. Instead, the apostles explicitly refused to place the Mosaic Covenant upon Gentile believers.

At the same time, Scripture does not forbid Christians from celebrating these feasts. Paul himself continued to participate in certain Jewish customs and festivals as a cultural expression of his heritage (Acts 20:16; 21:20–26). The issue was never whether a believer *could* observe them. The issue was whether believers *must* observe them.

This distinction is crucial. Throughout the New Testament, old covenant practices such as circumcision, dietary laws, feast days, and ritual observances are treated as matters of freedom rather than obligation (Rom. 14:5–6; Gal. 5:1–6). Christians are free to observe them as educational, cultural, or devotional practices. What they must not do is elevate them to a requirement for spiritual maturity, obedience, or acceptance by God.

Historically, this has been the position of mainstream Christianity from the earliest centuries of the Church. While Jewish believers often continued observing aspects of their cultural heritage, the Church consistently rejected the idea that Torah observance was required for salvation or faithful Christian living.

Key Scriptures to Study

- Leviticus 23:1–44 — The seven annual feasts given to Israel.
- Acts 15:1–29 — The Jerusalem Council does not require Gentiles to keep the Law of Moses.
- Romans 14:5–6 — Believers may differ regarding special days.
- Galatians 4:9–11 — Paul warns against returning to old covenant observances as obligations.
- Colossians 2:16–17 — Festivals are described as shadows fulfilled in Christ.
- 1 Corinthians 5:7 — Christ is our Passover Lamb.
- Hebrews 9:11–14 — Christ fulfills the sacrificial system.
- Hebrews 10:1–14 — The old covenant sacrifices were shadows pointing to Christ.
- Acts 2:1–4 — Pentecost finds new covenant fulfillment through the Holy Spirit.

Objections & Misconceptions

Common Objection: "Didn't Jesus keep the feasts?"

Yes. Jesus was born under the Mosaic Covenant and faithfully fulfilled it (Gal. 4:4–5; Matt. 5:17). The fact that Jesus kept the feasts does not mean all believers are required to do so any more than His participation in temple sacrifices means Christians must offer sacrifices today.

Common Objection: "If the feasts point to Jesus, shouldn't Christians celebrate them?"

Christians certainly may celebrate them. Many find them helpful for understanding biblical theology and God's redemptive plan. The question is not whether they can be observed but whether Scripture requires them. The New Testament says it does not.

Common Objection: "Doesn't Colossians 2:16–17 mean we should keep the feasts?"

Paul says the opposite. He instructs believers not to allow anyone to judge them regarding festivals, new moons, or Sabbaths because these things were shadows pointing to Christ, who is the substance.

Common Objection: "Are Christians missing out by not celebrating the feasts?"

The feasts contain rich theological lessons that can deepen one's understanding of Scripture. But believers are not missing out on God's favor, blessings, or salvation by not observing them. Those things are found in Christ alone (Eph. 1:3–14).

Why This Matters

This issue ultimately concerns the sufficiency of Christ. The feasts were given by God and served an important purpose. But their purpose was to point God's people toward the Messiah.

When Christians understand the feasts in light of Christ's fulfillment, they gain a deeper appreciation for God's redemptive plan unfolding across Scripture. At the same time, they are protected from the burden of believing that old covenant observances are necessary for acceptance before God.

The New Testament consistently points believers back to Jesus Himself. The shadows were glorious, but the substance has arrived.

Recommended Resources

- *The Law, the Christ, the Promise* — R. L. Solberg

- *The Christ Key* — Chad Bird
- *From Shadow to Reality* — Graeme Goldsworthy
- *The Temple and the Church's Mission* — G. K. Beale
- *The Bible and the Believer's Relationship to the Law* — Tom Wells & Fred Zaspel