

St Thomas Aquinas once asked the question, Whether the ceremonies of the Old Law ceased at the coming of Christ? *Ia IIae Q. 103, Art. 3, Ad 4* ...solemnities of the Old Law are supplanted by new solemnities: because the blessings vouchsafed to that people, foreshadowed the favors granted us by Christ. Hence the feast of the Passover gave place to the feast of Christ's Passion and Resurrection: the feast of Pentecost when the Old Law was given, [gave place] to the feast of Pentecost on which was given the Law of the living spirit: the feast of the New Moon, [gave place] to [the Annunciation], when appeared the first rays of the sun, i.e. Christ, by the fullness of grace: the feast of Trumpets, [gave place] to the feasts of the Apostles... the feast of Tabernacles, [gave place] to the feast of the Church Dedication: the feast of the Assembly and Collection, [gave place] to the feast of All Saints.

Ia IIae Q. 107, Art. 1, ad 2: “The New Law voids the observance of the Old Law in the point of ceremonial precepts. Now the ceremonies of the Old Law were figurative of something to come. Wherefore from the very fact that the ceremonial precepts were fulfilled when those things were accomplished which they foreshadowed, ***it follows that they are no longer to be observed***: for if they were to be observed, this would mean that something is still to be accomplished and is not yet fulfilled. In this way the legal ceremonies are abolished by being fulfilled.”

He then asks: **Whether since Christ's Passion the legal ceremonies [of the Old Law] can be observed without committing mortal sin? *Ia IIae Q. 103, Art. 4, Respondeo*: All ceremonies are professions of faith, in which the interior worship of God consists. **Now man can make profession of his inward faith, by deeds as well as by words: and in either profession, if he make a false declaration, he sins mortally.** Now, though our faith in Christ is the same as that of the fathers of old; yet, since they came before Christ, whereas we come after Him, the same faith is expressed in different words, by us and by them. For by the fathers of old it was said: "Behold a virgin ***shall*** conceive and bear a son," where the verbs are in the future tense: whereas we express the same by means of verbs in the ***past*** tense, and say that she "conceived and bore." In like manner the ***ceremonies*** of the Old Law betokened Christ as having ***yet*** to be born and to suffer: whereas our sacraments signify Him as ***already*** born and having suffered. Consequently, just as it would be a mortal sin now for anyone, in making a profession of faith, to say that Christ is ***yet*** to be born, which the fathers of ***old*** said devoutly and truthfully; so too it would be a mortal sin ***now*** to observe those ceremonies which the fathers of old fulfilled with devotion and fidelity. Such is the teaching of Augustine (Contra Faust. xix, 16).**

Ad 1: St Jerome adds that immediately after Christ's Passion [the legal ceremonies of the Old Law] began to be not only dead, so as no longer to be either effectual or binding; but also ***deadly***, so that whoever observed them was guilty of **mortal sin**.

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From the Jewish Encyclopedia: “**rabbinic or pharisaic Judaism... presents a phase quite different from Mosaic Judaism**, to which the Sadducees, and afterward to some extent the Karaites, persistently clung. Similarly Judaism in the Diaspora, or Hellenistic Judaism, showed ***great divergences*** from that of Palestine.” (<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/13376-seder>, accessed 4/5/14)

This from the American Council for Judaism: In the book, The New American Judaism by Rabbi Arthur Blecher, Rabbi Blecher writes, “Two thousand years ago, the Jewish religion involved a centralized system of priests and animal sacrifices.” But today, “**The differences between biblical practices and modern Judaism are so great that they cannot be considered the same religion.**” (http://www.acjna.org/acjna/articles_detail.aspx?id=473, accessed 4/5/14)

He is not the only Rabbi with that conclusion, that modern Judaism is a different religion than the Judaism practiced in Our Lord’s day. An article by Dr. Reuven Firestone, professor at Hebrew Union University in L.A. in the Jewish Journal, the most widely read Jewish news site in the country, said the following: “**some are still unaware that Judaism (sometimes referred to as Rabbinic Judaism, as opposed to the religion or the Judaism practiced during biblical times) is a different religion from that of the Hebrew Bible.**” (http://www.jewishjournal.com/world/article/islam_is_the_answer_20011214, accessed 4/5/14)

Not only that, but the Jewish Encyclopedia said of a ‘Seder meal,’ “The destruction of the Temple, [reduced] the Passover-night service into **little more** than a survival or **memorial** of its old self.” (<http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/13376-seder>, accessed 4/5/14)

What is a ‘Seder meal?’ The Encyclopedia Britannica defines a Seder Meal as: “the religious meal served in Jewish homes... to commence the festival of Passover.” It then describes “the religious nature of the seder with its carefully prescribed ritual” wherein “a fifth cup of wine (which is not drunk) is added in honor of Elijah, whose appearance at some *future* seder will signify the *coming* of the Messiah.” (<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/532142/seder>, accessed 4/5/14). In other words, the ritual of the Seder meal itself says *by its very actions* that the Messiah has not yet come – it is a false profession of faith. All ceremonies are professions of faith, and a man can make a profession of his inward faith, by deeds as well as by words: and in either profession, if he make a false declaration, he sins **mortally**. The very symbolism of the Seder meal points to a Messiah **not yet come**, which is a false declaration of faith, and if we make a false declaration of faith we sin mortally.

So given that today’s Seder meal is a ritual meal that is the product of a different religion than that of Biblical Judaism, as Jews today even admit, and given that even if the Seder meal *were* a ritual identical to that of *Biblical* Judaism, and therefore even if it were identical to that which Our Lord practiced *before* He instituted the New Law, and moreover given that if the ceremonies of the Old Law were to be observed, it would mean that something is still to be accomplished and is not *yet* fulfilled, since all ceremonies are professions of faith, and given that if a man makes a false declaration of faith, he sins **mortally**, can we see that for a Christian to participate in a Seder meal today it is, objectively speaking, a mortal sin?

Our Lord has already come, and has instituted a **new** ceremony under the New Law which we are to observe today. This ceremony is the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. And if we think that ceremonies are not important to Him, consider the following:

Before he died, Moses prophesied to the Israelites that “curses shall come upon thee... till thou perish: because thou didst not hear the voice of the Lord thy God, and didst not **keep his commandments and ceremonies** which he commanded thee” (Dt 28:45).

When the Assyrians had led some of the Israelites captive, God sent natural disasters to those who were left without priests and therefore without religious ceremonies. Even the Israelites' enemies recognized why this was happening, and so they released a priest from captivity to “teach them the ordinances of the God of the land”, and the priest instructed them to observe “the ceremonies, and judgments, and law” (4 Kg 17:37).

And finally in (4 Kg 17:13) we read that “the Lord testified to [the Israelites in captivity] by the hand of all the prophets and seers, saying: Return from your wicked ways, and keep my precepts, and ceremonies, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers.”

Conclusion: Some people believe that having good intentions and following the Ten Commandments is enough. But Moses said that on Mt Sinai, when he *received* those Ten Commandments, God actually did *three* things: (1) “He showed you His covenant... (2) [He showed you] the ten words that He wrote in two tables of stone, and (3) “He commanded me at that time that I should teach you the ceremonies and judgments which you shall do.”

We are entering Passiontide; a time rich in the symbolic meaning of *its* ancient ceremonies, prescribed by Our Lord and the Church which He entrusted the *new* Passover to – the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. This Passiontide, with great gratitude, let us enter into and meditate on the meaning of the ceremonies that *Our Lord* left us. When God appeared to Isaac (Gen 26:4-5) He told Isaac, “In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my precepts and commandments, and *observed my* ceremonies.” By observing the ceremonies that *Our Lord* left us, all the nations shall be blessed, if *we* obey His voice, if we keep the precepts and commandments, and if we observe *His* ceremonies.