

Does GOD Want YOU to Keep the Sabbath and Holy Days?

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1). Thus the physical creation, everything we see around us, sprang into being. The great clock of the universe began ticking. God set the gears of His plan in motion.

The Gospel of John echoes Genesis: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made” (John 1:1-3).

When Genesis tells us that God created all things in the beginning, that means God the Father created everything through His Son Jesus Christ.

When God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness” (Gen. 1:26), that means God the Father worked through His Son Jesus Christ to make mankind.

When, “on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done” (Gen. 2:2) and “God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it” (Gen. 2:3), that means that God the Father, through His Son Jesus Christ, blessed and sanctified the seventh day Sabbath.

“All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.” As Jesus said when He was on the earth, “I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me” (John 5:30).

So Jesus Christ, at the very beginning, created the seventh-day Sabbath, blessed it, and made it holy. No wonder He called Himself “Lord of the Sabbath” (Mark 2:28; Luke 6:5).

But that’s not all.

In the beginning, Jesus also created the seven annual Holy Days that we find in Lev. 23. How do we know? Because on the fourth day of Creation, He created the sun, moon, and stars to, among other things, help calculate “for signs and for appointments, and for days and years” (Gen. 1:14, *Concordant Literal Version*).

The Hebrew word the CLV translates as “appointments,” and other versions as “seasons,” is *moedim* (Strong’s # H4150), which is the same word God used for His Holy Days in Lev. 23!

But if that's not enough, God's Word also shows that Abraham, the father of the faithful (Rom. 4:16), observed Passover centuries before God reintroduced it to Moses in Egypt. By putting Ex. 12:40-41 together with Gal. 3:16-17, we learn that God brought Israel out of Egypt on Passover, four hundred thirty years after God's covenant with Abraham, "on that very same day" (Ex. 12:41).

Just as Noah knew about clean and unclean animals and brought them onto the ark almost a thousand years before God gave those same instructions to Israel in Lev. 11, so Abraham and all his forefathers knew about God's Holy Days. God the Father and Jesus Christ established them at Creation, along with the seventh day Sabbath.

The question is, are God's Holy Days still relevant today? As the title asks, does God want YOU to keep the Sabbath and Holy Days? Or did Jesus abolish them 4,000 years after creating them?

Two Covenants

Remember, God the Father and Jesus Christ planned everything out in the very beginning. Before They created the earth, "before the foundation of the world" (1 Pet. 1:20), They had determined that Jesus would come to earth to die for the sins of mankind.

Furthermore, God's Word shows that there are two covenants, the one leading up to Jesus' death and the other taking effect after His death.

Heb. 9:15 tells us, "And for this reason He [Jesus] is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance."

Heb. 8:13 adds, "In that He says, 'A new covenant,' He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away."

So the first covenant, the Old Covenant, is now obsolete and we are under the New Covenant. This, too, was part of the plan that God devised before Creation.

New Covenant... Laws??

But what does that mean, exactly? Does the New Covenant mean we no longer have to obey God's laws? Does it mean there's no more good and evil, that everything is okay and anything goes?

At the final judgment, God will exclude certain people from His Kingdom: "But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all

liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death” (Rev. 21:8).

If the wicked will be barred from God’s Kingdom and instead burn in the lake of fire, then clearly God still has standards. That means He still has laws, for without laws, there can be no sin. It’s impossible to break laws that don’t exist, and therefore it would be impossible to do anything wrong. That’s just simple logic!

1 John 2:3-5 says plainly, “Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him.”

Whoa! We do have to obey God’s commandments! God still has laws and standards for us to live by. Let’s continue.

Here’s 1 John 3:4: “Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness.” The King James Version renders this verse, “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.”

Jesus Christ Himself confirmed that He will not allow the lawless, those who break His laws, to enter His Kingdom: “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’” (Mat. 7:21-23).

“Lawlessness” here in Matthew 7 is the same Greek word (Strong’s # G458) used in 1 John 3. It’s not enough to call oneself by Christ’s name, as Christians do. As Jesus made plain, “Christians” who call themselves by His name but refuse to obey His laws will end up in the lake of fire! So even under the New Covenant, God requires obedience to His laws.

1 John 5:2-3 tells us, “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.”

Both the Apostles Paul and James affirmed that “not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified” (Rom. 2:13; Jam. 1:22-25). In fact, countless verses affirm the law, far more than we have time or space to cover here.

Two things are true:

1. God has made a new covenant which replaces the old

2. God still requires us to obey His laws, and He will destroy those who defiantly refuse

If God still has laws for us today, then what laws are we bound to obey under the New Covenant? Does our heavenly Father still want us to keep the seventh day Sabbath and the Holy Days that He and His Son established at Creation?

Let's see what the Author of the New Covenant did and taught while He was on this earth!

What Did Jesus Do and Teach?

The Author of the law, Jesus Christ, kept it perfectly, for He never sinned. Some have disputed this, but God's Word leaves no room for doubt.

Heb. 4:15 says, "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, **yet without sin.**"

Here's 2 Cor. 5:21: "For He made Him who knew no sin [Jesus] to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

Finally, 1 Pet. 2:21-22 tells us, "For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: 'Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth.'"

If Jesus never sinned, then He never broke His law, for "sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4, KJV). If He never broke the law, then He never broke the Sabbath or Holy Days.

The Jewish leaders scolded Him for healing people on the Sabbath, but nowhere in God's Word is such a thing forbidden. Jesus broke many man-made traditions, but He never broke God's law. Not even once.

It's not even necessary, then, to read examples of Jesus keeping the Sabbath and Holy Days — of which there are many examples. If He had broken the Sabbath or Holy Days, then He would have sinned, and God's Word says He did not sin. Nothing Jesus did on the Sabbath or Holy Days was against God's law, but rather in keeping with it.

What does that mean for us? 1 John 2:6 says, "He who says he abides in Him [Jesus] ought himself also to walk just as He walked."

And how did Jesus walk? He kept the laws and commandments of God, as we're told in the preceding verses: "Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him" (1 John 2:3-5).

Jesus Christ was, as the Apostle Paul wrote, “obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:8). This is the example we are to follow!

Jesus led by example. He kept the Sabbath, the Holy Days, and the rest of His laws perfectly. What about His teachings? What did He tell us to do, other than to follow His example? Did He, in other ways, also tell us to obey His laws?

For anyone who might think He abolished the law, Jesus said, in Mat. 5:17-19,

17 “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.

18 “For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.

19 “Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”

Now, if one were to stand up from one’s chair, go over to the window or the door, and look outside, one would immediately see that heaven and earth have not passed away. Therefore, God’s law hasn’t passed away either!

In fact, though Jesus many times lambasted the scribes and Pharisees, He also told His followers, “The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do” (Mat. 23:2-3).

As one can see from reading the Gospels, Christ condemned the Jewish leaders, not for keeping the law, but for NOT keeping it! In Mat. 23:23, He said, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. **These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.**”

Notice that Jesus didn’t rebuke the Pharisees for doing too much. He didn’t rebuke them for paying too much attention to detail — in fact, He said they should NOT have left that part undone. He rebuked them for focusing ONLY on the details and neglecting the whole purpose of the law.

He lambasted them, not for being obedient, but for only pretending to be obedient. Quoting Isa. 29:13, He said, “Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: ‘These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from

Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men” (Mat. 15:7-9).

Again, in John 7:19, Jesus rebuked the Jewish leaders: “Did not Moses give you the law, yet **none of you keeps the law?** Why do you seek to kill Me?”

Jesus never rebuked the Pharisees for keeping the Sabbath and Holy Days, either. He chastised them for adding man-made traditions to the Sabbath that God never required or intended. He excoriated them for putting their own traditions on par with God’s Word.

Nearly every religion, church, and sect of Christianity follows the Pharisees’ example to this day. They reject God’s laws and invent their own traditions, which they teach in place of His Word.

What About Jesus’ Followers?

If Jesus obeyed the law, including the Sabbath and Holy Days, and taught us to follow His example, what about His early followers? Did the apostles also keep the Sabbath and Holy Days and teach others to do likewise, or did they teach that these were abolished?

Many times, Paul and the other apostles taught that physical circumcision is no longer required for adult converts to Christianity, but only spiritual circumcision (Rom. 2:28-29). The Book of Hebrews demonstrates that animal sacrifices are not part of the New Covenant, but that Jesus fulfilled them with His own sacrifice. They taught that various other physical rituals are no longer important.

And, of course, they, like their Master, eviscerated the traditions of men. The Apostle Paul wrote in Col. 2:20-23,

20 Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations —

21 “Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,”

22 which all concern things which perish with the using — **according to the commandments and doctrines of men?**

23 These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in **self-imposed religion**, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.

Also like their Master, they excoriated those who rejected God’s laws. As he was about to be martyred, Stephen rebuked his false accusers with these words: “You stiff-necked and

uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, **who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it**” (Acts 7:51-53).

And yet, there is no dispute anywhere in the New Testament about keeping the Sabbath and Holy Days. On the contrary, Paul and all the other apostles faithfully kept the Sabbath and Holy Days, as we see throughout the Book of Acts.

In Acts 17:2, we read, “Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures.” At least seven other times in the Book of Acts, we are told that Paul and his companions kept the Sabbath, including in Acts 13:14, 27, 42, 44; 15:21; 16:13; and 18:4.

In Acts 13:42, after Paul and Barnabas had preached to the Jews in the synagogue on the Sabbath, “the Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath.” Did Paul and Barnabas simply tell the Gentiles to gather together the next day on Sunday? No, they preached to them a week later **ON THE SABBATH** (Acts 13:44)!

Acts 20:6 records Paul and his companions waiting until after the Feast of Unleavened Bread to travel to another city. In Acts 2:1; 20:16; and 1 Cor. 16:8, Paul and the other apostles celebrated the Feast of Pentecost, which is called the Feast of Weeks in the Old Testament. Acts 27:9 mentions The Fast, that is, the Day of Atonement.

During his own lifetime, the Apostle Paul was slandered as a lawbreaker who taught others to break God’s law (Acts 21:20-21). What was the response of the other apostles to this accusation? They noted to him, “You yourself also walk orderly and keep the law” (Acts 21:24).

Concerning those who twisted Paul’s words, the Apostle Peter wrote, “Also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures” (2 Pet. 3:15-16).

Returning to Acts 21, some have seized on the following verse, Acts 21:25: “Now concerning those of the nations who have believed, we write an epistle, deciding they are to guard themselves from idol sacrifice, besides from blood also, and what is strangled, and from prostitution” (*Concordant Literal Version*). They have claimed that the apostles only kept the law because they were Jews, and that they expected less of the Gentiles. This is absurd!

God has always required the same things of everyone, both Israelites and Gentiles (Ex. 12:49; Num. 15:16). As Paul wrote in Rom. 2:11, “For there is no partiality with God.” Gentile converts are, in fact, grafted into Israel and become spiritual Israelites, as Paul explained in Rom. 11:17-24! God holds everyone to the same standard.

So why, then, did the apostles write only that the Gentiles should “guard themselves from idol sacrifice, besides from blood also, and what is strangled, and from prostitution”? They explained in Acts 15:21, when writing that letter, “For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath.”

They knew the Gentiles would learn God’s Word over time, “every Sabbath,” but they didn’t want to overwhelm new converts with a deluge of foreign concepts. Conversion is a process. God didn’t teach Israel everything at once when He brought them out of Egypt, and the apostles followed His example.

And what did Paul say to those who accused him of breaking God’s law? “I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets” (Acts 24:14). Again, “I have done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers” (Acts 28:17).

It stands to reason that, if Paul walked orderly and obeyed the law (Acts 21:24), then he also kept the Sabbath and Holy Days, just as we saw him doing throughout the Book of Acts. As yet another example, in Acts 18:21, Paul hurried to Jerusalem to keep one of God’s feasts, something he would never have done if he had rejected God’s law.

But Paul didn’t just keep God’s laws himself; he fulfilled Jesus’ instructions in Mat. 5:19 and taught others to do so as well. Like Jesus, he led by example.

To the Corinthians, Paul wrote, “Therefore I urge you, imitate me. For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church” (1 Cor. 4:16-17). Later, he added, “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ. Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you” (1 Cor. 11:1-2).

Again, in the same epistle, Paul commanded the Corinthians to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread: “Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Cor. 5:7-8).

To the Colossians, Paul wrote, not they shouldn't keep God's Sabbath and Holy Days, but that they shouldn't let others judge them in so doing or pay any heed to the traditions of men. He added that the Sabbath and Holy Days represent things to come, that is, God's Kingdom: "Let no one, then, judge you in eating or in drinking, or in respect of a feast, or of a new moon, or of sabbaths, which are a shadow of the coming things, and the body of the Christ" (Col. 2:16-17, *Young's Literal Translation*).

When Paul said that these things "ARE a shadow of the coming things," he used the Greek present tense verb *esti* (Strong's # G2076), not a past tense verb. It also stands to reason that if the Sabbath and Holy Days represent things to come, then they haven't been fulfilled yet and therefore remain in effect!

This verse, all by itself, shows that God expects us to keep His Sabbath and Holy Days, just as Jesus Christ and all His early followers set the example for us. In harmony with this passage, Hebrews 4 shows that the seventh day Sabbath represents God's Kingdom, likening "the seventh day" (v. 4) to the rest God still has in store for us in the future (vv. 1, 11). When we keep the Sabbath, we do so to honor God, to spend time with Him, and to eagerly await His coming Kingdom.

What Should We Do?

So how does God expect us to keep the Sabbath and Holy Days under the New Covenant? In the Old Covenant, God commanded many animal sacrifices on these days, as we can see in Lev. 23 and Num. 28-29. Yet there are no more animal sacrifices under the New Covenant. What remains for us to do?

The first and most obvious instruction for the Sabbath and Holy Days is that we're to rest "according to the commandment" (Luke 23:56). God established this at Creation: "He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made" (Gen. 2:2-3).

Thus the Sabbath not only represents God's coming Kingdom, but also stands as a memorial of His creation. The Sabbath and Holy Days encompass His entire plan for mankind, His reason for creating us, and His ultimate goal of having us dwell with Him.

In addition to resting on the Sabbath and Holy Days, God's people are commanded to assemble together. As Heb. 10:24-25 says, "And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, **not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together**, as is the manner of some."

When are we to assemble together? On days of our own choosing? Or on days God has set apart and declared holy?

Human beings can make nothing holy. Only God can do that. Nor can mankind make anything unholy which God has made holy.

God set apart His Sabbath and Holy Days. He made them commanded assemblies, holy convocations, or appointed gatherings, which are the meanings of the Hebrew words that He used to describe them in Lev. 23:2.

For man to profane the days God has made holy and to set apart other days which God has NOT made holy, such as Sunday, is disrespectful and blasphemous. It's not up to man to decide how to worship God; it's up to man to obey what God has already decided! No church, no minister, and no human being at all has greater authority than the Word of God.

Furthermore, the word "assembling" in Heb. 10:25 is Strong's # G1997, *episynagoge*. As one can immediately see, it's related to the Greek word for "synagogue." When do people assemble in synagogues? On the Sabbath and Holy Days!

Finally, we see another glimpse of how to worship God on His Sabbath and Holy Days in Nehemiah 8. First, the people assembled to hear the Word of God. Then, in v. 12, we find, "And all the people went their way to eat and drink, to send portions and rejoice greatly, because they understood the words that were declared to them."

God wants us to serve Him with "joy and gladness of heart for the abundance of everything" (Deut. 28:47). As the Apostle Paul wrote, "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!" (Phil. 4:4).

How much more, then, should we rejoice on the Sabbath and Holy Days which God has set apart for our good (Deut. 10:13; Mark 2:27)?

Let us worship God in the way that He commands, brethren, on the days He has commanded. Let us rest from our labors, assemble together to study His Word, and rejoice in Him!

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