

Should You Still Observe the Sabbath?

I have been blessed over the years to be invited to speak in churches of many varieties all over the country. When I am given the opportunity to, one of my favorite things to do is to simply open the floor to questions, and one of the most-asked questions is “What about Sabbath?” This question is asked many times, and the reason it is asked is varied. Some just want to know, “Do Messianic Jews still keep the weekly Sabbath? Others want to know “Didn’t Yeshua (Jesus) do away with the Sabbath?” Others ask the question as a challenge: “Isn’t keeping the Sabbath just another form of legalism?” and Others ask, “Isn’t the Sabbath just for the Jews?” or “Isn’t Sabbath Sunday now?”

My favorite question is “Why do you still keep the Sabbath?” and I want to focus on the answer to this question in today’s article. Over the years, I have answered this question many different ways. I used to answer by providing a long list of Scripture references showing that Shabbat was commanded to be remembered and kept for all time. Other times I would point out that the Sabbath was the fourth commandment of the Ten Commandments showing just how important it was to keep the Sabbath. Sometimes I would read Luke 4, where it says attending Sabbath was Yeshua’s custom, or I would read Acts 15, which says Gentiles will hear that Moses taught on the Sabbath.

But I no longer use any of those answers to the “Why do I keep the Sabbath?” question. Instead, I focus my explanation in a completely different direction. I share that I keep the Sabbath because it is a visible way that I can share my faith in the invisible. Let me explain further. The Scripture says in Mark 2:27b (TLV): “Shabbat was made for man, and not man for Shabbat.

G-D didn't need the Sabbath any more than He needed the tabernacle or the temple. Think about this for a moment. The tabernacle at its best was a very nice, ornate tent. In comparison to heaven, the tabernacle is a pup tent standing next to the Ritz. The tabernacle was not made for G-D; it was made for man. We needed a visible location to help us to focus our thoughts and prayers. But more than that, when the children of Israel went to the tabernacle or temple, those around them could see them. They watched how they walked up to the tabernacle, how they entered, how they brought their offerings, how the priest accepted the offering, slew the animal and made the sacrifice. All those watching could see every step taken and saw how carefully the commandments were kept by both those bringing the offerings and those watching. This obedience in observing the commandments of G-D was a visible expression of their faith. People watching them obey the commandments could see their faith in their actions. It is in this context that we read in Jacob (James) 2:17-18:

"So also faith, if it does not have works, is dead by itself. But someone will say, 'You have faith and I have works.' Show me your faith without works and I will show you faith by my works."

In other words, G-D didn't set up the entire sacrificial system and all the explicit commandments to put a burden on the children of Israel or to make things difficult. He established the tabernacle and temple service so that people watching Israel would see their love for the invisible G-D in their visible actions. Their commitment to do all that He asked of them allowed people to see the invisible in their visible.

I keep the weekly Shabbat because by doing so it lets people see that I believe that G-D created the world in six days (Ex. 20:11) and to that people will see that I believe G-D redeemed Israel from Egypt's bondage (Deut. 5:15). It is my hope that by seeing my visible actions demonstrating my faith in the

invisible G-D, that they will also see that he can still create today,

“Therefore if anyone is in Messiah, he is a new creation. The old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Cor. 5:17).

And that He can still redeem from bondage

“In Him we have redemption through His blood—the removal of trespasses—in keeping with the richness of His grace” (Eph. 1:7). {eoa}

Eric Tokajer *is author of* With Me in Paradise, Transient Singularity, OY! How Did I Get Here?: Thirty-One Things I Wish Someone Had Told Me Before Entering Ministry, #ManWisdom: With Eric Tokajer *and* Jesus is to Christianity as Pasta is to Italians.