

Dear Darryl,

Thank you for writing us at Christian Questions Radio. You wanted to know if Jesus, who was born under the Old Law Covenant, was obligated to keep the temple sacrifices, high Sabbaths and the Seventh Day Sabbath. You also asked if Jesus was obligated to keep these observances, how, then, can Christians be said to walk in Jesus' steps if they are not required to keep them?

“But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive the full rights as sons.”
(Galatians 4:4-5)

Jesus, a perfect sinless man, was born under the Law Covenant and kept the law perfectly, including the temple sacrifices, high Sabbaths and the Seventh Day Sabbath. It was only because he was perfect and kept the law perfectly that he was able to present his body as a living sacrifice as a substitute for Adam (also a perfect man, but one who had sinned) when John baptized him. Jesus was the fulfillment, or completion, of the Law.

At the time of his baptism, Jesus died to the Law Covenant, but not to the Law. The Law had dominion over him as long as he lived, but after receiving the holy spirit at Jordan, he undertook to do more than merely keep the Law, but brought it to a much higher level. We see this principle in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-6). In the Sermon, Jesus gave his followers the high principles that they and we, as Christians today, are to live by. Jesus said, “You have heard it said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:43-45) In these verses Jesus is showing his followers the importance of the law of love, a law that is far greater than the Old Law Covenant that He completed upon his death on the cross.

The Old Testament Sabbaths were shadows pointing to the reality, which is Christ. “These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.” (Colossians 2:17) The tabernacle and laws of sacrifices were also shadows (Hebrews 8:5; 10:1). All of these things had symbolic significance, but Christ fulfilled their symbolism. No time or festival is labeled as holy in the New Testament. We have been given the spiritual reality through Jesus and are not bound by physical worship rules. Although it is useful for Christians to study the Jewish festivals in order to better understand their significance in the typical outworking of the plan of God, these festivals are in no way a required part of our relationship with God. That is why most Christian groups do not celebrate the Jewish Sabbaths today.

The Law of Moses was given to the Jews to keep them pure and separate from the nations around them. The Jews were God's special people from which Messiah was to come. The Law acted as a schoolmaster in order to bring the Jews to Christ. “So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law.” (Galatians 3:24-25) Once Jesus came and fulfilled the Law by his sacrifice unto death, the Law was no longer binding to the

Jew providing he accepted Jesus. The Apostle Paul further explains this thought by commenting, “that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ.” (Galatians 2:15) Christians, be they Jew or Gentile, are not required to follow the 300 plus laws stated in Leviticus or to celebrate the Jewish Sabbath or holy days, but are required to follow the Ten Commandments. In fact, as Jesus taught us in the Sermon on the Mount, these commandments should be taken to a highest level possible and be written on our hearts.

Are Christians required to keep the old Testament Sabbaths and Laws? From the scriptures above, we see that we are not. We hope we have answered your questions. Be sure to sign up for CQ Rewind at www.christianquestions.net. The service is free without obligation and will provide you with scriptural perspective on many questions and topics.

Sincerely,
Christian Questions Radio