

Examining Judaism (6)

In this installment on Modern Jewish Customs, we want to look at the keeping of the Sabbath, Kosher, and the family in religion.

Sabbath

The Sabbath in Modern Hebrew is Shabbat. Going back to the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:9, "But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God." Of all the feast and festivals mentioned in the Law of Moses, the Sabbath is the only one in the Ten Commandments.

Today's Jews begin the observance a few minutes before sundown, Friday. According to Jewish time, a day began and ended at sundown; whereas, with Roman time, and ours, a day begins and ends at midnight. Candles are lit and the family has a special meal. The Talmud lists 39 categories of forbidden work. Included in this list is cooking, lighting a fire, and hunting for food. (My grandfather Beasley thought of Sunday as the Sabbath. Interestingly, he would not work but he expected grandma to cook.)

Notice God did not establish the observance of the Sabbath until the giving of the Ten Commandments. At no time before was man told to observe the Sabbath. Jesus' death abolished the Sabbath day observance. Paul wrote the following to the church at Colossae, "having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Therefore let no one judge you in food or drink, or regarding a festival of a new moon or Sabbaths," (verses 14, 16)

Let us understand this one point; Sunday is not the "Christian Sabbath". Such language is foreign to the Bible. The Sabbath was the last day of the week, Saturday, whereas, Sunday was the day of Jesus'

resurrection and when the church came together. (John 20:1, Acts 20:27, 1 Corinthians 16:2)

Kosher

Technically, Kosher refers to the foods Jews could eat under the Law of Moses. For instance, one could not eat pork or horsemeat, but could eat beef or sheep. All vegetation was "Kosher", milk from a clean animal was permitted, birds of prey were not allowed, but chickens, turkey, ducks, and geese were suitable.

Of course, Modern Jews have gone beyond what the Bible teaches. "Kosher meat must be prepared in a kitchen where all the knives, cutting surfaces, and pots are kosher. Finally, the food must be served on a kosher plate and consumed with kosher flatware." (Being Jewish: The Spiritual and Cultural Practice of Judaism Today, page 234)

Just as the Sabbath is no longer binding so also are the dietary laws. One can understand the cultural impact the Law of Moses had among the Jews. Growing up they are taught what to eat and not eat. Peter had a problem letting go of the distinction between clean and unclean foods. In Acts 10, he had a vision. A sheet from heaven opens up with different animals, some being clean and others unclean. Peter was told to eat but he refused due to the unclean meats. He was told not to make that distinction anymore. Point being, the dietary laws were abolished, as were the differences between Jews and Gentiles. (verses 10 16)

-- Dennis Tucker

(To Be Continued)