

Dear Ray,

Thank you for writing us at Christian Questions Radio. You asked that if the High Sabbaths reflect the full plan of God, why not observe them? You also commented that you seriously doubted that by putting a Christian spin on formally pagan holidays such as Christmas and Easter made it right in the sight of God.

The seven High Sabbaths or Feasts of Israel mentioned in Leviticus 23 are: Passover, Unleaven Bread, First Fruits, Pentecost (Harvest of Weeks), Trumpets (Rosh Hashanah), the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), and Tabernacles (Booths or Ingathering). It is true, as you say, that these festivals reflect the full plan of God. Why, then, do most Christian groups not observe them?

All of these observances were instituted under the Old or Law Covenant and are not binding on Christians today. Christians are inheritors of the promise made to Abraham, long before the Law Covenant was established at Sinai. The Abrahamic covenant states that through Abraham's seed (Jesus and his faithful followers in heaven) all the families of the earth would be blessed (Genesis 22:17-18). The Law and High Sabbaths were added to this unilateral covenant to lead the Jewish nation 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) Jesus was the fulfillment of the Law and the observances were a type or shadow, of a much greater antitype for both the heavenly seed now in the Gospel Age and the earthly seed (the vast majority of humankind in the Millennial Age). The only observance our Lord told us to keep was the Memorial that he instituted at the Last Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23-26) where he said, "Do this in remembrance of me."

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 typological 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 next question you posed is: Is it right in the sight of God for Christians to celebrate Christmas and Easter, knowing that these holidays have pagan origins?

Just as we are not commanded in the New Testament to observe the Old Testament Jewish Sabbaths, there is no command either to celebrate Jesus' birth or his resurrection. In the third and fourth centuries Christendom established the holidays of Christmas and Easter to coincide with pagan holidays so that new converts would more readily embrace Christianity. These holidays have survived to this day to become the mainstay of traditional Christianity. Is their observance, especially with their pagan trappings, right in the sight of God? The obvious answer would be no. But God is greater than the traditions of men and is able to overrule them because

He knows the heart of each individual who desires to love, honor and worship Him. Therefore, it may be possible for one Christian to participate in an observance of a traditional holiday and have a clear conscience with the Lord because he knows the intension of the observance is good. However, the conscience of another Christian may be offended by such participation. The Apostle Paul admonishes us, "Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak." (1 Corinthians 8:9) As knowledgeable Christians each of us has a responsibility to those around us to be "an example of the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity." (1 Timothy 4:12)

We hope we have answered your questions. Please write us again.

Sincerely,  
Christian Questions Radio