

Luke Farrugia: Why the Sabbath? (30/6/18)

As a church we are often very good at the 'what' of the Sabbath, but not so good at the 'why' of the Sabbath.

Selling the Sabbath

Story - Years ago Luke had a kind hearted neighbour who came across with something to tell the family. "We have come to liberate you from the bondage of the Sabbath."

So why did they have this viewpoint? Was that their fault? or is it our fault? We ought to take responsibility for our failures and we ought to try to 'sell' (communicate) the message in the best way possible - so as to not communicate bondage.

Illustration: Selling a MacBook Pro. If we tried to sell it by describing its cost, its weight and the potential for damage you would have a much more difficult job than if you sold it based on its relational, creative, and productive benefits.

How we sell the Sabbath has a significant impact upon how it will be received.

The name of our church 'Seventh-day Adventist' is a bit more wordy than that of most denominations, but that is because in it is housed our identity as a movement.

1. Adventist - We believe in the second coming of Jesus to reunite us with Him for eternity and liberate us from the results of sin.
2. Seventh-day - We believe in the Creator God who is also our Redeemer.
 - Exodus 20:8-11 - "for" in 6 days... The Sabbath is recognised and observed 'because' God is Creator.
 - Deuteronomy 5:12-15 - "therefore..." The Sabbath is recognised and observed 'because' God is Redeemer.

The Inception of the Sabbath

In Genesis 2:1-3 we read about the inception of the Sabbath. But there are some things that I would like to point out that we often pass over (to read more about them they are found in "The Lost Meaning of the Seventh Day" by Professor Sigve Tonstad).

8 Assumptions of the text:

1. Intentionality. The institution of the Sabbath was deliberate.
2. As the Creator, it's institution was God's distinct prerogative.
3. It is a sign of personhood - because of the need of rest.
4. It is a relational marker. In Hebrew the word "Sabbath" has a relational meaning.
5. Connection. The Sabbath is an expression of love - to us.
6. It is an affirmation of presence - "God with us."
7. It is a day of blessing - to us.
8. Sabbath is a sign of revelation - God reveals Himself to us through the Sabbath.

This is how God sells the Sabbath!

Re-Affirmation of the Sabbath

After its inception the covenant was broken. But did the dream die? No! He re-affirms it after the deliverance of the children of Israel from Egyptian slavery.

Exodus 16:1-7 - The Sabbath is re-instituted by God after the liberation of His people.

God had to go through a process of getting 'Egypt' out of them... Sabbath was a significant part of the process of freeing them from the contamination.

Evaluating our Sabbath Keeping

Is it possible to keep the 'what' of the Sabbath without understanding the 'why?'

Mark 2:23-28 - Jesus points to the experience of David in the Old Testament. In that situation, the Priest, Jesus seems to be saying, had to evaluate the situation and decide whether to break the "Royal Law" of love, or the "Ceremonial Law."

Jesus is saying that we should apply the 'why' to our application of the Sabbath commandment, rather than merely focussing on the 'what' of the command!

The Purpose of the Sabbath

Ezekiel 20:12 - The Sabbath is a sign (symbol) of God's faithfulness at work - 'Righteousness by Faith.'

It is a reminder of the Creative and Redemptive power of God, and an invitation to have a relationship with that God.

Re-affirm *your* belief in "Sabbath" today!