

Romans 14:5-6

By John K. McKee

“One man considers one day besides another, while another considers every day alike. Let each be fully persuaded in his own mind. He who considers the day, considers it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God.”

On the basis of these two verses of Scripture, many of us are told that all days are equal in the sight of God. It is not important, Christians say, whether or not we honor the seventh-day Sabbath or the Biblical feasts. It is all an issue of one's conscience. Sunday is an acceptable “Sabbath,” and Christmas and Easter are acceptable holidays to celebrate in place of the Torah-prescribed holidays. But if one follows this conclusion to its logical end, then Tuesday is also an acceptable Sabbath, and Christmas can be celebrated on the Fourth of July. Surely, most Christians would disagree with this. It is obvious that the common Christian handling of these verses in this regard is misguided.

The opening verses of Romans 14 have Paul speak of eating meat versus vegetables. He states, “Now take along the one who is weak in faith, not for passing judgment on his opinions. One man has faith that he may eat all, but he who is weak eats vegetables” (vs. 1-2). In regard to the Biblical dietary commandments, Paul is comparing vegetarianism and eating meat, not about eating Biblically unclean things like pork or shellfish, which are not food. If he were speaking about eating unclean things, then the end-time admonition of Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 65 & 66, where God says He will judge those who defiantly eat swine's flesh, is null-and-void, as is the Acts 15 Jerusalem Council's ruling to abstain from meat's strangled. But these admonitions still remain, and we must reconcile Paul's words here to the whole council of Scripture, including Messiah's words and those of the other Renewed Covenant/New Testament writers, which uphold Torah.

In regard to Romans 14:5-6, about days and people choosing not to eat, we believe that the context of these verses is clearly speaking of days regarding fasting and when certain people were led to fast and abstain from eating. The only Biblical time we are commanded to fast is on Yom Kippur, but other than that there is not very much the Scriptures have to say about fasting. Fasting on certain days are times where each man must be convinced in his own mind.

This view is shared by Harold and Donna Kupp in their article “The Churchmen Versus the Sabbath.” They write, “What then was Paul talking about? He was talking about fast days. The whole 14th chapter of Romans is about food and how people's beliefs about fasting should not be interfered with. The fast days could be observed according to each

believer's conscience. A man could eat or not eat, keep the day or not keep it. It is as simple as this: Each man could observe FAST DAYS, or not observe them, according to his own convictions....

“The ‘days’ that Paul was referring to were the traditional fast days mentioned in Zechariah 7:5-6.5 The Gentile [non-Jewish] Christians in Rome did not keep them because they had no cultural interest in the anniversary feasts that were observed during the Jews’ captivity in Babylon.”

With this viewpoint, Paul's words take on a whole new meaning: “Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let him who does not eat judge him who eats, for God has taken him along. Who are you to judge the house-servant of another? To his own lord he stands firm or falls; and stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand. One man considers one day besides another, while another considers every day alike. Let each be fully persuaded in his own mind” (Romans 14:3-5).

Note that here Paul clearly tells the Roman Believers, “let not him who is eating despise him who is not eating” (Romans 14:3, YLT). We are told that on some days some people choose not to eat, and others do. We are not to despise those who choose not to eat and fast. Hopefully, those who choose to fast on certain days are being drawn closer to the Father in prayer and supplication.

Romans 14 is not talking about celebrating the Sabbath “whenever you like” or replacement holidays for Adonai's appointed times, but discusses disputable matters such as fasting, and abstaining from eating on certain days. Fasting on certain days is something that each person must individually be convinced about— and this is what Paul was speaking of.