

Today we operate under grace: *For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast (Ephesians 2:8-9).*

The New Covenant gives you Christ, and He gives you God's eternal rest. *Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest (Matthew 11:28).*



Some Sabbatarians allege that "the Pope" changed the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday. Others accuse the first Christian Emperor, Constantine (in the 4th Century A.D.) of changing the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday because of a secret admiration for the sun god, *Sol Evictus*.

Both these frivolous claims are unsupported not only by the evidence in the New Testament, but also by early historical documents. Constantine did not change the Sabbath to Sunday, he merely created the first 'Sunday closure law'. He recognized that a day of rest during the week was beneficial for all. The wording of his decree was, *"On the venerable Day of the Sun let the magistrates and people residing in cities rest, and let all workshops be closed."* This forbade work on Sunday (a big deal to the slaves and rest for them) and enabled more members of the church (as slaves were a large part of it) to worship on Sunday, something that had been happening since apostolic times. As New Testament, New Covenant believers then, let us celebrate the Lord's Day, not with the rigid legalism of Judaism but in the liberty of the Holy Spirit (**Galatians 5:1**).

Conclusion:

The Bible, God's word and the final authority for Christian doctrine and practice teaches that Sabbath law was designed by God not as a means of achieving righteousness, but as a constant reminder of the need to obey God's righteous Law.



The Sabbath was a dim reflection of Eden's perfect rest relooking back and shadowed (typified) and pointed forward to the true rest that would come, that wouldn't be weekly or seasonal or yearly, i.e., salvation's perfect rest in the Lord Jesus Christ.

With the institution of the New Covenant, the Sabbath shadow gave way to the glorious reality: Salvation is the substance; Sabbath, merely the shadow.

No Christian in the New Testament and under the New Covenant was commanded to remember the Sabbath, nor told to commemorate how God delivered Israel out of the hands of the Egyptians. How could they, for God never delivered the Gentiles (non-Jews) from slavery to the Egyptians. This privilege was given to Israel (Jews) and Israel only.

Christians are commanded to remember the Lord's death, which became a practice of the early church on the Lord's Day (1st day of the week or Sunday), under the leadership of the apostles, by partaking of the communion; for in doing this they do show the Lord's death until He comes (1 Cor 11:24-26). This should be a day when we assemble together with believers to hear God's word, to worship, to fellowship and to pray. Beware of neglecting this time in favour of work or pleasure (**Heb. 10:25**). Make it your custom to meet with the Lord's people. Make it a day of physical rest and spiritual rejuvenation. Rejoice with the Lord's people. 'The Lord is risen indeed!'

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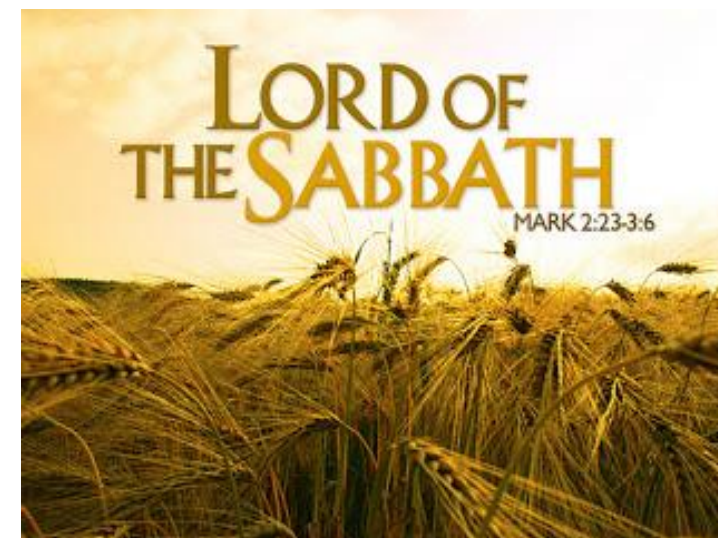
Christians & the Sabbath



Does God want us to keep His Sabbath Laws?

Colossians 2:8,16-17

See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day— things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.



There is quite a lot of needless fuss in the Church today regarding this business of a 'Sabbath' day. The vast majority of mainstream Christians go to church on Sunday while a minority group do church on Saturday. Those that keep the Sabbath and go to church on Saturday wrongly believe that only they are true Christians and will go to heaven. Others say that Sunday is their "Sabbath Day", but this too is misleading. We need to be careful about changing God's definitions for Him as we end up confusing ourselves when we do this.



The first question to be settled: can a Christian worship on any day? Worship is a lifestyle and a whole lot more than just going to church on a particular day of the week. All Christians should be worshipping God every day. *Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship (Romans 12:1).*

Differences arise when it comes to collective or corporate worship, i.e., when the body of Christ (the Church), in various localities, gather once a week for worship and fellowship. Should Christians be setting aside any special days as sanctified or holy? Where do today's professing Christians get the idea that Sunday is the Christian day of collective/ corporate worship?

God created the world and all that was in it in 6 days. *By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made (Genesis 2:2-3).* After sin came in through Adam and Eve, God worked again – this time for our salvation.

However, God gave no commandment to Adam to keep the seventh day. The only commandment given was not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph are not recorded as observing it. Nor will you find any such commandment until we come to Moses and the Israelites at Mt Sinai.

At Mount Sinai the Sabbath laws were given to Moses to give to Israel (Jews), and not to the Gentiles (non-Jews). Exodus 20:1-8 reads in this way, *"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage ... remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy."* Also Exodus 31:13-17: *'Speak also to the children of Israel, saying: "Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you... a perpetual covenant...a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever"'*.

In all the references to it, the Hebrew word for Sabbath is *sabbat* and it means 'to cease' or 'to rest'. God was telling His people, Israel (Jews) to rest on one day in the week from their physical labours and to think about their God and spiritual matters. The Passover, the Feasts of Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits, Booths and Pentecost, the Day of Atonement, the New Moons each month, the Sabbath years each seventh year and the Jubilee year, all of those are Sabbaths. The Law of God applied to all the Sabbaths, not just the seventh day, all the rest of these Sabbaths fall under the same prescriptions. **We can conclude then that the Sabbath, was a special sign to Israel (Jews) of their covenant relationship with God, and not given to all people as a whole.**

The teachers of the Law went on to add to the scripture itself a multitude of rules and regulations, *'the traditions of the elders'*, which made the Sabbath a burden to the people rather than a blessing. The Lord Jesus had many confrontations with the Pharisees over these traditions (Matt 12:1-14; Luke 13:10-17; Luke 14:1-6; John 5:1-47; John 9:1-41).

But what about today? Should churches observe the Sabbath as the Jews still do? What was the practice of the early church? The question came up early as many Jews who believed felt very strongly that Gentiles (non-Jews) who accepted Christ should then become 'Law keepers' to please God. *'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved', Acts 15:1.* It was a hot issue with strong feelings on both sides. The apostles and elders gathered in Jerusalem to settle the matter once and for all. They talked, prayed and came to a united decision. A letter was sent to the churches which stated, *'For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell', (Acts 15:28-29).*

Gentiles (non-Jews) did not need to live like Jews when they were converted. But they should abstain from eating blood which was offensive to the Jews and should live holy lives. They were not told to keep the Sabbath.

The principle of a day of rest and spiritual meditation was carried over into the churches. But it was not the Sabbath, which was connected with Israel and the covenant with them.

God had instituted a 'New Covenant' with believers based on the blood of Christ. In Hebrews 8:13 we read, 'In that He says, "A new covenant", He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away'. The temple would be destroyed shortly and the sacrificial system of the Jews cease.



On the Sabbath Christ was still in the tomb, a day of mourning and despair. It was the first day of the week that brought them hope and joy. As the disciples came to the tomb they found it empty with the angels standing guard. They were told, *'He is not here for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay', (Matt. 28:6).* It was on the first day that Christ appeared to them and their sorrow was turned into joy. It was fitting that they should meet on the first day each week for teaching, worship, fellowship and prayer (Acts 2:42).

It became known as the 'Lord's Day', (Rev. 1:10); a day belonging to Him and set apart for Him. Israel remembered their covenant relationship with Jehovah on the Sabbath. Christians today, as they remember the Lord in the breaking of bread (Holy Communion, Eucharist, Lord's Supper) remember their covenant with God in Christ Jesus. The Lord Jesus told His disciples, *'This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you', (Luke 22:20).* The disciples in Troas came together to break bread on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7), as did Christians in Corinth (1 Corinthians 16:2). This was the custom of all the churches established under the apostles' leadership.

Under the 'New Covenant', God doesn't require Christians to keep the Sabbath. If you're a Christian, you shouldn't be trying to fulfill a Covenant which no longer applies to you. Those who want to get into debates about the Ten Commandments and 'Law-keeping' are seriously lacking in their understanding of what it means to be a Christian. Some of these people are not interested in learning the truth because their pride enjoys trying to earn God's favour through works. If you try to earn salvation by following the Sinai Covenant or any other human effort, it will get you nowhere. You could sacrifice a million animals and God would reject them all.