

Should We Observe The Sabbath?

by Casey Head

Many so called “Christians” today still believe that the Sabbath is binding, and they will set aside Sunday as a day of rest. Even though they are quite inconsistent in their understanding and application of this doctrine, they continue to give lip-service to the “sanctified day of rest.” But did you know that Sunday is not even the Sabbath day? And did you know that Christians are not bound to keep the Sabbath? Let us take some time to address these common questions.

In the Bible, the Sabbath day was the seventh day of the week, and for us today, that would be Saturday, not Sunday. Seventh-Day Adventists have chosen the correct day to worship God if the Sabbath is still binding, for they worship on Saturday. In Exodus 20:9-11, we find that the Sabbath is the seventh day, following six days of work. Just as God created the world in six days, so were the Israelites required to work six days and rest on the seventh. Many Protestant people today will contend that Sunday is the Christian Sabbath, but where is this ever stated in the Bible? Can you find one single New Testament verse that switches the Sabbath day from the seventh day to the first day?

Christians ARE required to assemble on the first day of the week, but never is it referred to as the Sabbath day. Paul, along with the disciples at Troas, assembled together on the first day of the week to take the Lord’s Supper and to hear preaching (Acts 20:7). And we see in 1 Corinthians 16:1 that the collection for the saints is to be taken up on the first day of the week. It is not unusual for Sunday to be the day for Christians to assemble, especially when you recognize that Jesus Christ rose from the dead on the first day of the week (Matt. 28:1). It was clearly a significant day for Christians. But nowhere is the first day of the week referred to as being the Christian Sabbath, and nowhere do we find the first day called a day of rest. Christians are not bound to keep the Sabbath- it is not a part of the law of Christ. Therefore, we must abstain from observing and binding it.

Now that we have explained the importance of the first day of the week for Christians, proving also that it is not the Christian Sabbath, let us now prove that the Sabbath is not applicable today. In Colossians 2:14-16, for example, Paul says, “Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross...Let no man judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days.” Based on this text, we can safely conclude that Christians are not to observe the Sabbath, for it was nailed to the cross along with all of the other Jewish laws and regulations. Furthermore, in 2 Corinthians 3:1-11, we learn that the “tables of stone,” also referred to as the “ministration of death, written and engraven in stones,” has passed away. In other words, the physical law of Moses has been replaced by the spiritual law of Christ. While many people today want to bind certain parts of the law of Moses, the Bible teaches that the law of Moses has been replaced by a new and better covenant (Heb. 8:13; 9:15). Paul says in Galatians 5:3-4 that if any part of the old law is observed today, then all parts must be kept; and if we revert back to the old law, then we have fallen from grace. Clearly, the Sabbath is no longer binding.

It would be sufficient to end the article here, for we have proven already that Christians are not obligated to keep or observe the Sabbath day. But let us also address a few of the common arguments used to justify the observance of the Sabbath today.

First, many religious people will try to say that the Sabbath is an everlasting covenant, that it has been observed from the very beginning, even before the law of Moses was given. This is a common misconception. While we find God resting on the seventh day and even sanctifying the seventh day in Genesis 2:1-3, we never find Him commanding Adam and Eve to observe it themselves as the Sabbath day. Nor do we find any of God’s people in the entire book of Genesis observing the Sabbath. In fact, the word “Sabbath” doesn’t appear until Exodus 16:23, and that was

just as the people of Israel approached Mount Sinai, where the full law of Moses was given by God. To say that the Sabbath is an everlasting covenant that has been observed from the very beginning of creation is false. God rested on the seventh day Himself, but it wasn't until the giving of the law of Moses in Exodus that it was bound upon the Israelites.

Others will argue that Jesus and the apostles observed the Sabbath day. Of course Jesus did! He lived under the law of Moses. Paul confirms this point in Galatians 4:4, "But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, *made under the law.*" Our Lord observed the law of Moses while He lived, but when He died, it was nailed to the cross and a new law was enforced (Col. 2:14-16; Heb. 9:16). The apostles observed the Sabbath day while Jesus was alive, but after He died, they did not. Sure, they met with the Jews on the Sabbath day (Acts 13:14; 18:4), but for what purpose? To worship God according to the customs of the old law? No! They did so to teach the Jews. Notice that in each instance where the apostles entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, they reasoned with the Jews from the scriptures concerning Jesus Christ!

Finally, the Sabbatarians will turn to Hebrews 4 to justify their observance of the Sabbath day, but again, their efforts are futile. Let us notice what is said in verses 4-5, "For He spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, and God did rest the seventh day from all His works. And in this place again, If they shall enter into My rest." Initially, this may sound like good news for the Sabbatarian as the seventh day is clearly mentioned, but let us consider the context. God is not promoting the observance of the Sabbath day, but rather is discussing the rest that Christians look forward to. Our rest is not the Sabbath, nor is it the physical land of Canaan. "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God." Our rest is heaven! And when we enter heaven, it is true that we will cease from our own works (v10). God is not telling Christians to observe the Sabbath as the Jews did. He is, in fact, doing the exact opposite!

While many religious people today insist that the Sabbath day is our day for worship, and while others say that Sunday is the Christian Sabbath, we have shown in this article the error of both positions. Christians are not bound to keep the Sabbath in ANY way. Instead, we assemble on the first day of the week as seen in the New Testament.