

~Was the Sabbath for everybody?~

- a. God rested on the Sabbath day in Genesis.
- b. He did not command Adam or Eve to keep the Sabbath.
- c. He did not command anyone in Genesis to keep the Sabbath.
- d. Many commandments are broken in Genesis except the Sabbath.
- e. No mention of Abraham, Noah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph keeping the Sabbath.
- f. No mention of Job (a Gentile who was Gods' example of a perfect servant) keeping the Sabbath.
- g. No mention of any of the nations keeping the Sabbath.
- h. In Numbers 15 when Moses finds a man breaking the Sabbath, the Israelites don't know what to do to him.
- i. No mention of anyone other than the Israelites (and their inhabitants) keeping the Sabbath.

Are the Sabbath laws binding on Christians today?

We believe the Old Testament regulations governing Sabbath observances are ceremonial, not moral, aspects of the law. As such, they are no longer in force, but have passed away along with the sacrificial system, the Levitical priesthood, and all other aspects of Moses' law that prefigured Christ. Here are the reasons we hold this view.

One quick way to see if the Sabbath law is 'moral' is to ask the question: "Will it be binding in eternity"? When put to this test, one can see whether a commandment is temporal, ceremonial or moral.

IN HEAVEN:

- 1) Will there be murder?
- 2) Will there be lying?
- 3) Will there be stealing?
- 4) Will there be coveting?
- 5) Will there be other gods to worship?
- 6) Will there be adultery?
- 7) Will there be dishonoring?
- 8) Will there be taking the Lord's name in vain?
- 9) Will there be the making of graven images?

Of course not!! ALL of these will be forbidden in Heaven, as they are on earth! These are moral (eternal) commandments. We will ALWAYS keep these. However, the same cannot be said regarding the Sabbath commandment unless you believe that we will be keeping a 24 hour day (?) in eternity!! If so, what day? What regulations? If you say that EVERY day will be a Sabbath in heaven unto the Lord, then why are you not saying that now? Does not the book of Hebrews teach us that every day, *in heaven and earth*, is our Sabbath wherein we rest from our own works and trust in those of the Lord Jesus??

What a perfect place for the writer of Hebrews to tell the believers to continue keeping Saturday (the only Sabbath day of the Hebrew week) as the Sabbath as they have always done. Instead of that, he states that 'everyday' is the Sabbath rest!

Take a look:

Heb 4:9-10

9 "There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God;
10 for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from His."

That's it, folks! From the writer, himself--telling us that our Sabbath rest is in Christ. No weekly days mentioned. Do we need to add anything to that?

1. It was a ceremonial day

In Colossians 2:16-17,

16 "Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day.

17 These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ."

Paul explicitly refers to the Sabbath as a shadow of Christ, which is no longer binding since the substance (Christ) has come. It is quite clear in those verses that the weekly Sabbath is in view. The phrase "a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day" refers to the annual, monthly, and weekly holy days of the Jewish calendar (cf. 1 Chronicles 23:31; 2 Chronicles 2:4; 31:3; Ezekiel 45:17; Hosea 2:11). If Paul were referring to special ceremonial dates of rest in that passage, why would he have used the word "Sabbath?" He had already mentioned the ceremonial dates when he spoke of festivals and new moons.

2.. The Sabbath was the sign to Israel of the Mosaic Covenant

Exod 31:16-17

16 The Israelites are to observe the Sabbath, celebrating it for the generations to come as a lasting covenant.

17 It will be a sign between me and the **Israelites** forever, for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day he abstained from work and rested."

Since we are now under the New Covenant (Hebrews 8), we are no longer required to observe the sign of the Mosaic Covenant.

3.. The New Testament never commands Christians to observe the Sabbath-not even once!

4.. In our only glimpse of an early church worship service in the New Testament, the church met on the first day of the week

Acts 20:7

"On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight."

5.. Nowhere in the Old Testament are the Gentile nations commanded to observe the Sabbath or condemned for failing to do so. That is certainly strange if Sabbath observance were meant to be an eternal moral principle.

6.. There is no evidence in the Bible of anyone keeping the Sabbath before the time of Moses, nor are there any commands in the Bible to keep the Sabbath before the giving of the law at Mt. Sinai.

7.. When the Apostles met at the Jerusalem council (Acts 15), they did not impose Sabbath keeping on the Gentile believers.

8.. The apostle Paul warned the Gentiles about many different sins in his epistles, but breaking the Sabbath was *never* one of them.

9 Paul rebukes the Galatians for thinking God expected them to observe special days (including the Sabbath).

Galatians 4:10-11,

"You are observing special days and months and seasons and years! I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you."

10. Paul forbids those who observe the Sabbath (these were no doubt Jewish believers) to condemn those who do not (Gentile believers).

Romans 14:5-6

5 One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.

6 He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord. He who eats meat, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God.

11.. The early church 'fathers', from Ignatius to Augustine, taught that the Old Testament Sabbath had been abolished and that the first day of the week (Sunday) was the day when Christians should meet for worship (contrary to the claim of many seventh-day sabbatarians who claim that Sunday worship was not instituted until the fourth century).

12.. Sunday has *not* replaced Saturday as the Sabbath. Every day to the believer is one of Sabbath rest, since we have ceased from our spiritual labor and are resting in the salvation of the Lord

Heb 4:9-11

9 There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God;

10 for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his.

11 Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.

John Calvin took a similar position. He wrote, "*There were 3 reasons for giving this [fourth] commandment:*

- 1), *with the seventh day of rest the Lord wished to give to the **people of Israel** an image of spiritual rest, whereby believers must cease from their own works in order to let the Lord work in them.*
- 2), *he wished that there be an established day in which believers might assemble in order to hear his Law and worship him.*
- 3), *he willed that one day of rest be granted to servants and to those who live under the power of others so that they might have a relaxation from their labor. The latter, however, is rather an inferred than a principal reason."*

As to the first reason, there is no doubt that it ceased in Christ; because He is the truth by the presence of which all images vanish. He is the reality at whose advent all shadows are abandoned. Hence Paul (Col. 2:17) affirms that the Sabbath has been a shadow of a reality yet to be. And he declares elsewhere its truth when in the letter to the Romans, ch. 6:8, he teaches us that we are buried with Christ in order that by his death we may die to the corruption of our flesh. And this is not done in one day, but during all the course of our life, until altogether dead in our own selves, we may be filled with the life of God. Hence, superstitious observance of days must remain far from Christians.

The two last reasons, however, must not be numbered among the shadows of old. Rather, they are equally valid for all ages. Hence, though the Sabbath is abrogated, it so happens among us that we still convene on certain days in order to hear the word of God, to break the [mystic] bread of the Supper, and to offer public prayers; and, moreover, in order that some relaxation from their toil be given to servants and workingmen. As our human weakness does not allow such assemblies to meet every day, the day observed by the Jews has been taken away (as a good device for eliminating superstition) and another day has been destined to this use. This was necessary for securing and maintaining order and peace in the Church.

As the truth therefore was given to the Jews under a figure, so to us on the contrary truth is shown without shadows in order, first of all, that we meditate all our life on a perpetual Sabbath from our works so that the Lord may operate in us by his Spirit; secondly, in order that we observe the legitimate order of the Church for listening to the word of God, for administering the sacraments, and for public prayers; thirdly, in order that we do not oppress inhumanly with work those who are subject to us. [From Instruction in Faith, Calvin's own 1537 digest of the Institutes, sec. 8, "The Law of the Lord"].

If the Sabbath day was binding on Christians, would the writers of the New Testament have written the things they did regarding it, such as:

Col 2:16-17

16 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.

Rom 14:5-6

5 One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers *every day alike*. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.
6 He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord. He who eats meat, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God.

Heb 4:9-10

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10 for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his.

For further study: D. A. Carson, ed., From Sabbath to Lord's Day (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982).