

XV. Concerning the Christian Sabbath

- ☐ ***“We believe that the first day of the week is the Lord’s day, or Christian Sabbath, and is to be kept sacred to religious purposes, by abstaining from all secular labor and sinful recreations, by the devout observance of all the means of grace, both private and public, and by preparation for that rest that remaineth for the people of God.”***

What is the Sabbath?

- ☐ Before we are able to consider which day of the week to observe as the “Sabbath,” we must first consider the definition and meaning of the word. Further, we must note the observances of the Sabbath throughout the scriptures. We now look to the etymology of the word for a foundation of study:

1. “Sabbath”: (H7676)- “Shabbath” meaning, intermission or rest. The word appears 107 in the Old Testament. Vines defines it as “to rest or cease.” The verb is “Sabat” (H7673) and appears 74 times in the Old Testament and it is translated into English “cease” 37 times.
2. The Greek word is “Sabbaton” (G4521) and essentially means the same thing. However, this word is usually used to denote the Jewish Sabbath, that is, the seventh day of the week: Friday evening to Saturday evening.
3. ITS PURPOSE & ESTABLISHMENT:
 - a. Gen 2:2-3: God established the SEVENTH DAY as a day rest.
 - b. It was established as a “cessation of labor” (K&D) and does not denote the idea of relaxation and refreshment. The idea is that to cease from labors, creative or otherwise, is here considered “rest.”
 - c. What was a day? Gen 1:5- Sunset to Sunset!
 - d. Ex 20: 9-11: The Ten Commandments: The idea of “rest” for a day was utterly unknown and foreign to the ancient world. This fact is fundamentally hard to comprehend in a world of a 5-day work week! The Jews would not only “rest” for a day, but also use the day as a day of worship: Eze 46:3, Num 28:9-10.

e. Further, we know that scripture was read and expounded on this day as Jesus himself taught numerous times in the synagogues:

Luke 13:10, Luke 6:6, Luke 4:16.

f. Ex 31:12-17: The Sabbath day was designed as a perpetual sign of the covenant made between God and Israel (like circumcision). K & D commentary notes, *“It was therefore a holy thing for Israel (Exo 31:14), the desecration of which would be followed by the punishment of death, as a breach of the covenant. The kernel of the Sabbath commandment is repeated in Exo 31:15; the seventh day of the week, however, is not simply designated a “Sabbath,” but “a high Sabbath” (the repetition of the same word, or of an abstract form of the concrete noun, denoting the superlative; see Ges. §113, 2), and “holy to Jehovah” (see at Exo 16:23). For this reason Israel was to keep it in all future generations, i.e., to observe it as an eternal covenant (Exo 31:16), as in the case of circumcision, since it was to be a sign for ever between Jehovah and the children of Israel (Eze 20:20). The eternal duration of this sign was involved in the signification of the sabbatical rest, which is pointed out in Exo 20:11, and reaches forward into eternity.”*

g. The idea of religious rest and worship is also made plural in the Old Testament: Lev 19:3, Isa 1:13, etc.

1. The Feast of Trumpets: Lev 23:24
2. The Feast of Tabernacles: Lev 23:39
3. The Day of Atonement: Lev 23:28
4. The Sabbatical Year: Lev 25:2-4

f. How serious were these Sabbaths? The Babylonian Captivity, which lasted 70 years, was a result of missing the sabbatical year 70 times! In other words, for 490 years, the Jews did not hallow the seventh year. The captivity was result of this sin: II Chron 36:21! One year in captivity for every sabbatical year not observed.

A Case for the Christian Worship on the SEVENTH DAY

- ❑ Practicing Jews still observe the Sabbath on the seventh day, that is, Friday evening to Saturday evening. Also, some Christian denominations, such as the Seventh Day Adventists, observe the Jewish Sabbath. Should Christians observe

the Sabbath? If so, on what day of the week? We now examine the apology of worshipping of the seventh day:

1. THE SABBATH DAY IS FRIDAY/SATURDAY.
 - a. The obvious meaning scripturally and historically is that the Sabbath day falls on the seventh day. We cannot, or do not try to deny this fundamental truth.
2. JESUS (GOD) OBSERVED THE SABBATH:
 - a. Luke 4:16 (as his custom was)
 - b. Luke 4:31, 6:6
3. THE SABBATH DAY IS OBSERVED AS A SIGN OF THE COVENANT:
 - a. Seventh Day Adventist do not believe they are “discrediting” the resurrection of Jesus Christ, but rather celebrating “God’s creative and redemptive acts” (seventhdayadventist.org/beliefs).
 - b. Proof texts are: Heb 4:1-11, Ex 31:13-17
4. THE BIBLE DOESN’T CHANGE THE DATE EXPLICITLY:
 - a. Nowhere in the New Testament is there a direct quotation or command to worship on Sunday. If so, where is it?
5. GOD’S LAW IS UNCHANGEABLE:
 - a. Therefore, the Sabbath must be observed on a Saturday with the following criteria:
 1. CANNOT leave home: Ex 16:29
 2. CANNOT work: Ex 35:2
 3. CANNOT cause anyone else to work: Deu 5:14

The Christian Sabbath?

- ❑ At Hauser Baptist Church, we meet and worship our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ on the first day of the week, which is Sunday. However, given the information and Sabbath day principles above, is there any reason to meet on Sunday? Is there any precedence in scripture to prove why the vast majority of Christians throughout the past two millennia have worshipped on Sunday? The following are reasons, practical and theological, why I believe with the Baptist people that we should worship on SUNDAY:

1. CHRIST RESURRECTED ON SUNDAY:

a. Mark 16:9, Matt 28:1, John 20:19

b. Christ was buried before sundown on Friday (1), in the grave Friday night through Saturday night (Sabbath) (2), and arose shortly before dawn on Sunday (3), for a total of three days.

2. EARLY CHRISTIANS MET ON SUNDAY:

a. Acts 20:7, I Cor 16:2, Rev 1:10 (Lord's Day)

b. "Lord's Day" is a term that appears in non-biblical Christian texts of antiquity, denoting beyond all shadow of reason the first day of the week. If "Sabbath" was to be used, John would have denoted that by using the word!

c. The ONLY time you find the disciples in a synagogue after the resurrection of Christ is for evangelical purposes! They DID NOT GO IN OBSERVANCE OF THE LAW: I Cor 9:20, Acts 13:15, 13:14-16. After this, there is no more mentioning of the Jewish Sabbath day.

3. "SABBATON" & "SABBATISMOS" COMPARED:

a. The Greek word "sabbaton" as previously mentioned denotes the idea of the seventh day Sabbath rest (See Vines, Sabbath). This word appears in the New Testament 68 times.

b. "Sabbatismos" (G4520) appears only ONCE in Heb 4:9. Read Heb 4:1-11 in context. The "Sabbath day rest" is essentially compared to the rest we have as Christians. Thus, the "Sabbath day" was a type of Christian rest and peace! Matthew Henry writes, *"A rest of grace, and comfort, and holiness, in the gospel state. This is the rest wherewith the Lord Jesus, our Joshua, causes weary souls and awakened consciences to rest, and this is the refreshing. [2.] A rest in glory, the everlasting sabbatism of heaven, which is the repose and perfection of nature and grace too, where the people of God shall enjoy the end of their faith and the object of all their desires."*

c. The term "Christian Sabbath", therefore, is inconsistent with New Testament teaching! Vines Dictionary reads, *"For the first three centuries of the Christian era the first day of the week was never confounded with the Sabbath; the confusion of the Jewish and Christian*

institutions was due to declension from apostolic teaching.” Nowhere, in the New Testament is a “Christian Sabbath” preached. However, a day was set aside (Sunday) for the worship of Jesus Christ. After Acts 18, there are only two references to “the Sabbath:” one in reference to Sabbath day(S), and the other in appropriating the day of the week.

4. SUNDAY CONFIRMED BY EARLY HISTORIANS:

a. In 321 AD, Constantine mandated the worship of Christ be on Sunday. This is NOT WHEN THE PRACTICE BEGAN. This was the day in which the Christians were meeting in celebration of Christ’s resurrection. Constantine simply mandated what was ALREADY BEING PRACTICED.

b. Examples of early historical texts:

1. *“We keep the eighth day with joyfulness, the day also which Jesus rose again from the dead,”* (Letter of Barnabas, 74AD).

2. *“[T]hose who were brought up in the ancient order of things have come to the possession of a new hope, no longer observing the Sabbath, but living in the observance of the Lord’s day, on which also our life has sprung up again by him and by his death”*(Letter to the Magnesians 8 , A.D. 110).

3. *“But Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Savior on the same day rose from the dead”* (Justin Martyr, First Apology, AD 155).

5. ASSEMBLING OURSELVES:

a. Heb 10:25, Rom 14:5, Acts 20:7

b. Christians are still to meet for the observance of public worship. However, this day is not to be considered the “Sabbath day.” Many of the early Christians were, of course, Jewish and kept the Sabbath day (Saturday) until they realized that Christ had abolished the ceremonial law on the cross! However, the moral law still exists today, and therefore worship and its principles are still applicable today. Much like we studied in our Article concerning the Church, the Sabbath rest is a TRANSFERABLE PRINCIPLE OF WORSHIP:

Mark 2:27. Therefore, we must be careful not to enforce CEREMONIAL PRECEPTS on a PRINCIPLE OF WORSHIP. If it is wrong to work on Sunday (Ex 35:2) then it is wrong to go out and eat or purchase ANYTHING (Deu 5:14). Far too many Christians are legalistic on just one point. What was COMMANDED (ceremoniously) under the Old has a SPIRITUAL EQUIVALENT in the New. The “Sabbaton” was commanded in the Old. The “Sabbatismos” is reflecting in our Sunday celebration! Is this to say we do not keep the fourth commandment? Adam Clarke writes, *“The truth is, the Sabbath is considered as a type: all types are of full force till the thing signified by them takes place; but the thing signified by the Sabbath is that rest in glory which remains for the people of God, therefore the moral obligation of the Sabbath must continue till time be swallowed up in eternity.”* My friends, we observe the “Sabbath” EVERY DAY!

“Let Us Hear the Conclusion of the Whole Matter...”

- ❑ In 1863, the Seventh Day Adventist Church was established by a former Baptist Preacher named William Miller. Forsaking his Baptist heritage, Miller became a devout deist. Miller predicted that on Oct 22, 1844, Christ would return to Earth to gather his people. Of course, this prediction failed, and was termed “The Great Disappointment.” Yet, his followers now called “Millerites” branched off into several denominations including the Adventists and Jehovah’s Witnesses. With help from Ellen G. White, who claimed to have had thousands of “prophetic” visions, the SDA church was established in 1863 in Michigan with 3500 members. Ellen White is regarded as a prominent and prolific writer of not only theology, but health and nutrition as well. Adventists claim that her writings are “inspired” though “on a different level than scripture.” Had it not been for this Millerite movement, this issue would be almost unanimous in nature. It is clear from the Scripture and the history of Christendom that Sunday has been dubbed a day of “resurrection celebration” among God’s “Spiritual Israel.” On a closing note, however, if it wasn’t for the Adventist movement in the late 19th century, John Harvey Kellogg would not have founded his now world famous company “Kellogg’s.” He was driven by a desire to create foods the Adventists considered “clean.” Not only did he create “kosher” foods, but they were also GGRREEAATT!”