

## *Questions for Sabbatarians*

By ‘sabbatarians’, I mean those who say that believers are obliged to keep the fourth commandment, but that the day has been changed from the seventh to the first, calling it ‘the Christian sabbath’.<sup>1</sup> To them, I say:

You insist that believers must keep the sabbath, but is it not true that:

1. Believers have died to the law (Rom. 7:4-6; Gal. 2:19-20)?
2. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes (Rom. 10:4)?
3. Through Jesus Christ the law of the Spirit of life has set believers free from the law of death (Rom. 8:2), and this includes the ten commandments (2 Cor. 3:7-11)?
4. Whatever the law says, it says to them who are under the law (Rom. 3:19), and believers, being led by the Spirit (Rom. 8:9,14), are not under the law (Rom. 6:14-15; Gal. 5:18), but have been released from it (Rom. 7:6)?
5. The handwriting which was against believers, and contrary to them, Christ has taken away, and nailed to the cross (Col. 2:14)?
6. The law is not of faith (Gal. 3:12)?
7. The law has been rendered obsolete, and been abolished by Christ (Eph. 2:14-15; Heb. 7:18-19; 8:13)?
8. Believers are expressly forbidden to listen to those who insist on burdening them with a yoke of slavery (Gal. 2:4; 5:1), and the law is that unbearable yoke of bondage (Acts 15:10)?
9. Believers are members of the new covenant, of the Spirit, and not the letter (2 Cor. 3:6)?

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<sup>1</sup> Most of what follows, of course, is relevant to those who are more consistent and say the day is unchanged.

10. The law is not made for a righteous man (1 Tim. 1:9)?

11. The apostle spoke strongly against the observance of days, including ‘sabbaths’ (or, as it should be, ‘sabbath’) (Rom. 14:5-12; Gal. 4:10; Col. 2:16-17)?

12. The sabbath was given to Israel in the old covenant as their special distinguishing mark, separating Israel from all other peoples (Ex. 31:12-17; Ezek. 20:12,20), and believers (most of whom are Gentiles) are in the new covenant, which covenant is superior, being founded on better promises (2 Cor. 3:6; Heb. 7:22; 8:6)?

If your answer (in part) to these questions is that the ‘seventh day’ is ‘ceremonial’, and it is this which has been abolished by Christ, but ‘one day in seven’ is ‘moral’, and is, therefore, still binding, would you give me the scriptures that prove that the law can be divided into three sections, moral, ceremonial and judicial? Would you further give me the scriptures which prove that the ‘seventh day’ is ‘ceremonial’, while the ‘one day in seven’ is ‘moral’? Indeed, would you give me the scriptures which speak of ‘one day in seven’?

Furthermore:

Since Israel was often rebuked for sabbath breaking in the time of the old covenant, both directly (Neh. 13:15-22; Jer. 17:21-23; Ezek. 20:13-24; 22:8,26; *etc.*), and by implication (Isa. 56:2-6; 58:13; Jer. 17:27; *etc.*), if believers are obliged to keep the sabbath, why are there no similar examples in the new covenant?

Since there are many examples of apostolic instruction on a whole range of issues (family, children, work, the Lord’s supper, *etc.*), if believers are obliged to keep the sabbath, why is there no corresponding instruction on sabbath keeping?

Why did the apostles and elders, when they wrote to believing Gentiles (Acts 15:23-29), fail to insist on sabbath keeping? I ask this for two reasons. (a) It was discussion of the law which prompted the letter. (b) Very serious consequences follow sabbath breaking (Ex. 31:14-15; 35:1-3; Num. 15:32-36).

If you plead ‘acts of necessity and mercy’ (in the spirit of Luke 13:15; 14:5), to justify your inevitable breaking of the sabbath, are you absolutely confident that, in every circumstance, the sort of things you feel free to do on what you call ‘the sabbath’, really are covered by ‘acts of necessity and mercy’, bearing in mind the sabbath strictures which are revealed in Scripture (Ex. 31:14-15; 35:1-3; Isa. 58:13; *etc.*)?

Who changed the sabbath from the seventh to the first day, and from sunset/sunset to midnight/midnight? Who was the first person to use the phrase: ‘the Christian sabbath’? Who first said that the Lord’s day (Sunday) is a day of rest?

While these questions are meant to be rhetorical, you are welcome to write to me in response if you wish.

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