

When to Worship: Sunday of Sabbath

- I. The Old Testament Institution of the Sabbath
 - A. The day of rest principle dates back to the completion of God's creation (Gen. 2:1-3). God rested on the seventh day and sanctified it—set it apart as different from the other days of the week. In the Genesis account, the seventh day is NOT referred to as a Sabbath.
 - B. The Sabbath as observed by the Jews under the law was instituted in Exodus 20:10.
 - 1. The Sabbath was the last day of the week: Saturday.
 - 2. The Sabbath as a religious obligation was first made known when Moses presented the Ten Commandments to Israel (Neh. 9:13, 14).
 - 3. The Sabbath was primarily a day of rest. Remember that Old Testament worship took place on a daily basis in first the tabernacle and later the temple.
 - 4. The Sabbath was intended as a beneficent blessing, but by Jesus' day it had become an unbearable burden.
 - C. The Sabbath as a legal institution was specifically given as a sign between God and Israel (Ex. 31:12-18).
 - 1. As part of the Old Testament law, the Sabbath was an obligation peculiar to Israel.
 - 2. Since the New Testament church is NOT Israel, Christians are NOT commanded to keep the Seventh Day Sabbath.
 - 3. Never confuse Israel and the church. They are two separate entities with distinct programs in God's sovereign plan.
 - D. Dr. John R. Rice comments:

It becomes clear then by the plain and repeated teaching of God's Word, that the Sabbath is a command to Israel under the Mosaic Law as a special sign or covenant between them and God and was never commanded to Gentiles in any dispensation. When we speak of the Sabbath, then, we speak of the seventh day, Saturday, as the Old Testament command of ceremonial law to Jews.
- II. Should Christians observe the Sabbath?
 - A. Remember the Old Testament Sabbath is Saturday, the seventh day.
 - B. In Colossians 2:14-17, Paul discourages the observance of "sabbath days," stating that Christ has nailed that ordinance to the cross. Clearly, the observance of the seventh day Sabbath is NOT a command for Christians.
 - C. In Galatians 4:8-11, Paul rebukes the Christians at Galatia for their return to Jewish legalism. Paul feared for these believers because they insisted in observing "days, and months, and times, and years." Their emphasis on the Jewish law called their profession of grace into question.
 - D. Clearly, the observance of the seventh day Sabbath is NOT incumbent upon New Testament believers. Seventh Day Adventism does not stand the Bible test!

III. What about Sunday?

A. Sunday is NOT a “Christian Sabbath.”

1. The New Testament never hints at the observance of any Sabbath for Christians. It is nowhere commanded in the New Testament.
2. The New Testament does not give a code of conduct for the supposed “Christian Sabbath.” The concept is foreign to the Bible.
3. The New Testament never calls the first day of the week (Sunday) a “Sabbath,” and neither should we.
4. The New Testament never hints that the Old Testament Sabbath was changed to Sunday. The Sabbath as a legal institution was nailed to the cross (Col. 2:14)—not replaced by Sunday.

B. Sunday is the Lord’s Day, the day of Christian worship.

1. Though not to be regarded as a counterpart to the Old Testament Sabbath, Sunday was observed from apostolic times as the Christian day of worship.
 - a. The disciples came together to hear preaching on the first day of the week, Sunday (Acts 20:7).
 - b. Believers were commanded to set aside their offerings for collection on the first day of the week (I Cor. 16:1, 2).
 - c. Revelation 1:10 refers to the “Lord’s Day,” a title distinct from the Old Testament Sabbath.
 - d. While Saturday commemorated God’s cessation of work after creating the first man Adam, Sunday commemorates the completion of redemption and resurrection of the last Adam—Christ!
2. While not a form of ritualistic legalism, Christians are obligated to gather together for worship (Heb. 10:25). Such assembling clearly took place on the first day of the week, Sunday.
3. Since the “rest day” principle precedes the law, it is wise to maintain a day of rest. Man’s constitution is best served by six days of labor, followed by a day of rest.
4. Since Sunday is the “Lord’s Day,” it should be distinct from other days of the week:
 - a. We should meet for corporate Church worship on the Lord’s Day (Heb. 10:25).
 - b. We should hallow the “Lord’s Day” by emphasizing worship and Christian fellowship.
 - c. We should enjoy a measure of rest on the Lord’s day, following the “rest day” principle established in Genesis.
 - d. While Christians are clearly obligated to assemble on the Lord’s Day, the Bible is silent regarding other activities.
 - e. In order to distinguish the Lord’s Day from others and to preserve it for worship, Christians should seek—as much as possible—to avoid working on Sunday.
 - f. Sunday should somehow commemorate Jesus’ resurrection.

