

Questions and Answers Regarding the Weekly Sabbath Commandment

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Is the Sabbath to be observed primarily to achieve peace of mind or does obedience to the Sabbath command have a much deeper purpose?

Exodus 31:13-17 – the Sabbath is a commanded memorial as well as a sign that is holy to God and therefore should be holy to mankind (cf. Mk. 2:27). It is a reminder that God created the heavens and the earth and all who dwell in them.

Hebrews 4:9-13 – God rested from His work of creation (cf. Gen. 2:1-3) setting the example for all of mankind to follow. This was established before there were any ethnic groups or nations. The weekly Sabbath points to, and reminds those who obey it, the millennial rule of Jesus Christ when he will return to this planet and enforce the law and commandments of his Father (cf. Ps. 2:1-12; Isa. 2:3; Mic. 4:2; Isa. 66:20-23; Rev. 14:17-20; 19:11-21).

Isaiah 58:13-14 – the weekly Sabbath is God's Holy Day and as God does not change (cf. Mal. 3:6-7), this day is still holy and is to be obeyed.

Galatians 3:29 – as Abraham's descendants eventually became known as Israelites, those who worship God today "in sincerity and truth" have to become part of spiritual Israel. This includes keeping the weekly Sabbath (Romans 11:17-25; cf. Isaiah 56:6-7).

Were people of all nations to observe the Sabbath?

The commandments, statutes, ordinances, and judgments of God were to be carefully kept by Israel, not only for their own benefit, but also as a witness to all the nations around them.

... for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear these statutes and say, surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. ⁷For what great nation is there that God has so near it, as the Lord your God is to us, for whatever reason we may call upon Him? ⁸And what great nation is there that has such statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day (Dt. 4:6-8; cf. 2Sam. 7:23).

Psalms 19:7 - The law of God is perfect and His testimony certain, and thus able to restore any life that has gone astray, whether Israelite or Gentile.

Psalms 19:8 - All the commandments of God are pure, enlightening the eyes of all who understand them.

Blessed are those who keep His testimonies, who seek Him with the whole heart! ³They also do no iniquity; they walk in His ways. ⁴You have commanded us to keep your precepts diligently. ⁵Oh, that my ways were directed to keep Your statutes! ⁶Then I would not be ashamed, when I look into all Your commandments. ⁷I will praise You with uprightness of heart, when I learn Your righteous judgments. ⁸I will keep Your statutes; Oh, do not forsake me utterly! (Ps. 119:2-8).

All Your commandments are faithful... (Ps. 119:86a).

The entirety of Your word is truth, and every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever (Ps. 119: 160).

But you, Israel, are My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the descendants of Abraham My friend (Is. 41:8).

And he (Christ) said to them, 'The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath' (Mk. 2:27; Ed. note in parenthesis).

And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise (Gal. 3:29).

Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God (Rom. 3:19).

Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good (Rom. 7:12).

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work (2Tim. 3:16-17).

Was the Sabbath part of a temporary law that was somehow inferior to an improved future method of worshipping God?

The weekly Sabbath was introduced to mankind after the creation was completed (cf. Gen. 2:1-3). This Sabbath commandment was an integral part of a large body of law and commandments. Although the creation account is very brief, there is enough information to prove that both the sacrificial as well as the balance of the law and commandments were taught to, and understood by, early mankind. Adam was told not to have anything to do with the ways of the Adversary who was pictured symbolically by the tree of the

knowledge of good and evil as well as a serpent (cf. Gen. 2:16-17; 3:1).

Adam's sons presented animal sacrifices at the appointed time (Gen. 4:3-5). Noah offered clean animals as burnt offerings on an altar following the flood (Gen. 8:20-21).

Abram also built an altar for the purpose of offering sacrifices to God (Gen. 12:7-8) and he gave a tithe to the High Priest Melchizedek (Gen. 14:18-20). Jacob also understood and obeyed the law regarding the tithe (Gen. 28:22). Abram circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old (Gen. 17:12). Therefore, these many laws and commandments were taught from generation to generation by those God was working with (cf. Gen. 18:19), and they were known before the law and commandments were given to the nation of Israel at Mount Sinai (Ex. 20). Even some Gentiles were aware of God's laws, such as adultery, and they tried to obey these (Gen. 20:1-9). The sacrificial laws and ordinances were added as soon as Adam sinned, and they pointed to the sacrifice that would remove all the sins that have ever been committed. This would not be fulfilled until Jesus Christ laid down his life as the ultimate sinless sacrifice (cf. Mt. 5:17). Once this occurred, the animal sacrificial system with its many ordinances would no longer be necessary (Heb. 9:1-14; 10:1-10; cf. Gal. 3:19).

Does Paul's statement that "the law was a shadow of things to come" (Heb. 10:1) refer to the ordinances associated with the animal sacrificial system or was he describing the entire system of Law that God gave throughout the Bible?

It is important to start with the fact that the apostle Paul never taught against God's law (Rom. 3:31; 6:1-2, 15; 7:7, 12-13). Instead, he differentiated between the sacrificial system

with its many ordinances and the balance of God's word (Gal. 2:16; 3:21-25; Heb. 10:4, 11). Unfortunately, many of those who claim to know God do not make this distinction and then go on to state that Paul taught against God's law and commandments. Also, these same people conveniently take Paul's quotations out of context and twist what he was saying (cf. 2Pt. 3:14- 16). Commencing with the seventh chapter of Hebrews, the context is entirely focused on the sacrificial system along with the priesthood who administered it. Then in Hebrews 8:5 and 10:1, Paul mentioned that this same sacrificial system was a shadow that represented the fulfillment that would eventually come to earth in the form of a sinless sacrifice; Jesus Christ (Heb. 10:2-10).

Did weekly Sabbath observance and God's law as a whole come to an end after the death of Jesus Christ (Rom. 10:4)?

While Jesus Christ was still alive, he taught plainly that his Father's law would not pass away until this present world system passed away (cf. 2Pt. 3:10, 12).

For assuredly, I (Christ) say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled (Mt. 5:18; Ed. note in parenthesis).

As only the sacrificial system was regarded as temporary, every other word of God including the weekly Sabbath is still in effect and binding upon mankind (Mk. 2:27). This explains why the early church members kept the weekly Sabbath (Ac. 13:42; 16:13; 18:1-4).

Did Christ's statement in Matthew 5:17 mean that the law of God had fulfilled its purpose?

In Matthew 5:17, Jesus Christ explained that his Father's law regarding animal sacrifices pointed to the purpose for his coming to earth as a sinless sacrifice, and therefore his death on a stake would fulfill that aspect of the Law. Many prophets, including Moses, also spoke about the coming of Messiah (Dt. 18:15, 18) and the purpose for his death (cf. Isa. 53).

Are the commands that were given to Gentile converts in Acts 15:20 the only ones that Christians are to obey?

The early church had to assist new members who were coming into fellowship from Gentile nations and many of these people were in positions of servitude under masters who were not likely to make their new life very easy. Therefore, the brethren decided not to immediately dump a multitude of conditions upon these Gentiles because they would eventually come to a more complete understanding of the law and commandments of God as they studied His word and assembled together regularly (cf. Ac. 15:21). This would also give them enough time to make the necessary changes in their lives and then they could work to be in compliance with all of God's law and commandments. However, there were some areas that these new converts had to deal with right away as many of them were coming out of pagan systems of worship. In Act 15:20, it is clear that some of the laws that these Gentiles were to comply with were from the law given to ancient Israel at Mount Sinai (cf. Lev. 3:17).

Does Romans 14:5 infer that an individual can choose which day of the week to rest from work and worship God?

This section of scripture is dealing with how a person handles their fasting before God and indicates that he/she can choose which day of the

week to fast. The context has nothing to do with a weekly day of worship.

Which day did the early church observe as the weekly Sabbath?

The early church observed the same day that Jesus Christ did, and Jesus Christ kept the same day that the rest of the Judeans of his generation had been observing since man was created. It was the seventh day of the week, which was later named after a pagan god, Saturn. Now it is known as Saturday. Some world calendars have been changed to show Sunday as the seventh day of the week, but this is just another attempt by the Adversary to cause confusion and lead to the continued disobedience of mankind (cf. Dan. 7:24-25).

Is the weekly Sabbath a burdensome ritual?

In 1John 2:3-4 and 5:3, anyone who claims they love God and yet regard His weekly Sabbath as a burden and teach others that it is not necessary to keep it, is a liar and until they repent of this sin they will not be able to understand God's truth accurately. As Christ spoke only as directed by his Father in heaven and as Christ was without sin, he would have observed all the law and commandments including the weekly Sabbath (Jn. 5:19b, 30; 4:34; 6:38).

Does the instruction that "whatever the Body of Christ binds on earth will be bound in heaven" apply to changing Sabbath observance to any day of the week?

In Matthew 16:19 and 18:18, the Body of Christ is given permission to make certain judgments concerning the conduct of those within their fellowship. The context of Matthew 18:15-19 is dealing with a brother that sins (cf. 1Cor. 5:1-5)

and has nothing to do with changing God's law and commandments. On the contrary it has everything to do with enforcing them.

God created the weekly Sabbath day, blessed it and sanctified it (set it apart for holy use), and as God does not change (Mal. 3:6) the weekly Sabbath has not changed either. Christ declared that not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the law until all is accomplished (Mt. 5:18). Therefore no church, including the Body of Christ, has any authority to change the weekly Sabbath. Only apostate religious systems attempt to change God's appointed Holy Days and times (Dan. 7:24-25).

Does the instruction to stone anyone who gathers sticks (i.e. works or labors) on the Sabbath apply today (Num.15:32; cf. Ex. 35:2-3; Lev. 23:3; Dt. 5:14; Jer. 17:22)?

In 1Samuel 8:1-22 the nation of Israel rejected God's leadership over them. Prior to this occurring, the Levitical priesthood had the responsibility to administer any punishments related to breaking God's laws. After a king was chosen in place of Almighty God, the nation was warned that many negative changes would take place and eventually the Levitical priesthood would have very little power to administer God's law and its associated penalties (cf. 1Sam. 12:19). By the time of Jeroboam, the Levitical priests had been replaced by individuals specifically chosen to do the king's bidding (cf. 1Ki. 2:32). Today, God's people are not called to execute justice which previously was the domain of the Levitical priesthood. However after the return of Jesus Christ, those who have loyally obeyed God during their lifetime will share responsibility for administering capital punishment under the leadership of Jesus Christ (cf. Zech. 14:16-19; Rev. 20:4, 6).

Why is the command regarding the weekly Sabbath never quoted in the New Testament?

2Tim. 3:16 states that all scripture is inspired by God, is profitable for teaching, reproof, and correction as well as training in righteousness. Therefore, as the Sabbath command was given before and during the first covenant period, it was not necessary to repeat it time and again during the second covenant. In fact, the apostle Paul compared reviewing basic truths like the weekly Sabbath as partaking of milk rather than meat. In other words, he associated the understanding about the Sabbath command as something that could be explained to individuals who did not have a good understanding of God's Law and/or plan for mankind (Heb. 5:12-14; 6:1-3). Also, weekly Sabbath observance was not a point of dispute in the early church (Heb. 4:9). Instead, the focus of much debate and contention was centered on the fulfillment of the animal sacrificial system by Jesus Christ as well as the inclusion of the gentiles and it caused some to be offended and leave (Ac. 11:2; 15:5-11; Ac. 28:28-29; Rom. 9:30-33; 10:3-6; Gal. 5:2- 11).

Nevertheless, keeping the weekly Sabbath was mentioned in Hebrews 4:9 and Colossians 2:16-17 as a matter of fact.

Therefore, let no one judge you in eating and drinking, or in part of a Feast, or New Moon, or Sabbaths ¹⁷(which is a shadow of things to come), but the body of Christ (Col. 2:16-17; emphasis added).

Why is there no example of Christians coming together on the Sabbath day as a church after the resurrection of Christ?

In fact, there are New Testament examples of Christians keeping the Sabbath. In Acts 16:13

and 18:4, members of the Body of Christ were assembled for religious activities on the weekly Sabbath. In Acts 13:14, Paul and his companions went into the synagogue to worship God (cf. Ac. 13:42, 44).

Was the weekly Sabbath observed by God's people prior to the law being given to Moses at Mount Sinai?

In Exodus 16:22-30, God was reminding the nation of Israel that they had forsaken the observance of the weekly Sabbath and this was done prior to the law being given to Moses on Mount Sinai. The weekly Sabbath law was known and observed by the family of Israel until they became slaves in Egypt. One of the reasons for bringing them out of Egyptian slavery was to provide them with the freedom to follow God's law and commandments, including the observance of the weekly Sabbath (see above: Was the Sabbath part of a temporary law that was somehow inferior to an improved future method of worshipping God?).

Will God's appointed times be kept after Christ returns?

For just as the new heavens and the new earth which I make will endure before Me, declares the LORD, so your offspring and your name will endure. ²³'And it shall be from new moon to new moon and from sabbath to sabbath, all mankind will come to bow down before Me,' says the LORD. ²⁴Then they will go forth and look on the corpses of the men who have transgressed against Me. For their worm will not die and their fire will not be quenched; and they will be an abhorrence to all mankind (Isa. 66:22-24).

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