

Is Sabbath Worship for Christians?

Dr. Charles Feinberg wrote an excellent booklet titled "The Sabbath and the Lord's Day." Consider what he wrote prior to our lessons on "Is Sabbath Worship for Christians?" In the section titled "The Jewish Sabbath and Christian Sunday":

"Perhaps before this point the reader may with reason have been inquiring as to the necessity for such a lengthy treatment of law and grace in a discussion of the subject of the Sabbath and the Lord's Day. Our answer is candidly that we have deemed it of the utmost importance to our discussion. As one reads the works on the subject of the Sabbath and the Lord's Day, one becomes increasingly convinced of the fact that those who hold the proper Scriptural position on this subject are only those who have a clear conception of law and grace. But why choose this particular subject to exemplify the distinction between law and grace? Because 'The distinction between the reign of law and the reign of grace is at no point more sharply drawn than in the question of the observance of the seventh day of the week or the first day of the week; for these two days are symbolical of the dispensations to which they are related.'

One or two definitions are in order at this point. When we shall refer to the Sabbath, it will be with the understanding that it is the seventh day of the week, the Jewish Sabbath. We know of no day such as the 'Christian Sabbath.' When mention is made of the Lord's Day, it will refer to the first day of week, the Christian's Sunday."

1) INTRODUCTION

- A) The Mosaic covenant is conditional in nature.

Exodus 19:1 - 6
Deuteronomy 28: 1 - 14

- B) Mosaic Covenant given to the Jewish people

Deuteronomy 4:8; 44 - 45
Psalm 147:19 - 20
Romans 9:4 - 5
Ephesians 2:11 -15 (the Law was given to keep Israel separate from the nations)

- C) Not a system to be saved through but to show individuals their need of salvation. The Abrahamic Covenant would provide salvation and the Mosaic Covenant was needed to show sinners their need of salvation. They are in many ways contrasts.

Romans 3:19-20
Galatians 3:24-25

Abrahamic Covenant

Blessing - Galatians 3:9,14
Life - Romans 4:17-25; Hebrews 11:19

Mosaic Covenant

Cursing - Galatians 3:13
Death - 2 Cor. 3:6; Rom. 7:9-10

- C) The Law was temporary

Jeremiah 31:31-32
Galatians 3:19
2 Corinthians 3:1-11
Hebrews 8:6-13

2) The "Creation Sabbath" - Genesis 2:1-3

Charles Feinberg, in his booklet "The Sabbath and the Lord's Day", comments:

"It will be noted that there is no hint that God gave this Sabbath to man. He alone rested. Considered as a day of rest (although God did not rest because He was tired-Isaiah 40:28) the original Sabbath could not logically have been given to man, because as yet he had not labored. Not only do those who keep the seventh day try to read into this passage the institution of the original Sabbath for all mankind, but even others go to this passage for their supposed authority for the Lord's Day. They reason that if the Sabbath received its authority here, and the observance of the seventh day has been changed to the first day, then the observance of the first day must go back to Genesis 2 for its authority.

Another fact that militates against the view that the Sabbath began in Eden, is that we find no mention of it for centuries later. In spite of this, one author tells us: 'It shares with the ordinance of marriage alone the characteristic of having been instituted at the creation of the world. Being coeval with creation, the Sabbatical law, like the marriage law, is of universal obligation on all mankind.' Proof for such an assertion is not forthcoming."

Dale Ratzlaff, in his book Sabbath in Christ, page 25, comments:

"What does the Genesis account mean when it says God 'sanctified' the seventh day? The basic meaning of sanctify is to set apart as sacred. In this respect, then, God was setting apart the seventh day from the first six days for a special purpose. 'God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, **because** in it **He** rested...' (Gen. 2:3). This day was set apart from the first six days because it was the first day after creation was completed. It was, so to speak, a time to celebrate and enjoy the work of His hands. It was a time for fellowship and communion between the Creator and created life. Truly, the conditions of that day were sanctified and blessed." [emphasis in original]

What about Exodus 20:11?

1. There is no mention about Sabbath until the time of Moses (there is nothing in the biblical text to call God "resting" on the 7th day, a Sabbath day).
2. It is specifically stated that God did not make the Mosaic Covenant, which included the Sabbath, with the patriarchs.

Deuteronomy 5:1-3

3. Exodus 20:10,

"But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates,"

is for the Jewish people and all that is theirs. No other people, or God's creation "rest" is in view here.

4. Since God doesn't "rest" - *"Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep,"* Psalm 121:4 - the "rest" in the creation account speaks of God's creation work being completed in 6 days and man enjoying his perfect environment and fellowship with God from the seventh day on.

5. The emphasis is on sanctifying, not on the Sabbath, per se, but of God's ultimate redeeming act for mankind, typified in this command of Exodus 20:11.

Harold Dressler in the book From Sabbath to Lord's Day, in the chapter titled "*The Sabbath in the Old Testament*," page 30, clarifies the relation of Exodus 20:11 with Genesis 2:3.

"Thus, the creation account of Genesis 1:1 – 2:3 proclaims God's activity, His majesty, and His power. Man takes his place within creation at his allotted position. God's last creative act is not the making of man but the creation of a period of rest for mankind. This creative act of God does not take the usual form of decree or fashioning but is simply an act of ceasing, resting, and being refreshed.

Genesis 2 does not teach a 'creation ordinance' in our opinion; the institution of the Sabbath for the people of Israel, however, was based on the creation account and became a sign of God's redemptive goal for mankind."

Dale Ratzlaff, in his book Sabbath in Christ, page 25, comments:

"Here we are told that God's rest is holy, set apart for some purpose. However, we must be careful not to read into this creation rest more than what is stated. The concept of rest is a theme which will be developed throughout Scripture. We will see that this 'creation rest' will soon be lost, then it will be symbolized and then it will be restored."

- 3) Millennium Sabbath (Ezek. 46:1,4,12)

The Millennium will be the restoration of what was lost in the Garden of Eden. As Dale Ratzlaff said "this 'creation rest' will soon be lost, then it will be symbolized and then it will be restored." Because of the restoration of what was lost, the Sabbath will be reinstated. But, this has no bearing on Christians today.

- 4) Exodus 16 Sabbath (Ex. 16:21-30)

Exodus 16:21-30 is a unique, singular event and has nothing to do with the Mosaic Sabbath.

- A) This Sabbath is not given as a commandment on Israel in this passage. Notice the different language for the Sabbath in Ex. 20:8-11. The requirement was to "*remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy*" (Ex. 20:8) where in Exodus 16 the command seems to be for that one day only and not perpetual.
- B) An absence of penalty for not keeping this Sabbath when some gathered food. In Numbers 15:32-36 there was a penalty for gathering on the Mosaic Sabbath. Also, they had to ask what to do with the one breaking the Sabbath implying this was unprecedented and they needed to find out how this should be handled.
- C) We can find a somewhat comparative event in the New Testament in John 20:22 - 23 when the Holy Spirit was given to the disciples. This did not begin the new age of the Holy Spirit but was a temporary provision. Thus, the disciples were told to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit in Acts 1.

5) The Mosaic Sabbath - Exodus 20

A) The Mosaic Sabbath was established for the Jewish people. It is a unique sign between God and the Jewish people (Israel). Consider Exodus 31:12-18.

1. It is a "sign" between God and the "children of Israel" (Jewish people). If any other people were under the Mosaic Sabbath it would destroy the unique sign of between God and Israel.
2. It is a "perpetual covenant" between God and Jewish people.
3. Referring back to the "creation rest" shows the symbolic nature of this, in the sense that God gave it as "a sign of God's redemptive goal for mankind."

B) Deuteronomy 4:12-13

C) Ezekiel 20:10-12

6) The Sabbath was part of the Mosaic Law

There is no moral, ceremonial, and civil division in the Bible (James 2:10).

Erich Sauer, in his book, The Dawn of World Redemption (p. 126), states,

"Every distinction between a moral law and a ceremonial law is fake, because thereby arises an impression that there are two laws, of which the one - the 'ceremonial' law - could be fulfilled by the work of Christ, but the other not."

Dr. Renald Showers in his book There Really is a Difference: A Comparison of Covenant and Dispensational Theology, pg. 187:

"...Christians today are not under any aspect of the Mosaic Law, even the moral aspect. It should be noted that although the Mosaic Law had three aspects (civil, ceremonial, and moral), it functioned as an indivisible unit. Thus, to place oneself under one aspect of the Mosaic Law is to obligate oneself to be under the entire Law. If a person is under the moral aspect of the Law, he is required to keep all the civil and ceremonial regulations as well."

7) The Sabbath was done away in Christ and is not for the believer

2 Corinthians 3:7-13

Colossians 2:14, 16-17

John 1:17

See also: Romans 6:14-15; 7:4; Ephesians 2:15; Galatians 2:19; 3:23-25; Hebrews 8

8) We are under the Law of Christ today (grace)

Romans 6:14

Galatians 6:2

James 2:8

9) Nine of the 10 commandments are repeated under the Law of Christ

- | | | |
|-----|---|--------------------------------|
| 1) | <i>"There is One God"</i> | 1 Tim. 2:5 |
| 2) | <i>"Neither be ye idolaters"</i> | 1 Cor. 1:7 |
| 3) | <i>"But Above all things, my brethren, swear not"</i> | James 5:12 |
| 4) | | not found in the New Testament |
| 5) | <i>"Honor thy Father and Mother"</i> | Ephesians 6:2 |
| 6) | <i>"no murderer hath eternal life"</i> | 1 John 3:15 |
| 7) | <i>"whoremonger and adulterers God will judge"</i> | Heb. 13:4 |
| 8) | <i>"Let him that stole steal no more"</i> | Eph. 4:28 |
| 9) | <i>"Lie not one to another"</i> | Col. 3:9 |
| 10) | <i>"But ... covetousness, let it not be once named among you"</i> | Eph. 5:3 |

SUMMARY

Sabbath worship is not for Christians today. The Mosaic Sabbath was part of the Law which was done away in Messiah. Today, we are under grace and, generally, worship on the Lord's day (Sunday), but have the freedom to corporately worship on any day, Romans 14.