

# Questions from Seventh Day Keepers

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We have received a great number of responses to the article "What Is the Christian Sabbath?" (<http://www.wordofhisgrace.org/christiansabbath.html>). Almost half of the responses have been very positive. A few were more reserved, thanking us for the article and saying they would study into the subject further. But the remainder were negative comments from those who keep the seventh-day Sabbath. Somewhat surprisingly, we have received no negative comments from Sunday-Sabbath keepers or Lord's Day keepers.

We received so many emails and letters regarding this article that we simply cannot respond to them all personally. Therefore, I have created this page as a way of responding to the questions, statements, and chastenings from the seventh-day keepers. Their statements, questions, etc., will be in bold. I have responded only to those questions and comments that were relevant and substantially biblical. I have not responded to those that wandered off the subject at hand or that were based on the private interpretations of self-proclaimed prophets and apostles.

## **The Bible nowhere says that the Sabbath was changed to Sunday.**

I was somewhat surprised by the number of people who stated this as a refutation to the article, thereby revealing that they did not completely read the article. "What Is the Christian Sabbath?" is not trying to say that the Bible changes the Sabbath from the seventh day to Sunday. In fact, the article clearly states, "Nowhere in the entire Bible is Sunday or the first day of the week ever called the Sabbath. The reason is that it is not the Sabbath." I fully agree that the Bible does not allow for the view that the Sabbath was changed to Sunday. Those who believe in a Sunday Sabbath are basing their belief on the traditions of men, not the Bible. The real question is whether there is a Sabbath day for Christians. The answer is an emphatic no.

## **You should have prayerfully searched the Scriptures before you wrote your article.**

This is a good opportunity for me to mention that most of the seventh-day keepers showed that they have the obvious desire to uphold the

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Word of God that I expected them to have. Why did I expect it? Because I kept the seventh-day Sabbath for 13 years, and I know that Sabbath keepers generally want to do God's will.

"What Is the Christian Sabbath?" is the result of a prayerful searching of the Scriptures that has lasted many years. I was a member of the Worldwide Church of God at a time when it was one of the strongest proponents of the seventh-day Sabbath. I was not only a member of this church, but, for ten years, worked as a writer for that church. I answered thousands of letters with Bible questions (many of them concerning the Sabbath) when I worked for the Worldwide Church of God's Personal Correspondence Department. I also wrote for the church's *Plain Truth* and *Good News* magazines. One article in particular that I wrote for the *Good News* magazine elicited comments from readers who said it was one of the best articles defending the keeping of the seventh-day Sabbath they had read, and it was quoted in the publications of other seventh-day keeping churches.

But as I wrote articles and answered questions for people, God eventually led me to see that there were major flaws in the argument for keeping the seventh-day Sabbath. Because of this, and because I saw that other teachings of the Worldwide Church of God were not Scriptural, I left the Worldwide Church of God. That was in 1991. Since then, I have studied the Sabbath question prayerfully and at great length. I studied all sides of the question and tried to have an open mind so I could be taught by the Scriptures. In this manner, over time, I came to see that the three most common views (the seventh-day Sabbath view, the Sunday-Sabbath view, and the Lord's Day view) all use non-Scriptural evidence (in other words, human bias) to reach their conclusions.

**Who are you to change the law of God? Why would God have given the Sabbath if it were not to last forever? And if the Sabbath is abolished, then the other commandments are also abolished and immorality will reign.**

I, of course, have no authority to change the law of God. It is the Bible that says the law has been changed: "For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.... For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God" (Hebrews 7:12, 18-19).

All I am doing in the article is explaining what God has done. I show in the article that the Old Covenant clearly defines the Sabbath day to be the seventh day. But the Bible also clearly states that the Sabbath command (and, indeed, all of the Ten Commandments, as such) was given to Israel under the Old Covenant, that the Old Covenant has ended, and the New Testament says that there has been a change in the law. The Ten Commandments are Old Covenant law. As such, they are merely a shadow of New Covenant law. The Sabbath command was a shadow of or picture of our rest in Christ.

The Fourth Commandment says that the seventh day is the Sabbath (Exodus 20:10). It also commands, "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8). But to whom is the command directed? The Bible says that the Sabbath is a unique sign of the covenant between God and Israel (Exodus 31:12-17; Ezekiel 20:10-12, 20). The Bible also says that the Ten Commandments are that covenant: "And the Lord said unto Moses, Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel. And he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments" (Exodus 34:27-28). This is a very clear statement that the Ten Commandments on the tables of stone were the words of the covenant. Deuteronomy 4:13 confirms this: "And he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, even ten commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone."

Deuteronomy 5 also shows that the covenant the people agreed to keep was the Ten Commandments. In verses 1-2, Moses tells the people that God made a covenant with them in Horeb (Mt. Sinai). In verse 3, Moses tells the children of Israel that God made the covenant with them. In verse 4, Moses says that God spoke with them "face to face in the mount out of the midst of the fire." Verse 5 is a parenthetical statement in which Moses says that he stood between the Lord and the people because they were afraid. Verse 5 ends outside of the parenthetical statement with the word "saying." What follows in verses 6-21 is the Ten Commandments. So we see that God made a covenant with the children of Israel at Sinai by speaking to them the Ten Commandments. In verse 22, Moses says that God "added no more. And he wrote them in two tables of stone, and delivered them unto me." Obviously, then, the covenant that God made with the children of Israel was the Ten Commandments He spoke to them and wrote on the two tables of stone. This is what the people agreed to (verse 27).

The Bible clearly calls that covenant old and says, in the book of Hebrews written just before the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70, that the Old Covenant was ready to pass away (Hebrews 8:13).

Notice that we are not under that Old Covenant, but under a New and better covenant: "For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched [Mount Sinai], and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: (for they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart: And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:) But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel" (Hebrews 12:18-24).

We are under the New Covenant. The New Covenant is a covenant of grace. We are saved by grace (Ephesians 2:8-9). The Ten Commandments, as the Ten Commandments that were written on tables of stone, were intrinsic to the Old Covenant that was made with the Israelites at Mount Sinai. The Ten Commandments, as such, are not part of the New Covenant, although they were shadows of commandments in the New Covenant. Therefore, the implication that the logical outcome of my teaching would be immorality and lawlessness is not valid. The command to keep a Sabbath day is never repeated in the New Covenant. That is because it was the unique sign of the covenant, the Old Covenant, between God and Israel. The Bible also puts the Sabbath days in the same category as the Old Covenant dietary restrictions and the Old Covenant holy days and new moon observances, and says they are "a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ" (see Colossians 2:16-17). These Old Covenant laws were shadows that pointed to Christ, but they passed away when the reality (Jesus Christ) came (see Galatians 3:24-25). Today, our Sabbath is not a day; our Sabbath is Jesus Christ.

**If the Sabbath was good enough for Jesus, it is good enough for me. We should follow His example and keep the Sabbath.**

If you will search the Scriptures, you will find the following to be true: Jesus kept the Sabbath as He kept all the law (He was, for example, also circumcised—Luke 2:21). While He lived, the Old Covenant was still in force. For Him to break any of its laws would have been sin. He had to be sinless so that His perfect righteousness could be imputed to us (2 Corinthians 5:21; Galatians 4:4-5). But the New Testament never commands the keeping of the Sabbath, and neither Jesus nor His disciples ever criticize anyone for breaking the Sabbath. The only people critical of others over the Sabbath in the New Testament are the Jews who were critical of Jesus for healing on the Sabbath and of His disciples for gathering some grain to eat on the Sabbath. After Jesus' resurrection, the only connection the disciples have with the Sabbath is that they went to the synagogue on the Sabbath so they could preach to the assembled Jews. There is no mention of them keeping the day as a Sabbath. And, among all of the sins listed in the epistles, Sabbath breaking is not listed once.

If everything Jesus did was an example for us to follow, we should also be circumcised, and we should not only keep the Sabbath, but attend the Jewish synagogue on that day. It may seem right to keep the Sabbath because the Old Testament commands it, and Jesus, living under the Old Covenant, kept it. But there has been a change in the law (Hebrews 7:12; see also Galatians 4:21-31). The Sabbath for Christians is our rest in Jesus Christ. This is explained in the article.

**Jesus said that He was the Lord of the Sabbath and that the Sabbath was made for man. Doesn't this show 1) that we Christians should keep the day Christ is Lord of, and 2) that the Sabbath was made for all mankind and not just the Jews?**

Jesus said this in the context of His being accused by the Pharisees of allowing His disciples to break the Sabbath by plucking some heads of grain to eat on the Sabbath (see Matthew 12:1-8; Mark 2:23-28; Luke 6:1-5). As I explained in the answer above, Jesus kept the Sabbath because He lived while the Old Covenant was still in force. Nevertheless, He understood the law better than the Pharisees.

After pointing out to His accusers that mercy (such as allowing hungry people to pick food to eat) is a weightier matter of the law than keeping the Sabbath, Jesus says, "For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day" (Matthew 12:8). It would be out of keeping with the context for Jesus in Matthew 12:8 to be saying that because He is Lord of the Sabbath, we should keep the Sabbath. The Pharisees to whom He was speaking were already keeping the Sabbath. Rather, He is

saying that because He is Lord of the Sabbath, the Pharisees have no right to criticize Him for whatever He allows His disciples to do on that day. In other words, Jesus had the right to determine the proper application of the commandments, including the Sabbath command.

Eighteenth-century Baptist theologian, John Gill, says in his commentary on Matthew,

By "the Son of man" is meant, not any man, as some have thought; for no mere man is lord of any law, moral or ritual, natural or positive; or has a power of disposing of it, and dispensing with it at pleasure; but Christ himself; which is the constant sense of this phrase in the New Testament, and is a character of the Messiah in the old, Da[niel] 7:13 who, as he was the institutor of the sabbath among the Jews, that being a ritual, and of mere positive institution, could dispense with it, and even abrogate it at his pleasure. The Jews so far agree to this, that he that commanded the law of the sabbath, could dispense with it; they say that "the day on which Jericho was taken was the sabbath day; and that though they slew and burnt on the sabbath day...he that commanded the observation of the sabbath, commanded the profanation of it."

And since Christ is greater than the temple, and has all the perfections of the divine nature in him, is equal to the Father in power and glory; and even as mediator, has all power in heaven and earth given him; so as he is Lord of all other things, he is of the sabbath, and has a power of dispensing with it, and even of abolishing it; see Col[ossians] 2:16 and since the Lord of the sabbath had a power of dispensing with it, and made use of it in the cases of David and his men, and of the priests in the temple formerly; the Pharisees ought not to think it strange, that the Son of man, who is equally Lord of the sabbath, dispensed with it in his disciples now.

It was in this same context that Jesus said, "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath" (Mark 2:27). As I have already pointed out in this article, the Sabbath was given to the Jews only. The Pharisees believed that the Jews were God's chosen nation and that God had given the Ten Commandments only to them (which is true—see, for example, Exodus 34:27-28; Deuteronomy 4:13; and Deuteronomy 5:3). If Jesus had responded to them by saying that the

Sabbath was given to all mankind, including the Gentiles, the Pharisees would have argued with Him on this point. The fact that they did not argue with Him over this statement shows that they understood that Jesus did not mean all humanity when He said "man." He simply meant that the Sabbath was intended to serve the people to whom it was given. In other words, the Sabbath was supposed to be adapted to human needs, and humans were not to be deprived of a need (in this case food) because of the restrictions of the Sabbath law.

Jesus was not saying that the Sabbath was given to all humanity. We might say that circumcision was given to people and not to animals. This statement is true, even though it does not say that circumcision was given specifically to the Jews. We might even say that circumcision was for the Jews. This, too, is true, even though it does not say that circumcision was specifically for male Jews. Therefore, Jesus was perfectly truthful in stating that the Sabbath was given to man even though, because His hearers were Jews and perfectly understood the fact, He did not need to state that the men to whom it was given were the Jews.

John Gill, in his commentary on Mark, adds some additional information:

By "man", is not meant all mankind; for the sabbath was never appointed for all mankind, nor binding upon all; only the Jews, who are emphatically called "man", or "men"; see Eze 34:30, upon which the Jewish writers remark that "they are called..."man"; but the idolatrous Gentiles, and nations of the World, are not called "men" but dogs, beasts, &c. Our Lord may here be thought to speak in their language, as he does in Mt. 15:26, See Gill on "Mt 15:26". And that the observation of the seventh day, was only designed for the children of Israel, seems manifest from Ex 31:16, "wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant; it is a sign between me and the children of Israel"; and not between him and the rest of the world: and in Ex 31:14, "ye shall keep the sabbath, for it is holy unto you": on which the Jews make this remark, ..."to you, and not to the rest of the nations": nor did they ever think that the Gentiles were obliged to observe their sabbath, only such who became proselytes to their religion; even those who were proselytes of righteousness: for a proselyte of the gate, was not bound

to observe it; for so says Maimonides, "those who take upon them the seven commandments of Noah only, lo! they are as a proselyte of the gate, and they are free to do work on the sabbath day for themselves, openly, as an Israelite on a common day."

Yea, they not only say, they were not obliged to keep the sabbath, but that it was not lawful for them to observe it; and that it was even punishable with death them to regard it; for so they say, "a Gentile that keeps the sabbath before he is circumcised, is guilty of death, because it is not commanded him." They judged them unworthy of having this precept enjoined them, as being not men, but beasts, and worse than they, and had not the privilege the ass has: hence one of their commentators says, "concerning the rest of an ass, thou (O Israelite!) art commanded; but concerning the rest of a Gentile, thou art not commanded."

**You say that seventh-day Sabbath keepers believe Jesus was resurrected on Saturday. I am a Seventh Day Adventist, and I believe that Jesus rested in death in the grave on the Sabbath and was resurrected on Sunday.**

I have corrected the article to include the fact that the teaching of the Seventh Day Adventist Church is that Jesus was resurrected on Sunday. However, with the exception of the Seventh Day Adventist Church, virtually all other seventh-day keeping churches believe that Jesus rose on Saturday. According to George Dellinger of the Sabbath Research Center in Westfield, Indiana, "The belief that Jesus Christ was crucified on Wednesday, and resurrected on Saturday, has found wide acceptance among most Sabbath-keeping churches and organizations over the past two hundred and more years. It has also been widely accepted by many Sunday-observing ministers and authors. The only Sabbath-keeping church that has officially rejected this belief is the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and it is presently receiving considerable support in many quarters of that church." In the twentieth century, its biggest promoter was Herbert W. Armstrong, founder of the Radio Church of God (later renamed Worldwide Church of God). For a complete rebuttal of the teaching that Jesus was crucified on Wednesday and resurrected on Saturday, please read "3 Days + 3 Nights = 1 False Doctrine" (<http://www.wordofhisgrace.org/3days.htm>).



**The Bible says that when we break one commandment, we break them all. How, then, can we stop keeping one of the commandments (the Fourth Commandment) and be guiltless of breaking them all?**

When the Bible says that when we break one point of the law, we break all, the Bible is not saying we must therefore keep all the commandments perfectly. No one can keep the law perfectly. Therefore, the Bible is saying that we are all guilty of breaking all the commandments, and we must therefore rely upon grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone. Our own law keeping will never save us. Jesus Christ kept the law perfectly for us, and His perfect law keeping (His righteousness) is imputed to us (counted as ours).

When we are saved through Jesus Christ, we are put under the New Covenant. The New Covenant contains commands, but keeping a Sabbath day is not one of them. We are not saved by keeping the commandments of the New Covenant, but our keeping them shows our salvation. The commandments of the New Covenant can be boiled down to belief (and resting in Christ is an expression of this) and love (see 1 John 3:23).

**In Matthew 24:20, Jesus says, "But pray that your flight be not in winter, neither on the sabbath day." Does not this indicate that the end-time Christians whom Jesus is warning will be keeping the Sabbath?**

In Matthew 24, Jesus was answering three questions His disciples had asked Him. Jesus and His disciples were at the temple in Jerusalem: "And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down" (Matthew 24:2). In response to this, His disciples asked Him three questions: "And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" So, the questions were: 1) When shall these things (the stones of the temple being thrown down) be? 2) What shall be the sign of thy coming? and 3) (What shall be the sign) of the end of the world?

We must realize, however, that the disciples' questions were influenced by their preconceived ideas. The kingdom of Israel and the temple were everything to them. They thought Jesus' mission was to restore the kingdom to Israel, and they were still thinking that way

even after His resurrection (Acts 1:6). So, when Jesus told them, in Matthew 24:2, that the stones of the temple would be thrown down, they equated that with the end of the world. When they asked, "when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" (Matthew 24:3), these were all basically the same question to them. The word "world" in that verse is *aiōnos*. It means the "age." And, indeed, when the temple was destroyed, it was the end of the age. It was the end of the age of God dealing with the Jews as His special nation.

Besides telling what would happen before any of these things took place, Jesus answered all of their questions. Verse 20 was not part of a warning to end-time Christians. Rather, it was part of Jesus' answer about when the temple would be thrown down ending the temple age, the age of the Jewish nation as God's special nation. In A.D. 66, Roman armies, under Cestius Gallus, surrounded Jerusalem. They then withdrew. Christians recognized this as the fulfillment of Luke 21:20 (which parallels Matthew 24:15), and they fled Jerusalem. We know from history that the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70 when Romans armies returned and sacked Jerusalem. So, "these things" (the stones being thrown down) occurred in A.D. 70. The age ended in A.D. 70.

In Matthew 24:16-18, Jesus emphasizes the urgency of getting out of Jerusalem immediately upon recognizing the sign in verse 15. In verses 19-20, He then tells them of the hardships they may encounter in their flight and tells them to pray for deliverance from those things that it is possible to be delivered from. He tells them it will be hard on those who are pregnant and those who are nursing babies. This is unavoidable, and He does not tell them to pray about it. He then tells them of two other potential hardships that they can pray to be delivered from. The first is that they should pray that their flight not be in winter. This is because of the obvious hardships refugees would encounter with weather and lack of food in the fields in winter. Then Jesus tells them to pray that they would not have to flee on the Sabbath.

But if the Sabbath command is not for Christians, why should they pray this? If we let the Bible interpret itself, we will not take the second half of verse 20 to refer to the keeping or not keeping of a day when the context involves hardships during a refugee flight. Those who use this verse to say that it indicates that Christians would be keeping the Sabbath after Christ's resurrection and that Jesus, in saying this, was giving sanction to the practice, fail to explain what

sort of hardship this would present. Notice that Jesus did not say to pray that your need to flee would not come on a Sabbath when you cannot flee. He says to pray that the flight not be on the Sabbath. The Sabbath does not stop the flight, but in some way makes it harder. Surely Jesus is not saying to pray that they would not have to flee on the Sabbath because God would be angry with them for traveling such a distance on the Sabbath. Such an interpretation not only does not fit the context, but it would be out of character for God to react this way under such circumstances, and it would contradict Jesus' teachings concerning mercy and the Sabbath (see, for example, Matthew 12:1-13). Also, the argument that Christians keeping the Sabbath would find it harder to flee on that day because they would be caught off guard and unprepared does not hold water because verses 16-18 show that no matter what day the flight takes place on, it will be sudden and without preparation. Keeping the Sabbath could not add to the suddenness and lack of preparation. Why, then, does Jesus say that the Christians in Jerusalem should pray that their flight not be on the Sabbath?

There is more than one possible explanation, but all of them better answer the question and better fit the context than simply saying that Christians would be keeping the Sabbath. One possible explanation is based on the fact that the word "day" at the end of verse 20 is not in the original Greek. Therefore, the Sabbath Jesus refers to might be a seventh-year sabbatical year. In those years, farmers were to let their land lie fallow. Therefore, there would be little produce in the fields, so those fleeing into the countryside would have a hard time finding anything to eat. This certainly fits the context of hardship.

Even if we say that the Sabbath Jesus refers to is the weekly Sabbath, there is still no reason to assume that He means that the Christians would be keeping it. After all, Jerusalem was predominantly Jewish, and the Jews would want to enforce their Sabbath traveling restrictions. They might attempt to prevent the Christians in Jerusalem from fleeing on that day. In fact, as one reader pointed out to me, it is quite possible that the practice found in Nehemiah 13:19-21 was still in force at this time. That is, the gates of the city were closed on the Sabbath. This would make it very difficult to flee on the Sabbath. Buying and selling were also forbidden by the Jews on the Sabbath. Therefore, the Christians fleeing out of the city into the countryside would not be able to stop at markets, houses, or inns along the way to procure food. Again, this fits the context of hardship.

In conclusion, we see the following concerning the assertion that Jesus told Christians to pray that their flight from Jerusalem would not be on the Sabbath because Christians would be keeping the Sabbath: 1) this does not fit the context, and 2) it does not really answer the question of why Jesus said to pray this. On the other hand, understanding that Jesus was referring to the Sabbath as an external hardship much like winter 1) fits the context, and 2) answers the question of why Jesus said to pray this. Therefore, Matthew 24:20 in no way implies that Christians at that time were keeping the Sabbath, that Jesus sanctioned their keeping the Sabbath, or that Christians today are to keep the Sabbath.

**The Bible says that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Therefore, the Sabbath is eternal.**

Hebrews 13:8 says, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." But it is false reasoning to say that this means that His dealings with men don't change. An enormous change occurred when Jesus Christ came in the flesh, lived a sinless life, died for our sins, and was resurrected. Hebrews 7:12 says clearly that, with the change from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant, there was a change in the priesthood and a change in the law. The New Covenant does not require Christians to keep a day as a Sabbath any more than it requires Christians to be circumcised or to keep the dietary restrictions of Leviticus 11. If we can admit that it does not mean that God has changed to say that Christians do not have to be circumcised or to abide by the rules of clean and unclean meats, we should be able to do the same thing for the Sabbath.

**People try to say there is an Old Testament and there is a New Testament. What they should understand is that the Bible is one book, and you need the Old to understand the New. The Bible says to keep the Sabbath.**

This statement gets to the very heart of the matter: how people understand the Bible. Seventh-day keepers generally have a great desire to obey the Word of God. Unfortunately, they often miss the significance of the change between the Old and New Testaments. They see the two testaments as having equal weight in the life of a Christian. Or they will sometimes even see the Old Testament as having greater force, interpreting the New Testament in light of the Old.

That this method of interpretation is wrong can be seen from the fact that not only does the Bible (the Old Testament) say to keep the Sabbath, it also says that all males must be circumcised on the eighth day, that pork is unclean, that a menstruous woman is unclean, that it is wrong to wear garments of mixed fabric, and many other such things. If we blindly say that because the Bible says to keep the Sabbath, we must keep it, why are we not also following these other commands?

A tremendous change took place with the coming of Jesus Christ and the establishing of the New Covenant. The distinction between the covenants is not artificial. It is the Bible itself that says there is an Old Testament (Old Covenant) and a New Testament (New Covenant). In Hebrews 8:13, we read, "In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away." Verse 6 of the same chapter calls the New Covenant "a better covenant, which was established upon better promises." I would encourage all readers to read Hebrews 7 and 8 (in fact, the entire book of Hebrews is profitable on this subject).

Notice also this from Galatians 4: "Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free" (verses 21-31). Hagar (Agar) corresponds to the covenant given at Mt. Sinai, the Ten Commandments. This is the covenant of bondage; it is the covenant that the Jews (called Jerusalem in these verses) are in bondage to. But Christians, as was Isaac, are the children of the free woman (Sarah) and of promise. We are under the terms of the New Covenant, and those terms do not include the keeping of a Sabbath day. As I explain

in the article, the Sabbath day is most certainly the seventh day. But it is not for Christians.

Hebrews 7 tells us that with the New Covenant there is a change in the priesthood, and when there is a change in the priesthood, there is "of necessity a change also of the law." If I were to make two contracts with some people, it would be wrong of someone to assume that the second contract included the same terms and conditions as the first contract unless it specifically said so. Even the fact that the Ten Commandments were written on tablets of stone shows that they, as the Ten Commandments of the Old Covenant written on stone, cannot be a part of the New Covenant, which is written in the minds and hearts of believers (Hebrews 10:16; 2 Corinthians 3:3). The principles of the Ten Commandments do appear in the New Covenant, but in a spiritual and much expanded application that is in keeping with their being in our minds and hearts.

Because the New Covenant is the better and fuller revelation, we are to understand the Bible from the perspective of the New Covenant. The New Covenant helps us understand the typology of the Old Covenant. The Sabbath rest, for example, pictured our rest in Jesus Christ.

When we try to understand the New Covenant from the perspective of the Old, we run into trouble because the Old Covenant cannot adequately hold the revelation of the New. That is why Jesus likened it to putting new wine into old wineskins (Luke 5:37-38).

Having been a seventh day keeper, I understand why seventh day keepers keep the Sabbath, and I have respect for them because I know that they believe they are following the Bible. But I also would like them to understand that the Sabbath day is not for Christians, that the keeping of the Sabbath is at best a work of wood and stubble that will be burned (1 Corinthians 3:11-15), and that it detracts from the centrality of Jesus Christ, who is our true Sabbath rest.

**If we do not need to keep the Fourth Commandment, written by the finger of God, why did God write it in the first place?**

God had a good reason for giving the Fourth Commandment. As I have already shown in this article from several Scriptures, God gave the Ten Commandments to the Jews. There are also Scriptures that show He gave the Sabbath specifically to the Jews. In Exodus 16:29, we read, "See, for that the Lord hath given you the sabbath, therefore he giveth

you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day." And in Exodus 31:16-17, God states, "Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed." Clearly, God gave the Sabbath to Israel as a sign of the covenant (the Old Covenant) between Him and them. If God expected anyone other than Israel to keep the Sabbath, it could not have been a special sign between Him and them.

So, one reason God gave the Sabbath command was as a sign of the covenant between God and the Israelites. Another reason is that the Sabbath was a type of the rest Christians have in Christ. Although most did not realize what they were doing, by resting on the Sabbath, the Israelites were typifying or picturing the rest that Christians would have in Christ under the New Covenant (this is similar to their picturing Christ's death with the animal sacrifices they offered).

God had important reasons for giving the Sabbath command to the Jews, just as He had important reasons for giving them commands concerning sacrifices, washings, and dietary laws. Those commands are not requirements for Christians and only typified the realities under the New Covenant of Christ's death, our being washed clean of our sins, and our sanctification. Similarly, the Sabbath is also not required for Christians. God gave the Sabbath command to Israel as a picture of the rest Christians under the New Covenant would have as they rest in Jesus Christ for their salvation. It pictured our resting from trying to save ourselves through attempts at law keeping. Christians are instead to rest in Jesus Christ's finished work.

**In Matthew 5:17, Jesus said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." If Jesus did not destroy the law, how can you say that we don't need to keep the Sabbath?**

Jesus truly came not to destroy the law, but to fulfill. To destroy the law would mean to abolish the law before it had fulfilled its purpose. Jesus did not do this. He fulfilled the law because He was the culmination of the law. He was everything the law pointed to, and He kept the law perfectly for us. As I have said concerning the Sabbath, Jesus was the true rest of which the Sabbath was only a shadow.

The law served the purpose of showing people their transgressions and, therefore, pointed to the need for Jesus Christ. But when Jesus came, He fulfilled its purpose: "Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator" (Galatians 3:19). Notice that the law was added only until the Seed, Jesus Christ, should come. He has come and fulfilled the purpose of the law.

Jesus was saying that He had not come with the authority of God to destroy the law before it was fulfilled, but that He was going to fulfill the law right down to every jot and tittle. Once He did that, the law would end because all obligations would have been fulfilled. The law changed when the Old Covenant law was fulfilled by Christ and replaced by New Covenant law, the law of Christ.

**Revelation 22:14-15 says, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." If the only ones to be saved are those who keep His commandments, we should be keeping the Sabbath. Also, Revelation 22:18-19 warns, "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book." Are you not changing the Bible by saying we do not need to keep the Sabbath?**

Since Jesus Christ's righteousness is imputed to us, we do the commandments (Revelation 22:14) by believing in Him and showing our faith outwardly in love. John clearly says: "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us" (1 John 3:22-24). Those who are outside the gates of the city in Revelation 22:15 are those who do not have Christ's righteousness imputed to them because they do not believe.



If what I am saying is changing the Bible according to Revelation 22:18-19, then Paul and the other apostles are also guilty because they said that circumcision, which is required by the law, is not necessary for Christians. But, in reality, what I am saying is not changing the Bible because I am only saying what the Bible says. The Bible says there has been a change in the law (Hebrews 7:12). God does not change, but the Bible clearly documents (circumcision and the opening of salvation to the Gentiles are just two obvious examples) that His dealings with man change.

**In Daniel 7, in verses 8 and 24-25, Daniel prophesied of a "little horn" who would "think to change times and laws." Isn't this someone trying to do away with the Sabbath or change the day of the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday?**

This question is somewhat irrelevant. "What Is the Christian Sabbath?" does not say that the Sabbath day has been changed. It says that the Sabbath remains the seventh day, but that God never gave the Sabbath day to Christians. The Sabbath command is a command of the Old Covenant; it is not a command of the New Covenant, which is the covenant Christians are under.

Although some churches dogmatically teach that the little horn's thinking "to change times and laws" refers to someone (most commonly, this is considered to be either the Pope or Constantine, the first Roman emperor to confess Christianity) changing the Sabbath from the seventh day to Sunday, this is by no means an unquestioned interpretation. There is much disagreement about the identity of the little horn of Daniel 7 (the most common suggestions are Antiochus Epiphanes, Constantine, other Roman emperors, Muhammad, the Pope, and the future antichrist). The meaning of his thinking "to change times and laws" is also much debated.

But even if the little horn is the papacy or Constantine, it does not follow that changing the times is changing the Sabbath. First, the official position of the Roman Catholic Church is not that the Sabbath changed to Sunday, but that Sunday is the Lord's Day. Second, even if the Roman Catholic church did claim that it changed the Sabbath to Sunday (as some Catholic writers imply), it does not follow that it actually did so. Surely, no seventh day keeper believes that the pope really has the authority to change a command of God! Third, the Sabbath is not mentioned anywhere in the context of the verses in question.

Fourth, both of the words—"times" and "laws"—in the phrase "think to change times and laws" are translated from Chaldee words (with origins, perhaps, in Persian), not Hebrew. Other passages in the Bible where these words are used reveal that they are used by Israelites only in a common sense (simply meaning time or law in general) or to refer to man's laws or pagan laws. They are used to refer to the law of Moses only by non-Israelites. Even in Deuteronomy 33:2, where the word "law" is directly related to that used for "laws" in Daniel 7:25 and would seem in the King James Version to refer to the law given at Sinai, Gesenius' *Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament* allows for this alternative reading: "'at his (Jehovah's) right hand fire, to be a rule for them (Israel) in journeying,' referring to the pillar of fire." In other words, even in Deuteronomy 33:2, this word may be referring to the pillar of fire and not to the law of Moses.

Daniel 7:25 is spoken by an angel. It is unlikely that an angel of God would have used these words to refer to God's appointed times and laws. Completely different (Hebrew) words are used for God's appointed times and laws. In fact, also in Daniel 7:25, the angel later uses the Hebrew word for time when he says time, and times, and the dividing of time. Therefore, whatever the angel meant that the little horn would think to change, there is no biblical reason to assume that he meant the Sabbath. But even if we were to assume that this is a reference to an attempt to change the Sabbath from the seventh day to Sunday, it has no effect on the question of whether Christians are to keep the Sabbath. As I have stated, the Bible does not allow for the changing of the Sabbath from the seventh day to Sunday. Those who say that God changed the Sabbath to Sunday are wrong; the Sabbath day remains the seventh day, although it is now only part of an "archived" covenant. The Old Covenant is no longer in effect. The Bible clearly teaches that Christians are under the New Covenant, which has no Sabbath day. The Sabbath day is not for Christians.

**The Sabbath command was not directly mentioned in the New Testament because there was never a question as to which day was God's ordained day of worship. Jesus had ample time to explain any changes in God's laws when He visited the disciples for 40 days after His resurrection.**

The apostolic church, because it believed the Bible, would certainly have believed that the seventh day was the Sabbath. But it did not believe that Christians were to keep it. The Bible is to be our standard for faith and practice. If something is not stated in the Bible or at least

logically implied by what is stated in the Bible, then we cannot believe it. Unless we know from other evidence in the Bible, it is fruitless to speculate about what Jesus may have told His disciples during the 40 days after His resurrection.

But here is something we do know from the Bible. We know that the church spread from being composed entirely of Jews to encompassing Gentiles. These Gentiles had never kept the Sabbath. Yet, in Acts 15, the Jerusalem council wrote to these Gentile Christians that they would only require them to "abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood" (verse 20). Why did the council mention these things and not include the Sabbath? The answer is obvious: there was no more of a requirement to keep the Sabbath than there was to be circumcised. If Christians were supposed to keep the Sabbath, it would be amazing that Sabbath breaking is never mentioned in the many lists of sins the church was to avoid. The conclusion is unavoidable. Christians were not required to keep the Sabbath.

### **The apostle Paul continued to keep the seventh day Sabbath.**

The question of whether Paul kept the Sabbath is addressed in the "What Is the Christian Sabbath?" article. There is no evidence that Paul, after his becoming a Christian, kept the Sabbath. Such Scriptures as Acts 17:2 and 18:4 merely show that Paul used the Jews' assembling in the synagogue on the Sabbath as an opportunity to preach to them while they were all assembled in one place. Likewise, Acts 13 shows that Paul preached in the synagogue in Pisidian Antioch on the Sabbath to preach to the assembled Jews. It was, however, the Gentile, God-fearing proselytes who attended the synagogue who turned out to be the ones most interested in hearing Paul. They invited Paul to return the following week. Paul took them up on their invitation so he could also speak to the assembled Jews, because, he believed, "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you [the Jews]: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (verse 46). None of this is evidence that Paul kept the Sabbath; it only shows that Paul used the Jews' assembling on the Sabbath as an occasion to evangelize.

### **The Sabbath is the sign of God's people.**

The Sabbath day was a sign between God and the children of Israel (Exodus 31:13, 17). So was the Passover and feast of unleavened

bread (Exodus 12:13; 13:9). Circumcision was a sign between God and Abraham and his descendents (Romans 4:11; Genesis 17:11). But the Bible never says that any of these are signs between God and Christians. Christians are sealed with the Holy Spirit: "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory" (Ephesians 1:13-14); and, "And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Ephesians 4:30). They are baptized (Matthew 28:19). They eat the Lord's Supper in remembrance of Him until He returns (1 Corinthians 11:23-26). Their love one for another is a sign to all men (John 13:35). But the Bible says nothing about Christians keeping the Sabbath.

**You used Romans 14 in your article, but aren't you violating this Scripture by judging Sabbath keepers?**

No. We are not judging anyone merely for the keeping of a day. We take the same position as the apostle Paul. He allowed brethren to keep whatever day they wanted as long as they did not do it out of legalism, believed that their keeping of a day was a necessary work needed to be added to the completed work of Jesus Christ, or judged others who did not keep the day. Unfortunately, "What Is the Christian Sabbath?" needed to be written because a large number of people who keep days do violate at least one of Paul's criteria, especially that of judging others who do not keep the day or who keep another day (such as saying that those who do not keep a Sabbath will be condemned in the judgment or those who keep Sunday are taking the Mark of the Beast). Notice what the article says:

As we have seen, in Romans 14, Paul allows weak brethren to continue to keep days while they remain weak in faith (specifically, weak in their understanding of the concepts he teaches in Galatians and in Colossians 2). Of course, other Scriptures admonish us to not remain weak, but grow strong through knowledge (Ephesians 5:17; 2 Peter 1:2-8; 3:18). But in Galatians, Paul adamantly teaches against the false gospel that works such as circumcision (Galatians 5:2) and the keeping of days (Galatians 4:10-11) are necessary on top of the completed work of Christ. Any message that says or implies that Christ's work is not enough is a false gospel. In Colossians 2, Paul tells Christians not to allow anyone to pass judgment or condemn them for their understanding that

observing dietary rules and certain days are merely the “rudiments [this is the same Greek word translated “elements” in Galatians 4:3 and 9] of the world” (Colossians 2:8, and 20).

From this information, we can draw additional conclusions. Paul tells the Colossians not to allow themselves to be judged concerning days, and in Romans 14, he says it is wrong for Christians to judge others concerning days. Therefore, those Christians who charge others with breaking the Sabbath (whether seventh day or Sunday) or not keeping the Lord’s Day are violating the instructions of the Holy Spirit as written by Paul. Similarly, since we have seen that no day need be kept, those who accuse others of sinning when they do not keep a day are acting contrary to Scripture....

To say that Christians must either keep a particular day or risk their salvation is legalism. To say that God holds the world responsible for keeping a day because it is a creation ordinance is to add a yoke to the world’s burden that the Scriptures do not support. To say that Christians are required to keep a particular day or risk God’s chastisement is adding to the Word of God, as nothing in the Bible says or implies this. To correct someone for “breaking the Sabbath”—such as scolding a child for kicking a ball on the “Sabbath” or bringing church discipline against a man for trying to support his family by working on the “Sabbath”—is adding to the Word of God, is being blind to the commands God has really given Christians (1 John 3:23; 4:21), and is risking offending people away from God. All of this judging over days is unscriptural and uncharitable.

The Scriptural position is that God does not command, imply, or expect Christians to keep a day. If someone wants to keep a day, that is fine as long as he or she does not do so out of legalism or trying to earn merit with God, is not judging others, is not imposing his or her view on others, and is not adding to the Scriptures by saying there is a command to keep a day when there is not.

From time-to-time, I may add to this article as we receive new questions and comments. I hope it has been helpful.