

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

The Sabbath

By Tim Haile

Confusion exists in the religious world over the significance of the Sabbath. The Sabbath is the seventh day of each week. The Old Testament also spoke of a sabbath of years in preparation of the jubilee year (Lev. 25:8). The root (*shavat*) in Hebrew means “desist, cease, rest.” God “*rested*” on the seventh day from the work that He did on the six days of creation (Genesis 2.3). Based upon this divine model the Jews were then commanded to “*remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy*” (Ex. 20:8-11; 31:17). They were forbidden to do any work, build a fire, or gather and prepare any food on the Sabbath (Ex. 20:10; 31:15; 35:3; 16:20-29). Failure to comply with these instructions resulted in execution (Ex. 31:14-15; Num. 15:32-36). It should be immediately noted that if we are under the Sabbath law today we would also be under the laws that define it and regulate it. This would mean the death penalty for those who fail or refuse to observe the Sabbath. Of course, this begs the obvious question — Are we under the Sabbath law today?

Sabbath Observance Was Instituted For Israel

Deuteronomy 5:7-21 records the restating of the Ten Commandments to Israel. This of course included the Sabbath law (verse 12). In Deuteronomy 5:1-3, Moses reminded Israel of their special relationship with God. He said, “*Hear oh Israel, the statutes and commandments which I speak in your hearing today, that you may learn them and be careful to observe them. The Lord our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. The Lord did not make this covenant with our fathers, but with us, those who are here today, all of us who are alive.*” Notice the important distinctions:

- Moses addressed “*Israel*” and no other nation (v. 1).
- He said that the covenant was made “*with us*” at “*Horeb.*” Not with their forefathers and not at some other place (vs. 2-3).
- He said that the covenant was made “*with those of us who are alive here today*” (v. 3).
- Concerning Sabbath-keeping, God said, “*It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever, for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed*” (Ex. 31:17 — The word translated “*forever*” means to the end of the age, which means the end of the Jewish age. Jesus foretold of that time in Matthew 23:37-38, pointing to the coming destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD).

These verses plainly teach that Sabbath observance was a Jewish institution. Jesus observed the Sabbath because He was a Jew and He lived under the law of Moses (Lk. 4:16).

Sabbath Observance Requires The Observance Of All Other Old Testament Laws

There is no multiple choice option for observing the law of Moses. First century false teachers told the saints of Galatia that they had to be circumcised and keep the law of Moses in order to be saved (see also Acts 15:5). Paul told these saints, “*For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse, for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them’*” (Gal. 3:10). He later said, “*And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law*” (Gal. 5:3). This principle applies to Sabbath-keeping as well. One who practices Sabbath keeping is obligated to keep every other requirement of the law of Moses. Failure to do so results in spiritual condemnation. This would include things like the offering of animal sacrifices, Levitical food and

cleanliness laws, a Levitical priesthood, an Aaronic high priesthood, the observance of special annual feast days and trips to Jerusalem, the various tithes required by the law and as Paul discussed, the circumcising of every 8-day old male. And remember that according to Galatians 3:10 and 5:3 there is no “pick-and-choose” option! All would be required. This leads to a huge spiritual problem for people, for Paul also said, **“by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified”** (Gal. 2:16).

Sabbath Observance Has Been Abrogated Along With The Rest Of The Law Of Moses

All humans today are under the law of Christ, not the law of Moses (1 Cor. 9:21; see also Jn. 1:17). We are to **“fulfill the law of Christ”** (Gal. 6:2). Jesus personally **“fulfilled”** the Law of Moses (Matt. 5:17-18), and in so doing He **“took it (the law of Moses) out of the way, nailing it to the Cross”** (Col. 2:14). Just two verses later Paul said, **“Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath”** (Col. 2:16). That is, don’t let them condemn you for not now practicing these ordinances. They are no longer applicable or binding. In His death Christ **“abolished in His flesh the law of commandments contained in ordinances...”** (Eph. 2:15).

The law of Moses had to be removed in order for Christ to even qualify as our high priest. The Hebrew writer said, **“For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well. For the one of whom these things are spoken belonged to another tribe, from which no one has ever served at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe Moses said nothing about priests”** (Heb. 7:12-14). Jesus came from the tribe of Judah. The law of Moses authorized priests only from the tribe of Levi. In order for Jesus to qualify as our high priest the law of Moses had to be changed.

Sabbath Observance Has Been Replaced With Worship Upon The First Day Of The Week

Jesus rose from the grave upon the first day of the week (Matt. 28:1). He met with His disciples later that same first day of the week (Jn. 20:19) and again upon the first day of the next week (Jn. 20:26). The Holy Spirit came and the church was established upon the first day of the week (Acts 2 — Pentecost was always on the first day of the week, Leviticus 23:15-16). This means that the worship practices mentioned in Acts 2:42 were carried out upon the first day of the week. With the apostle’s approval the disciples at Troas assembled and observed the Lord’s Supper upon **“the first day of the week”** (Acts 20:7). Giving is to be done upon **“the first day of the week”** (1 Cor. 16:2).

Conclusion

Sabbath observance was a Jewish institution during the Mosaic dispensation. We today are in the gospel dispensation. The law of Moses has been replaced with the law of Christ. Even Jews are not under the law of Moses today. All are under law to Christ (whether they like it or not) and will be judged by the gospel law (Rom. 2:16; 2 Cor. 5:10). The New Testament authorizes the first day of each week as the worship day, not the seventh day. While some acts of worship may be practiced on any or every day of the week (singing, praying, Bible study), the Lord’s Supper and giving are to be done upon the first day of the week. ■

Editor’s Note: Brother Haile’s article is excellent and presents the truth on the Sabbath. Yes, many in the religious world are confused on this matter and ignorantly observe the Sabbath not understanding the truth about the Sabbath as revealed in God’s word. It is also interesting to note through diligent study that all the commands listed in the ten commandments (Ex. 20:1-11; Duet. 5:1-15) are restated in the New Testament, with the exception of, **“remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy”** (Ex. 20:8-11). In the Christian age, which is now, we are to worship the Lord **“in spirit and in truth”** on the **“first day of the week”** and we are to do so **“til He comes”** (Jn. 4:24; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 15:26).

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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