

Question: "Are Christians to observe the Sabbath day as did Israel?" (Part 2)

Last week we pointed out that God gave to Israel the Sabbath law as a sign between them and Him (Deu 5:2-3; Eze 20:12, 18-20). It served the two-fold purpose of reminding them of God's almighty creative power, and that it was He Who delivered them from Egyptian slavery (Exo 31:12-18).

The Covenant Containing The Sabbath Was Fulfilled and Replaced:

Jesus came to fulfill the first covenant: the covenant of Moses (Mt 5:17-18). The New Testament declares that the Old Testament is no longer in effect (He 8:8-9; 9:1-4; 10:9-10). That was the covenant containing the Sabbath commandments (Exo 20:8-11).

There is no clearer passage explaining the fact that Christians are not accountable to keep the holy days and dietary laws of the Old Testament than in Paul's letter to the Colossians, *"Therefore, let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ"* (2:16-17). It was by the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross that these things were taken out of the way (Co 2:14).

Some argue that the "Sabbaths" of the above passage do not include the weekly Sabbath, but other ceremonial Sabbaths such as discussed in Leviticus 23:24-32. However, that chapter in Leviticus also discusses the weekly Sabbath (vs.3). Furthermore, the following Old Testament passages make no distinction between weekly or ceremonial Sabbaths (1 Chr 23:30-31; 2 Chr 2:4; Neh 10:31). Therefore, the passage in Colossians, too, would include all Sabbath laws. Paul stated that Christians are not to be brought into judgment for refusing to observe these customs of the Old Law.

Did the early Christians keep the Sabbath?

Sabbatarians are quick to point out that Jesus kept the Sabbath (Lk 3:21). Some of them will even suggest that the apostle Paul was careful to observe that day (Acts 13:13-16; 44; etc.).

Obviously, we would expect Jesus to keep the Sabbath since He was a righteous Jew living under the Law of Moses. Paul, on the other hand, met with his fellow countrymen on that day, not to keep the Sabbath but to preach the gospel of Christ to them. When Paul assembled with Christians, he did so on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7).

There is a Sabbath, though, that remains for the people of God. It is not, however, the seventh day of the week. The New Testament refers to Heaven as the Christian's "Sabbath" (He 4:1-13). Those who, by faith in the gospel, are "baptized into Christ" (Ga 3:26-27) are also admonished to be diligent so as not fall short of that rest. In Heaven, the Lord's true disciples will receive an eternal rest from the pain, sickness, sorrow and death of this life. That is a rest you do not want to miss!

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