

The Seventh Day Sabbath Rest

I. The Sabbath was ordained by God for man at Creation:

A. Gen. 2:1-3

1. Did God need to rest?
2. It was the Son who spoke to Adam face to face (John 1:18) who rested
3. A precedent for Adam
4. Was the "blessing" of the Sabbath for God of man?

II. God's people observed specific days from the beginning:

A. Gen. 1:14

1. The cycles of sun and moon were for "signs and seasons."
 - a. "Signs" refers to symbolic meanings
 - b. "Seasons" does not refer to the so-called "four seasons,"
 1. the Hebrew word was used for the specific festivals under the Law of Moses
 2. The Greek word in the LXX is *καίρος* which means an appointed time, and appointment.

B. Gen. 4:3-4

1. "In the process of time" is literally "at the end of the days."
 - a. Jamieson Faucet Brown Commentary says: "*Hebrew, 'at the end of the days,' probably the Sabbath.*"
 - b. The LXX has "after the days"
 - c. Possibly a weekly reference, since "the days" are defined in Gen. 1 as numbering 1-7, the days of the week.
2. Specific worship was prescribed at a specified time, implies an established order and set of commands.
 - a. Both Cain and Able brought their offering at the same time.

III. Seth and his descendants had a covenant relationship with God

A. Gen. 4:26

1. Heb. "*Then [he] began to call himself by the name of YHVH*" (God's covenantal name)
2. LXX "*This one [Seth] hoped, calling to himself the name of the Lord.*"
3. The Sethites were called "*the sons of God*" (Gen. 6:1-2), the same terminology used of Israel's covenant relationship with YHVH and Christians under the New Covenant (Isa. 43:6; 2 Cor. 6:16-7:1).

B. Gen. 8:16-22

1. A change in God's commandments for the Sethites regarding food (cf. Gen. 1:27-30)

C. Gen. 26:5

1. Abraham, Seth's descendant through Noah, kept God's charge, commandments, and laws. Thus God's covenant people has specific commandments before the Law of Moses was given to Israel.

IV. The Sabbath was observed by Israel as keeping a law of God before the Mosaic Law

A. Exod. 16:1-36

1. The Sabbath rest was already God's law (v. 4)
2. God synchronized their Sabbath observance with an already established cycle by providing manna on six days only (v. 23).

V. In the Law, the Sabbath command was already being practiced by Israel.

A. Exod. 20:8-11

1. "Remember the Sabbath Day" implies former knowledge and practice.
2. The basis for Israel's observance was God's initial Sabbath blessing at creation.

B. Lev. 23:1-3

1. The Feasts were "God's Festivals" not Israel's
2. The Sabbath is first among them.
3. It included a "holy convocation" which means a sacred assembly

VI. Jesus and His disciples kept the Sabbath

A. Mark 2:23-28

1. Jesus and the disciples kept the Sabbath as originally given, not with the greater restrictions of the Law of Moses.
2. Jesus defended His disciples by pointing out:
 - a. a higher law (as demonstrated by David and the priesthood)
 - b. the Sabbath was made for THE MAN (Adam), and not THE MAN for the Sabbath
 1. It originated for mankind before the Law
 2. It was intended to be a blessing not a burden
 - c. Jesus is "the Master of the Sabbath"
 - d. We worship "the Master of the Sabbath"

B. Mark 3:1-5

1. The Sabbath rest does not preclude doing good for others.

VII. The New Testament precedent only supports Sabbath gatherings

A. Luke 23:56 Jesus' disciples and the women rested on the Sabbath "according to the commandment" after hearing Jesus' teaching throughout His ministry

B. Acts 15, Acts 21:20 The Jerusalem assembly continued to keep all of the festivals.

C. Acts 24:5,13-14 Christianity was considered a "sect" of Judaism which could not be so if they did not keep Sabbath. (see: Acts 5:17, Acts 15:5; Acts 26:5).

D. Acts 13:14-16,42-44 Regular Sabbath gatherings coincided with the synagogues

E. Acts 18:4-11 in vs. 11 the clause “he continued there” is literally “he sat there”

1. This is a reference to the practice in the synagogues of sitting in the “chief seats” to teach on the Sabbath (Acts 13:14-15).

VIII. There were many conflicts between the Jews and early Christians, but never concerning which day to gather for worship and instruction.

A. Separation of Christians from the Sabbath occurred in post-apostolic times

1. Because Christians wanted to be separate from the Jews who were despised after the destruction of Jerusalem.

2. Antisemitism was beginning to be justified by reinterpreting Scripture, so the assemblies in Rome and Alexandria abandoned the Sabbath for Sunday.

a. The Epistle of Barnabas (2nd cent. Alexandria) says: *“Further, He says to them, “Your new moons and your Sabbath I cannot endure.” Ye perceive how He speaks: Your present Sabbaths are not acceptable to Me, but that is which I have made, [namely this,] when, giving rest to all things, I shall make a beginning of the eighth day, that is, a beginning of another world. Wherefore, also, we keep the eighth day with joyfulness, the day also on which Jesus rose again from the dead. And when He had manifested Himself, He ascended into the heavens.”*¹

3. Socrates, a 4th century Christian historian, states that most assemblies still met on the Sabbath in his day. *“Nor is there less variation in regard to religious assemblies. For although **almost all churches throughout the world celebrate the sacred mysteries on the Sabbath of every week**, yet the Christians of Alexandria and at Rome, on account of some ancient tradition, have ceased to do this. The Egyptians in the neighborhood of Alexandria, and the inhabitants of Thebais, hold their religious assemblies on the Sabbath, but do not participate of the mysteries in the manner usual among Christians in general: for after having eaten and satisfied themselves with food of all kinds, in the evening making their offerings they partake of the mysteries.”*²

IX. The Sabbath will be observed in the coming Kingdom

A. Isaiah 66:22-23 “all flesh” (Jew and Gentile) will worship Jesus Christ the King on the Sabbath.

B. Isaiah 56:6-7 The “sons of the foreigner” who do not defile the Sabbath will participate in Temple worship in the Kingdom.

¹ Epistle of Barnabas, ch. xv

² Socrates Scholasticus, Bk. V, ch. 22

X. Romans 14:4-6 does not justify changing the day

A. Paul was addressing a problem in the Roman assembly concerning the keeping of the annual festivals in the Law and dietary considerations.

1. The entire passage (except vss. 5-6) deals with the dietary laws.

2. Eating only vegetables is the extreme Jewish prohibition when living in a Gentile culture, and is what Daniel did during the 70-year exile so as not to unknowingly defile himself with the king's food (Dan. 1:8).

B. Paul was not addressing the day of the common assembly (weekly Sabbath).

1. In chapter 12, he made it clear that the entire body (Jew and Gentile) were to be united and exercise their gifts for the benefit of the whole assembly in a single gathering, which necessarily had to occur on the same day, time, and location (cf. 1 Cor. 12 & 14).

a. Therefore, it is evident that Jewish and Gentile believers were not assembling on separate days (or choosing whatever day suited an individual), because this would divide the Christian assembly into different "assemblies."

b. His admonition for tolerance and non-judgmental attitudes assumes that the differences in practice were private, and were apart from the scheduled weekly assemblies.

c. If his exhortation towards tolerance included different days of gathering, then his instructions would contradict his teaching in Rom. 12 which only works in a common assembly of both Jew and Gentile.

d. Paul addressed private practice of "one person" vs. "another" (vs. 5, 7)

C. Adam Clarke's Commentary on Romans 14:5:

"One man esteemeth one day above another - Perhaps the word ἡμέραν, day, is here taken for time, festival, and such like, in which sense it is frequently used. Reference is made here to the Jewish institutions, and especially their festivals; such as the passover, pentecost, feast of tabernacles, new moons, jubilee, etc. The converted Jew still thought these of moral obligation; the Gentile Christian not having been bred up in this way had no such prejudices. And as those who were the instruments of bringing him to the knowledge of God gave him no such injunctions, consequently he paid to these no religious regard.

Another - The converted Gentile esteemeth every day - considers that all time is the Lord's, and that each day should be devoted to the glory of God; and that those festivals are not binding on him.

We add here alike, and make the text say what I am sure was never intended, viz. that there is no distinction of days, not even of the Sabbath: and

that every Christian is at liberty to consider even this day to be holy or not holy, as he happens to be persuaded in his own mind.

That the Sabbath is of lasting obligation may be reasonably concluded from its institution (see the note on Gen_2:3) and from its typical reference. All allow that the Sabbath is a type of that rest in glory which remains for the people of God. Now, all types are intended to continue in full force till the antitype, or thing signified, take place; consequently, the Sabbath will continue in force till the consummation of all things. The word alike should not be added; nor is it acknowledged by any MS. or ancient version.

Let every man be fully persuaded - With respect to the propriety or non-propriety of keeping the above festivals, let every man act from the plenary conviction of his own mind; there is a sufficient latitude allowed: all may be fully satisfied."

D. Albert Barnes Commentary on Romans 14:5:

"One man esteemeth - Greek "judgeth" κρίνει krinei. The word is here properly translated "esteemeth;" compare Act_13:46; Act_16:15. The word originally has the idea of "separating," and then "discerning," in the act of judging. The expression means that one would set a higher value on one day than on another, or would regard it as more sacred than others. This was the case with the "Jews" uniformly, who regarded the days of their festivals, and fasts, and Sabbaths as especially sacred, and who would retain, to no inconsiderable degree, their former views, even after they became converted to Christianity.

Another "esteemeth - That is, the "Gentile" Christian. Not having been brought up amidst the Jewish customs, and not having imbibed their opinions and prejudices, they would not regard these days as having any special sacredness. The appointment of those days had a special reference "to the Jews." They were designed to keep them as a separate people, and to prepare the nation for the "reality," of which their rites were but the shadow. When the Messiah came, the passover, the feast of tabernacles, and the other special festivals of the Jews, of course vanished, and it is perfectly clear that the apostles never intended to inculcate their observance on the Gentile converts. See this subject discussed in the second chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians.

Every day alike - The word "alike" is not in the original, and it may convey an idea which the apostle did not design. The passage means that he regards "every day" as consecrated to the Lord; Rom_14:6. The question has been agitated whether the apostle intends in this to include the Christian Sabbath. Does he mean to say that it is a matter of "indifference" whether this day be observed, or whether it be devoted to ordinary business or amusements? This is a very important question in regard to the Lord's day. That the apostle did not

mean to say that it was a matter of indifference whether it should be kept as holy, or devoted to business or amusement, is plain from the following considerations.

(1) The discussion had reference only to the special customs of the "Jews," to the rites and practices which "they" would attempt to impose on the Gentiles, and not to any questions which might arise among Christians as "Christians." The inquiry pertained to "meats," and festival observances among the Jews, and to their scruples about partaking of the food offered to idols, etc.; and there is no more propriety in supposing that the subject of the Lord's day is introduced here than that he advances principles respecting "baptism" and "the Lord's supper."

(2) The "Lord's day" was doubtless observed by "all" Christians, whether converted from Jews or Gentiles; see 1Co_16:2; Act_20:7; Rev_1:10; compare the notes at Joh_20:26. The propriety of observing "that day" does not appear to have been a matter of controversy. The only inquiry was, whether it was proper to add to that the observance of the Jewish Sabbaths, and days of festivals and fasts.

(3) It is expressly said that those who did not regard the day regarded it as not to God, or to honor God; Rom_14:6. They did it as a matter of respect to him and his institutions, to promote his glory, and to advance his kingdom. Was this ever done by those who disregard the Christian Sabbath? Is their design ever to promote his honor, and to advance in the knowledge of him, by "neglecting" his holy day? Who knows not that the Christian Sabbath has never been neglected or profaned by any design to glorify the Lord Jesus, or to promote his kingdom? It is for purposes of business, gain, war, amusement, dissipation, visiting, crime. Let the heart be filled with a sincere desire to "honor the Lord Jesus," and the Christian Sabbath will be revered, and devoted to the purposes of piety. And if any man is disposed to plead "this passage" as an excuse for violating the Sabbath, and devoting it to pleasure or gain, let him quote it "just as it is," that is, let "him neglect the Sabbath from a conscientious desire to honor Jesus Christ." Unless this is his motive, the passage cannot avail him. But this motive never yet influenced a Sabbath-breaker.

Let every man ... - That is, subjects of this kind are not to be pressed as matters of conscience. Every man is to examine them for himself, and act accordingly. This direction pertains to the subject under discussion, and not to any other. It does not refer to subjects that were "morally" wrong, but to ceremonial observances. If the "Jew" esteemed it wrong to eat meat, he was to abstain from it; if the Gentile esteemed it right, he was to act accordingly. The word "be fully persuaded" denotes the highest conviction, not a matter of opinion or prejudice, but a matter on which the mind is made up by examination; see Rom_4:21; 2Ti_4:5. This is the general principle on which Christians are called to act in relation to festival days and fasts in the church. If some Christians deem them to be for edification, and suppose that their piety will be promoted by

observing the days which commemorate the birth, and death, and temptations of the Lord Jesus, they are not to be reproached or opposed in their celebration. Nor are they to attempt to impose them on others as a matter of conscience, or to reproach others because they do not observe them."