

C. Keeping The Sabbath

Some churches demand their followers keep the Sabbath if they desire to stay in right relationship with God. A few even teach a failure to observe the Sabbath is the “Mark of the Beast” spoken of in Revelation 14 and will result in eternal damnation.

The Seventh-Day Adventist Church, which takes the lead on the Sabbath issue, claims the Council of Laodicia in 364 A.D. changed the Sabbath to Sunday, which cannot be historically verified. Additionally, they claim Christians are still under the Law of Moses and are bound to keep the “least of its precepts” — therefore keeping the Sabbath. Ellen G. White, the professed founder of the Adventist Church, claims she received a vision confirming these beliefs:

“I was taken into Heaven and shown the sanctuary and its appointments. Jesus raised the cover of the ark, and I beheld the tablets of stone on which the Ten Commandments were written. I was amazed as I saw the Fourth Commandment in the very center of the ten precepts, with a soft halo of light encircling it.”

Sabbatarians

Christians who hold this position are generally referred to as Sabbatarians. If they are correct, then why don't most churches worship on Saturday, rather than on Sunday? There are at least four reasons.

A Sign Between God And Israel, Not The Church

The Sabbath was first given as a “sign” and perpetual covenant between Jehovah and Israel, as shown in Exodus 31:12-18. The Ten Commandments, of which the law of the Sabbath is the fourth, were written by the finger of God on tablets of stone. The Bible refers to these commandments as the “ministrations of death” and the “ministration of condemnation... written and engraven in stone” (2 Corinthians 3:7,9, KJV). Paul goes on to tell us that these ministrations were “done away” with and “abolished” (verses 11,13, KJV) through Christ's sacrificial death on the Cross. In its place we have the “ministrations of the Spirit” and “the ministration of righteousness” (verses 8, 9). Thus we read, “Let no man therefore judge you ... of a Sabbath day,” (Colossians 2:16, see also Romans 14:5,6).

Fulfilled In Christ

We also read the “handwriting of ordinances” (the Law) was “blotted out” and “nailed” to Christ's cross, for Christ has fulfilled the law on our behalf and met its every claim.

No Longer Under The Law!

Look also to Romans 6:14, where believers are placed in a POSITION of FREEDOM from the Law, “You are not under the law, but under GRACE.” (See also Romans 7:4,6 and Galatians 5:18.) The entire book of Galatians is directed at this main issue. The Apostle Paul rebuked those who sought to bring the Gentile converts under the yoke of the law: “Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?” (Acts 15:10, KJV).

Biblical Silence?

If the SABBATH was to be a mandatory precept, and failure to observe it could potentially result in loss of salvation, why then does the Bible not make this more evident? Why did the Apostles instead refer to those who were teaching this heresy as “those who troubled you with words and subverting your souls” (Acts 15:24, KJV)? If this precept were mandatory, why is there not ONE single verse demanding compliance in the New Testament?

Impossibility Of Keeping The Law!

The answer is simple: Keeping the Sabbath, as the Old Testament demands, is impossible. Even professed Sabbatarians do not follow the Sabbath laws as mandated in the Old Testament. Look at Leviticus 23:32, where the Sabbath was to be kept from sunset to sunset; or Jeremiah 17:21, where it states “no burden” could be carried within 24 hours; or Exodus 35:3, where no fire could be kindled; and Exodus 16:23, where no cooking could be done.

The fact of the matter is that the Law (including Sabbath observance) was given by God, not so we could prove our righteousness, but to demonstrate that God is holy and we are sinners. No one has ever completely kept the Law, which proves that we are all sinners in need of a Savior. That is why Jesus stated He came to “fulfill” the Law, and thereby set us free from its condemnation.

Paul's Counsel

We would do well to follow Paul's counsel to the Romans and the Galatians on this very issue:

One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord. He who eats meat, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God. (Romans 14:5-6, NIV)

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. (Galatians 5:1, NIV)