

Introduction

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The Sabbath is something which many Christians have been unaware of. It is a blessing that I believe many Christians need in order to operate wholly in the will of God. So many of my Christian friends struggle in the relationship with God and I believe the Sabbath is a large key to improving the way we relate to God.

I hope this article is edifying and, considering it is quite long, a good reference for anyone curious about the Sabbath or wanting to know the reasons to follow it! I am open to questions, you can send me an email at joshministers@gmail.com or send me a message on instagram @josh.ministers

Hope You're Blessed!

Reasons for the sabbath

The Sabbath was instituted at creation for all time

The Sabbath was first instituted at creation.

Genesis 2:2 (NIV)

By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. 3 Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

First God created Adam and Eve, he then created the Sabbath for them. The fact that God created the Sabbath before the fall is a sign that it is something that is meant to be for humans for eternity.

When speaking about the new heaven and earth God states

Isaiah 66:22-23 (NIV)

22 "As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me," declares the Lord, "so will your name and descendants endure. 23 From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before me," says the Lord.

This shows that we will be keeping the Sabbath into eternity.

The 10 Commandments

The strongest reason to continue keeping the Sabbath is the fact that it is in the 10 commandments. The commandments are God instructions on how to live life, right with God and right with fellow man. The argument against the statement “We no longer need to follow the ten commandments” can be found here.

Exodus 20:8-11 (NIV)

8 “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. 11 For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

Here are a few of the things we can take from this about the Sabbath:

- It is on the Seventh Day (“but the seventh day is a sabbath”)
- It is a commemoration of creation (“In six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth”)
- It is for everyone (“nor any foreigner residing in your towns”)

What is right and wrong to do on the Sabbath is a discussion in of itself that I hope to touch on eventually, but we can see here that there is a requirement in the bible to keep the Sabbath.

Jesus taught his disciples to follow Sabbath

- Jesus expected his followers in the last days to keep the Sabbath

Matthew 24:15-22 (NIV)

15 “So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand— 16 then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. 17 Let no one on the housetop go down to take anything out of the house. 18 Let no one in the field go back to get their cloak. 19 How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! **20 Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath.** 21 For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again.

Here Jesus states that when the end of times comes, that those there should pray they will not have to leave during the winter or on the Sabbath since it would be difficult for them. This

shows that Jesus expected people following him to still be keep the Sabbath once that time comes. Regardless of what time period these events are to transpire, Jesus makes it clear that he believed that after his death people would be keeping the sabbath

- Jesus maintained the Sabbath custom

Luke 4:16 (NIV)

So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read.

Here it states that Jesus kept the custom of going to worship on the Sabbath day.

- Jesus taught how people should keep the Sabbath.

Matthew 12:11 (NIV)

Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.”

Here Jesus is instructing people on **how** to keep the Sabbath. He already assumed that people would know that they should to keep the Sabbath, so there for is expounding on how to biblically keep it. There would be no reason to teach people how to keep the Sabbath if he planned on removing it as a requirement.

A context search for the Sabbath in the New Testament gives all the occurrences where Jesus taught about the Sabbath, went to the synagogue on the Sabbath, or himself taught others on the Sabbath.

- Jesus stated the Sabbath was for all man kind

Mark 2:27 (NIV)

27 Then he said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.

Here Jesus is teaching his followers that the Sabbath was made for man (as we saw in creation, man being made first). This shows that the Sabbath is not just a Jewish custom to be followed begrudgingly, but a blessing that was made for all men.

- Jesus’ disciples kept the Sabbath at his death

Luke 23:55-56 (NIV)

55 The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it. 56 Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes.

But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment.

Here Jesus' followers are stated to rest on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment. The disciples felt the conviction so strong to follow the Sabbath, they wouldn't finish Jesus' burial in order to respect it. This shows that Jesus did not diminish the Sabbath in any way to the disciples, but emphasized it.

The early church followed Sabbath

The early church worshiped on Sabbath

Rather than paste all available quotations, here is a list of every place where it mentions the disciples going to worship on the Sabbath.

Acts 13:14, Acts 13:42, Acts 13:44, Acts 15:21, Acts 17:2, Acts 16:13, Acts 18:4

The most notable of these quotes is in Acts 17:2 (which is a parallel to Luke 4:16), where Paul is said to go to the synagogue on the Sabbath as was his custom. If we did not need to keep the Sabbath Paul would not have held onto that custom.

We also have extrabiblical evidence that the early church follow the sabbath. The Encyclopedia of the Early Church gives an account of how early Christians followed the Sabbath (source).

The Sabbath was changed by man not God

A question to ask is, if there is so much about the Sabbath, why and when did it stop being followed?

In 321 AD, Constantine the Great declared the changing of the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday

"On the venerable day of the Sun let the magistrates and people residing in cities rest, and let all workshops be closed"

Codex Justinianus lib. 3, tit. 12, 3; trans. in Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church, Vol. 3, p. 380, note 1

The Sabbath also was challenged by an early Christian in the second century Ignatius of Antioch who is the first person recorded to approve of not observing the Sabbath. He was just a man however, he had no authority to change the laws in which God created.

Therefore, an argument for the Sabbath is the fact that the attempts to change it have been purely from man, not from God.

Are there reasons against the Sabbath

Colossians 2:16-17

Colossians 2:16-17 (NKJV)

16 So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths,
17 which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.

I quote the NKJV here since it is a more literal translation.

- Sacrifice, not rest

When looking at this passage, it can appear that the sabbaths are something people should not be judged for, but if we look at the phrase “festival, or a new moon, or sabbaths” we see that all of these things are referring not to the days themselves, but sacrifices.

When we look at the old testament, it makes reference to this triplet a lot (festival, new moon, sabbaths). For instance, in 1 Chronicles 23:31

1 Chronicles 23:31 (NKJV)

31 and at every presentation of a burnt offering to the Lord on the Sabbaths and on the New Moons and on the set feasts, by number according to the ordinance governing them, regularly before the Lord;

Here the author is not speaking about sabbaths in terms of days of rests, but in terms of sacrifice. This is a list of many of the occurrences in the old testament where the triplet of “Sabbaths, New Moons and feasts” appear in the old testament, and all of them are referring to sacrifice:

Ezekiel 45:17, 2 Chronicles 2:4, 2 Chronicles 8:12-13, 2 Chronicles 31:3, Hosea 2:11, Nehemiah 10:33, 1 Chronicles 23:31

The only one of these verses where it is not explicitly clear and doesn't say a sacrificial term specifically is Hosea 2:11, but we can infer from the fact that it says “mirth” (some translations “celebration”) that it's referring not to Sabbath rests but sacrifices.

- The shadow of Sacrifice

The second point that helps us come to the conclusion that this passage is referring to sacrifice is the fact that it refers to these things (festival, new moon, and sabbaths) as a “shadow” of things to come. There is only one other place in the new testament that refers to shadow in the same sense, and that's in Hebrews 10:1-10. I'll paste part of it below, but you can read the entire passage and see how it refers to sacrifice.

Hebrews 10:1-4

For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. 2 For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins. 3 But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. 4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.

Here the author of Hebrews is explaining that sacrifice was a shadow of Christ's coming. We know this because the reason why God instituted sacrifice was to point to Jesus, and once Jesus came and died on the cross for all people there was no longer any need for it.

The Sabbath also could not be a shadow of Jesus because it was instituted before sin even entered the world. God created the Sabbath for the expressed reason of commemorating creation (Exodus 20:11) as we noted in the section on the 10 commandments

The Sabbath is not a shadow of Christ, here when Paul is speaking about feasts, new moons, and sabbaths he is referring to sacrifices that were done on them. A new moon had no spiritual significance, it was the sacrifice that was done on it that pointed to Christ.

Romans 14:5

Romans 14:5 (NKJV)

5 One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind.

People often lift this quote out of context. When reading the surrounding verses (Romans 14:1-12) we see Paul not talking about Sabbath, but about food. It would be very strange for Paul to go from talking about food and then make a statement about no longer needing to follow Sabbath and then going back to talking about food in the following verses.

In the context of the passage, Paul is referring not to people who esteem a Sabbath day than another, but about fast days. This is made clear when he refers to people who chose to eat and not eat on certain days:

Romans 14:3

Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him.

With that context, when reading verse five it is apparent that Paul is referring to how some may keep certain fast days and choose not to eat while others do not keep certain fast days. This is made even clearer in the verse that follows it where Paul states:

Romans 14:6

6 He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks.

Here Paul states that some observe fast days to the Lord, but that “He who eats, eats to the Lord”. If someone chooses to eat on a day another chooses to fast, they both do it to the Lord.

Did Jesus abolish the 10 commandments**Jesus taught people to follow the 10 commandments**

An argument that has been made is that Jesus abolished the law, including the 10 commandments on the cross. However, we see Jesus teaching people to obey the 10 commandments throughout his ministry.

Matthew 9:17-19

17 So He said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.”

18 He said to Him, “Which ones?”

Jesus said, “ ‘You shall not murder,’ ‘You shall not commit adultery,’ ‘You shall not steal,’ ‘You shall not bear false witness,’ 19 ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ ”

Here when speaking about what you must do to enter life, he said you had to keep the commandments. And then he began to quote from the 10 commandments. In the passage he doesn’t quote all of them, but considering “Having no other God’s before me” is one he does not quote it can be surmised that the rest of them are expected as well. Here Jesus also establishes that when speaking about “commandments” he is referring to the 10 commandments. He speaks continually in the gospels about following all the commandments.

John 14:15 (NKJV)

“If you love Me, keep My commandments.

Jesus telling the disciples to follow the commandments is also found in: John 14:21, John 15:10, Mark 7:9.

The ceremonial law was abolished

So it is clear that Jesus taught people that they should obey the 10 commandments, but there was still a law abolished, the ceremonial law.

Paul speaks about this in Ephesians and shows that the ceremonial law, or law of “ordinances” was abolished.

Ephesians 2:14-15

14 For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, 15 having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, **the law of commandments contained in ordinances**, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace,

What is the ceremonial law

Paul states what was abolished was “the law of commandments contained in ordinances”. To find out what the law of ordinances was we can go back and look at the giving of the law in the old testament.

Deuteronomy 31:26

“Take this Book of the Law, and put it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there as a witness against you;

Here it is speaking about the Book of the law, which contained all the ceremonial laws about being clean and unclean and rules for daily life while the Jews were anticipating Christ’s coming.

Exodus 25:16

And you shall put into the ark the Testimony which I will give you.

Here the 10 commandments (given on two tablets of stone) is put into the Ark. God created a distinction between the law of ordinances by writing the 10 commandments on tablets of stone and placing them within the ark while having Moses write down the ceremonial laws and ordinances in a separate book that was placed on the side of the Ark of covenant.

The distinction is also made in the new testament, in addition to **Ephesians 2:14-15**, when speaking about Zacharias and his Wife Elizabeth, it states that they walked in the “commandments and ordinances of the Lord”.

Luke 1:6

And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless

This distinction is also made all throughout the old testament as a context search for the word ordinances in the old testament will reveal

Paul also states that we must uphold the 10 commandments in Romans 3:31:

Romans 3:31 (NKJV)

Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.

He makes a direct comparison between the 10 commandments and the law of ordinances in 1 Corinthians 7:19:

1 Corinthians 7:19

Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters.

Circumcision (part of the Jewish law of ordinances) is nothing, while keeping the commandments of God (the 10 commandments) is what matters.

Paul and the law

So we see that in Ephesians 2:14-15, Paul is abolishing the ceremonial law, the law of ordinances. Another passage that corroborates this is Hebrews 9:10.

Paul does speak about the law in terms of the 10 commandments in some places though. In Romans 7 Paul talks about the 10 commandments, made obvious by the fact that he quotes from it in verse 7. He speaks about the struggle in following the commandments of God, but he ultimately says that the law is “holy”, “spiritual”, “good”, and “just” throughout the chapter. At the end of the chapter he states:

Romans 7:25(NKJV)

I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

Paul states that he serves the law of God (which we know as the 10 commandments as revealed in verse 7). The difference between before Christ and after Christ is that we now serve the law through the strength of Jesus. We uphold the spirit and heart of it through love. We see Jesus throughout the gospels stating “you have heard it said, but I say unto you” (Matthew 5:21) and then expounding upon the heart of certain laws. Jesus never said we did not have to keep the law, but instead is pulling us closer to the heart of the law and raising the bar in a sense while also promising to give us the strength to keep it through him.

Does the day you keep Sabbath matter

The day in which you keep Sabbath matters. God sanctified and made the 7th day holy specifically (Genesis 2:3).

God showed the Israelites that the day was important as well because while they were in the wilderness. God rained down mana for them to eat and instructed them to gather twice as much on the 6th day so that they could eat on the 7th since he would not rain down mana on the Sabbath because they were to be resting and not out collecting food (Exodus 16:4-5, Exodus 16:29-30); On any other day if they tried to take enough for the next day, the extra would become infested with maggots and stink (Exodus 16:20).

As discussed in the section on man trying to change the Sabbath, we do not have the authority to alter what times God has set aside, and any attempts at changes will be seen as lawlessness (Daniel 7:25).

Some make the argument that the Sabbath was switched to the first day of the week, “the Lord’s day” but the only place that mentions the phrase the “Lord’s day” is Revelations 1:10, and it does not say what day of week that is nor is it trying to say that it is a new Sabbath. But rather, we see the apostles gathering together and going to the synagogue all throughout Acts, as discussed in the section on the early church.

Conclusion

The Sabbath is an important part of God’s ideal for humans. He wants us to understand that it is not our work that sustains us, but God Himself that does so. Sabbath keeping is not legalism or works based, it is just the opposite. It is relenting and showing God that we believe it is not our works that save us but Him alone.

If anyone “keeps the Sabbath without desecrating it” (Isaiah 56:2), remembers that there “remains a Sabbath rest” (Hebrews 4:9), and calls the Sabbath a delight (Isaiah 58:13) that they will be blessed! I have experienced this and know you will also.

God believes in you!