

Christ - Our Sabbath by Brian Anderson [reworked], 8 pgs.

<http://www.solidrock.net/library/anderson/sermons/christ.in.genesis/christ-our.sabbath.php>

Over the past two thousand years there has been much disagreement over the subject of the Sabbath. During the 17th century, the Puritans sought to enforce the Sabbath by having the civil magistrate fine offenders. The Seventh-Day Adventists have historically taught that Sunday worship is the mark of the beast, and all who bear that mark will be cast into the lake of fire. Today, many churches will not fellowship with or partner in the spread of the gospel together with those churches that don't hold their particular view of the Sabbath, although 99% of their doctrine is identical.

There are three major views historically held concerning it. The Seventh Day View holds that God instituted the Sabbath on the seventh day in the Garden of Eden as a perpetual creation ordinance that is still binding on believers today. Thus Christians are obligated to hold Saturday as a day of rest. The Christian Sabbath View holds that Christ and His apostles changed the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday, and that we obey this command by resting and worshiping on Sunday.¹ The New Covenant View holds the position that the Sabbath requirement was abolished² when the New Covenant was ratified by the death of Christ along with all the other ceremonial laws of the Mosaic institution.

1. Even though advocates of the Christian Sabbath View believe that the Sabbath is God's unchanging moral law, their understanding of the Sabbath involves several major changes: the day the Sabbath is to be observed; the reason for observing it; and the manner in which it is to be observed. The Sabbath was changed from the seventh to the first day of the week because Jesus Christ rose from the dead on that day. There is no NT command to worship on any particular day or observe Sunday as a day of rest for any reason. They believe the Sabbath is to be observed not only by resting from labor, but by public and private worship throughout the day. However, the OT Sabbath was to be observed by complete cessation of labor, not by acts of public and private worship.

2. Abolished because it was fulfilled, swallowed up in the coming of 'the faith' and all that it implies - Christ is our Sabbath. In Him we are complete and at peace with God. [cf http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/TopicIndex/115_The_Lords_Day/]

The Sabbath Before the Mosaic Law

Gen.2:1-3 Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts. And by the seventh day God completed His work which He had done; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it ... [set it apart from the others]

Gen.2 is the only place the subject of the Sabbath is mentioned before the institution of the Mosaic Law. The word Sabbath does not appear in the text, however, the concept of resting on the seventh day is found there. This passage teaches that God made all things in six days, and that He rested on the seventh day in the enjoyment of what He had created. His work was finished, so he stopped. He had totally accomplished what He set out to do.

Those who hold **the Seventh Day and Christian Sabbath Views** believe that **Gen.2** reveals the **Sabbath to be a creation ordinance** - God bound Adam and Eve to keep the Sabbath and thus the Sabbath is perpetually binding on all mankind in the same way that all of God's moral laws are binding on all men. However, **there is no command to keep the Sabbath and no penalties for neglecting same. Gen.2:1-3 is historical narrative** [rather than a command] of the fact that God rested on the seventh day. **v.3** says that God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it. **Proponents of the Sabbath as a creation ordinance** pack all sorts of things into the words "blessed" and "sanctified" as a day in which all men must cease from work to emulate their Creator.³ **They mistake the benediction for a command, just as the Pharisees did when testing Jesus on the matter of divorce, Mt.19:3-12.** They went to the law, but Jesus answered by pointing out the **implications of marriage** stemming from God's intent of union in making mankind as man and woman (**v.7-8**) [cf **Reading and Discussing Scripture**]. So, Jesus refers back to **God's original intent of blessing** when answering their [man made] restrictive traditions upon the Sabbath - *The Sabbath was made for [to benefit] man, not for [man to serve] the Sabbath [as you have made it], Mk.2:27*⁴

God gave another benediction [blessing] that many also mistakenly take as a command - **Gen.1:28**, *And God blessed them ... Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.* [cf **Cultural Mandate; Commands in Scripture**]

The difference in character between benedictions and a commands is readily apparent. In **Gen.2:16-17** Scripture records the one command and penalty which served to test man's obedience, *And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for [consequence of disobedience] in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die.*

3. There is no indication that anyone ever kept the Sabbath until Israel did so in **Ex.16**, about 2,400 years later as part of the Mosaic Law.
4. Sabbath encounters Jesus had with the Pharisees (**Mt.12:1-14; Mk.2:23-3:6; Lk.14:1-6**) show that the **Pharisees' traditions had converted the day of blessing into a legalistic burden.** **Was the Sabbath intended to be a weekly moratorium on doing good?** Is not refusing help (by doing good) doing evil?

The Sabbath as Law

Ex.16:22-26 *Now it came about on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread ... the Moses said to them, This is what the LORD meant [lit. spoke]: Tomorrow is ... a holy Sabbath to the LORD. Bake ... and boil ... and **all that is left over put aside to be kept until morning.** So they put it aside until morning ... and it did not become foul, nor was there any worm in it [as it would have any other day]. And Moses said, Eat it today, for today is a Sabbath to the LORD ... you will **not** find it in the field. Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day ... there will be none.*

Notice that in **this first occurrence of the word "Sabbath," the children of Israel did not understand why they were to gather double the amount of manna on the sixth day.** That Moses had to explain

that they were not to gather the manna on the seventh day **suggests that the Sabbath was brand new** to the Israelites who were not in the habit of Sabbath keeping before this time.

Neh.9:13-14, *Then Thou didst come down on Mount Sinai, and didst speak with them from heaven ... So Thou didst make known to them Thy holy Sabbath [implying that it was not previously known or regarded as an ordinance], and didst lay down for them commandments, statutes, and law, through Thy servant Moses.*

Ex.20:8-11 *Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work,⁵ but the seventh day is a Sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work ... For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.*

Here, **the Sabbath is codified as one of the Ten Commandments**. Though it is different in character from the other nine, many see this as proof that the Sabbath must be part of God's unchanging moral law for all people of all time - meaning it is just as wrong to break the Sabbath as it is to commit theft, adultery, or murder. **The Sabbath commandment was very simple and straightforward**. A man was not to work on the seventh day. Neither this text nor any other says anything about the duty to worship on this day. **There is no command to attend public worship on the Sabbath**.

Ex.31:12-17 *And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying ... speak to the sons of Israel, saying, You shall surely observe My Sabbaths; for this is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you. Therefore you are to observe the Sabbath, for it is holy to you. **Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it shall be cut off from among his people** ... It is a **sign** between Me and the sons of Israel forever; for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day He ceased from labor, and was refreshed.*

Ez.20:12-13 ... *I gave them My Sabbaths to be a **sign** between Me and them ... But the house of Israel rebelled against Me in the wilderness. They did not walk in My statutes, and they rejected My ordinances, by which, if a man observes them, he will live; and My Sabbaths they greatly profaned [by failing to keep them holy by abstaining from work]. Then I resolved to pour out My wrath on them in the wilderness, to annihilate them.*

Profaning the Sabbath, was in effect repudiating the Mosaic covenant, because the Sabbath was so closely identified with the Mosaic covenant that it stood for it. For example, **Ex.31:16** states, *So the sons of Israel shall observe the Sabbath, to celebrate the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. **Nearly all of God's covenants had signs**: The **rainbow** was the sign of the Noahic covenant (**Gen.9:9-17**); **circumcision** was the sign of the Abrahamic covenant (**Gen.17**); and the **Lord's Supper** is the sign of the New Covenant (**1 Cor.11:25**).*

To ignore or break a covenant sign is tantamount to breaking the whole covenant. **That's why a man was to be cut off from his people by execution if he refused circumcision** (**Gen.17:14**), so God met Moses and sought to put him to death (**Ex.4:24-26**). Although Moses was on his way to deliver in fulfillment of the covenant God had made with Abraham, **Moses' own son was not bea-**

ring the covenant sign of circumcision. God would have gone ahead and killed Moses if Zipporah had not cut off her son's foreskin herself. When God came and sought to put Moses to death for his blatant disobedience to His Word, **Zipporah knew exactly what to do to save her husband's life.** **That may also be the reason God dealt so severely with believers who were profaning the Lord's Supper** (the sign of the New Covenant).⁶ Those who partook of the Supper in a loveless and unworthy manner were afflicted with sickness, while some even died (**1 Cor.11:27-30**). In effect, **they were denying the very essence of their covenant relationship** with God.

Because it was the sign of the covenant, the Sabbath had to be part of the covenant document ⁷ of which it was the sign. **Ex.34:28** tells us that the Ten Commandments were the very words of the covenant. *So he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; but he did not eat bread or drink water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.* This also explains why the Sabbath commandment takes up such a central and prominent portion in the Decalogue. Of the 144 Hebrew words detailing the Ten Commandments in **Ex.20:2-17, 55**, 38% are devoted to the Sabbath commandment which was placed positionally in the center of the rest.

Num.15:32-36 *Now the sons of Israel ... found a man gathering wood on the Sabbath day. And those who found him ... brought him to Moses and Aaron, and to all the congregation; and they put him in custody because it had not been declared what should be done to him. Then the LORD said to Moses, The man shall surely be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him ... outside the camp*

The Sabbath commandment was new revelation to the children of Israel. **This is the first time that Sabbath breaking was dealt with after God made it the sign of the covenant.** But the children of Israel did not know what to do when someone broke the Sabbath. [Implied that] if all mankind had been given the Sabbath as a perpetual moral command from God since creation, surely they would have known exactly what to do when someone broke that command. Otherwise God gave the command to keep the Sabbath at creation, but neglected to give the penalty for breaking the command until over 2,400 years later? **Since God did not make this covenant with their forefathers, the covenant sign of the Sabbath could not have been observed before this time.**

Dt.5:2-3, 12-15 *The LORD our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. **The LORD did not make this covenant with our fathers, but with us**, with all those of us alive here today ... Observe the Sabbath day to keep it holy ... Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work ... And you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out of there ... therefore the LORD your God commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.*

The significance of the Sabbath is depicted in the 10 Commandments as a reminder of the completion of God's creative activity (**Ex.20:8-11**). Later, **there is a shift in emphasis.** The Sabbath is spoken of in connection with God's deliverance of from slavery in Egypt (**Dt.5:12-15**) which serves as a type of our deliverance from slavery to sin. **The Sabbath therefore depicts the great themes of creation and redemption.** Since God gives redemption as a reason to keep the Sabbath, no one before the exodus of Israel could have kept the Sabbath. **The Sabbath was not a creation ordi-**

nance, but signified what the covenant was about.

Scriptures never tell us that God gave the Sabbath to the Gentile nations. It is always spoken of in reference to Israel. God judged Sodom and Gomorrah for homosexuality and selfishness (**Gen.19:5; Ez.16:49**), for pride and arrogance (**Isa.10**), but **we never read that He judged Gentile nations for Sabbath-breaking**. Nor does God ever send His prophets to rebuke Gentile nations for Sabbath-breaking, though He did reprove Israel for it. **The Sabbath was not a moral law given to all people for all time.**

5. How one reads and thinks about things matters. At first glance it appears that the command to keep the Sabbath has 2 parts – the LABOR for 6 day part and the PROHIBITION of labor for 1 day part [cf **Commands in Scripture**]. Is God really commanding that people work all day every day for 6 straight days, or is He describing limitations?

6. It was important that God's people learn at the beginning of each new era that sin would not to be dealt with lightly. **Sin can spoil the blessing of God upon his people.** **When either life in the church or doctrine is not cared for**, the blessing stops as much as when an individual sins. Sin among the people of God either diminishes the blessing or brings it to a halt until it is confessed, judged, and removed, **Joshua and the Flow of Biblical History, p.114; GT#4, p.2-4**. There were many times when this principle was applied to Israel where the promises of God were in jeopardy of being suspended unless judgment soon followed those events. The demonstration of this principle was especially important as God's people were entering a new era.

7. The Ten Commandments were the covenant document of the Old Covenant (**Ex.34:28**), which has become obsolete with the introduction of the New Covenant (**Heb.8:13**) [cf **RPCD Chap.4, The Law was a Parenthesis**]. There has been a change in the priesthood from that of Aaron to that of Melchizedek. *For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also (Heb.7:12)*. Now with that priesthood change there is also a change in law. **It is invalid to apply law under the Old Covenant to New Covenant people**. The New Covenant document governs so **the Sabbath, which was part of the Mosaic Law, has been fulfilled in Christ** and thus is no longer binding upon believers.

The Sabbath and the New Covenant

Advocates of the view that the Sabbath is one of God's moral laws perpetually binding upon all mankind, find reinforcements for their position in the fact that Jesus habitually worshiped in the synagogue on the Sabbath day. *And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, Lk.4:16*. Jesus was made under the Law (**Gal.4:4**) in order to fulfill it and remove it by inaugurating a New Covenant. His righteousness in keeping the whole law is imputed to all who are in Him [cf **Justification by Imputation**].

Rom.14:1-6 Now **accept the one who is weak in faith** ... *One man regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind [aka, individual soul liberty]. He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives*

thanks to God.

The "day" referred to would most likely be Jewish holy days under the Mosaic Law, including festivals, new moons, and Sabbath days. People turning to Christ from a lifetime under the traditions of law required **a learning and adjustment period**. To judge one another either for not being free from certain aspects of the law or for being liberated in conscience, not bound to keep a certain day, is wrong. Thus, **we are to afford latitude to one another for the sake of each person's conscience before God** regarding such observances recognizing that we are at different places in personal understanding. Sabbath and other observances were no longer required.

Gal.4:8-11 However at that time, when you [pagans – either Jews under the law (v.5) or Gentiles under some old religious bondage, v.8] did not know God, you were slaves to those which by nature are no gods. But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again? You observe days and months and seasons and years. I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain.

Judaizers had been teaching the Galatian believers that circumcision, as well as observance of the Jewish holy days was a necessary part of salvation. In contrast, **Paul expects believers to grow in understanding, out of their infancy and susceptibility to such erroneous teaching.**

Col.2:16-17 Therefore **let no one act as your judge** in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day - things which are **a mere shadow of what is to come**; but the substance belongs to Christ.

Therefore, a conclusion based on the previous discussion – **he himself is our peace, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.** What are these hostile decrees? **Christ abolished in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, that in Himself He might make the two [Jews and Gentiles, see Beyond Abraham, p.3, under New Creation] into one new man, thus establishing peace (Eph.2:14-15).** The decrees detrimental to us were the commandments, statutes, and ordinances of the Mosaic Law. The keeping of this Law (which condemned us for disobedience) was removed as a requirement for approaching God. Therefore, since **believers are not bound under by the New Covenant to observe Old Covenant law,**⁸ **they are not to allow anyone to manipulate them in regard to things like food, drink, or special observances.** Christians have been released from them, because **those decrees were fulfilled by Christ and His record of perfect obedience [righteousness] is imputed to all who are in Him.** They were, after all, only shadows pointing to Him.

Heb.4:10-11 There remains therefore a Sabbath keeping for the people of God. For **the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His.**

In **Heb.3:7-4:11**, the author compares the Hebrew believers he is writing to, to Israel in the OT. He shows how **both the land of Canaan (3:7-4:3) and the seventh day Sabbath (4:4) were types of a rest that the people of God enjoy today.** How does a believer today enter this rest? *For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them,*

because it was not united by faith in those who heard. For *we who have believed enter that rest (Heb.4:2-3)*. Since **we enter this rest through faith**, what kind of rest is it? For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His (v.10). **The Sabbath rest that still remains for the people of God (4:9) is a rest that comes through believing God's Word (v.3) and resting from our own works (v.10)**. We enter this rest by relying upon the finished work of Jesus Christ.

God rested from His work at creation. Christ rested from His work of redemption when He sat down at God's right hand in heaven. **Jesus pointed to Himself as our Sabbath rest** - *Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls, Mt.11:28-29.*

8. The New Testament never lists the Sabbath as a command believers living under the New Covenant must keep. In **Rom.1:29-32** twenty-two sins are listed. However, **Sabbath-breaking is conspicuous by its absence**. The immediate context describes the worship the Gentiles should have offered to God (**Rom.1:18-23**). Surely, if the Sabbath was still binding upon all men, Paul would have written of it in this place. In **Gal.5:19-21** seventeen sins are listed, however Sabbath-breaking is not one of them. Why this notable absence? **Sabbath-keeping is not carried over from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant**. It was a shadow pointing men to the true substance, which is Christ - a ceremonial law directing men to their true rest in the Lord Jesus.

A House of Prayer for All People by John A. Loooper
http://www.restorationfoundation.org/volume_1/1240.htm

*Thus says the Lord, keep judgment, and do justice: for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed. Blessed is the man that doeth this ... that keeps the Sabbath from polluting it, and keeps his hand from doing any evil. **Neither let the son of the stranger, that has joined himself to the Lord, speak saying, The Lord hath utterly separated me from his people: neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree.** For thus says the Lord unto the eunuchs [excluded by law from entering the temple] that keep my Sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant; even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off. Also the sons of the stranger [non-Israelites], that join themselves to the Lord, to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants, everyone that keeps the Sabbath from polluting it, and takes hold of my covenant. Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: **their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon my altar**: for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all people, Isa.56:1-7.*

Speaking of God's house of prayer for all people, King David prophesied in **Ps.87** that the day would come when the excluded peoples of the world - Egyptian, the Babylonian, the Philistine, the Tyrenian, and the Ethiopian would be welcomed in Zion. Isaiah foresaw the restoration of God's house or temple, not just the historical return of Israel from seventy years of Babylonian captivity and the building of Zerubbabel's temple, but **the greater restoration** of banned Jews, v.4 - "eunuchs" and

Gentiles, **v.6** - "strangers" to God and **to** eternal joy people in the last days. The two peoples were to be reconciled into one temple by the cross of Christ.