

The Christian Arsenal

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Is the Sabbath Day Binding?

I offer the following scriptures, thoughts, and observations on the Sabbath. It does seem to be a controversial subject from time to time and stepping on toes in a Sunday School class is almost inevitable.

First Observation

The only one of the 10 Commandments not repeated and made a part of the in New Testament economy is the 4th Commandment.

1. Exodus 20:3 (Rom. 5:8; 1Corinthians 13; 1 John 1-4:21)
2. Exodus 20:4-6 (Romans 2:22; 1 Corinthians 5:10; 6:9-11; 8:1-10; 10:7&19-28; Ephesians 5:5; 1 John 5:12)
3. Exodus 20:7 (Acts 26:11; Romans 2:24; Colossians 3:8; Titus 3)
4. Exodus 20:8-10 (Not commanded in the New Testament)
5. Exodus 20:12 (Eph. 6:2-3; Colossians 3:20; 2 Timothy 3:2)
6. Exodus 20:13 (Romans 13:19; 1 Peter 4:15; 1 John 3:15)
7. Exodus 20:14 (Romans 2:22; 13:9; 1 Corinthians 6: 9-11 Galatians 5:19-21; Hebrews 13:4)
8. Exodus 20:15 (Romans 2:21; 13:19; Ephesians 4:28)
9. Exodus 20:16 (Romans 13:19)
10. Exodus 20:17 (Romans 13:19; 1 Corinthians 5:10 & 11; 6:9-11)

Second Observation

Jesus ran into occasions where the keeping of the Sabbath ran head long into conflict with what He and His Disciples were doing.

See the following Scriptures:

1. Matthew 12:1-4; Mark 2:23-26; Luke 6:1-4.
2. Matthew 12:15; John 7:22; (Lev. 12:3)
3. Mark 2:27
4. Matthew 12:8; Mark 2:28; Luke 6:5
5. Mark 3:1-5; Luke 13:10-17; 14:1-16
6. John 5:1-18; 9:1-41; 5:17; 9:40-41

In all of these instances, Jesus showed that he placed human needs above the mere external observance of the Sabbath. Jesus never did say anything to suggest that he would take away from man the privileges afforded by such a day of rest. On the other hand, it can not be said that Jesus intended to perpetuate the Hebrew Sabbath and extend it's application to all men. As far as the records of the Gospels are concerned, Jesus never mentioned the 4th commandment.

Third Observation

The early Christians observed the Sabbath and were still worshipping in the Jewish synagogues on a daily basis. (Acts 2:46; 5:42; 9:20; 13:14; 14:1; 17:1-10) The early Christians also revered the Law of Moses (Acts 21:20). There arose a group know as the Judaisers. These were the one who claims that you had to follow the Law in order to come to Christ and to stay in Him. (Acts 15:1-10; Galatians 3:2-3) As the church began to grow and Paul had to address the problem of people who were still living under the Law and trying to live in the freedom that Jesus bought for us at Calvary. (Galatians 5:1-6; 2 Corinthians 3:14; Colossians 2:14-17; Galatians 4:9-10; Romans 14:1-5)

Fourth Observation

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Sabbath considerations in church history in the first three century's of the Christian church. The early church fathers of the second and third century's were in total agreement that the 4th commandment, the keeping of the Sabbath, was not binding on the Christian. Ignatius, the disciple of the apostle John and the Bishop of Antioch, said this "Concerning the Sabbath, those who were brought up in the ancient order of things, observe the Sabbath. But we, who have come to the possession of a new hope, no longer observe the Sabbath." Keep in mind this person was taught and discipled by the apostle John, himself. If keeping the Sabbath was an essential, could we not expect the disciple who was closest to Jesus to have known this and passed it on to someone he was nurturing and discipling about Jesus. Justin Martyr, the first great Christian apologist, (approximately the middle of the 2nd century) in his work "Dialogue with Trypho" stated that Christians do not keep the Sabbath according to the law of Moses, but the Christian keeps a perpetual Sabbath, which consists of constantly turning from sin." Ireneaus, the Bishop of Lyons during the latter part of the second century, did not view the Sabbath as a day Christians were bound to observe. Clement of Alexandria, in his work the "Stromata" written around the close of the 2nd century, voices an opinion similar to Justin Martyr's. The Christian observes the Sabbath by abstaining from evil. Finally, Tertullian, at the beginning of the 3rd century, says "We have nothing to do with Sabbaths or other Jewish festivals, much less with those of the heathen's."

Fifth Observation

The Sabbath is Saturday. If we are going to keep the Sabbath according to the scriptures that we find in the Bible on the Sabbath. Then we must keep Saturday as the Sabbath. And if we are going to keep the Sabbath, then we must keep all of the commandments that God has put in his Word associated with the Sabbath. For example, no labor of any kind, only traveling no more than one mile from your home, no cooking or baking, etc, from Friday night at sunset to Saturday at sunset. Some people will say "Sunday is the Christian Sabbath now, so we observe Sunday as our Sabbath instead of Saturday." At this point, I must appeal to scripture and ask where do you find the Sabbath moved to Sunday and where are your New Testament commands to continue with that Sabbath on Sunday. The early Christians began observing Sunday as a day of worship, because this was the day that Christ rose from the dead. It was a day to be filled with joy and praise because of the resurrection, which guarantees eternal life for all who believe. (1 Corinthians 15; 16:1-2; Romans 4:25; 5:10; John 14:19; 1 Peter 1:3; 3:21; John 20:19; 20:26) God even honored the first day of the week by giving us the book of Revelation on Sunday. (Revelations 1:10)

Sixth Observation

While it is not wrong to set Sunday aside as a special day, which we dedicate to God and his service and to ministering to one another and our families, we cannot afford to mandate Sabbath like rules and regulations upon ourselves and others. Sunday is to be a day of happiness, gladness and worship and not of legalistic observances. Those who live around us, know us by our day to day lives and not by what we do on Sunday. Those who are easily offended and/or a weak Christian we simply choose not to make our activities known to them. It is not a matter of hiding something from someone it is a matter of us living our lives and not putting ourselves in a glass house.