

The Seventh Day: The Christian's Responsibility

(Andrew Haydin Bible study story)

The Sabbath day is a well discussed issue among Christians. What do we do concerning the Sabbath? Are we to continue to observe it as the Jews did? Does Sunday become the Christian Sabbath? Is it to be ignored completely? Lets look at what the New Testament teaches concerning the Sabbath. We will look at what is directly taught concerning the Sabbath and then some principles to help us decide what we should do concerning the Sabbath.

I. What does the New Testament teach concerning the Sabbath?

- The disciples picked grain on the Sabbath

Matthew 12:1-8 At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. And His disciples were hungry, and began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. ² And when the Pharisees saw *it*, they said to Him, "Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!" ³ But He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: ⁴ "how he entered the house of God and ate the showbread which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? ⁵ "Or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless? ⁶ "Yet I say to you that in this place there is *One* greater than the temple. ⁷ "But if you had known what *this* means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. ⁸ "For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

- Jesus answers first with what David did on the Sabbath

- Jesus also talks about the priest "working" their priestly duties on the Sabbath

- Jesus concludes that He is the Lord even on the Sabbath.

Mark 2:23-28 ²³ Now it happened that He went through the grainfields on the Sabbath; and as they went His disciples began to pluck the heads of grain. ²⁴ And the Pharisees said to Him, "Look, why do they do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?" ²⁵ But He said to them, "Have you never read what David did when he was in need and hungry, he and those with him: ²⁶ "how he went into the house of God *in the days* of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the showbread, which is not lawful to eat, except for the priests, and also gave some to those who were with him?" ²⁷ And He said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. ²⁸ "Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath."

- Jesus adds in this passage that the Sabbath was made for man and not the other way around. Man was not created to serve the Sabbath, but the Sabbath was given to serve man.

Luke 6:1-5 Now it happened on the second Sabbath after the first that He went through the grainfields. And His disciples plucked the heads of grain and ate *them*, rubbing *them* in *their* hands. ² And some of the Pharisees said to them, "Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?" ³ But Jesus

answering them said, "Have you not even read this, what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: ⁴ "how he went into the house of God, took and ate the showbread, and also gave some to those with him, which is not lawful for any but the priests to eat?" ⁵ And He said to them, "The Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath."

- Jesus Healed a man on the Sabbath

Mark 3:1-5 And He entered the synagogue again, and a man was there who had a withered hand. ² So they watched Him closely, whether He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him. ³ And He said to the man who had the withered hand, "Step forward." ⁴ Then He said to them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they kept silent. ⁵ And when He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched *it* out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other.

- Jesus asks a question: Is it lawful to do good or evil on the Sabbath? While those in the synagogue do not answer, the answer is obvious: they should do good on the Sabbath.

Luke 6:6-10 ⁶ Now it happened on another Sabbath, also, that He entered the synagogue and taught. And a man was there whose right hand was withered. ⁷ So the scribes and Pharisees watched Him closely, whether He would heal on the Sabbath, that they might find an accusation against Him. ⁸ But He knew their thoughts, and said to the man who had the withered hand, "Arise and stand here." And he arose and stood. ⁹ Then Jesus said to them, "I will ask you one thing: Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy?" ¹⁰ And when He had looked around at them all, He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he did so, and his hand was restored as whole as the other.

- Jesus adds: Is it lawful to save life or to destroy it? Again the answer is obvious.

- Jesus Healed a woman on the Sabbath

Luke 13:10-16 ¹⁰ Now He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. ¹¹ And behold, there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bent over and could in no way raise *herself* up. ¹² But when Jesus saw her, He called *her* to *Him* and said to her, "Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity." ¹³ And He laid *His* hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. ¹⁴ But the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath; and he said to the crowd, "There are six days on which men ought to work; therefore come and be healed on them, and not on the Sabbath day." ¹⁵ The Lord then answered him and said, "Hypocrite! Does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or donkey from the stall, and lead *it* away to water it?" ¹⁶ "So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound -- think of it -- for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?"

- The rulers told the woman to come and be healed on the other six days of the

week after Jesus had already healed her. If God had allowed her to be healed on the Sabbath, why would He be offended when Jesus does just that.

- Jesus asks if they water their animals on the Sabbath, which they obviously do. The point he is making is that the life of one human being is much more important than the life of a dumb animal, yet the rulers allowed an animal to be taken care of on the Sabbath, but not a woman to be healed.

- Jesus taught concerning healing on the Sabbath

Luke 14:1-6 Now it happened, as He went into the house of one of the rulers of the Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath, that they watched Him closely. ² And behold, there was a certain man before Him who had dropsy. ³ And Jesus, answering, spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" ⁴ But they kept silent. And He took *him* and healed him, and let him go. ⁵ Then He answered them, saying, "Which of you, having a donkey or an ox that has fallen into a pit, will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day?" ⁶ And they could not answer Him regarding these things.

- Jesus asks directly if it is lawful to heal on the Sabbath? The Jews are unwilling to answer Him.
- Jesus relates healing to rescuing an animal from danger on the Sabbath, which the Pharisees and the lawyers would have had no problem doing.

(Driving your car on Sat. – It breaks down – You have to wait there until Sun.).

- Jesus taught on circumcision on the Sabbath

John 7:22-23 ²² "Moses therefore gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath. ²³ "If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath, so that the law of Moses should not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made a man completely well on the Sabbath?"

- Jesus points to circumcision – they have to circumcise a male on the eighth day to keep the law, whether or not it is the Sabbath.

Jesus does not teach to disregard the Sabbath, but seems to correct many misconceptions which the Jews had concerning what could or could not be done on the Sabbath. Does this mean we should keep the Sabbath still? We must remember that Jesus' teachings were still to those under the law, because he had not gone to the cross as of yet.

II. Why should we or should we not observe the Sabbath?

We, as Christians need to look to the Epistles to see what is taught to the church concerning the Sabbath. However, there are few passages where the Sabbath is even mentioned in the Epistles. Therefore we will look at five principles which will help us determine if we are to observe the Sabbath.

A. The New Testament does not command the Christian to observe the Sabbath

All of the Ten commandments are re-emphasized in the New Testament except for the command to keep the Sabbath. While this in and of itself is not enough to throw out the idea of keeping the Sabbath, we have to wonder why did the apostles not command the church to continue keeping the Sabbath?

B. The early Church met together on Sunday

Acts 20:7 Now on the first *day* of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.

1 Corinthians 16:1-2 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: ² On the first *day* of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.

The early church writings confirm that first century believers would meet together on the first day of the week (Sunday). The apostles did not condemn this practice, and in fact in these two passages seem to accept the fact that this is the main day of gathering and worshipping together as a church body.

A few weeks ago, I mentioned that God blessed and sanctified the seventh day partially because He did something special on it. In the same way, we honor the first day because God did something special on it: the resurrection.

C. The Jerusalem council did not address the Sabbath

Jerusalem council:

- Men were teaching that Gentiles had to be circumcised.
- The church in Jerusalem got together to decide if this was necessary.
- Here is their conclusion:

Acts 15:23-29 They wrote this *letter* by them: The apostles, the elders, and the brethren, To the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia: Greetings. ²⁴ Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, "*You must be circumcised and keep the law*" -- to whom we gave no *such* commandment -- ²⁵ it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, ²⁶ men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁷ We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who will also report the same things by word of mouth. ²⁸ **For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things:**

²⁹ that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.

The Jerusalem council did not address keeping the Sabbath, which if this was important, then they would have commanded the gentiles to keep it at this point.

D. We are not to judge someone for keeping the Sabbath

Colossians 2:16-17 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.

The lunar month on the Jewish calendar begins when the first sliver of moon becomes visible after the dark of the moon. In ancient times, the new months used to be determined by observation. When people observed the new moon, they would notify the Sanhedrin. When the Sanhedrin heard testimony from two independent, reliable eyewitnesses that the new moon occurred on a certain date, they would declare the [rosh chodesh](#) (first of the month) and send out messengers to tell people when the month began.

The new moon feasts and the Sabbath observations are not what Paul considers to be necessary for the believer to focus on, but rather the believer should focus on Christ.

E. The principle of Individual Soul Liberty gives us a choice

1 Corinthians 10:23-33 ²³ All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify. ²⁴ Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's *well-being*. ²⁵ Eat whatever is sold in the meat market, asking no questions for conscience' sake; ²⁶ for "the earth *is* the LORD's, and all its fullness." ²⁷ If any of those who do not believe invites you *to dinner*, and you desire to go, eat whatever is set before you, asking no question for conscience' sake. ²⁸ But if anyone says to you, "This was offered to idols," do not eat it for the sake of the one who told you, and for conscience' sake; for "the earth *is* the LORD's, and all its fullness." ²⁹ "Conscience," I say, not your own, but that of the other. For why is my liberty judged by another *man's* conscience? ³⁰ But if I partake with thanks, why am I evil spoken of for *the food* over which I give thanks? ³¹ Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. ³² Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God, ³³ just as I also please all *men* in all *things*, not seeking my own profit, but the *profit* of many, that they may be saved.

The principle of soul liberty is a complex principle, and could be preached on for a year (which I am not going to do). I will try to summarize. In the

case in which there is not a direct command of scripture (such as the Sabbath for a Christian), we have the liberty to do what our conscience dictates. However certain principles apply: does it build up, does it hurt others, can I do it with thanks to God, does it glorify and honor God? If I can meet all of these qualifications, then I should not worry about doing it.

Romans 14:1-14 Receive one who is weak in the faith, *but* not to disputes over doubtful things. ² For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats *only* vegetables. 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. ⁴ Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand. ⁵ **One person esteems *one* day above another; another esteems every day *alike*. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind.** 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. ⁷ For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. ⁸ For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. ⁹ For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living. ¹⁰ But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. ¹¹ For it is written: "As I live, says the LORD, Every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall confess to God." ¹² So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. ¹³ Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in *our* brother's way. ¹⁴ I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that *there is* nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him *it is* unclean.

Here again, the idea is in questionable areas, can I do this with a clear conscience that I am not hurting myself, others, or displeasing God? Paul even addresses the observation of special days and tells us we need to be convinced in our own minds.

When it come to the Sabbath, the New Testament seems to give us liberty as to if and how we observe it. Since it is not a direct command to us, we need to be convinced in our own minds whether or not we keep the Sabbath.

(Spending time with a Jew).

Conclusion:

“Sunday, the day the church gathered for worship, because it was the day of Christ’s resurrection. The writings of the early church Fathers confirm that the church continued to meet on Sunday after the close of the NT period. Scripture does not require Christians to observe the Sabbath, 1) the Sabbath was a sign of the Mosaic Covenant whereas

Christians are under the New Covenant; 2) there is no NT command to keep the Sabbath; 3) the first command to keep the Sabbath was not until the time of Moses; 4) the Jerusalem Council did not order Gentile believers to keep the Sabbath; 5) Paul never cautioned Christians about breaking the Sabbath; 6) the NT explicitly teaches that Sabbath keeping was not a requirement.” – John MacArthur

Genesis 2 God speaks of blessing and sanctifying the seventh day, but does not give Adam a command to observe the Sabbath:

Genesis 2:2-3 ² And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. ³ Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.

The first commands concerning the Sabbath do not occur until Exodus and are given in the law or directly to Israel. In the New Testament, the church is never commanded to keep the Sabbath.

It would seem that the decision to observe the seventh day as a Sabbath day is a decision that each individual would have to make for themselves. Whether you choose to observe the Sabbath or not, you need to be convinced in your own mind. However, no where does scripture indicate that Sunday has become the Christian Sabbath,

On the other hand, while God does not command in Genesis 2, He does set up a principle of rest that creation has as an example. We need to take time to stop our activity, no matter how necessary and important it is, and give our time to God.