

# The Harvester



*Preparing Souls  
To Serve The Lord!*



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## Why Christians Do Not Keep The Sabbath Day

Brian R. Kenyon

Usually in the summer, many members of the churches of Christ in America go on foreign mission campaigns. In many of the places they go to spread the Gospel, there will be people who still hold to various parts of the Old Testament. One of the most common parts of the old law they seek to bind is “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Ex. 20:8). All Christians, including those not going on mission trips, need to know how to answer the arguments that promote unscriptural Sabbath Day requirements (cf. Phil. 1:17). In last month’s Harvester, arguments by those who bind Sabbath keeping were set forth and analyzed. In this article, reasons are set forth as to why Christians are to worship on Sunday, the first day of the week.

### **The Purpose of the Sabbath Has Been Accomplished**

Moses, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, stated God’s law on the Sabbath as follows:

Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. <sup>13</sup>Six days you shall labor and do all your work, <sup>14</sup>but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you.

<sup>15</sup>And remember that you were a slave in the land of

Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day. (Deut. 5:12-15)

There are at least three facts that show the fulfillment of the Sabbath. First, the Sabbath Day was given to Israel as a day of rest because they “were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm” (Deut. 5:15). As slaves in Egypt, they had no rest, especially as their taskmasters increased Israel’s burdens (cf. Ex. 5:3-23). Indeed, God delivered the children of Israel from Egypt, and by His grace gave them this Sabbath Day of rest! No non-Jew today was ever enslaved with Israel in Egypt, and even those claiming to be “Jewish” today were not part of that people to whom the Law of Moses was given! Therefore, this Sabbath Day was never a part of the Christian’s restful reminder of what God did in liberating His people from Egyptian bondage!

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Second, according to Exodus 31:13, 17, the Sabbath Day was “a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you ... <sup>17</sup>It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever.” Some will sincerely point to the word “forever” and assume it means until Jesus comes again. However, “forever” can mean, as here, throughout an entire age/dis-pensation. For example, the Passover (Ex. 12:13-14), olive oil for the lamp in the tabernacle/temple (Ex. 27:20-21), animal sacrifices (Ex. 29:27-28), ceremonial washing (Ex. 30:19-21), and a host of other Old Testament practices are said to be “forever,” yet the God who cannot lie said that these things are no longer binding on His people (cf. Rom. 8:3-4; 10:4; Gal. 3:24-25; Col. 2:14; Heb. 8:7-13) (see Stearsman for a fuller treatment of this “forever” aspect).

Third, God did not bind the Sabbath until he made the covenant with Israel. Contrary to the thinking of some, the Sabbath was not given at creation, nor has it been observed by God’s people since that time. The Bible teaches that the Sabbath was not made known as a law for God’s people until they were assembled at Mount Sinai. Again, among the Ten Commandments Moses gave was:

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. <sup>9</sup>Six days you shall labor and do all your work, <sup>10</sup>but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your

stranger who is within your gates. <sup>11</sup>For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it. (Ex. 20:8-12)

In the days of Nehemiah, when the leaders among the people blessed the Lord for all that He had done in making Israel a special people, this was included:

You came down also on Mount Sinai, And spoke with them from heaven, And gave them just ordinances and true laws, Good statutes and commandments. <sup>14</sup>You made known to them Your holy Sabbath, And commanded them precepts, statutes and laws, By the hand of Moses Your servant. (Neh. 9:13-14)

Clearly, according to this passage, the Sabbath as a command came with Moses’ giving of the Law at Sinai, not with Adam and Eve in the Garden!

## The Law That Contained The Sabbath Day Has Been Abolished

Several times in Paul’s discussion with the Corinthians about the old law’s inferiority to the Gospel, the apostle said it “was passing away [was to be done away, KJV; fading as it was, NAS; was being brought to an end, ESV]” (2 Cor. 3:7, 11, 13-14). The word

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translated in these passages (from *katargeo*, καταργέω) means to render ineffective, nullify, cancel; destroy, abolish, do away with (Eph. 2:15) (Newman 95). Thus, the old law is no longer active; it is no longer binding. Further proof of this is given by the writer of Hebrews. Since the priesthood has been changed to accommodate Christ, who was not from Levi, the Law has had to change (Heb. 7:11-14). Christ, the Christian's High Priest, could not qualify for the priesthood under the old law! Because this change of the law, God's people no longer have to offer animal sacrifices (Num. 28:9-10). Because the old law has been abolished, God's people no longer observe the Sabbath (Eph. 2:11-17). The New Testament is authoritative today, and it contains no authority for keeping the Sabbath (cf. Col. 3:17)!

## The Significance Of the Lord's Day Has Come

Sunday, the first day of the week is very significant to New Testament Christianity. First, Jesus Christ was raised from the dead on this day (Lk. 24:1, 21, 46). Where was Jesus on the Sabbath Day before His resurrection? As Jesus was in the grave, so also was the Sabbath Day and, for that matter, the entire law of which the Sabbath was a part! Second, the risen Jesus appeared to His apostles on this day (Jn. 20:19-20). Third, the Holy Spirit came on this day in fulfillment of Joel's prophecy (Acts 2:1-4, 16 cf. Joel 2:28-32). The Day of Pentecost was always on Sunday because it was always fifty days after the Passover (i.e., seven Sabbaths plus one day equals fifty days cf. Lev. 23:15-16). Fourth, the church began on this day (Acts 2:41). Fifth, the Gospel as reality was first preached on this day (Acts 2:22-24). Sixth, the early church assembled on the first day of the week to partake of the Lord's Supper, to give of their means, and to participate in other elements of worship to God (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2).

Furthermore, the New Testament contains the following "new" elements when compared with the old law: (1) a new covenant (Heb. 8:13); (2) a new institution, the church of Christ (Eph. 1:20-23); (3) a new set of ordinances, or commandments (1 Cor. 11:2); (4) a new day of worship, Sunday, the first day of every week (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2); and (5) a new term to express the new day, "the Lord's Day" (Rev. 1:10). It should not, therefore, be surprising that the weekly day of worship would change from Saturday, the Sabbath Day, to Sunday, the first day

of the week!

Contrary to what some teach, worshiping God on Sunday is not the result of Constantine in AD 313, with his Edict of Milan, nor with his legalizing Christianity around AD 321. The New Testament was completed by the end of the first century, and it teaches the day of weekly worship is "the first day of the week" (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2). Also, extra-biblical sources before AD 321, such as Ignatius, Justin Martyr, and others (see Hoekema 168), confirm that Christians, following apostolic teaching, worshiped on the first day of the week.

## Conclusion

The Sabbath Day, along with the rest of the Law of which it was a part, has been completed in Christ (Mt. 5:17; Rom. 8:3-4; 10:4), and it is, therefore, no longer binding (Gal. 3:24-25). In fact, if Christians today go back to bind the Law as necessary for salvation, they have "fallen from grace" (Gal. 5:4). Although Christians can worship any day of the week (Jn. 4:23-24), they can confidently know that God has authorized Sunday, the first day of every week, as the day of weekly worship!

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**June 2019**

**Page 4**

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Tuesday	__ 8:30-12:00	Preacher and His Work (107)	Wheeler	3
	__ 1:00-4:15	Computers and Churches (290)	Wheeler	3
Wednesday	__ 8:30-12:00	English I: Grammar (124)	Patterson	3
	__ 1:00-4:15	Holy Spirit (250)	Kenyon	3
Thursday	__ 8:30-12:00	Logic (270)	Beals	3
	__ 1:00-4:15	Romans (261)	Brownlow-Dindy	3
Friday	__ 8:30-12:00	Church History (242)	Daugherty	3
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Thursday	__ 6:00-8:30	Denominational Dogmas (131) (Tenth Street church of Christ, Apopka)	Kenyon	2.5
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