

Are Christians Required to Observe the Sabbath?

I. The Old Testament Sabbath

- **Daily food production was prohibited.**
 - Gathering wood (Numbers 15:32-36)
 - Kindling a fire (Exodus 35:2-3)
- **Laborious work was prohibited.** (Leviticus 23:7, 8, 21, 25, 35, 36; Numbers 28:18, 25, 26, 29:1, 12, 35)
 - Field work (Exodus 34:21)
 - Treading winepresses (Nehemiah 13:15)
 - Selling goods (Nehemiah 10:31, 13:15-22; Amos 8:5)
 - Bearing burdens (Jeremiah 17:19-27) specifically with the understanding that the burden was being carried away to sell.
- **Godless personal pleasure was prohibited.** (Isaiah 58:13-14)
- **Fasting was prohibited.** Not only did the Lord command various feasts to take place on various Sabbaths, but there are illustrations of God's people being commanded to eat on the Sabbath. (Nehemiah 8:9-10)
- Prohibited work distracted from worship and encouraged trust in one's ability.
- **Condoned and Commanded work included:** military campaigns (Joshua 6:15), marriage and dedication feasts (Judges 14:12-18; I Kings 8:65), Levitical duties (II Kings 11:5-9; II Chronicles 23:4, 8) like preparing showbread and putting it out (I Chronicles 9:32), offering sacrifices (I Chronicles 21:32; Ezekiel 46:4-5), and guarding the temple (II Kings 1:5-9).

II. The Rabbis and the Sabbath

- The rabbis wanted to put a fence around the Torah — to make it hard to break God's law.
- But all of this was too much. It was never commanded by God. The Lord never specifically said that the tabernacle work that ceased on the Sabbath was to provide a template for all other work. They lost the whole point of delighting in and trusting God, and the attempt to protect people from displeasing the Lord actually displeased the Lord because following the rules became the main goal. In the end, God was not glorified because the actual purpose of the Law was being completely missed

III. The New Testament Sabbath

- **It instituted healthy cycles of work and rest for the creation.** In the New Testament we see that nothing in this category has changed. Modern Christians aren't superheroes who no longer need to care for our bodies because we have caffeine and electric lights. Our animals still need rest. Our land still needs rest. We still need rest.
- **It provided a consistent time of corporate worship.**
 - We no longer live in a theocracy. Like all of the other rules and regulations that were unique to the Jewish people under the Old Covenant, we are not commanded to corporately worship God on Saturday any more than we're commanded not to eat shellfish or bacon.
 - Also the Scriptures and history are very clear that the worship of Yahweh among Christians was moved to Sunday in observance of the Resurrection. Still, modern believers are to make sure they assemble with God's people for corporate worship. This is not something we're allowed to forsake.

- **It exemplified the spiritual imagery of spiritual rest in a relationship with God.** The imagery is still true today. We look forward to the future Sabbath where we enter our eternal rest with God. And when we don't rest, it's easy to miss the anticipation of our future rest.
- **It promoted the need to trust the Lord.**
 - We still need to trust God. He is still our refuge and strength. He still wants to provide spiritual rest to all those who trust in Him. He still provides peace and contentment that passes all comprehension.
 - This means that from the beginning of the Church Age until now, the key functions of the Sabbath are just as applicable to Christians as they were to the genuine believers in the Children of Israel.

IV. Jesus and the Sabbath

- **Jesus observed the Sabbath.** Jesus absolutely had to observe the Sabbath. He observed the very first one right after finishing Creation, He was the one Who demanded that the Sabbath be holy unto God, and that is precisely why He and His followers observed it while He was on earth. The Sabbath was more than a mere theocratic show. It was tied directly to Creation, and it was designed to do so much more than give us a break from work.
- **Jesus didn't follow the manmade rules that stole God's glory.** In the same way it's important to acknowledge that Jesus submitted to the Old Testament expectations for the Sabbath by avoiding condemned work and embracing commanded work, it's important to realize that He rejected the manmade additions to the Sabbath.

V. The Christian and the Sabbath

- **Modern Christians do not need to observe the Old Testament ceremonial laws that were concluded with the fulfillment in Christ.** However, the one-in-seven Day of Rest cannot be swept under ceremonial law rug. The main purposes of the Day of Rest supersede the specific ceremonial requirements that were part of the Old Testament Sabbath traditions. The core of the Sabbath wasn't rooted in tradition and law, but in God's very character and man's very need.
- **Modern Christians need to rest one-day-in-seven so they can be Christ-honoring stewards of their bodies.** We aren't superheroes unfazed by overwork. The same is true of our animals and land. Just like before the fall, man and nature need to rest once a week.
- **Modern Christians need to rest one-day-in-seven so they can be Christ-honoring stewards of their spirits.**
 - The Scripture is very clear that God's people need to participate in corporate sanctification and that God gave us pastors to facilitate that process.
 - Gathering as the Church on Sunday is very important. But I don't think that a mere 1 to 2 hours of services is exactly what God intends.
- **Modern Christians need to rest one-day-in-seven to give God the priority in their lives.** We need to trust Him. We need to obey Him. We need to rest in Him.
- **Modern Christians need to rest one-day-in-seven as a unique way to love the people in their lives.**
 - Are Christians required to observe the Sabbath? Simply put, yes. But there is a difference between the way modern Christians will observe it and the way that ancient Jews observed it.
 - In order to put our full trust in God, we need to submit to His plan for our physical and spiritual thriving.