

“Does Sunday Church Violate the Sabbath Commandment?”

Hello Michael, I read your [article](#) on why Christians go to church on Sunday instead of the sabbath. Our Sunday school teacher gave us an assignment to find out how this goes along with the commandment “Remember the sabbath and keep it holy.” Are we breaking this command? Is there any scripture I can share with the class that explains this?

The command to observe the Sabbath is rooted in both creation and redemption. It was a non-negotiable command for Israel under the Mosaic Covenant. However, it seems to me that this is no longer the case for Christians today, for we are now called to relate to God under the terms and conditions of the New Covenant. Hence, I personally don't think that Christians can violate this command for I do not think it is still in effect (at least not as it was under the Old Covenant).

That the Old Covenant has been made obsolete is stated explicitly in Hebrews 8:13. Paul recognizes that there will be difference of opinion among believers regarding how one observes (or does not observe) certain days like the Sabbath in Romans 14:5-6, 13. He clearly indicates that such observance is not necessary for salvation in Galatians 4:8-11. In Colossians 2:16-17 he says that we are not to judge (or let ourselves be judged) with respect to things like Sabbath day observances, for these things are but “a shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.” Finally, the author of Hebrews reminds us of that true Sabbath rest that remains for God's people today. This, I take it, refers to a “rest” that is available to us in some respects now, but will be fully and perfectly realized only in the future, in the new heaven and new earth. Insofar as this “rest” is available to us now, it is not limited to a single day of the week, but is rather a “perpetual” sort of “rest” that we can enter by

surrendering ourselves completely to the will of God and trusting wholly in what Christ accomplished for us through His death and resurrection. In other words, we cease trying to earn God's favor by what we do and we "rest" in the fact that Christ has already done this for us! Properly understood, of course, this does not mean that we cease doing good works, which we are clearly told to do (see Ephesians 2:10 and Titus 2:14). It does mean, however, that we can get off the treadmill of trying to earn God's favor by what we do (and "rest" in the fact that Christ has done this for us).

The Sabbath day rest under the Old Covenant, then, is but a type or "shadow" of this fuller "rest" that we can enjoy in Christ—both now (through faith) and in the future new heaven and new earth.

Of course, there is nothing wrong with setting aside a day for rest each week, provided that one does not think that this gains them some sort of special favor with God, favor that is somehow not available to all who trust Christ for salvation. In other words, as I understand it, a Christian is free to set aside a day for rest, but is not required to do so. All Christians, however, are clearly commanded to set aside time for worship and fellowship with other believers (see Hebrews 10:23-25). This, as I see it, is the primary purpose for Christians to set aside Sunday each week. It is to be a day for worshiping the Lord and enjoying fellowship with one another, and encouraging one another to love and good deeds.

Of course, not everyone will agree with what I've written here. But this seems to me to be the New Testament teaching about this issue.

Shalom in Christ,

Michael Gleghorn

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