

Are Christians To Keep The Seventh Day As A Sabbath?

by Bill Crews

There are some religious groups, such as the “Seventh-Day Adventists,” founded largely by Mrs. Ellen G. White; the “Worldwide Church of God” and the “Church of God International,” founded by Herbert W. Armstrong and his son, Gomer Ted Armstrong; the “Church of God (Seventh-Day),” one out of Denver, Colorado and the other out of Salem, West Virginia; and the “Seventh-Day Baptist” — besides the various Jewish religions — that maintain that the seventh-day of the week is still a “sabbath” (“rest”) day which must be “kept holy” by man. While I do not agree with the Protestant/Catholic contention that “God changed the sabbath day from the seventh day of the week to the first day of the week,” and I object to calling the first day of the week “the Christian’s sabbath,” I do not believe the Bible teaches that Christians are to observe the seventh day of the week or any other day of the week as a sabbath. Please consider the following points from the Bible:

1. The first time any sabbath-day is mentioned in the Scriptures, the first time any people are called upon to observe the seventh day of the week as a “sabbath” or rest day is in Exodus 16:21-30. Genesis 2:1-3, written by Moses about 1450 B.C., refers back to creation, but does not speak of any sabbath day observance by men. It is referred back to when God later gave man observance of the seventh day sabbath as the basis for choosing that day (Exodus 20:11).
2. The observance of the seventh day sabbath began (in Exodus 16) before the law of Moses was given from Mt. Sinai (starting in Exodus 19), just as the first Passover occurred and subsequent Passovers, as well as subsequent feasts of unleavened bread, were commanded (Exodus 12) before the law of Moses was given. But all of these were incorporated into and became part of the law of Moses.
3. The seventh day sabbath was a day of rest, not a day of worship (the Jews turned it into a day of worship, as well as a day of rest, when they began building synagogues during the 70 years of exile). The Israelites were to “*keep it holy*” by doing no work (Exodus 20:9-10), by building no fires (Exodus 35:3), by doing no baking or boiling (Exodus 16:23), by bearing no burdens (Jeremiah 17:21-22). The priests were to offer two lambs (Numbers 28:9-10) and lay out fresh showbread and eat the week-old showbread (Leviticus 24:5-9) on that day.
4. Those who profaned the seventh day sabbath were to be put death (Exodus 31: 14-15). An instance of such is given in Numbers 15:32-36 — the man’s sin? Gathering firewood on the sabbath day.
5. The seventh day sabbath was a sign between God and the Israelite nation (Exodus 31:12, 17; see also Ezekiel 20:10-12; there is no indication anywhere that it was a sign between God and any other people. Gentiles are nowhere in either the Old or the New Testaments charged with breaking the sabbath or failing to keep the sabbath (see, for example, Romans 1:18-32 with its long catalog of sins on the part of the Gentiles). Over and over the Jews are condemned for committing this sin.
6. The seventh day sabbath was given to the Israelite nation to serve as a memorial of their deliverance from Egyptian bondage. In observing it they would remember that they had been slaves in the land of Egypt where they had no days of rest at all! Deuteronomy 5:12-15. It was to be observed by every Israelite, by their menservants and their maid-servants, and even by any strangers so-journeying among them.
7. To the Israelites whom God brought out of Egypt was He speaking when He said, “*Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy,*” Exodus 20:1-2, 8; Deuteronomy 5:1-3, 12.

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