

Are Christians To Keep The Seventh Day As A Sabbath?

by Bill Crews

There are religious groups (such as the “Seventh-Day Adventists” founded by Mrs. Ellen White, the “Worldwide Church of God” and the “Church of God International” founded by Herbert W. Armstrong and his son, Garner Ted Armstrong, and the “Church of God (Seventh-Day),” one out of Denver, Colorado and the other out of Salem, West Virginia, 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 as a sabbath or rest day. 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 1500 B.C., refers back to creation, but does not speak of any sabbath-day observance by man. It is referred back to when God later gave man (the Jewish nation) the command to keep the seventh day as a day of rest and brings out the reason for choosing that day (Exodus 20:8-11; please read verse 11).
2. The observance of the seventh-day Sabbath began before the law of Moses was given, just as the first Passover occurred before the law of Moses was given (see Exodus 12), but both were incorporated into the law of Moses (Exodus 20:8; Leviticus 23:4-5).
3. The seventh-day Sabbath was a day of rest, not a day of worship. The Israelites were to “keep it holy” by doing no work (Exodus 20:9-10), by kindling 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 extra lambs (Numbers 28:9-10) and lay out fresh shewbread and eat the week-old shewbread (Leviticus 24:5-9) on that day of the week.
4. Those who profaned the seventh-day Sabbath were to be put to death (Exodus 31:14-15). An instance of such is given in Numbers 15:32-36 — the man’s sin? Gathering sticks on the Sabbath day.
5. The seventh-day Sabbath was a sign between God and the Israelite nation (Exodus 31:13, 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 never charged with breaking or failing to keep the Sabbath anywhere in either the Old Testament or the New Testament (see, for example, Romans 1:18-32 with its long catalog of sins committed by 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 their Egyptian bondage (Deuteronomy 5:12-15). In Egypt, as slaves, they had no days of rest at all; no wonder it was a sign between them and God.
7. To the Israelites whom God brought out of Egypt was He speaking when He said, “*Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy.*” Notice the contexts of Exodus 20:1-2, 8 and Deuteronomy 5:1-3, 12; they are addressed to and were for those Israelites.

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