

## **S A B B A T H** -- The only Commandment God took away from Israel

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Early Christians struggled with which day was appropriate to recognize as a day of rest. Both Saturday and Sunday were observed for hundreds of years. God gave Israel Ten Commandments. Nine of them deal with moral obligations, or truths. One of them was given to Israel to provide for a specific weekly time of rest and relaxation – **Ex. 20**. This day of rest was given by God to the Jewish people (**Ex. 20:1-2**). The Ten Commandments called Israel to make Saturday as the day of rest. Early Christians were mostly of Jewish decent. Jesus rose on Sunday - **John 20:1**, and Jesus said that He came to fulfill the law - **Matt. 5:17**. Therefore His rest, and our rest, are in Jesus. In other words, the rest day we look forward to...our eternal rest...was fulfilled on that day of resurrection when all things (our salvation) were fulfilled – on Sunday - **Matt. 5:17-18, 12:1-12**. Additionally, the early Christians did not want to appear like they were doing “works” by following the Jewish Sabbath Law. They recognized there is nothing wrong with resting on Saturday. Saturday, however did carry the image of keeping the law to obtain salvation (doing works), which Jesus warned against – **Eph. 2:8-9**.

Justin Martyr wrote in 160 AD (long before the Roman Church became powerful), that Sunday was already the day of worship. It was not until 321 AD that the Roman emperor, who had converted to Christianity, ordered Sunday to be the official day. He did this to unite the empire in the Christian faith, and move away from the Jewish Traditions. Then in 343-381 AD, at the council of Bishops in Laodicea, Christians voted to establish Sunday as the day of rest. The Roman Catholic Church with Pope Sylvester became the authority in the west under emperor Otto III in 1,000 AD and confirmed Sunday as the officially recognized day of rest for Christians.

Today, Sunday is still the traditional day of rest and worship for Christians. However, some have chosen to worship on Saturday, in order to keep the Jewish Law.

Today, all of The Ten Commandments are still in effect for Israel, and Jesus reminded us (we who are not Jewish), that we also need to keep the nine moral commandments. However Jesus noted that those who worship Jesus (**John 14:6**), are not held to any specific day for rest, as long as we set aside some time each week for rest out of love for one another – **Mark 2:24-27; Col. 2:16-17**. The day of rest is a gift from God, not a moral command.

The nine commands of moral obligation include the truth of one and only one God, no other way (**John 14:6**), no lying, no cheating, no stealing, no murder, no lusting, no coveting, and we must love our parents, and we must not commit adultery, which is engaging in sex outside of marriage between one man and one woman. Adultery thus even includes most people who remarry after divorce (see *Marriage & Divorce Study* at Target Truth Ministries.com). In **Romans 3:19-28**, we learn how the law convicts us of sin, and that no one will be justified by keeping the laws, because no one can possibly keep them. And, in fact, it is only faith in Jesus that will fulfill the law.

The other command, to keep the Sabbath, or rest day, was a reward, a special day of rest, a day of celebrating the weeks work, and in time it became a day to read the Scriptures as Israel rested, and celebrated, and reflected on how great God is.

Israel had no problem keeping the Sabbath. It was the other nine commands they had trouble with. **Hosea 2:11** tells us how God punished Israel and took away their Sabbath because of their breaking continually the other nine moral commands. So the Sabbath is the only command God removed from Israel, for a period of time, while they were in captivity.

The Saturday Sabbath was only one of the Sabbath days. The 7 Feasts of Israel (Lev. 23), which usually do not occur on Saturday, also includes Sabbath days of rest, and no work was to be done on these Sabbaths. In fact, they were called High Holy Days, Holy Convocations, and Sacred Assemblies. Sunday, the Resurrection day of Jesus, was one of these special Sabbath Feast days – Feast # 3.

Jesus tells us He gave the Jewish people this Saturday day of rest because otherwise they would just work all the time. This Sabbath was a benefit for Israel. Jesus tells us that the Sabbath (a day of rest), was made for man, and that we were not to worship the day itself – **Mark 2:24-27**.

Jesus in His early ministry to the Jewish people, in **Matt. 5:17-19, 13:1**, told Israel not to do away with the Sabbath. Later in Jesus ministry – **Matt. 13:1**– He told the gentiles that He actually disapproved of those who did not have a heart for God, and who sought to profit from the day of rest, and use it for personal gain - **Matt. 15:8-9**. In **Col. 2:16-17**, God tells us that Jesus is the way to salvation – eternal life – our real day of rest - and not any certain day of the week.

Israel lives under all ten commands of the law. However, Jesus commands those who become Christians to observe the nine commands of morality – **Matt. 15:15-20** – but concerning the command to observe a day of rest, His word is to not judge each other on which day we choose to observe-**Rom. 13:8-10, Rom. 14:5-10, Rom. 11:6, Eph. 2:8-9**.

Even in **James 2:8-13**, we are admonished to keep all the commandments of morality, and also to keep a day of rest, however we are to display love concerning things like which day is chosen by the faithful.

In **Matt. 15:8-9, 15-20**, Jesus tells us that it is the condition of our heart which He is concerned with, not which day is a rest day.

If our purpose in choosing Sunday as a day of rest is to glorify God, then God is pleased. If our purpose in choosing Saturday is to glorify God, then God is pleased. If our purpose in choosing a certain day is to keep the law given to Israel, then we have missed the purpose for Jesus coming to us, which is so that we may worship freely.

From the prophet **Isaiah 66:22-33**, we learn that God will one day call Israel, and also all nations, to rest on the Sabbath in the future Millennium. A call to thanksgiving as a result of reconciliation. A joyful memorial. A holiday we will gladly observe.

Perhaps you rest on Saturday. I know some who's day off is Tuesday. We can all praise God for our day off, whatever it is, and may we worship Him on *every* day, rest or not.

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