

Christ, the Early Church, and the Sabbath

Many have asked the question, "What was Christ's example and teaching in regard to the Holy Sabbath day (the 7th day Sabbath) which we find given in the Ten Commandments?" And, whatever Christ's example and teaching was, how can we be sure to follow the example and teaching that Jesus has given us? In seeking answer to these questions, we will appeal to only one authority—that is, the Holy Scriptures, which Jesus and the Apostle make abundantly clear, should be our only authority for all doctrines (teachings), and practices (ref. 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Matthew 4:4)

1. **Did Jesus regularly worship God in church (Temple, Synagogue) upon the Sabbath? (Luke 4:16)** Did he also participate in the church services when possible?
2. **What did Jesus teach about the Sabbath? (Matthew 12:1-14; additional references to Christ's teaching and example on the Sabbath can be found in Mark 2:23-3:5 and Luke 6:1-10)**
 - a. Did Jesus here teach that we ignore or disregard the holy Sabbath day? Or did he here teach that we should change God's holy day of worship to another day? (certainly not)
 - b. What kind of principles was Jesus teaching about the Sabbath? Are there certain types of needful and light things that might be done without offending the holiness of the Sabbath, or the holy God who created the Sabbath?
 - c. If Jesus is the "Lord of the Sabbath," does that mean He has every right to teach us how to keep it?
 - d. **Did Jesus really "break" the Sabbath as some of the Pharisees accused him of?** (or did he just break the traditions which some men had placed upon the Sabbath?) (ref. Exodus 20:8-11; **John 15:10**; 1 John 3:4, 5).
 - e. Did Jesus teach the Sabbath as a day of freedom from labor and burdens of sickness and oppression? Was it a day of mercy (or a day of affliction as some men would have made it seem?)? (**see also Mark 2:27,28**). Who is the "Lord of the Sabbath" (who can instruct us in regard to this holy day)?
3. **Did the early Christians (followers of Jesus) keep the Sabbath when Jesus was alive, and when Jesus died? (Luke 23:52-24:1)**
4. **Did Jesus expect His followers to be keeping the Sabbath as late as AD 70 when Jerusalem was to be destroyed by the Romans? (Matthew 24:15,16, 20)**
5. **Do we have a Biblical record of the early Christian church worshipping on and keeping the 7th day Sabbath holy? (Acts 13:42,44; 16:13; 17:2; 18:4)** In these verses we see that the early Christians were worshipping on the weekly Sabbath days; both Jews and Gentiles. Paul went to worship "every Sabbath..." at the Synagogues. Christians were still meeting among the other Jewish worshipers at this time. And when there was no temple building to worship in, they went out by the river (or perhaps a similar place) to worship the Lord on the Sabbath day.

6. **What was the Christian view in regard to the keeping of the Ten Commandments? Did they consider it very important to keep every one of them? (See James 2:10-12; 1 Corinthians 7:18, 19).** Note: In the early church there was quite a controversy between some of the Jewish believers, the new Gentile Christians and the Apostle's teaching over circumcision (ref. also Acts 15:5, 24, 29). The Apostles taught that only Baptism and conversion was needful, not circumcision. Could you imagine the controversy that would have arisen if they ever told people not to keep the 7th day Sabbath?!!! But, the Scriptures remain silent on that matter—there was no such controversy. Clearly, no such thing ever happened! Christians loved, upheld, taught, and kept the Ten Commandments! That is what Jesus and the Apostles had taught them to do (John 14:15,21; Romans 3:31).
7. **What additional meaning did the Sabbath hold for the Christians (besides the wonderful fact that it commemorated the Creation of our world, in which Jesus himself was a direct participant—John 1:1-3,14; Colossians 1:16)? (Hebrews 4:4,5,7-11)**

- a. Note: The Early Christians and the Apostles saw an even more extended meaning in the keeping of the 7th day Sabbath. Not only was it a day to remember the great work of Creation, but also a day to remember the great work of Redemption!! God had finished the work of Creation on the 6th day, and then rested from all his work on the Sabbath (Gen. 2:1-3). Mankind had rested with Him. On the Cross, Jesus had died for our sins, paying the great price of His blood for our redemption. Jesus died on a Friday evening and cried out, "It is finished" (John 19:30, 31). He then rested in the grave upon the Holy Sabbath day, thus commemorating the great work of Redemption, as it was purchased by His own blood!! He then resurrected to continue His work for us upon the 1st day (commonly known as Sunday), to continue His work for our salvation.

Those who rest in Jesus Christ have "ceased from their own works as God did from His" (Hebrews 4:10). Thus, the 7th day Sabbath teaches our dependence upon Jesus Christ as our redeemer. We are saved, not by our own works, but by His own works. And we must enter into the rest of God, remembering, that Jesus himself has finished the work for obtaining our salvation by His righteous life and His sacrificial death in place of ours. Jesus had finished all the work of Creation upon the 6th day, and man's first full day of life was in experiencing rest and enjoyment with God—God had already done the work for man's sake. A so it is with our salvation, that we must rest in the work of Jesus Christ, which He has done for us (Ephesians 2:8, 9).

8. What are some knowledgeable Christians in danger of doing today, that Jesus reprimanded the religious leaders of his day for doing? (Mark 7:5-13) What should we do about this? (Acts 17:30).

Question (s) for the Heart:

If Jesus, the Apostles, and the early Christian church were keeping the Sabbath "according to the commandment" (Luke 23:56), would you like to keep God's 7th day Sabbath holy as well? _____