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Appendix 5a: The Sabbath And The Day to Go to Church, Two Different Things

This page is part of the series on the 4th commandment: The Sabbath:

1. Appendix 5a: The Sabbath And The Day to Go to Church, Two Different Things (Current page).
2. Appendix 5b: How to Keep the Sabbath in Modern Times
3. Appendix 5c: Applying Sabbath Principles in Daily Life
4. Appendix 5d: Food on the Sabbath — Practical Guidance
5. Appendix 5e: Transportation on the Sabbath
6. Appendix 5f: Technology and Entertainment on the Sabbath
7. Appendix 5g: Work and the Sabbath — Navigating Real-World Challenges

WHAT IS THE DAY TO GO TO CHURCH?

NO COMMANDMENT ON A SPECIFIC DAY FOR WORSHIP

Let's begin this study by getting right to the point: there is no commandment from God that indicates what day a Christian should attend church, but there is one that determines on which day he should rest.

The Christian may be Pentecostal, Baptist, Catholic, Presbyterian, or any other denomination, attending worship and Bible studies on Sundays or any other day, but

that does not exempt him from the obligation to rest on the day ordained by God: the seventh day.

WORSHIP CAN BE ON ANY DAY

God never stipulated what day His children here on earth should worship Him: not Saturday, not Sunday, not Monday, Tuesday, etc.

Any day that the Christian wants to worship God with his prayers, praises, and studies, he can do so, either alone, with family, or in a group. The day he gathers with his brothers to worship God has nothing to do with the fourth commandment and is not related to any other commandment given by God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

THE SEVENTH-DAY COMMANDMENT

REST, NOT WORSHIP, IS THE FOCUS

If God really wanted His children to go to the tabernacle, temple, or church on the Sabbath (or Sunday), He would obviously have mentioned this important detail in the commandment.

But, as we will see below, this never happened. The commandment only says that we are not to work or force anyone, not even animals, to work on the day that He, God, sanctified.

FOR WHAT REASON DID GOD SET ASIDE THE SEVENTH DAY?

God mentions the Sabbath as a holy day (separate, consecrated) in numerous places in Holy Scripture, beginning with the week of creation: "And God completed on the seventh day the work which he had made, and rested [Heb. שבת (Shabbat) v. to cease, rest, desist] on that day from all the work He had done. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it [Heb. קדוש (kadosh) adj. holy, consecrated, set apart], because in him he rested from all the work that he had created and made" (Genesis 2:2-3).

In this first mention of the Sabbath, God lays the foundation of the commandment that He would later give us in more detail, which is:

1. The Creator separated this day from the six days that preceded it (Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, etc.).
2. He rested on this day. We know, obviously, that the Creator does not need to rest, since God is Spirit (John 4:24). However, He used this human language, known in theology as anthropomorphism, to make us understand what He expects His children on earth to do on the seventh day: rest, in Hebrew, Shabbat.



By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

THE SABBATH AND SIN

The fact that the sanctification (or separation) of the seventh day from the other days occurred so early in human history is significant because it makes it clear that the

Creator's desire for us to rest specifically on this day is not tied to sin, since sin did not yet exist on earth. This indicates that in heaven and on the new earth, we will continue to rest on the seventh day.

THE SABBATH AND JUDAISM

We also note that this is not a tradition of Judaism, since Abraham, who gave rise to the Jews, would not appear on the scene until several centuries later. Rather, it is a matter of showing His true children on earth His behavior in this day, so that we can imitate our Father, in the same way that Jesus did: *"Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father doing; for whatever He does, the Son also does likewise" (John 5:19)*.

THE SEVENTH DAY IN GENESIS

This is the reference in Genesis, which makes it more than clear that the Creator separated the seventh day from all others and that this is a day of rest.

Up until now in the Bible, the Lord had not been specific about what man, who was created the day before, was to do on the seventh day. Only when the chosen people began their journey to the promised land did God give them detailed instructions about the seventh day.

After 400 years of living as slaves in a pagan land, the chosen people needed clarification regarding the seventh day. This is what God Himself wrote on a stone tablet so that everyone would understand that it was God, and not a human being, who gave these orders.

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT IN FULL

Let's look at what God wrote about the seventh day in its entirety:
"Remember the Sabbath [Heb. שבת (Shabbat) v. to cease, to rest, to desist], to sanctify him [Heb. קדש (kadesh) v. sanctify, consecrate]. Six days thou shalt labor, and do all thy work [Heb. מלאכה (m'larrá) n.d. work, occupation]; but on the seventh day [Heb. ויום השביעי (uma shivi-i) seventh day] is rest for the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work, neither you, nor your

son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your maidservant, nor your animal, nor the stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and sanctified it" (Exodus 20:8-11).

WHY DOES THE COMMANDMENT BEGIN WITH THE VERB "REMEMBER"?

The fact that God begins the commandment with the verb "remember" [Heb. זכר (zakar) v. to remember, to recall] makes it clear that resting on the seventh day was not something new to His people.

Because of their slave status in Egypt, they could not do so often or in the right way. Also, note that this is by far the most detailed of the 10 commandments given to the people, occupying one-third of the Bible verses devoted to the commandments.

THE COMMANDMENT'S FOCUS

We could talk at length about this passage in Exodus, but I want to focus on the purpose of this study: to show that the Lord did not mention anything in the fourth commandment related to worshiping God, gathering together in a place to sing, pray, or study the Bible.

What He did emphasize is that we must remember that it was this day, the seventh, that He sanctified and set apart as a day of rest.

God's command to rest on the seventh day is so serious that He expanded the commandment to include our visitors (foreigners), employees (servants), and even animals, making it very clear that no secular work would be allowed on this day.

GOD'S WORK, BASIC NEEDS, AND ACTS OF KINDNESS ON THE SABBATH

JESUS' TEACHINGS ON THE SABBATH

When He was among us, Jesus made it clear that acts related to God's work on earth (John 5:17), basic human needs such as eating (Matthew 12:1), and acts of kindness toward others (John 7:23) can and should be done on the seventh day without breaking the fourth commandment.

RESTING AND DELIGHTING IN GOD

On the seventh day, the child of God rests from his work, thus imitating his Father in heaven. He also worships God and delights in His law, not only on the seventh day, but every day of the week.

The child of God loves and is pleased to obey all that His Father has taught Him:
"Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers, but in the law of the Lord is his delight, and meditates on His law day and night" (Psalm 1:1-2; see also: Psalm 40:8; 112:1; 119:11; 119:35; 119:48; 119:72; 119:92; Job 23:12; Jeremiah 15:16; Luke 2:37; 1 John 5:3).

THE PROMISE IN ISAIAH 58:13-14

God used the prophet Isaiah as His spokesman to make one of the Bible's most beautiful promises to those who obey Him by observing the Sabbath as a day of rest:
"If you keep your foot from profaning the Sabbath, from doing your will on my holy day; if you call the Sabbath a delight, holy, and glorious of the Lord; and you honor him, not following your own ways, nor seeking your own will, nor speaking vain words, then you will delight in the Lord, and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth, and I will sustain you with the inheritance of your father Jacob; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken" (Isaiah 58:13-14).

THE BLESSINGS OF THE SABBATH ARE ALSO FOR THE GENTILES

A beautiful special promise linked to the seventh day is reserved for those who seek God's blessings. To the same prophet, the Lord went further, making it clear that the blessings of the Sabbath are not limited to the Jews.

GOD'S PROMISE TO GENTILES WHO KEEP THE SABBATH

*"And as for the **gentiles** [נֵכָר nekhar (strangers, foreigners, non-jews)] who join the Lord to serve Him, to love the name of the Lord, and to be His servants, to all who **keep the Sabbath** without profaning it, and **embrace My covenant**, I will bring them to My holy mountain, and I will make them glad in My house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted upon my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples"* (Isaiah 56:6-7).

SATURDAY AND CHURCH ACTIVITIES

The obedient Christian, whether a Messianic Jew or a Gentile, rests on the seventh day because this, and no other, is the day the Lord instructed him to rest.

If you want to interact with your God in a group, or worship God alongside your brothers and sisters in Christ, you can do so whenever there is opportunity, which usually happens on Sundays and also on Wednesdays or Thursdays, when many churches hold prayer, doctrine, healing, and other services.

SYNAGOGUE ATTENDANCE ON SATURDAYS

Both Jews in the biblical period and modern Orthodox Jews attend synagogues on Saturdays because it is obviously more convenient, since they do not work on this day, in obedience to the fourth commandment.

JESUS AND THE SABBATH

Jesus himself attended the temple on Saturdays regularly, but at no time did He imply that He went to the temple on the seventh day because that was part of the fourth

commandment—because it simply isn't.



Model of the Jerusalem Temple before it was destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D. Jesus regularly attended and preached in the Temple and synagogues.

JESUS WORKED FOR THE SALVATION OF SOULS ON THE SABBATH

Jesus was busy seven days a week in accomplishing His Father's work:
"My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of Him who sent me and to finish His work" (John 4:34).

And also:
"But Jesus answered them, "My Father has been working until now, and I, too, am working" (John 5:17).

On the Sabbath, He often found the greatest number of people in the temple who needed to hear the Kingdom message:
"He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day He went into the synagogue, as was His custom. He stood up to read" (Luke 4:16).

THE TEACHING OF JESUS, THROUGH WORD AND EXAMPLE

A true disciple of Christ models their life in every way. He clearly indicated that if we love Him, we will be obedient to the Father and the Son. This is not a requirement for the weak, but for those who have their eyes fixed on the Kingdom of God and are ready to do whatever it takes to obtain eternal life. Even if it incites opposition from friends, the church, and family. The commandment concerning hair and beard, the tzitzit, circumcision, the Sabbath, and prohibited meats are ignored by almost all of Christianity, and those who refuse to follow the crowd will certainly be persecuted, as Jesus told us. Obedience to God demands courage, but the reward is eternity.