

Sabbath and Sunday

Many have made inquiry as to the Sabbath day and Sunday. Some “Christian” religions observe the first day of the week as a day of worship and some the seventh day. Much debate has been held on the issue. It has been said, “There was and is a commandment to keep holy the Sabbath day, but that Sabbath day was not Sunday...It will be said, however, and with some show of triumph, that the sabbath was transferred from the seventh to the first day of the week...Where can the record be found? Not in the New Testament — absolutely not. There is no scriptural evidence of the change of the sabbath institution from the seventh to the first day of the week” (Dr. Edward T. Hiscox). This statement is indeed true. The “Sabbath” never was “transferred from the seventh to the first day of the week.” The sabbath will always be the seventh day. The first day of the week is not the Christian sabbath. It is simply the first day of the week. The question is, does the New Testament bind sabbath keeping on the Christian?

In an effort to bind the Sabbath day, some religionists hold a position that there are two laws in the Old Testament: the moral law and the ceremonial law. The Ten Commandments are the moral law and the Law of Moses the ceremonial laws. By so doing they can observe the seventh day and disregard all the other laws they do not want to obey. Many passages could be utilized to address the issue of Sabbath day keeping, but one will suffice for our consideration.

In Romans 7:1-8, the apostle Paul, as he is led by the Holy Spirit, said, “Wherefore, my brethren, ye also were made dead to the law through the body of Christ.” If a person is “dead to” something, it no longer controls their life. That’s the point Paul was making by alluding to the marriage relationship, “For the woman that hath a husband is bound by law to the husband while he liveth; but if the husband die, she is discharged from the law of the husband.” As we consider the statement of Paul, we need but ask the question, “To what law does he refer?” Paul says, “I had not known sin, except through the law: for I had not known coveting, except the law had said, ‘Thou shalt not covet’: but sin, finding occasion, wrought in me through the commandment all manner of coveting: for apart from the law sin is dead.” The “law” to which Paul refers, “Thou shalt not covet,” is one of the Ten Commandments.

It is sometimes affirmed that we are to follow the example of Christ and that Christ and his apostles went to Jewish assemblies on the Sabbath day. This is true, yet, we must also remember that “God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law” (Galatians 4:4). The apostles were also Jewish and bound by law to keep the law until it came to a full end. Justification under the law ceased when Christ died, “For where a testament is, there must of necessity be the death of him that made it. For a testament is of force where there hath been death: for it doth never avail while he that made it liveth” (Hebrews 9:16-17). The apostle Paul said, “Ye are severed from Christ, ye who would be justified by the law; ye are fallen away from grace” (Galatians 5:4). Yet, we find that as Jews, James and all the elders, said to Paul, “We have four men that have a vow on them; these take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges for them, that they may shave their heads; and all shall know that there is no truth in the things whereof they have been informed concerning thee; but that thou thyself also walketh orderly, keeping the law” (Acts 21:23-24). The “law” to which they refer is what some classify as the ceremonial law. If man is to follow the examples of the apostles, without consideration to the time, circumstance and people to whom it was written, then this example would bind the Christian to the keeping of the “ceremonial law.” However, when we understand that Paul was a Jew, and bound by the law as a Jew until it came to its full end, which it did at the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A. D. when the Roman

general Titus destroyed the nation and thereby nullified the law, then we have a better understanding of what it was that Paul did and why.

Though Sunday is not the “Christian Sabbath,” it is, nonetheless, the day established by the apostles of Jesus Christ for the follower of Christ to assemble for worship: “And upon the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul discoursed with them...” (Acts 20:7). This breaking of bread is not a common meal as we see Paul verified the authority for saints to assemble to eat the “Lord’s supper” (1 Corinthians 11:17-32), but denied them the authority “to come together in the church” to eat a common meal: “If any man is hungry, let him eat at home; that your coming together be not unto judgment” (1 Corinthians 11:34). The scriptures also verify the authority for the saints to assemble on the first day of the week, when Paul said, “Upon the first day of the week let each one of you lay by him in store, as he may prosper...” (1 Corinthians 16:2).

When Paul said, “Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a feast day or a new moon or a sabbath day...” (Colossians 2:16), that’s what he meant. And this admonition covers the moral and ceremonial Law of Moses. ret