



The Sabbath Question

The Sabbath question seems to be a ridiculous topic to most people. Some people say that the New Testament Sabbath is Sunday while others believe we should still be going to church on Saturday, the seventh day of the week. Most Christians I've spoken to about this have replied that as long as we go to church at least one day of the week, what difference does it make which day it is?

The truth is, our attitude and understanding of the Sabbath makes a big difference. An improper understanding of the Sabbath has caused a lot of problems within the church, many of which are not even seen as a problems at all. What I mean is that if we had a proper understanding of the Sabbath, perhaps people would better understand their lives in Christ, because right now few Christians have any problem with how they live outside their Sunday church attendance. Because of the current misunderstanding about this time set aside by God, most Christians have a very physical view of the Sabbath by thinking they are good Christians as long as they go to church on a regular basis, but they are actually placing themselves under the Law instead of under Grace. Without a proper, truth-based understanding of the Sabbath, as it relates to New Testament Christianity, most people will never really understand their obligation toward God as followers of Jesus Christ.

When we see the Sabbath as a particular day of the week, aren't we just going by the old law, but changing it to suit our current needs? Paul made it very clear in the book of Romans that we are under grace and not under the Law, and that those who are under the Law will be judged by the Law. In this case the judgment could be very harsh because we've changed God's law to suit ourselves and expected God to accept what we've done.

When we get all wrapped up in a particular day of the week, no matter which day it is, or why, we are doing the Sabbath, and God, a grave injustice, and are turning away from the truth God wants us to understand. Jesus told us that we would know the truth and the

truth would set us free, but we refuse to acknowledge that truth and have been misleading Christians for centuries, by keeping them under the law.

Before stepping into this lesson, I would like to address you, the reader, personally. I need to ask you to make a pledge to yourself that you will actually read this lesson in it's entirety, even if you come across a section, or some wording you find objectionable. Consider that humans have difficulty expressing themselves in ways that make a message clear and easy to understand, so there are times when we say or write things that can come across wrong, and be misinterpreted. To clarify the meaning and intent of the message it is often necessary to express the view in a less desirable way in order to direct someone toward the final understanding and intent of what is being said.

God himself said that his written word would be difficult to understand and would cause a lot of confusion and misunderstanding. Read the prophecy yourself in the book of Isaiah.

Isa 28:9 Whom shall He teach knowledge? And whom shall He make to understand doctrine? Those weaned from the milk and drawn from the breasts.

Isa 28:10 For precept must be on precept, precept on precept; line on line, line on line; here a little, there a little;

Isa 28:11 for with stammering lips and another tongue He will speak to this people.

Isa 28:12 To whom He said, This is the rest; cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing. Yet they were not willing to hear.

Isa 28:13 But the Word of Jehovah was to them precept on precept, precept on precept; line on line, line on line; here a little, there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken and snared and taken.

There are going to be passages in this text that may seem like I'm playing with words or juggling some concepts in order to make a point, but with patience and dedication you will arrive at the true intent for this lesson. Please do NOT skip around and scan different topics then give up and label this article of study as a blasphemy, at least not until you've read it word for word, line for line, all the way through to the very end. I've been guilty of that myself, and have used the excuse that I don't want my mind or beliefs tainted by a lie, but the truth is that God's Truth will stand firm against any false teaching and you will actually be better off and stronger for having read this dissertation. If this material is not true, you will know it and can discard it immediately.

I honestly and earnestly pray that the Holy Spirit will open your mind and heart to recognize the truth and show you the message God has for you in this subject. Once you see the truth about the Sabbath, it will make a vast, qualitative difference in your Christian walk.

The Seventh Day Sabbath:

First of all, let's dispel the idea that we're still required to keep the seventh day Sabbath. For most Christians today, this is not really an issue, and they do seem to have at least a rudimentary concept of why we don't require church attendance on Saturday under the New Testament.

For those who believe the 7th day Sabbath is still in effect, they have failed to acknowledge that we are no longer under the Law. The Law being referred to in the various passages of scripture on this subject is all the laws given under Moses whether written on parchment or on tablets of stone. This version of the Law is referred to in the New Testament as the "Letter of the Law" and pertains to a required, specific physical action to be obedient to God.

Rom 7:1 Or are you ignorant, brothers; for I speak to those who know the Law; that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives?

Rom 7:2 For the married woman was bound by law to the living husband. But if the husband is dead, she is set free from the law of her husband.

Rom 7:3 So then if, while her husband lives, she is married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress. But if the husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is no adulteress by becoming another man's wife.

Rom 7:4 So, my brothers, you also have become dead to the law by the body of Christ so that you should be married to Another, even to Him raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit to God. (minister's note: This verse literally depicts the church as the bride of Christ.)

Rom 7:5 For when we were in the flesh, the passions of sin worked in our members through the law to bring forth fruit to death.

Rom 7:6 But now we having been set free from the Law, having died to that in which we were held, so that we serve in newness of spirit and not in oldness of the letter.

In the verses above, Paul is showing that we, having died to the world with Christ, are no longer under any of the laws that were a part of the physical rituals and requirements of God's people. These laws began with the Ten Commandments, and continued through the additional laws and ordinances given through Moses. These laws include the law of circumcision of the flesh, offering sacrifices of bulls and lambs and such, and keeping any of the holy days (Sabbaths) and festivals, including the 7th day, weekly Sabbath. For many Christians, stating that the Ten Commandments were removed by Jesus' sacrifice is tantamount to heresy, but let's read it in scripture.

2Co 3:7 But if the ministry of death, *having been engraved in letters in stone*, was with glory (so that the sons of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses because of the glory of his face), **which was being done away**;

2Co 3:8 shall not the ministry of the Spirit be with more glory?

2Co 3:9 For if the ministry of condemnation is glorious, much more does the ministry of righteousness exceed in glory.

In the verses above we see a direct reference to the law written on tablets of stone having been done away, and the fact that this refers specifically to the Ten Commandments as engraved in stone is shown by the reference to the face of Moses shining so brightly that

he had to cover his head because the people couldn't look at him. Receiving the commandments from God placed so much glory on Moses' appearance that the people could not look directly at him, but that glory finally faded, as has the glory of the original Ten Commandments as written on the tablets of stone.

These verses above, more than any others in the bible should explain this necessary truth completely. Those who think we are required to keep the 7th day Sabbath are ignoring the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross, which was the point at which the old, physical, ritual keeping of the law was replaced by the spirit of the law. If they claim they are not, and they think we should keep the 7th day Sabbath, then why aren't they keeping all the laws? You cannot justify a "pick and choose" attitude toward God's laws. Either you obey them all correctly or you are in disobedience to God. And why do some of those, who claim we're still bound by the 7th day Sabbath, work on Saturday? And why don't they stop working on the annual holy days? After all, those laws were given to God's people for ALL generations, just like the Sabbath! Those who think the original Sabbath is still commanded today should also be keeping all the annual holy days and festivals and should be giving the required sacrifices as well.

The truth is we are no longer bound by the old laws, but are free because of having died to the world, just as a wife is no longer bound (married) to her husband after he dies. Our law, as Christians, is the law of Jesus Christ which is the spirit of the law written on our hearts and in our minds. This law, generally speaking, is the law of love; the love of God toward each other and our neighbors, following the example of Jesus Christ as he changes us by the renewing of our minds.

However, the question now arises; Was the Sabbath then **completely** eliminated? Did God just throw out the Sabbath, and not require any resemblance to it at all in the Christian life, or has it, too, taken on a spiritual form as have all the rest of the original laws? For instance, Jesus said at times, "You have heard it said..." and then expanded on the law further, giving it a more spiritual intent, showing what true love really is, and especially as it would pertain to that particular law. Following this example, we can see the actual intent of the law God gave to Israel. So many times, as Jesus spoke to the people, and especially the Pharisees, he made it clear that, in God's eyes, there was much more to the Law than what was written in letters on paper or stone. Repeatedly he chastised them for being the spiritual leaders of the nation and not recognizing the real intent of the law.

Mat 23:23 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithes of mint and dill and cumin, and you have left undone the weightier matters of the Law, justice, mercy, and faith. You ought to have done these and not to leave the other undone.

It was God's intent, from the very beginning, that we come to understand more than just how to go through the motions in keeping his laws. He wanted Israel to understand how to express justice, mercy and faith. So much of what is written in the old laws was intended to teach us about the character and nature of God.

Was The Sabbath Completely Abolished?

There are those who, in apparently agreeing with this unpopular teaching, would say that the Sabbath no longer exists today, and that it has been done away with by the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. One of the most quoted scriptures to support this belief is found in Colossians. Usually they just quote verse 16, but let's be honest and look at all of it.

Col 2:14 blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and has taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross.

Col 2:15 Having stripped rulers and authorities, He made a show of them publicly, triumphing over them in it.

Col 2:16 Therefore let no one judge you in food or in drink, or in respect of a feast, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbaths.

Col 2:17 For these are a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ.

What needs to be understood in these verses is found in verse 14. It is not the entire law in every form that was done away with, but the "handwriting of ordinances", or what we would call the physical, ritual requirements of the law obeyed by adhering to the law only as it was written, with no regard for the spiritual intent. For instance, the 7th day Sabbath required that the people stop working from sunset Friday to sunset Saturday, and the Scribes and Pharisees also added rules about how much weight you could carry, how far you could travel, how much work you could do to prepare food, and thus made the Sabbath a terrible burden on the people. But those physical requirements of the Sabbath command, and it's added ordinances, are no longer required, although the spiritual intent of the Sabbath itself is still alive and well. The Sabbath, as with all the other parts of the law, are now written on our hearts and minds to be kept in the spirit, and not by the letter.

Rom 7:6 But now we having been set free from the Law, having died to that in which we were held, so that *we serve in newness of spirit* and not in oldness of the letter.

There are other verses relating to the Sabbath question in the New Testament, but none of them, these above included, actually show the Sabbath being completely abolished.

This "newness of the spirit" is a reference to obeying the laws of God, or else the reference to the "oldness of the letter" would not have been stated. This is a direct reference to the keeping of the law God gave to Israel, but doing so in the spirit and not just by the letter. The law itself is not bad, as Paul describes in Romans, but it is the reason sin is recognized in this world. Stepping out from under the physical requirements of the law and into the spirit of the law, gives us the ability to be forgiven. We know that we sin at times, despite our best efforts, but God looks on our hearts to see our intent and the direction of our lives, and offers us forgiveness when we confess our sins and repent.

Paul describes his own battle with this concept of obedience to the letter of the law and spirit of the law, and the end result of his mind and heart being set on God.

Rom 7:9 For I was alive without the law once. But when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.

Rom 7:10 And the commandment, which was to life, was found to be death to me.

Rom 7:11 For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me.

Rom 7:12 So indeed the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good.

Rom 7:13 Then has that which is good become death to me? Let it not be! But sin, that it might appear to be sin, working death in me by that which is good; in order that sin might become exceedingly sinful by the commandment.

Rom 7:14 For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.

Rom 7:15 For that which I do, I know not. For what I desire, that I do not do; but what I hate, that I do.

Rom 7:16 If then I do that which I do not desire, I consent to the law that it is good.

Rom 7:17 But now it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwells in me.

Rom 7:18 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwells no good thing. For to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I do not find.

Rom 7:19 For I do not do the good that I desire; but the evil which I do not will, that I do.

Rom 7:20 But if I do what I do not desire, it is no more I working it out, but sin dwelling in me.

Rom 7:21 I find then a law: when I will to do the right, evil is present with me.

Rom 7:22 For I delight in the Law of God according to the inward man;

Rom 7:23 but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin being in my members.

Rom 7:24 O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

Rom 7:25 I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then with the mind I myself serve the Law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

These verses were placed in this lesson to show that breaking God's law is still sin, but we can be forgiven because of the sacrifice of Jesus which releases us from the penalty brought on by sin. God never intended for the law to be completely abolished, not even the Sabbath command, but his intent all along was to set us free from the physical requirements of the law, and to offer us forgiveness for our sins, which are a result of our having been sold under sin because of the fall of Adam and Eve.

We can also see a verse, with words spoken by Jesus, which shows God's true intent toward the law he gave to Israel.

Mat 5:17 Do not think that I have come to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I have not come to destroy but to fulfill.

These words above were spoken by Jesus himself. Although I try to refrain from using just one verse to make a point, there are some which just cry out truth and simply cannot be ignored. The verse above is just such a verse and shows that God's intent was never to destroy the Law, but to fulfill the law so that the **spiritual intent** of the law could take effect. By doing so, he released us from the physical requirements of the Law (the written code), and wrote the spirit of the Law on our hearts and minds through the Holy Spirit.

If the Sabbath has been completely eliminated, then there is no place or time of rest for today's Christians. But Jesus said in Matthew 11 that we **do** have a time of rest that is available to us here and now.

Mat 11:28 Come to Me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Mat 11:29 Take My yoke on you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest to your souls.

Mat 11:30 For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.

In these verses, not only are we offered rest, but it is made perfectly clear that the rest he refers to is here in this life we now live. Yes, there yet remains a Sabbath rest for those who are his, and that is in his kingdom, but God has not removed the Sabbath temporarily just to save it for later. God gives us examples and definition to fit and prepare us for what is to come.

Paul made it very clear that the writings of the Old Testament were given to us as examples of many things, and most ministers would agree that we can learn a lot about our Christian walk by studying how Israel acted toward God. Most of that example would be of things we definitely should **not** do, but they are good examples nonetheless. So, let's look at what happened between them and God and see how it points to today.

First of all, we find them in slavery to Egypt, which is pictured as a type of sin. God raises up one person, Moses (a type of Christ), to set them free. Once they are free, they are taken on a route which seems puzzling and confusing, much like being a new Christian is to many people who sincerely want to follow God. It's common to see a new Christian face a moment of severe trial or doubt almost immediately after surrendering to God, much the same as depicted by Israel being upset at being trapped between the Egyptian army and the sea, but God was there and protected them.

The act of them crossing the sea on dry land and the sea then closing in and washing away Pharaoh and his army is given as being "baptized into Moses" just as we are baptized into Christ.

1Co 10:2 And all were baptized to Moses in the cloud and in the sea,

After this event, the people spent some time in the wilderness as they began to live under God's leadership, freed from slavery in Egypt. We, too, once we have become Christians, set free from sin, remain in the wilderness of this world, but under God's care led by the Holy Spirit, and are not immediately removed to some wonderful peaceful place of safety and happiness. But even in the wilderness, God provided for them by giving them food to eat (manna), and making sure their clothing never wore out, and their sandals never had to be replaced. When thinking about this time spent in the wilderness as compared to our lives today, we can read what Jesus said in Matthew six.

Mat 6:25 Therefore I say to you, Do not be anxious for your life, what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor for your body, what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?

Mat 6:26 Behold the birds of the air; for they sow not, nor do they reap, nor gather into barns. Yet your heavenly Father feeds them; are you not much better than they are?

Mat 6:27 Which of you by being anxious can add one cubit to his stature?

Mat 6:28 And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. They do not toil, nor do they spin,

Mat 6:29 but I say to you that even Solomon in his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

Mat 6:30 Therefore if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much rather clothe you, little-faiths?

Mat 6:31 Therefore do not be anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, With what shall we be clothed?

Mat 6:32 For the nations seek after all these things. For your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things.

Mat 6:33 **But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you.**

In Hebrews it records that God was not happy with them in the wilderness because they refused to obey him despite all he did for them, so he denied them entry into the promised land. The example for us here is entry into the Kingdom of God. We have, now, a time of rest from the cares of this world in that we can rely on God to provide for us according to his will and our needs, and we are free from the burden and consequences of our sins and from having to worry about our daily needs when we obey and serve him, but there still remains a Sabbath rest for those who are his, and that will be in his kingdom after we leave this life behind. Our part is to seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and God will then take care of our needs.

We are now servants of God to serve in the newness of the Law, which is the spirit of the Law written on our hearts and minds.

Rom 7:6 But now we, having been set free from the Law, having died to that in which we were held, so that we serve in newness of spirit and **not** in oldness of the letter.

In all of these verses, there is not one hint that the Sabbath has been completely done away with, but those who would think that salvation is a one time hit, and guaranteed shot would have you believe that it is. What I mean is that there are those who believe that once you've confessed Jesus as your savior, and have been baptized, that no matter how you live your life you will still be in the Kingdom of God after you die. Nothing could be farther from the truth. But a convenient way to live by this false belief is to completely do away with the Sabbath. After all, if the Sabbath, is still a valid command, then, even in the spirit, there is a way to keep the Sabbath. But if you do away with the Sabbath completely, then you have nothing you need to keep properly through obedience to God, and you would be free to do whatever you desire and not pay any attention to God and what he desires for your life.

What saddens me even more is that pretty much every Christian denomination is teaching that Sunday is the Sabbath, so people feel content to believe they are keeping the Sabbath by attending church every week. This is really nothing more than being under the law, but simply changing which day we are required to keep.

Sadly, for many who believe this false doctrine of “Once Saved – Always Saved”, the Sabbath is still a valid command of the spirit of the Law written on our hearts and minds today, and we are required to obey it. The difference between the Sabbath as given in the letter of the Law and the Sabbath of the New Covenant is that under the New Testament the Sabbath is not a particular day of the week.

Dealing With The Legalistic Approach To The Sabbath:

Now, for many of you who are reading this lesson, I’m on shaky ground. I’m doing a bit of a balancing act between legalism and spiritual freedom, but please bear with me, and see this through to the end. Once you read what I have to say, perhaps you will understand what I mean about the Sabbath being kept today. To keep the Sabbath today requires a spirit of worship to serve God “*in spirit and in truth*”, but there is no physical ritual we must endure in order to keep it.

Let me first try to explain the difference between legalism and simple obedience. Ever since people have experienced the various denominations which required certain ritual performances (such as tithing, and weekly and annual observances), and festivals, people have become “gun shy”, for lack of a better term, about anything that hints at our having to do anything in particular to please God. But that is not a proper view of legalism.

There are things we must do to please God and they do not denote legalism in the least. For instance, we must not lie, steal, commit adultery, cheat, covet, and a myriad of other “don’t” laws in order to please God. Few people would argue that to sin is to be displeasing to God. In order to please God, then, we must do certain things such as love God, and love our neighbor. However, these things are not considered legalistic, but when you require that someone be somewhere at a certain time on a certain day, you are forming ritualistic behavior, and that is where legalism can raise its head. So, requiring regular church attendance on Sunday (or Saturday), or even just requiring regular attendance once a week, is a form of legalism. The key word here is “requiring”, and putting that with a specific schedule as a requirement forms the legalism because of a specific physical behavior which must be observed.

When it comes to church attendance, the writer of Hebrews puts it this way.

Heb 10:25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

All that is being said here is that we should not forsake meeting together, but there is no schedule implied or given, not even a frequency to adhere to. It is up to us to determine what works best, and God then looks on our hearts to see our attitude in this matter.

In order to see how we keep the Sabbath, we must look to the words Jesus spoke. So many times he told the people that they could come to him and find rest.

Mat 11:28 Come to Me *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Mat 11:29 Take My yoke on you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest to your souls.

Mat 11:30 For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.

Jesus spoke these words during his famous speech we refer to as “The Sermon On The Mount”. Here he lets us know that we can find rest in him.

The writer of Hebrews shows how the “rest” Jesus offers ties in with the original declaration of the Sabbath all the way back to creation week when God set aside the 7th day as a day of rest.

Heb 4:3 For we who have believed do enter into the rest, as He said, "I have sworn in My wrath that they should not enter into My rest;" although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.

Heb 4:4 For He spoke in a certain place of *the seventh day in this way*: "And God rested the seventh day from all His works."

Heb 4:5 And in this place again, "They shall not enter into My rest."

Heb 4:6 Since then it remains that some must enter into it, and since they to whom it was first preached did not enter in because of unbelief,

Heb 4:10 For he who has entered into his rest, he also has ceased from his own works, as God did from His. (see Matthew 6 above)

Heb 4:11 Therefore let us labor to enter into that rest, lest anyone fall after the same example of unbelief.

Here we see a clear statement that those who become Christians have entered a type of rest in Christ Jesus. Jesus beckoned us to do this in Matthew 11, and describes it in detail in Matthew 6. Hebrews also shows that the rest Jesus offers is directly related to the original Sabbath rest which God established at the end of creation week.

But look at verse 11 in Hebrews 4 above. “Therefore let us labor to enter into that rest...” shows that we do have responsibilities toward God as would relate to the final rest yet remaining, which is entry into the Kingdom of God. But also look at the statement, “...lest any fall after the same example of unbelief.” We can see by this verse alone that we have things we must do, and if we don’t do them, we can fall away and not enter into that final rest. This statement shows that the bad example set by ancient Israel during their time of wandering in the wilderness is a warning for us today who would neglect our calling.

Heb 2:1 Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.

Heb 2:2 For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and if every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward,

Heb 2:3 how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by those who heard Him;

So many ministers and laypeople have concluded that since Jesus set us free from sin, there is absolutely nothing that we need, or are required to do in order to enter our final

rest. What a sad dilemma we have gotten ourselves into by our fear of upsetting God, and our unwillingness to give of ourselves to others!

God is not an ogre waiting, and looking for a chance to “zap” us for doing something wrong. Our God is a loving, kind and merciful father who wants us to become all we can possibly be by allowing him to form his very nature and character in us. To think that our doing something good could cause him to show his wrath is completely unfair and totally dishonorable to him.

We’ve gotten to where we equate any kind of obedience to anything as a form of evil works, and believe we could insult God by our actions. The one most misunderstood scripture reference in this problem is found in Ephesians.

Eph 2:8 For by grace you are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God,

Eph 2:9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.

So many ministers have quoted this verse and others to support the idea that we do not have any works we must do to enter into the kingdom of God, but they are neglecting a vital truth to understanding this reference to works. The truth is, we can’t even live without doing some kind of “works”. When we obey God in any form at all, we are doing a “work” of obedience. The argument that we have no works to do also flies in the face of Jesus who called us to do these works.

Eph 2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them.

Of all the subjects in the bible, the idea of “works” is perhaps the most misunderstood term there is. It seems to strike fear into the heart of almost every Christian I’ve ever spoken with on this subject, and until now, even I have had difficulty explaining it, although I knew in my heart God was telling me that it is terribly misunderstood.

Every reference to “works” when speaking of what will NOT save us, is intended to mean the “works of the Law”, which should be understood to mean the obedience to the written codes of the Mosaic Law, which is based on the Ten Commandments, both of which have been nailed to the cross as shown in various scriptures I’ve quoted earlier in this lesson.

Col 2:14 blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and has taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross.

The “handwriting” of ordinances is what was nailed to the cross, and not the entire law itself. It is the “letter” of the law which identified sin and condemns us, but the spirit of the law leads us toward eternal life in Jesus. There is a vast difference between the “handwriting” and the spirit.

Rom 7:6 But now we, having been set free from the Law, having died to that in which we were held, so that we serve in newness of spirit and **not** in oldness of the letter.

The truth is, we must still obey the laws of God, but we have been released from the physical, ritualistic form of the law, and have been introduced to the spiritual intent of the law. Jesus spoke of this spiritual intent in the law when he repeatedly said, “You have heard it said...” and elaborated on the spiritual, original intent God had in mind when he gave the law to Israel. For example, although the Ten Commandments, as engraved on stone, have been nailed to the cross, it is still a sin to commit adultery. What we now call the spiritual law of Jesus Christ is that which Jesus himself described.

Mat 5:27 You have heard that it was said to the ancients, "You shall not commit adultery."

Mat 5:28 But I say to you that whoever looks on a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Jesus did not come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it. He kept the physical laws perfectly, lived a holy and righteous life, then suffered the unearned, and undeserved punishment of death on our behalf, thus releasing us from the physical requirements of the law.

In this example, under the law as written on the tablets of stone, you could imagine committing adultery with a woman, but as long as you did NOT actually physically commit adultery, you were in obedience to the law. God is now saying that this idea of restricting the law to physical obedience doesn't really show the true character and nature of the Father, and we must come to understand his nature and have his character and nature developed within us, through the power of the Holy Spirit, in order to please him.

Obedience has not been nailed to the cross, but the physical rituals of the law, and the physical restrictiveness of the law has been. I know it may sound a little like I'm playing with words here because I'm trying to separate the physical aspects of the law from the spiritual aspects without throwing out the law entirely. But I felt compelled to put this point out before going on to really draw a clear picture of this truth in a way I believe you will be able to understand. Suffice it to say that legalism is not a part of keeping the Sabbath under the New Testament, but the Sabbath, in its spiritual form, still exists today. My next section will try to put a lid on this subject.

Where To From Here?

There are been many attempts, throughout the church's history, to describe what is meant by living a Christian life. Some call it the way of “love” and some call it the way of “giving”, but neither of those really describe the true Christian life as God wants us to understand it.

When I was in the Worldwide Church of God under Herbert Armstrong, he would describe it this way. He said, “There are two ways of life in this world; the way of GIVE and the way of GET.” To me, that made sense at the time, but now that I look back on it

from the vantage point God has given to me, I realize that even that description is not really a good description of the two ways of life available to us.

Perhaps part of the problem we have had so far is that we keep trying to use our own terminology to explain to others what God meant when he had certain things written in his Word. For a long time, I thought this was a good idea, and that if God wanted you to explain what he meant he would give you the words you needed to use. But lately, I believe God has led me to see that he has probably given us all the wording we need in order to understand him, but we need to take the time to listen to him so we'll understand. I believe this is what's needed to understand the Sabbath, because it involves how we live our lives.

In Galatians we read about the fruits of the flesh and fruits of the spirit.

Gal 5:16 I say, then, Walk in the Spirit and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh.

Gal 5:17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. And these are contrary to one another; lest whatever you may will, these things you do.

Gal 5:18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.

Gal 5:19 Now the works of the flesh are clearly revealed, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lustfulness,

Gal 5:20 idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, fightings, jealousies, angers, rivalries, divisions, heresies,

Gal 5:21 envyings, murders, drunkennesses, revelings, and things like these; of which I tell you before, as I also said before, that they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

Gal 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is: love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith,

Gal 5:23 meekness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Gal 5:24 But those belonging to Christ have crucified the flesh with its passions and lusts.

The works of the flesh are those ways of life that lead to death, while the works of the spirit lead to eternal life. What we need to understand here is that we all do "works" whether we're willing to admit it or not. So saying that we don't do works because we're not saved by works is wrong. What the scriptures is talking about in reference to not be saved by works is the works of the law, which is described as obedience to the letter of the law as given to the people through Moses. Although God himself spoke the Ten Commandments, they were given through Moses by writing them on tablets of stone.

To equate any other work into the statement about works in Ephesians 2:9 is to give the word a wrong meaning. Everyone who has ever lived, is alive now or will ever live will do works either of the flesh or of the spirit. We can't be alive and not do works.

The works we need to be doing now is simply obedience to God as defined by his spiritual law written on our hearts and in our minds. God did not completely eliminate all law, but he did transform it into its original form of being kept in the spirit. Jesus told the woman at the well that this time of keeping the spirit of the law was coming.

Joh 4:23 *But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such to worship Him.*

As Paul also affirmed, we now no longer obey the letter of the law, but the spirit of the law. To do so we must live to the spirit and not the flesh. Romans 8 dedicates a lot of time to this principle of living to the spirit and not the flesh. One verse in particular spells it out very clear.

Rom 8:13 For if you live according to the flesh, you shall die. But if you through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live.

What I'm saying is this:

The two ways of life a person can live in this world is to live to serve the flesh or to serve the spirit. Whatever you may wish to call it, the bible calls it living to the flesh or living to the spirit, and that description says it all.

To live to the spirit involves more than just giving. It involves giving out of godly love and expecting nothing in return. Living to the spirit involves true sacrifice every day, which is why Jesus said that if we are to follow him we must take up our crosses daily. He also said that anyone who puts their hand to the plow and looks back is not worthy of the Kingdom of God.

There's much more, but I'll leave you to study and rightly divide the word of truth.

So... How Do We Keep The New Testament Sabbath?

What I'm trying to say in all this is that the Sabbath was intended from the beginning, from the very week of creation, but was intended as the time of rest for Mankind. When Adam and Eve were created, and before they sinned, they were living in the same rest in which God had entered on the seventh day. That day, for God, has never ended. He's still resting from the creation work he did. He offered Man that same rest by placing him in a beautiful garden and providing for him everything he could ever want or need, including a close, intimate relationship with the God who created him.

God and his creation used to walk in the garden together, and talk to each other almost continuously. It was their sin that broke that restful relationship. It has been God's purpose, every since, to restore that condition of mankind having a close, intimate, personal relationship with his creator. To accomplish that purpose, it was necessary for Jesus Christ to come to this world in human form and pay the penalty for our sins.

Yes, God nailed the letter of the law to the cross on which Jesus died, but in doing so, he restored our ability to live in peace and rest with him; with him providing for us all that we would ever want or need. If we live by the spirit, as we're asked to do, we are freed from the requirements of the law and are alive in the rest we've been given through Jesus' sacrifice. The Sabbath has always existed, since before sin entered the world, but it's physical form of the 7th Day Sabbath, given as a type of what God was doing to restore us, has been removed in favor of the restoration of the original intent and purpose for the rest God entered on the 7th day of the creation week.

The New Testament Sabbath is every day of a Christian's life, because "*For we who have believed do enter into the rest*". What was foreshadowed by the original 7th day Sabbath was our ultimate entrance into the Kingdom of God, but also our rest from the cares of this world under the sovereign hand of God in this life. We have a form of rest here and now in this life today. To require that we keep a particular day of the week, even if it's Sunday, would be to deny the actual intent of the Sabbath as a time of true rest for all people who come to faith in Jesus Christ.

So, how do we keep the Sabbath if it's every day of our lives?

Simply put, it's by living to the spirit, and mortifying the deeds of the flesh. Jesus put it this way, when it comes to our daily cares and concerns.

Mat 6:25 Therefore I say to you, Do not be anxious for your life, what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor for your body, what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?

Mat 6:26 Behold the birds of the air; for they sow not, nor do they reap, nor gather into barns. Yet your heavenly Father feeds them; are you not much better than they are?

Mat 6:27 Which of you by being anxious can add one cubit to his stature?

Mat 6:28 And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. They do not toil, nor do they spin,

Mat 6:29 but I say to you that even Solomon in his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

Mat 6:30 Therefore if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much rather clothe you, little-faiths?

Mat 6:31 Therefore do not be anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, With what shall we be clothed?

Mat 6:32 For the nations seek after all these things. For your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things.

Mat 6:33 **But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you.**

If we seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, we will be living to the spirit, and that is precisely how you keep the Sabbath today. We must be careful what we look at, what we listen to, what we say and do. God's righteousness should be our primary goal in life.

It's not that we shouldn't want to do well in this life. Setting goals and reaching to accomplish them can be a good thing, but we should never let anything in this life come between us and God. In the book of Luke we find the story of a man who was very direct with Jesus, who came to find out exactly what he needed to enter into the Kingdom of God.

Luk 18:18 And a ruler asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

Luk 18:19 And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.

Luk 18:20 You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery, Do not murder, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother.'"

Luk 18:21 And he said, "All these I have kept from my youth."

Luk 18:22 When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."

Luk 18:23 But when he heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich.

Luk 18:24 Jesus, looking at him with sadness, said, "How difficult it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!"

Luk 18:25 For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God."

Luk 18:26 Those who heard it said, "Then who can be saved?"

Luk 18:27 But he said, "What is impossible with men is possible with God."

Verses 18 through 21 show that Jesus wants us to obey his laws. In this case, the man was still under the law because Jesus had not yet been crucified, but we are to obey the spirit of this same law. In verse 22 we see what it takes to be a true follower of Jesus.

He told the man to sell all he had and distribute the proceeds to the poor and he would have treasure in heaven, then he could follow Jesus. Jesus didn't say this to point out that being rich was wrong. After all, many of the patriarchs were quite wealthy in their day, and were so as a direct result of the blessings they received from God. Also, there were many people Jesus told to follow him, and he never told any of the others to sell all they had, but he told this man to do that.

The reason why is given in verse 23. The rich man became very sad and walked away, because he was very rich and didn't want to give up his wealth and prestige in order to reach the Kingdom of God. His money, in this case, stood between him and God. What is it in our lives that stands between us and God?

In my case, using myself as an example, it would be my bitterness at being passed over for promotion or advancement, or not being hired for a job I believe I'm fully qualified to do, and perhaps more qualified than the person who was actually hired. I have a sense of pride I must constantly fight in order to stay focused and not become bitter and angry. I've been told by many people that I'm very intelligent; much more than average, and when I look back on my life, I know that I have never had a problem learning anything I've set my mind to do. But, because of my own failures and conceptions in the past, I've missed some opportunities to better my life situation. Some of the missed opportunities have been really great opportunities, but I walked away from them for various reasons and excuses.

Now, I'm 60 years old, intelligent, and working as a common laborer in a factory in Perry, Oklahoma. I have almost no retirement, and see a future where I will not be able to afford to retire and have some free time to spend on myself unless I have some major health issue that prevents working. If health restricts my work, who wants to retire? It would be a waste of time since I could never enjoy the time I would have. Even as I write this truth, I find myself becoming upset about my circumstances!

In order for me to serve God, I have to constantly forgive people whom I feel have wronged me in my endeavor to improve my situation. Sometimes the person I must forgive is my wife, and sometimes it's myself. Because of my own failures I find myself at odds with the rest of the world, and constantly wanting things to be better for me. It's sometimes extremely difficult to let go and allow God to work in my life, but I keep

running back to Jesus, knowing he wants the best for me according to his will. My problem is that I sometimes don't trust his will, and that comes between me and God.

For some people it's drugs, for some it's sex, for some it's status, or possessions, and for many of us it's literally the pursuit of money. Bottom line for me is that I need and desire more money, and see my situation in life as being a major part of the problem. So, in many ways, when Jesus said these things to the rich man, he was saying them to us.

In order to follow Jesus, we must let go of the things that distract us, and learn to follow him at all costs. We must sacrifice daily in order to achieve what God has designed for us to achieve. It's not easy, and God's word tells us that repeatedly throughout scripture. We will fall at times, but God has made a way for that.

Yes, we sin, but Jesus has paid the price for that sin, and if we confess our sins and repent (turn away from them), we can be forgiven, and we will be held blameless before God. In doing these things, we will keep the Sabbath as God intended, and we will continue to grow into the fullness of the measure of the stature of Christ.