



What we should and shouldn't do on a Sunday

Background :-

The concept of a Sabbath comes from the idea rooted in the day of rest that God had following the six days of creation

Read – Genesis Ch 2 v 2 – 3. Because God set this day aside blessed it and made it Holy, God's people throughout human history have seen this day as a Holy ordinance.

The root word for Sabbath is the Hebrew word “*sabat* “ The meaning of this word is to “Stop, Cease, Keep.”

Observation of the Sabbath was central to the Jewish way of Life.

Why did they Keep it?

God commanded His people to keep the Sabbath, failure to do so resulted in the death penalty.

Read – Exodus Ch 31 v 12 – 17 , Exodus Ch 35 v 1– 2, Numbers Ch 15 v 32 – 36

Keeping the Sabbath was a duty and requirement of the Law God gave His people.

The Sabbath had three main meanings:-

(1) Keeping the Sabbath was a weekly affirmation that God is the creator and sustainer of the world. The focus was to put God at the focus of their lives and affirm their dependence on Him to protect, provide and guide them. In this there was a recognition that even the seven day rhythm of their lives belonged to God for He established it.

If God stopped His labour on the seventh day then those who share in His labour here on earth must do the same.

(2) The keeping of the Sabbath was used to establish and affirm God's people's unique identity before Him.

Read – Deuteronomy Ch 5 v 12 – 15

Through the Sabbath the people of God were called to remember that it was God Himself who chose them and made a Covenant with them. They were reminded through the celebration of the Sabbath that God Himself is the one who took them from Slavery to Freedom by an act of His divine Salvation.

(3) Sabbath day was a day set apart for rest and corporate worship. To keep a balanced rhythm of life people were called to imitate God and rest fully one day out of seven.

There was a prohibition of most forms of work. Exodus 20 v 10

No trading, selling or buying on the Sabbath. Nehemiah Ch 13 v 15 – 22

Future of God's people dependent on keeping Sabbath Holy Jeremiah Ch 17 v 24 – 27

One's personal well being also at stake – Isaiah Ch 56 v 2 – 7

So what about Christ and the early Church

Jesus on a number of occasions appeared to break the rules concerning the Sabbath. Matt 12 v 1 – 8

Matt 12 v 9 – 14, Luke 13 v 10 – 14, Luke 14 v 1 – 6 John 5 v 1 – 18

All these times Jesus broke the Sabbath was to heal someone and set them free. Matt Ch 12 v 8 seems to suggest that Jesus broke some of the more ridiculous rules of the Sabbath to show that He had a great authority then the Sabbath because He is Lord of the Sabbath. In this Jesus Himself defines what the Sabbath is and what it should be about.

Jesus healed on Sabbath

Taught on Sabbath

Provided for his disciples on the Sabbath.

Jesus Himself went to worship in the synagogue on the Sabbath

Early church kept the Sabbath and used it to meet for worship and celebrating the Lord's supper. Acts 1 v 12, Acts 13 v 14 – 44, Ch15 v 21, Ch 17 v 2, Ch18 v 4, Ch 20 v 7

Early Church changed the day of the Sabbath to a Sunday. This was done to recognise that both Jesus' resurrection and The giving of the Holy Spirit to the church at Pentecost, happened on a Sunday. Meeting on a Sunday helped define and establish the church as distinct from the Jewish religion while keeping the idea of the Sabbath in line with God's word.

In 321 AD work was prohibited across the known Christian world. This was reinforced in 1664 AD by the Westminster Confession. Up until the last 30 years the church for 1700 years has prohibited most forms of paid work, banned trading on a Sunday e.g. buying and selling and even restricted the recreational activities that Christians should engage in on a Sunday.

Question – With the great weight of theological and historical practice of the church standing for the importance of the Sabbath do you think we keep the Sabbath as the Word of God demands?

Question – in light of the bible's teaching - what do you think Christians should, should not do on the Sabbath – **See also Galatians Ch 5 v 16 23 & Philippians Ch 4 v 8**