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# Why I Keep the Sabbath

*by: Ronald L. Dart*

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Why do I observe the Seventh Day Sabbath Day? On the Born to Win radio program I often have made reference to the Sabbath Day and if a person listens very long, they will be aware of the fact that I am a Sabbatarian.

It is not a long story and it is a fairly straight forward story and I am approaching it as to 'Why I Keep the Sabbath Day' as a personal testimony, in the hope that out of my own belief system, out of my own feelings about this important day, you might come to learn and share my feelings about it.

Most people, who claim to be religious, whether they are Jewish or Christian, believe in keeping the Ten Commandments. That is a given. The Fourth Commandment is the one commandment that is called into question consistently. Even the people who believe that the Ten Commandments were done away with, believe that nine of the Commandments were reinstated in the New Testament. They have some convoluted discussion or argument about how that actually works.

## **Sabbath is Commanded and is Holy**

If you are going to start with this question, you have to start with the Ten Commandments, because that is where the Sabbath Day is outlined in clarity.

In Exodus 20 and in verse 8: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. {9} Six days shall you labor, and do all your work: {10} But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God: in it you shall not do any work, you, nor your son, nor your daughter, your manservant, your maidservant, nor your cattle, or the stranger that is within your gates: {11} For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it."

Now there is one thing that I want to explain before I go any further with this and that is the word "holy" and the expression 'hallowed'. To hallow something is the verb form, holy is the noun form, and they both deal with the same concept. It is related to the word 'sanctify' that is used in the New Testament. What the words mean is to 'set apart' or something that is 'set apart'. I will use the analogy of taking seven chairs, all of which would be identical and line them up, then take one of them and set it apart from the others and in the secular sense you have made that chair holy. You have sanctified it. You have set it apart from the others. That is the

core meaning of the word ‘sanctify, to hallow, or something that is holy’. The distinction though in the Bible is that when you set something apart from others of like kind, you set it apart to God, so there is a spiritual significance to sanctifying and hallowing things.

The very idea of the Sabbath Day is that it is a day ‘set apart’, otherwise there is absolutely no more difference, or less difference I suppose, between the Sabbath Day from any other day, than there might be from the example of the chairs.

Do you get the point? The Sabbath Day, the seventh day of the week, is no different from any other day of the week, except for one thing, it was blessed by God and it was set apart from the other days of the week by God. Now this is a very important concept when you think about it. The question then is: when precisely did this event take place? Did God sanctify the Sabbath Day, set apart from the other days, at Mount Sinai when Moses was on the mountain top and God gave him the Ten Commandments and He wrote the Fourth Commandment on stone with His own finger: "Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy." Is that when God blessed the seventh day and set it apart from all of the other days?

### **Sabbath Was Made for Man**

Now we also know that Jesus said: "The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27-28). The Sabbath is an institution that man needed.

Now when was the Sabbath made? Was it made after the exodus when Israel was on their way up to Mount Sinai? Was it made when He wrote the Fourth Commandment on Mount Sinai? Well, no it wasn't, in fact, the place where you turn at this point is to the second chapter of the book of Genesis.

You all know the story in the first chapter of Genesis, how God day by day developed and began the creation of the world, how the light was created, the animals were created, and the fish that swim in the sea were created, and the birds that fly in the sky were created, and every time God said: "The evening and the morning were the first day, the evening and the morning were the second day", and He works His way through the seven days of creation. Then we come to Genesis 2:1: "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. {2} And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. {3} And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it (set it apart): because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made." How hard is this? When did God bless the seventh day and set it apart from all of the other days? Days which any observer would say, are just like all the rest of them. The sun comes up and the sun goes down, it goes around to its place and comes up again. One day is just like any other day; except for the fact that God blessed it, and set it apart, and He did it on the seventh day of creation, the day after the creation of man.

### **Sophistry**

Now this is very interesting, and I think simple to understand. I am familiar with the argument that says that there is not a single reference prior to Moses of any man actually observing the

Sabbath Day. You probably have heard that, if you haven't then you have heard it now. Now the argument is true but absolutely irrelevant, totally irrelevant. God observed this day, which is rather more important than man observing it, as a manner of fact.

But I want to add a new word to your vocabulary, the word is 'sophistry', and here is what it means: 'Sophistry is a subtle, tricky, and superficially plausible but generally fallacious method of reasoning.' It is a false argument.

The argument that the Sabbath was not observed by any man from Adam to Moses is a sophistry. It is nothing more than an excuse that people will go through to try to deal with the Sabbath Day, when they are not willing to observe it, and they feel it is not a part of their way of doing things. The problem is this: most of the arguments that have to do with why you should not observe the Sabbath Day is: that it is strictly a Jewish institution, that it came into existence at Mount Sinai, it was for Israel, it was assigned to Israel and was not assigned to anybody else, and therefore, when Christ came along and His gospel and it went to the Gentiles, the Sabbath did not go with it.

The Sabbath was an Israelite institution. Now for that to be true, then the Sabbath had to come into existence with Moses. The problem with it is, it didn't.

The Sabbath came into existence at creation. For from the seventh day of creation, God blessed it and set it apart from the other days, as the day that He rested. Now God wasn't tired, the reason that He did what He did was to set an example for man to follow down through his generations. And so we do it to this day.

It is interesting that another scripture says, "that God rested and was refreshed" (Exodus 31:17). It was like God saying "I have done my work and now I am going to sit back and enjoy it. I am going to sit back and look at it. I am not going to work today." So, God was refreshed, uplifted, inspired by the results of His own work. And candidly those of us who in our lifetime built something, have put something together, created something out of nothing, know precisely what that feels like. To take a little time to appreciate your own work is a real blessing.

I want to explain why this is a sophistry. The book of Genesis is not a book of laws but a book of history. The Sabbath played no special role in that history. References to the law in Genesis are incidental. Now what I mean by that is, they come about only because of some incident that took place. There is a reference to the fact that adultery is a sin (Genesis 20:1-9), only because of the temptation that was placed upon a man to commit adultery when he then turns around and calls it a sin, if it hadn't been for that incident, you might not find any reference in the book of Genesis to adultery being a sin. The fact that a man (Abraham) was tempted to lie and he actually did lie and the results of it created problems. So we see that lying was a sin to men prior to Moses in the book of Genesis. So the incidence of different things in the book of Genesis illustrates each and every one of the Ten Commandments was in existence (Romans 5:14).

In fact, it is an incident that gives the Sabbath to us. What was that incidence? It was the completion of creation, where God says that He was all finished, the incident is that God said: "I

have done the job", and the incident was that God rested, set the Sabbath apart, sanctifies it, hallows it, and says: "This is the Sabbath Day."

The Sabbath came into existence immediately on the day following man coming into existence because the Sabbath was made for man (Mark 2:27-28).

This much is easy to understand from the pages of the Scriptures.

### **Why I Keep the Sabbath Day**

One of the most interesting passages relative to the Sabbath is found in Exodus 16 and this is well before the Ten Commandments were given on Mount Sinai.

We are going to study this chapter now and try to glean from it what we can about the Sabbath Day. This chapter was important to me in coming to understand the Sabbath, so that you can understand 'Why I Keep the Sabbath Day.'

This is a personal testimony.

Exodus 16:1 "They took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came unto the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt. {2} And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness: {3} And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died."

Oh, you really have to feel sorry for these poor people, who said "I wish I was dead" and "I wish we had died in the land of Egypt where we sat by the flesh pots, when by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full."

I have an awful hard time with this. These people were slaves, their life was hard, they worked from the time they could see in the morning till the time that they went to bed at night, and the Egyptians didn't give them any more to eat than they absolutely had to give them, but still, it is better than not having anything and they wanted to go back.

They said: "when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full, and you brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger. {4} Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or not." God wanted to know, will they walk in my law or will they not? God wanted to find out right now.

Verse 5: "It shall come to pass, that on the sixth day they shall prepare that which they bring in; and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily. {6} And Moses and Aaron said unto all the children of Israel, tonight you shall know that the LORD hath brought you out from the land of Egypt: {7} And in the morning, then you shall see the glory of the LORD; for he heard your murmurings against the LORD: and who are we, that you murmur against us? {8} And Moses

said, This shall be, when the LORD shall give you in the evening flesh to eat (quail), and in the morning bread (manna) to the full; for that the LORD heard your murmurings which you murmur against him: and for what are we?" Moses was anxious to get this point across, we are not anything, the one you have trouble with here is God. God sent me (Moses) down to Egypt to bring you out of there. You wouldn't have gotten this far if He had not been with you. Let's get the record straight.

Verse 9: "Moses spoke unto Aaron, Say unto all the congregation of the children of Israel, Come near before the LORD: for he hath heard your murmurings. {10} And it came to pass, as Aaron spoke unto the whole congregation of the children of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and, behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud." What a sight that must have been. {11} "And the LORD spoke unto Moses, saying, {12} I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel: speak unto them, saying, This evening you shall eat flesh, and in the morning, you shall be filled with bread; and you shall know that I am JEHOVAH your God. {13} And it came to pass, that at evening the quails came up, and covered the camp: and in the morning the dew lay round about the host. {14} And when the dew that lay was gone up, look, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost upon the ground. {15} And when the children of Israel looked at it, they said one to another, "What's that?" The word 'manna' means 'what's that'.

They said to one another "It is manna: for they knew not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the LORD hath given you to eat." Moses is telling them to gather the manna up and you are going to make bread out of it. This is how you are going to do this.

Verse 16: "Gather of it every man according to his eating, an omer for every man, according to the number of your persons; take you every man for them which are in his tents." Go out and get enough of it for your family.

Verse 17: "And the children of Israel did so, and gathered, some more, some less. {18} And when they measured it out, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack; they gathered every man according to his eating." There was enough there to meet everybody's need.

Moses said, "Here are your instructions: "Verse 19: "Don't leave any of it till morning". Well, you know how people are. Somebody had to leave some for morning, they might say "I may be hungry in the morning, I don't want it all right now, I will save this aside and have it in the morning, and other people won't." Guess what, next morning it had bred worms and it stunk up the whole area, and I gather it was pretty bad. It wasn't something that the odor just stayed inside your tent and nobody knew that it is stinking that bad, it must have smelled up the whole neighborhood. Moses was really upset with these people.

### **The Day That God Chose**

Now something is beginning to happen. Why is this important? It is important because God is in the process through the simple process of discipline, teaching Israel a very simple concept. Not

merely taking one day in seven to rest, but that they should all take the SAME day in seven to rest, and it had to be the day that God chose, not the day that they chose.

Now this little passage of scripture is pretty tough to deal with and in my lifetime, I have heard many arguments about the Sabbath Day. I have heard a lot of people say, "it doesn't matter which day that you observe, as long as it is one day in seven." This way they can slide the Sabbath one day later and can keep Sunday as the Sabbath, as generations of people did in this country (United States of America).

The fact of the matter is, many Protestants and I suppose some Catholics, actually wouldn't work on Sunday, it was a day of rest. It was their Sabbath Day. I have heard deacons in church pray "Lord bless us on this your Sabbath Day" on Sunday morning. Many of them would not plow their fields, they wouldn't do house work, they actually treated Sunday as though it were the Sabbath, so when these people came into the awareness of the seventh day Sabbath, the natural thing for them to say is, "Well I am keeping the Sabbath, it doesn't matter which day you keep it, it is just one day in seven."

Now here is where in my own experience, I came up against it on that question. It was in Exodus 16: 22: "And it came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man: and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses." They were a little concerned initially because on the sixth day a lot of people were out gathering double the amount, they had been getting every other day and they looked at it and said: "Can you imagine what the camp is going to smell like tomorrow morning?" They came and told Moses about it. Moses said "No, this is what God said."

Verse 23: "Tomorrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the LORD." The word 'holy' means 'set apart'. It is the day that God 'set apart'. "It is the holy Sabbath to the Lord, bake that which you will bake to day, and cook what you will cook, and whatever you have left over, you can keep it till morning. {24} And they laid it up till the morning, as Moses said: and it did not stink, neither was there any worm therein." Everything was fine.

Verse 25: "And Moses said, Eat that today; for today is a sabbath unto the LORD: you shall not find it in the field. {26} Six days shall you gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the sabbath, in it there shall be none. {27} And it came to pass, that there went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none."

As I said, in my own studies, this became very important, because it resolved a question that I had, and that is: "Can you observe the Sabbath just whenever you feel like it? " You can say that you will make Wednesday the Sabbath in your life.

### **God's Little Acre**

Now I am going to tell you what I think is wrong with that. There was a book, and if I recall the book correctly, I may have mixed up two books that I read when I was young fellow, but it seems that the book was: "God's Little Acre." This book was about a man who had dedicated one acre of his property that whatever grew on that acre that year he was going to give to God by

giving it to the church. On the rest of the property he would keep whatever grew on it for himself. The first year that corner acre that he had given to God produced more than the rest of his land put together, or something along this line. So, this was the most productive acre on his property. Guess what he did the next year, he moved 'God's little acre' to one of the less productive places and he was going to take this one for himself. Well that year this acre began to produce more, and the other acre went back to be like the others. He kept moving this little acre around every year trying to get the best yield for himself, but still wanting something to go to God, and everywhere he moved it, God made that particular acre prosper. One year he finally decided to make 'God's little acre' the one that his house was sitting on, and they discovered oil on that one acre of property that year. Now the moral of the story is that once you have the freedom to move it around, you will move it around to suit yourself, and you will never have any consistency and you will have no Sabbath at all.

If you have the right to decide when it is, you have no Sabbath. The truth is God did NOT leave it to Israel to decide when it was, He very explicitly, very pointedly told them when it was going to be.

### **The Sabbath in Prophecy**

Now let's turn back to Isaiah 56. The Sabbath figures very prominently in some prophecies and these figured very largely in my mind because they answered questions that I and other people had about these things.

Now you have probably heard the expression "the Jewish Sabbath" right? The argument is that the Sabbath is for the Jews or the Sabbath is for the Israelites and it is not for the rest of us.

Isaiah 56:1-2: "Thus says the LORD, Keep your judgment, and do justice: for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness is to be revealed. {2} Blessed is the Man that does this, blessed is the Man that lays hold on it; that keeps the Sabbath from polluting it." Now this is what God says to Man. He says blessed is the Man who looks at this and gets hold of it and keeps the Sabbath from polluting it. OK, I got that.

Continuing in verse 2: "And he keeps his hand from doing evil. {3} Neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the LORD, speak, saying, The LORD hath utterly separated me from his people." I am not one of these, I don't have to do this, I am not in this category. He goes on to say: "Neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree." None of this pertains to me.

Isaiah 56:4: "For thus saith the LORD unto the eunuchs that keep my Sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant." This is interesting. God's covenant is something that you can reach out and take hold of.

Verse 5: "Even to them will I give in my house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off. {6} Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the LORD." Who are these folks? They are not Israelites and they are not Jews. They are Gentiles, they have decided to join themselves to Jehovah and "To serve him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be his servants, every one that

keeps the Sabbath from polluting it, and takes hold of my covenant." Hey, even the Gentiles could take hold of God's covenant, they could take hold of the Sabbath and look at the blessings that come their way for having done so.

Now I can immediately hear the argument, that that is the old covenant. That is fine and that is true. But everyone needs to wise up about one thing. In the Old Testament, the Gentiles were not stiff armed by God. They weren't pushed away by God. They were not treated as second class citizens by God. The Israelites treated them as second-class citizens. The Jews treated them as second-class citizens. But God's Law never did. God opened the door for the Gentiles to lay hold of the Sabbath, to lay hold of the covenant and to worship Him in it; it was not a Jewish Sabbath. It was God's Sabbath, which all men were welcome to come and partake of and be involved in.

Verse 7: "Even them will I bring to my holy mountain and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar." Who's? The sons of the stranger could actually come into the House of God, could offer sacrifices upon His altar. Now that is startling to think about. In fact, many commentators looking back at this talk about how far ahead of his time Isaiah was in seeing the conversion of the Gentiles, the complete access of the Gentiles to God, but the fact is, that wasn't ahead of the time, that WAS the time. That is what God expected from the very beginning of Israel, not the cutting off or the pushing away of Gentiles.

### **Sabbath is for All People**

Continuing in Isaiah 56: 7: "For my house shall be called a house of prayer for ALL people." God never intended to be just the God of the Israelites. He never intended to be just the God of the Jews. He intended to be the God of ALL people. He intended His House to be a House of prayer for ALL people. He intended His worship, the offering of sacrifices, the keeping of the Sabbath to be something for ALL people.

When Jesus said that the Sabbath was made for man (Mark 2:27-28), He is talking about ALL man, not just Jews and Israelites. This whole argument about being a Jewish institution is a sophistry. It is based upon a very poor understanding of the purpose of God, the direction in which God is going, what God is trying to accomplish with man, and how God intends to save the world. How He intends to reach out to all men at one time or another in His great plan.

Let's turn back to Isaiah 58:1 "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins. {2} Yet they seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God." This is sarcasm, this is irony, that you are reading here. The truth is that at this time in their history Israel did not do these things. They made a pretense of it. He said that they come up here as though they were a people who wanted to know, but the truth is they don't.

Verse 3: "Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and you don't see? How is it that we afflicted our soul, and you take no knowledge?" God answers: "Behold, in the day of your fast you find pleasure, and exact all your labors." In other words, you say, we are going to declare a fast day



and you don't eat, but look at what you do, you just go ahead and live your life the way you have always done it.

Verse 4: He says: "Behold, you fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: you shall not fast as you do this day, you are not going to, if you want your voice to be heard on high. {5} Is it such a fast that I have chosen? A day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him?" Is this what you think that I want, God asks.

### **The Sabbath Broke the Yoke**

Isaiah 58:6: "This is the fast that I have chosen, to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke."

I want you to understand something. One of the most fundamental concepts of the Sabbath that is so poorly understood by people is that the Sabbath broke the yoke. It broke the yoke of slavery. In the days of Moses, the Israelite slaves worked all of their lives, they worked seven days a week, from morning daylight till dark when they could no longer work, with no days off, seven days a week.

And along comes modern people who want to look at the Sabbath Day and they with so much incredible lack of understanding of the history of this day, they think that the Sabbath is a yoke of bondage upon people. The Sabbath of all things, which is the day you lay the yoke down, it is the day you cast it off, it is the day that you are free from labor, it is a day that you can spend time with your family. You can sleep late and visit with your friends. This is the day you are liberated. Some people come along and say that this day is a yoke of bondage. You are tempted to say "Have they paid no attention at all to the history of this and do they know nothing about the Commandment, do they know nothing of what God did it for. It was not to bind people. It was to FREE people

Verse 7: "Is it not to deal your bread to the hungry, and that you bring the poor that are cast out to your house? when you see the naked, you cover him; and you hide not yourself from your own flesh?" Does this have any New Testament overtones?

Remember in Matthew 25 when Jesus separated the sheep from the goats, and He said, "Enter the kingdom of my Father, inherit the kingdom, well done" (Matthew 25:21-23, 32-34), because you have covered the naked, fed the hungry, and gave drink to the thirsty.

Continuing in Isaiah 58:7: "Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that you bring the poor that are cast out to your house? when you see the naked, that you cover him; and that you hide not yourself from your own flesh? {8} Then shall your light break forth as the morning, and your health shall spring forth speedily: and your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the LORD shall be your reward. {9} Then you will call, and the LORD shall answer; you shall cry, and he shall say, Here I am."

What do you have to do? He said you take away from the midst of you the yoke, stop putting burdens on people. "If you take away from the midst of you the yoke, the putting forth of the finger," I presume what he means by this is the accusing finger, if you will just stop accusing one another, stop putting yokes on one another, and stop speaking vanity.

Verse 10: "If you draw out your soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall your light rise in obscurity, and your darkness be as the noon day: {11}"And the LORD shall guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in drought, and make fat your bones: and you shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters never stop. {12} And they that shall be of you shall build the old waste places: you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; and you shall be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in."

### **The Sabbath is a Delight**

Now nearly everybody that studies this realizes that we are looking forward to the end time and the restitution of all things. The rebuilding of a world that has been torn apart and listen to what he says in Isaiah 58:12 "You shall raise up the foundations of many generations; and you shall be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in. {13} IF you turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight." A yoke of bondage gives me a break. It is called a delight, the holy day that is separate of the Lord. "Honorable, and if you honor Him not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words:" {14} Then shall you delight yourself in the LORD; and I will cause you to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father: for the mouth of the LORD has spoken it."

These prophecies, the context of Isaiah 40 to the end of the book, is very much aimed at the return of Christ, the establishment of the Kingdom of God and right in the middle of this you have this powerful section about good works, the things that we are supposed to do.

### **The Sabbath and Economics**

I don't know if you have ever focused on this on the Sabbath Day, but one of the prime elements of the command to 'Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy' was, that the people for whom you are responsible must not be required to work. Not only are you to take the day off, that is the easiest thing in the world to do, regarding the Sabbath command to rest. I know how to do that. I am good at it. I have no problem with resting, but the problem is economics.

The problem is economic whenever you have a group of people that work for you, and the Commandment says that you have to let these people have the day off. You cannot require them to work on this day. This is a manner of personal liberty in the modern world if someone wants to work you can't keep them from it, but the fact of the matter is, you must not require it of anybody. You break the yoke, you lay it off of people, and you set them free on the Sabbath Day and that is the theme that is being developed in these prophecies that Israel had violated. They were taking the day off themselves, but they were demanding that their servants work, and they had not accomplished what they were supposed to accomplish on this.

## **Why I Keep the Sabbath**

Now there are many technical questions about Sabbath observance that arise out of this and that is not my point in this article. My point is to tell you 'Why I Keep the Sabbath.' One of the reasons is that as I make my way through the prophets and I see the prophets gazing off down into the future and I can see that the Sabbath is for all men and all people. I can see that the Sabbath Day is something that God set apart from creation. I can see the Commandment that says to 'Remember the Sabbath Day and to keep it holy' and apart from other days. I can see all of the prophets looking down to the end time and see the Sabbath as a figure, as something that plays out, it is not some abstract theological thing. It is a very real requirement that you give human beings who get tired a day off, and they don't stop getting tired when the covenant changes.

Do you understand that? Just because we have some religious argument, or we say that Jesus Christ died on the stake, human bodies still get tired. Human minds still get tired. There is still a need in human beings that need time for rest, reflection and family, and for God. None of that has changed.

The Sabbath was made for man, not pre-Christian man. This is a difference that is lost on a lot of people, but when I saw it, it came down on me like a load of bricks.

All of this poses an enormous problem, it did for me with all of the anti-Sabbatarian arguments, all of the arguments that I was hearing and had heard, about why the Sabbath need not to be kept by Christians. It posed a huge problem to me. And it also has a lot to do with why the reason of the arguments are so convoluted, however, the things that I have told you up to this point are not the strongest part of the case. The strongest part is yet to come.

## **The Strongest Part of the Case**

Matthew 12, one chapter in the book of Matthew, poses a much bigger problem. It was at this point that I really began to realize that I was going to have to face up to this particular issue. You have to think in going through this, I realize that for some people that is an uncomfortable activity. It is what you have to do when you read this chapter. Matthew 12:1: "At that time Jesus went on the Sabbath Day through the corn; and his disciples were hungry, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat. {2} When the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, Behold, your disciples do that which is not lawful to do on the Sabbath Day."

I want to stop here to clarify a couple of issues. One is that the Law of God specifically permitted you, when you were going through somebody else's field or somebody else's orchard, to eat something of what was there if you wanted to do so (Leviticus 23:22, Deuteronomy 23:24-25). You couldn't carry it home with you, you couldn't go stealing from somebody else's orchard, that was forbidden. You couldn't fill your pockets with it, you couldn't carry along a bushel basket, fill it up and take it home. That was not permitted. But as you walked through, you could pull a fig off of a tree and eat it as you went on your way. You could grab a handful of grain, rub it between your hands, pop it into your mouth, as you went on your way. This was permitted in the Law.

The Pharisees said that this was not permitted on the Sabbath Day. Why? Because it was work. Well, that is an interesting question, isn't it? What constitutes work? Almost by that definition, it is working to get your food from the plate to your mouth. Their interpretation of this was that this was harvesting. If you could take one handful, why not two? If you could take two handfuls, why not three? If you could take three, why not a bushel? They said, "let's draw the line and you can't pull anything off of it at all." Now where is this written in the Law of God? It is not there. There is absolutely nothing in the written Law of God at all. Where did it come from? It came from the Jews traditions. In the modern day we call it the oral law, it was not a term known in New Testament times, they referred to it as the tradition of the elders or the traditions of the fathers (Mark 7:3,5). This is something that they had judgments on, the rabbis argued about all of this, and the consensus of the Pharisees was one handful of grain was one handful to many.

Well, Jesus didn't agree with that. He felt that one handful of grain was no bigger deal than taking food to your mouth from your plate. So, if you had a basket of grain sitting in the corner of your own house, could you grab a handful of it and eat it? The answer is yes, obviously you could, yes everybody would do that. So, there is no substantive difference. This is an argument between rabbis about an application of divine law. Let's understand what we are talking about here. It was not a question that Jesus was ignoring the Law of God, mind you. It was the law of the Jews that was in question, not the Sabbath.

### **What Did David Do?**

Matthew 12:3: "But Jesus said to them, Have you not read what David did, when he was hungry, and they that were with him; {4} How he entered into the house of God, and ate the showbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests? {5} Or have you not read in the law, how that on the Sabbath Days the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless?" How could they do that? Well the Sabbath Day was a day that you were not supposed to do any work. In the Temple on the Sabbath Day the priests would kill an animal, take its blood and sprinkle it in the required places, cut the animal up into pieces, heave pieces of the animal upon the altar, and this definitely was work. They did the butchering, the preparation, the flaying, the skinning of the animal on the Sabbath Day, which I would imagine was hard work. So, they profaned the Sabbath in the Temple and they are blameless.

### **Laws Can Conflict**

I always thought that this was interesting, because, when you think about this, laws can come into conflict, can't they? You have one law that says that every day you have to offer these sacrifices, and you have another law that says that you are not to do any work on the Sabbath Day. Now which law prevails, the greater or the lesser? Which law trumps which? Most people would assume that the Ten Commandments is the greatest law and would trump any other law. WRONG! The actual service of God in the Temple trumped the Sabbath Day. It didn't abolish it. Whenever a conflict came about, the priests in the Temple, in order to worship God, in order to carry out the plan of God, display the plan of God in the Temple, could actually break the Sabbath Day Commandment to do so. Now that runs so contrary to what most legalists would think.

Now Jesus then says in verse 6: "I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple. {7} But if you had known what this means, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, you would not have condemned the guiltless." Jesus is saying "My disciples are not guilty of anything wrong in what they did."

### **Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath**

Matthew 12:8: "For the Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath Day." Now I remember way, way, way back when, and it has been so long that I barely can remember it, but I remember distinctly coming across this passage of scripture and thinking to myself, "there is something interesting here." Jesus is not abandoning the Sabbath, He is not dismissive of the Sabbath, He didn't say to these guys "You don't know what you are talking about, the Sabbath is going to be done away with, it is not important anymore." He actually confirmed the Sabbath and in discussing what one could do and could not do on the Sabbath, and discussing with rabbis, He validates the Sabbath and then He comes around and says something really astonishing. If you want to know which day in the Bible is the Lord's Day, you've got it right here in the words of Jesus. "The Son of man is Lord of the Sabbath Day" (Matthew 12:8). Now if you can explain to me how on earth when we get on down to Revelation 1:10 and John says: "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day," How you can know that that is Sunday? I am waiting to hear it, because there is absolutely no way textually in the Bible that you can come to any such conclusion.

We think that what He meant was: "I was carried in spirit into the 'end time' Day of the Lord" and it had to do with his vision, but even if it means a day in the week, I would naturally presume that day of the week was the weekly Sabbath, the seventh day Sabbath.

### **Jesus Observed the Sabbath Day**

Jesus observed the Sabbath Day, that much is clear as crystal to anybody, but He didn't observe it according to the tradition of the Jews. Jesus affirms the correct observance of the Sabbath through this entire section of scripture. This is the big problem for people who wear 'What Would Jesus Do' bracelets. Jesus was a Sabbath Keeper! I don't know how anyone could have a question about that. So do you want to know 'What Would Jesus Do'? Jesus kept the Sabbath. And He kept the same day that the Jews observed at that time. The Jews had no argument with Jesus about that, their argument was about what could you do on the Sabbath, not whether the Sabbath was in effect, not what day of the week that it was.

The Sabbath is absolutely affirmed and here is a very important thing that many people don't understand, and this argument always comes up with people. The seven-day cycle has not been lost at any time since Jesus kept the Sabbath Day on the same day that the Jews kept it. It has been maintained intact for the last two thousand years, nobody has played with it. The argument that somehow the calendar was changed, and we lost where the Sabbath was is a sophistry. We are going to nail that word down before I am done.

In Mark's account, Mark adds this: "Jesus said to them, The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath: {28} Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27-28).

Now my question when I came to all of this was, "What am I supposed to do with all of this?" The Sabbath is in the Ten Commandments, Jesus observed the Sabbath, He never give hint once that the Sabbath was to be abolished in any way in all of His ministry.

Then you have this statement in Luke 4:14: "Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about. {15} And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all. {16} And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, *as his custom was*, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath Day, and stood up to read." It was just part of Jesus' customary way of life. Jesus was a Sabbath Keeper.

### **Paul Kept the Sabbath**

The Sabbath figures very strongly in the book of Acts. There are so many places where Paul habitually went into the Synagogue and every time he went into a new city, where did he go? He went to the Synagogue. What time did he go? On the Sabbath Day. There is not much of a question about that.

Some make the argument that the Sabbath figured strongly in the book of Acts, but it is almost non-existent in the epistles of Paul. Some make the same argument in the New Testament they make for the period prior to the time of Moses. It wasn't mentioned there, nor is it mentioned in Paul's epistles, therefore the Church at that time wasn't keeping it. That is a what? It is a sophistry.

The Sabbath Day was not an issue in the New Testament Church. Nobody had a question about the Sabbath in the New Testament Church.

It did not become an issue until after the last apostle was dead. That is why nobody talks about it. They talk about things in the New Testament that were problems for them at the time, and the Sabbath was not one of them. Nobody ever raised it as a problem.

It did become a problem after the death of the last apostle. Samuele Bacchiocchi has told the story very well in his book: "From Sabbath to Sunday." It is a very deep read, not the easiest read in the world, but is absolutely comprehensive. I have read it twice and I have read every footnote in it. To me it was one of the most eye-opening books that I have ever read. He tells the story of how it came about that the Sabbath became a controversy in the church and it didn't happen until just after the end of the First Century, when certain bishops of Rome, because of the problems they were having, in having fingers pointed at them and them being called Jews, had to separate themselves from the Jews on the issue of the Sabbath Day, because of persecution. From that time forward the church moved away from the Sabbath Day and did not want to be associated with it in any way. If you haven't read Samuele Bacchiocchi's book, I give it to you as a very strong recommendation.

### **Is the Sabbath a Shadow?**

Now let's go to Colossians 2. Oddly enough, this passage is used by people to try to show that the Sabbath Day was done away with. In Colossians 2:16 it says: "Let no man therefore judge

you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holyday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath Days: {17} Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ." What they say by this is that the holy days, new moons and Sabbath Days were shadows and all of the shadows have been done away with. Now there is a great leap of logic that takes place in the middle of all of this. I want you to stop for a minute and think about what he said.

The translation should be "Let no man therefore judge you for eating or for drinking, or in any part of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath Days." It doesn't say don't keep them. It says don't let any man judge you for keeping them, and among the things that you are not to be judged for is eating and drinking. So, we are not talking about these things being done away with. If you read between the lines, think about this passage for a moment, it tells you something very important. It tells you that the Church in Colosse, a Gentile church, was keeping the Sabbath, the Holy Days, and even the new moons. I have no idea what they were doing other than keeping the Feast of Trumpets which occurs on a new moon. The new moons are neither a Sabbath nor a commanded assembly, but they were observing them. What was happening is that the ascetics were beginning to criticize them for FEASTING at these times, and Paul was saying "don't let people do that." That's not that hard of a passage of scripture. And right here is confirmation of a Gentile church, long after Jesus was nailed to the cross, observing the Sabbath Day, the Festivals, and even the new moons at this time.

### **Sabbath Keeping commanded in the New Testament**

Now let's go to Hebrews 4. This is where the old presumption that the Sabbath isn't mentioned in the New Testament suddenly goes into the tank.

Hebrews 4:1 "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his Rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." Now what does he mean by that? In the Bible in what leads up to this, you have to understand that the entering into the promised land in Israel is a type of entering into the Kingdom of God, so that the millennium which is a passing over from this world's government into the Kingdom of God is also comparable to crossing the Jordan and entering into the promised land, and being able to enter into the REST. The millennium is the seventh thousand years, you have six thousand years of man's misgovernment, you then have the seventh thousand years which is called a REST, it is the rest of God, rest from sin, rest from war, a rest from all of the tragedies of the world that is all around us. The millennium in a sense is referred to as a REST, and the weekly Sabbath after six days of work and one day of rest, once again is topologically and symbolically connected to history. That is the time of man's history, then comes the time of the Kingdom of God. So when he speaks of the REST in this regards, and coming short of the REST of God, he is talking about the REST in a way that is symbolic of the Kingdom of God.

Verse 2: "For unto us was the gospel preached." Just like it was preached to the Israelites. "As well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. {3} For we which have believed do enter into Rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my Rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world." This is an awkward construction, even though My plan was here from the foundation of the world, these people are not going in, because they did not trust Me and didn't

believe. This is symbolized by the Israelites refusal to go into the land and they had to die in the wilderness, and they were not allowed to enter into the land which is comparable to the Kingdom of God.

Verse 4: "For he spoke in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works. {5} And in this place again, If they shall enter into my Rest. {6} Seeing therefore it remains that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief: {7} Again, he limits a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, Today if you will hear his voice, don't harden your hearts. {8} For if Joshua had given them rest." If Joshua in taking Israel across the Jordan had actually given them rest, if this is all that this is about, "then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. {9} There remains therefore a 'sabbatismos' to the people of God."

Now I put the Greek word in there instead of the word 'rest', because everywhere in this passage where it talks about REST it is 'katapausis' in the Greek, which means "a pause from work." In this case, a transliteration of the Hebrew word 'Sabbath' is brought over into this, not just a Greek word, but a Hebrew word is deliberately brought over into the Greek text, to make the point and the connection between the seventh day Sabbath and the REST of the Kingdom of God. The Greek word 'sabbatismos' means "a keeping of the Sabbath."

Now what is interesting about this is that in the process of looking at this passage, which by the way, builds upon a presumption of Sabbath observance of God's people and as verse 9 says "there remains a Sabbath keeping for the people of God." Sure, it is looking forward to the Kingdom of God, but there is a convoluted line of reasoning that some people say that this passage shows the ultimate Sabbath is yet ahead of us, therefore, we don't have to pay any attention to the old Sabbath. This doesn't follow at all. It is turned to mean that we have REST in Christ now. People say: "We now have REST in Christ", and out of this comes the phrase: 'Christ is our Sabbath'. I heard that so many times a few years ago in a series of doctrinal arguments on this that I was about ready to start throwing things out the window. It was so frustrating because nobody who was using the phrase when I asked: "What do you mean by that?" could actually explain it.

They waffled around Hebrews 4 but could not explain it. I had to figure it out for myself what they meant, and that was since we have now entered into our REST in Christ, which is not what it says in Hebrews 4, that therefore the old Sabbath was done away with. Actually, this is another sophistry.

It is also, to coin a phrase, 'it is sound bite theology.' Sound bite theology is where you pick a cute little phrase, some neat little thing, like 'nailed to the cross' or like in this case 'Christ is our Sabbath' and you don't have to explain these things, they become icons to the people who use them, and so that when you are on your way to work on the Sabbath Day, you can salve your conscience by saying: "Christ is my Sabbath, it is not a day". Never realizing that even though Christ is your REST, even though you have entered into REST in Christ, you are still going to have to work for a living, day in and day out, which means that you are going to need to rest one day in seven. Even in the Kingdom of God, which is God's REST, people are going to work six days and rest the seventh.



## Closure

Now in conclusion: turn back with me to the book of Isaiah again to the very last chapter, which ties some of these things together for us. This is the place that was closure for me on 'Why I Keep the Sabbath Day.'

Isaiah 66:5-24: "Hear the word of the LORD, you that tremble at his word; Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the LORD be glorified: but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed. {6} A voice of noise from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of the LORD that renders recompense to his enemies. {7} Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child. {8} Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? Shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children. {9} Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? God says: Shall I cause to bring forth, and shut the womb? {10} Rejoice you with Jerusalem."

I want to tell you something, there hasn't been a time since these words were written, when you could really rejoice with Jerusalem. She has been the subject of wars, fighting's, captivities, leveled to the ground and salted down. All these things have happened to this city, and even when people have come back, there has been no peace. When Nehemiah was building the wall, it was a time of war. From the time that Nehemiah built the wall until the time that Christ came, and in time the Romans destroyed it again. The city was troubled, occupied, and beaten down. This is Isaiah's future prophecy. This is looking forward into the Kingdom of God at the time when Jesus Christ will return.

Verse 10: "Rejoice you with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all you that love her: rejoice for joy with her, all you that mourn for her: {11} That you may suck, and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations; that you may milk out, and be delighted with the abundance of her glory. {12} Thus says the LORD, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river." What an expression, 'a river of peace flowing'. Jerusalem has never had it.

Continuing in Verse 12: "Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream: then shall you suck, you shall be borne upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees. {13} As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you; and you shall be comforted in Jerusalem. {14} And when you see this, your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like an herb: and the hand of the LORD shall be known toward his servants, and his indignation toward his enemies."

This is millennial, this is a reference to the Kingdom of God that we are reading here.

Verse 15: "For, behold, the LORD will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. {16} For by fire and by his sword will the LORD plead with all flesh: and the slain of the LORD shall be many in that day." It doesn't take much of an imagination to connect this with the battle of Armageddon in Revelation 16:16.

Isaiah 66:17 "They that sanctify themselves and purify themselves in the gardens behind one tree in the midst, eating swine's flesh, and the abomination, and the mouse, those people shall be consumed together, says the LORD." Do you realize what we are talking about? All of these people who think that all of the Old Testament dietary laws were done away with, here we are talking about the return of Jesus Christ, chariots of fire, and a sword of vengeance and he said that all of those people, who are purifying themselves in the gardens of pagan ceremonies, who are eating swine's flesh, the abomination and the mouse, shall be consumed together.

Verse 18: "I know their works and their thoughts: it shall come, that I will gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and see my glory. {19} And I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations, to" all of these people and "they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles. {20} And they shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the LORD out of all nations." They are going to bring them all back.

Verse 21: "I will take of them for priests and for Levites, saith the LORD. {22} For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain."

Here's the kicker: Verse 23: "And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD. {24} And they shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring to all flesh."

You can play all kinds of cute theological games, proof texts, but when I came to this scripture after all the rest that I had read, it was as clear as crystal to me. The Sabbath was made at creation for man, it would continue to exist as long as man exists, and probably, in God's way long after that.

That's Why I Keep the Sabbath.

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*The late Ronald L. Dart was a Christian evangelist whose teachings still inspire thousands of people around the world. His legacy spans decades. For more information about the teachings of Ronald L. Dart, visit [RLDEA.com](http://RLDEA.com) where you will find booklets, articles, sermons, Bible studies, and books by Mr. Dart.*

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### Discussion Questions

1. If you keep the Sabbath, why do you?
2. If you don't keep the Sabbath, why don't you?

3. Why is it so hard for most Christians to accept the Sabbath?
4. What did the Messiah mean when He stated that “the Sabbath was made for man”?
5. The Sabbath is to be a day of rest in remembrance of God resting on the 7<sup>th</sup> day. How then can the Sabbath be considered a burden? When has rest ever been considered a burden?
6. How would you answer Mr. Dart’s questions: “Can you observe the Sabbath just whenever you like,” or did God Himself chose the day that we are to call the Sabbath?
7. What are your thoughts about the prophecy in Isaiah 56?
8. What are your thoughts about Mr. Dart’s point that the “Sabbath broke the yoke”? It gives us freedom.
9. What do you think Jesus meant when He stated that He is the Lord of the Sabbath Day?
10. What are your thoughts about Hebrews chapter 4?