

Captive's Corner



"Bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ"

2 Corinthians 10:5

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The Sabbath and Christian Holidays

The Sabbath is a rest day. Normally every seventh day is a Sabbath, for in six days God created the heavens and the earth and on the seventh day He rested. See Genesis 1:1-2:3 with Exodus 20:8-11. However, other "Rest Days" were given to the nation of Israel and included in their calendar. For example, Sabbaths were celebrated along with most of

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their feast days - Leviticus 23. The Sabbath was given to Israel as a sign between the LORD and Israel - Exodus 31:12-17; Ezekiel 20:12. When Israel received the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20, the Sabbath was associated with the LORD who made the heavens and the earth, resting from His creative work on the seventh day. When Moses reviewed the Ten Commandments in Deuteronomy 6, the Sabbath was designated as a day to remember the redemptive work of God on Israel's behalf - Deuteronomy 6:12-15. One of the reasons that Israel was defeated and dispersed was that they failed to keep the Sabbaths involving not only their weeks but also the land - Jeremiah 17:19-27; Ezekiel 20.

The Sabbath has to do with the first creation of which we as Christians are no longer a part. As Christians we live in the new creation (or 8th day in the types of the Old Testament feasts). Most believers think it is wise to rest one day a week but which day is unimportant in the new economy - Colossians 2:16-3:11. Christians have tended to set aside Sunday because it was the 8th day or the day of

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resurrection (to the world this is the first day of the week). See Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2. We have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus into the new creation. Jesus Christ is now our Sabbath, our rest. We are no longer bound by the ordinances of the old covenant. We now celebrate the new creation and the new redemption in Christ. Therefore, I do not believe that the Sabbath celebration is any longer binding on the saints of God - Colossians 2:16-17; Hebrews 4:1-11. Since Christ has fulfilled the law and we have died in Him to it (Romans 7:1-6), we are now set free to do as His Spirit leads so long as we do not sin. We are now under law to Christ - 1 Corinthians 9:21. The traditions of men mean nothing.

They are but a show of piety. The reality is Christ - Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 4:1-10. He is our Sabbath or our rest and that rest is perpetual. Hallelujah, what a Savior!

Now, how do we respond to those who feel they must remember the Sabbath. If they are doing so to find acceptance with God, we must resist their behavior as Paul did those in Galatia who felt circumcision was necessary in order to be justified before God. This would be adding man's work to His work for salvation, and the gospel would no longer be a gospel of grace - Ephesians 2:8-10.

However, if a person felt he must keep the Sabbath due to his conscience before God, then I say let him observe the Sabbath. He does not sin - Romans 14. In my estimation, Christmas and Easter celebrations fit in the teachings of this chapter also. Easter, of course, is a pagan holiday which has been institutionalized into the Christian frame-work. We as Christians celebrate our Lord's resurrection every time we sit at the Lord's Supper or preach the gospel or praise and worship Him. To us days have become rather unimportant. However, if someone desires

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to celebrate the resurrection of Christ on a particular day, they have liberty in Christ to do so. See Romans 14 for a good exposition of this truth. As long as you do not practice pagan rituals during these celebrations, then as a Christian you have every liberty to make the remembrance of His birth and His resurrection into feast days. It cannot and should not be

necessary for all the church to follow, for there is no such commandment or direction in the Bible for this to be so. However, individual Christians are at liberty to do as they wish so long as they do not sin. To doubt when practicing such a feast would be sin - Romans 14:22-23.

One other thought on the Sabbath. Christ taught that the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath - Mark 2:27. In other words, it

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is a day of rest for man because man needs a day of rest where he ceases from his labors and focuses his attention on God and His goodness. In this sense Christians have generally set aside the first day of the week (the day on which our Lord rose

from the dead) as a day to cease from their labors and focus their attention on the Lord. There is something

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to be said for this in that every man needs a break from the world's burdens to enjoy without distraction the Lord and His people. Although I myself often work in His work seven days a week, I do in principle agree that one day of rest is important to the well-being of a man.

However, if you abide in Christ moment by moment, you will find your renewal in Him daily.

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