

Paul tells us, in simple language: "One person esteems one day above another, another man esteems every day alike. Let each *be fully convinced in his own mind*" (Romans 14:5). This means that no Christian, or Christian group, has the right to tell others how they should regard the sabbath. The Jews had to keep the sabbath because God commanded them to do so. Christians may choose to, *but they don't have to keep the sabbath*. God has not given Christians a commandment to do so.

Our whole focus must be on Jesus Christ, his teaching, his perfect life and his sacrifice. This can lead to salvation and everlasting life. Christians need to realise that *every day belongs to God*. Because *all our time belongs to God*, Christians must live every day in a Godly way.

4. WHAT IS "THE REST" THAT GOD HAS PROMISED TO FAITHFUL CHRISTIANS?

"A promise remains of entering his rest ... Today if you will *hear his voice*, do not harden your hearts ... There remains therefore a *rest for the people of God*" (Hebrews 4:1-9). Knowing Jesus brings us spiritual rest now. But even greater blessings are yet to come. They will begin when Jesus returns to the earth. He will raise the dead and give everlasting life to his faithful followers from every generation. He will come as "King of kings and Lord of lords". It will be a time of peace and great joy.

The Bible calls this future time the "Kingdom of God". At that time, the wonderful message will be "the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and ye shall

reign for ever and ever" (Revelation 11:15).

Those who are saved will help Jesus to teach his message of salvation to the mortal population of the earth. What a prospect! What a blessing! If we worship God *acceptably every day* now, and not just on the sabbath, then everlasting life will be ours at the coming of our King.

"Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

Christadelphian Bible Mission BASIC BIBLE TRUTHS

The Sabbath

IS IT A SPECIAL DAY?

When you have read this leaflet you will know the answers to these questions:

1. Which day is the Sabbath?
2. Did Jesus think the Sabbath was a special day?
3. Should Christians keep the Sabbath?
4. What is "the Rest" that God has promised to faithful Christians?

1. WHICH DAY IS THE SABBATH?

The answer to this question may surprise you. The sabbath in the Bible began at sunset on Friday and ended at sunset on Saturday. That is how the Jews observed it. The 'day' began when darkness fell. The reason for this is found in Genesis 1:5: "So the evening and the morning were the first day." The evening came first.

The sabbath, and man's duties on it, is first recorded 2,500 years later, in Exodus 20:9,10: "Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD

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your God. In it you shall do no work ... The LORD blessed the sabbath day and hal-
lowed it." Today, orthodox Jews still keep
that sabbath. It was a wonderful
rest for those who worked six days a
week, and especially for slaves. For every-
one, it was a release from busy
days focussed on making a living. They
could, on the sabbath, give their full
attention to worshipping God.

2. DID JESUS THINK THE SABBATH WAS A SPECIAL DAY?

There is a marked contrast between the
ideas of the Jewish leaders about the
sabbath day, and those of Jesus. The
leaders were very strict. They were hard
on people who were not equally strict. In
fact, they were more severe than God
had intended. Jesus took a very different
view. He understood the real meaning of
the sabbath.

The leaders were concerned about
the "letter of the law". Jesus cared about
the *spirit* of the law. When Jesus healed
men and women on the sabbath day, the
leaders were against him. They even com-
plained that a lame man who Jesus
healed was "working" on the sabbath. All
because he carried his mat after being
healed! They also spoke against the dis-
ciples of Jesus for plucking ears of corn
to eat, on the sabbath.

When Jesus healed on the sabbath, he
saw it as a way in which God was
glorified. Jesus must have been right,
because he came to do his Father's will,
and he did it. God was pleased to call
Jesus, "My beloved Son". Jesus said: "The
sabbath was made for man." It was a day
of rest and worship, and for honouring
God by doing His will.

Even when Jesus healed a woman
who had suffered for 18 years with a bent
spine (Luke 13:11-13), and a man who
had been paralysed for 38 years (John
5:1-9), the leaders still grumbled. But, the
sabbath, through the work of Jesus,
reached new heights. He offered more
than physical rest when he said, "Come
unto me all you who labour, and I will
give you rest ... learn of me ... you will
find rest for your souls. For my yoke is
easy and by burden is light" (Matthew
11:28-30). Jesus could also lift their
burden of sin. He could show them a
path which would lead to everlasting life.

The example of Jesus helps us to
understand the true meaning of the
sabbath. He did his Heavenly Father's
work every day. His followers must do the
same. Doing the will of God day by day is
far more important than arguing about
whether or not the sabbath should be
kept as a special day.

3. SHOULD CHRISTIANS KEEP THE SABBATH?

There are many reasons why Christians
should *not* be *compelled* to keep the
sabbath day as a special one:

(a) Nowhere in the New Testament are
we told that Christians must keep the
sabbath.

(b) In Acts 15, Christian leaders con-
cluded that, "no greater burden"
should be imposed on non-Jewish
Christians, than "to abstain from
thing polluted by idols, from sexual
immorality, from things strangled,
and from blood". It was wise advice.
This would "keep the peace between
Jew and Gentile Christians. Notice
that *the sabbath* was *not included* as

something which Gentile Christians
must keep.

(c) The New Testament does not refer to
Christians being condemned for not
keeping the sabbath.

(d) In Exodus 31:13-17, it is stated that
the sabbath was a sign *between God*
and *Israel*. There is no mention that it
was ever made a sign between God
and Christians.

(3) Christians are not under the Law of
Moses. Paul makes that very clear in
Galatians 3:24,25: "The law was our
tutor to *bring us to Christ*, that we
might be justified by faith. But *after*
faith has come, we are *no longer*
under a tutor." Paul is telling us that
there is freedom in Christ for
Christian believers. In fact, Paul was
upset when some Christians were
going back to the law. He called
them "foolish Galatians" for doing so
(Galatians 3:1).

Christians are *free to choose* whether
or not they want to regard the sabbath as
a special day. Paul says: "Let *no-one*
judge you in food or in drink, or regarding
a festival or a new moon or *sabbaths*,
which are a *shadow* of things to come,
but the *substance is of Christ*" (Colossians
2:16, 17).

Jesus Christ himself is the substance.
His words and actions must transform
our lives. The law was only a shadow. To
argue about whether or not we should
keep the sabbath as a special day, is to
argue *about a shadow*. It is missing the
point. Understanding the life of Jesus
Christ is much more important.