**Should We Keep the Sabbath?**

By Randy Tidmore

In this study, we will examine the following five questions:

1. When was the Sabbath first commanded to be observed?
2. To whom was the command to observe the Sabbath given?
3. For how long was the command to observe the Sabbath supposed to last?
4. Do those who advocate the observance of the Sabbath today really “keep” the Sabbath?
5. What is the Lord’s day?

**When was the Sabbath commanded to be observed?**

**Some say at the creation.**

[**Genesis 2:2-3**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Gen%202.2-3) By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

1. God blessed it, and made it holy. He did not command anyone to observe it. The first place that we find the command to observe the Sabbath is:

[**Exodus 16:22-30**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Exod%2016.22-30) On the sixth day, they gathered twice as much — two omers for each person — and the leaders of the community came and reported this to Moses. He said to them, “This is what the LORD commanded: `Tomorrow is to be a day of rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD. So bake what you want to bake and boil what you want to boil. Save whatever is left and keep it until morning.'” So they saved it until morning, as Moses commanded, and it did not stink or get maggots in it. “Eat it today,” Moses said, “because today is a Sabbath to the LORD. You will not find any of it on the ground today. Six days you are to gather it, but on the seventh day, the Sabbath, there will not be any.” Nevertheless, some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather it, but they found none. Then the LORD said to Moses, “How long will you refuse to keep my commands and my instructions? Bear in mind that the LORD has given you the Sabbath; that is why on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days. Everyone is to stay where he is on the seventh day; no one is to go out.” So the people rested on the seventh day.

2. This is before the Ten Commandments (shortly before, and probably pointing towards them). There is no record of anyone commanded to observe, nor example of anyone observing the Sabbath before the Israelites’ deliverance from Egyptian bondage. In fact, it was because they had been slaves, that God gave them a day of rest.

[**Deuteronomy 5:15**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Deut%205.15) Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the LORD your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.

**To whom was the command to observe the Sabbath given?**

**Some say to everyone.**

The Bible says, with reference to the Ten Commandments:

[**Deuteronomy 5:2-4**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Deut%205.2-4) The LORD our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. It was not with our fathers that the LORD made this covenant, but with us, with all of us who are alive here today. The LORD spoke to you face to face out of the fire on the mountain.

1. “Not with our fathers” — the patriarchs.

[**Galatians 3:16-17**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Gal%203.16-17) The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say “and to seeds,” meaning many people, but “and to your seed,” meaning one person, who is Christ. What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise.

2. The Ten Commandments came 430 years after the promise to Abraham, who was a patriarch.

3. It was made “with us, with all of us who are alive here today.”

[**Exodus 31:16-17**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Exod%2031.16-17) The Israelites are to observe the Sabbath, celebrating it for the generations to come as a lasting covenant. It will be a sign between me and the Israelites forever, for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day he abstained from work and rested.'”

4. “The Israelites are to observe the Sabbath.”

5. “A sign between me (God) and the Israelites.”

**For how long was the command to observe the Sabbath supposed to last?**

**Some say forever.**

[**Exodus 31:16-17**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Exod%2031.16-17) The Israelites are to observe the Sabbath, celebrating it for the generations to come as a lasting covenant. It will be a sign between me and the Israelites forever, for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day he abstained from work and rested.'”

1. Sometimes “forever” in the Old Testament meant for all of a particular time or dispensation.

[**Genesis 17:13**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Gen%2017.13) Whether born in your household or bought with your money, they must be circumcised. My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant.

2. The same Hebrew word was translated “forever” in [Exodus 31:17](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Exod%2031.17), and “everlasting” in [Genesis 17:13](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Gen%2017.13).

3. However, Paul declared later that fleshly circumcision was no longer of any value.

[**Galatians 5:6**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Gal%205.6) For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.

[**Galatians 6:15**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Gal%206.15) Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation.

4. Paul also taught that baptism takes the place of circumcision for the Christian.

[**Colossians 2:9-12**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Col%202.9-12) For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority. In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

5. Concerning the Old Testament, including the Ten Commandments, and therefore the Sabbath, Paul also taught that Christ would abolish it through His flesh on the cross.

[**Ephesians 2:11-18**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Eph%202.11-18) Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (that done in the body by the hands of men) — remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

6. And, that the old law, including the Sabbath, was canceled and nailed to the cross of Christ.

[**Colossians 2:14-17**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Col%202.14-17) having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross. Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

7. This harmonizes completely with what God, in disgust, spoke through His prophet Amos:

[**Amos 8:4-5**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Amos%208.4-5)Hear this, you who trample the needy and do away with the poor of the land, saying, “When will the New Moon be over that we may sell grain, and the Sabbath be ended that we may market wheat?” — skimping the measure, boosting the price and cheating with dishonest scales,

**When would the Sabbath be ended? Never? The answer was prophesied:**

[**Amos 8:9-10**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Amos%208.9-10) “In that day,” declares the Sovereign LORD, “I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight. I will turn your religious feasts into mourning and all your singing into weeping. I will make all of you wear sackcloth and shave your heads. I will make that time like mourning for an only son and the end of it like a bitter day.

The prophesy was fulfilled.

[**Zechariah 12:10**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Zech%2012.10) “And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son.

[**John 3:16**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/John%203.16) “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

[**John 19:37**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/John%2019.37) and, as another scripture says, “They will look on the one they have pierced.”

[**Matthew 27:45**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Matt%2027.45) From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land.

The Sabbath was taken away!

**Do those who advocate the observance of the Sabbath today, actually keep it themselves?**

**How was the Sabbath kept?**

[**Exodus 20:8**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Exod%2020.8) Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

1. With burnt offerings.

[**Numbers 28:9-10**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Num%2028.9-10) On the Sabbath day, make an offering of two lambs a year old without defect, together with its drink offering and a grain offering of two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil. This is the burnt offering for every Sabbath, in addition to the regular burnt offering and its drink offering.

2. No work

[**Exodus 20:10**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Exod%2020.10) but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates.

3. No fire

[**Exodus 35:3**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Exod%2035.3)Do not light a fire in any of your dwellings on the Sabbath day.”

4. There was a penalty for failing to keep it holy

[**Exodus 35:2**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Exod%2035.2) For six days, work is to be done, but the seventh day shall be your holy day, a Sabbath of rest to the LORD. Whoever does any work on it must be put to death.

[**Exodus 31:15**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Exod%2031.15) For six days, work is to be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day must be put to death.

Do you know of anyone, who claims to be a Christian, who is still really keeping the Sabbath?

**What is the Lord’s day?**

1. The day our Lord arose from the dead.

[**Acts 10:40**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Acts%2010.40) but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen.

[**Luke 24:1**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Luke%2024.1) On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb.

[**Luke 24:13**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Luke%2024.13) Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem.

[**Luke 24:21**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Luke%2024.21) but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place.

2. It was the day that His disciples assembled, and He appeared to them and blessed them.

[**John 20:1**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/John%2020.1) Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance.

[**John 20:19**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/John%2020.19) On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!”

[**John 20:26**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/John%2020.26) A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!”

3. It was the day the Church began ([Acts 2:1-47](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Acts%202.1-47)).

[**Acts 2:1-3**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Acts%202.1-3) When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and [one] sat upon each of them.

[**Acts 2:47**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Acts%202.47) praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

4. Pentecost always came on the first day of the week.

[**Leviticus 23:15-16**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Lev%2023.15-16) And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall be completed. ‘Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the LORD.

5. The Lord’s supper would not be appropriately observed on any other day than the “Lord’s day” or the first day of the week ([1 Corinthians 11:23-29](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1%20Cor%2011.23-29)).

[**Acts 20:6-7**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Acts%2020.6-7) But we sailed from Philippi after the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and five days later joined the others at Troas, where we stayed seven days. On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight.

6. The Lord’s day is a day of service and worship to God.

[**Acts 20:7**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Acts%2020.7) On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight.

[**Acts 2:42**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Acts%202.42) They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

[**1 Corinthians 16:1-2**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/1%20Cor%2016.1-2) Now about the collection for God’s people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.

7. The Sabbath was a day of rest for man.

[**Mark 2:27-28**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Mark%202.27-28) Then he said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.”

**Conclusion:**

Just as the Old Testament was replaced with the New Testament, and fleshly circumcision was replaced with a spiritual circumcision (baptism), the seventh day of the week was replaced with the first day of the week.

The writer of Hebrews declares that there does remain a “rest” for us today, in Heaven ([Hebrews 4:1-11](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Heb%204.1-11)).

1. The Sabbath, a **day** of rest, was given to Israel through Moses.

[**Deuteronomy 5:1-5**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Deut%205.1-5) Moses summoned all Israel and said: Hear, O Israel, the decrees and laws I declare in your hearing today. Learn them and be sure to follow them. The LORD our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. It was not with our fathers that the LORD made this covenant, but with us, with all of us who are alive here today. The LORD spoke to you face to face out of the fire on the mountain. (At that time I stood between the LORD and you to declare to you the word of the LORD, because you were afraid of the fire and did not go up the mountain.) And he said:

[**Deuteronomy 5:12-15**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Deut%205.12-15) “Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the LORD your God has commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your ox, your donkey or any of your animals, nor the alien within your gates, so that your manservant and maidservant may rest, as you do. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the LORD your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.

2. Joshua led Israel into a land of rest.

[**Joshua 1:12-18**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Josh%201.12-18) But to the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh, Joshua said, “Remember the command that Moses the servant of the LORD gave you: `The LORD your God is giving you rest and has granted you this land.’ Your wives, your children and your livestock may stay in the land that Moses gave you east of the Jordan, but all your fighting men, fully armed, must cross over ahead of your brothers. You are to help your brothers until the LORD gives them rest, as he has done for you, and until they too have taken possession of the land that the LORD your God is giving them. After that, you may go back and occupy your own land, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you east of the Jordan toward the sunrise.” Then they answered Joshua, “Whatever you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. Just as we fully obeyed Moses, so we will obey you. Only may the LORD your God be with you as he was with Moses. Whoever rebels against your word and does not obey your words, whatever you may command them, will be put to death. Only be strong and courageous!”

[**Joshua 21:43-45**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Josh%2021.43-45) So the LORD gave Israel all the land he had sworn to give their forefathers, and they took possession of it and settled there. The LORD gave them rest on every side, just as he had sworn to their forefathers. Not one of their enemies withstood them; the LORD handed all their enemies over to them. Not one of all the LORD’s good promises to the house of Israel failed; every one was fulfilled.

3. However, they did not enter into the rest that remains for the Christian ([Hebrews. 4:6](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Heb.%204.6) & [11](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Hebrews%204.11)).

4. This rest is a promise ([Hebrews. 4:1](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Heb.%204.1)).

5. It can not refer to the Sabbath, which was a command ([Exodus. 20:8](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Exod.%2020.8)).

6. It can not refer to the land of rest, which was a promise that was fulfilled ([Josh. 21:43-45](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Josh.%2021.43-45)).

7. This rest is in Heaven ([Hebrews. 4:9-11](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Heb.%204.9-11)).

[**Revelation 14:13**](http://biblia.com/bible/nkjv/Rev%2014.13) Then I heard a voice from heaven say, “Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.” “Yes,” says the Spirit, “they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them.”