

## LOVING THE BRIDE OF CHRIST: What is a Healthy Church Member?

*Mark #10 – Holy Rest*

“...worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.” (John 4:23)

### I. Westminster Confession of Faith, 21.7

*As it is the law of nature, that, in general, a due proportion of time be set apart for the worship of God; so, in his Word, by a positive, moral, and perpetual commandment binding all men in all ages, he hath particularly appointed one day in seven, for a Sabbath, to be kept holy unto him: which, from the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, was the last day of the week; and, from the resurrection of Christ, was changed into the first day of the week, which, in Scripture, is called the Lord's day, and is to be continued to the end of the world, as the Christian Sabbath.*

#### A. With respect to the Sabbath, WCF 21.7 teaches at least two things:

1. The 4<sup>th</sup> commandment is morally and universally binding in the Old and New Covenants.
2. In light of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, the day has been changed from Saturday to Sunday.

#### B. Theological Basis for the Continuity of the Sabbath:

1. The Sabbath is a creation ordinance patterned after God's creation rest (Gen. 2:2-3; Exod. 20:8-11; Mark 2:27; Heb. 4:4).

*By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work.<sup>3</sup> 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. (Gen 2:2-3)*

- Man was to pattern His work/rest cycle after His Creator. The Sabbath was a pre-Fall pattern and therefore did not originate with the Mosaic (‘under Moses’) administration. It was to give man a perpetual example for how to arrange his week.
2. How do the two reasons given for the 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment (Sabbath) affect how we view the Sabbath?

*“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy...<sup>11</sup> For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.” (Ex 20:8-11)*

*“Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, ...<sup>15</sup> 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. (Deut 5:12-15)*

<sup>16</sup> *“Therefore the people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout their generations, as a covenant forever. <sup>17</sup> It is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed.” (Ex 31:16-17)*

- It’s clear that the Sabbath is a perpetual covenant between God and His people...

## II. What about Colossians 2:15-17?

<sup>15</sup> He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him. <sup>16</sup> Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. <sup>17</sup> These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.

Q. Does the work of Christ in the New Covenant discount the 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment as binding?

*“Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, ‘In the seventh month on the first of the month, you shall have a rest, a reminder by blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation.’” (Lev 23:24)*

## III. Why the Christian Sabbath After Christ?

- A. Our Lord Jesus did not abrogate the Sabbath, but cleansed it from the traditions of the Pharisees, and brought the Sabbath to its ultimate New Covenant expression. (Mark 2-3)
- B. The Sabbath is a sign pointing to the eternal Sabbath **in the New Heaven/New Earth!**

*“Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it...<sup>8</sup> For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. <sup>9</sup> So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, <sup>10</sup> for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. <sup>11</sup> Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.” (Heb 4:8-11)*

- In this passage the writer of Hebrews is intent on giving New Testament Christians a sense of their basic identity: *they are sojourners*—the church is a pilgrim people.

*“Weekly Sabbath keeping is a sign that points to the end of history and to the ultimate fulfillment of all God's purposes for his creation.”*

- Dr. Richard Gaffin, *A Sign of Hope*

## IV. Practical Considerations: How should the Sabbath be celebrated/commemorated today?

- A. The primary principle in the practical area of new covenant Sabbath observance is that we ought to be inflexibly committed to gathering together with God's people on the first day of the week for public worship in order to fellowship with the risen Christ through the means of grace.
- B. Rather than dictating a detailed list of things forbidden on the Sabbath it is best if elders enunciate the principles involved and allow each individual or family to prayerfully and conscientiously determine how they will sanctify the Sabbath. *At a minimum however, one should refrain the vocational work that occupies his or her six day week. Don't do your job (worship and rest)...*
- C. Church members should ask themselves, “Does this activity hinder or promote the purpose of the day? I.e., does it hinder or promote my participation in the corporate worship of God's people? Does it hinder or promote a spiritually restful frame of mind in which I am reminded that I am a pilgrim on the way to a future Sabbath rest?”

*“Believers are sanctified through a lifetime of Sabbath observance. In other words, the Sabbath is designed to work slowly, quietly, seemingly imperceptively in reorienting believers' appetites heavenward.”*

-D.G. Hart and John Muether, *With Reverence and Awe*, 65.