

THE SABBATH, and THE LORD'S DAY

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Preface:

It is sincerely hoped that this Bible Study will help to meet the need that is so great in this our day, of combating the forces of doctrines of error. There are many individuals who are sincere in their beliefs, but they are being led astray by erroneous teachings. As we deal with such people, we must do so with Love, and Truth as it is recorded in God's Holy Word.

Contents

Introduction	
The New Creation	
Dispensations and Covenants	
The Law Fulfilled and Abolished.....	
The New Covenant.....	
Christ and the Sabbath	
A New Day - The Lord's Day	

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The first day of the week has been celebrated by the church from the resurrection of Christ to the present time. This fact is proven by the New Testament records, the writings of the early fathers, and the history of the Church. There have been those in nearly every century who, not comprehending the present purpose of God in the New Creation, have earnestly contented for the observance of the seventh-day sabbath. At the present time, those who specialize in urging the observance of the seventh day combine these appeals with other unscriptural doctrines. Since the believer should observe the first day of the week under the new relationship of grace, confusion arise when that day is invested with the character of, and is governed by the seven-day sabbath laws. All such teachings ignore the New Testament doctrine of the New Creation.

To inform the reader of what the Seven Day Adventist believe and teach, we will give the four main doctrines of the Adventist.

They believe and Teach:

1. That the moral law of the ten commandments, or the Decalogue, is the standard of life and conduct for all men of all ages; we do not believe that the Decalogue has been either changed or abolished.

2. That man was endowed at creation with conditional immortality; we do not believe that man has innate immortality or immortal soul.

3. That the wicked will be punished by suffering and complete destruction in the lake of fire; we do not believe in an eternal burning hell in which souls are tormented without end.

4. That the seventh day of the week is the Sabbath; we do not believe that the Sabbath has been abolished.

(In this study, I wish to deal with the first and the fourth doctrines.)

I. The New Creation.

The New Testament reveals that the purpose of God in the present unforseen dispensation is the out-calling of the Church, (Acts 15:13-18) and this redeemed company is the New Creation, a heavenly people. (2 Cor. 5:17) "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature (creation): old things are passed away; behold all things are become new." Peter writing of this company of believers, states: "But ye are a chosen generation;" (1 Pet. 2:9), which means a distinct heaven-born race, or nationality.

In the Word of God, the New Creation--which began with the resurrection of Christ and consists of a born again, heavenly company who are in Christ--is every where held in contrast to the old creation, and it is from that old and ruined creation that the believer is said to have been saved and delivered.

As the Sabbath was instituted to celebrate the old creation, so the Lord's Day celebrates the New Creation. Likewise, as the sabbath was limited in its application to Israel as the earthly people of God, so, also, the Lord's Day is limited in its application to the Church as the heavenly people of God.

II. DISPENSATIONS and COVENANTS.

Before we can understand the New Creation and the New Covenant, we must give some study to the Old Covenants.

May we be reminded that God's dealings with His people in the various dispensations of the world's history, have been in terms of covenants.

Dispensation - is a period of time during which man is tested in respect of obedience to some specific revelation of the will of God. (There are seven dispensations distinguished in Scripture.)

Covenants - means a binding and solemn agreement made by two or more individuals, or parties. In terms of theology, it means the promises made by God to man, as recorded in the Bible.

Let us briefly study the dispensations and the covenants of the past.

1. First Dispensation - Innocency.

Man was created in innocency, placed in a perfect envirement, subjected to an absolute simple test, and warned of the consequence of disobedience.

During this dispensation, man was tested by the Edenic Covenant. (Gen. 1:26-28 & 2:8-17) This covenant conditions the life of man in innocency.

2. Second Dispensation- Conscience.

(covers Gen. 3:22- 7:23)

By disobedience man came to a personal and experim-ental knowledge of good and evil--of good as obedience, of evil as disobedience to the known will of God. Through that know-ledge conscience awoke. Expelled from Eden and placed under the second, or Adamic Covenant, man was responsible to do all known good, to abstain from all known evil, and to approach through sacrifices. The result of this second testing of man is stated in Gen. 6:5 "And God saw that the wickedness of man

was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually;" and the dispensation ended in the judgment of the Flood.

The Adamic Covenant, conditioned the life of fallen man and gives promise of a Redeemer. (Gen. 3:14-19)

3. Third Dispensation - Human Government.

(covers from Gen. 8:20 - 11:9)

Under the dispensation of Conscience, as in Innocency, man utterly failed, and the judgment of the Flood marks the end of the second dispensation and the beginning of the third.

The declaration of the Noahic Covenant subjects humanity to a new test. Its distinctive feature is the institution, for the first time, of human government--the government of man by man. Man is responsible to govern the world for God. That responsibility rested upon the whole race, Jews and Gentiles, until the failure of Israel under the Palestinian Covenant, which brought the judgment of captivity. Here marked the beginning of the Gentile times, and the government of the world passed exclusively into Gentile hands.

4. Fourth Dispensation - Promise.

(This dispensation covers from the call of Abraham to the giving of the Law. Gen. 12:1 - Ex. 19:8)

For Abraham and his descendants it is evident that the Abrahamic Covenant, (Gen. 15:18 "In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates,") made a great change. They became distinctively the heirs of promise. That covenant is wholly gracious and unconditional. The descendants of Abraham had but to abide in their own land to inherit every blessing. In Egypt they lost their blessing, but not their covenant. The dispensation of Promise ended when Israel rashly accepted the Law. (Ex. 19:8) Grace had prepared a deliverer (Moses) and provided a sacrifice for the guilty, and by divine power brought them out of bondage, but at Sinai they exchanged grace for law.

5. Fifth Dispensation - Law.

(covers from Ex. 19:8 - Mt. 27:35)

This dispensation extends from Sinai to Calvary--from the Exodus to the Cross. The history of Israel in the wilderness and in the land is one long record of violation of the law. The testing of the nation by law ended in the judgment of the captivities, but the dispensation itself ended at the Cross.

During this long dispensation, the people were tested by the Mosaic Covenant. It was given to Israel in three divisions, each essential to the other, and together forming the Mosaic Covenant.

- (a) Commandments - expressing the righteous will of God.
 - (b) Judgment- governing the social life of Israel.
 - (c) Ordinance - governing the religious life of Israel.
- (These three elements form "The Law".)

There were two Covenants that were made to the children of Israel during the time of the Law, that has not been fulfilled as yet. They will be fulfilled during the Dispensation of the Kingdom, which is the Heavenly dispensation. (The seventh dispensation.)

I would like to mention here, that the Christian is not under the Mosaic Covenant of works, (the law) but under the unconditional New Covenant of Grace.

This leads us to the:

- 6. Sixth Dispensation - Grace.
(We live today under this dispensation.)

John 1:17 "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

As a dispensation, grace began with the death and resurrection of Christ. (Rom. 3:24-26) The point of testing is no longer legal obedience as the condition of salvation, but acceptance or rejection of Christ, with good works as a fruit of salvation. The immediate result of this testing was the rejection of Christ by the Jews, and His crucifixion by Jews and Gentiles. The predicted end of the testing of man under grace is the apostasy of the professing church.

(We now live in the last hours of the dispensation of Grace.)

III. The Law Fulfilled, and Abolished.

1. Note: The Law, including the Sabbath, was a testing period for Israel only. The Sabbath was a sign between Jehovah and Israel. The Sabbath was never imposed on the Gentiles. Read closely the following scriptures: Ex. 20:10, 11 "But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy sons, nor thy daughters, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy strangers that is within thy gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day; and hallowed it."

Ex. 31:12-17 "And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying, Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you through-out your generation; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you. Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you; every one that defileth it

shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord: whosoever doeth any work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. Wherefore the Children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generation, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever.

2. The Law Fulfilled in Christ.

Matt. 5:17 "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill."

Christ's relation to the law of Moses may be thus summarized:

- (1) He was made under the law. (Gal. 4:4)
- (2) He lived in perfect obedience to the law. (John 8:46)
- (3) He was a minister of the law to the Jews, clearing it from legalism, and enforcing it in all its pitiless severity upon those who professed to obey it, (Luke 10:25-37) but confirming the promises made to the fathers under the Mosaic Covenant.
- (4) He fulfilled the types of the law by His holy life and sacrificial death. (Heb. 9:11-26)
- (5) He bore, vicariously, the curse of the law that the Abrahamic Covenant might avail for all who believe.
- (6) He brought out by His redemption all who believe from the place of servants under the law into the place of Sons.
- (7) He mediated by His blood the New Covenant of assurance and grace in which all believers stand (Rom. 5:2; Heb. 8:6-13) so establishing the "law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2) with its precepts of higher exaltation made possible by the indwelling Spirit.

The Law of Christ is the divine love, as wrought into the renewed heart by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 5:5; Heb. 10:16). It is therefore the law of liberty (Ja. 1:25) in contrast with the external law of Moses. Moses' law demanded love; Christ law is love. And so takes the place of the external law by fulfilling it, (Rom. 13:10 "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.")

Gal. 5:14 "For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even this: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

It is the "Law written in the heart" under the New Covenant. (Heb. 10:11-17)

3. Other Scriptures Proving the Law has been Abolished in Christ Jesus.

Rom. 6:14,15 Gal. 2:16 Gal. 3:10-14, 24-26
Gal. 4:21-31 Col. 2:14-17

IV. The NEW COVENANT.

The new covenant is the eighth covenant and speaks of the resurrection and eternal completeness. (Read Heb. 8:6-13)

The term "New" Covenant necessarily implies an "old" Covenant, and we are reminded that God's dealings with His people in the various dispensations of the world's history have been in terms of covenants. The writings produced within the Jewish church being the writings or Scriptures of the old Covenant; those within the Christian church, the Scriptures of the New Covenant.

The alternative name "Testament" was adopted into our English language from a Latin word (*testari*) meaning to testify, or make a will. The Webster's Dictionary defines Testament, in the Bible, a covenant; hence either of the two parts of the Bible, the old Testament and the New Testament; so called because they were considered a covenant between God and man.

With this in mind, let us consider the following scriptures: Mt. 26:28 "For this is my blood of the new testament (covenant) which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

Mk. 14:24 "And he said unto them. This is my blood of the new testament (covenant), which is shed for many."

See also Luke 22:20 and 1 Cor. 11:25.

The old covenant was so well known to these Jewish disciples, that to speak of the covenant in this emphatic way, referring manifestly to something other than the old Mosaic covenant, was in effect to call it a "New" covenant.

It is significant that Christ here connects the "new" covenant with His blood. We at once think, as doubtless the disciples would, of the transaction described in Ex. 24:7, 8, when Moses, took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people, these "words", indicating God's undertaking on behalf of His people and what He required of them; and they said, "All that the Lord hath spoken will we do, and be obedient," thus taking up their part of the contract. Then comes the ratification. Moses took the blood (half of which had already been sprinkled on the altar), and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words.

The blood was sacrificial blood, the blood of the animals sacrificed as burnt offerings and peace offerings. The one half of the blood sprinkled on the altar tells of the sacrifice offerings to God, the other half sprinkled on the people, of the virtue of the same sacrifice applied to the people, and so the covenant relation is fully brought about.

Christ by speaking of His blood in this connection, plainly indicates that His death was a sacrifice, and that through that sacrifice His people would be brought into a New Covenant relationship with God. His sacrifice is acceptable to God and the virtue of it is to be applied to believers--so all the blessings of the new covenant are secure to them; the blood is poured out for you, and You accept it by FAITH, and not by the WORKS of the law.

Gal. 2:16 "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."

Gal. 3:24-26 "Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."

Heb. 7:19 "For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God."

Rom. 8:3,4 "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh. That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

V. Christ and The Sabbath.

Christ was faithful to the whole Mosaic System, which included the sabbath, because that system was in force during His earthly life; but that obvious fact is no basis for the claim that a Christian who is under grace and living in another dispensation is appointed to follow Christ in His sabbath observance either in example or precept.

1. The Period of the Early Church.

Following the resurrection of Christ, there is no record in the New Testament that the sabbath was observed by any believer, even in error. Doubtless the multitude of Judaized Christians did observe the sabbath; but no record of such observance was permitted to appear in the Word of God. In like manner, following the resurrection of Christ, there is no injunction given to Jew, Gentile, or Christian to observe the sabbath, nor is sabbath breaking once mentioned among the numerous lists of possible sins. On the contrary, there are warnings against sabbath observance on the part of those who are the children of God under grace.

Gal. 4:9,10 "But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?

Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years." Here Christ condemns the observance of days, and months, and times, and years. Col. 2:16, 17 Plainly instructs the child of God not to judge with respect to a sabbath day, and infers that such an attitude toward the sabbath is reasonable in view of all that Christ has become to one who is not of the New Creation.

Rom. 14:5 declares that when the believer is persuaded in his own mind, he may esteem all days alike. This does not imply a neglect of faithful worship, but rather suggest that, to such an one, all days are full of devotion to God.

Because of the fact that in the New Testament the sabbath is never included as any part of the Christian's life and service, the term Christian sabbath is a mistake. In this connection it may be noted that in place of the sabbath of the law there is now provided the Lord's Day of the New Creation which far exceeds the sabbath in its glory, its privileges, and its blessings.

2. A New Day - The Lord's Day.

According to Psalms 118:22-24 "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." A new day was prophesied.

Acts 4: 10,11 declares that Christ was the Stone rejected by Israel, but through His Crucifixion and His resurrection, He has been made the Head-Stone of the corner. This marvelous thing is God, and the day of its accomplishment is divinely appointed as a day of rejoicing and of gladness.

The old Sabbath, was a day of rest. But this day, The Lord's Day, is a day of worship, and rejoicing. In accord with this, Christ greeting on the resurrection morn was "All Hail!" (Matt. 28:9) which means, "O Joy!", and being the day which the Lord hath made, it is rightfully termed, "The Lord's Day."

After the resurrection of Christ, I think it is worthy to notice the days on which he made his appearances to his disciples. The resurrection of Christ took place on the first day of the week.

On the First Day of the week he makes the following appearances:

- (1) To Mary Magdalene (John 20)
- (2) To the women returning from the tomb with the angelic message. (Mt. 28)

- (3) To Peter (Luke 24:1, 34)
- (4) To the Apostles, except Thomas. (Luke 24:1, 36-43)
- (5) To the Emmaus disciples (Luke 24:1, 13-31)

Eight Days later: (which would be on the 1st day)

- (1) To the Apostles, Thomas being present. (John 20:1, 24-29)
- (2) On a mountain, to the apostles and five hundred brethren, (1 Cor. 15:6)

3. The New Day of Grace.

At the end of a week of toil, a day of rest was granted to the people who were related to God by law-works; while to the people under grace, whose works are finished in Christ, a day of worship is appointed, which being the first day of the week, precedes all days of work. In the blessing of the first day the believer lives and serves the following six days.

A day of rest belongs to a people who are related to God by works which were to be accomplished; a day of ceaseless worship and service belongs to a people who are related to God by the finished work of Christ.

The seventh day was characterized by unyielding law; the first day is characterized by the latitude and liberty belonging to grace.

The seventh day was observed with hope that by it one might be accepted to God. The first day is observed with the assurance that one is already accepted to God.

The keeping of the seventh day was wrought by the flesh; the keeping of the first day is wrought by the indwelling Spirit.

4. Records of Observances of the First Day.

- (a) On that day Christ arose from the dead. (Matt. 28:1)
- (b) On that day He first met His disciples in the new fellowship. (John 20:19)
- (c) On that day He gave them instructions. (Luke 24)
- (d) On that day He ascended into heaven as the first-fruits, or wave sheaf. (John 20:17; 1 Cor. 15:20)
- (e) On that day He breathed on them. (John 20:22)
- (f) On that day the Apostle Paul preached in Troas. (Acts 20: 6,7)
- (g) On that day they were to "lay by in store" as God had prospered them. (1 Cor. 16:2)
- (i) On that day Christ appeared to John on Patmos. (Rev. 1:10 "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day.")

Throughout this age, the Dispensation of Grace, the most Spirit-filled, devout believers, to whom the will of God has been clearly revealed, have kept the Lord's Day apart from any sense of responsibility to keep the seventh day. It is reasonable to suppose that had they been guilty of sabbath breaking, they would have been convicted of that sin.

5. The Manner of the Observance of the Lord's Day may be Extended to All Days.

Christ was no more devoted to His Father on one day than on another. Sabbath rest could not be extended to all days alike; but, while the believer may have more time and freedom on the first day of the week, his worship, joy and service, which characterizes the keeping of the Lord's day, should, so far as possible, be his experience all the days of his life.

End