

Did People Worship On The Seventh Day Sabbath Before Mt. Sinai?

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Some Christians question whether God's seventh day Sabbath was observed before He gave the Ten Commandments on Mt. Sinai because Sabbath observance was never mentioned in the book of Genesis.

I would like to address this question and summarize my conclusions by writing that even though Genesis and several other books in the Bible do not mention Sabbath observance, evidence provided elsewhere in the Bible answers and resolves this question.

Two essential points should be established as we begin this study: First, Jesus Christ created everything that exists. He created everything on Earth in six days, and He created the seventh day and made it holy. (Genesis 2:1-3)

John speaks of Jesus as the Creator saying, "**He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.**" (John 1:10:11)

Paul says more about Jesus as the Creator, "**For by him [Jesus] all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him [the Son] and for him [the Father].**" (Colossians 1:16, insertions mine)

Second, Jesus does not change. "**Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.**" (Hebrews 13:8) "**I the Lord do not change. . . .**" (Malachi 3:6) As we proceed in this study, we will see that the actions of Jesus in the past through the future are consistent. If we accept these two conclusions, the remainder of this study should be easy to follow.

Since we know that Jesus is deity, the Creator of the seventh day carefully considered His response to the Pharisees when they accused Him of breaking the Sabbath: "**Then he [Jesus] said to them, 'The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So, [speaking as the Creator of the Sabbath, Jesus continued] the Son of Man is Lord [over all creation] even of the Sabbath.'**" (Mark 2:27, insertions mine)

The Pharisees understood Jesus to mean: "I made the Sabbath for man. As the Creator [owner and Lord] of the Sabbath, who defines Sabbath observance? You or Me?"

Genesis 2 clearly states that Jesus created the Sabbath at the end of Creation Week. Jesus, speaking to the Pharisees as the Creator of the Sabbath 4,000 years after Creation Week, said "the Sabbath was made for man." Considering this statement, how can anyone argue that Jesus created the Sabbath for man, hid it for centuries during the time of the patriarchs, and waited until 2,500 years after Creation Week to reveal the Sabbath on Mt. Sinai.

The New Testament indicates three times that "the Lord's day" is the seventh day of week. (Matthew 12:8; Mark 2:27; Luke 6:5)

The Seventh Day Was Holy before the Ten Commandments

Jesus affirmed that the seventh day was holy two times before speaking the Ten Commandments from Mt. Sinai! The first instance occurred a few weeks *before* He delivered Israel from Egypt and the second instance occurred more than a month *before* Israel reached Mt. Sinai.

When Jesus sent Moses back to Egypt to deliver His people from slavery, there is evidence suggesting that Jesus required Israel to rest from their work on the seventh day. We know Israel's "resting" infuriated Pharaoh. Even though Exodus 5 does not explicitly say that Jesus required Israel to rest on His Sabbath, Exodus 5 indicates there was severe punishment and persecution for "resting."

This means that Israel was caught between the demands of two kings and violating Pharaoh's orders brought punishment while violating Jesus' demands meant no deliverance. **"But the king of Egypt said, 'Moses and Aaron, why are you taking the people away from their labor? Get back to your work!' Then Pharaoh said, 'Look, the people of the land are now numerous, and you are stopping them from working.' "** (Exodus 5:4,5)

When the Israelites suddenly stopped their labor to rest, Pharaoh summoned the Israelite foremen to appear before him. Pharaoh made it clear that since they had chosen on their own to take a day off, he would no longer provide the straw needed to make bricks.

He further declared that the Israelites' brick production quota must be maintained or they would be severely punished. The foremen left Pharaoh's palace and soon found Moses and Aaron. Notice what they said, and then what Moses said to Jesus: **"And they [the foremen] said [to Moses and Aaron], 'May the Lord look upon you and judge you! You have made us a stench to Pharaoh and his officials and have put a sword in their hand to kill us.' Moses returned to the Lord and said, 'O Lord, why have you brought trouble upon this people? Is this why you sent me?'"** (Exodus 5:21,22, italics and insertions mine)

This verse indicates that God (not Moses) required Israel to rest from working. Obviously, the day God chose for resting was His holy day. Moses respectfully placed the blame on the Lord because it was the Lord who demanded the Israelites to rest from their work.

Jesus said the Sabbath was created for man and He declared the seventh day holy at Creation. He wanted to increase Israel's faith and reveal His sovereign authority over Pharaoh before delivering Israel from Egypt. So, the Lord demanded that Israel rest from their labors on the Sabbath day – His holy day.

A second instance of Sabbath observance can be found prior to Mt. Sinai. The story in Exodus 16 began exactly one month after the Exodus. Israel had run out of food and the camp was

hungry and grumbling, so Moses appealed to the Lord. . . . **"Then the Lord said to Moses, 'I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions. On the sixth day they are to prepare what they bring in, and that is to be twice as much as they gather on the other days.'** . . . He [Moses] 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 [unlike storing up manna on other days of the week, the manna stored up on Friday] **it did not stink or get maggots in it.**" (Exodus 16:4,5,23,24, italics and insertions mine)

The evidence in Exodus 16 reveals three things. First, the order of the seventh day Sabbath in the weekly cycle has not been lost. Jesus withheld manna *on the seventh day* of each week 2,500 years after Creation. Then, 1,500 years after Mt. Sinai, Jesus told the Pharisees that He was Lord of the seventh day of the week.

Second, when the Israelites were in the wilderness for forty years, Jesus produced a miracle every sixth day when the manna they stored on the sixth day did not decompose. Finally, we learn in Exodus 16 that manna began to fall from Heaven about forty days before the Ten Commandments were given.

Obviously, the Israelites knew of the Sabbath before the Ten Commandments were given.

The Sabbath Was Known before the Flood

The Bible says, **"And after he became the father of Methuselah, Enoch walked with God 300 years and had other sons and daughters. . . . This is the account of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God."** (Genesis 5:22, 6:9)

We have seen thus far that Israel knew of God's seventh day Sabbath prior to Mt. Sinai, but was the Sabbath known before the flood? The Bible reveals that Enoch walked with God for 300 years! The Bible also states that Noah walked with God, so did these patriarchs know about the Sabbath?

I believe the antediluvians were not subhuman, knuckle-dragging apes. Compared to humanity today, the descendants of Adam were physically superior to us. The Bible records how they lived for hundreds of years. Men walked with God and they heard Him speak. This is how the Word of God (and the laws of God) became known. I cannot think of any reason why God would hide the holiness of the seventh day from the antediluvians.

Until Jesus expelled Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, they walked with Him. Even though there is no explicit text indicating the Creator told Adam and Eve about the holiness of the seventh day, we know that from the beginning the Sabbath was made for man.

Jesus is purposeful and consistent in all that He does. It seems inconceivable that Jesus would not tell Adam and Eve about the holy boundary He put around the seventh day. From the beginning, the seventh day of Creation was separated from the other six days.

From the beginning, God has allowed man to work six days of the week, but has forbidden working on the seventh day.

Moses covered 1,600 years of human history in the first nine chapters of Genesis. When God gave Moses the information for Genesis (about 2,500 years after Creation Week), He gave Moses enough information so that humanity might understand the following concepts: the origin of life on Earth, the origin of man, the origin of marriage, the origin of His seventh day Sabbath, the origin of sin's curse, and a record of the horrific display of God's wrath against lawlessness.

Even though the Bible does not record in Genesis that Adam and Eve observed the seventh day, there is unmistakable evidence that Adam and Eve did not violate or trample on the holiness of God's Sabbath!

Their *first and only sin* while living in the Garden of Eden was that of eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam and Eve, Enoch, and Noah did walk with God and I believe that Jesus revealed the holiness of the seventh day to them since the Sabbath was made for them.

When Did God's People Begin Resting?

Some Christians who wish to ignore God's Sabbath rest choose to skip over, distort, or ignore Paul's words in Hebrews 4. Notice: "**For somewhere he** [Moses, in Genesis 2:1-3] **has spoken about the seventh day in these words: 'And on the seventh day God rested from all his work.'** **There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who** [plans to] **enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his.**" (Hebrews 4:4, 9,10, insertions and italics mine)

Paul wrote these words about 35 years after Jesus died on the cross, yet he reminds the early church by saying, "**There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God.**" Genesis 2 proves that the seventh day Sabbath is not a "Jewish Sabbath." Adam and Eve were not Jews.

Jesus said the Sabbath was made for man, meaning all mankind. (Mark 2:27) At Mt. Sinai, Jesus said the Sabbath was created as a weekly memorial to His creative works. (Exodus 20:8-11) There is no indication anywhere that the Creator cancelled the holiness He placed on the seventh day at Creation or made another day holy.

Thirty-five years after the cross, Paul wrote that a Sabbath-rest remains for the people of God, "**for anyone who** [plans to] **enters God's rest also rests from his own work** [on the seventh day], **just as God did from His** [on the seventh day]."

Ten "Unseen" Commandments

When Jesus created Adam and Eve, He wrote the Ten Commandments in their hearts and minds. This means that Adam and Eve were in natural alignment with God's law and this was seen in their thoughts, words, and actions. There was no lawlessness in the Garden of Eden until they committed a lawless act.

Prior to sinning, Adam and Eve always looked forward to meeting and worshiping their Creator each Sabbath day. Unfortunately, when Adam and Eve sinned, their nature changed so much that their first inclination was to run and hide from God.

Instead of being naturally lawful, they became naturally lawless and the result of this curse has been witnessed in the thoughts, words, and actions of mankind ever since.

When Jesus met with the guilty pair, He made a covenant with them and their offspring, promising redemption and restoration. God's love for humanity would provide the necessary atonement for sin AND God would restore the Ten Commandments within His people's hearts and minds.

Few people speak of the second half of the promise, but it is just as important as the first part! The Ten Commandments are called "the covenant" and they were kept in a box called the ark of "the Covenant." At the appointed time, God will remove the carnal nature of humanity and again write His laws in the minds and hearts of the faithful.

"This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."
(Hebrews 8:10-12)

Even though it has been almost 6,000 years since sin began, God will do all that He promised. During the Great Tribulation, God will seal His people. (For more on this topic, please see Chapter 6 in my book, *Jesus: The Alpha and The Omega*.)

It is an interesting fact that throughout human history, only Moses and those who saw him return to camp from the mountaintop ever saw the Ten Commandments, the two tablets of stone God engraved with His finger. (Exodus 31:18; 32:15,16) Since then, God has not permitted mankind to see the Ten Commandments.

God has promised that He will write His laws in the hearts and minds of His people, but only for those who exercise faith and embrace His promise. It is not necessary for God to show the Ten Commandments to His people now, because they do not worship His law as two tablets of stone.

Instead, they wish to receive God's law written within their hearts and minds. Their greatest desire is to demonstrate God's law of righteousness through their conduct. In other words, God's people want to be living examples of His law, loving God above everything, and their neighbors as themselves.

During the time when the Ark of the Covenant was on Earth, the Ten Commandments written on stone remained hidden from view. Whenever the tabernacle was moved, the Ark of the Covenant (the golden box containing the Ten Commandments) was covered with thick cloth (the temple veil - Numbers 4:5) and was kept more than half a mile away from the Israelites! (Joshua 3:4)

For centuries, Israel's high priests could not look at the Ten Commandments even though they entered the Most Holy Place once a year, on the Day of Atonement and stood before the Ark of the Covenant. I believe the Ark of the Covenant was taken to Heaven more than 2,000 years ago.

Consequently, no one on Earth will ever see the Ten Commandments (the two tablets of stone) again! A day is soon coming when the Ark of the Covenant will be shown to the whole world (Revelation 11:19) and although the Ark will be seen in the sky, the Ten Commandments will not!

God shows the Ark of the Covenant, but not the Ten Commandments, to the world at the seventh trumpet. When it sounds, Earth's inhabitants will already be in two distinct groups. One group will have rejected the gospel of Christ and will have received the mark of the beast's tattoo, "666." The other group will have accepted the gospel of Christ and will have had their faith in Christ tested. The second group will have demonstrated their faith during extreme persecution.

As a result, Jesus will remove their carnal natures and they will receive the seal of God. This group will rejoice when they see the Ark of the Covenant. There is no need for them to see inside the Ark because the promise (the covenant) has already been fulfilled! The Ten Commandments have been written in their hearts and minds.

Just like Adam and Eve before sin began, the saints will have sinless natures! Meanwhile, the wicked will see the glorious Ark of the Covenant in the sky with anxious foreboding. The contents of that box seals their doom. The two tablets, written with God's own finger, defines love for God and man, the very laws which they have despised and rejected. God shows the wicked the Ark of the Covenant, clarifying for them the reason for their punishment and judgement.

God will force everyone having the mark of the beast tattoo to experience His wrath and drink from His seven bowls (the seven last plagues).

Nine Commandments Are Not Enough

Most Christians acknowledge that the Ten Commandments are important and should be obeyed. However, when pressed about the demands of the fourth commandment (the holiness of the seventh day), the carnal nature pushes back, insisting that the fourth commandment was abolished at the cross and is no longer important.

Most Christians will agree that worshiping an idol is offensive to the Creator (per the second commandment), but do not believe that working on the seventh day (per the fourth commandment) is offensive. Most Christians will agree that committing adultery is morally wrong (per the seventh commandment), but maintain that resting on the seventh day (per the fourth commandment) is legalistic.

Most Christians will agree that stealing is a sin (per the eighth commandment), but they ignore Saturday as a holy day (per the fourth commandment). Why do most Christians "cherry pick" the Ten Commandments? Shouldn't nine commandments be enough?

For more than forty years I have been fascinated with the various arguments used by Christians to eliminate the demands of the fourth commandment. I will list the five basic arguments I hear most often.

1. The Catholic position: The Church received authority from Christ to transfer the sacredness of the seventh day to the first day of the week. This transfer was completed by Pope Sylvester I during the fourth century A.D.*
2. The Sabbath is a Jewish ritual and it was not imposed on mankind before God gave the Ten Commandments.
3. The Ten Commandments are part of the covenant God made with the Jews. This covenant was nailed (abolished) to the cross.
4. Nine of the Ten Commandments are repeated by New Testament writers. The silence regarding the Sabbath proves it was abolished at the cross.
5. If a person insists on keeping the Ten Commandments, he is a legalist. Christians are not under any obligation to obey the Ten Commandments, instead, believers in Christ are now under a dispensation of grace. Keep in mind, however, that these same people believe that obeying nine commandments does not constitute legalism.

Noah's Flood

Noah was a preacher of righteousness. (2 Peter 2:5) For 120 years, Noah faithfully warned the people of God's coming wrath. (Genesis 6:3; Hebrews 11:7) Did Jesus commit murder when He destroyed the world in Noah's day or was there a judicial basis for His action which was based on righteousness, justice, and mercy?

According to the Bible, Jesus deliberately drowned tens of thousands of men, women, and children. How do we justify this horrific action by a God of love? God has not changed His ways since Noah's flood! Remember, "**I the Lord do not change. . .**" (Malachi 3:6)

Prior to the flood there was stealing, murder, adultery, lying, idolatry, improper use of God's

name, and disregard for God's holy Sabbath. While the first six chapters of Genesis are silent about specific sins, the antediluvians did offend God and cause Him to drown them.

Remember the initial point in part one of this article was that Jesus never changes, so therefore we can ferret out the answer. God never changes so He destroyed the antediluvians for the same reason that Sodom and Gomorrah, Israel, and Jerusalem were destroyed. Finally, God will burn the wicked up in a lake of fire at the end of the 1,000 years for the same reason He destroyed the antediluvians.

Remember, the Lord does not change: **"The Earth is defiled by its people; they have disobeyed the laws, violated the statutes and broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore a curse consumes the earth; its people must bear their guilt. Therefore Earth's inhabitants are burned up, and very few are left."** (Isaiah 24:5,6)

The Full Cup Principle can be seen throughout the Bible. God's cup of wrath is filled when a group of people reach a place where extended mercy does not have a redeeming effect. At that point, God's wrath is aroused and He sends destruction.

God destroyed the world in Noah's day, and later destroyed nations and cities because they became defiant and degenerate. When a group of people knowingly and willfully reject God's laws, lawlessness springs up like weeds after a Spring rain. Consider Jesus' words to Ezekiel:

"Her [Israel's] priests do violence to my law and profane my holy things; they do not distinguish between the holy and the common; they teach that there is no difference between the unclean and the clean; and they shut their eyes to the keeping of my Sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them. . . . Doom has come upon you—you who dwell in the land. The time has come, the day is near; there is panic, not joy, upon the mountains. I am about to pour out my wrath on you and spend my anger against you; I will judge you according to your conduct and repay you for all your detestable practices. I will not look on you with pity or spare you; I will repay you in accordance with your conduct and the detestable practices among you. Then you will know that it is I the Lord who strikes the blow." (Ezekiel 7:7-9; 22:26, insertion mine)

God removed Adam and Eve from Eden, destroyed the world in Noah's day, removed Israel from their homeland and exiled them in Babylon, destroyed His people and the city of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, and will destroy the wicked at the end of the 1,000 years for the same reason – lawlessness.

Remember, faith in God does not eliminate His law. **"Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith [in Christ]? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law."** (Romans 3:31, insertion mine)

Is There Grace When There Is No Law?

We can assume that the Ten Commandments existed in Noah's day because the Bible says, **"But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord."** (Genesis 6:8) Where there is no

law, there is no condemnation and need for grace. If a judge grants you grace and you are released from paying the penalty for speeding, this does not mean the speed limit no longer exists.

The suggestion that the Sabbath was unknown prior to the flood or Mt. Sinai is born out of our carnal rebellion, an attempt to cover up a glorious truth. Foolish arguments about law, grace, and faith have been imposed on God's Word causing a great cloud of darkness and confusion about the truth of God's Sabbath, which ironically, was made for man!

The Sabbath is a gift from our Creator and the carnal nature hates it. This is why Jesus gave Sabbath observance the force of law at Mt. Sinai. He knew that man's rebellion and Lucifer's sophistry would soon combine causing the world to deny its accountability to its Creator.

Too many Christians today have convinced themselves that God's grace has somehow eliminated His law. They stumble within this circular reasoning and conclude that everyone is free from the one command that requires rest from our works "just as God rested from His." Yet, they overlook one very profound truth, that there is no need for grace if there is no law.

Consider the following comparisons: Obeying the law of the land does not make an illegal immigrant a citizen and neither does obeying the law of God make a sinner a citizen of New Jerusalem. Those who seek to obtain their citizenry in God's kingdom through obedience are under the curse of sin and their hope will be dashed to pieces.

On the other hand, those who understand the covenant and want the laws of God written in their minds and hearts can see how law, grace, faith, and works harmoniously align to glorify God in every aspect of their lives. "When we walk with the Lord, in the light of His Word," as the old gospel song reminds us, it is only a matter of time in this degenerate world until our faith in Him is tested.

The biblical definition of faith means: Obeying God without regard for the consequences. (See Daniel 3.) Those who walk by faith know, "**The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. . . The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart.**" (Psalm 19:7,8)

There is enough evidence in the Bible to demonstrate that God's Sabbath rest has been known and observed ever since Creation Week. He is a God of love and He has never imposed a harmful or inferior law on mankind.

Those who plan to enter God's "eternal rest" are wonderfully blessed once they discover and embrace the joy that comes with observing God's seventh day rest with Him. Jesus made it for us – He meant it to be a gift accompanied with a tremendous blessing!

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***Note on the Catholic position (insertions in bracket are my comments):** Rabanus Maurus (776-856), abbot of Fulda and later archbishop of Mainz, Germany wrote: "Pope Sylvester (his papacy: 314-335) instructed the clergy to keep *the feriae* [a weekday, other than Saturday, on

which no feast occurs].

And, indeed, from an old custom he called the first day [of the week] the 'Lord's [day],' on which the light was made in the beginning and also the resurrection of Christ is celebrated."¹ Rabanus does not mean to imply that Sylvester was the first man who referred to the days of the week as *feriae* or who first started the observance of Sunday among Christians.

He means that, according to the testimony of Roman Catholic writers, Sylvester confirmed those practices and made them official insofar as his church was concerned. Hence Rabanus says elsewhere in his writings: "Pope Sylvester first among the Romans ordered that the names of the days [of the week], which they previously called after the name of their gods, that is, [the day] of the Sun, [the day] of the Moon, [the day] of Mars, [the day] of Mercury, [the day] of Jupiter, [the day] of Venus, [the day] of Saturn, they should call *feriae* thereafter, that is the first *feria*, the second *feria*, the third *feria*, the fourth *feria*, the fifth *feria*, the sixth *feria*, because that in the beginning of Genesis it is written that God said concerning each day: on the first, 'Let there be light'; on the second, 'Let there be a firmament'; on the third, 'Let the earth bring forth verdure'; etc. But he [Sylvester] ordered [them] to call the Sabbath by the ancient term of the law, [to call] the first *feria* the 'Lord's day,' because on it the Lord rose [from the dead].

Moreover, the same pope decreed that the rest of the Sabbath should be transferred rather to the Lord's day [Sunday], in order that on that day we should rest from worldly works for the praise of God."² Note particularly, he says that 'the same pope [Sylvester I] decreed that the rest of the Sabbath should be transferred rather to the Lord's day [Sunday].'³

According to this statement, he was the first bishop to introduce the idea that the divinely appointed rest of the Sabbath day should be transferred to the first day of the week.

This is significant, especially considering that it was during Sylvester's pontificate that the emperor of Rome [Constantine] issued the first civil laws compelling men to rest from secular labor on Sunday and that Eusebius, bishop of Caesarea, was the first theologian on record to present arguments, allegedly from the Scriptures, that Christ did transfer the rest of the Sabbath day to Sunday.

¹ Rabanus Maurus, *Liber de Computo* (A book Concerning Computation), Chap. XXVII ("Concerning Festivals"), translated from the Latin text by Robert L. Odom, cf Migne's Patrologia Latina, Vol. CVII, col. 682.

² Rabanus Maurus, *De Clericorum Institutione* (Concerning the Instruction of the Clergymen), Book II, Chap. XLVI, translated from the Latin text by Robert L. Odom, cf Migne's Patrologia Latina, Vol. CVII, col. 361.

³ The wording in the Latin text reads: "Statuit autem idem papa ut otium Sabbati magis in diem Dominicam transferretur, ut ea die a terrenis operibus ad laudandum Deum vacaremus."

Web Source: <http://biblelight.net/sylvester-1.htm>