

Is the Sabbath Jewish?

Question:

In a recent sermon I heard the minister continually referred to Saturday as the Jewish Sabbath. Is this true?

Our Answer:

The belief that the seventh day is the Jewish Sabbath is one of the most common misunderstandings in the professing Christian world today. Furthermore, this belief is supported nowhere in the scriptures. The Bible emphatically declares that the Sabbath was created over two thousand years before there even was a Jew and at that time it was made holy by God Himself.

On the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day and *sanctified* it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made. (Gen. 2:2)

The word “sanctified” in this verse is very interesting. Literally translated it means “to consecrate” or “to purify.” In other words, God set this day apart from all other days and when doing so He placed His blessing on it. He made it HOLY! Furthermore, He did this at the very beginning. This event took place before Adam was two days old. The first Jew did not arrive on the scene until the sons of Jacob were born millennia later.

Some have also suggested that the Sabbath is an “Old Testament” command. But once again this is not true. The Sabbath is mentioned 61 times in the New Testament – 51 times in the gospels alone. Jesus Christ called Himself the Lord of the Sabbath (Mk. 2:28) and never once did He remotely hint at a desire to change this command. Those who believe that the Sabbath was only in effect during the Old Testament do not have the scriptures as evidence. Nowhere in the Bible does it say the Sabbath was abandoned by God’s people in the New Testament.

Throughout the scriptures the great champions of faith down through the ages honored God’s Sabbath. Consider just a few examples: Moses (Ex. 20:8-11), David (Psa. 92), Nehemiah (Neh. 10 & 13), Isaiah (Isa. 58), Ezekiel (Ezk. 20) and of course, Jesus Christ (Mk. 1:21; 2:27). But it doesn’t end there. The scriptures reveal that after the death of the Messiah the disciples continued to honor the Sabbath and keep it holy. Even Paul and the gentile churches he taught honored this day.

"Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures...And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 17:2; 18:4 see also Acts 13:14,27,42,44).

A Final Thought

Is the seventh day the “Jewish Sabbath”? Perhaps Jesus of Nazareth said it best. “The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath” (Mk. 2:27). God didn’t create the line of Judah so He would have someone to honor the day He made holy. He created the day and made it holy so that the entire human family would have access to Him and His plan for them. It was God’s gift from the very beginning and it remains so to this very day.