

Why I am not a Sabbath Keeper

by Evangelist Dea Warford

"Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy" is the 4th commandment (Exodus 20:8). The Sabbath day is without dispute Saturday (not Sunday as some Christians mistakenly suppose!). We make Sunday a special day to worship the Lord, go to church, and at times rest as well, but we no longer carefully avoid work on Saturday, as Old Testament saints did (to do otherwise would have meant death! A man was stoned to death for gathering sticks for a fire in Num. 15:32-36). Why do we no longer "keep" the 4th commandment? It is in the Bible. Could the 7th Day Adventists possibly be right and we're wrong?

Ellen G. White, founder of 7th Day Adventism claimed to have seen a vision of the 10 commandments with a ring of fire around the 4th commandment. She even taught Sunday worship would one day be the mark of the beast (Rev. 13:15, 16; 15:2), when the anti-Christ insists everyone make Sunday the day of worship and those who are the "true remnant church" will refuse to take the mark simply by continuing to worship on the Sabbath. At that time, one's very salvation will be dependant upon whether they worship on Saturday or Sunday. Thus we can understand the Adventists zeal to spread their "truth" of keeping the 4th commandment. Yet their arguments continue to be rejected by the vast majority of the body of Christ.

Probably few, if any, reading this newsletter are Sabbath keepers; and probably almost as few really know why not, and could clearly explain why to their Adventist friends. From time to time I meet Christians who are somewhat confused about this matter. Thus the purpose of this newsletter.

WHY I DON'T KEEP THE SABBATH

I do not make Saturday a "day of rest" and I do not try to keep a "Sabbath" every week (though I do try to have a "day off" once a week, usually Tuesday). Why don't I keep the Sabbath?

1. Nowhere in the New Testament are we specifically commanded to keep the Sabbath: Period! Enough said!
2. Every one of the other 10 commandments are repeated in the New Testament, but not Sabbath keeping (Romans 13:8-10, Eph. 6:1, 2, James 5:12, 1 John 5:21, Matt. 19:17-19, Mark 10:19). Mention this to an Adventist and he will probably reply, "that's because it was taken for granted that they kept the Sabbath". To this, I would reply, "You mean they had to be reminded not to commit murder or adultery and wouldn't take those sins for granted, but would Sabbath keeping?" It doesn't make sense.
3. When the early church established the basic requirements of the faith for new converts, keeping the Sabbath was not mentioned, but fornication was! (Acts 15:28, 29).
4. New Testament Christians met on the 1st day of the week, which is Sunday (Acts 20:6, 7).
5. New Testament Christians laid aside their offerings on the 1st day of the week (1 Cor. 16:2).
6. The Day of Pentecost, when the church was born, was on the 1st day of the week. The day of Pentecost was 50 days after the Sabbath of the Passover (Acts 2:1).

7. Jesus appeared to the disciples on the 1st day of the week, but never on the Sabbath after his resurrection (John 10:1, 14; Luke 24:1, 13, 34, 35; John 20:19-23, 26-27; Rev. 1:10). I think He was trying to tell us something about Sundays and His meeting with us on that day, don't you? (Matt. 18:20)

8. Paul rebuked a church for "keeping" certain days in Gal. 4:9-11: "Ye observe days, and months, and times . . . I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain", but never commended any church for "keeping" the Sabbath!

9. If we are saved by faith, then we are not saved by works, including Sabbath keeping: I have no personal quarrel with those who wish to keep the Sabbath as a day of rest, or to go to church and worship him on Saturdays -- none at all! Paul wrote in Romans 14:5, "One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." I am fully persuaded that I do not have to keep the Sabbath, and God gives me a scriptural right in this verse to have such persuasion. However, he also gives others the right to be "fully persuaded" to esteem their "day".

The problem is when Sabbath keepers insist we are "sinning" against the scriptures when we don't keep the Sabbath. Such judgment violates Paul's warning against judging one another's personal principles in Rom. 14:4, 6, 10-14. And to make Sabbath keeping (which is a "work") now or at any time in the future a determinate factor in my salvation is a slap in the face of the perfectly clear and often repeated New Testament theme of salvation by "grace through faith" and "not of works" (compare: Eph. 2:8-10, Acts 15:11, Romans 4:3-8; 5:1, 2, 20; 10:8-13; Col. 1:22, 23; Titus 3:5).

10. The law was fulfilled in Christ and thus the 10 commandments, including the Sabbath, are no longer binding on the church: "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Rom. 10:4. compare also: John 1:17; Acts 13:39; Rom. 3:10-13, 28, 6:14-15, 7:4-6; 13:8-10, Gal. 2:16, 21; 3:10, 12, 13, 19-21, 5:18; Eph. 2:15, Col. 2:14; II Cor. 3:7-11, Heb. 8:6, 12, 13;). This does not mean that we are free to commit adultery or covet or steal, of course, but only that our basis for not doing those things is because we have His law written on our hearts and Christ within bears witness of what is sin and empowers us not to sin.

11. Neither my conscience nor my heart tells me to keep the Sabbath though it clearly tells me to keep all the other commandments! This is in fulfillment of Jer. 31:31-34, and Heb. 8:7-13, where God says he will write His law in my heart. It is indeed clearly written there, and thus grieves me when I sin. However, on the other hand, I never yet have awakened from sleep on Saturday with some spiritual sense that I needed to treat that day any differently than any other day.

12. There is an obvious transition away from Sabbath keeping in the Word. In the New Testament, before Acts 18, the Sabbath is mentioned 8 times in the book and we find Paul in the Synagogues frequently on that day. The reason is quite obvious. Since the Jews still considered themselves "under the law" and hadn't received the truth of the gospel yet, Paul (desiring to win them to Christ) put himself as one "under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law", (though, in his heart, Paul considered himself "under the law to Christ" 1 Cor. 9:19-22). After Acts 18, the Sabbath is not once mentioned in the entire New Testament, except in Col. 2:14-17, and there it is made clear that the Sabbath was symbolic of the Christian benefits: "the Sabbath days . . . are a shadow of things to come". Shadows are Old Testament truths. Now, we walk in the light under the New Testament: "Ye are called ... out of darkness into his marvelous light." (1 Peter 2:11).

13. The Lord's day of His resurrection (Sunday); is the Christian's day of rejoicing: "The stone which the builders refused is become the head of the corner. This is the Lord's doing; it is

marvelous in our eyes. This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it" (Ps. 118:22-24). The Lord through His resurrection, in becoming the "head of the corner", made a special day. There is no other day in history like it. It is the day of his resurrection, which "just happened" to be on a Sunday. The Sabbath was "made for man" in Old Testament times (Mark 2:27), but Jesus as "Lord of the Sabbath" (Mk. 2:28) made us a "new" day, the first day of the week, a day "which the Lord hath made" especially for his church. On this 1st day of the week when He rose from the grave (John 20:1), He gave us a day of "rejoicing" which we would celebrate over and over throughout the ages. Every Sunday throughout New Testament history, "rejoicing" has gone up from those who were "redeemed from the curse of the law" (Gal. 3:13), and set free to live in Grace (John. 1:17).

14. I am really a Sabbath keeper anyway by resting in the finished work of Christ: Yes, my 7th day Adventist friends, I am truly a Sabbath keeper, but, not by refusing to pick up sticks on Saturdays. I keep the Sabbath by keeping the faith! Even if the 4th commandment were still binding on the church, I would be obeying it, according to Heb. 4:9-11: "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief." The Sabbath in the New Testament is a moment by moment "rest" of faith, wherein we have "ceased from" our "own works" and "enter into his rest".

In "his rest", we trust in His work on the cross as full payment for our sins and the full assurance of our salvation (Heb. 10:22). To keep Saturday, or any other day, as some attempt to appease God's wrath and help earn salvation is, in my opinion, possibly a falling "after the same example of unbelief" (Heb. 4:11), and could even conceivably hinder one's salvation, if by such things as Sabbath keeping, one really buys into a system of salvation by works. This is what Paul was warning the Galatian Christians about in Gal. 5:4: "Christ is become of no effect unto, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace".

FALLEN FROM GRACE?

Now, I do not believe most Adventists are "fallen from grace". I've met many of them who truly show the fruit of the spirit and evidence of salvation. (I am sitting next to one on this airplane, even as I type this newsletter. She has a sweet and kind disposition, indicative of Christ within. I expect to see her in heaven.) However, any false doctrine has potential to bring one under the sway of a "seducing spirit" and "doctrines of devils" (I Tim. 4:1).

The closer we are to truth the further we are from the "father of lies" (John 8:44). But, to try to disprove others for their doctrinal errors with an argumentative, proud, judgmental spirit can be in itself the work of the devil: "This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying an strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy . . . and the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace" (James 3:13-18).

I believe God is far less concerned about "purity" of doctrine than many radio preachers and doctrinal purists would have us think. In both our judgment at the throne of Christ and the "great white throne judgment" of the unsaved, it says we are judged "according to our works" not our "perfected doctrinal system". The disciples once rebuked a man for casting out devils, though he wasn't a member of their "denomination". Jesus rebuked them for their separatism and said, "he that is not against us is on our part" (Mark 9:38-40). I'm not arguing for some embracing of false teachers and false doctrine, only a Christlike response to people who are in error. I submit to you that to be "valiant for the truth" (Jer. 9:3), doesn't mean you are running around with your Bible fighting everyone who isn't as accurate as you in doctrine.

THEN WHO'S RIGHT?

Let me ask you a question. Since everybody thinks what they believe is right (most of them very sincerely) and since "the way of a fool is right in his own eyes" (Prov. 12:15), how do you know you are right and they are wrong? Who is the fool? As one who was at one time the follower of a cult (British Israelism), which would have eventually damned my soul, I look at false doctrine with a little more understanding and compassion probably than some.

When Jesus warned in the last days to "take heed that no man deceive you", I don't believe that this was a call to "skepticism" of others and steadfast denominational loyalty. Rather it was a call to two things: 1) humility, and 2) the maintenance of intimacy with the Lord.

Humility: "if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens" (Gal. 6:2, 3). False doctrine is a burden indeed! Further, "The servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men. . . patient, in MEEKNESS instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil. (2 Tim. 2:24-26). To be proud and confident that one is right, could possibly be the very attitude that Satan uses to tempt that person into error (the very error they are boasting against!). You believe you have the right doctrine? Humbly thank God! But, stay teachable!

Maintaining Intimacy With The Lord: The mistakes all cults make is to see "truth" as a bunch of principals which they corroborated with carefully interwoven scriptures. Peter speaks of such in II Pet. 3:16 "they that are unlearned and unstable wrest (twist) ... the scriptures, unto their own destruction." Thus cults are always ready to argue and prove they have the truth and you don't (Jehovah Witnesses are the best example). Often they can open to the scriptures to "prove" their error more effectively than believers. Perhaps you have tried, as I have many times, to disprove Jehovah Witnesses, unsuccessfully.

But, we need to be reminded, that truth is not just a set of organizable, listable facts. To the true believer, truth is a person -- Christ. "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto Father, but by the Assembly of God Church. (ha, ha!). No, it says "no man cometh unto the Father, but by ME." (John 14:6).

If Christ is in you, regardless of your church membership or doctrinal stance, you are full of the truth, the only truth that will ever get you into heaven ("he that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life." (I Jn. 5:13). To have intimacy with Jesus is to have intimacy with the truth. "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life". (John 8:12), "If we walk in then light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." (1 Jn. 1:7). When we walk in the light in fellowship (intimacy) with him, the blood cleanses us from sin (couldn't a false doctrine be sin?).

Finally, Jesus told his disciples, "if ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31, 2). He told them to "continue in my word" long before the Bible was put into the hands of believers.

It is not careful study of the Bible alone, but "continuing" in those words spoken to our heart, those deep dealings of Christ within, warning our heart, guiding our thoughts (and our doctrines) in the only truth that is ultimately the bottom line-the truth Jesus teaches us. There is no such thing as the "true" church, (the right denomination). There is only Jesus. Serve and obey Him.