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Is the Sabbath for Today/Part 2

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By: **Dr. Robert A. Morey**; ©2003

One of the arguments used by Sabbatarians is that God instituted Sabbath keeping as a “creation ordinance.” What is a creation ordinance, and does Sabbath keeping fit? Dr. Morey explains.

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Part II—An Examination Of The Sabbatarian Arguments

The "The Creation Ordinance" Argument

The Sabbatarian Position—God instituted Sabbath-keeping as a creation ordinance.

Examination Of This Argument

What is a “creation ordinance?”

Answer: An activity or institution which God set up at Creation for all mankind to observe perpetually until the end of the world. Some of the obvious creation ordinances are activities such as work (Gen. 1:28; 2:15, 20) and the cultural mandate (Gen. 1:28) or institutions such as marriage (Gen. 2:8) and the family (Gen. 2:24).

What is needed exegetically to prove that Sabbath-keeping is a “creation ordinance?”

Answer: To prove that Sabbath-keeping is a creation ordinance, you must find in the creation account itself one or more of the following things:

1. A command given to man to keep a seven-day week.
2. A command given to man to rest the seventh day.
3. An example of man resting the seventh day.
4. An explanation as to why man should rest on the seventh day.

The hard exegetical facts are that there is not a single command, example or explanation for Sabbath-keeping in the Creation account. There is absolutely nothing in Genesis 1- 3 or elsewhere to warrant the assumption that Sabbath-keeping was a creation ordinance. This Sabbatarian argument is not based on Scripture.

“But isn’t the Sabbath creation ordinance found in Genesis 2:1-3?”

Answer: No, the word “Sabbath” does not appear in the text. A Biblical-theological approach would show that Genesis 2:1-3 is Moses’ comment looking back to the creation period within the context of his own understanding of the Ten Commandments and not a reference to Adam’s understanding at the beginning of history. It does not say in the text that “man” or “animals” sanctified the day or that they rested. It is a simple statement that God’s immediate creative acts were over. That God “rested” is clearly an anthropomorphic [i.e. attributing human characteristics to God] statement, for God does not get tired and hence does not need rest.

“But the seventh day is mentioned. Doesn’t this prove that it is a creation ordinance?”

Answer: Not necessarily. Nudity and vegetarianism are also a part of the creation account. But who would claim these elements as creation ordinances just because they are mentioned? Besides, the seventh day was hallowed, not the first day after the Sabbath (Greek, *mia sabbaton*), which is Sunday.

“But doesn’t Genesis 2:1-3 serve as a pattern or model for us to follow?”

Answer: We hope not. After God worked six days, He rested on the seventh day and He has been “resting” to this very time (Hebrews 4:10-11). God did not begin another cycle of six days’ work and one day of rest. Thus if man is to follow God’s example, then he would have to work six days at the beginning of his “career” and then rest until the end of his life!

At any rate, to prove that Sabbath-keeping is a creation ordinance, we must be shown an example of man’s keeping of it. Since this is true for any other creation ordinance, why should Sabbath-keeping be exempt from this rule of faith?

Also, Adam would have never been able to observe a proper Sabbath because God’s seventh day was only Adam’s second day, whereas Adam’s seventh day was God’s fifth day. Which seventh day did Adam observe?

If Genesis 2:1-3 is a creation ordinance, then the seventh day is the permanent Sabbath, for the text does not say, “God sanctified one day out of seven,” but, “God blesses and sanctified the seventh day.” Christian Sabbatharians always overlook this fact.

All the Biblical passages, such as Nehemiah 9:5-38 (cf. vs. 13-14), which give us a summary of redemptive history, always place the beginning of the Sabbath with Moses and not Adam. If Sabbath-keeping began at creation, surely the Scripture would have placed it there when surveying the history of the world, but it does not.

There is no mention of a seven-day week as being commanded or observed in the Genesis account of creation. No example, command or precept can be given from Genesis 1-3. While a seven-day week appears later on in redemptive history, there is no evidence that Adam or Eve observed such a measurement of time.

“I was told that all ancient cultures followed a seven-day week. Is this true?”

Answer: No, it is not true. Anthropology and archaeology have proven conclusively that various ancient cultures used different ways of measuring time (13-day week, 9-day week, etc.). If the Sabbath were a creation ordinance, surely it would have been observed by ancient cultures just as they observed all other valid creation ordinances. A true creation ordinance is universal, but Sabbath-keeping is not.

“But don’t men and animals have a natural seven-day cycle?”

Answer: No, they don’t. Various psychological tests have also shown that there is no biological time rhythm or clock for a seven-day week in man or animals. Extensive tests have been done with isolated men and animals to see if there is a built-in time clock. The evidence is conclusive that neither man nor animals are Sabbath-keepers by nature or being.

Sabbath-keeping does not have anything to do with the psychological or physiological well-being of man. Men and animals normally rest in their work instead of from their work. The classic Sabbatarian argument which claimed that Sabbath-keeping is physically constituted in men and animals should be laid to rest forever.

To be continued. Next time we will look at the “Moral Law” argument.

(From Robert A. Morey, *Is the Sabbath For Today?* (Research and Education Foundation, 1995). Used by permission.)

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