

Q & A #7

Question: How is it possible to alter or change anything in the Ten Commandments? Most Christians worldwide observe the first day of the week rather than the day specified in the fourth commandment. Does this mean that most Christians agree that the Ten Commandment law can be changed?

Answer: You are correct in your observation that there is a contradiction over what Scripture says and what most of the Bible-believing population practice with reference to the weekly day of worship and assembly. As you point out, the seventh-day (Saturday) is specified in the fourth commandment, but the first day (Sunday) is commonly the day when Christians gather, and the seventh day, which was “blessed” and “sanctified” at Creation, is considered a work-day.

Certainly this must be confusing to the general public to observe that God says one thing in the fourth commandment, which Jesus lived out in His public ministry (Luke 4:16), yet the Christ-follower rests on the first day of the week which the fourth commandment identifies as a day for work.

This raises the question: Is it possible to alter any of the Ten Commandments? If Sunday-observing Christians have turned away from the seventh-day Sabbath, of which Jesus claimed to be Lord (Matthew 12:8), one could therefore assume that the majority of Christians believe the moral law of God can be altered.

Serious questions raised

Sunday-observing Christians claim that the resurrection of Jesus on the first day of the week was the cause for

the abandonment, by the first Jewish Christians in Jerusalem, of the seventh-day Creation Sabbath. Strangely, this belief persists even though there is no Scripture to support it. That this belief is thought to be true by Sunday observing Christians raises important questions that deserve answers:

#1 Why must the Sabbath of the fourth commandment be discontinued in order to honor the raising of Jesus from the grave? Does this not invalidate what Jesus Himself said about the Sabbath: “The Sabbath was made for man” (Mark 2: 27)?

#2 Do not the Creation Sabbath and the resurrection of Jesus walk hand in hand—Creation and Redemption? What justifiable biblical reason can be made that one must cancel out the other? Where in Scripture is God's declaration that the first day, Sunday, is the “Lord's day”?

Another important detail relative to Christ's proclamation that “The Sabbath was made for man (“anthropos”—Greek for “man” or “mankind”)” is that this was recorded in New Testament Scripture years after Sunday observance is said to have supplanted the Sabbath of which Jesus was speaking. This statement by Jesus would no longer have been thought true by the Gospel writers if the Creation Sabbath had been supplanted by the weekly Sunday celebration of the resurrection. Did Jesus misspeak when He declared “The Sabbath was made for man”? Would His disciples, who personally heard Jesus make this declaration, be justified to ignore what Jesus said?

Divine assurances

Here is God's recorded answer to your question:

“Can the Ten Commandments be altered?” In his speech to all Israel, before their crossing of the Jordan river into the Promised Land, Moses stated God's intention for the Ten Commandments:

“You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take anything from it that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.” Deuteronomy 4:2

In His sermon on the mount, Jesus publicly stated even more specifically the infallible, permanent status of the Ten Commandments:

“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill [that is, fill full of meaning]. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.” Matthew 5:17, 18

Next, Jesus gave a sobering clue of how a person would be regarded who teaches others to break even the commandment that might seem the least important:

“Whosoever therefore shall break one of the least of these commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 5:19

That Jesus was referring to the Ten Commandments is supported by His immediate amplification of the meaning of the sixth and seventh commandments (Matthew 5:20—28).

It was predicted that the Messiah would “magnify the law and make it honorable” (Isaiah 42:21). That means Jesus! And magnify the law He did with regard to the Sabbath commandment through His several miracle healings on the Sabbath day. These are not isolated, insignificant narratives recorded by all the Gospel writers for they were written, based on eyewitness

testimony, many years after they occurred. If Jesus' disciples had abandoned the seventh-day Sabbath following His resurrection, would it not undo all that Jesus had accomplished to restore the meaning of the Creation Sabbath? This is hardly imaginable!

If, after His resurrection, Jesus had altered the day of rest and worship, He would have contradicted His own statement (Matthew 5: 17, 18). Had the disciples and apostles changed the Sabbath to Sunday, they would have violated Jesus' statement as well. It goes without saying, then, that any alteration of the fourth commandment by any future leader must be viewed in the same light—as a deviation from the proclaimed Word of God and as a serious dereliction of responsibility to Jesus Christ Himself.

Concluding thought

The monumental event of the resurrection of Jesus Christ is able to stand on its own divine merit in the story of redemption. To emphasize its importance, it does not require the abandonment of a divine institution that is imbedded in the Creation order and is sealed in divine moral law. Rather, the resurrection of Jesus is Heaven's confirmation of the valiant victory of Jesus to perfectly live the Law which validates the permanent status of the Creation Sabbath (in the fourth commandment). This gives even more reason for worshipers to come with adoration and rejoicing to the experience of the weekly seventh-day Sabbath.

Answer prepared by Daniel Knauft, author of *Sacred Time unRemembered—How the Original Sabbath Was Lost and Why It Matters*, (2014). This Q & A is edited by Kevin L. Morgan. (12/26/15)

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