

## Concerning Chapter 22 of the London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689: OF RELIGIOUS WORSHIP AND THE SABBATH DAY

At the Diet of Worms in 1521, Martin Luther declared “to act against conscience is neither right nor safe.” How true this is! It is a concept drawn from the Bible itself. “Whatever is not of faith is sin” ([Romans 14:23](#)).

It needs to be said, with great emphasis, that there are wonderful, genuine Christians, who truly love God’s word who come to differing conclusions on this issue of the Sabbath. This is not a new phenomenon in any way. This was the case even in New Testament times. [Romans 14: 5, 6](#) says, “One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord.” In this chapter ([Romans 14](#)), the Apostle Paul outlines how we are to handle these kind of differences in the setting of the local Church, and rather than breaking fellowship with each other, exhorts us to walk together with our fellow Christians in love and understanding, believing the best of each other, while at the same time, never violating our individual conscience.

In the context of outlining what Christ accomplished for His people on the cross, the Apostle Paul writes, “Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath (literally, ‘sabbaths’ plural). These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.” ([Colossians 2:16, 17](#)) Christians are told to never let anyone judge them concerning Sabbath observation. When Church leadership tells another Christian “we cannot walk with you because of your view of the Sabbath” this is a clear violation of Paul’s apostolic command. Such should never be the case.

The Bible alone is the word of God – the sole infallible rule of faith for the people of God. Historic creeds and confessions of the Church, while having great weight and significance, never rise to the level of God breathed Scripture. Only Scripture has the authority to bind the conscience absolutely. This also means that every creed and confession must therefore be in agreement and alignment with the Bible to be true.

As elders at King’s Church, our study of the Scriptures has brought us to the conclusions outlined here below. Yet even as we make our position plain, we wish to make clear that those who hold a strong Sabbatarian view are very welcome at King’s Church. Please know that! We simply ask that they do not seek to promote or push that view on others in the flock. To these precious people we say “we can live with you as long as you can live with us.”

As to the question,

**“ARE THE SABBATH LAWS BINDING ON CHRISTIANS TODAY?”**

We believe the Old Testament regulations governing Sabbath observances are typological and associated with the Mosaic Covenant, not moral, aspects of the law. As such, they are no longer in force, but have been fulfilled along with the sacrificial system, the Levitical priesthood, and all other aspects of Moses' law that prefigured Christ. Here are the reasons we hold this view.

1. In [Colossians 2:16-17](#), Paul explicitly refers to Sabbaths as a shadow of Christ, which is no longer binding since the substance (Christ) has come. It is clear in those verses that the weekly Sabbath is in view. The phrase "a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day" refers to the annual, monthly, and weekly holy days of the Jewish calendar (cf. [1 Chronicles 23:31](#); [2 Chronicles 2:4](#); [31:3](#); [Ezekiel 45:17](#); [Hosea 2:11](#)). Paul is referring to all kinds of Sabbaths, which is why he used the Plural.
2. The Sabbath was the sign to Israel of the Mosaic Covenant ([Exodus 31:16-17](#); [Ezekiel 20:12](#); [Nehemiah 9:14](#)). Since we are now under the New Covenant ([Hebrews 8](#)), we are no longer required to observe the sign of the Mosaic Covenant.
3. The New Testament never commands Christians to observe the Sabbath.
4. In our only glimpse of an early church worship service in the New Testament, the church met on the first day of the week ([Acts 20:7](#)).
5. Nowhere in the Old Testament are the Gentile nations commanded to observe the Sabbath or condemned for failing to do so. That is certainly strange if Sabbath observance were meant to be an eternal moral principle. Also, a Gentile cannot be expected to practice a sign of a covenant of which he is not a member; thus requiring Sabbath observance by Gentiles makes no sense. It's like requiring unbelievers to attend the Lord's Supper.
6. There is no evidence in the Bible of anyone keeping the Sabbath before the time of Moses.
7. When the Apostles met at the Jerusalem council ([Acts 15](#)), they did not impose Sabbath keeping on the Gentile believers.
8. The apostle Paul warned the Gentiles about many different sins in his epistles, but breaking the Sabbath was never one of them.
9. In [Galatians 4:10-11](#), Paul rebukes the Galatians for thinking God expected them to observe special days (including the Sabbath).
10. In [Romans 14:5](#), Paul forbids those who observe the Sabbath (these were no doubt Jewish believers) to condemn those who do not (Gentile believers).

11. Sunday has not replaced Saturday as the Sabbath. Rather the Lord's Day is a time when believers gather to commemorate His resurrection, which occurred on the first day of the week. Every day to the believer is one of Sabbath rest, since we have ceased from our spiritual labor and are resting in the salvation of the Lord ([Hebrews 4:9-11](#)).

So while we still follow the pattern of designating one day of the week a day for the Lord's people to gather in worship, we do not refer to this as "the Sabbath."

#### Note on [Col. 2:16](#)

A. Why do some translations translate the last part of vs. 16 as "or a sabbath day" (using the indefinite article and render "Sabbath" as singular), while others translate "or sabbaths" (not using the indefinite article but render "Sabbath" in the plural)?

It seems to us that the original intent of Paul, using the plural without the definite article, was to refer to multiple "kinds" of sabbaths – i.e. weekly, seasonal, etc. – which were commanded in the mosaic covenant.

To illustrate in English, using the term "holiday" – if we said, "let no one judge you in regard to a holiday" (using the indefinite article and singular noun) – we would mean, let no one judge you in regard to all of the days we classify as holidays – i.e. 4th of July, Memorial Day, Easter, Christmas, etc. Also, if we said, "let no one judge you in regard to holidays" (omitting the indefinite article and using the plural noun) we would understand the same thing – i.e. let no one judge you in regard to any days we classify as holidays since there are different types of holidays.

The fact that Paul used the plural can only mean one of two things.

1. Either the thought is since the weekly Sabbath is repeated he put it in the plural because he wanted to say let no one judge you in regard to any particular week's Sabbath. We do not think he meant this – but if he did it supports the non-sabbatarian position.

2. If the reason for the plural is not #1, then the plural must be being used as in the "holiday" illustration above – i.e. there was more than one type of "Sabbath" and Paul wanted to address them all.

Now if we are to be Sabbatarians we must go further in explaining Paul's use of the plural. We must say he wanted to address more than one kind of Sabbath (the non-weekly ones) but not all kinds of Sabbaths (i.e. not the weekly)! And we would need to say that his readers (mainly Gentile Christians) could be expected to conclude this!

In summary, it may be clarifying to ask (and answer) this question:

**What did the 4th commandment mean to the Israelites to whom it was given?**

The fourth commandment was to be observed as *a sign of the Mosaic Covenant* the Israelites had just entered:

[Exodus 31:12](#) And the LORD said to Moses, 13 "You are to speak to the people of Israel and say, 'Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths, for **this is a sign between me and you** throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the LORD, sanctify you.

[Ezekiel 20:9](#) But I acted for the sake of my name, that it should not be profaned in the sight of the nations among whom they lived, in whose sight **I made myself known to them in bringing them out of the land of Egypt.** 10 So I led them out of the land of Egypt and

brought them into the wilderness. 11 I gave them my statutes and made known to them my rules, by which, if a person does them, he shall live. 12 Moreover, **I gave them my Sabbaths, as a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD who sanctifies them...** 19 I am the LORD your God; walk in my statutes, and be careful to obey my rules, 20 and **keep my Sabbaths holy that they may be a sign between me and you, that you may know that I am the LORD your God.**

Sabbath observance was to remind Israel that they were *in covenant relationship with Yahweh*. The reason the sign was *a day of rest* was to remind them that Yahweh **redeemed** them from the house of bondage and *gave them rest*.

Deut. 5:12 Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. 13 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 14 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter or your male servant or your female servant, or your ox or your donkey or any of your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. 15 **You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.**

Israel practiced this command because they were a redeemed-by-Yahweh-people. This is what the Sabbath in the Decalogue, in the Mosaic Covenant, is about. This is not a natural law matter written on all human consciences. It's a *redemptive revelation* revealed in the "gospel" in the law – God giving His people rest and rolling back the curse.

None of the Israelite observance was applicable to non covenant members, i.e. Gentiles. Actually it would be a misuse of the command for Gentiles to practice this Sabbath as if they were one of Yahweh's people (much like an unbeliever practicing the Lord's Supper in our day).

\*The WCF/LBCF sabbatarian needs to show that 1) Non covenant members were required to keep the 4th commandment and 2) when they do keep it, keeping it means something different for them from what it means for covenant members.

### **Concerning Chapter 26 of the Confession: OF THE CHURCH**

Paragraph 4 – we revise to say:

The Lord Jesus Christ is the Head of the church, in whom, by the appointment of the Father, all power for the calling, institution, order or government of the church, is invested in a supreme and sovereign manner. As the Lord Jesus is the single head of the universal church it is impossible that any person has been or ever will be the single head of the universal church on earth.

<https://kingschurchaz.com/modifications-to-the-london-baptist-confession-of-faith-of-1689/>