

[1] Arguments for Impermanence

Three major arguments are urged against the permanence of the Sabbath:

[a] The first argument against permanence is that the Old Testament sabbath was instituted at Sinai, as part of the Mosaic Law. As such, it applied specifically and exclusively to Israel. Since Israel and the Church are totally distinct, and since national Israel has temporarily been set aside so that Christ can call His Church out of the world, therefore the sabbath has no applicability to this present dispensation, the Church Age.

In response, it should be remembered that the pattern of one day in seven goes back beyond Sinai to Eden; it was established at the end of God's immediate creative activity. Thus the Sabbath as a day of rest is a creation ordinance; not merely a legal or Jewish ordinance.

In addition, the Lord Jesus stated the sabbath principle of rest in a way that shows that it is applicable not only to Israel but to mankind in general. He said, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." Rest from occupational labor is something that all human beings need, not merely those who lived in the Old Testament period, and not merely Jews. God created the sabbath for mankind's need and benefit and blessing. All human beings need it, including those of every age.

[b] The second argument against permanence is that since the Sabbath is part of the Mosaic Law, and since the Law in its entirety has been abrogated or abolished for the New Testament believer, therefore the Sabbath has no binding character on one who "is not under the Law, but under grace." In fact, if a Christian views the Lord's Day as a "Sabbath," he is confusing law and grace, and mixing diametrically-opposed principles!

In response, it should be pointed out that the Mosaic Law may be distinguished into moral, ceremonial, and civil aspects; and that, although the ceremonial aspect has been fulfilled by Christ, and the civil aspect abrogated (except for certain general principles of civic equity), the moral aspect remains in force in terms of its enduring principles. This may be seen in such Scriptures as Galatians 5:13-14 and Romans 13:8-10.

[c] The third argument against permanence is that since the regulations governing Sabbath observance are completely foreign to the spirit of the New Testament observance of the Lord's Day, therefore there is no connection between the Sabbath and the Lord's Day.

In response, it should be stressed that there is a vast difference between the Old Testament regulations revealed by God and the Jewish legal regulations devised by men. Only the former should be mentioned in any comparison between the Sabbath and the Lord's Day. In addition, we must ask if the Fourth Commandment in its entirety is moral, or whether there is a dimension of it that is ceremonial.