

[A Sabbath-Rest For the People of God](#) - Vance A. Stinson

The seventh day of the week is often called the "Jewish Sabbath" because it was the day God commanded Israel to observe, and because it was meant to be a perpetual reminder of the Exodus (Deuteronomy 5:12-15). Yet, the Sabbath is also clearly associated with the week of Creation, which took place long before there were any Jews (Exodus 20:8-11; cf. Genesis 2:13). The Sabbath, then, is not restricted to a single meaning or purpose. It points to both the Creation and the Exodus, thus picturing God's creative and redemptive acts in history.

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**'Come, Let Us Reason'**

**You need to prove what you think you know...  
by the Scriptures.**

by Lloyd W. Cary

**Reason. Analysis. Logic. Deduction.**

**These are the lofty aspirations to which mankind endeavors. Society has come a long way through the process of reason. We have put man on the moon and on the bottom of the ocean. We have harnessed the power of the atom and eradicated life-threatening diseases. We have written millions of books, articles, and scientific papers. We have brought mankind to the apex of civilization-and to the brink of annihilation.**

**There are some things, however, that reason has not been able to do. Reason has not enabled mankind to master himself. And reason alone has not enabled us to know God.**

***False reasoning has been a curse upon mankind. As soon as man began considering himself the measure and sole source of knowledge and understanding, the world plunged into sin (cf. Genesis 2:17; 3:11).***

**Silver-tongued orators often advance logical-sounding pronouncements which are masterly crafted to exploit their hearers' emotions of loyalty, sympathy, adoration, or pride. The strength of his following is dependent upon the gullibility of his adherents. "My mind is made up," their attitude seems to say. "Don't confuse me with the facts." *Feeling* becomes more important to them than truth, and becomes the eyeglasses-the outlook-through which they view the given situation. Logical reasoning based on all the facts is thrown to the wind. We need to *prove* what we *think* we know.**

**We must realize there are different foundations upon which to base our thinking. While some seem to believe everything they hear, others believe only in what they can see, feel, weigh, and measure. Still others worship at the shrine of the "little gray cells" and entertain themselves with thoughts of esoteric philosophy and pedantic rhetoric.**

**And then there is divine revelation. Divine revelation is knowledge that is otherwise undiscoverable by man. It is information given to man by God Almighty through His Holy Word, the Bible. It is superior to any and all human reasoning. It is supernatural data upon which we should base all our reasoning. God's Word must be the starting point-the premise or trunk of the tree-upon which we base all our other reasoning. "Your word is truth," Jesus declared (John 17:17). Believing and acting upon this truth-no matter what the outward appearances are-is faith: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1).**

**""Come now, and let us *reason* together,' Says the Lord" (Isaiah 1:18).  
""Present your case,' says the Lord. 'Bring forth your strong reasons,'**

says the King of Jacob" (41:21). God clearly sets Himself above false reasoning, misplaced emotion, and false worship.

Notice, the apostle Paul *used the Scriptures as the starting point* when reasoning with the Thessalonians. "Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths *reasoned* with them from the Scriptures" (Acts 17:2). Again, "he *reasoned* in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks" (18:4). Paul did not just "quote Scripture" or berate his hearers; he reasoned, discussed, debated, and deduced-all from the substructure of the Holy Scriptures. As God's people, we must do the same. We must put on the very mind, attitude, and character of Jesus Christ (Philippians 2:5).

We should never belittle the power of reason, or the abilities God has built into mankind for the potential to master the world we live in, but that is not enough. We must go one step beyond. Instead of thinking only logically, we must think theologically.

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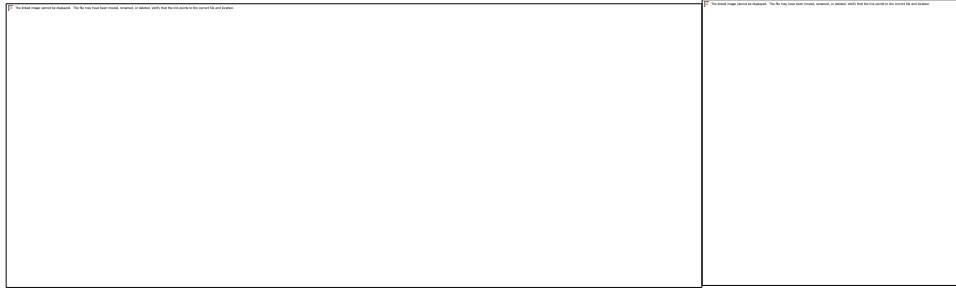
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## Questions&Answers

by *Vance A. Stinson*

### The Purpose of Parables

**Question:** Did Jesus speak in parables in order to deliberately conceal the truth from certain people?

**Answer:** Parables enhance the understanding of those who earnestly seek God's will, but remain a mystery to those whose minds have been darkened by the deceitfulness of sin. God does not arbitrarily conceal the truth from anyone. It is concealed only from those who have shut their eyes and ears, spiritually speaking. However, if at any time they turn to God in repentance and seek His will, He will remove the blinders and lead them to greater understanding. When this happens, the parables of Jesus will benefit them enormously.

When His disciples asked Him why He spoke in parables, Jesus replied, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. For to him who has will more be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away. This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. With them indeed is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah which says:

"You shall indeed hear but never understand, and you shall indeed see but never perceive. For this people's heart has grown dull, and their ears are heavy of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should perceive with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and turn to me to heal them.' But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. Truly I say to you, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it" (Matthew 13:1017, Revised Standard Version).

Knowledge of the secrets of the Kingdom of God "has not been given" to certain people because their "heart has grown dull, and their ears are heavy of hearing, and their eyes they have closed."

The parables of Jesus are not the cause of spiritual blindness. They conceal truth in the sense that they are undiscernible to those who have closed their own eyes. Jesus knew that divine secrets presented in the form of metaphors would hardly be understood by those insensible to spiritual things.

## When Will Christians Be 'Present With the Lord'?

**Question:** Doesn't Paul say that to be "absent from the body" is to be "present with the Lord"? If, then, a Christian dies and is "absent from the body," is he not immediately (and consciously) "present with the Lord"?

**Answer:** The expressions "absent from the body" and "present with the Lord" are found in 2 Corinthians 5:6,8. In the preceding verses, Paul speaks of the present mortal condition and the future glorified state. The mortal body is described as "our earthly house" (verse 1), "this tent" (verses 1,4), and our present "home" (verse 6). These descriptions are contrasted with the everlasting "building from God," or "house not made with hands" (verse 1), which is "our habitation which is from heaven" (verse 2) with which we shall be "clothed" (verses 24).

A person who is "absent from the body" has put off the present clothing. He will remain "naked" (verse 3), or "unclothed" (verse 4), until he is "further clothed" (verse 4) with his "building," "house," or "habitation" from heaven. At that time, he will be "present with the Lord."

Both the present mortality and the future immortality are described in terms of "clothing." The mortal body a person occupies is his present clothing. His future clothing is the immortal body he will obtain at the resurrection, which takes place at the Second Coming of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:21,23,50,55; 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17). He is "naked," or "unclothed," between death and resurrection. Therefore, Paul did not mean that a person who is "absent from the body" is immediately and consciously "present with the Lord."

## What Is the Commission?

**Question:** What is the commission Jesus Christ gave to His church?

**Answer:** The church's commission is stated concisely by Jesus Christ Himself: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have

commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:19,20).

The disciples of Jesus, as eyewitnesses of His resurrection, were to make new disciples by proclaiming the good news of the coming Kingdom of God to all nations. "Go into all the world and preach the gospel [good news] to every creature" (Mark 16:15). The life-changing message they were to proclaim centers on the resurrection of Jesus, and calls for a radical change of behavior on the part of its hearers. "Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:46,47).

Christ said He would be with His true followers "to the end of the age." The work of the church goes on; the commission is the same.

Christ gave the church only one commission, though the one commission involves ministries, or services, that vary. To accomplish the commission, God "gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers" (Ephesians 4:11). The primary job of apostles and evangelists is proclaiming the gospel to the world as a witness; pastors and teachers provide instruction and guidance for the assemblies that are formed as a result of the work of the apostles and evangelists. These all differ somewhat in function, but share the common mission of making-start to finish-disciples for the Kingdom of God.

Notice that the commission includes "teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you." This is an ongoing job; it doesn't end with baptism and the laying-on-of-hands. "Making disciples" includes the preaching that initially brings individuals to conversion, as well as the ongoing instruction in sound biblical doctrine and godly living.

Christ's three-fold command, "Feed My lambs....Tend My sheep....Feed My sheep," was given to Peter, but applied to all the apostles and overseers (John 21:15-17; cf. 1 Peter 5:14). "Feed My sheep" is synonymous with "Go therefore and make disciples." These commands of Jesus are not two distinct commissions, but different ways of speaking of the one commission.

Jesus used the shepherdsheep analogy in describing His ongoing work of making disciples for the Kingdom of God. He said, "I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd" (John 10:14-16).

The church, with its diversity of gifts, is the agency through which the Good Shepherd calls to, and feeds, His sheep.



"It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

"Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work" (Ephesians 4:11-16, New International Version).

Send your questions to: [Q&A@cgi.org](mailto:Q&A@cgi.org)

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# **A Sabbath-Rest**

## **For the People of God**

by Vance A. Stinson

**F**rom time to time, while I'm on my way home after a day at the office, I catch a few minutes of *The Bible Answer Man*, a radio program hosted by Hank Hanegraaff, president of the Christian Research Institute (CRI). The broadcast is quite popular among evangelicals, and can be heard on Christian radio stations all over the country.

Recently, I was fascinated by Hank's answer to a caller who wanted to know whether the Ten Commandments are in force for Christians. The caller asked specifically about the Fourth Commandment.

Hank took a few minutes to explain the different aspects of the Law. He correctly pointed out that the Law has various components and different functions. He also pointed out the absurdity of claiming that commandments against murder, adultery, theft, blasphemy, and so on, are not for today. His answer was clear: *Yes!* The Ten Commandments most definitely *are* for today!

But what about the Fourth Commandment, the one that commands us to keep the Sabbath? Is that one still in force?

Hank's answer went something like this:

The Sabbath-the seventh day of the week-is only a shadow, but Christ is the Reality that casts the shadow. Therefore, Christ is the true Sabbath, and we enter into the true Sabbath-rest by accepting Christ as Lord and Savior. We express this Sabbath-rest experience by observing Sunday, the day associated with Christ's resurrection.

The argument satisfied the caller, but left me wondering why neither Hank nor the caller could see the obvious: Since the weekly Sabbath pictures Jesus Christ and His redemptive work, *Sabbathkeeping is a perfect way of celebrating the redemption we have in Christ!* Why would a Christian want to observe any day other than the Sabbath?

**The Sabbath, Past and Present**

The seventh day of the week is often called the "Jewish Sabbath" because it was the day God commanded Israel to observe, and because it was meant to be a perpetual reminder of the Exodus (Deuteronomy 5:12-15). Yet, the Sabbath is also clearly associated with the week of Creation, which took place long before there were any Jews (Exodus 20:8-11; cf. Genesis 2:1-3). The Sabbath, then, is not restricted to a single meaning or purpose. It points to both the Creation and the Exodus, thus picturing God's creative and redemptive acts in history.

But there's yet another meaning, a much deeper meaning, of the Sabbath.

Speaking of the ultimate redemption reserved for those who are in Christ, the writer of the book of Hebrews states, "There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his" (Hebrews 4:9,10, New International Version). Not only does the seventh-day Sabbath picture the Creation and the Exodus, it also symbolizes the ultimate redemption available to us through Jesus Christ! It is therefore a symbol—a "sign," if you will—of the New Covenant.

### **Eschatological Meaning of the Sabbath**

The Sabbath symbolizes the present relationship Christians have with God through Jesus Christ, but the meaning of this special day goes far beyond anything we have experienced up to this point. It also pictures the *ultimate redemption* God's people will experience in the future, when Christ comes a second time.

From the beginning, the Sabbath has pointed to the time when the resurrected and glorified saints reign with Christ (Revelation 20:4); to the end, the consummation, when Christ "delivers the kingdom to God the Father" after putting "an end to all rule and all authority and power" (1 Corinthians 15:24); to the "new heaven and new earth" (Revelation 21:1), when the "holy city, New Jerusalem" descends from heaven (verse 2), and when the earth becomes the dwelling place of God (verses 3,4).

Since so much of what the Sabbath foreshadows has not been fulfilled, why should we think that the day has been changed or abolished? The Sabbath continues its function as a shadow of good things to come. It makes no sense to discard the shadow when the good things it portrays have not yet come.

**Is It 'Legalism'?**

**Many evangelicals claim that setting aside one day in seven meets the requirement of the Fourth Commandment. Yet, some of them also argue that insistence upon the seventh day, the so-called "Jewish Sabbath," is "legalism."**

**If insistence upon the seventh day is legalism, then what about insistence upon one day in seven? Why not one day in eight, or one day in ten? If insisting upon a specific day is legalistic, it seems that insisting upon any day out of a specific number of days is equally legalistic.**

**What is "legalism" anyway?**

**The term can be defined variously. *The Concise Dictionary of the Christian Tradition* defines it as "[a] relationship that is governed primarily by rules or by law." *Webster's Dictionary* defines it as a "strict, literal, or excessive conformity to the law or to a religious or moral code." In theology, the term is sometimes defined more narrowly as an attempt to earn salvation through conformity to the law or to a religious or moral code.**

**Let's consider Sabbathkeeping in view of each of the above definitions.**

**Taking the last one first, I personally know of no Sabbathkeepers who believe that a person can earn salvation through obedience to the law.**

**Under the second definition, all who seriously profess Christianity are legalists. All of us insist upon a strict and literal conformity to laws against murder, adultery, theft, worshiping false gods, blaspheming God's name, and dishonoring parents.**

**The first definition is the one most likely behind much of the finger pointing. For example, a person who says that disobedience to the Ten Commandments will adversely affect a Christian's relationship with God and may lead to loss of salvation could be labeled a legalist by the first definition. If so, then some of the brightest theologians in the evangelical world are legalists.**

**The vast majority of Sabbath-keepers believe that the Christian's relationship with God is established first and foremost upon God's grace, that salvation is a free gift and cannot be earned, and that the free gift is received through faith. However, most Sabbathkeepers (along with many mainline evangelicals) recognize that none of this means that there are no conditions for receiving and retaining the free gift. Faith itself is a condition, and should not be considered a "work"**

whereby salvation is earned. Obedience is the fruit of faith. As James says, "faith without works is dead" (James 2:26).

Evangelicals are divided at this point. Some claim that a "Christian" who reverts to a life of lawbreaking was never truly converted. Others believe that a true Christian is fully capable of returning to a life of lawbreaking, and can forfeit his salvation. This latter group does not need to concoct an elaborate way of interpreting the warning of Hebrews 6:46:

"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame."

Clearly, there are standards of behavior Christians are required to meet. Failure to meet them through flagrant disobedience can result in forfeiture of the free gift of salvation.

If careful adherence to the Ten Commandments is legalism, then may we all become legalists.

Evangelicals agree with the universally recognized standards of ethics and morality, but feel that a "legalistic" approach to the Fourth Commandment leads to the negation of love and compassion. Sabbathkeepers, on the other hand, believe that attention to the details in no way conflicts with love and compassion.

Keeping God's holy Sabbath day in a Christian context and with like-minded believers can be a most rewarding experience, and can enhance our faith and enrich our love and compassion.

### **Need For the Sabbath**

The Sabbath is far more than a sign of the Covenant or shadow of good things to come; it also has its practical side. We *need* the Sabbath. It's a time for fellowship and for exhortation and instruction from God's Word. It's a time to lay aside the cares of this world and focus on God and His way of life and His coming Kingdom. It's a time for physical and spiritual rejuvenation.

The writer of the book of Hebrews was undoubtedly speaking of Sabbath assemblies when he admonished, "And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the

assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching" (Hebrews 10:24,25).

The writer of Hebrews was obviously speaking of a *regular* assembling, or he would not have warned against "forsaking" it. Without regular fellowship with those of like faith it is impossible to stir up love and good works or exhort one another-and continued neglect in these areas could lead to some serious consequences:

"For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries" (verse 26).

Few of us have experienced the kind of pressure the early Christians experienced. Nevertheless, all of us need encouragement and motivation from others who share our convictions-so coming together on the Sabbath to hear the Word of God expounded and experience fellowship in the Holy Spirit is still needed for spiritual growth and development.

Let's not neglect this special day. Let's keep it! And let's experience its blessings to the fullest.

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