

PAUL'S SABBATH OBSERVANCE

There are so many denominations that have voiced their opposition towards the observance of God's seventh-day Sabbath, they are too numerous to mention. Most these religious groups have gone to the extreme of making the statement that no place in the New Testament is there instruction to enjoin people to keep the Sabbath. Contrary to those who hold such a belief, this booklet will follow the Sabbath observance of Paul during his ministry of the True Faith.

Many believe that Paul was converted to a disciple of Christ in 35 A.D. which was several years after the crucifixion of Jesus. From the Scriptures, we find that Paul, a key figure in the early church, kept the seventh-day Sabbath. Read Acts 17:1, 2: "***Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews and Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures.***" [emphasis added] The argument made against this verse is that Paul went there on those days because the Jews met regularly on Sabbath for worship with the Greeks who were devout proselytes to the law of Moses. This argument is weak in that it says that it was Paul's manner (or custom) to worship on the Sabbath and read scriptures on that day. Note that it says he spent three Sabbaths at this particular synagogue reasoning with them from scriptures.

Now read Acts 16:13: "***And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down and spake unto the women which resorted thither.***" Evidently, there was no synagogue in Philippi because Paul held a worship service by a river side, just outside the city and again, this occurred on the sabbath day. It should be noted that Paul was in Philippi about 53 A.D., about 20 years after his conversion. Notice that Paul followed his custom that when the sabbath day arrived, he held worship with those who desired to congregate together on God's day.

When coming to the city of Antioch, Paul again spoke to the Jews and Gentiles on the Sabbath day, and was even asked by the Gentiles to speak to them again the next Sabbath. The Gentiles seemed unaware of any other day of worship at this period in time which was about 45 A.D. Acts 13:14,15, 42 to 44: "***But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down. And after the reading of the law and the prophets the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them saying, Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on... And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath. Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God.***" We find from the preceding verses that

Paul preached two Sabbaths in a row, thus, demonstrating that Paul worships on God's sacred day, the seventh day.

Paul regularly observed the sabbath every week while he was in the city of Corinth as it was his manner to do. Acts 18:1 to 4, 11: ***“After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth: And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them. And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers. And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks... And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.”*** Paul preached every sabbath for 78 weeks and we see that he never changed this custom: every sabbath he would go unto the congregation to reason on the scripture and preach Jesus the Christ.

If the followers of Christ are no longer obligated to observe the Sabbath because it is believed to have been annulled along with the sacrificial and curse laws of Moses, then why did Paul never preach its abolishment during the year and a half he attended the church at Corinth? It's quite obvious why—there was no commandment from the Christ for the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath to be terminated. Special attention should be given to the fact that Paul's Sabbath observances were occurring many years (ie. about 26 to 28 years) after Jesus was crucified.

One last passage we will look at as we begin closing our discussion of Paul's seventh-day observance comes from Acts 18:12, 13: ***“...the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment seat, saying, This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law.”*** What law were the Jews accusing Paul of breaking? The book of Acts does not say, however, it could not have been the Sabbath since Paul kept it regularly. Paul's observance of the Sabbath was not contrary to God's law since Paul was attending synagogues regularly in the Jews presence without being kicked out so it could not have been that. On the other hand, Paul was teaching men to worship God and do His Will, and because of this obedient attitude towards God, he taught many doctrines that were contrary to laws written by Moses. The Jews accusations would have been based on Paul's contrariness to the written law of the book of Moses. Remember that the observance of the Sabbath was instituted by God at Creation; Moses did not institute it but merely created laws about how it should be kept.

Now if the first day of the week had been made as the Sabbath for Christians, why was Paul silent about it? In all the worship services he attended, it always occurred on the seventh-day. No where in his writings does he ever say the Sabbath was done away with or changed to a different day. Wouldn't one think that Paul would have announced such a change if it had happened? Not even in

one of his epistles does he voice a change in Sabbath observance. It doesn't make sense for a vocal man, such as Paul, to observe a holy day his whole life and then tell others not to observe it. Paul the Apostle was a faithful servant who kept the seventh-day Sabbath his whole life as evidenced in Scripture.