

The Sabbath or the First Day of the week?

INTRODUCTION.

In this essay I will be arguing that the Sabbath day law has been replaced and therefore the authorised day of worship under the christian dispensation is the first day of the week (Sunday). In order to prove this proposition true I will be looking at three things: [1] implication, [2] the differing covenants, and [3] an apostolic example we are enjoined to follow.

[1] Explicit statements always imply other statements.

One argument that the Sabbath argument uses is that we are to keep the Sabbath day since there is no explicit statement given in the Bible that mandates a change in the observance of the sabbath day. This is true, no one will find an explicit statement that says: "Thou shalt worship God on the first day of the week." It is on this that the Sabbath keepers rest their case. I contend, however, that this is a very weak basis to rest such a case on. Consider for a moment that if we apply this line of reasoning to the entire Bible then we would find that none of the Bible would apply to any person now living on the earth. Think for a moment, where is there to be found in all scripture an explicit, direct command bound on any living person by name.? You will not find one, therefore by parity of sabbatarian reasoning on this point no one is amenable to any explicit law, command, or example since they are not explicitly bound on anyone by name. This on its own shows us the fallaciousness of such reasoning.

Those then who argue in this way forget the fact that God, in His word, has made explicit statements and these explicit statements imply other statements. Further, we are expected to only draw conclusions which are warranted by the TOTAL evidence, that is both the explicit statement, and what that explicit statement implies, as well as all other verses in scripture on that subject, (the total context.) Therefore we are neither to outrun the evidence nor are we to suppress any evidence by leaving it out of the total context of scripture. This is fallacious at best, but dishonest at worst if indeed it is deliberate.

We know, for instance, that that the explicit "all people" in scripture implies you and me specifically. It is only by implication or inference that we do know that this is the case since my name and yours are not explicitly mentioned. Further God has given us a mind through which we can reason

from the explicit to the implicit by drawing true inferences from the explicit statements. From this, I suggest that those who argue that there is no explicit statement in scripture which tells us to meet on the first day of the week are totally ignoring the law of inference or implication. If we concede the point then it follows that there is nothing implicitly taught in scripture which could be held as doctrine binding on people today, Sabbatarians however say that there is at least one doctrine that is binding on all people today, the keeping of the sabbath, thus they have already conceded that implicit teaching exists. Further if one teaches that only explicit teaching is correct then that one disqualifies Jesus from being the son of God

What is implication or implicit teaching?

When we say that every proposition is taught implicitly by explicit statements in the Bible we are saying that it is impossible for the given statements to be true yet the proposition which is implied is false. (Assuming that we have reasoned correctly.) If we say x implies y then we are saying at the same time that it is impossible for proposition x to be true but proposition y to be false. The second must be true if the first is true. The first proposition is a premise and the second proposition is a conclusion.

An example.

Let us take two explicit statements: [1] The coin is in my hand. [2] My hand is in my pocket. What is it that these two statements imply? We now have a third proposition: [3] The coin is in my pocket. Now this third proposition is not explicit yet if the first two are true the conclusion (the third proposition) cannot be false. Surely we can see that it would be a grave error to say that the coin is not in my pocket simply because there is no explicit statement saying that it is. We can infer the third proposition from the first two. The argument here is valid by Modus Ponens which in short form is this:

If p then q
p
therefore q.

We can see from this that it is indeed an error of reasoning to say that because there is no explicit statement there is therefore no teaching involved that can be bound on any person. Yet it is just this argument that is used to say that one should not worship on the first day of the week, or that the sabbath has not been explicitly abolished.

Another example:

In Acts 2:37-38 after Peter had preached the first gospel sermon the Jews cried out: "what shall we do?" Peter's reply was: "Repent and be baptised." This is the explicit statement, yet when we read the total evidence of the plan of salvation we can see that hearing, believing, and confessing are implied in Peter's statement since all are essential to salvation.

We are then to note here that what is taught implicitly is bound on all people living today not because we infer it, but because God has implied it Himself in the explicit statements He has uttered through His Spirit. It is of paramount importance that we understand this point since if we do not then we will fall into the error the sabbatarian argument has on this point of implicit teaching.

It seems appropriate here to mention ambiguity. This occurs when one term is used in more than one way thus changing the meaning of a proposition. In the sabbatarian argument the term "law" is referred to in two ways. [1] the "moral law" which includes the sabbath day since it was part of the ten commandments, and [2] "ceremonial," which refers to animal sacrifices, feast days and suchlike.

[2] On covenants.

The Bible itself does not make this distinction thus to use the terms in this ambiguous way is illegitimate. The term "law" refers to the Jewish covenant in total, and this covenant including its whole law was to be repealed. Consider what Moses says in (Deuteronomy 4:8), "What great nation is there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole law which I am setting before you today?" Here Moses is implicitly saying that this law belonged specifically to the Jewish nation and no other. This can be seen in the rhetorical question he asked. It is also in an interrogative form which means that the matter is put forth in the strongest form Moses could use. It is equivalent to saying: "We all know that no other nation has a god so near to them as our God is to us, and no other nation has this law, nor anything that approximates it." Then in (Exodus 34:27-28), God said to Moses: "Write down the words for in accordance with these words, I have made a covenant with you and with Israel. So he was there with the Lord for forty days and forty nights, he did not eat bread or drink water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the ten commandments."

Now it is true that Moses was given other precepts and instructions that were

added to the ten commandments, and these as well as the law constituted the entire Jewish covenant God made with Israel, He made it with no one else either individual or nation. From this, the proposition that the law was nailed to the cross implies the **whole law**, the ten commandments included, was repealed. Further the sabbath day law was explicitly included in the words of that covenant thus it is implied beyond doubt that the sabbath day law was rescinded along with the rest of the Jewish covenant. Therefore there is nothing that remains of that covenants specific components which applied only to the Jews. The principles, however, did come across into the new covenant.

More about the covenants.

There are three types of covenant that God made with man. [1] individual, as with Abraham, Adam, Noah and other patriarchs. [2] National, as with the Jewish nation and [3] Universal with all mankind now living. From this we can see the progression of God's plan of salvation for all peoples. Further it is implied in these several covenants that each covenant superceded or replaced the the other that preceded it. Thus the national covenant replaced the individual covenant, then the universal covenant of Christ replaced the national Jewish covenant. The argument is this: If the national covenant replaced the individual covenants of the patriarchs, then the universal covenant replaced the national covenant of the Jews. The national covenant did replace the individual covenants of the patriarchs, therefore the universal covenant did replace the national covenant of the Jews. Again this is a valid argument by Modus Ponens;

If p then q.
p.
therefore q.

Further this argument is sound if the premises are true, and I contend that they are indeed true when you look at the total context regarding the several covenants. Part of that evidence is found comes from Moses himself where he states in (Deuteronomy 18:15) "The Lord your God will raise up a prophet like me from among your countrymen, you shall listen to him." This is echoed by Peter in (Acts 3:22). Moses was a lawgiver and mediator for the Jewish nation, Christ is the lawgiver and mediator of the universal covenant. Thus the national covenant was replaced by the universal covenant and we are to "Hear Christ, not Moses."

Therefore, in order to understand what is happening we must discriminate between the covenants God made. If we do not then we will not be able to understand either what our duty is or what law we are amenable to.

Now it is admitted that there are things each covenant has in common, for example, obedience, faith, law keeping etc. However, each covenant is both distinct and complete in itself. It is also well to note here that the language of one covenant can explain the language of another covenant. But it is the covenant **we are under** which dictates the law we are amenable to at all times. Thus all the covenants God made either individually, nationally, or universally were made only for the individual(s), nation(s) that it was given to and to no one else, unless He extended it to them.

One fallacy of the sabbatarian argument is simply that it does not distinguish between the national and the universal covenants. Bound up with this fallacy is the fallacy that mistakes similarity for identity. Each covenant does have things in common, but the sabbath argument concludes, therefore they must be identical. This just is not the case. Why? Because they do not require the same acts of obedience, nor do they promise the same things. Paul states in (Romans 9:4-5): "Who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption of sons, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the temple service, and the promises whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever, Amen." Here we have law, covenants and promises that were peculiar to Israel, therefore the duties required in these contracts were not obligatory (bound) on any other persons or nations.

Language in one covenant may explain duties under another, but they are restricted to only those features which are common to the two covenants. The laws of each covenant are complete in themselves yet they are similar in those features in which each covenant is alike similar **but not identical**.

An example.

We all know that in all matters of law we are amenable to the law under which we are living in the country we are living in. Suppose the speed limit in one country is 50 k.p.h. and in another country it is 70 k.p.h. We get caught doing 70 k.p.h. which is the limit in our country but not in the one we are on holiday in. We try to defend ourselves by protesting that it is "legal" to do 70 k.p.h. in our country (under our covenant or contract.) Will it do any good? We know it won't since we are now amenable to another law

under another covenant or contract. The question is, how do we understand this principle in all things except the Biblical? The principle is the same, (those breaking the speed limit will be prosecuted) the laws are similar one is 50 k.p.h. the other is 70 k.p.h. but they are **not identical. This is how it is with the several covenants of the Bible also.**

It must also be noted that in New Testament times there were many Gentile congregations that had no knowledge of the law of Moses. These were entirely dependent on the teachings of the inspired Apostles and others who taught them the Gospel of Christ. We too learn from Christ and the inspired apostolic writings what the terms of Christ's covenant are, that is every precept we are expected to observe. "This is My beloved son, listen to Him," is how God from heaven ordained His Son and His Son's covenant with all men living today. (Mark 9:7).

Notice also Paul's statement in (I Corinthians 9:20-21) "And to the Jews I became a Jew, that I might win the Jews, to those under the law, as under the law **though not myself under the law**, that I might win those under the law, to those without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God, **but under the law of Christ**, that I might win those without law. Paul here is saying that he could be indifferent to everything else, **except the law of Christ**. The form of the law, he may or may not observe, it was to Paul a matter of indifference, a question of expediency, but as to morals and the principles of truth, they were to be found in the law of Christ. This also explains why he and other apostles went into the synagogues on the sabbath day, it was not to observe the sabbath day, rather it was because that is where the Jews were gathered and thus the opportunity to teach them the truth of the new covenant. Paul became a "Jew" on the sabbath in order to win the Jews.

The covenant made with Israel on Mount Sinai (Exodus 20:1-24) cannot be denied yet some will say that this was not a covenant. they do, however, in saying this show that they are ignorant of what a covenant is. A covenant is a contract or treaty made between two parties. It has in it the contract laws, and other things the two parties agree to. When God made the covenant with the Jewish nation, it was anticipated in the covenant God made with Abraham (Exodus 6:3-8) God then made a covenant with the Jews on Mount Sinai in His own name "Jehovah." No former covenant had been completed in that name (Exodus 34:27-28). By referring to the giving of the law on Sinai we can see clearly that it is in the form of a covenant. It was given to the Jews as a guide and a test of obedience, and it was sealed with blood and

bound on them. Further it was not entirely religious, for the purpose of God in preparing the nation to be ready to receive Christ when He should come into the world necessitated that a government should exist and that by means of a national religion He would be able to give His universal revelation to the world concerning His will for all people. Thus the law combines the the purpose of those covenants of land and flesh in order that the world may be prepared for christ. (See Galatians 3:8, 16-25). This covenant was temporary in nature.

Now in (Jeremiah 31:31-34, Hebrews 8:6-13. 9:15, Matthew 28:25), the new covenant made by Christ was sealed with His own blood, and it was this covenant that was in view during the former dispensations. Every former offering, law, and service foretold of the coming redemption, and every prophet, priest, and king typified the coming of Christ. As such, there are fundamental differences in the covenant God made with Israel and the covenant Christ made with all people. [1] There is a change in the priesthood (Hebrews 7:11-12). [2] Because of this there was a change in the law (Hebrews 7:12) [3] There was a change in the limitation of the covenant (Deuteronomy 4:7-8) Which we discussed earlier. [4] There are different promises in the new covenant (Hebrews 8:6) [5] The law was written on tablets of stone, but the new covenant is put into the hearts and minds of all who belong to it. [6] The old covenant was formal and outward, the new is inward and spiritual. [7] All who have a place in the new covenant shall first "know the Lord," Jeremiah makes this statement. Under the old covenant a Jew was born into it. the Hebrew writer quotes this again in (Hebrews 8). In the service of God under the law of Moses this could never have been said to be true. [9] Finally on this point, they differ in respect to form and place of worship.

In (Colossians 2:13-17) Paul settles the question of the law's continuance as a rule by which christians should live. It was nailed to the cross. this implies that the Mosaical law was finished. This necessarily includes the sabbath day law since it was a part of the covenant law. The explicit statement is "The law of commandments was done away with being nailed to the cross of Christ."

(Jeremiah 31) predicts this by saying that the covenant to come would not be like the Jewish covenant. Thus we can say with certainty that the old covenant was repealed in its entirety including the sabbath day law.

Now we come to the question itself, was the sabbath day law changed to the first day of the week.? My contention is that it was and that it is implicitly affirmed in scripture.

An Apostolic example.

When dealing with scripture we are to realise that the teaching of the New Testament is revealed by explicit statement, which as we have said implies other statements. We derive these from necessary inference. We are also taught by Apostolic example it is to this that we will turn to now.

In (Acts 20:7) We read: "And upon the first day of the week, when we gathered to break bread, Paul spoke with them intending to depart the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight." Now this is a specific statement of an apostolic example. This then raises two important questions. [1] Are christians obligated to follow this example? and [2] Are christians obligated (bound by this example) to eat the Lord's Supper every first day of the week? In other words can a christian partake of the Lord's Supper on some other day of the week (e.g., the sabbath day).

[A] Jesus Himself instituted the Lord's Supper (Matthew 26:26-29, Mark 14:22-25, Luke 22:14-23.)

[B] He also observed that supper with the apostles before His death.

[c] The instituting of that supper was not on the first day of the week, it was on the sabbath day.

[D] However, there is **no record** of the Lord's Supper ever being observed by the church on the sabbath day in all the New Testament.

[E] The sabbath is not the day on which the Lord died, nor is it the day He was raised from the dead.

[F] On the day that he instituted, Jesus explicitly stated that He would not drink the fruit of the vine **until that day when He would drink it new with them in His Father's kingdom (church)** (Matthew 26:29).

[G] The New Testament ties the Lord's supper to the "Lord's Day." Also When christians partake of the Supper it involves the proclamation of Christ's death, resurrection, and second coming. (I Corinthians 11:26).

[H] In (Acts 2:24), Peter explicitly states that christ could not be held by death, plus the fact that He arose from the grave **proved** that He was indeed the Son of God (Romans 1:4).

[I] From this we can see that the partaking of the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week is appropriate, since it was on the first day of the week that Christ rose from the grave.

[J] From these things therefore there are implications that arise concerning the partaking of the Lord's supper on the first day of the week. These are as follows:

[1] The death of Christ was according to the eternal purpose of God.

[2] Christ arose from the dead on the first day of the week.

[3] Christ appeared to many people after His resurrection.

[4] Christ then ascended back into heaven.

[5] He is there now reigning as king with absolute authority.

[6] He is coming again and at that time He will judge all people
(ICorinthians 15:1-8, cf 11:26).

[K] It is also clearly implied that the partaking of the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week is an integral purpose of all christians assembling together every Sunday.

[L] In the passage before us the disciples came together to "break bread," that is to partake of the Lord's Supper.

[M] This purpose is attested to and implied by Paul in (I Corinthians 11).

[N] The two passages (Acts 20:7, and ICorinthians 11:20), are then witnessed by (ICorinthians 16:2), where it is stated: "On the first day of the week, lay by in store as you have been prospered, so that no collections be made when I come."

[O] the expression, "the first day of the week, in the Greek, is kata mian sabbatou, which means on the first day of the sabbath week, (sunday).

Further the word kata means every, so christians are under obligation to meet every first day of the week. The implication then of the two scriptures is that all christians are to assemble on the first day of the week to partake of the Lord's Supper and to lay by in store of their means.

[P] Therefore when one honestly considers all of this evidence in (Acts 20:7, ICorinthians 11:20, and ICorinthians 16:2), then the only logical conclusion that follows from the evidence is: that on the first day of every week christians are to assemble together in order to at the very least, partake of the Lord's Supper and to give as they have been prospered.

[Q] Note that this is in parity with with the commandment given to the Jews to "remember the sabbath day to keep it holy." However, we have seen that the commandments have been nailed to the cross (Colossians 2:14). This in turn clearly implies that no christian is under the specific obligation to observe the sabbath day. As we have seen similarity does not mean identity, and the law under one covenant does not apply exactly in the specific laws of another covenant.

[R]When one looks at the total context on this issue one can only infer that the meeting on the first day of the week for all christians is in the form of a general command implicit in the teaching. Notice what Paul says in (ICorinthians 16:1-2) "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia so do you also. On the first day of every week let each one of you put aside and save, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come." Therefore the members of the Lord's church were **commanded** to put their contributions into the treasury every first day of the week. This implies that there was to be a meeting every first

day of the week and that that assembly had a basic purpose for meeting, that being to partake of the Lord's Supper and put their contribution into the church treasury (Acts 20:7, ICorinthians 11:20, 16:1-2). The only logical conclusion one can draw from this is that christians are to meet every first day of the week to partake of the Lord's supper.

[S] Further this is the **only day** on which that supper is to be taken. There is absolutely no authority in scripture for the Lord's Supper to be taken on any other day (Including the sabbath). And whatever is done without Biblical authority is sinful (II John 9-11, ICorinthians 4:6, II Chonicles 15:1-15.)

To summarise these things,

[1] We can see that if the early christians were commanded to contribute of their means every first day of the week.

[2] If that contribution was made while the church was assembled.

[3] If another basic purpose of that assembly was to partake of the Lord's Supper. Then.

[A] the early christians were commanded to partake of the Lord's Supper every first day of the week. further there is no Biblical authority for the Lord's Supper to be eaten on any other day including the sabbath. Therefore the only authority given to the Lord's church when to meet is on the first day of every week. That is the only implication one can infer from the total context. This further implies that **the sabbath day meeting was abolished, as Paul says, by it being nailed to the cross.**

[B] Notice also that in (Acts 20:7) Paul and the rest of the congregation waited seven days **then** came together and remained together for quite some time thus it was not a momentary short assembly. The perfect participle indicates that they came and remained together and while they were there Paul preached to them. The expression in Greek is klasai arton (to break bread). Klasai is the first aorist infinitive of klaō ("I break.") The infinitive in Greek is used just as it is in English and that is to denote the purpose of the action of the principal verb. The original dative force of the infinitive expressing that for which anything is done.

[C] Therefore it can be seen in (Acts 20:7) there was a purpose stated by the infinitive "on the first day of the week the disciples came together to break bread." When we add (ICorinthians 11:20) it is very clearly implied that the christians were to come together for this basic purpose.

[D] Thus it is significant that Christ rose from the grave on the first day of the week and it is because of this that the churches in Galatia and Corinth were commanded to assemble on the first day of the week to lay by in store and partake of the Lord's Supper, A third apostolic example in this is preaching.

[E] Therefore it is clearly implied that (1) The disciples were under obligation (bound) to meet every first day of the week. (2) A basic purpose of that assembly was to have the Lord's Supper thus they were in turn bound to take the Lord's supper and also to give of their means.

Therefore by clear implication three things can now be predicated;

[1] All christians are to meet every first day of the week.

[2] The first day of the week is the **only day** authorised in which the church can meet with the approval of God.

[3] This clearly shows that the example implied in this apostolic example is not only bound on all men living today under the universal covenant, but that it is permanent, that is it is in force until Christ comes again.

One can reach this inescapable conclusion only by reasoning correctly and drawing only the conclusion drawn from the evidence that is warranted, and by using implication correctly.