

Biblical Fallacies and Seventh-Day Adventism

If you have encountered Seventh-Day Adventists, one thing that you will eventually talk about is the significance of “Keeping the Sabbath”. Most Christians would not deny this—as the New Testament offers believers by faith to enter the Rest **God** entered into at Creation. However, Christians might be unaware of the apologetic methods of the SDA—and are thus caught off guard. SDA’s seem to conflate “Keeping the Sabbath” with weekly *worship on the Sabbath* (as clearly shown in their 20th Fundamental Belief).

The gracious Creator, after the six days of Creation, rested on the seventh day and instituted the Sabbath for all people as a memorial of Creation. The fourth commandment of God’s unchangeable law requires the observance of this seventh-day Sabbath as the day of rest, *worship*, and ministry in harmony with the teaching and practice of Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath. The Sabbath is a day of delightful communion with God and one another. It is a symbol of our redemption in Christ, a sign of our sanctification, a token of our allegiance, and a foretaste of our eternal future in God’s kingdom. The Sabbath is God’s perpetual sign of His eternal covenant between Him and His people. Joyful observance of this holy time from evening to evening, sunset to sunset, is a celebration of God’s creative and redemptive acts. (Gen. 2:1-3; Exod. 20:8-11; 31:13-17; Lev. 23:32; Deut. 5:12-15; Isa. 56:5, 6; 58:13, 14; Ezek. 20:12, 20; Matt. 12:1-12; Mark 1:32; Luke 4:16; Heb. 4:1-11.)¹

However—this is a theological stretch and a non-sequitur in order to hold to their tradition. Within the Sabbath command given at Sinai—we are not given a clear description as to *how* to keep the Sabbath, and it also does not imply that *worship* happens on this day exclusively. It simply commands us to refrain from “work”.

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day [is] the Sabbath of the LORD your God. [In it] **you shall do no work**: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who [is] within your gates. 11 For [in] six days the

¹ SDA Fundamental Belief #20

LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and
all that [is] in them, and rested the seventh day.
Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and
hallowed it.²

Conflating *worship* with Sabbath Observance probably comes from a false understanding of the Synagogue in pre-70 A.D. Judaism. The assumption is that when the Scriptures speak of the Apostles and Jesus “attending the Synagogue” that they are attending a *weekly worship service*. However—this is a stretch in logic—considering that *the Temple* was the center of worship for Jews—not the Synagogue. And their functions are completely different in the minds of Jews at the time of Jesus and the Apostles. The Temple is associated always with a *sacrifice*—this happening *every day* as described in the Hebrew Bible (Numbers 28:1-8, Exodus 29:38-42). The Sacrifice being at the heart of the Jewish understanding of worship and **all religions in Antiquity**;

'Religion' (which went by such terms as 'piety*
'worship' or 'service') was defined *primarily as cultic worship*. What was the worship of Zeus? Temples, purifications, *sacrifices* and festivals. The same is true of all the other gods of antiquity.³

The Synagogue on the other hand was where believers would fellowship, read Scripture and learn the Faith. Even though prayer happened within the Synagogue, prayer is not distinctive of Worship since within the Biblical account itself we see people praying *outside* of the Synagogue and in the Temple itself. Also—this Synagogue meeting was *not limited to the Seventh-Day*;

a. an assembly of Jews formally gathered together to offer prayer and listen to the reading and exposition of the Holy Scriptures; assemblies of the sort were held **every sabbath and feast-day**, afterward also on the second and fifth days of every week (see references below): Luke 12:11; Acts 9:2; Acts 13:43;⁴

The blending of Temple *worship* and the Synagogue is a development that happens after the Second Temple in Jerusalem is destroyed.

The emphasis on ensuring liturgical continuity is significant. In the centuries after 70 CE synagogue

² Exo 20:8-11 NKJV

³ P.g 190 (Judaism: Practice and Belief, 63 BCE-66 CE)

⁴ Thayer's Greek Lexicon - STRONGS G4864:

buildings gradually began to take on an aura of sanctity, albeit at a level below that of the Temple.⁵

Jews having no other choice than to convert their Synagogues into “mini temples”. The assumption that the Sabbath commandment includes weekly gatherings pre-70 A.D. is only an assumption;

In Pseudo-Philo’s Biblical Antiquities (first century CE), the requirement to assemble on the sabbath 'to praise the Lord' and 'to glorify the Mighty One' is made part of the Ten Commandments (Bibl Antiq. 11.8). The **assumption** that Moses ordained sabbath assembly, like Josephus' view, that he commanded twice-daily prayers, shows how common the practice was - as common **as if** it had been in the written law⁶

This critique on the worship entailing a ***sacrifice*** is something that is completely lost in Protestantism let alone Seventh-Day Adventism. To have a sacrifice ***is to worship***-yet most Protestants miss this point.

Since Sabbath Observance in the biblical sense does not necessitate a day of Worship. The charge that Adventist make against the Roman Catholics that they “changed the Sabbath” falls through. Since the Sabbath was never about a ***day of Worship***. Seventh-Day Adventist are guilty of changing the Sabbath command–by adding the requirement of weekly gatherings into Sabbath observance. Hebrews 4 now makes a-lot more sense in light of this since the Sabbath that is offered to believers is not talking about a day of Worship–rather a spiritual rest that we enter into by faith.

⁵ *Martin Goodman’s A History of Judaism*

⁶ P.g 198 (Judaism: Practice and Belief, 63 BCE-66 CE)