

THE CHURCHMEN VERSUS THE SABBATH

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Many churchmen use Romans 14:5-6 as proof that New Testament believers no longer have an obligation to keep the Sabbath day holy. So let us examine those two verses, just as a judge would consider evidence in his courtroom, and then decide whether or not they testify against Sabbath keeping. Paul wrote:

"One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth [observeth] the day regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks."

The judge would ask: "Where is the Sabbath mentioned in those verses?" The Sabbath is not mentioned there, nor in the entire book of Romans! No court in the land would allow verses that do not mention the Sabbath to be used as evidence in an argument against the Sabbath - so why should we?

You see, Paul could not have been talking about keeping the Sabbath day holy because obedience to God's laws is not optional. It is ludicrous to suggest that any of the Ten Commandments can be disobeyed \ "unto the Lord." Think of the absurdity of saying, "He that stealeth, to the Lord he stealeth; and he that stealeth not, to the Lord he stealeth not."

What then was Paul talking about? He was talking about fast days. The whole 14th chapter of Romans is about *food* and how people's beliefs about fasting should not be interfered with. The fast days could be observed according to each believer's conscience. A man could eat or not eat, keep the day or not keep it. It is as simple as this: Each man could observe FAST DAYS, or not observe them, according to his own convictions.

He that does not eat, regards the day. He that eats, does not regard the day.

The "days" that Paul was referring to were the traditional fast days mentioned in Zechariah 7:5-6. The Gentile Christians in Rome did not keep them because they had no cultural interest in the anniversary fasts that were observed during the Jews' captivity in Babylon.

These are the four traditional fasts mentioned in Zechariah:

1. The fast of the 4th month, in remembrance of the breaking of the wall of Jerusalem.
2. The fast of the 5th month, in remembrance of the burning of the Temple.
3. The fast of the 7th month, in remembrance of the

killing of Gedaliah, which completed the Dispersion.

4. The fast of the 10th month, in remembrance of the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem.

(See Jer.52:6,12-13; 2 Ki.25:25,1.)

It is of interest to note that those dates commemorate the judgments of God upon a people who refused to keep the Sabbath Day holy. (See Jer.17:19-27.)

Even the Jews themselves had different convictions about the observance of those days - *because those fasts were never commanded by God.*

After the Captivity (when the Temple was being rebuilt) the men of Bethel also wondered if they should observe these fasts unto the Lord. For example, they asked Zechariah: "Shall I weep in the *fifth month* and *abstain*, as I have done these many years?" (Zech.7:2f)

When you read Zechariah's answer, notice the striking similarity of his words to those of Paul to the church at Rome:

COMPARE Zechariah 7:5-6

"When ye FASTED and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, DID YE AT ALL FAST UNTO ME, even to Me [the Lord]?"

And when ye did EAT and when ye did drink, did ye not EAT FOR YOURSELVES and drink for yourselves?"

WITH Romans 14:6-7 "He that regardeth the [fast] day regardeth it UNTO THE LORD: and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that EATETH, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks: and he that EATETH NOT, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks. For none of us LIVETH TO HIMSELF, and no man dieth to himself."

If you were the judge in the case of the CHURCHMEN VERSUS THE SABBATH, would you be willing to say that Paul had cancelled one of the commandments of God based on the evidence you find in the 14th chapter of Romans?

In our opinion, the evidence from Romans and Zechariah demands a verdict for Sabbath observance. The church must obey the Fourth Commandment, and that is the only decision that will uphold the Law of God.

CASE CLOSED!

