

Was the “Sabbath Shadow” REPLACED by the Coming of Christ?

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Some people teach that the seventh day Sabbath no longer needs to be observed, and they offer the following statement as their main line of reasoning: “The Lord of the Sabbath [Mark 2:28] has come [speaking of Christ’s life on earth about 2,000 years ago], and **the reality [Christ] has replaced the [Sabbath] shadow.**” Those who make that statement, say that they are basing that statement on Colossians 2:17.

So, the *one and only* supposed “proof” of their argument is Col. 2:17.

Prior to examining Col. 2: 16-17 in the *AKJV* and the *NKJV*, let’s first consider how the passage is rendered in the *NIV*—and we will see that the *NIV*’s translation does largely *support* their contention: “Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or **a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ**” (verses 16-17, *NIV*).

So, the *NIV* essentially says that the Sabbath was a “shadow,” and that the **reality** of that shadow is “found in” Christ.

However... let’s realize that most Protestants, *including* the Protestant *translators* of the *NIV*, have long believed that the Sabbath (especially the *seventh day* Sabbath) has essentially been done away—that there is no real “requirement” by God to observe that day, and that Sabbath-keeping has absolutely nothing to do with salvation. And, *because of* that long-standing belief, the translators of the *NIV* simply rendered that passage in such a way **as to support their pre-conceived idea on this issue.**

Four Points Showing the Error of that teaching!

(1) The *true* meaning of Col. 2: 16-17

First, notice how the passage is rendered in the *Authorized King James Version*: “Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath *days*: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body *is* of Christ” (*AKJV*).

Now, that passage states that God’s holy days (Leviticus chapter 23) and Sabbaths are a **shadow** of things to come. Yet, *how* are they shadows? Well, each of the *annual* holy days pictures (or *foreshadows*) some aspect of God’s plan of salvation (see Footnote #1). Likewise, the weekly Sabbath (the 7th day) *foreshadows* the coming Millennium—the final 1,000 years of God’s 7,000-year plan. That 7th 1,000 year period (unlike the 1st 6,000 years) will be a period of *rest*—a 7th day Sabbath rest—a rest **from the sin** that characterized the first 6,000 years!

Yes, the Millennium will be “a rest from sin.” Satan will have been put away (Rev. 20:2),

and those humans who have then become spirit-beings (and members of God’s Kingdom) will, from then on, possess the *fullness* of God’s character—thus being *free* from their past *struggle* against sin.

So, both the weekly and annual holy days are “shadows.” They *foreshadow* aspects of God’s plan for mankind.

Let’s now look at the end of verse 17. The *NKJV* renders it: “but the **substance** is of Christ.” The word “substance” is likewise used in the *NASB*, whereas the *NIV* uses the word “reality.” Yet, both words—“reality” and “substance”—are **poor** translations of the original Greek. The Greek word is *soma*. And, *every other scripture* in the New Testament where the Greek word *soma* occurs, it is translated as “body.” In fact, it is translated in **this** verse as “body” by the *AKJV*, the *KJ21*, and *Young’s Literal Translation*. Yes, the *AKJV* renders that phrase in verse 17 as “but the body *is* of Christ.”

Now, consider that the *AKJV* has the word “is” in *italics*, which means that this word was *not* in the original text—it was **added** by the translators, who were trying to make the verse make sense (according to *their* understanding). **So, the phrase is actually: “but the body of Christ.”**

Now, what does that phrase “the body of Christ” refer to? To understand, go back to verse 16: “Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days.” There, Paul is saying that Christians should **let no man judge or instruct you** as to how you keep the holy days and Sabbaths...**but the body of Christ.** “Let no man judge you...but [except] the body of Christ.” He is saying that *only* “the body of Christ” should judge or instruct us in the proper observance of those days. And *who is* “the body of Christ”? The Church! (I Cor. 12:27; Eph. 4:12). Paul is saying that *only* the Church—only God’s true ministers—**not** outsiders—should judge or instruct Church members in the *proper* observance of the annual holy days and Sabbaths.

In Colossae, Paul was struggling against Gnostic teachers who were trying to bring heresies into the Church. Those false teachers were condemning members of the Church for supposedly improper eating and drinking—especially their *manner* of eating and drinking **on the Sabbath and holy days** (as well as *wrongly* condemning Church members for **rejoicing** on those days).

Thus, we see that the *NIV* and others totally **misunderstand** what Paul was saying in Colossians 2:16-17! (See the article entitled “Colossians 2: 16-17.”)

(2) Those days ARE a shadow

Let’s consider now the *second* point which demonstrates the **error** of the notion that “the reality of Christ has *replaced* the Sabbath.”

Looking again at this passage of Col. 2: 16-17, Paul said in verse 17—**years after Christ’s crucifixion**—that the holy days and Sabbath days “**are** a shadow”—not “**were** a shadow,” but “**are** a shadow.” Therefore, these days are **still** to be kept! They **weren’t** done away by Christ’s coming, nor by His crucifixion!

(3) The fact that something is called a “shadow” does *not* mean that it is no longer necessary for us to observe!

Just because something is a shadow, a representation or a symbol, that does not diminish its *importance*. Both the Old *and* the New Testaments are filled with symbols and **symbolic actions** commanded by God to teach us important spiritual lessons. Baptism is a *symbol* representing a greater spiritual truth, yet we are *commanded* to be baptized (Acts 2:38). The bread and wine....are *symbols* of the vital spiritual relationship we have with Jesus Christ, yet we are clearly *commanded* to partake of them (I Corinthians 10:16).

Laying on of hands (Hebrews 6:2), anointing with oil (James 5:14)...and other physical things are commanded to be observed, not because they are greater than that which they symbolize, but to strengthen and enhance our spiritual understanding as we do them....

These examples show that symbols and symbolic actions aren't limited strictly to physical worship in the Old Testament, but are clearly commanded as important elements of New Testament worship. God simply uses the same *teaching methods* throughout the Bible.

These symbols and representations are vital reminders of important spiritual truths, as Paul recognized (I Corinthians 11:23-26). We observe these things— as well as the Sabbath and Holy Days— because they are shadows of the greater spiritual [things] to which they point.¹

Again, as explained previously, the keeping of the Sabbath—including *resting* on the Sabbath— is **symbolic** of our future rest from sin, in God's Kingdom.

(4) Annual Holy Days NOT Done Away

If the passage in Colossians 2, does away with the *weekly* Sabbath, then it *likewise* does away with the *annual* holy days— because the passage refers to BOTH of them as “shadows.”

Yet, scripture reveals that the **annual** holy days will be observed even after Christ returns! When Christ returns, He will subdue the rebellious nations of the earth, and the Kingdom of God will be established on earth, and **all people of the earth will be keeping God's annual holy days**—including the Feast of Tabernacles:

“Then the LORD will go forth And fight against those nations, As He fights in the day of battle. And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives....And the LORD shall be King over all the earth....And it shall come to pass *that* everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the **Feast of Tabernacles**. And it shall be *that* whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, on them there will be no rain. If the family of Egypt will not come up and enter in, they *shall have* no *rain*; they shall receive the plague with which the LORD strikes the nations who do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. **This shall be the**

punishment of Egypt and the punishment of ALL the nations that do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles” (Zech.14: 3-19).

Yes, clearly, God’s annual holy days **will** still be in effect *even after* Christ’s return! Thus, Colossians 2 does **not** do away with the annual holy days—and **therefore** it does not do away with the *weekly* Sabbath either!

Conclusion

We have looked at 4 points which show the **error** of the *NIV*’s rendering of Col. 2: 16-17. The truth is that when Christ came to earth about 2,000 years ago, His coming **in no way** replaced our need to keep God’s annual holy days **or** His weekly Sabbath. In fact, the keeping of the Sabbath is one of God’s ten **great** Commandments!

Footnote

#1 Click this link to see the booklet [*The Holy Days: God's Master Plan*](#)

References

1. “Does Colossians 2 show the Sabbath and Holy Days are obsolete?” Scott Ashley, *In Transition*, Sept. 22, 1995, p.14