ARGUMENTS USED BY SABATTARIANS TO BIND THE SABBATH

DAY TODAY

1. Genesis 2:1-3 > The sabbath is universal in time/scope
2. Exodus 31:12-17 > The sabbath is eternal and important
3. Christ kept the sabbath.
4. Paul kept the sabbath > Acts 9:20, Acts 13:14, 42-44, Acts 16:13-15, Acts 17:2, Acts 18:4.
5. Acts 20:7 & 11, Acts 2:42, Acts 2:46, refer to a common meal and not the Lord’s Supper.
6. One must keep the sabbath as a part of the Ten Commandment “Law of God” or moral law. Only the Law of Moses or ceremonial law was abolished.
7. Christ said not one jot or tittle was to be taken from the law until all things are fulfilled, Matthew 5:17-20.

ANSWERS TO THE ARGUMENTS ABOVE AND ARGUMENTS AGAINST KEEPING THE SABBATH DAY TODAY

1. Genesis 2:1-3: The sabbath was not universal –The Gentiles are condemned for all manner of sins, but not for breaking the sabbath law, Romans 1:19-32. It was set aside for the Jews, Exodus 31:21-17, so they would remember their release from bondage in Egypt, Deuteronomy 5:15.
2. Exodus 31:12-17: “Forever” means to the end of the Mosaic age. Other things described as “forever” include: incense, Exodus 30:16; the Aaronic priesthood, Exodus 29:9; peace offerings, Leviticus 3:17; Passover, Exodus 12:14; priestly trumpets, Numbers 10:8; foot washing, Exodus 30:21; Feast of Firstfruits, Leviticus 23:14; sanctuary lamps, Leviticus 24:3; Feast of Tabernacles, Leviticus 23:41; priest’s portion, Leviticus 7:36.

The importance of the sabbath law in the Old Testament cannot be denied, but it is obvious that the fourth commandment, keeping the sabbath holy, is *no longer important* because it is not repeated in the New Testament while all the other commandments are repeated therein.

* + One God, Acts 14:15
  + Idols, Acts 17:29
  + Oaths, James 5:12
  + Honor to Parents, Ephesians 6:1
  + Commandments #6-10, Romans 13:9

3. Christ kept the sabbath, but then He was a Jew and lived under the Mosaic Law. Christ also kept the Passover, Matthew 26:17, and undoubtedly offered all the prescribed sacrifices. Do we? Paul said that if we keep part of the law we must keep all of the law, Galatians 5:3.

4. Paul did not keep the sabbath as a Christian. The verses used to show that Paul kept the sabbath day do not indicate that he worshipped God on the sabbath but that he went into the synagogue in order to teach the Jews (who did worship on the sabbath). In Acts 13:42 the argument could be made that it was the Gentiles that sought teaching in the synagogue on the sabbath, so this proves that it was not a Jewish rite, but Christian. This argument is false for the following reasons: (1) These Gentiles who sought to hear from Paul on the “next Sabbath” were not yet Christians. (2) The logical place to seek a message from Paul was the synagogue because that is where Paul had gone to teach the Jews. (3) There were no established Christian churches for these Gentiles to go to in order to hear a message on the Lord’s day. Passages that show when Christians worshipped, show them worshipping on the first day of the week, Sunday. [Acts 20:7, 1Corinthians 16:1-2]

It might be wise to notice also that Paul did other things to fit in with the Jews. Notice his behavior in Acts 18:18 and in Acts 21:22-26. Paul did things from the Law of Moses that were not necessary for Christians so that he could work with the Jews. Acts 21:25 clearly explains that Gentile believers are not bound by Paul’s example of keeping the Jewish law. When the Gentiles were taught about what was and what was not necessary, they were not taught to keep the sabbath. Had the sabbath been as important as some claim today, then this would surely have been a part of the list of necessary things in Acts 21:25.

Notice the language of Acts 17:2. Paul “went in unto them” and “reasoned with them.” This indicates Paul’s purpose. These were occasions of Paul’s entering a Jewish place of worship—a synagogue. Christian acts of worship such as the Lord’s Supper and praise to Jesus were not allowed in the Jewish synagogue on the sabbath or any other day. Jews did not share their synagogues with Christians, instead, they persecuted the Christians. See Acts 7:1-8:4.

To summarize, Paul did not keep the sabbath as a matter of religious conviction but as a means to preach Jesus to Jews where they had assembled on the sabbath. Paul’s keeping of other aspects of the Mosaic Law were clearly not meant for our example but as a means to satisfy the Jews of his day. Of this we are informed in Acts 21:25.

5. Acts 2:46 contains the phrase “they ate their food” and Acts 20:11 “broken bread and eaten” both of which explain that there was a difference between the common meal and the phrase “broke bread” which appears in the same contexts to describe the Lord’s Supper. In both Acts 2:42 and Acts 20:7 the immediate context of that verse contains worship activities and not social activities which come later in the context. Paul tells us in 1Corinthians 11:22 & 34 that Christians should not mix the social and the spiritual, but eat at home in order to keep from adulterating the Lord’s Supper. This tells us that in Acts two and in Acts twenty the act of eating a meal was in some way separated from the spiritual activities. Therefore the phrase “breaking bread” in connection with spiritual acts of worship must itself refer to an act of worship and not to a social endeavor.

6. Sabbath keepers today often try to distinguish between what they call the moral law and the ceremonial law, saying that the moral law [the ten commandments] is still binding while the ceremonial laws are no longer binding. The following arguments show that this distinction is not valid – that there is only one Mosaic law which is also called “the covenant”:

* Romans 7:1-7 tells us that we have died to the law which commands “thou shalt not covet.” It is obvious, then, that Paul considers the ten commandments to be part of the law which has been abolished.
* Galatians 4:24 and Numbers 15:16 inform us that there was only one covenant made at Sinai – only one law. Hebrews 8:6-13 also indicates that God gave only one covenant to the Hebrews and it was written on tables of stone. The covenant at Sinai was the “first” and the new gospel covenant under Christ written on the heart was the “second.” This does not leave room for another second covenant given at Sinai.

That there was only one covenant is also indicated in various phrases describing things related to a single covenant: the *tables of the covenant*, Deuteronomy 31:26; the *book of the covenant*, Exodus 24:7; the *ark of the covenant*, Deuteronomy 31:26; the *blood of the covenant*, Exodus 24:8; and the *mediator of the covenant*, Galatians 3:19. There is no indication that there is a book of one covenant while there are tables of another covenant. The blood which was used was the blood of “the” covenant. If there were more than one covenant which covenant was the blood to cover?

There was only one covenant, regardless of the number of laws into which one tries to divide it. That single covenant was abolished, Hebrews 8:6-13, and that which was abolished included the tables, the book, the ark, the blood, and the mediator, Hebrews 9:1-20. (Note that the term “covenant,” Gr. d*iatheke,* verse four, is the same Greek word as the word “testament,” Gr. *diatheke* in verse 20.)

7. Jesus did not come to destroy the law. Paul tells us the purpose of the Law of Moses in Galatians 3:24, “Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.” The meaning of this and similar passages is that the Law of Moses presented man with the perfect will of God and showed that he could not earn righteousness in God’s eyes because he kept failing to keep the law. (See also Romans 7:1-25) This being the case, men who wished to be right in the sight of God were moved to embrace Christ as their only way out of this dilemma. Once the way to be right in the sight of God was fulfilled in Christ, the Mosaic Law had done its work and was therefore fulfilled in Jesus. Even though it was abolished, nailed to the cross of Christ, it was not destroyed because it did the work it was established to perform. A good many New Testament passages indicate that the law of Moses was abolished:

1. Galatians 3:1-9, System of faith not works of Law

2. Galatians 3:10-14, The law is a curse

3. Galatians 3:15-29, Justification by promise not the Law

4. Galatians 4:1-7, Sons now, child-heirs under the law

5. Galatians 5:1-6, The Law is legalism, Gospel is freedom

6. Romans 7:1-25, Divorced from Law of Moses (“not covet”)

7. Colossians 2:14, Law nailed to the cross

8. Hebrews 7:1-28, A new priesthood, therefore a new law

9. Hebrews 8:1-5, Old Law a shadow of things to come

10. Hebrews 8:6-12, Old Covenant faulty, looks to a new

11. Hebrews 9:1-10:10, Law to be changed

12. 2Corinthians 3:3-18, Law of Moses a ministration of death

13. Acts 13:39, No justification under the Law of Moses

14. Acts 15:24, Adherence to Moses subverts the soul

1. In all of Paul’s New Testament writings there is no condemnation of Christians for not keeping the seventh day holy. All sorts of other sins are listed, but not once does Paul tell Christians to be sure and keep the sabbath nor does he condemn anyone for not keeping it.