

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE OBSERVATION OF THE SABBATH DAY TO PENTECOSTAL CHURCHES IN ASHANTI REGION OF GHANA: EVIDENCE FROM EJISU

DR. ISAAC K. DAMOAH
Email: damoahisaac1974@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The study adopted explanatory research design, qualitative research approach, research strategy used was cross-sectional survey, the population of the study was 8 Pentecostal churches, the samples size used were 200 samples, the sampling design were pastors and church elders of the Pentecostal churches, the source of data collection was primary source, the method of data collection was distribution of structured questionnaire, the method of data analysis was analysis of data collected from the field. The problem statement of the study was "The significance of the observation of the Sabbath day to Pentecostal churches in the Ashanti Region of Ghana: Evidence from Ejisu". The background of the study was brief introduction of Sabbath observation. The objectives of the study was achieved through development of questionnaires. The study found out that some of the members of the Pentecostal churches did not understand the purpose of attending church service on Sunday. Others said they attended church on Sunday to praise God and thank Him for His love and mercy. The pastors and church elders of Pentecostal churches said that they attended church on Sunday to recall the day Jesus resurrected from the dead, the early church met on Sunday after Jesus' resurrection. The pastors and church elders stated that Sabbath observation was restricted to the ancient Jews and Jesus Christ did not raise from the dead on Saturday. The pastors and church elders stated the importance of Sunday worship as follows: Sunday worship assists them to establish in the Lord, it was an acting of following the footsteps of Christ. Concerning the consequences of rejection of Sunday worship some of the pastors and church elders of Pentecostal churches said that it had no spiritual effect, Christians could worship God on any other day. Others said if a Christian did not attend church on Sunday he or she was not involved in the celebration of the Lord's day. The study generalized that Sabbath observation was irrelevant to Pentecostal churches because Jesus Christ resurrected from the dead on Sunday. The study recommended that Christian organizations should organize a seminar to educate Christians, church elders and pastors to know and understand that the Old Testament dispensation was past. Christians were not living under the law but under the grace of God.

Keywords: Significance, Observation, Sabbath, Origin, History, Jewish, Argument, Consequences

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Introductions

According to Abrahamic Religion Sabbath is a day set apart for rest and adoration. The book of Exodus confirms that Sabbath is a day of rest which falls on Saturday. It was God who instructed the Israelites to observe the Sabbath day as a holy day. In Judaism Sabbath is observed including Sabbatarian forms of Christianity like Protestant and Eastern Denominations. The word "Sabbath" appears first in the creation account of the book of Genesis. God made Sabbath day holy because He rested from creative works (Genesis 2:2-3).

The observation of the Sabbath day included in the ten commandments ("Wikipedia").

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

To find out the reasons why Pentecostal churches worship God on Sunday

To find out the reasons why Pentecostal churches do not worship God on Saturday

To find out the significance of Sunday worship

To find out the consequences of rejecting Sunday worship

ORIGIN AND THE HISTORY OF SABBATH

The word "Sabbath" in Hebrew is called "Shabbat" but in Judasim "Shabbat" is among the greatest gifts God gave to mankind. The people in the ancient near East never observed anything similar to the Jewish Sabbath. Other cultures had knowledge of seven-day week which depended on the phase of the moon. The Jewish Sabbath had no links with the movement of the celestial bodies. However scholars developed theories to find out the origin of the Sabbath but it did not yield to expected results. Many people said that the Sabbath was instituted by God (Exodus 20:8). Others believed the Sabbath was adopted from other people in the past. During the Babylonian days, Akkadian word "shab" or "pattum" fell on the fifteenth day of the month of calming the gods' hearts. Some people accepted that Sabbath was derived from an Akkadian word "Sebutum" meaning the seventh day. Many people believed that Moses' father-in-law taught Moses how to observe the Sabbath. The name of Moses' father-in-law is Jethro. Josephus the historian laughed at Apion who said that six days Jews departure from Egypt and they had buboes and that made them to observe Sabbath day. The Egyptians called the cure of the buboes in their groin as "sabbatosia". It is not certain how Sabbath is originally connected with the word "shavat" implies "to rest". The Sabbath is a holy day and a day God rested from His creative works and everlasting memorial of creation which talks about the double portion of manna collected on the wilderness the Bible declared (Genesis 2:1-3; Exodus 31:12,17; Ezekiel 20:12,20). It was God who provided the manna for the Israelites after their departure from Egypt (Exodus 16:23). The observation of the Sabbath day is mentioned in the Torah referring to the creation of the universe. The book of Amos proves that the Israelites observe the Sabbath in 8th century BCE. Prophet Amos said that they could not wait for the Sabbath to end before they start business (Amos 8:5). At the time of Exilic period in Babylonia around 6th century BCE prophet Isaiah instructed the Jews to pay attention to the Sabbath (Isaiah 58:13-14). In 5th century BCE when they returned from

Babylonian captivity Nehemiah the then governor of Judea questioned the nobles of Judah (Nehemiah 13:17). Sabbath observation portrays the Jewish personal and communal identity. Jewish thinker and an author said that more than Israelites observed the Sabbath and the Sabbath preserved them. Early Christians who were Jews observed Sabbath on Saturday but when Christianity went to Rome the day of worship became Sunday. Muslims being influenced by Jews and Christians decided to observe Sabbath on Friday ("Sonsino").

THESIS STATEMENT: The problem statement of the study was "The significance of the observation of the Sabbath day to Pentecostal churches in the Ashanti Region of Ghana: evidence from Ejisu". The study found out the reasons why Pentecostal churches worship God on Sunday, the reasons why Pentecostal churches do not worship God on Saturday, the consequences of rejecting Sunday worship and the significance of Sunday worship.

JEWISH SABBATH OBSERVATION

The Jews' Sabbath start on Friday night at Sunset and candles are lit 18 minutes before Sunset. An hour after the candles are lit the Sabbath ends. The observation of the Sabbath day takes 25 hours. The observation of the Sabbath day falls on Saturday on the Hebrew Calendar. The actual time Sabbath begins and ends differs depending on location and the time of the year. Sabbath begins and ends during the early winter time and later summer time. In polar regions Sabbath start Friday afternoon and ends early Saturday afternoon but begins early Saturday morning after Friday midnight and ends early Sunday morning.

SABBATH RITUALS

Candles lighting: 18 minutes before Sunset candles are lit by the head woman in the house. In the absence of the head woman the head man in the house lit the candles.

Kiddush: This is a blessing recited on a glass of wine or grape juice. This is done once on Friday evening and once on Saturday morning.

Lechem: Two loaves of bread are put a table and covered. The people on the table are blessed for washing their hands but three meals are served. One meal is served on Friday evening, one meal is served on Saturday afternoon and one meal is served on Saturday evening.

Havadallah: Prayer is offered at the end of the Sabbath with a glass of wine, multi-wick candles burning and fragrant spice.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are countless articles which speak for and against sabbath observation but the study investigated into the significance of Sabbath observation to Pentecostal churches. Due to this, the study found out authors who had written papers in favor of Sabbath observation. In reference to (bibleinfo,n.d) an article written entitled "Sabbath observance" states that the aim of observing the Sabbath was spiritual in sense that God instructed the Jews to observe the Sabbath day and to keep it holy (Exodus 20:8). The Sabbath starts in the evening at Sunset and ends in the evening (Leviticus 23:32). No one is permitted to work on the Sabbath day because the Sabbath day is holy unto the Lord (Exodus 20:9). Adults, children and animals are not allowed to work including strangers. If they observe the Sabbath, then God will bless them (Isaiah 58:13-14). The men of Judah works on the Sabbath day and Nehemiah warns them not to work on the Sabbath day (Nehemiah 13:15,19-22). In the evening he instructs that the gates of Jerusalem should be closed until the Sabbath has ended. He commanded some of his men to guide at the gates so that no one could work on the Sabbath day. He instructs the Levites to keep themselves pure and guide the gates in order to keep the Sabbath holy. The Lord ordained that the Sabbath ought to be public worship (Leviticus 23:3). In 203 Robert Rosenthal Kwall wrote an article entitled "Remember the Sabbath day and enhance your creativity" which confirms that the Sabbath is the fourth commandments among the ten commandments, makes the Sabbath weekly institution and initiates revolutionary idea into the ancient Eastern world. The word "Sabbath" in Hebrew is called "Shabbat" but from the

Theological point of view sabbat identifies the Israelites and the modern Jewish religion. Sabbath spells out the Jewish monotheism religion. As part of tradition, Christians and Moselms have adopted the Sabbath. The Sabbath law is dervied from the Torah and developed by the rabbinic tradition right from the early centuries of the common era. With respect to the views of the above mentioned authors, the study investigated into the reasons why Pentecostal churches worship God on Saturday, the reasons why Pentecostal churches do not worship God on Saturday, significance of Sunday worship and consequences of rejecting Sunday worship.

SIGNIFICANCE OF SABBATH OBSERVATION

- Sabbath permits the Jews to spend quality time with their families
- It gives them the chance to break from work and technology
- It creates time for them to think about their religious beliefs specially God and the Torah
- To remember how God delivers them from the Egyptians slavery
- It helps them to obey two of their mitzvot
- Sabbath observation brings the blessings of God (Isaiah 56:2).
- Observing the Sabbath in holiness brings the joy of the Lord (Isaiah 58:13-14).

ARGUMENT FOR SABBATH OBSERVATION

Divine commandments: God instructed the Isrealites to observe the Sabbath day and the Sabbath commandments is among the ten commandments. Abraham, Moses and Jacob never instituted the Sabbath day but it was God Himself who created the Sabbath day.

God's sign: The Sabbath was a sign between God and the Israelites.

Ordinance of creation: God instituted marriage and work in the Garden of Eden and created the Sabbath day during creation. He set one day aside out of seven days in the week for rest and worship. He blessed the seventh day and made it holy.

Sabbath day observed before Sinai: Many people believe that the Sabbath commandments are ceremonial law of the Mosaic covenant and it is restricted to the Old Testament Saints. God's people observed the Sabbath day before the commandments were written with the finger of God (Exodus 16:22-26).

The ten commandments: The observation of the Sabbath day is enshrined in the ten commandments and the ten commandments are unique among all the laws in the scriptures (Exodus 31:18). The other laws of the Old Testament Bible were written by the prophets but the ten commandments were written by God Himself.

Grounded in creation: The Sabbath commandments was based on creation and not temporary ceremonial system of the Israelites. He created the Sabbath day based on His own actions during creation of the universe.

ARGUMENT AGAINST SABBATH OBSERVATION

God instituted the Sabbath day for the Jews and there was evidence of Sabbath observance from Moses' time. At the time the Jews were observing the Sabbath day; the other nations were not observing it. The New Testament teachings does not instruct Christians to observe the Sabbath. According to the New Testament teachings Christians can choose to worship God on any other day (morningview,2014). The Old Testament Covenant is past and Christians are under the dispensation of grace. As Christians, we enter God's rest when we exercise faith in Christ. Since Christ has fulfilled the law, the Mosaic law is no more working. He has instituted the New Testament Covenant by His blood and His death is sufficient for our salvation and sanctification. When we observe the Sabbath, it diminishes the redemptive work of Christ. Christ as our savior is the Sabbath rest and declares us holy but the observance of the Sabbath does not make us holy. The law and the Sabbath foreshadow the ministry of Christ (Colossians 2:16-17). Jesus fulfilled the law through practicing the law perfectly and finishing sacrificial work. When He said He had

finished, it implies completion and fulfillment of the law (redbarnchurch,2019).

THE CONSEQUENCES OF BREAKING THE SABBATH COMMANDMENTS

- During Moses' era in the Old Testament times, those who failed to observe the Sabbath were killed (Exodus 31:15; Numbers 15:32-36).
- God's wrath came upon those who failed to observe the Sabbath (Ezekiel 20:21).
- The Israelites would be scattered if they did not observe the Sabbath (Exodus 20:23-24).
- Failure to observe the Sabbath is a idolatry (Ezekiel 20:16).
- Refusing to observe the Sabbath leads to spiritual, physical and mental breakdown
- Failure to observe the Sabbath is an act of disrespectfulness to God.

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter covers research design, research approach, research strategy, the sample, research instrument used, population of the study, sampling design, the source of data collection, the method of data collection, method of data analysis and form of presentation. The study used explanatory research design. Through this, the study explained how the objectives of the study were achieved. The research approach used was qualitative research approach in sense that the study found out the truth behind Sabbath observation. The research strategy used was cross-sectional surveyed because a group of churches were chosen as case study. The sample design, population of the study, the source of data collection and the method of data collection were examined.

Sampling design

The pastors and church elders of the Pentecostal churches were considered and were 8 in number.

Population of the study

8 Pentecostal churches were the target population of the study consisted of The Apostolic Church Of Ghana, Family Chapel, Hand Of God, The Church Of Pentecost, Heavenly Rain Church Of Ghana, Zion

Evangelistic Ministry, Jesus Christ International Church, Kings and Queens Ministry

The source of data collection

The source of data collection was primary source.

The method of data collection

Questionnaire were structured and distributed to the pastors and church elders by the researcher.

Method of data analysis

The data collected were analyzed qualitatively by examining the views of the various churches.

Data analysis and discussion

This chapter discussed the analysis of data collected from the field. Qualitative analysis techniques were used to analyzed the data and the results were as follows:

Pentecostal Churches' views on Sunday Worship

Response from Congregation

The reasons to worship God on Sunday

"I don't worship God on Sunday but I rather goes to church on Sunday".

That is, some of the members of the Pentecostal churches did know the purpose of attending church on Sunday.

"To praise him and to present my needs before Him"

This means, to show appreciation to God for His mercy, kindness and protection.

"To thank him for his love and mercy".

According to the congregation's response some of the members of the Pentecostal churches attended church service to express their gratitude to God for what He had done to them. Others did not understand the purpose of attending church service. Such people might attend just for social gathering.

The reasons not to worship God on Saturday

"In my own understanding I know that on Saturday God created the last thing of his kind and rested on Sunday that why we don't worship on Saturday".

That is, the Advantists were not right to worship God Saturday rather they should have worshipped on Sunday.

Significance of Sunday Worship

"Wonders will be happening".

"Some joy within you".

"You will feel great and healthy".

This means, Sunday was a day of blessings to some of the members of the Pentecostal churches.

Consequences of failing to worship God on Sunday

"Disobedience and He does not let you grow in the words of God".

That means, a sign of disrespectfulness to God and did not contribute spiritual growth.

"You will be always facing problems in your life".

This might implied the punishment of God.

Pastors and church elders response

Reasons for Sunday worship

"Because it is the day I find ample time to worship God and also fellowship with believers"

This means, some church leaders used Saturday to do household activities and went to farm. They did not accept Saturday as a Sabbath day.

"The early church began meeting on Sunday soon after Christ rose from the dead in honor of the Lord's resurrection which took place on Sunday or the first day of the week (1Corinthians 16:1-2)".

Pastors and church elders regard Sunday as a Sabbath day due to the resurrection of Christ.

"When Paul met with believers in Troas to worship and celebrate communion they gathered on the first day of the week" (Acts 20:7).

That is, they were following the footsteps of the early church.

"The Biblical reasons, for that change from Sabbath day, Saturday to Sunday is first and foremost the fact that it is in commemoration of the resurrection of Christ which seal the deal in establishing the new covenant". (Matthew 28:1; Acts 20:7; 1Corinthians 16:2).

This means, they were remembering the redemption day.

"Sunday is a special day for our Lord Jesus Christ (the Day of the Lord)."

"Jesus Christ died and resurrected on Sunday".

"He usually met his disciples on Sunday".

"Sunday is a victory day for Christians, Jesus resurrected from the dead" (Luke 24:5-7).

"Disciples assemble in room on Sunday" (John 20:19; Acts 20:7).

"To remember the memorial of the resurrection of Jesus Christ our savior"

The early church regarded Sunday as a Sabbath day so they could not overlook it. It was the day Christianity came into being.

Reasons not to worship God on Saturday

"Because there is nothing special about worshipping God on Saturday. You can choose any day as recommended by Paul the apostle".

"Because of the reasons above and the fact that my denomination has generally agreed to do so on Sunday".

The Constitution of the church declared Sunday as a worship day and never respected Saturday as a Sabbath day.

"God is worshipped individually on all days but at the co-operate level on a particular day".

"Further evidence that the Sabbath day no longer needs to be kept is that we are longer under the law but under grace" ((Romans 6:14).

They believed that they could choose any day as rest and worship God. They accepted that Sabbath was restricted to the Jews who were under the law.

"We don't keep the Sabbath to fulfill the law because Christ has already fulfilled it" (Romans 8:4; Colossians 2:15-17).

They believed the law was no more working and it was not necessary to celebrate the Sabbath day.

"No one should judge you in regards to food or a Sabbath day, festival or new moon etc"

"Because Saturday was the day for the Ancient Jews usually called the Sabbath day".

"Saturday is for those in Judasim".

They accepted that God commanded only the Jews to observe the Sabbath day.

"Jesus didn't resurrected on that day" (John 19:31).

They believed Christ triumphed over Satan on Sunday.

"This is because we believe that Jesus resurrection occurred on Sunday and is also known as the "Lord's day".

Significance of Sunday Worship

"It helps to establish in the Lord".

The teachings of Sunday service increased their faith and urged them to grow in the Lord.

"You can get the chance to fellowship with believers".

It was a day they met as followers of Christ and encouraged one another

"Christians go to church on Sunday because we have been saved from our sins, United with reign living Christ and with each other through faith in Jesus".

That is, to recall and celebrate the day Christ defeated Satan and felt proud to be part of Heavenly family.

"Our coming together weekly is the expression of our cooperate joy and thankfulness before God in worship".

That is, to praise God from the deliverance from sin.

"It is the day the Lord has made" (Psalms 117:24).

They regarded Sunday as a special day to the Lord

"It's nature is holy and joyful".

This means, it was the day Christ declared that it was possible for man to abstain from sin.

"It is the day that God liberate the world from the tyranny of sin, death and corruption through the resurrection of Jesus Christ".

That means, through Christ's resurrection, man could overcome sin and raised from the dead.

"It is the day God transform darkness to light etc".

That is, God gave man grace to overcome the world and to live above sin.

"Jesus Christ sanctified it"

"Sunday worshippers are following the steps of Jesus Christ".

This means, Sunday was regarded as a Sabbath day because it was the day Christ made Christianity as a religion.

"Victory day for Christians".

The day the soul of man was delivered from custody of Satan.

"Assembly day for Christians".

The early church met so they had reason to rest and worship on Sunday.

"It provides the opportunity to feel closer to God".

It was the day the soul of man had access to approach the throne of grace.

"It brings faithfulness in you"

It stirred up the spirit of man to remain faithful to God.

The consequences of failing to worship God on Sunday

"Your salvation can be denied by the devil".

"Your relationship with believers will take a back seat which can ultimately lead you to hell".

That is, if a Christian withdrew from fellowshiping with other believers, Satan could take the fellow captive.

"I don't know of any".

This means, the scriptures did not confirm any results for rejecting Sunday worship.

"Worshipping, if one fail to worship God on Sunday it does not have any spiritual consequences or bad effect wherether one is going to hell or Heaven".

That means, God would not punish for refusing to worship Him on Sunday.

"Again there is only one consequences for someone who fails to worship God on Sunday is that when one does not believe in the only son of God Jesus Christ. not receiving salvation in Christ Jesus".

This means, there was bad effect if one did not believe in Christ and not Sunday worship

"God has sanctified all the days from Sunday to Saturday".

This implies, Sunday was great day than Saturday because of resurrection of Christ.

"You can worship God on any day during the week apart from Sunday".

That is, God did not mention the particular day man should worship Him.

"You are not celebrating the victory day".

That means, failure to worship on Sunday is failure to involve in the Lord's resurrection.

"You are not gathered with Christians".

"It may lead you to worship other gods".

This means one failed to fellowship with believers in Christ and could take hold of that person.

"Degenerating the living".

"You start to believe that everything in the world is below you".

It was an act of belittling Christ

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter presented summary of findings from the analysis, conclusion and recommendation.

The study found out that Pentecostal churches gave reasons Sunday was regarded as the Lord's day as follows: Sabbath observation was restricted to the Jews, Jesus Christ did not resurrect from the dead on Saturday, apostle Paul and some believers in Christ met together on Sunday in Troas, regarded Sunday as a special day than Saturday, the Old Testament law was past, to praise God and to thank Him for His love and mercy, Jesus Christ resurrected from the dead on Sunday which was the first day of week. The early church met and worshipped God on Sunday, Sunday was the day Jesus triumphed over death and hell and was the day Christianity became into being. However, the study specified the importance of Sunday worship: Sunday was a day to feel great and healthy, created chance to get closer to God, to celebrate the redemption day of mankind, enabled one to establish in the Lord, holy and redemption day and to follow the footsteps of Christ. The study stated the consequences of rejecting Sunday worship. With respect to the consequences, some said it had no spiritual effects, did not know the outcome of rejecting Sunday worship. Others said God could be worship on any day, salvation could be denied, not involved in the total redemption of man, could lead to worship God's and hindered divine spiritual growth.

CONCLUSION

The study discovered that Pentecostal churches believed the Old Testament law was no more working in the New Testament era. Therefore

Sabbath observation was irrelevant to the Pentecostal churches.

RECOMMENDATION

Seminar

Christian organizations should organize seminar for Christians and church leaders on the theme: "The abolishing of the Old Testament law". In the seminar they ought to educate Christians and church leaders to understand that the Old Testament law is not working in this dispensation of grace. Because Christ has delivered man from the law so it is not important to observe the Sabbath day. The Sabbath was restricted to the ancient Jews and was not everyone who observed the Sabbath day.

Education

Sacred authors must write books to educate the general public to know and understand that sabbath observation is not vital in the dispensation of grace.

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Author's Profile

Dr. Isaac K. Damoah is a product of St .Augustine Bogoso Senior Secondary School in the Western Region of Ghana. He holds PhD in Christian Education, Masters in Divinity Bachelor Of Arts Degree in Theology and Diploma in Biblical Studies. He is a researcher, Publisher, an author and co-author to International Journal Of Scientific Research and Engineering Development.

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