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Printed: 6/21/2013

**From The Word of God  
Whole Bible Christian Community**

## **Christian Faith & Practice Through The Sabbath**

**<sup>2</sup>By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. <sup>3</sup>Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made. (Genesis 2:2-3 NASB95)**

### **Highlights of What's Inside**

- When was the Sabbath established?
- Who observed the first Sabbath?
- Was the Law in effect before Mt. Sinai?
- Did Jesus abolish the Sabbath?
- What did the Apostles teach about the Sabbath?
- Practical help for observing the day.

late; fellowship through group meetings; and watching movies together.

Preparation is needed for some of the activities. Some people light a couple of candles for light through the Sabbath because we're not supposed to kindle a fire. But we shouldn't have to worry about the finer points of what constitutes work or kindling, so don't sweat the details – they will come as you develop your understanding. We try to have enough ready-to eat or microwaveable food to eat through the end of the day so no one has to cook. Dishes are usually left until sundown, although dishes from Friday are usually washed right away, otherwise it would be a whole lot more labor to clean them on Saturday night.

The Sabbath itself was never 'optional' unless you consider God's Word 'optional' also. Unfortunately there were, and are, many traditions that get raised by some to the same importance as commands from our Father. And some people can be very critical with their traditions, watching closely to see if someone does something 'wrong' and refusing fellowship to the wrong doer. But try to avoid getting too excited at what other people are doing. Give yourself, and others, a chance to learn and grow. In the meantime, relax and enjoy.

May the Father bless your Sabbath practice and increase the fruit of it.

Bruce Scott Bertram

able. For instance, Susan bakes two loaves of bread, and we have some wine (well, actually wine coolers - we like to use the Manishevitz kosher Elderberry with 7-Up). Baking two loaves of bread reminds us that God provides for bread on both days, even though we are resting, just like He provided manna in the wilderness for Israel. The bread and wine can also be symbolic of the body and blood of the Messiah, if you choose. But these are just neat things you can add as you begin to understand, or as you feel comfortable.

Another meaningful option is the blessing of the rest of the family by the father (that would be me). After Susan lights a couple of candles and says a blessing to kick everything off, then I bless the wine and we pass around the cup. Then I go around and say a blessing for each person, placing my right hand on his or her head. My family enjoys this so much that they get really bummed out if we don't do it for some reason that week.

Next, we wash our hands (saying a blessing before), then I bless the bread, break it, and pass it around, each person saying a blessing and breaking off a piece (see the other booklet I wrote called Christian Faith and Practice Through Blessing for some blessings in English). Don't worry if you don't know what exactly to say or do in these cases, there is a lot of fun in learning. There are songs you can sing, other blessings you can say, head coverings if you like those, special candleholders, special food, saying the blessings in Hebrew, and many other interesting and fulfilling options to add (or not) as you learn. Practices that are good guidelines for Sabbath activities include study of the Word; family sharing; games; socializing with others; relax and sleep

# The Sabbath in Scripture

## It's Origins

The first person to observe a Sabbath was God, who was also the one who made it.

<sup>2</sup>By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. <sup>3</sup>Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made. (Genesis 2:2-3 NASB95)

The Sabbath originated with God before the fall and a long, long time before the giving of the Law at Mt. Sinai. But the Sabbath and the Law are intertwined.

God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it. He did not need to rest because He does not run out of energy as we do, but He rested anyway which serves as an example to us all. "Be still and know that I am God" is one of the purposes of the Sabbath. We rest because He rested and gave the day to us. Any word He gives us could be considered a command or a Law, but His Law is full of love and mercy.

## Law Before Law?

The Sabbath is part of the Law, which is part of God's Word to us. I think the reason for giving the Law again (in my opinion it has always been around) at Mt. Sinai was that God had to remind the Israelites of His Laws because they had been forgotten. There is much evi-

dence that the instructions that were eventually part of The Law were practiced long before the Law was 'given.' This is why I think it's obvious The Law was actually "re-given" on that mountain. Look at this list and see if you don't agree.

Genesis 1 - Reproduction (after their own kinds), go forth and multiply.

Genesis 2 - Sabbath, Don't eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; marriage. (The first of many Laws broken - Eating from the wrong tree).

Genesis 3 - Redemption, blood sacrifice, and atonement.

Genesis 4 – sacrifices, do not murder - (the second law broken).

Genesis 8 - Noah sacrifices, and uses 'clean' animals.

Genesis 26:5 Abraham obeys laws

Gen. 38:6-26 – Er and Onan and the law of providing for an heir

Exodus 11 – Passover

Laws of primogeniture – first born inherits

Ex. 4:26; Ex. 12; Circumcision – (not part of the Law except for babies and Passover).

Ex. 13 - Law of the firstborn belonging to Adonai

Ex. 13:16 “It shall be for you a token upon thy hand, .....

Ex. 16:4 – given manna so “that I may prove them, whether they walk in my law or no.”

Ex. 16:26-28 “how long will you refuse to keep my commandments and my laws?”

In Genesis 26:4 & 5 notice too that 430 years before the giving of the Instructions (Law) at Mt. Sinai, Abraham was commended and blessed because he obeyed God's Laws:

20:10; 23:12), don't kindle a fire (Ex. 35:3 – although it was a whole lot of work back then to kindle a fire), and work the other six days (Ex. 20:9). Later on, buying and selling were added as restrictions (Nehemiah 13:15-22) because of causing other people to work. Check out Leviticus 23:12 where the Word says to 'rest your ass' on the Sabbath (okay, I slipped that pun in there). Work is not specifically defined in the Word, but with a little thought we can probably figure out the difference.

The meaning of the word 'holy' is to 'set apart.' We make our Sabbath set apart by having a nice, almost formal dinner on Friday nights. The great thing about Biblical practices is there are not very many specific details in the Word. Most of the current practices are tradition only. That means we can pick and choose what seems good to us within the framework of the specifics in the Word.

Our family usually uses 6:00 pm as a start time, instead of the traditional sundown, because we try to make it more consistent. However, one of these days we may switch to sundown although there is no specific command about the start and stop time. I suppose if we didn't have clocks it would be a little harder to figure out a start time, unless we could learn to read a sundial correctly (but they're a little hard to strap to your wrist). We use the best dishes we have (that we don't use the rest of the week), my wife Susan cooks a special meal, and she bakes bread for us (two or three loaves – Ex. 16:29). Everybody pitches in to clean the house so there won't be anything to do on Saturday.

There is symbolism in some of the options we choose to do for Sabbath dinner that is meaningful and enjoy-

errands, and car repair, and work on the house, and cleaning, and all kinds of stuff. So trying to set it aside at first was a little difficult because it takes planning to get all the other stuff done on the other six days. Of course, having a holiday every week can grow on you. The second time we did it, the next week, it was a little easier because we had planned better. By the third or fourth week we were really getting into the groove (apologies to non-baby boomers) and started to relax better and enjoy it. Nowadays, we insist on it because the resting has become so beneficial for us.

A side affect of a weekly holiday is that you don't mind working so much on the other six days. As my family slid into this practice, the workweek got easier and easier to cope with because *that was the way it was supposed to be*. We realized we were supposed to be working on the other six, and as weird as it sounds, instead of being resentful (sometimes), we started to relax and enjoy the work also. No matter how hard we labored we knew there was an end to the week (and by extension an eventual end to ALL labor in the Day of the Lord or what some think of as the Millenium Kingdom). We found we could actually experience a weekly cycle with Jesus as He worked along side us during the week, and then met with us on the Sabbath during our rest. As we honor Him by 'remembering' (a word that means to speak or act on behalf of) the Sabbath, He honors us by blessing both our labor and our rest with His presence and help.

The only **specifics concerning Sabbath** are to sanctify it or set it apart as holy (Ex. 20:8, Lev. 23:3), remember it (Ex. 20:8; Lev. 19:30), rest from working (Ex. 16:29;

<sup>4</sup>“I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven, and will give your descendants all these lands; and by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; <sup>5</sup>because Abraham obeyed Me and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My laws.” (Genesis 26:4-5 NASB95)

Lest you think that the Law (and the Sabbath) only apply to the Jewish people, the Word testifies that there was to be only one Law for everybody:

<sup>15</sup>“*As for* the assembly, there shall be one statute for you and for the alien who sojourns *with you*, a perpetual statute throughout your generations; as you are, so shall the alien be before the Lord. <sup>16</sup>“There is to be one law and one ordinance for you and for the alien who sojourns with you.’ ” (Numbers 15:15-16 NASB95)

Not only does God say one Law for everyone, but notice in verse 27 of the next reference that the people in the Land before Israel had "defiled" the land by doing all these "abominations" (against the Law). Also in verse 29 "whoever" does "any of these abominations" shall be cut off, with or without the Law, Jewish or not.

<sup>26</sup>“But as for you, you are to keep My statutes and My judgments and shall not do any of these abominations, *neither* the native, nor the alien who sojourns among you <sup>27</sup>(for the men of the land who have been before you have done all these abominations, and the land has become defiled); <sup>28</sup>so that the land will not spew you out, should you defile it, as it has spewed out the nation which has been before you. <sup>29</sup>“For whoever does any of these abominations, those persons who do *so* shall be cut off from among

their people. <sup>30</sup>“Thus you are to keep My charge, that you do not practice any of the abominable customs which have been practiced before you, so as not to defile yourselves with them; I am the Lord your God.” (Leviticus 18:26-30 NASB95)

God also tells us we are not to do what is right in our own eyes....

<sup>8</sup>“You shall not do at all what we are doing here today, every man *doing* whatever is right in his own eyes; <sup>9</sup>for you have not as yet come to the resting place and the inheritance which the Lord your God is giving you. (Deuteronomy 12:8-9 NASB95)

Nor is anyone allowed to add to the Word, or take away from it:

<sup>2</sup>“You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you. <sup>3</sup>“Your eyes have seen what the Lord has done in the case of Baal-peor, for all the men who followed Baal-peor, the Lord your God has destroyed them from among you. <sup>4</sup>“But you who held fast to the Lord your God are alive today, every one of you. <sup>5</sup>“See, I have taught you statutes and judgments just as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should do thus in the land where you are entering to possess it. <sup>6</sup>“So keep and do *them*, for that is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes and say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’ <sup>7</sup>“For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as is the Lord our God whenever we call on Him? <sup>8</sup>“Or what great nation is

day and leaving it set, so you always work six and rest one.

The people who advocate the ‘**any day is okay**’ theory and treat this like a cute novelty hardly ever actually follow the six and one pattern. They also usually have the same ‘cutesy pie’ attitude about the rest of the Word, too. As you walk this way you may find, like we did, that your reverence for our Father’s Word grows, your discernment gets stronger, and you literally begin to ‘hang’ on every letter and syllable of His Instructions as if your “life” depended on it (which it does). You will become more able to be guided by His eye rather than having Him have to use a bit and bridle.

<sup>8</sup>I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you. <sup>9</sup>Do not be as the horse or as the mule which have no understanding, Whose trappings include bit and bridle to hold them in check, *Otherwise* they will not come near to you. (Psalm 32:8-9 NASB95)

And there is a pattern to this that will be more apparent to you as you begin to do it. Sometimes it’s hard to explain all the benefits of submission to the whole of the Word unless you experience them directly. Since the penalties have been removed, the Law functions as an excellent discipleship program having many inter-related teachings. As you build your understanding through hearing and doing, you will find that the Word opens up and deepens your relationship to God.

When my family first started practicing the Sabbath, the first day was real difficult because we just weren’t used to resting. Saturday used to be a day of yard work, and

As noted in the previous article, the Sabbath, day of rest, or “Day Of the Lord” was instituted in the Garden, before the fall. So it was not started because of sin, or the Fall. Although God may have in His infinite wisdom provided in advance for our stupidity by setting aside a day of rest from our labors (gee, ya think?). This study is not so much about specific celebration ideas as it is a general introduction and testimony. There are many books that will give you some suggestions for practices on the Sabbath (and the other feasts), such as “Celebrate the Feasts” by Martha Zimmerman, which you can get at a bookstore or places like the First Fruits of Zion website ([www.ffoz.org](http://www.ffoz.org)).

Sabbath is like a weekly holiday. It starts at sundown Friday and goes until sundown Saturday. How do we know this is the correct day? Well, all anybody ever had to do was count to seven. In case we forgot, God reset the time at Mt. Sinai and told the Israelites which day it was, so they just had to continue counting to seven. Also, if we don’t know which is the seventh day, how do we know Sunday is the first day of the week?

**Does it matter which day we use?** The simple answer is yes. Perhaps you won’t get sent straight to hell if you don’t practice on a particular day, at the moment anyway. But one of the important things to understand about this day is the act of doing it together as a community. If we all use the same day, we are united (Hebrew *echad* or one) in our timing though we may vary a little in our specific practices. Another reason for deciding on a common time is to avoid “each man doing what is right in his own eyes” which God never approves of. A third reason is the importance of setting a

there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole law which I am setting before you today? (Deuteronomy 4:2-8 NASB95)

### **Moral, Civil, and Ceremonial?**

Those who argue for the elimination of the Law by ‘fulfilling’ have trouble with the Ten. So they try to get around this difficulty by saying that somehow just the dietary and ceremonial Laws have been fulfilled, but not the Moral Law. They really can’t explain how some laws were eliminated and some were not, nor can they explain where these headings are in the Word. But God says not to follow the ways of the nations and live:

<sup>1</sup>Then the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, <sup>2</sup>“Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘I am the Lord your God. <sup>3</sup>‘You shall not do what is done in the land of Egypt where you lived, nor are you to do what is done in the land of Canaan where I am bringing you; you shall not walk in their statutes. <sup>4</sup>‘You are to perform My judgments and keep My statutes, to live in accord with them; I am the Lord your God. <sup>5</sup>‘So you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, by which a man may live if he does them; I am the Lord. (Leviticus 18:1-5 NASB95)

Some may argue that many of these things are addressed to the “sons of Israel.” Okay, so does that mean everyone else CAN do what was done in Egypt or Canaan? Obviously that does not make sense. Besides, if we (followers of Jesus) are not children (sons) of Israel, I don’t know who is. If we (sons or children of Israel) obey the Lord, we do not get the diseases the Egyptians got:

<sup>26</sup>And He said, “If you will give earnest heed to the

voice of the Lord your God, and do what is right in His sight, and give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have put on the Egyptians; for I, the Lord, am your healer.” (Exodus 15:26 NASB95)

As children, our motivation to follow what our Father says is that we love Him:

<sup>1</sup>“You shall therefore love the Lord your God, and always keep His charge, His statutes, His ordinances, and His commandments. (Deuteronomy 11:1 NASB95)

The King of Israel (does this apply to Jesus?) was to make a handwritten copy of the Law:

<sup>19</sup>“It shall be with him and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, by carefully observing all the words of this law and these statutes, <sup>20</sup>that his heart may not be lifted up above his countrymen and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, to the right or the left, so that he and his sons may continue long in his kingdom in the midst of Israel. (Deuteronomy 17:19-20 NASB95)

Curses are given if the Law is not followed (not serving the Lord with joy and a glad heart):

<sup>45</sup>“So all these curses shall come on you and pursue you and overtake you until you are destroyed, because you would not obey the Lord your God by keeping His commandments and His statutes which He commanded you. <sup>46</sup>“They shall become a sign and a wonder on you and your descendants forever. <sup>47</sup>“Because you did not serve the Lord your God

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nity. Amen. (2 Peter 3:14-18 NASB95)

This is another study in a continuing series for ‘rookies’ who have recently decided that there may be something to a ‘whole-Bible’ submissive walk and need a little help with understanding the applications or figuring out where to start.

One of the easiest places to start your walk is with the Sabbath. This is one of the eight festivals, “feasts,” or “appointed times” that are summarized by God in Leviticus 23 as belonging to Him. When you lay all of these out on a calendar, it seems like every time you turn around there’s another holiday with a party. Do we have a great God or what? Party, party, party, all the time party. Our God is an awesome God, and He’s a real partying kind of guy! Well, sometimes it’s solemn (like Yom Kippur), but most of the time He wants us to kick up our heels and get down, get funky, and get loose.

An appointed time (Lev. 23:2) is literally an appointment with God. He sets aside specific times for us to meet with Him, where we are reminded of what He has done, is doing, and will do for us. Of course, we can meet with Him anytime, on any day, through prayer, study of His Word, relationships with others, music or work. But these days are special, sort of like having a birthday or anniversary. They are also called ‘rehearsals’ because there are practices within these feasts that remind us of prophetic things yet to come.



delivering death.

Jesus said "If you keep My commandments you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love." Let's not fool around with semantics - His commandments include those given in the Old Testament. We abide in the Vine and bear fruit as we do what He said; mere 'mental acknowledgement' is not enough. We can't split up what's in the Word and call some of it New and some Old, because all of it comes from Jesus. If you want to 'show Jesus' then do what He says. He has given us all of the Word for our benefit, and expects us to take the talents given and return to Him an increase. After all, He has removed the penalties (but not the consequences) for not doing His Word perfectly and He has given us the Spirit to lead us and strengthen us. What else do we need?

<sup>14</sup>Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, <sup>15</sup>and regard the patience of our Lord *as* salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, <sup>16</sup>as also in all *his* letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction. <sup>17</sup>You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, <sup>18</sup>but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him *be* the glory, both now and to the day of eter-

with joy and a glad heart, for the abundance of all things; (Deuteronomy 28:45-47 NASB95)

David was known as a 'man after God's own heart,' and he says this about himself...

<sup>21</sup>"The Lord has rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands He has recompensed me. <sup>22</sup>"For I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not acted wickedly against my God. <sup>23</sup>"For all His ordinances *were* before me, And *as for* His statutes, I did not depart from them. <sup>24</sup>"I was also blameless toward Him, And I kept myself from my iniquity. (2 Samuel 22:21-24 NASB95)  
(See also Psalm 18).

Later **David** advised Solomon on the way to succeed.

<sup>3</sup>"Keep the charge of the Lord your God, to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His ordinances, and His testimonies, according to what is written in the Law of Moses, that you may succeed in all that you do and wherever you turn, (1 Kings 2:3 NASB95)

**Solomon** tells us what 'wholly devoted' means.

<sup>61</sup>"Let your heart therefore be wholly devoted to the Lord our God, to walk in His statutes and to keep His commandments, as at this day." (1 Kings 8:61 NASB95)

**Nehemiah** says that God's Law (and the Sabbath) is good, and that the Sabbath is 'God's.'

<sup>13</sup>"Then You came down on Mount Sinai, And spoke with them from heaven; You gave them just ordinances and true laws, Good statutes and command-

ments. <sup>14</sup>“So You made known to them Your holy sabbath, And laid down for them commandments, statutes and law, Through Your servant Moses. (Nehemiah 9:13-14 NASB95)

God tells us that hypocrisy (saying but not doing) is wickedness, and that those who think His silence equals approval for ‘lawlessness’ are mistaken:

<sup>16</sup>But to the wicked God says, “What right have you to tell of My statutes and to take My covenant in your mouth? <sup>17</sup>“For you hate discipline, and you cast My words behind you. <sup>18</sup>“When you see a thief, you are pleased with him, and you associate with adulterers. <sup>19</sup>“You let your mouth loose in evil and your tongue frames deceit. <sup>20</sup>“You sit and speak against your brother; You slander your own mother’s son. <sup>21</sup>“These things you have done and I kept silence; You thought that I was just like you; I will reprove you and state *the case* in order before your eyes. (Psalm 50:16-21 NASB95)

And He also tells David in Psalm 89:33,34 (NASB95) that He will not alter His Word:

<sup>33</sup>“But I will not break off My lovingkindness from him, Nor deal falsely in My faithfulness. <sup>34</sup>“My covenant I will not violate, Nor will I alter the utterance of My lips. (Psalm 89:33-34 NASB95)

Isaiah tells us that ALL the inhabitants of the earth have violated the Law and broken the covenant, but how can this be unless all are subject to its requirements?:

<sup>5</sup>The earth is also polluted by its inhabitants, for they transgressed laws, violated statutes, broke the everlasting covenant. <sup>6</sup>Therefore, a curse devours the

from believers, and in their place we are given meaningless platitudes, bumper sticker Christianity, empty philosophies, and useless traditions taught by men that lead people away from a true understanding of God and Jesus the Messiah.

I suggest that teachers who want to eliminate parts of our Father's Word from our consideration want to place *themselves* in the believer’s life as the final authority. Instead of teaching independence (better still interdependence) or maturity, they want the believer to stay in a perpetual state of milk-induced dependence, immaturity and weakness.

For a fool speaks nonsense, And his heart inclines toward wickedness: To practice ungodliness and to speak error against the LORD, To keep the hungry person unsatisfied And to withhold drink from the thirsty. (Isaiah 32:6 NASB95)

In order to remain the primary influence in a believer’s life they deliberately keep him or her in a constant state of need, that is, a need for the teacher rather than a need for the Word.

As I've said before, if people don't want to obey God I guess that's their choice. But they shouldn't try to call the mish-mashed, lukewarm things that they do scriptural, or sanctify their behavior by sprinkling it with parts of the Word like so much holy water, or say that they ‘have Jesus’ without doing what He says. These people are wolves in sheep's clothing, they are liars with seared conscience, rending and tearing by the misuse of the Word and denying the benefits and blessings of obedience to those who are untutored and weak. They are like a mirage in a waterless desert, promising life but

beginning (Did God really say...?), fell away from an intimate relationship with Him, and allowed death to come into the world. Some people today are still asking, "Did God really say?"

We also cannot expect the Word to justify our refusal to observe His Ways by pointing to verses in the New Testament that appear to contradict or 'change' the Word as already delivered by God through His servants in the Old Testament. Unfortunately for some, **the Word is a complete package** that, taken as it was intended without fogging it's meaning with the doctrines of men, constitutes a crystal clear picture of what God requires of man. Paul does not teach against the Father's Word, he confirms it in the same fashion as Jesus does. Both of them attack the "traditions" that are built up around the Word and tear down the walls of separation that legalists (Jewish or Christian) even today continue to try and reinforce. For some, this is a bitter pill to swallow because it goes against pride; the legalists keep thinking there must be some other way to get what they want without having to go through God.

The instructions that God gave us in the Old Testament are full of life, act as basic stepping-stones in the learning of more difficult concepts (if you don't understand natural things, how will you understand the spiritual? John 3), show us our sin, and bring us to Jesus. His Word is a beautiful lifestyle and discipleship method. As each command is discovered and applied, they provide rich nourishment, fullness, depth, and expanded learning and understanding and 'knowing' God. I experience the peace of God by resting 'in Jesus' on the Sabbath day. It is a shame that these benefits are stolen

earth, and those who live in it are held guilty. Therefore, the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men are left. (Isaiah 24:5-6 NASB95)

Israel is said by God to have rebelled against His Laws *even more than the nations*, which, along with Isaiah 24:5,6 above shows that everyone on the whole earth was expected to follow God's Laws.

<sup>6</sup>“But she has rebelled against My ordinances more wickedly than the nations and against My statutes more than the lands which surround her; for they have rejected My ordinances and have not walked in My statutes.” (Ezekiel 5:6 NASB95)

Even **the New Covenant** is between God, Israel, and Judah and involves the giving of a soft heart, a new spirit, and God's Law (we are “grafted in” to an existing tree according to Romans 11):

<sup>31</sup>“Behold, days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, <sup>32</sup>not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares the Lord. <sup>33</sup>“But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the Lord, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. <sup>34</sup>“They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the Lord, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their

sin I will remember no more.” (Jeremiah 31:31-34 NASB95)

<sup>19</sup>“And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, <sup>20</sup>that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God. <sup>21</sup>“But as for those whose hearts go after their detestable things and abominations, I will bring their conduct down on their heads,” declares the Lord God. (Ezekiel 11:19-21 NASB95)

<sup>26</sup>“Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. <sup>27</sup>“I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. (Ezekiel 36:26-27 NASB95)

Fortunately God extends an invitation to the wicked to follow His commands. Righteousness and justice are also equated to His statutes (including observing the Sabbath):

<sup>21</sup>“But if the wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed and observes all My statutes and practices justice and righteousness, he shall surely live; he shall not die. <sup>22</sup>“All his transgressions which he has committed will not be remembered against him; because of his righteousness which he has practiced, he will live. <sup>23</sup>“Do I have any pleasure in the death of the wicked,” declares the Lord God, “rather than that he should turn from his ways and

profit us either. The plain, literal meaning here is that the Sabbath rest is entered by obedience (or ‘faith’), and there is a warning for us not to follow the previous example and ‘not enter’ or disobey.

### Summary

**Jesus Himself established the Sabbath** in Genesis (He was the Word that Created), and He was the first to observe it. And it is obvious from many references in Genesis and Exodus that His Word (Law, Torah) was known by all and obeyed by few well before Mt. Sinai, and penalties enforced on all for disobedience (why else was the world destroyed by a flood before the Law was "given?"). All through His Word, the Sabbath (and any other commandment, statute, ruling, law, or instruction) is spoken of as the Standard against which behavior is measured. He constantly appeals to Man to repent of following his own ways and turn to God and His Ways. Sabbath, and by extension Torah or any Word that God gives, is His Ways.

We cannot hide our disobedience in Romans 14 and the perceived teaching on ‘disputatious matters.’ By definition, a disputatious matter would be any matter that God had not already given us instructions for. Good grief, if a disputatious matter was defined as anything people argued over then I suppose every thing God ever said is a ‘disputatious matter.’ If He has already given a specific instruction, then there should be no argument or ‘disputation.’ If He hasn’t given an instruction, or we can’t determine His will from the existing instructions, then it becomes an opinion and open to interpretation. It becomes disputatious when we fight over something that God didn’t spell out. We ignored His Word in the

by faith in those who heard. <sup>3</sup>For we who have believed enter that rest, just as He has said, “As I swore in My wrath, They shall not enter My rest,” although His works were finished from the foundation of the world. <sup>4</sup>For He has said somewhere concerning the seventh *day*: “And God rested on the seventh day from all His works”; <sup>5</sup>and again in this *passage*, “They shall not enter My rest.” <sup>6</sup>Therefore, since it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly had good news preached to them failed to enter because of disobedience, <sup>7</sup>He again fixes a certain day, “Today,” saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before, “Today if you hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts.” <sup>8</sup>For if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day after that. <sup>9</sup>So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. <sup>10</sup>For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His. <sup>11</sup>Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through *following* the same example of disobedience. (Hebrews 4:1-11 NASB95)

THEY had the “good news” preached to them just like WE did, but the Word did not “profit them” because it was not “united with faith.” They “failed to enter because of disobedience.” It seems pretty clear to me that ‘faith’ is equal to ‘obedience’ in this passage while ‘no faith’ is equal to ‘disobedience.’ Therefore, ‘faithful obedience’ will cause us to enter His rest while ‘unfaithful disobedience’ will cause us to ‘fall.’ If the gospel they heard had been united with faith then by implication it **would have profited them**, and, if we do not unite faith with the gospel we hear then it will not

live? (Ezekiel 18:21-23 NASB95)

<sup>13</sup>“When I say to the righteous he will surely live, and he *so* trusts in his righteousness that he commits iniquity, none of his righteous deeds will be remembered; but in that same iniquity of his which he has committed he will die. <sup>14</sup>“But when I say to the wicked, ‘You will surely die,’ and he turns from his sin and practices justice and righteousness, <sup>15</sup>*if a* wicked man restores a pledge, pays back what he has taken by robbery, walks by the statutes which ensure life without committing iniquity, he shall surely live; he shall not die. <sup>16</sup>“None of his sins that he has committed will be remembered against him. He has practiced justice and righteousness; he shall surely live. (Ezekiel 33:13-16 NASB95)

The Priests in the Millennial Temple will teach.

<sup>23</sup>“Moreover, they shall teach My people *the difference* between the holy and the profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean. <sup>24</sup>“In a dispute they shall take their stand to judge; they shall judge it according to My ordinances. They shall also keep My laws and My statutes in all My appointed feasts and sanctify My sabbaths. (Ezekiel 44:23-24 NASB95)

**So, the origin of the Sabbath was in Genesis, with God observing the first one; the Sabbath and the Law are wrapped up together; there was a lot of Law before Law; there is to be one law for everyone; everyone breaks the Law; God invites everyone to observe His Law; and we will be following the Law again in the Millennium Kingdom.**

## Its Observance

Thus says the LORD, “**Preserve justice and do righteousness**, For My salvation is about to come and My righteousness to be revealed. How blessed is the man who does this, and the son of man who takes hold of it; **who keeps from profaning the Sabbath**, and keeps his hand from doing any evil. Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the LORD say, ‘The LORD will surely separate me from His people.’ Nor let the eunuch say, ‘Behold, I am a dry tree.’” For thus says the LORD, “To the eunuchs who keep My Sabbaths, and choose what pleases Me, and hold fast My covenant, to them I will give in My house and within My walls a memorial, and a name better than that of sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name which will not be cut off. Also the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to Him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be His servants, every one who keeps from profaning the Sabbath and holds fast My covenant; even those I will bring to My holy mountain and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar; for My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples.” The Lord GOD, who gathers the dispersed of Israel, declares, “Yet others I will gather to them, to those already gathered.” (Isaiah 56:1-8 NASB95, emphasis added)

Notice that in the previous reference that justice and righteousness are equated to observing the Sabbath, and foreigners are invited to observe it. "Choosing what pleases Me" is the same as "holding fast My covenant."

and Gentiles? And yet again I point out that if you look at this verse in context, you will see that Paul is referring to the "elemental things of the world" in 4:3, which could not possibly refer to God's Word in the slightest degree. Also, in verse 5 and 6, Paul says Jesus "redeemed those under the Law that we might receive the adoption as sons." Does this mean only the Jews were redeemed? Of course not. According to verses above all persons were "under the law."

When we get to **Colossians 2:16-23**, it is an easy one to understand if you look at verse 20, which mentions "elementary principles of the world," and verse 22 where Paul again is teaching against the "commandments and teachings of men." This is NOT God's Word as revealed in the Law. You know, a lot of trouble could be avoided if we just READ THE TEXT.

In verse 16, Paul says to let no man "act as your judge" which in no way shape or form teaches negatively about the Sabbath. Why, when this verse could mean that we shouldn't let men tell us NOT to observe the Sabbath, do we take it to mean that we shouldn't obey the Sabbath? Could it be that we are naturally disobedient children and desperately looking for any excuse to avoid obedience?

**Hebrews 4:1-11** comes up a lot to defend lawlessness, but for the life of me I can't see why.

<sup>1</sup>Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it. <sup>2</sup>For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united

so on, to (apparently) imply that the Sabbath is a ‘disputatious matter.’ But if you back up a little and check out 14:1 two facts are very clear: (1) Paul is talking about men's opinions, not the Law (or Sabbath), and (2) he is referring to ‘not condemning’ a person with weak faith, which doesn't have anything to do with whether or not the Law should be followed. A third fact is that many other people observe ‘days’ besides the Jews. These facts cause the verses to convey a whole different meaning.

In **Galatians 3:1-14** the general tenor seems to dismiss the Sabbath observance (and by extension the Law). This reference does not speak of the Sabbath directly, but it does speak of the Law. However, if you read carefully you will see that Paul is really teaching against using the Law for a purpose for which it was not intended, that is, to gain right standing from God sufficient for salvation (2,3). Of course we do not gain right standing from following His Laws, we are given right standing through the sacrifice of Jesus, and we follow the Laws because we love God with all our heart soul and strength. Go a little further ahead to 3:21 and see that the Law is not contrary to the promises of God, and in verse 23 Paul says that all (I think this means a-l-l-p-e-o-p-l-e) were shut up under the Law. This is not teaching us to ignore the Law.

Next we have **Galatians 4:10**, which, like Romans 14:5 and 6, is referring to observing days and so on. Again I point out that Jews are not the only one to observe days, months, seasons, and years. Why do we keep thinking that this applies only to Jews? Who is the book addressed to? Isn't it addressed to a mixed group of Jews

In the next reference, we get some more insight into the observance of Sabbath.

“If because of the sabbath, you turn your foot, from doing your own pleasure on My holy day, and call the sabbath a delight, the holy day of the LORD honorable, and honor it, desisting from your own ways, from seeking your own pleasure and speaking your own word, then you will take delight in the LORD, and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth; and I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.” (Isaiah 58:13-14 NASB95)

Some think that the Law and/or the Sabbath was just for the Jews, but I think the Word has shown in the references under The Origins heading that ALL of God's Word is for EVERYONE. One might get the impression that only the Jews are being chastised and encouraged to follow His Word (including the Sabbaths), but look again in places such as Isaiah 56 verses 2, 4, and 6, (opposite page) where the Lord also includes the stranger and the foreigner (both the same).

The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person. For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil. (Ecclesiastes 12:13,14 NASB95)

## **What Jesus did on the Sabbath**

The list below says that He healed and ate food. But in doing these things, according to the text, He only went against the ‘traditions of men’ which had tended to drift from what God had instructed. Not a single one of His actions was against Torah. They could not have been or

Jesus could not have been the Messiah. For Jesus' definition of what He was doing see Mat. 15:3, 6; and Mark 7:8, 9, 13.

Matthew 12:1 = apostles picked grain, not in the Law - but an interpretation of Law.

Mark 2:27 = Sabbath made for man; next verse Jesus is (I AM) "Lord of the Sabbath."

Mark 6:2 = Jesus teaches in the synagogue.

Luke 6:1-11 = teaching and healing on the Sabbath.

Luke 13:10-17 = healing on the Sabbath.

Luke 14:1-6 = eating bread and healing on Sabbath.

John 7:22 and verse following = circumcision on the Sabbath & healing on the Sabbath.

John 9:13-16 = Jesus applies clay and heals a man of blindness.

## **What Paul did on the Sabbath**

Mostly teaching. Teaching on the Sabbath day was never forbidden in the Word of God. However, Paul also spent time teaching "traditions." I wonder what those could've been?

Acts 13:14-16, 42 = Paul teaching on Sabbath

Acts 16:13 and verses following = Paul teaches on Sabbath

Acts 18:4 = Paul teaching on Sabbath

I Cor. 11:2 = Paul hands down traditions. Which ones? Could it be those in Gal. 1:14?

Gal. 1:14 = Paul holds to ancestral traditions.

II Thess. 2:15; 3:6; = Paul hands down more traditions.

Studying the Word is never considered 'work' in the sense of making a living. Also, not only did Paul always deny breaking the Law, but if he taught disobedience to

the Law then he was a hypocrite of the worst sort, even worse than he accused Peter of being. (Remember, the Sabbath is part of the Law, even part of the 10 Commandments.) A cursory examination of the book of Acts shows Paul observing feasts (20:6,16), fasts (27:9), vows (18:18; 21:23-26), Sabbath (13:14,42,44, 16:13, 17:2, 18:4), circumcision (16:3), temple worship (22:17, 24:11,17,18), teaching from the Law and the Prophets (28:23), and **keeping the Law** (21:24, 22:3, 23:6, 24:14).

To add consternation to those who insist that the Law is eliminated by fulfillment, Paul teaches traditions to the Corinthians, the Galatians, and the Thessalonians. It seems plain from Galatians 1:14 that he must be teaching them his traditions, that is, his 'ancestral' traditions, probably those that held closely to the written word rather than the word of men.

## **What the Apostles taught about Sabbath**

We need to be careful that, given the many scriptures quoted so far that are teaching positively about the Law and the Sabbath, we do not take a few scriptures in the New Testament out of context and use them to deny all those previous teachings. God does not change, and neither does His Word. If the Word appears contradictory, it is our understanding that is out of whack, not the Word. So look up the following references and read very carefully, and let us attempt to rightly divide the Word of Truth. These are not complete treatments of each text but just a summary intended to point the way for you in your own studies.

In **Romans 14:5-8** Paul talks about observing days and