

# Should Christians Keep The Sabbath?

By Pastor John Anderson

## A Great Question

This is a matter of greatest importance. It really revolves around the question, "How should a believer relate to his God?" or "How should a creature relate to his Maker?" It would seem that the simple and reasonable response to such an inquiry would be "with unquestioning obedience." Does not our Creator God deserve to be obeyed? Who would suggest that it would be acceptable for one made to dishonor and disobey the One Who has given life?

As strange as it may seem, there is one who has suggested and promoted that very idea! Long ago, the Scriptures tell us, Lucifer, a most talented, beautiful and wise angel, one who was a "covering cherub," which means his lofty position was close to the very throne of God, somehow came to the way of thinking that he was deserving of the worship and adoration belonging only to God. "How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.'" Isaiah 14:12-14.

How he formed that conclusion is a mystery that cannot be explained. In the Bible it's called the "mystery of iniquity." II Thessalonians 2:7, KJV. But he did, and began a war in heaven (Revelation 12:7-9) through which he garnered the support of about one-third of the angels. He was particularly jealous of Jesus, the second Member of the Godhead, through Whom everything had been created. Eventually Lucifer was evicted from heaven and the location of the battle was transferred to this earth.

The issues this fallen angel raised were fundamental. In his jealousy, he charged God with being restrictive, unjust and unloving; of requiring too much of His creatures. He claimed that the foundation of God's government, the great law of love that had been written on the hearts of all His creatures resulted in virtual slavery. This despite the fact that until then only peace, harmony and happiness had been known! His would be a better way; one without law. Everyone would

be free to pursue his own direction and follow his own wishes.

Upon planet Earth, this became the substance of his argument to Eve. Addressing her through one of God's most beautiful creatures, the serpent, Satan suggested that it was alright to disobey God's explicit command to not eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. He went on to say that she actually would experience life on a higher level if she violated God's command; that she would become like God Himself. (See Genesis 3:1-5.) He told her that God didn't really mean what He had said, that she wouldn't really die.

Unfortunately, we know that Eve and her husband Adam disobeyed God and ate of the forbidden fruit, with chaos and catastrophe following. Sin and its lethal effects were admitted to the human family and to this day every sorrow and heartache can be traced back to that fateful act of disobedience. All the tragedy and woe this sad world has seen were in the seeds of that forbidden fruit.

## A Great Plan

Nevertheless, God had mercy on the human family and offered them a way back into His favor so they could be given another opportunity to make a choice. The act of disobedience had called for punishment and there was no way that the consequence of death could be set aside. God's law is as sacred as His throne and the entire universe would be placed in jeopardy should His law be nullified. But there was a way that the human family could be restored to favor and that would be if God Himself, Author of the law and Originator of the human race, would take the punishment they deserved. The Lord Jesus, Creator of all, would come and be born into the human family and reveal to mankind and indeed the entire universe, that God's law could be obeyed. Adam in his perfection need not have sinned and obedience was even possible in sinful flesh, through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Romans 8:3; Hebrews 2:14. Jesus would demonstrate that God is love by His every action, culminating in His death on the cross by which He would pay for man's sin.

"What," you might ask, "does this have to do with the Sabbath?" It has everything to do with it! From that day in Eden to this, Satan has still championed his cause of rebellion in tempting the sons and daughters of Adam to believe that the Father is not a God of love and that His laws are too restrictive; that freedom and happiness are derived from trampling on His law and doing "your own thing." His pitch hasn't changed; it's just put on modern clothing for our

generation, but it's the same line of thinking he gave to Eve in the Garden.

This is the great question that each of us must decide. ***This is what life is about:*** will we accept the Lord as our Maker, our God? Will we acknowledge that His ways are best and trust Him even when we can't see into the future? Will we honor Him as our Creator by obeying and serving Him implicitly and joyfully? Or will we heed the hiss of Eden's serpent and charge God with being an unfair and unloving Ruler, undeserving of our respect and homage. Our response to that question is filled with eternal significance.

## Saved by Grace through Faith which Works by Love

Let it be stated plainly that our law-keeping in no way qualifies us for salvation. We were born in sin and are incapable of doing anything that will earn God's favor. "By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in His sight." Romans 3:20. Salvation is a free gift of grace, received through faith. "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." Ephesians 2:8. Our obedience is the fruit of salvation, our expression of loyalty and appreciation to the God Who has saved us. "Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments." I John 2:3.

By obeying Him, we declare that His law is "holy, just and good," and that we believe that it is for our benefit, the benefit of society and the honor of His name that we submit to His requirements. In short, we place ourselves on the side of God and His throne when we obey Him. "Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin to death, or of obedience to righteousness?" Romans 6:16. What's wrong with being loyal to Christ?

Let it also be stated clearly that *only through Christ* can true obedience to any of His requirements ever be rendered. Without Him we can do nothing (John 15:5), but through Him we can do all things! Philippians 4:13. However, since God created His beings with freedom of choice, it is only when we give our consent to allow His Spirit to instruct and empower us that He will live in us. Then He will implant the principles of His character within our hearts and give us the strength to live a life worthy of our calling. "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and

trembling; for it is God Who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure." Philipians 2:12, 13.

## God's Law Eternal

From the beginning, our human forefathers were not left in ignorance of God's commands. Because man's mental powers were strong, fresh from the Creator's hand, there was no need to commit His law to writing, but we know that man had a clear understanding of God's expectations. Mankind was clear as to his duty both to God and to his fellow man. Cain knew that murder was wrong. Genesis 4:1-9. Abraham had a distinct understanding of the difference between true worship and idolatry. Joshua 24:2, 3. He also knew that misrepresenting the truth was wrong. Genesis 12:11-20; 20:1-5. Joseph knew that adultery was a sin. Genesis 39:7-9. Before the giving of the law on Mt. Sinai, the people of God knew about the Sabbath. Exodus 16.

At Mt. Sinai, nearly half-way through the story of human history, since the original vitality of man's thinking and remembering had deteriorated, God's wisdom saw fit to place in writing His law. In grandeur beyond words His voice thundered the Ten Commandments. With His finger He inscribed them in stone. Although through the centuries He would allow godly men, the prophets, to express His message, the giving of the Ten Commandments was not entrusted to human agency; they were written by Himself. They were stones "cut out without hands" that impacted the entire globe.

These ten precepts were to govern the relations between God and man (the first four commandments), and man with his fellowmen (the last six) in all times and places. They were universal in their application. Who would argue that God's prohibitions against murder, lying, adultery, coveting or idolatry pertained only to one class of people at only one time?

They were not invented at Sinai; they were fully applicable during the 25 previous centuries. But now, because of man's weakness, they were inscribed in stone as a perpetual reminder of God's just requirements. The Ten Commandments were called the "testimony" because they bear witness as to God's character. Exodus 31:18. The ten statements reveal who He is. They were called the "covenant" because they formed the basis of man's relation to God, and obedience to these would demonstrate man's allegiance to God. Deuteronomy 4:13; 5:2-21; 9:9-11, 15.

Beside the Decalogue, there were other guidelines given through Moses while Israel encamped at the foot of Sinai regulating civil, health and ceremonial issues. These were written by Moses in a "book" and placed outside the ark of the covenant. Deuteronomy 31:24-26. Clear and intentional distinction was made by God between the moral law, the Ten Commandments and the ceremonial laws.

It would seem obvious that these same Ten Commandments would remain the expression of God's will and that those who acknowledge Him as Creator would gladly honor Him by obedience to them.

Unfortunately, Satan has been hard at work to undermine the principles of His precepts. His war in heaven began by challenging the throne and law of God and his policy has never changed. He has induced men into believing and teaching that obedience is not necessary. He has led men into interpretations that twist the plain meaning of God's Word to suit his own purpose. He has ingeniously persuaded men to put a false light on certain portions of the Bible, ignoring the obvious intent of the Scriptures. He knows that if he can undermine confidence in and fidelity to God's law he will have accomplished his goal of rebellion. He will be able to claim those caught in his revolt as his adherents and thus disqualified to receive the gift of salvation so painfully obtained by Jesus.

With respect to the Ten Commandments notice what we find in the New Testament. Shortly after beginning His ministry, the Savior enunciated the principles of His kingdom in what is called the "Sermon on the Mount." Matthew 5-7. This event is the "Mt. Sinai of the New Testament." What did Jesus declare--that the law was done away with? No. He expanded on the law, and demonstrated that the law went further than outward actions; it reaches to our very thoughts, motives and intents. This was not really a "new" concept; it had been taught in the Old Testament, but had been lost sight of and Christ brought it back into the spotlight.

Within that Sermon on the Mount, Jesus proclaimed clearly that it was not His purpose that the law be done away with. He declared, "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the

kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." Matthew 5:17-19. A "jot" and "tittle" were the smallest parts of Hebrew letters. Jesus is saying, "Not a sentence, not a word, not a letter, not even a fragment of a letter will be removed from the law till all is finished."

What "commandments" is He talking about? He proceeds directly to say, "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder,'....but I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment." Matthew 5:21, 22. "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery." Matthew 5:27, 28.

It goes without saying that the portions Jesus quoted, as illustrations of the law that He came "not to destroy" are from the Ten Commandments. To say that Jesus' death on the cross put an end to the Ten Commandments flies in the face of Christ's direct statement given in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus didn't say, "By the way, you only have to obey the Ten Commandments for another three years or so, because when I die on Calvary they will be nullified." To maintain that things changed at the cross and now we're free to disobey the Commandments goes directly against His comment, "Till heaven and earth pass."

On another occasion Jesus defined the "commandments" as being the ones that included "You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, Honor your father and your mother and (the summary of the last six of the Ten Commandments) You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Matthew 19:18, 19. The teaching that His death abolished the Ten Commandments would have been strange to Christ's ears. Jesus, in Whose heart the law was written (Psalm 40:8) came and lived out the principles the law. "The LORD is will pleased for His righteousness' sake; He will magnify the law and make it honorable." Isaiah 42:21.

Does Paul teach that the law is done away with? What does he mean when he speaks about not being "under the law"? Paul is addressing at least two concerns by using this phrase. First, the heresy had taken root that one could qualify for eternal life on the basis of his or her own obedience. This is the basis of all false religion; that we can earn favor with God through our works. It would seem unusual that this concept could grow and develop, given the fact that their spiritual forefather Abraham was termed the "patriarch of *faith*". And yet,

especially among Pharisees, a "check-list" religion flourished, as illustrated in the prayer of the Pharisee in the temple, who touted his good works as making him acceptable to God. Luke 18:9-14.

Paul himself, who had been a Pharisee, confessed that his former way of thinking had been that the good works he had accomplished earned him favor with God. Philippians 3:4-9. Later, he preached "By the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight." Romans 3:20. The term "under the law," as used by Paul, applies to those who believed like he had; that by one's obedience to the law he could be saved. Both New and Old Testament reject that concept. The Old Testament teaches salvation by faith as a gift from God. Paul argues successfully in Romans 3-5 that God's plan of salvation *throughout all time, including the time before the cross* was by grace through faith, not of our works. The term "under the law" can be understood to be an abbreviated phrase for "under the system that believes my obedience will qualify me for salvation." That was Jewish Theology 101 in New Testament times. Paul is completely against that!

The term "under the law" can also mean "under the guilt or condemnation of not realizing that my sins are forgiven through Jesus." That also is something Paul preaches against. Christians should believe that their sins are pardoned through the blood of the Savior, and once they are acknowledged, confessed and forsaken, they are forgiven and forgotten and the burden of guilt is removed.

In Galatians he uses the term "law" to represent the Old Testament system's ceremonial laws which helped them understand God's ways until the Messiah, the true Lamb of God came and taught us about God. When Jesus died on the cross, these "types" or illustrations met their fulfillment and they are no longer required of God's people.

**Of one thing we can be certain.** When Paul states, "we are not under law but grace" he most assuredly does *not* mean that God's Ten Commandment law is abolished and has no place in our lives. We know that because of his emphatic statement, "Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law." Romans 3:31. When he spoke of how God "*abolished* (in Greek this is the same word as "make void" in Romans 3:31) in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances" (Ephesians 2:15), it is clear that he was speaking of the "ordinances" pertaining to the sacrificial system. The book of Hebrews speaks of these "copies" and "shadows" of Christ's death, representing gifts and

sacrifices, food and drinks, various washings and "fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation." Hebrews 9:9, 10. These were completely separate from the Ten Commandments. When Paul says He "abolished" the law of commandments contained in ordinances, and yet says that through faith we certainly do not "abolish" the law, unless we conclude that he is contradicting himself, it is more than clear that he is speaking of two different "laws," right?

Let's test the theory that Paul taught the abolition of the Ten Commandments. Let's see if it stands the test of Scripture. Paul declared, "Where no law is there is no transgression." Romans 4:15. This makes perfect sense; in our legal system a crime can only be established if there is legislation prohibiting a certain act. A prosecutor knows that the first step in a criminal proceeding is to identify the specific statute that has been broken.

In God's legal system, violation of His law is called sin. Give this careful thought: therefore, this means that if the Ten Commandments were abolished at the cross, then sin no longer exists, for "by the law is the knowledge of sin." Romans 3:20. **This law is clearly the Ten Commandments**: "I would not have known sin except through the law, for I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, 'You shall not covet.'" Romans 7:7. The law against coveting is part of the Ten Commandments. Follow this to its shocking conclusion: if there is no law, there is no sin; and if there is no sin, then there is no need of a Savior. But this cannot be true! Therefore the existence of sin compels the conclusion that the Ten Commandment law must also still exist! Paul declared the law to be "holy, just and good." Romans 7:12.

Think about this: Jesus is King. That must mean He has a kingdom. What kingdom is there that is not governed by law? Not only that, but we observe the faithful application of law throughout God's great universe, from the orderly movements of the stars in their courses to the laws that affect our lives on this planet, including the laws of gravity, physics, physiology and chemistry. His law governing relationships between mankind and God likewise exists.

## The Purpose Of God's Law

The truth is that the law cannot provide for us salvation; that is, we cannot earn favor with God through our own obedience to it. But that doesn't mean that the law has no purpose. Paul said to Timothy, "We know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully." I Timothy 1:8.

The purpose of the law is to point out sin. It is the moral "mirror" that reveals the defects of the heart. "If anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does." James 1:23-25.

What law is James talking about? The Ten Commandments! This is evident from his quoting several commandments as he later speaks again of the "law of liberty." "For He Who said, 'Do not commit adultery,' also said, 'Do not murder.' Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty." James 2:10-12. When, by looking at the law, we become conscious of sin in our lives, then we are driven to Christ our Redeemer for cleansing and forgiveness.

## The Moral Law and Other Laws

What part does the issue of circumcision play in this discussion? This was a provocative issue in Paul's day. Old Testament believers were obliged to conform to this rite. In fact, Moses was prohibited from beginning his mission to deliver Israel from Egypt's bondage until his younger son was circumcised. Exodus 4:24-26. Whether this law would carry over and be required of Gentiles was the subject of the Jerusalem council of A.D. 49 and it was concluded that circumcision and the observance of laws having to do with sacrificial rites were not mandatory. See Acts 15. But to suggest that the result of that council was to abolish the Ten Commandments is outrageous! Would it be fair to say that their decision gave license for murder and lying? No! The moral law was distinctly different from the ceremonial law. Paul said, "Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but the *keeping of the commandments of God* is what matters." I Corinthians 7:19.

Clear separation existed between the ceremonial (sacrificial) and moral (Ten Commandment) laws. The ceremonial laws were written by Moses; the Ten Commandments by God. The ceremonial laws were written in a book; the Ten Commandments in stone. The ceremonial laws were stored in a compartment beside the ark; the Ten Commandments placed within the ark. See Deuteronomy 31:24-26. With its sacrifices and offerings, the ceremonial law pointed forward as

a "shadow" to "good things to come," that is, the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, and met their end when He died. God demonstrated this when He tore the curtain in the temple from top to bottom when Jesus expired. Matthew 27:51. On the other hand, as noted, the Ten Commandments apply to all peoples at all times.

## God's Law and the New Covenant

Someone might ask, "But aren't we under the New Covenant now?" Yes, we are. But notice carefully that the New Covenant does not annul God's law. "This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: After those days,' says the LORD, 'I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people'" Hebrews 8:10.

The difference between the Old and New Covenants is not that the Old contained law and the New doesn't. The New Covenant is not "law-less." The difference is that the Old Covenant relied on man's promise to obey the law ("All that the Lord has spoken we will do" Exodus 19:8), while the New Covenant relies on God's promise to save us and implant His principles in our lives. The "fault" was with the people, not the law. "Because finding fault with them, He says: 'Behold the days are coming,' says the LORD, 'when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.'" Hebrews 8:8.

The law is still very much a part of the New Covenant; He promises to "write it on our hearts." But the basis for our salvation rests on Christ's obedience to the law which is imputed to us by grace. God then promises to help us obey Him as the fruit of salvation. As we noted before, **so closely identified with His agreement were the Ten Commandments that on occasion they were simply called "the covenant."** "So He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, that is, the Ten Commandments; and He wrote them in stone." Deuteronomy 4:13.

Someone might say, "Love is the only law we're obliged to obey." Jesus said, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another." John 13:34. When Jesus was asked about the great commandment He responded, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all you mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'" Matthew 22:37-39. In this sense "love is the fulfilling of the law." Romans 13:10. But it would be foolish to

argue that by so saying, Jesus did away with the Ten Commandments! He was merely summarizing them under the canopy of love, which is the only proper and acceptable motivation for obedience. The "new commandment" that we love, is only telling us the "why" and the "how" of obedience to the Ten Commandments. If I love my neighbor, I won't steal from him or covet what he has. Jesus said, "on these two (the principles of loving God and loving man) hang all the law and the prophets." Matthew 22:40.

The principle of agape love summarizes the precepts of the Ten Commandments. Notice this: *a summary does not nullify the specific!* Would someone really propose that because he's under the law of "love" he is free to murder or lie? Certainly not! The "basic speed law" says that you should never drive faster than conditions warrant. That statement might be considered a summarization of safe driving. But the "basic speed law," does not nullify that sign beside the highway that posts the defined speed limit on the road when you're traveling.

Would we really want to argue that since we're saved we're free to break the Commandments? Because Jesus paid for our sins (our transgressions of the law), does that give us freedom to disobey the law? What did Paul say to this notion? "What then? Shall we sin (break the law) because we are not under the law but under grace? Certainly not!" Romans 6:15. As Christians, as people who have accepted God's gracious gift of salvation, we are under even greater obligation to obey Him!

## Appreciating God's Law

Think also of this. We've seen that the Bible says that "love is the fulfilling of the law," and that "love" is the summary of the law. We also know that "God is love." I John 4:8. We can see then that His law of love is a perfect reflection of His character of love. One who understands this sees His law as being a mirror image of God. No, the law doesn't save us, but because it reflects His likeness so clearly, we have great appreciation for it.

I have a photograph of my wife on my office desk. No, it's not "her." It's a likeness, an image of her. But because it is so much like her, and because I love her, I appreciate it. Does that make sense? I like to look at it because it reminds me of her. I can't help but appreciate the photograph of her. How odd it would seem to say, "I love my wife, but I hate the photo likeness of her. Get rid of it; put it away!" And yet that's what many teach regarding the Ten

Commandments, which are a “photograph” of God’s character!

So for the one who truly appreciates the character of love of our wonderful God and the fact that His law perfectly reflects that character of love, His law will be a delight. This is the confession of David in that beautiful 119<sup>th</sup> psalm, dedicated to the high regard he had for God’s law. Here is a brief synopsis of his testimony:

- “I will delight myself in Your statutes” Psalm 119:16.
- “Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law” Psalm 119:18.
- “Your testimonies also are my delight and my counselors.” Psalm 119:24.
- “Make me walk in the path of Your commandments, for I delight in them.” Psalm 119:35.
- “I delight in Your law.” Psalm 119:70.
- “Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day.” Psalm 119:97.
- “Therefore I love Your commandments more than gold! Yes, than fine gold.” Psalm 119:127.
- “Great peace have those who love Your law, and nothing causes them to stumble.” Psalm 119:165.

## Violations of His Law Condemned

Paul’s list of the “works of the flesh” can be seen as the “breaking of the Ten Commandments.” He speaks of “adultery, idolatry, envy, murder,” and says that “those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” Galatians 5:19-21. To the Corinthians he wrote, “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.” I Corinthians 6:9, 10. He might just as easily have said, “Those who are insubordinate to God and practice the breaking of the Ten Commandments won’t be saved.” Likewise, the list of misdeeds mentioned in Revelation as characterizing those left outside the City could be viewed as “transgressions of the Ten Commandments.” Revelation 21:8, 27; 22:15. God could not have been clearer regarding the necessity of obedience (through His strength, of course!) to His Ten Commandment law.

## The Testimony of Protestant Creeds

It is interesting to note that nearly all the confessions or creeds of the churches of the Protestant Reformation included statements upholding the Ten Commandments and differentiating between God's great moral law, which is eternal, and the ceremonial law, which came to an end at the cross. A few quotations will suffice to demonstrate this.

"We believe that the law of God is the eternal and unchangeable rule of His moral government; that it is holy, just, and good, and that the inability which the Scriptures ascribe to fallen men to fulfill its precepts arises entirely from their love of sin; to deliver them from which, and to restore them through a Mediator to unfeigned obedience to the holy law, is the one great end of the gospel, and of the means of grace connected with the establishment of the visible church." The New Hampshire Baptist Confession, A. D. 1833.

"The Old Testament is not contrary to the New; for both in the Old and New Testament everlasting life is offered to mankind by Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and man; being both God and man. Wherefore they are not to be heard who feign that the old fathers did look only for transitory promises. Although the law given from God by Moses, as touching ceremonies and rites, doth not bind Christians, nor ought the civil precepts thereof of necessity be received in any commonwealth, yet, notwithstanding, no Christian whatsoever is free from the obedience of the commandments which are called moral." The Methodist Articles of Religion, A. D. 1784.

"God gave Adam a law, as a covenant of works, by which He bound him and all his posterity to personal, entire, exact, and perpetual obedience; promised life upon the fulfilling, and threatened death upon the breach of it; and endued him with power and ability to keep it. This law, after his fall, continued to be a perfect rule of righteousness; and, as such, was delivered by God upon Mt. Sinai in ten commandments, and written in two tables; the first four commandments containing our duty toward God, and other six our duty to man. Beside this law, commonly called moral, God was pleased to give to the people of Israel, as a church under age, ceremonial laws, containing several typical ordinances, partly of worship, prefiguring Christ, His graces, actions, sufferings, and benefits, and partly holding forth divers instructions of moral duties. All of which ceremonial laws are now abrogated under the New Testament." The Westminster Confession of Faith, A. D. 1647.

So also agree the testimonies of Luther, Zwingli, the Irish Articles of Religion of 1615, the Anglican Catechism of 1549, the Articles of Religion of the Church of England of 1571, the Articles by the Protestant Episcopal Church of 1801, and many more. The suggestion that God's Ten Commandments were abolished would have been heresy to the proponents of the Reformation.

## Total Obedience Required

Every part of God's law needs to be obeyed. *Partial obedience is total rebellion*. James makes it clear that the Ten Commandments *in its entirety* will be the law applied in the final Judgment. "For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet *stumble in one point, he is guilty of all*. For He who said, 'Do not commit adultery, also said, 'Do not murder.' Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty." James 2:10-12. The *Ten* Commandments (not nine of them!) will be the standard in the judgment. We will be judged by this "law of liberty," which from the context noted, is clearly the Ten Commandments.

## God's Sabbath in the Spotlight

If you were to ask most people "Is it okay to covet, lie, steal murder or commit adultery?" they would say, "No!" If you asked, "Since you are a Christian, is it okay to worship other gods, bow to graven images or misuse God's name?" they would say, "No!" Most people would acknowledge in a general way the wisdom and authority of the Ten Commandments.

Right now in our country there is a movement to remove representations of the Ten Commandments from public places, and that movement is being resisted by Christians of many faiths. In a "general way" Christianity upholds the Ten Commandments, but there is a great contradiction when the spotlight is put on one of them. Here is a most intriguing mystery: with one hand Christianity upholds the law and venerates the Ten Commandments, yet with the other hand she seeks to destroy the law and declare it void!

The mystery has to do with the Fourth Commandment which defines God's Sabbath as being the seventh day of the week, cast in the very bosom of God's Decalogue. Those who argue that the Ten Commandments are abolished would teach that it's really only the

seventh-day Sabbath that needs to go, the day of worship defined by God Himself, that

- highlights the Creatorship of God, something of which our evolutionistic world needs to be reminded
- teaches salvation by faith (by true Sabbath keeping we “rest” from our “work” to earn favor with God through our obedience and place our faith in Jesus Who paid for our sins on the cross)
- illustrates the restorative purpose of God in sinful man (recalling how God took a world without form and void and made it perfect)
- begins with the word “Remember”!
- Sets apart one day of the week as a time for the creature to spend with his or her Creator. All relationships require time to be established and maintained.

The fourth commandment refers back to God’s great creative act. “Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. 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 2:1-3. When God blesses something, He gives it power and capability to fulfill His purpose. When He sanctified the seventh day, He set it apart for sacred use.

Satan hates the Sabbath, because it stands for everything he is against. He hates that God is Creator; he hates that God has made a plan of salvation for sinful man; he hates that God will restore man completely through the plan of redemption. He hates that man can enjoy and be blessed by spending time with his Maker. Satan has made it the object of his enmity from the beginning, leading God’s people either to ignore it or heap upon it excessive restrictions that obscure its true beauty.

When Jesus was on earth, He didn’t teach, “Forget the Sabbath.” He lifted it from the dust of human tradition and elevated it to the glorious stature it once held when the world was created. He anticipated that the Sabbath would still be in effect decades later, when Jerusalem would be destroyed. Matthew 24:20.

Someone might argue that because the Sabbath is not mentioned more often and did not come up at the Jerusalem Council, that that is evidence that it was changed. The “argument of silence” is weak. It is true that the Sabbath was not the main point of discussion

in the Jerusalem Council, but that silence is eloquent! In A.D. 49, which day was the Lord's Day was not at issue. It would have been shocking news to the delegates at that convention to suggest that another day than the Sabbath was now to be honored.

Again, just because something is not mentioned is no evidence that it has been nullified. When asked about the commandments, Jesus recited to the rich young ruler from the second table of the law. Because He didn't specifically include the commandment addressing graven images or disrespectful use of the Lord's name, would we conclude that His silence on them constituted their nullification? Absolutely not!

The Ten Commandments were written in stone by God for a reason; to demonstrate their perpetuity. **God entrusted many things to human agencies to record, but He wrote the Ten Commandments with His own finger!** Who on earth has the authority to tamper with His Decalogue! Who on earth has the authority to say it has been changed, reduced or nullified!

If His law could have been done away with, Jesus didn't need to die. It was because His law could not be set aside that Christ came and bore the punishment of our sins.

There is one who is most anxious for God's law to be disregarded, and that is the enemy of God, Lucifer. Since the beginning he has waged war against God's government, throne and law. He knows that if he is successful in leading men into disregarding just one part of the law, he will achieve his goal, for the moral law is a chain which is as strong as its weakest link.

Jesus looked down in time and saw ones faithful to His Commandments and pronounced a blessing on them. "Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." Revelation 14:12. His last call of mercy to this world is an appeal to return to the worship of the seventh day Sabbath, the memorial of His creation. The invitation is given to "Worship Him Who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water." Revelation 14:6, 7. How do we worship "Him Who made"? How do we worship Him as Creator? Certainly it would include upholding His memorial of creation, the seventh day Sabbath.

Obedience is the highest form of worship. "To obey is better than sacrifice." I Samuel 15:22. John, the apostle of love, has strong words

regarding God's law. "Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." I John 2:3, 4.

We would ask, "What's wrong with obeying the Lord? What's wrong with expressing our loyalty to our God through obedience to His Commandments?" Is there something faulty about God's law, that He wrote with His own finger, that man needs to improve? Preposterous!

Today the question still rings out, "Who is on the Lord's side?" Exodus 32:26. Notice carefully the context: that question was originally asked when Moses received the Ten Commandments, but Israel was breaking them by worshiping a golden calf. Allegiance is expressed by obedience. This was the principle in heaven when Lucifer rebelled, it was the principle when Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden and it is the issue in these last days. To say, "I am Christ's," and yet trample on His law is contradictory.

Jesus and the apostles kept the Sabbath. Luke 4:16; Acts 13:42-44; 16:13; 17:2; 18:1-4. Jesus anticipated that the Sabbath would still be in effect decades after the cross, when Jerusalem would be destroyed. Matthew 24:20. Those today who honor the Creator of heaven and earth will find their feet in the path of obedience.

### “What About?”

Doesn't the Bible speak about the "Lord's Day," and doesn't that mean Sunday? The Bible refers to the Lord's Day in Revelation 1:10, but doesn't specify in that verse what day that was. There is no evidence in Scripture that God ever transferred the sanctity from the seventh to the first day. There is no historical evidence that when John wrote the book of Revelation the term "Lord's Day" was understood as Sunday.

Some would put forth what they consider to be evidence to that proposition, but it is weak and unreliable. Concerning the often referred to "Letter of Ignatius," the highly reputed scholar and historian Dr. Philip Schaff says, "These oldest documents of the hierarch soon became so interpolated, curtailed, and mutilated by pious fraud, that it is today almost impossible to discover with certainty the genuine Ignatius of history under the hyper- and pseudo-Ignatius of tradition." History of the Christian Church, 2<sup>nd</sup> period, sec. 164, vol. 2, p. 660. The earliest reliable evidence that the term "Lord's

Day" was used in reference to the first day of the week would come much later.

In any case, the Bible makes plain which is the "Lord's Day." Jesus revealed that He is "Lord of the Sabbath." Mark 2:27, 28. The Lord calls the Sabbath, "My holy day." Isaiah 58:13. The word "of" speaks to possession. If I refer to the "children of Mark," I am speaking of those that belong to him. "The seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God." Exodus 20:10. It belongs to Him. It is His day. Never in Scripture was such an honor conferred on the first day of the week. Christ never claimed that the first day of the week as "The Lord's Day" was His child. That eventually Sunday was given this title by man there can be no dispute, but the authority in Scripture for such a designation does not exist.

Doesn't the Bible mention the "first day of the week" as being honored? There are eight passages mentioning the first day of the week. Six of them merely refer to it as the day when Jesus rose from the tomb. On one of those, it mentions that the disciples had gathered, not to worship, but "for fear of the Jews." John 20:19.

In Acts we're told that Paul met with certain disciples and spoke to them "until midnight." Acts 20:7. This meeting did not take place during what we today would call Sunday, because days back then began and ended with the setting of the sun. This meeting took place on what we today would call Saturday night and some translations (New English Bible) render it that way. This would not be a good text to justify Sunday sacredness! The context makes it clear that the church had gathered to hear a farewell address by the apostle before he left.

In the other passage, Paul advises believers to "lay something aside" ("lay by him in store" KJV) on the first day of the week. I Corinthians 16:2. This passage does not confer sacredness on Sunday; it merely advocates that financial accounting ("at home") be taken care of so that a suitable offering will be prepared for Paul to transport to Jerusalem when he should visit Corinth.

Someone might say, "I believe in the principle of the Sabbath, but I don't really think it matters which day I rest on." Where in Scripture are we told that we are given the liberty to choose which day is His Sabbath? Our Creator didn't say, "I want you to rest one day in seven; you choose the one you like." The commandment is specific and leaves no doubt as to which of the days of the week is the one

appointed by God. "The seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God." Exodus 20:10. The history of the Jews is insurmountable evidence that only one day was ever designated by God as His Sabbath, and that is the seventh day.

An incident in the Bible illustrates this principle. Among the sons of Jesse only one, David, was appointed by God to receive the anointing of His blessing. He would be set apart and consecrated by Samuel for special honor. Only one would wear the crown of His approval. It was not left to Samuel to choose anyone he liked, though he said when presented with Eliab, "Surely the LORD's anointed is before Him." The choice of the *first one*, the eldest son Eliab, seemed right to Samuel! But it would not be the *first son* but the *last son* that God chose. Likewise, it is not the *first day*, Sunday, but the *last day*, the seventh day, that God said He elected.

The answer God gave to Samuel left no uncertainty as to the matter, and might well serve as an answer to the one who feels free to choose the day of worship that best suits him or her: "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have refused him. For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." I Samuel 16:7. The Lord has "refused" all other days of the week and has chosen the seventh-day as His Sabbath, a memorial of His creative act and promise of re-creation in our lives. It's not our prerogative to pick any one we think is just as good, no more than Samuel was given liberty to pick any son of Jesse to be king. We elevate ourselves into the position of God when we assume that authority. Cain felt his offering of fruit was just as good as the blood sacrifice of his brother Abel, but Cain's worship was not accepted.

Someone might say, "I believe in the principle of the Sabbath, the rest I experience in trusting Jesus as my Savior, therefore I am free from observing the technicality of worshiping on the seventh day." It is true that to try to observe the form without the substance is worthless. Keeping the seventh day holy without surrendering to Christ and appreciating His character of love is meaningless, and in fact impossible. But it is equally true that accepting the spiritual principle does not result in our being free from the physical performance of His requirement.

What do you think would have happened in Egypt if someone said, "I believe in the blood of the lamb as representing Christ, but I don't think I'll actually sprinkle it on the doorposts of my house."

Disaster! When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, did He envision His followers saying, "I accept Him as my Savior, but I don't need to actually drink from the cup"? When John the Baptist and the apostles preached the baptism of repentance, did they suggest that if one agrees to the concept of dying to sin and rising to new life, they are free to dispense with the physical act of water baptism? Where in the New Testament is there anything to support that notion? Likewise the Sabbath needs to be observed both in heart and hand; with the motive of appreciating Christ as Savior and Giver of rest, as well as obeying the clear precepts regarding refraining from work and engaging in worship.

## Where Did Sunday Worship Come From?

The conclusion is unavoidable: **there is no text in the New Testament that explicitly transfers the blessing and sacredness that God placed on the seventh-day Sabbath (Genesis 2:1-3, Exodus 20:8-11) to Sunday.** There is however, historical evidence that man attempted to effect such a change, and the Church of the Middle Ages takes full responsibility for such transference. In the Convert's Catechism Of Catholic Doctrine (Peter Geiermann, Herder Book Co, London, 1931), the question is asked, "Which is the Sabbath day?" "Saturday is the Sabbath day." "Why do we observe Sunday instead of Saturday?" "We observe Sunday instead of Saturday because the Catholic Church, in the Council of Laodicea (A.D. 336), transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday." Page 50.

Another Catholic author writes, "You will tell me that Saturday was the Jewish Sabbath, but that Christian Sabbath has been changed to Sunday. Changed! but by whom? Who has authority to change an express commandment of Almighty God? When God has spoken and said, Thou shalt keep holy the seventh day, who shall dare to say, Nay, thou mayest work and do all manner of worldly business on the seventh day; but thou shalt keep holy the first day in its stead? This is a most important question, which I know not how you can answer. You are a Protestant, and you profess to go by the Bible and the Bible only; and yet in so important a matter as the observance of one day in seven as a holy day, you go against the plain letter of the Bible, and put another day in the place of that day which the Bible has commanded. The command to keep holy the seventh day is one of the Ten Commandments; you believe that the other nine are still binding; who gave you authority to tamper with the fourth? If you are consistent with your own principles, if you really follow the Bible and the Bible only, you ought to be able to produce some portion of the

New Testament in which this fourth commandment is expressly altered." Library of Christian Doctrine: Why Don't You Keep Holy the Sabbath-Day? London: Burns and Oates, Ltd., pp. 3, 4.

Note that Catholicism stands for the principle that the Church is "above Scripture" and thereby has such authority. Those who "protested" against this theology claimed that "Scripture is above the Church" and the Church is shaped by its teachings. Where do "Protestants" stand on this issue today, particularly as it relates to the day of worship?

While Moses was on Sinai receiving the law, the people below were transgressing it. Aaron, under the insistence of the crowd, had fashioned a golden calf and invited the congregation to worship. "And Aaron made a proclamation and said, 'Tomorrow is a feast to the LORD.'" Exodus 32:5. Because Aaron, a mere man, said so, did that make it so? Certainly not! We recoil in disbelief at the flagrant disobedience of the Israelites at the foot of Horeb with their idolatrous way of worship, but is there any difference between that conduct and the setting aside of God's explicit command regarding the day of worship by the professed Christian community now? With respect to God's designated day of worship, the seventh day Sabbath, it appears there are many "Aarons" today who are teaching, "Tomorrow is a feast to the Lord."

Someone might ask, "Doesn't Romans 14 teach us that it doesn't make any difference what day we keep?" The text in question is dealing with "doubtful disputations." Romans 14:1. There has never been anything doubtful about what God wrote in stone! There is nothing doubtful about "murder," "lying," "adultery" or "coveting." Nor should there be about the Sabbath.

The subject Paul is addressing has to do with the festival days attached to the Passover, Pentecost and Day of Atonement feasts. We are told specifically that within those festivals there were "sabbaths." Leviticus 23:24. These could come on any day of the week. They were distinguished from the Sabbath memorializing creation, which came only on the seventh day of the week. This instruction is in parallel with Paul's letter to the Colossians in which he wrote, "Therefore (because of Christ's death on the cross) let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ." Colossians 2:16, 17. The subject matter, as well as the phrase "let no one judge you" is a clear tie to Romans 14:3, 4.

How do we know Paul is not talking about the seventh-day Sabbath in Colossians? First, the word is plural. He speaks of the "sabbaths." There is a distinct difference between referring to "the Sabbath" and the "sabbaths." Secondly, there is a phrase which follows which gives clear definition to the "sabbaths" of which he speaks. He does not leave us guessing concerning which sabbaths he is speaking. That little word "which" in the text is important! It demonstrates that Paul is not speaking of all Sabbaths; he speaks to those sabbaths "which are a shadow of things to come."

If someone asked you to go to a parking lot and write down all the license plate numbers of cars which are red, you would not come back with all the license plate numbers (unless by strange coincidence all cars in the lot happened to be red!). Because of that little phrase beginning with the word "which" you would be selective in writing the information down, and pay attention only to licenses of red cars. In the same way, Paul has given us unmistakable evidence that he is not talking about all Sabbaths; just the ones which pointed forward to the cross.

The Sabbath of the fourth commandment gives clear indication of its purpose. It directs our attention backward to the creation of the world. In the commandment itself God explains why it is to be honored. We are enjoined to observe it, "For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it." Is Paul speaking about the Sabbath which, according to the language of the Lawgiver pointed back to creation? No, he is addressing those sabbaths that were as "shadows" (or "illustrations, types") pointing forward to Calvary, where "good things" took place for our redemption.

In the Old Testament, every sacrifice was an arrow pointing to the cross. In every sacrifice there was a promise of Calvary. Every time a lamb's blood was shed it illustrated what God would do through the death of Jesus the Messiah. These sacrifices, and the festival sabbaths that were part of their ceremonies, came to their rightful end when the true Lamb of God paid for our salvation on Golgotha. Therefore, the festival sabbaths were optional for New Testament believers. If a person observed the Passover sabbath "to the Lord," that was okay. If, given his faith in Jesus as the Passover Lamb, his conscience led him to disregard the festival sabbath, that also was okay. This might be similar to one who chooses not to observe

Christmas or Easter recognizing that the roots of many of the customs associated with those events come from less than desirable soil.

## Can We Be Sure Which Is the Seventh Day?

Wasn't the calendar changed and hasn't time been lost, so that we don't know what the "seventh day" is today? It is true that periodically changes have occurred to the calendar to make adjustments, but the *weekly cycle has never been changed!* We make an adjustment when we insert an extra day every four years and call it a "leap year," but the weekly cycle isn't altered. In 1582 the Gregorian calendar eliminated ten days from the month of October, but the days of the week remained intact. Does it really make sense that millions of Jews are mistaken as to which day is the Sabbath, and billions of Christians are confused as to which day is the day on which Jesus rose, but that this mistake has somehow resulted in all Jews recognizing that the seventh day is the Sabbath and all Christians pointing to the first day of the week as being the day on which Jesus was resurrected?

For believers, there should be no ambiguity as to which is God's Sabbath. Luke 23:54-56 makes it clear that the day between the day that Christ died (acknowledged by almost everyone to be Friday) and the day He rose again (acclaimed by all to be Sunday) is the "*Sabbath according to the commandment.*" Take note that Luke wrote this many years after the death of Jesus. If a change in the day of worship had been instituted by Christ and observed by the apostles, Luke would have declared it to be so.

In over 100 major languages of the world, including Greek, German, Russian and Spanish, the word for the seventh-day is "Sabbath." In the case of Spanish, we're told that now there is a separate word to designate "Sabbath" in a religious sense, but there can be no question where the term "sabado" came from. More than that, the word for the sixth day of the week today in Greek is "preparation" (*paraskeue*), hearkening back to God's instruction that adequate preparations be made before the Sabbath, so that no work be done during holy hours. See Exodus 16:5; Luke 23:54.

In this enlightened age, will God accept the reasoning that "everyone else is doing it" as a reason to disobey His commandments? Will the excuse "it doesn't matter," when God wrote it in stone, carry weight? When we stand before Him in the day of Judgment, will it suffice to call on a few instances that identify the day when Jesus rose as the first day of the week, when the disciples met "for fear" not

worship, a Saturday night farewell speech by Paul or his advice that believers lay aside (“at home”) an offering for future collection, as being sufficient authority to justify the substitution of another day for His Sabbath? Conspicuously absent from these Scriptures is a definitive “Thus saith the Lord.” Behind all of these excuses lurks the shadow of the arch-deceiver, whose intent it has always been to wage war against God and His law.

Today the voice of God asks, “How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My laws? Exodus 16:28. That question was originally asked when the Israelites disregarded God’s instruction regarding keeping the Sabbath, an event which took place before the giving of the law on Mt. Sinai, recorded in Exodus 20. In these last days of earth’s history obedience to God will define the true disciple. In times of ignorance, God “winked,” but now commands all men and women to repent and acknowledge Him as Lord by obedience to all His commandments.

We come back to our original question. Should people honor their Maker? Should believers submit to His will? Should one who calls himself a follower of the Lord obey Him in all things? Should Christians keep the Sabbath? Yes, Yes, Yes, Yes!