## The Biblical Covenants Insights and Applications for the Christian

A Four-Part Series Prepared for the JOY Class By Pat McRight February - March, 2021

### Session 4

### The Sabbath and the Christian

### March 24, 2021



#### We live in an exhausting world, and the Lord encourages us to rest!

### Mark 6:31



And He said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and <u>rest</u> a while." (For there were many people coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.)

### Matthew 11:28-30



<sup>28</sup> "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. <sup>30</sup> "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

## Foundational Observations

- Jesus encourages His disciples to take restorative rests, even stepping away from evangelizing the lost when necessary.
- Jesus GIVES us rest-even while we are YOKED, laboring for Him.

With this in mind, we will examine the following questions...

## Today's Big Questions

- 1. Does the Bible teach that Christians must keep the Sabbath (4<sup>th</sup>) Commandment?
- 2. Does the Bible teach that Christians are to rest and gather for worship on Saturday?
- 3. Did someone in church history change the day of Christian worship from Saturday to Sunday?
- 4. Does the Bible teach that Sunday was to become the Christian Sabbath, replacing the 7<sup>th</sup>-Day Sabbath?

## Seventh-Day Observers

- 🕸 Jews
- 🕸 Modern **Messianic Jews**
- Many in the modern Jewish Roots Movement
- **† Seventh-Day Baptists** (began in British Isles, 1700's)
- + Seventh-Day Adventists (descended from Millerites, mid 1800's, USA)
- Some Denominations traced to Herbert Armstrong (father of Garner Ted Armstrong), 1900's, USA.
- + Some others.

## A Provocative, Heated Debate 1 of 3

THE SABBATH NOTE: I am NOT endorsing this book! --Pat C. H. PAPPAS THM

Publisher's Blurb (Back Cover) for The Sabbath by C. H. Pappas THM.

When it comes to the doctrine of the Sabbath, many are confused. Some are so confused that they are asking how many commandments are there, nine or ten? Has the fourth commandment been abrogated or is it still binding? If the fourth commandment stands, then on what day are we to observe the Sabbath, on Saturday or Sunday? Or does it really matter just as long as we take off one day in the week? Others have come to think that all the commandments have been abrogated. Is this true?

## A Provocative, Heated Debate 2 of 3

**INFIE** SABBATH NOTE: I am NOT endorsing this book! --Pat C. H. PAPPAS THM

A more searching question is asked, Is the typical Christian community correct in observing the Sabbath on the first day of the week? Or does the fourth commandment mandate the Sabbath to be observed on seventh day? Still others are asking, is the Sabbath Day and the Lord's Day same or are they different? As one can readily see, these questions are troubling to many professing Christians. They are confused as the doctrine of the Sabbath is no longer addressed.

## A Provocative, Heated Debate 3 of 3

THE

SABBATH

C. H. PAPPAS THM

--Pat

However, the more searching question is, if the fourth commandment stands, have we provoked our Lord to anger in failing to observer [sic] the Sabbath as we ought? If we are to observe it, then how is the Sabbath to be observed? It is the writer's conviction that we are not only to observe NOTE: I am NOT endorsing this book! the Sabbath, but also until we do, there will be no revival in this country no matter how fervently we may fast and pray. The doctrine of the Sabbath is essential to the life of the church and the liberties we once enjoy [sic] as a nation before it was infected with this liberation theology. We must heed the divine mandate coming down from God to "Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it Holy" (Exodus 20:8).

## **Question 1**

### Does the Bible teach that Christians must keep the Sabbath (4<sup>th</sup>) Commandment?

## Let's examine key claims made by Seventh-Day Sabbatarians



### **Key Sabbatarian Claims**

- 1. Sabbath Observance was instituted as a Creation Ordinance for all mankind
- 2. The Patriarchs Observed the Sabbath from Creation to Abraham until the time of Moses
- 3. The Ten Commandments are "God's Law" and permanent moral law vs. temporary "the Law of Moses" (ceremonial).
- 4. The Fourth Commandment is an everlasting covenant.
- 5. Jesus, the Apostles, and the First-Century church observed the Seventh-Day Sabbath, not the first day of the week.
- 6. Paul is misunderstood as abrogating the weekly Sabbath. He only abrogated the annual Sabbaths associated with the Feasts.
- 7. At the end of time, faithful Christians will be those who are found keeping the Seventh-Day Sabbath. Sunday is a mark of the Beast.
- 8. Sunday observance arose after the Apostolic times from pagan and/or apostate influences.

### **Claim 1: Sabbath is Creation Ordinance**

Item	Alleged Evidence	Comments / Counterpoints
A	Genesis 2:1-3. God blessed the seventh day and made it holy.	God did not instruct Adam or anyone to do anything in response.
		Making the day blessed and holy is not tantamount to a commandment.
		The first recorded Sabbath commands are given to Israel through Moses (Ex. 16 & 20).
		Marriage IS a detailed, explicit Creation Ordinance, in stark contrast to the alleged Sabbath ordinance which is never stated.

### **Claim 2: Sabbath Observed Before Sinai**

ltem	Alleged Evidence	Comments / Counterpoints
A	Exodus 5:5. Pharaoh says Moses wanted to make the Israelites cease (shabbat) from their labors. SDA prophetess Ellen G. White claims this indicates Moses was restoring Sabbath observance.	Moses has requested that Pharaoh release the Israelites to go worship in the wilderness, taking leave of their jobs. This adequately explains Pharaoh's meaning, without resorting to an <u>extraneous</u> claim of Sabbath observance.
В	Exodus 16:28 – God rebuked those who gathered manna on Sabbath: <i>"How long</i> will you refuse to keep my commandments?" This allegedly indicates they'd had the Sabbath commandment for a long time.	<ol> <li>Israel had just broken God's</li> <li>commandment not to keep manna</li> <li>overnight. Two transgressions in one</li> <li>week explains the "How long?" question.</li> <li>Besides, why explain the Sabbath in Ex.</li> <li>16 if they already knew it?</li> </ol>

### Claim 3: Decalogue is Distinct from Law of Moses

ltem	Alleged Evidence	Comments / Counterpoints
А	The Tablets of Stone are placed inside	Ex. 34:28 refers to the Tablets of Stone as
	the ark of the Covenant.	"the words of the covenant, the Ten Words".
	The scrolls containing the other laws	
	are placed beside the ark as a	No Scripture separates the Decalogue
	separate document.	tablets or the Scrolls from the Sinai
		Covenant.
	Allegedly, the Tablets are the Law of	
	God while the Scrolls are the Law of	The Sinai Covenant has served its time and
	Moses, which is set aside.	is now obsolete

The Old Covenant Was Time-Limited Galatians 3:19 - Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed [Christ, Gal. 3.16!] would come to whom the promise had been made.

The Old Covenant is Set Aside Hebrews 8:13 - When He said, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear.

### Claim 4: Sabbath is a Forever Commandment

ltem	Alleged Evidence	Comments / Counterpoints
Α	Exodus 31:17 – It (the Sabbath) is a sign between Me and the sons of Israel <u>forever</u> "	The word translated "forever" is the Hebrew word עוֹלָם (olam), often translated as everlasting, forever, perpetual, permanent, ever, never, old. Other "forever" (olam) things: circumcision (Gen 17.13, Aaron's priesthood (Ex 29.9), Passover (Ex 12.14), lampstand in the Tabernacle (Ex 27.21), Jonah's stay in the fish (Jonah 2:6).
		Olam sometimes means "to as far as we can see from here" or "until superseded."

### Claim 5a: <u>Jesus</u> Kept, Taught Sabbath not Sunday

ltem	Alleged Evidence	Comments / Counterpoints
A	We find Jesus keeping the Sabbath during His earthly ministry.	Jesus was born under the Law (Gal 4:4). He also observed circumcision and the Feasts. Paul tells us that Christians are not under the Law (Romans 6:14)
В	Matthew 24:20 – "pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath." This allegedly indicates Jesus expecting the Sabbath to be celebrated by the church after the resurrection. Carrying supplies would break the Sabbath.	* Jesus knew Jews would reject Him and not convert. * Sabbath closure of city gates and local markets would make it harder for Judean Christians to flee. * 1 <sup>st</sup> Century Jewish Law allowed defensive fighting on the Sabbath. * Jesus taught that man's needs surpassed Sabbath Law. * There's no basis for Claim #5 in Mt 24.20.

### Claim 5b: Paul Kept Sabbath not Sunday in Acts

ltem	Alleged Evidence	Comments / Counterpoints
A	Paul went to synagogues on the Sabbath multiple times in Acts 13-20. Alleged: This means Paul and his followers worshipped on the Sabbath Day, not Sunday.	<ul> <li>Paul's synagogue visits are consistent with:</li> <li>1. Gospel priority (Romans 1:16) – to the</li> <li>Jew <i>first</i> and also to the Greek.</li> <li>2. Becoming all things to all people to</li> <li>reach them (1 Cor 9:20)</li> <li>3. Paul's mission to the Jew first (Acts 13:46)</li> </ul>
		NO clear example exists in Acts or NT of a group of <i>converted</i> Christians meeting for a day of Christian worship on a Sabbath Day.

### Claim 6: Paul Only Abrogated Annual Sabbaths

ltem	Alleged Evidence	Comments / Counterpoints
A	Colossians 2:16 – "Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or <b>in respect to a</b> <b>festival or a new moon or a Sabbath</b> <b>day</b> —things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance	<ul> <li>Annual Sabbaths are already included when Paul mentions the festivals.</li> <li>The obvious progression is frequency:</li> <li>Festivals (annual)</li> <li>New Moons (monthly)</li> </ul>
	belongs to Christ."	<ul> <li>Sabbath Days (weekly)</li> </ul>
	Alleged: The Sabbath days mentioned here are the annual sabbaths, associated with the annual festivals/feasts.	The allegation forces an assumption into the passage, disrespecting the clear flow of the thought in the text.
		Sabbaths were the sign of a now obsolete

covenant.

### Claim 7: End-Time Faithful Will Keep Sabbath

#### Item Alleged Evidence

A Revelation 12:17 - So the dragon was enraged with the woman [the Church], and went off to make war with the rest of her children, who
keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.

> Alleged: Since the Decalogue = "the commandments of God", the faithful keep all the Ten Commandments, including the Sabbath (4<sup>th</sup>).

#### **Comments / Counterpoints**

Paul's commandments are also God's commandments (1 Cor 14:37) - "If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that **the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment.**"

Forcing the Decalogue into Rev 12:17 (and similar passages) ignores the connection of the "Ten Words" with the obsolete Sinai covenant and likelihood that John's vision has New Covenant commandments in view.

### Claim 7: End-Time Faithful Will Keep Sabbath

#### Item Alleged Evidence

#### Daniel 7:25

B

'He [the fourth beast (Rome)] will speak out against the Most High and wear down the saints of the Highest One, and he will intend to make alterations in times\* and in law; and they will be given into his hand for a time, times, and half a time.

ALLEGED: This indicates that Rome would change the Sabbath to another Day (Sunday).

\* God "changes times and seasons" (Dan. 2:21). This could suggest "times" doesn't include "Sabbaths" since He doesn't routinely change them.

#### **Comments / Counterpoints**

Use of Dan 7:25 represents a common tendency in some Sabbatarian groups to use prophetic passages (with symbols or apocalyptic language) as a springboard for doctrines.

This approach is dangerous when the doctrine is not mirrored in plain language in other passages.

If the Christian Sabbath keeping were in view, wouldn't the NT writers have warned the church, as Paul warned about ambitious elders (Acts 20:30), forbidding of marriage (1 Tim 4:3), etc.?

### **Claim 8: Sunday Observance Came Later**

ltem	Alleged Evidence	<b>Comments / Counterpoints</b>
A	Doctoral Dissertation published as	Bacchiocchi advances but cannot prove
	book by Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi, the	hypotheses that the early Church
	first Seventh-Day Adventists to	worshipped on Saturday.
	Graduate from the (Catholic)	
	Pontifical Gregorian University in	Detailed scholarly critiques have been
	Rome.	written in response.
		Too detailed for a one-hour class. Will
		address Bacchiocchi's ideas in Question 4.

### **Claim 8: Sunday Observance Came Later**

**Fact:** Romans incorporated the cult of Mithradates (involving sun worship) from pagan Armenia.

**Fact:** Sun worship became associated with the Emperor and Emperor worship in the Second Century.

ltem	Alleged Evidence	Comments / Counterpoints
В	The outlawing of Jewish Sabbath worship after the Bar-Kokhba Revolt (132-136 AD) prompted the Bishop of Rome to change the Christian	There is little evidence that the Bishop of Rome had worldwide power at this point in history.
	meeting day to <u>Sun</u> day and impose it worldwide, distancing Christians from Jews to avoid persecution.	If the change occurred, it happened nearly instantly without a trace of controversy in the early church writings. See Also Question 4.

## **Question 2**

### Does the Bible teach that Christians are to rest and gather for worship on Saturday?



### Gather for Worship on Saturday?

#### The Jewish Precedent

- Only Leviticus 23:3 indicates that Saturday is a day of "convocation" (meeting).
- Problem for Sabbatarians: Lev 23 would be in the scroll, not the tablets, which they claim has been abrogated!

### New Testament Teaching

- I promise a \$500 reward for the first person who finds a NT passage that explicitly provides an example of or command for converted Christians meeting together for worship on Saturday.
- It's not there.

## **Question 3**

Did someone in church history change the day of Christian worship from Saturday to Sunday?

### **David W. T. Brattston**

"The earliest Christian literature, well before Constantine, is unanimous that the main day of the week for early Christians to gather and worship was not the seventh-day Sabbath, but Sunday, which they sometimes called 'the first day' or 'the eighth day' or 'the Lord's Day.'"

### Epistle of Barnabas (70 to 132 AD)

<text><text><text><text><text><text>

Manuscript of the Apocryphal Epistle of Barnabas in Codex Sinaiticus, British Library

"This, by the way, is the reason why we joyfully celebrate the eighth day—the same day on which Jesus rose from the dead; after which He manifested Himself and went up to heaven."

### Justin Martyr (mid 100's before 165 AD)



Justin Martyr

On the day called Sunday

- All gather
- Read the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets
- Verbal instruction and exhortation
- Stand for prayer
- Bread and wine and water are brought
- And much more!

### The Epistle of the Apostles (mid 100s AD)

Manuscript of the apocryphal Epistula Apostolorum

# PROVENANCE: Asia Minor or Egypt

- "I have come into the Ogdoad (eight number), which is the Lord's Day."
  - Non-inspired, but witnesses to Sunday observance and describing Sunday as "The Lord's Day" (cf. Rev 1.10)

### The Acts of Peter (180 – 200 AD)

TERUOSITSEC ISCOUNNO NIMPATCEA MINCHICODA UITUONISUS ANATOSOICA MASTISCIC.R.C questiucio retistisquic ODDRIJSTISTISTS : NIAMECOXOCO QUIXIMININO minicore "exilienter TREMUCHIN ALLCCINCCIPIC hunding TISUICAUDIO-เติมสุวิปิเติมซะ AIT SACLINGSET Relinguobung Newcon MACTINICIONIS mundunci INSTANTICUE UNDONOTATEC DINIBUSUS: URUNITUDIS CIDUBECCCNUM Methorsuit DINANTOque IXONNON 20: SIMILIANINI EISEISTANILL' TANOISEMANNAL TANOISEMANNAL SUSTOBISLO WERSCOPLAN AL MIRCRETTING scamustob LANDANSSC CICILIOBIS-

VALUE AND A DESCRIPTION OF A DESCRIPTION

A REAL PROPERTY AND A REAL PROPERTY A REAL

Manuscript of the Apocryphal Acts of Peter PROVENANCE: Eastern Mediterranean

"On the first day of the week, that is, on the Lord's day, a multitude gathered together, and they brought unto Peter many sick that he might heal them."

### Tertullian (198 to 220's AD)



Tertullian

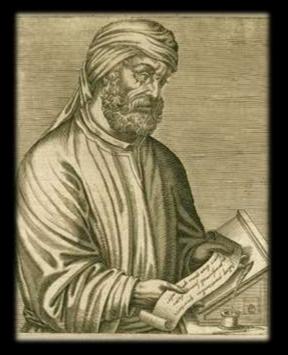
<u>On Idolatry</u>

The Holy Spirit upbraids the Jews with their holy-days. "Your Sabbaths, and new moons, and ceremonies," says He, "My soul hateth."3 By us, to whom Sabbaths are strange,4 and the new moons and festivals formerly beloved by God...

\*\*\*

for to the heathens each festive day occurs but once annually: you have a festive day every eighth day.6 Call out the individual solemnities of the nations, and set them out into a row, they will not be able to make up a Pentecost.

#### Tertullian (198 to 220's AD)



Tertullian

Ad Nationes 13.1

Others, with greater regard to good manners, it must be confessed, suppose that the sun is the god of the Christians, because it is a wellknown fact that we pray towards the east, or because we make Sunday a day of festivity.

#### Tertullian (198 to 220s AD)



Tertullian

Apologeticum XVI "In the same way, if we devote Sunday to rejoicing, from a far different reason than Sun-worship, we have some resemblance to those of you who devote the day of Saturn to ease and luxury, though they too go far away from Jewish ways, of which indeed they are ignorant."

#### Didascalia Apostolorum (200 to 230 AD)



Written in Northern Syria

8 First Paragraph in Chapter 21: "Wherefore, a Christian ought to keep himself from vain speech and from words of levity and profanity. For not even on Sundays, in which we rejoice and make good cheer, is it permitted to anyone to speak a word of levity or one alien to religion..."

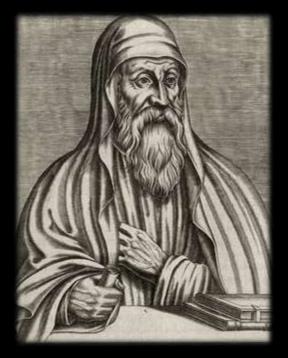
#### Bardaisan of Edessa (Before 223 AD)



"On one day, the first of the week, we assemble ourselves together, and on the days of the readings we abstain from taking sustenance."

Roman Columns at Ancient Edessa (in SE modern Turkey)

## Origen (Between 202 and 254 AD)



Origen of Alexandria

And since now there is a multitude of people on account of Good Friday, which commemorates the Passion of Christ, beseech God Almighty so that His Word may come to us, and especially on the Lord's Day, for not only is the resurrection of the Lord celebrated once a year, but also always after seven days.

(Translated by R. Congo)

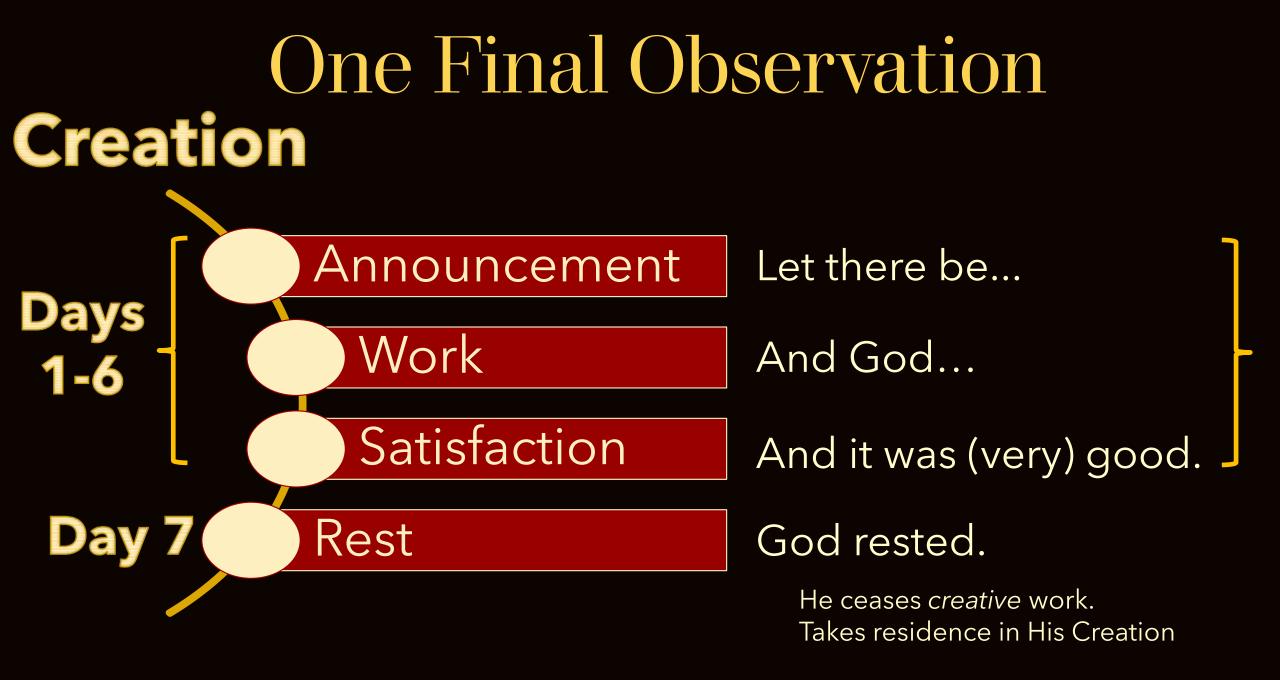
## **Question 4**

Does the Bible teach that Sunday was to become the Christian Sabbath, replacing the 7<sup>th</sup>-Day Sabbath?



### Sunday = Christian Sabbath?

- Easy Answer: NO! There is no Scripture that teaches that OT Sabbath requirements have been moved to Sunday.
- This idea originated in later Centuries.
  - Reflected in Catholic and Anglican writings.
  - Brought to the US by the Puritans.
  - Origin of our Blue Laws.
- Sunday rest has been <u>conducive</u> to Christian worship, but is not based on any NT Teaching!



# One Final Observation New Creation



Genesis 3:15 - God begins the plan of redemption

Jesus comes to do the work God has given Him.

God affirms Jesus, raising Him, giving Him a name...

Jesus sits down at Right Hand.

He completes the *redemptive* work. Takes residence in His <u>New</u> Creation!

## Observations

- Both the First and Second Creation result in a place where God rests, resides.
- Both Eden and the Church/Kingdom connect God with His creation.
- The Seventh Day of Creation week was God's sabbath, His cessation of creation work and His taking up residence in the creation in fellowship with man–until the Fall.
- The weekly Sabbath of the Sinai covenant celebrated God's rest at Creation (Ex 20:8-11; cf. Gen 2:1-3) and His role as Israel's deliverer from slavery. (Deut 5:15). The weekly sabbath was clearly a gift to a formerly enslaved people.
- We now live in an ongoing, superior, and penultimate Sabbath Rest that transcends the Jewish Sabbath.
  - Jesus has completed His redemptive work and has sat down at God's right hand.
  - We enjoy salvation through Jesus' work, not our own.
  - We, like Adam before the Fall, have joyful tasks to do, born out of love for God and others-not out of burdensome obligation to a law.) See Eph 2:8-10.
  - God has taken up residence in us (indwells us), His New Creation. (See 1 Cor 3:16, 6:19; 2 Tim 1:14; Rom 8:11).
- NOTE: The Mosaic Sabbath foreshadowed what we now enjoy!
- The *ultimate* Sabbath rest remains for us to enter it. This rest is our eternal home, and we enter it by continuing to believe and remaining obedient. (See Hebrews 3:12-4:11).



### **Concluding Remarks**

- There is no explicit command or clear example that binds the Sabbath commandment on Christians as a day of rest or worship.
- NT references to the First Day and the Lord's Day (Acts 20:7; I Cor 16:2; Rev 1:10) are consistent with all the earliest church writings that indicate Sunday worship.
- The lack of NT commands or NT examples of worship gatherings of converted Christians combined with the lack of evidence of Sabbath worship in the early church undermines the Sabbatarians' claim.
- The preponderance of evidence shows it is reasonable to conclude that our 1,990-year-old practice of Sunday worship was accepted during the Apostolic era.
- Christians are free to observe Sabbath <u>rests</u> without judgment. (Col 2:16)—and most especially when following Paul's example of trying to share the gospel with Jews.

## Addendum: The Jerusalem Council

Since Session 4 ran long, we did not cover this point in class. However, it is another very interesting piece of evidence that addresses the question of whether the Fourth (Sabbath) Commandment was to be observed in the Lord's Church.

#### Acts 15:1-2



<sup>1</sup> Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."

<sup>2</sup> And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue.

#### Acts 15:5-6



<sup>5</sup> But some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed stood up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses."

<sup>6</sup> The apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter. NOTE: The question in Acts 15 involves WHA

NOTE: The question in Acts 15 involves WHAT if anything will be required of the Gentiles Christians. If, as some Sabbatarians claim, the Law of Moses were distinct from the Law of God (the "Ten Commandments"), then no one is even raising the possibility that the Decalogue applies to Gentiles. In Acts 15, the Sabbatarians would seem to be better off to assert that the Law of Moses and the Decalogue are one.

### Acts 15:7-9 (Peter speaking)



- <sup>7</sup> After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe.
- <sup>8</sup> "And God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us;
- <sup>9</sup> and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith.

#### Acts 15:10 – a KEY verse!



<sup>10</sup> "Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? Notes:

- Peter is an APOSTLE (official messenger) of Christ. He has authority to bind and loose (Matt 16:19; 18:18).
- 2. Peter refers to circumcision and the Law of Moses (Acts 15:5) as a yoke that the Jews had been unable to bear.
- Law keeping stands in contrast to "cleansing their hearts by faith (in the previous verse)".

#### The Decree to the Churches



<sup>28</sup> "For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials: <sup>29</sup> that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication; if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well. Farewell." Notes: 1. The Jews viewed this four stipulations as

- The Jews viewed this four stipulations as requirements of the Noahic covenant, applicable to all mankind (Babylonian Talmud, Gemara, Sanhedrin 56A).
- . It is noteworthy that no other Jewish requirement is laid upon the Gentile Christians in this verse.

#### Acts 15:21



#### <sup>21</sup> "For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath."

Notes:

- 1. James uses this rationale to support his suggestion of sending a delegation to the Gentile Christians with his proposed decree.
- 2. Sabbatarians (e.g. Samuele Bacchiocchi) use this verse as evidence that the Jerusalem Church (and presumably the Apostles and Elders and James) still held the Law of Moses in high regard and insisted on its observance (except for the sacrificial system).
- 3. Some scholars view this as an indication that Gentiles could easily learn the rest of the Law of Moses by attending the synagogues. However, this view ignores the fact that many Christians were cast out of the synagogues and that even Hebrew Christians saw the Sinai Covenant as having become obsolete (Heb 8:14).
- 4. Many mainstream scholars view this verse as urging Gentile Christians to be sensitive to the widespread influence of Moses so as not to alienate potential Jewish converts unnecessarily. By observing the 4-part decree, Gentiles would be observing what the Jews regarded as the "Noahic stipulations" agreed upon by the Rabbis. This view would seem to fit the immediate and global NT context better than the other options. It makes sense in the flow of James' statements while not conflicting with other NT passages.



#### **Observations on Acts 15**

- At the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15, the whole question is what Old Covenant law(s), if any, must be bound on the Gentile Christians.
- The Holy Spirit and the Apostles and Elders decreed four things that "seemed good," none of which was the Sabbath.
- The seventh-day Sabbath was not commonly observed in Gentile culture and was even ridiculed by Gentile writers. Hence, if Gentile Christians were to keep Sabbath, one would expect the Council to include it in the decree and to explain the importance of, and practical details of, and rationale for this foreign practice. None of this is present in Acts 15--or elsewhere in the NT.
- This evidence, while not conclusive in itself, further detracts from the claim that early Christians and Gentile Christians in particular were expected to observe the Sabbath as a religious requirement.

#### Session 4

#### The Sabbath and the Christian

#### March 24, 2021