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JEWISH BELIEVERS ARE OBLIGED TO KEEP THE SABBATH: NO

By Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum

Most Jewish believers have a strong desire to identify with Jewishness, but are not always agreed as to the nature that this identification should take. As a result, there have been a variety of ways that Jewish believers have expressed their Jewish identity. Some follow only those Jewish practices found in the Bible (Passover, etc.). Others add a number of rabbinic enactments of earlier Judaism (Kipah, Tallit, etc.). Some Jewish believers do not keep kosher at all. Some keep kosher only in those areas spoken of by Moses and do not follow rabbinic additions such as the prohibition against eating milk and meat together, or separate dishes. Other Jewish believers try to keep kosher both biblically and rabbinically. It is this author's contention that the freedom in the Messiah allows for all of the above options, insofar as personal practices are concerned.

There are also Jewish believers who take on a form of Jewish practice that was not part of their upbringing. Jewish believers brought up in liberal and/or Reform homes will sometimes adopt a very Orthodox lifestyle, perhaps to over-compensate for their lack of Jewish training and/or insecurity about their Jewishness. Now that they are believers in the Messiah, their Jewishness becomes even more suspect insofar as the Jewish community is concerned and this can create even greater insecurity. So they sometimes adopt an Orthodox lifestyle, in order to provide some security about their Jewishness. However, they are not always careful to conform their Jewish practices with their New Testament faith. Freedom in the Messiah does not include the freedom to violate New Testament commandments or principles.

One of the areas of Jewish identity and practice concerns the question of the Sabbath. The issue in this paper is not whether Jewish believers may choose to keep the Sabbath, but the issue is whether they are required to keep the Sabbath. The Union of Messianic Jewish Congregations (UMJC) has a Sabbath requirement for membership, and an individual congregation is required to have either a Friday night or Saturday morning service in order to qualify for membership. The UMJC, to some extent, has made the Sabbath the key practice for Jewish identity, and judges other Jewish believers' loyalty to their Jewishness upon their keeping of the Sabbath. Daniel Juster, a founder and President of the UMJC, in a letter addressed to the author dated September 20, 1984, stated:

Sabbath is a sign of the covenant through Moses, and like a seal in the center of the ten words. Yet it is far more, and transcends merely Mosaic reference. It has creation dimensions (a memorial of creation) and is seen as a celebration of the exodus on a weekly basis, which is a fulfillment of God's covenant promise to Abraham, and lastly, is part of the Millennial order. Accommodation during this age was made to not require a day. Yet

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with all of these transcending meanings, I am not particularly inspired by the Jewish identity of one who gives up the Sabbath. For me it is part of New Covenantal Jewishness.

It is the last two sentences that are particularly disturbing, and that are truly so far from New Covenant truth. First, by stating, "I am not particularly inspired by the Jewish identity of one who gives up the Sabbath," it clearly shows that Juster has chosen the Sabbath by which to judge the Jewish identity of other Jewish believers. So Jewish believers who do keep the Sabbath are more "Jewish" than those who do not. This is a very arbitrary criterion at best, and unbiblical at worst. After all, on what biblical basis should this one issue of the Sabbath be a determining factor for Jewishness? After all, Jewish history between Abraham and Moses, a history of several centuries, did not need the Sabbath for Jewish identification. It would be equally arbitrary if this author began to insist that the knowledge of Hebrew, reading, writing, and speaking it should be the determining principle of Jewishness. At least that criterion goes back to Abraham, which the Sabbath law does not. The author can therefore declare that he is not particularly inspired by the Jewish identity of those who have no working knowledge of Hebrew. How many in the UMJC would measure up to that standard? But that would be a very arbitrary standard. Many Israeli believers make aliyah to Israel the way of maintaining Jewish identity, and many of them are not particularly inspired by Jewish believers who choose to remain with "the fleshpots of America," rather than be willing to suffer the hardships of aliyah to Israel. I am sure that the UMJC would question the right of Israeli believers to make that the standard for judging Jewish loyalties. There is as much biblical basis of making aliyah the standard for determining Jewish identity and loyalty as there is the Sabbath.

The first statement from Juster's letter makes Sabbath observance the key issue in Jewish identity. But the second statement goes further. For when he says that, "for me it is part of New Covenantal Jewishness," it carries a clear implication that the Sabbath is mandatory for Jewish believers, although not for Gentiles. This is a far more serious statement, since this involves biblical and theological issues, while the former only social and national issues.

The apologetics used for mandatory Sabbath keeping are almost exclusively based upon the Old Testament for obvious reasons: there is no New Testament command for believers in general or Jewish believers in particular to keep the Sabbath. The claim that Sabbath observance "is part of New Covenantal Jewishness" is nowhere supported by the New Covenant Scriptures themselves. In fact, if anything, they would teach the opposite. The purpose of this paper, then, will be to examine, as much as space allows, what the Sabbath is in both testaments. At the same time, this paper will try to examine arguments used to support mandatory Sabbath keeping.

I. IS THE SABBATH A CREATION ORDINANCE?

A major argument used to support mandatory Sabbath observance is based on the concept that the Sabbath is a creation ordinance. The passage used is Genesis 2:2-3:

And on the seventh day God finished his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it; because that in it he rested from all his work which God had created and made.

It should be pointed out that if this is a creation ordinance, it would be mandatory for both Jews and Gentiles, since at this point in the narrative no distinction between Jews and Gentiles exists. Even if it is accepted as a creation ordinance, it would still not be obligatory upon all. For example, marriage is clearly a creation ordinance (Genesis 2:18-25), but that does not make it mandatory for all. For in the New Testament, celibacy and/or singleness is considered an equally valid option (Matthew 19:10-12), and even a superior option (I Corinthians 7:1,7).

However, there is no ordinance here. The passage does not issue any command whatsoever for the observance of the seventh day. The passage says nothing about what man should do on the seventh day, but only states what God did on the seventh day. The crucial term, "shabbat," is not even used. There is no mention of man, only of God. The climax here is not upon the creation of man, but upon God's own triumphant rest. It is not found among the Noahic commandments, or among any of the commandments God gave to Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob. Furthermore, there is absolutely no record of its practice between Adam and Moses.

Commenting on this point, Lewis Sperry Chafer wrote:

It is incredible that this great institution of the Sabbath could have existed during all those centuries and there be no mention of it in the scriptures dealing with that time. The words of Job, who lived 500 years and more before Moses, offer an illustration. His experience discloses the spiritual life of the pre-Mosaic saint, having no written scriptures, and striving to know his whole duty to God. Job and his friends refer to creation, the flood, and many details of human obligation to God; but not once do they mention the Sabbath. Again, it is impossible that this great institution, with all that it contemplated of relationship between God and man, could have existed at that time and not have been mentioned at any portion of the argument of the book of Job (Grace, pages 248-249).

Writing along similar lines, Dr. Charles L. Feinberg states:

There are some who find a reference to the institution of the Sabbath at creation . . . It will be noted that there is no hint that God gave the Sabbath to man. He alone rested. . . Not only do those who keep the seventh day try to read into this passage the institution of the original Sabbath for all mankind, but even others go to this passage for their supposed authority for the Lord's Day. They reason that if the Sabbath received its authority here, and the observance of the seventh day has been changed to the first day, then the observance of the first day must go back to Genesis 2 for its authority. Another fact that militates against the view that the Sabbath began in Eden is that we find no mention of it for centuries later (The Sabbath and the Lord's Day, pages 15-16).

Dr. Feinberg also states:

A study of the period between Adam and Moses, a period of about 2,500 years, will reveal that the institution of the Sabbath is not mentioned anywhere . . . If the Sabbath did exist, then it is more than passing strange that, although we find accounts of religious life and the worship of the patriarchs, in which accounts mention is specifically made to the rite of circumcision, the sacrifices, the offering of the tithe, and the institution of marriage, we should find no mention of the great institution of the Sabbath. It did not exist . . . (pages 16-17).

In the New Testament, Genesis 2:2-3 is not treated as a creation ordinance, but is treated eschatologically of Messiah's salvation rest. Hebrews 4:3-4 uses the passage to teach that salvation rest is rooted in the Old Testament. It also interpreted typologically of the future heavenly rest. As Harold H. P. Dressler, Professor of Biblical Studies at Northwest Baptist Theological College in Vancouver, Canada, in his article "The Sabbath in the Old Testament," states:

Genesis 2 does not teach a "creation ordinance" . . . the institution of the Sabbath for the people of Israel, however, was based on the creation account and became a sign of God's redemptive goal for mankind (From Sabbath to Lord's Day, page 30).

To summarize why the Sabbath is not a creation ordinance, the following should be noted. First, it does not use the term "shabbat," but "the seventh day"; secondly, there is no command that it be obeyed as a day of rest; thirdly, there is no record of anyone keeping the seventh day prior to Moses; and, fourthly, in the Scriptures the seventh day is emphasized as a day of rest or cessation, but not as an observance.

There is no basis for mandatory Sabbath observance for Jewish believers on the basis of Genesis two. Again, if the Sabbath is a creation ordinance, it would be obligatory upon Jews and Gentiles, and not just Jewish believers.

II. THE SABBATH IN THE LAW OF MOSES

The observance of the Sabbath clearly begins with Moses, and did not precede him. It is first found in Exodus 16:23-30, where the word is found for the first time. It is the first occurrence of both the word and the concept. Since it was not known before this time, the full form is used: *שַׁבָּת קֹדֶשׁ* (a sabbatical celebration, a holy Sabbath). The Hebrew root for the word means, "to desist," "to cease," or "to rest." There is no definite article before the word in the Hebrew text, which grammatically can imply the Sabbath was unknown during this period. Literally, the text reads, "tomorrow is a rest of a holy Sabbath." The fact that so many disobeyed and went out to gather manna on the Sabbath also implies that they were not used to simply resting on that day. The specific prohibition at this point was not to gather manna on the Sabbath day.

A. THE SABBATH AS A COMMAND

The Sabbath is embodied as part of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:8-11:

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work; but on the seventh day it is a sabbath unto Jehovah thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days Jehovah made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore Jehovah blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

The command begins with the word "remember," since they had already received one Sabbath commandment in Exodus 16. The second account of the Ten Commandments in Deuteronomy states, "observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" rather than "remember." They were to keep the day holy, meaning they were to keep it as a special day separate from every other day, and dedicated to God. The main element involved in keeping it a holy day was a cessation from work, including

family members, servants, and domesticated animals. It should be noted that in neither version of the Ten Commandments is there any obligation to worship the Lord on that day. The emphasis of the Sabbath is not as a day of worship, but as a day of rest. According to verse 11, because God rested on the seventh day, Israel is now to rest on the seventh day. Only now is "shabbat" actually applied to the seventh day of Genesis 2:2-3. But this does not imply that the seventh day of Genesis 2:2-3 was already set aside for humanity. The Hebrew wording שבת as lexical studies show, means that the present command is based upon a previous event. But it does not mean that the command itself was previously in force. The construction connects causally an event in the past with a situation sometime later.

As the Sabbath commandment was further developed in other parts of the Law of Moses, what was meant by "resting" on the Sabbath was largely a matter of prohibitions:

No gathering of manna - Exodus 12:23-30

No traveling - Exodus 16:29

No kindling of fire - Exodus 35:3

No gathering of wood - Numbers 15:32

Outside the Torah, other prohibitions on the Sabbath included:

No burden bearing - Jeremiah 17:21

No trading - Amos 8:5

No marketing - Nehemiah 10:31, 13:15, 19

The penalty for profaning the Sabbath was death, and to profane the Sabbath was to consider it like any other day. Therefore, on the Sabbath, they were to do no labor, and they were to stay home and rest. Nothing was said about corporate worship.

If it is insisted that Jewish believers keep the Sabbath on the basis of the Law of Moses, then consistency demands that they keep all of the facets which the Law of Moses required. However, many of those who insist on Sabbath keeping will not insist that it be kept in the very way that the Mosaic Law demanded. So they may very well carry burdens and kindle fire. The emphasis generally is on keeping the Sabbath as a day of worship, which was not the point of the Mosaic Law to begin with. It is inconsistent to base Sabbath-keeping on the Law of Moses, and then fail to keep it in the manner prescribed by the Law of Moses. Jewish believers who insist on making Sabbath-keeping mandatory are forced to make many adjustments in their practice, and often such adjustments actually violate the Law of Moses rather than keep it. In reality, they no more keep the Sabbath as prescribed by Moses than those Jewish believers who do not feel they are obligated to keep the Sabbath.

The specific area that they claim the Sabbath law still applies is largely in the area of corporate worship. This is the issue with the UMJC requirement for a congregation to be a member. But that was not the purpose of the Sabbath in the Law of Moses. In the Law of Moses, the Sabbath was a day of rest and cessation, and not a day of corporate worship. The Sabbath synagogue services found in the New Testament originated with the Babylonian captivity and not with the Law of Moses. Under the Law, the Sabbath was a day of rest. While it was not a day of total inactivity, it was to be a day of rest and refreshment from the regular

work of the other six days. While the rest itself may have been an act of worship, corporate worship on the Sabbath was not a factor in the Old Testament. The one passage used to try to substantiate corporate worship on the Sabbath is Leviticus 23:3, which refers to the Sabbath as a "holy convocation." The same terminology, however, is applied to the Passover and other festivals (Leviticus 23:4), which had to do with family gatherings rather than corporate acts of worship. As Dr. Louis Goldberg of Moody Bible Institute states:

On the Sabbath there was to be complete rest (physical) and holy convocation (spiritual refreshing) before the Lord (Leviticus: A Study Guide, page 116).

Even Leviticus 23:3 states concerning the Sabbath, "It is a Sabbath unto Jehovah in all your dwellings." Again, the emphasis has to do with staying at home and resting as a family, rather than getting together in corporate worship. As Dr. Goldberg also points out, the rest "was to include spiritual renewal" (page 117).

In reality, the Mosaic Law mandated corporate worship only on three occasions, where they were to migrate to wherever the Tabernacle and later the Temple stood (Shiloh, Jerusalem). Corporate worship by Non-Levites was mandated only three times a year (Passover, Weeks, Tabernacles), but not on a weekly Sabbath. This would have been physically impossible in light of the time it took to journey during biblical times.

If Sabbath keeping is mandatory for Jewish believers on the basis of the Ten Commandments, then it is only mandatory as a day of rest, and not as a time to hold congregational worship services.

B. THE SABBATH AS A SIGN OF THE MOSAIC COVENANT

The Sabbath was also a sign of the Mosaic Covenant. This is stated in Exodus 31:12-17:

And Jehovah spake unto Moses, saying, Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily ye shall keep my sabbaths: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am Jehovah who sanctifieth you. Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that profaneth it shall surely be put to death; for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days shall work be done; but on the seventh day is a sabbath of solemn rest, holy to Jehovah: whosoever doeth any work on the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel forever: for in six days Jehovah made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.

This passage follows the instructions concerning the furniture for the Tabernacle. The Sabbath is now also called an *nizk*, a sign of God's sanctifying Israel. It is a sign that God ceased working after six days, and so Jews are commanded to cease from work after six days. The penalty for failure is death. Specifically, the Sabbath is a sign between God and Israel, that Israel has been sanctified, that is, has been set apart from all other nations.

According to this passage then, the Sabbath in relationship to Israel is a memorial of creation and a sign of Israel's covenantal relationship that began at Mt. Sinai. But the Sabbath is also a sign that God brought Israel out of the land of Egypt

according to Deuteronomy 5:15:

And thou shalt remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and Jehovah thy God brought thee out thence by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm: therefore Jehovah thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day.

Israel had been a slave in the land of Egypt, and God brought Israel out with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm. So the Sabbath is also to be kept as a sign and as a memorial of the Exodus experience. It is this same point that Ezekiel emphasizes:

Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am Jehovah that sanctifieth them. (20:12).

And hallow my sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that you may know that I am Jehovah your God (20:20).

Both verses from Ezekiel are in the context of a rehearsing of God's deliverance of Israel from the land of Egypt. In Ezekiel, the Sabbath was still a sign of Israel's setting apart and a memorial of the Exodus.

Because the Sabbath was a sign of the Mosaic Covenant just as circumcision was a sign of the Abrahamic Covenant, it is obvious that the Sabbath can only be related to Israel, since only Israel was set apart at Sinai and only Israel has been delivered from the land of Egypt. God never delivered the church in general out of Egypt, or the Seventh Day Adventist Church in particular. In the context of the Mosaic Law, the Sabbath and the reasons for the Sabbath can only be related to the Jewish nation.

The reasons given for Sabbath observance in the Law of Moses then included a memorial of creation, a memorial of the Exodus, a sign of Israel's sanctification or setting apart as a nation, and a sign of the Mosaic Covenant. No one single event is given as the subject of its observance, but several.

Because the Sabbath is a sign of the Mosaic Covenant, it is in force for the duration of the covenant. If there is a time when the covenant comes to an end, the sign would no longer be obligatory. This issue will be dealt with later in the paper.

C. CEREMONIAL ASPECTS OF THE SABBATH

There were special ceremonial aspects to the observance of the Sabbath. Besides setting the day apart as a day of rest and a holy convocation in their dwellings, other commandments included the putting out of new showbread (Leviticus 24:8) and doubling the daily sacrifices (Numbers 28:9).

D. THE PERPETUITY OF THE SABBATH

Those who argue for a mandatory Sabbath observance on the basis of the Law of Moses will often refer to Exodus 31:13, which states that the Sabbath is to be observed "throughout your generations," and 31:16 that the Sabbath is to be a "perpetual" covenant, and 31:17 where it is to be a sign between God and Israel "forever." According to the proponents of mandatory Sabbath-keeping, these terms show that the Sabbath obligation continues, although many other parts of the Mosaic Law are no longer in effect, such as the sacrificial system and the

Levitical priesthood. However, while the English terms do tend to carry concepts of eternity, that is not the meaning of the Hebrew words themselves. Classical Hebrew had no word that actually meant "eternal." The Hebrew term for "forever" (*לְעוֹלָם*) as BDB states, means "long duration," "antiquity," or "futurity." The Hebrew forms mean nothing more than, "until the end of a period of time." What that period of time is is to be determined by the context or determined by related passages. But in classical Hebrew, these words never meant or carried the concept of eternity, but had a time limitation. The period of time may have been to the end of a man's life, or an age, or dispensation, but not "forever" in the sense of eternity. This is very clear from examining the usage of the same terminology in other passages (*לְעוֹלָם*; *לְעוֹלָם - 25*).

For example, the same Hebrew term for "forever" is used to mean nothing more than up to the end of a man's life in Exodus 21:6:

Then his master shall bring him unto God, and shall bring him to the door, or onto the door-post; his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him for ever. (Not for eternity, but for the rest of his life.)

Deuteronomy 15:17:

Then thou shalt take an awl, and thrust it through his ear onto the door, and he shall be thy servant for ever. And also unto thy maidservant thou shalt do likewise.

I Samuel 1:22:

But Hannah went not up; for she said unto her husband, I will not go up until the child be weaned; and then I will bring him, that he may appear before Jehovah, and there abide for ever. (Not for eternity, but for the rest of his life.)

I Chronicles 28:4:

Howbeit Jehovah, the God of Israel, chose me out of all the house of my father to be king of Israel for ever: . . . (David did not rule over Jerusalem for eternity, but he did rule for the rest of his life.)

Other examples where *לְעוֹלָם* and *לְעוֹלָם - 25* mean only to the end of a man's life include Exodus 14:13, Leviticus 25:46, I Samuel 20:23, and 27:12.

Another way that the same term was used is when God said that He would dwell in the Solomonic Temple "forever" in I Kings 9:3:

And Jehovah said unto him, I have heard thy prayer and thy supplication, that thou has made before me: I have hallowed this house, which thou has built, to put my name there for ever; and mine eyes and my heart shall be there perpetually.

The same statement is made in II Chronicles 7:16. However, God left the Temple in the days of Ezekiel. So obviously "forever" here meant the age or period of time of the First Temple only.

In Deuteronomy 23:3, the concept of "forever" is clearly limited:

An Ammonite or a Moabite shall not enter into the assembly of Jehovah; even to the tenth generation shall none belonging to them enter into the assembly of Jehovah for ever.

Obviously here "forever" is limited to ten generations.

Even more relevant to the issue at hand is that the same term is applied to other facets of the Law of Moses besides the Sabbath, such as the kindling of the tabernacle lampstands (Exodus 27:21, Leviticus 24:3); the ceremony of showbread (Leviticus 24:8); the service of the brazen laver (Exodus 30:21); the Levitical priesthood and the priestly garments (Exodus 28:43, 40:15, Leviticus 10:9, Numbers 10:8, 18:23, 25:13, I Chronicles 15:2, 23:13); the sacrificial system, including sacrifices, offerings, etc. (Exodus 29:28, Leviticus 7:34, 36, 10:15, Numbers 15:15, 18:8, 11, 19, and 19:10); and, the Yom Kippur sacrifice (Leviticus 16:34).

So if it is insisted that the Sabbath is still mandatory on the basis of the English "forever," then the same thing would have to apply to all these other facets of the Law of Moses. Yet those who insist on mandatory Sabbath-keeping will insist that the Messiah has put an end to all the others.

As for the term "perpetual statute," (*לְעוֹלָם*, *לְעוֹלָם*) it is also used of the ceremony of the showbread in Leviticus 24:9.

As for the term "throughout the generations," (*לְדוֹרוֹתָם*) this too is limited in time. It is used of a man's life (Leviticus 25:30); of the Levitical priesthood (Exodus 40:15, Leviticus 10:9, Numbers 10:8, 18:23); the ceremony of the lampstands (Exodus 27:21, Leviticus 24:3); the service of the Brazen Laver (Exodus 30:21); and the sacrificial system (Leviticus 7:36, Numbers 15:15).

It is inconsistent exegesis to insist on the basis of such terms as "forever," "throughout your generations," and "perpetual statute" that the Sabbath law is still mandatory without incorporating all of these other elements from the Law of Moses for the same reason.

D. THE LAW OF MOSES HAS BEEN RENDERED INOPERATIVE

The clear-cut teaching of the New Testament is that the Law of Moses has been rendered inoperative with the death of Christ; in other words, the Law in its totality no longer has authority over any individual. This is evident first of all from Romans 10:4:

For Christ is the end of the law unto righteousness to every one that believeth.

Very clearly, Christ is the end of the Law, and that includes all 613 commandments; hence the Law has ceased to function. There is no justification through it:

Yet knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, even we believed on Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the law: because by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. (Galatians 2:16)

Furthermore, there is no sanctification or perfection through the Law:

(For the law made nothing perfect), and a bringing in thereupon of a better hope, through which we draw nigh unto God. (Hebrews 7:19)

Thus it should be very evident that the Law has come to an end in Christ and cannot function in justification or sanctification. For the believer especially it has been rendered inoperative; the remaining verses, however, show that the Law has ceased to function for all.

Some insist that the Greek word *τελος* need not mean "end" but "goal." This is true. But in the end, other passages make both elements true. Jesus is the goal of the Law, but he is also the end of the Law.

Secondly, the Law was never meant to be a permanent administration but rather a temporary one:

What then is the Law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise hath been made. . . (Galatians 3:19)

In the context, Paul is pointing to the Law of Moses as an addition to the Abrahamic Covenant. It was added for the purpose of making sin very clear so that all will know that they have fallen short of God's standard for righteousness. It was a temporary addition until the seed (Messiah) would come; now that He has come, the Law is finished. The addition has ceased to function with the cross. It is true that the Law was a tutor (Galatians 3:24), but as believers, we are no longer under this tutor (Galatians 3:25) but have been redeemed from this Law (Galatians 4:5).

Thirdly, with Christ there is a new priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek, not according to the order of Aaron. The Law of Moses provided the basis for the Levitical Priesthood. Thus a new priesthood required a new law under which it could operate. This is clear from Hebrews 7:11-12, 18:

Now if there was perfection through the Levitical priesthood (for under it hath the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should arise after the order of Melchizedek, and not be reckoned after the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law. . . . For there is a disannulling of a foregoing commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness.

Consequently, the Law of Moses has been disannulled in favor of a new law, which is the basis for the priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek.

The fourth line of evidence for the annulment of the Mosaic Law zeros right in on that part of the Law that most people want to retain, the Ten Commandments:

Ye are our epistle, written in our hearts, known and read of all men; being made manifest that ye are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in tables that are hearts of flesh. And such confidence have we through Christ to God-ward: not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to account anything as from ourselves; but our sufficiency is from God; who also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. But if the ministration of death, written and engraven on stones, came with glory, so that the children of Israel could not look stedfastly upon the face of Moses for the glory of his face; which glory was passing away: how shall not rather the ministration of the spirit be with glory? For if the ministration of condemnation hath glory, much rather doth the ministration of right-

eousness exceed in glory. For verily that which hath been made glorious hath not been made glorious in this respect, by reason of the glory that surpasseth. For if that which passeth away was with glory, much more that which remaineth is in glory. (II Corinthians 3:2-11)

First of all, one needs to see what Paul is saying concerning the Law of Moses. In verse seven it is called the ministration of death. In verse nine it is called the ministration of condemnation. These are negative but valid descriptions. In verses three and seven the spotlight is on the Ten Commandments since it is these which were engraven on stones. The main point then is that the Law of Moses, especially as represented by the Ten Commandments, is a ministration of death and a ministration of condemnation. If the Ten Commandments were still in force today, this would still be true.

But they are no longer in force, for it states in verses seven and eleven that the Law has passed away. The Greek word used is *katargeo*, which means "to render inoperative." Since the emphasis in this passage is on the Ten Commandments, this means that the Ten Commandments have passed away. The thrust is very clear. The Law of Moses, and especially the Ten Commandments, is no longer in effect. In fact, the superiority of the Law of Christ is seen by the fact that it will never be rendered inoperative (verses 9-11).

On this passage, Turner, in his article, "The Sabbath/Sunday Question and the Law in the Pauline Corpus," wrote:

Second Corinthians represents a very different situation, but one in which Paul is again fighting an attempt to assert the superiority of the law-keeping apostles at Jerusalem. It is in the context of his self-defense that he returns to the contrast between the old covenant and the new, a contrast that enters his mind first through the demand for written credentials (3:1). These he contrasts with spiritual credentials written on the heart (3:2-3), which he is confident that he can display, for God has made him the minister of a new and spiritual covenant. Here we still find the polemic of Galatians; the old covenant was by implication in letter and not in spirit. The letter can only kill; it was called "the dispensation of death" (3:6-8). Yet even this "came with splendor" (v. 7). It has lost that splendor only in the light of the far greater glory of the "dispensation of the Spirit," which is not evil but fading (vv. 11, 13) (From Sabbath to Lord's Day, page 163).

Other passages also teach that the Law of Moses has come to an end. One is Ephesians 2:11-16 where the law is called "the middle wall of partition" (vs. 14) that in effect kept the Gentiles away from enjoying Jewish spiritual blessings. But with the death of Christ this middle wall of partition has been broken down (vs. 14) and abolished (vs. 15). Verse 15 clearly identifies the wall of partition to be the Law of Moses.

Another passage is Galatians 3:23-4:7. In this passage the Law is looked upon as a pedagogue over a minor to bring him to mature faith by bringing him to faith in the Messiah (3:24). But having become believers, we are no longer under this tutor, i.e., the Law of Moses (3:25).

To summarize, the Law is a unit comprised of 613 commandments, and all of it has been rendered inoperative. There is no commandment that has continued beyond the cross of Christ. The Law is there and can be used as a teaching tool to show God's standard of righteousness and man's sinfulness and need of a substitutionary atonement. It can be used to point one to Christ (Galatians 3:23-25). However,

it has completely ceased to function as an authority over individuals.

E. THE CEREMONIAL, CIVIL AND MORAL DISTINCTIONS

Even adherents of mandatory Sabbath keeping realize that the vast majority of the Law of Moses no longer applies. But in order to apply some, they try to make distinctions in different types of commandments. This is the practice of dividing the Law into ceremonial, legal, and moral commandments. On the basis of this division many have come to think that the believer is free from the ceremonial and legal commandments but is still under the moral commandments. The Sabbath is viewed as a moral commandment and as such, still obligatory.

To begin with, it must be understood that the Mosaic Law is viewed by the Scriptures as a unit. The word Torah, "Law," when applied to the Law of Moses is always singular, although it contains 613 commandments. The same is true of the Greek word Nomos in the New Testament. The division of the Law of Moses into ceremonial, legal, and moral parts is convenient for the study of the different types of commandments contained within it, but it is never divided in this way by the Scriptures themselves. Neither is there any scriptural basis for separating the Ten Commandments from the whole 613 and making only the Ten perpetual. All 613 commandments are a single unit comprising the Law of Moses.

It is the principle of the unity of the Law of Moses that lies behind the statement found in James 2:10:

For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is become guilty of all.

The point is clear. A person needs only to break one of the 613 commandments to be guilty of breaking all of the Law of Moses. This can only be true if the Mosaic Law is a unit. If it is not, the guilt lies only in the particular commandment violated and not in the whole Law. In other words, if one breaks a legal commandment, he is guilty of breaking the ceremonial and moral ones as well. The same is true of breaking a moral or ceremonial commandment. To bring the point closer to home, if a person eats ham, according to the Law of Moses he is guilty of breaking the Ten Commandments, although none of them says anything about ham. The Law is a unit, and to break one of the 613 commandments is to break them all.

In order to have a clear understanding of the Law of Moses and its relationship to the believer, it is necessary to view it as the Scriptures view it: as a unit that cannot be divided into parts that have been done away with and parts that have not. Nor can certain commandments be separated in such a way as to give them a different status from other commandments.

Probably the most exhaustive study on the Sabbath in recent times is by several authors who put together From Sabbath to the Lord's Day. They have come to similar conclusions. D. A. Carson, Professor of New Testament at Trinity Seminary, in his article, "Jesus and the Sabbath in the Four Gospels," commenting on Matthew 12:1-8, Mark 2:23-28, and Luke 6:1-5 stated:

In Sabbatarian apologetic, it is common to distinguish between moral, ceremonial, and civil law. The Sabbath commandment is thought to be binding on all, not only because it is alleged to be a "creation ordinance," but also because it is part of the Decalogue, which is classified as "moral." The distinction between moral, ceremonial, and civil law is apt, especially

in terms of functional description, but it is not self-evident that either the Old Testament or New Testament writers neatly classify Old Testament law in those categories in such a way as to establish continuity and discontinuity on the basis of such distinctions. Even if such categories are applied, it should be noted that both David's lawbreaking and that of the priests (found only in Matthew) come from ceremonial law. It is difficult, then, to resist the conclusion that their applicability to the Sabbath case puts Sabbath law in the ceremonial category with them. (From Sabbath to Lord's Day, pages 68-69).

Another writer in the same volume, M. Max B. Turner, a lecturer in New Testament at the London Bible College, in his article, "The Sabbath, Sunday, and the Law in Luke/Acts," wrote:

. . . It must be insisted that to read such categories back into Matthew 5:17-20 and conclude that only moral law is in view would be anachronistic. This is not to deny that Jesus himself makes no distinctions whatsoever in Old Testament law, nor to say that the distinctions are always invalid. Rather it is to say that the New Testament writers do not in any case appear to establish patterns of continuity or discontinuity on the basis of such distinction. Certainly the phrase "an iota or a dot" excludes any interpretation of the passage that claims that only the "moral law" is in view (pages 78-79).

Even less that he (or Luke) operated with such categories as "moral," "ceremonial" and "civil" law, dividing some that are retained from others that are abolished. Indeed to bring such categories into the discussion at this point would be anachronistic. Jesus fulfills and supercedes the law (page 111).

A. I. Lincoln of Gordon Conwell Seminary, in his chapter on "From Sabbath to the Lord's Day: A Biblical and Theological Perspective" states:

In all of his discussion and terminology, Paul treats the Law of Moses as a total package and makes no distinction between moral and ceremonial elements within (page 370).

There is simply no biblical validity to make such distinctions and to make part of the Mosaic Law continue and part of it not in order to make Sabbath as part of that law that is still obligatory, especially upon Jewish believers.

F. IS THE SABBATH LAW MORAL OR CEREMONIAL?

Even if it is conceded that such distinctions are valid (and it is not), is the Sabbath law a moral law? If it is a moral law, then those Jewish believers who do not keep the Sabbath are immoral. Is this what those who require Sabbath-keeping believe? If not, they are not following logically through their own presuppositions. If they are logically consistent, then they must accuse all those who do not keep the Sabbath, at least Jewish believers who don't keep the Sabbath, as being immoral. However, the Law of Moses does not treat the Sabbath as a moral issue but a ceremonial issue. The requirements of what one must do or not do all have ceremonial aspects and not moral aspects. Certainly the adultery law is a moral commandment. Adultery is always wrong, regardless of the day of the week. However, the very things forbidden on the Sabbath day are allowed on other days, so obviously the actions themselves are not moral actions. The Sabbath is clearly ceremonial and not moral. Furthermore, the penalty of death

for disobedience also moves it somewhat into the civil category as well. If proponents of mandatory Sabbath-keeping insist that the moral law is in effect while the ceremonial and civil laws are not, then the Sabbath too has been done away. But if they insist that the Sabbath law is a moral commandment, then those who do not keep the Sabbath must be declared as being immoral.

G. SUMMARY CONCLUSION

Not only is there no basis for mandatory Sabbath-keeping based upon the Sabbath being a creation ordinance, there can be no valid grounds for mandatory Sabbath-keeping from the Law of Moses. Hopefully it has been shown that every basis used to support mandatory Sabbath-keeping for Jewish believers on the basis of the Law of Moses has not been substantiated. Turner gives an excellent summary of Law and its applicability today:

The law presents mankind with the ethical standards of the holy God. As such, its goodness is unquestionable, but its effect is simply to demonstrate the existence of our sin, to condemn us as a result, and also to provoke our sin. Because of the weakness of the flesh, it can have no other effect on us when we read its righteous demands. Only death with Christ will remove us from the condemnation that it would otherwise constantly pronounce on anyone who endeavored to live by its standards.

But the law also stands for the whole covenantal arrangement that God made with His people at Sinai, a covenant that has now manifestly been replaced by the New Covenant in Christ. In both of these aspects Paul realized that the law no longer played any role in the life of a Christian. His new and Christian insights into the "exceeding sinfulness of sin" also led him to see that any attempt, even by Christians, to use the law as a basis for a standing before God led inevitably to the sin of "boasting," that is, faith in self rather than faith in God. The only Christian way to fulfill one's obligation to God is by fulfilling the law of love (the law of subordinating one's own self to the other), by walking in the Spirit. These two factors, love and the Spirit, Paul sees as keeping Christian obedience from degenerating into formal legalism. Too rarely, alas, has the church been able to preserve this Pauline insight (page 175).

III. THE SABBATH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Our survey of the Sabbath in the New Testament will be studied in four categories.

A. THE GOSPELS

In the Gospels, there are three major areas of conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees:

1. His claim to be the Messiah;
2. The authority of the Mishnah and rabbinic traditions (such as the issue of fasting); and,
3. The proper way of observing the Sabbath.

In rabbinic Judaism, the Sabbath had become an end in itself. In fact, Israel was seen as having been made for the purpose of observing the Sabbath. The Sabbath became highly personified and looked upon as a queen (Malchat Shabbat)

and Israel's bride. By adding 1,500 additional Sabbath rules and regulations, the Pharisees made the Sabbath rest a burden in itself.

Jesus accused the Pharisees of totally misconstruing the purpose of the Sabbath. The purpose of the Sabbath was to help man and not to enslave him. It is the human element of the Sabbath that should be emphasized, because the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath (Mark 2:27). Furthermore, as the Messiah, Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath (Matthew 12:8), and therefore can permit what they forbid and forbid what they permit.

There is no question that Jesus observed the Sabbath in the manner prescribed by the Law of Moses, though not always in the manner prescribed by rabbinic Judaism. But this is not sufficient grounds to insist that Jewish believers are obligated to keep the Sabbath. Jesus lived under the Law and obeyed every one of the 613 commandments applicable to Him, be they in the category of moral, ceremonial, or civil. To insist that Jewish believers keep the Sabbath today because Jesus kept it would also require Jewish believers to keep all the other commandments, down to every jot and tittle, including those that proponents classify as ceremonial and civil.

Of the many commandments Jesus issued for His followers to keep, such as those of the Upper Room Discourse, the Sabbath is never mentioned as being one of them.

B. THE SABBATH IN THE BOOK OF ACTS

In the book of Acts, the Sabbath is mentioned a total of nine times. The first time (1:12) it is used to measure the distance between Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives (a Sabbath day's journey: about 3,000 feet). All the other references relate to the Sabbath observance in the synagogue (13:14, 27, 42, 44; 15:21, 16:13, 17:2, 18:4). No conclusions can be drawn about mandatory Sabbath-keeping for Jewish believers on the basis of these passages. These passages refer to Jewish unbelievers in the synagogue service, and say nothing about the meeting of the church. Paul attended these services for evangelistic purposes. Those who became believers because of Paul's preaching in the synagogue left and established a local church, and no passage in anyway indicates that the day of the week these churches met was the Sabbath. In fact, throughout the book of Acts, there is no single reference of any church meeting on the Sabbath.

This is not to deny that there were Jewish believers present in synagogues during the period of Acts. The fact that the Birchat Haminim was issued in 90 A.D. in order to force Jewish believers out of the synagogue shows a Jewish-Christian presence in the synagogue at least as late as 90 A.D. But there is no command in the book of Acts for Jewish believers to hold corporate worship on the Sabbath. Furthermore, Jewish believers' presence in the synagogue was not the meeting of the church. There are, of course, many reasons why Jewish believers may have continued to observe the Sabbath as a day of rest, especially within the land of Israel. These may have been for reasons of habit, social pressure, fear of sanctions, missionary policy (as in the case of Paul), conservative leadership in Jerusalem, and personal theological convictions. But again, there is no command for Jewish believers to observe the Sabbath, either as a day of rest or a day of worship, nor is there a single example in the book of Acts of any local church, Jewish or Gentile, holding their meetings on the Sabbath.

There are two other passages in the book of Acts that may have a bearing on the question. The first is Acts 15:1-29, which records the Jerusalem council.

Initially, the issue was circumcision of the Gentiles (verse 1), but later it expanded to include the keeping of the Law of Moses (verse 5). This passage largely deals with what Gentile believers should or should not do rather than what Jewish believers should or should not do. But a few statements might be relevant to the question of the practice of Jewish believers. Peter states in verse 10:

Now therefore why make ye trial of God, that ye should put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?

In this context, the "yoke" is clearly the Law of Moses. If the Jews ("neither we nor our fathers") were unable to keep the Law, there is no reason to force it upon the Gentiles and ask them to do what even the Jewish believers could not do. It is obvious that neither circumcision nor even Sabbath keeping was laid upon the Gentile believers to keep. Peter's statement implies that these things are not obligatory for Jewish believers anymore either. Peter's words might mean that Jewish believers were equally exempt from the Law of Moses. Whether this is so or not, the fact remains that nowhere in this context is there any requirement for Jewish believers to keep the Sabbath. The second passage is in Acts 21:20-24:

And they, when they heard it, glorified God; and they said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of them that have believed; and they are all zealous for the law: and they have been informed concerning thee, that thou teachest all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children neither to walk after their customs. What is it therefore? they will certainly hear that thou art come. Do therefore this that we say to thee: we have four men that have a vow on them; these take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges for them, that they may shave their heads: and all shall know that there is no truth in the things whereof they have been informed concerning thee; but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, keeping the law.

Again, there is no specific mention of the Sabbath but that would certainly be part of "the law" (verse 20) and "their customs" (verse 21). However, the passage only deals with what Jewish believers in Jerusalem practiced and says nothing about mandatory Sabbath practice. To extrapolate out of this passage the requirement of Sabbath keeping would be to extrapolate too much. The Sabbath is not alone as part of the Law, and certainly the zealotry of the Jerusalem Jewish believers for the Law included much more than the Sabbath and would have included ceremonial and civil elements as well. What the passage does teach is that Jewish believers have the freedom to observe the Law, but this is far from saying that they are required to keep the Law. It allows for voluntary Sabbath-keeping, but not for mandatory sabbath-keeping.

So insofar as the book of Acts is concerned, there is no support for mandatory Sabbath-keeping for Jewish believers.

C. THE SABBATH IN THE EPISTLES OF PAUL

In all of Paul's writings, the Sabbath is mentioned in only one place, Colossians 2:16-17:

Let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of a feast day or a new moon or a sabbath day: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is Christ's.

This passage follows Paul's discussion in verses 8-15, in which he points out that the ordinances that were against us have been blotted out by the death of the Messiah. It is for that reason that we no longer have the obligation to keep the Law. Among the specifics he mentions are issues of meat and drink, feast day and Sabbath day. Like other aspects of the Law, the Sabbath too is merely "a shadow of good things to come." In Hebrews 8:5, the whole tabernacle system was a "shadow," one of the reasons it is no longer obligatory. In Hebrews 10:1, the Law, especially the sacrificial system, was also a "shadow" which is no longer obligatory. The same thing is clearly true in this passage of the Sabbath. As a "shadow," it was previously obligatory, but now that the light has come, the shadow is no longer obligatory. If Sabbath-keeping was mandatory, then failure to keep it would put the violator under divine judgment. That's exactly what the context of this passage says is no longer true.

D. L. DeLacey, instructor at the London Bible College and one of the authors of From Sabbath to Lord's Day, in his chapter on "The Sabbath/Sunday Question and the Law in the Pauline Corpus," states:

As with the law, the Sabbath has lost its intrinsic value, but may yet be enjoyed by those who wish to keep them . . . no stringent regulations are to be laid down over the use of Sabbath. As with the law, the believer is no longer bound by external stipulation as in the matter of festivals (page 183).

There are two other passages in Paul's writings which, while not mentioning the Sabbath, do relate to the question of the Sabbath. The first is Romans 14:4-6:

Who art thou that judgest the servant of another? to his own lord he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be made to stand; for the lord hath power to make him stand. One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike. Let each man be fully assured in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord: . . .

In verse 4, there is a prohibition against fellow believers judging one another concerning practice in various areas. One of these areas concerns the observance of "days." If this is not limited to the Sabbath, it would certainly include it. According to verse 5, one man is free to esteem a day as being more important than another, be it Saturday or Sunday, while another can view all days equally alike. Both options are valid options. Jewish believers who do not keep the Sabbath should not judge those who do so as legalists, unless those who choose to do so begin making it mandatory for all other Jewish believers. Jewish believers who do choose to keep the Sabbath should not judge the Jewish identity or loyalty of other Jewish believers on that basis. This passage is a very strong one against mandatory Sabbath-keeping for either Jews or Gentiles.

The second passage is Galatians 4:10:

Ye observe days, and months, and seasons, and years.

In the context of the book of Galatians, the issue is clearly the Law of Moses (2:16, 19, 20, 3:2, 5, 10-29, 4:4-5, 21, 5:3-4, 14, 6:13). The "months" refer to the New Moon festivals. The "seasons" refer to the seven holy seasons of Israel. The "years" refer to the sabbatical year, and perhaps the Year of Jubilee. The term "days" is the Sabbath days. Paul clearly plays down their value, either as a means of salvation or even as a means for a believer living out his lifestyle. As D. L. DeLacey has also stated:

Paul viewed any attempt to impose Sabbath keeping . . . upon Gentiles as wrong, and any tendency on the part of converts to submit to this coercion as a retrograde step (page 181).

In conclusion, in none of his writings does Paul ever state that it is mandatory for Jewish believers to keep the Sabbath while for Gentiles it is not. After extensively evaluating Paul's writings, Turner concludes:

What does this tell us about Paul's attitude to the Sabbath? The clear implication is that he refuses to dogmatize one way or the other. An individual may keep the Sabbath or not; presumably, in general Paul might have assumed that a Jewish Christian would do so and a Gentile convert would not. The important factor was not which practice one adopted, but one's motives: to convert for inadequate reasons is reprehensible. Thus Paul was probably content to allow a wide variety of practice in the churches (pages 183-184).

D. THE SABBATH IN THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

The book of Hebrews treats the Sabbath typologically rather than literally as a day of worship. This is not unprecedented. Already in Deuteronomy 12:9, the concept of "rest," closely associated with the Sabbath, is also associated typologically with the land of Israel:

For ye are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance which Jehovah thy God giveth thee.

This may also be intimated in the Gospels. The statement that Jesus makes concerning spiritual rest in Matthew 11:28-30 immediately precedes the report of two Sabbath conflicts with the Pharisees over the proper way of observing the Sabbath (12:1-4). In Luke 4:16-21, Jesus used the Sabbath day to proclaim His Messiahship in Nazareth, and to proclaim salvation rest. In John 5:1-30, in the context of a Sabbath conflict, Jesus offered heavenly rest.

In Hebrews 3:7-4:13, the writer treats at length the concept of rest from the Old Testament in a typological way to emphasize present salvation rest and future heavenly rest. Two portions in particular relate to the Sabbath question. The first is 4:3-4:

For we who have believed do enter into that rest; even as he hath said, As I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For he hath said somewhere of the seventh day on this wise, And God rested on the seventh day from all his works.

The point the writer makes is that his teaching on salvation rest is based on the Old Testament. The specific reference is to the seventh day of creation of Genesis 2:2-3. God's creation rest is interpreted typologically as referring to the present salvation rest.

The second passage is Hebrews 4:9:

There remaineth therefore a sabbath rest for the people of God.

The use of the term "Sabbath" refers to the Sabbath of the Law of Moses, which is here interpreted typologically in reference to the future heavenly rest.

It is noteworthy that in this epistle, written specifically to Jewish believers, nothing is said anywhere about mandatory keeping of the Sabbath. This is also true of the other epistles specifically written to Jewish believers, such as James, I Peter, II Peter, and Jude.

E. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The teaching of the New Testament is clear. While the day of the Sabbath has never been changed from the seventh to the first day of the week, there is no longer any obligation to observe the Sabbath, either on the basis of the Old Testament, the Law of Moses, or New Testament teaching.

The Jewish believer, freed from the Law of Moses, has also been freed from mandatory keeping of the Sabbath. But there is nothing in the New Testament that prohibits the Jewish believer from keeping the Sabbath if he so chooses. Not only is he free to keep it, he's free to keep it in any manner he would like to keep it, either strictly as a day of rest, which was the way the Old Testament proclaimed it, or a day of worship, which was a much later innovation. But the point is that the day of choice is purely optional, and in fact, no particular day of the week has to be set aside.

Individually, each believer, Jew or Gentile, has the option to choose whether he will set aside a day or not, and if so, which day of the week he will choose to set aside.

Corporately, or congregationally, the church must meet (Hebrews 10:25), but the choice of the day of the week is to be determined by each individual congregation.

IV. SUNDAY

A few things should also be said about Sunday. It is quite apparent by now that the author is not a First-Day Adventist, either.

In many circles it has been taught that Sunday worship universally began only in 321 A.D. with the Law of Constantine, or 364 A.D. with the Council of Laodicea. However, the authors of From Sabbath to Lord's Day have shown with excellent documentation that Sunday worship was a very universal practice of all churches outside of the land of Israel by the beginning of the second century. They also clearly point out that in those early days, while Sunday was viewed as a day of worship, it was not viewed as a Sabbath. What later church councils did was ratify a practice already common, and only then did they begin to apply the Sabbath rules to Sunday. But in the beginning it was not so. Sunday was a day of worship but not a day of rest. As church history developed, more and more Sabbath laws from the Old Testament were applied to Sunday, and this concept is present to this day. So many speak of the "Christian Sabbath," or the "Sunday Sabbath." But it is no more correct to speak of a "Christian Sabbath" than a "Jewish Sunday." Charles Hodge, in his Systematic Theology, goes to great lengths to insist that all of the Ten Commandments still apply, including the fourth one. He also insists, with no Scriptural evidence, that the fourth commandment now applies to the first day of the week and not the seventh. His evidences are all derived from the Old Testament, and he insists that the United States Government issue laws that will require Sunday observance on a society that may not even believe. His arguments, taken from the Law of Moses, ignore the seventh day emphasis of that same Law.

Even Dispensationalists, who should know better, often fall into the same trap:

As the Sabbath commemorates God's creation rest, the first day speaks of Christ's resurrection. The seventh day marks God's creative rest. On the first day Christ was unceasingly active. The seventh day commemorates a finished creation, the first day, a finished redemption. In the present dispensation of grace, Sunday perpetuates the truth that one-seventh of one's time belongs to God. In every other particular there is contrast (Unger's Bible Dictionary, page 941).

The catalog of the Criswell Bible College and Graduate School of the Bible states:

The first day of the week is the Lord's day. It is a Christian institution for regular observance. It commemorates the resurrection of Christ from the dead and should be employed in exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private, and by refraining from worldly amusements, and resting from secular employments, works of necessity and mercy only being excepted (1985-6 Catalog, page 33).

The Council of Elders of Grace Community Church, in a paper critical of a variety of practices by Jewish believers, states:

The Misunderstanding of Sabbath and the Lord's Day

To the Jew the Old Testament taught him: "So you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, by which a man may live if he does them" (Leviticus 18:5). The Jew was taught that if he was obedient he would get his reward at the end. In commenting on the 5th Commandment in Exodus 20:12, the Apostle Paul says that honoring one's father and mother was the first commandment with a promise (Ephesians 6:2), a promise of more days at the end of one's life. This was also how the Jew viewed the Sabbath. He lived six days in obedience to God and he was rewarded on the seventh day with a day of rest. However, for the Christian God has already rewarded him. "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). Thus, we have the Lord's Day at the beginning of the week and live out our reward the rest of the week. The injunctions to observe the Sabbath is the only one of the Ten Commandments that does not have a counterpart somewhere in the New Testament. And the insistence of all Christians, both Jews and Gentiles, in the Early Church to observe the Lord's Day (Sunday) rather than the Sabbath (Saturday) is proof positive that all Christians perceived the day change as more than just a matter of preference, convenience, or sentimentality (Acts 20:7, I Cor. 16:2, Rev. 1:10).

Issue: Why do the proponents of the Messianic Synagogue Movement encourage their Hebrew Christian constituents to reassert the Sabbath over against the Lord's Day? What is their New Testament justification for such an action? Don't they understand we have already been rewarded in Christ? ("The American Messianic Synagogue Movement: Deficiencies, Mistakes, and Errors in Light of the Scriptures," pages 6-7).

All of these above quotations make some radical assumptions which they never attempt to prove: in particular, that somehow Sunday is a mandatory day of worship, whether they call it Sabbath or the Lord's Day.

It should be pointed out that Sunday is never called the Sabbath in the New Testament, but always "the first day of the week." Nor is it ever called "the

Lord's Day." Although the early church fathers certainly did use that term for Sunday, it was not so used in the New Testament. The one place where that term appears is Revelation 1:10, and there is no reason to assume that this day was a Sunday. There is good reason to believe it was not. In this passage, the term "Lord" (κυριαν) in the Greek text is not a noun but an adjective. It would be better translated as "lordy day." It does not refer to a specific day of the week such as the Sabbath, Saturday, or Sunday. Rather, it was a day in which John was enraptured by prophetic and divine ecstasy, and received divine revelation. It was a day in which he fell under the control of the Holy Spirit and was given prophetic inspiration. And so for him it was, indeed, "a lordy day."

Regardless, however, it is true that by the second century churches observed Sunday as a day of worship. It is also clear that the Pauline churches in the first century observed the first day of the week as a day of worship. This is rather apparent from Acts 20:7-8, 11:

And upon the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul discoursed with them, intending to depart on the morrow; and prolonged his speech until midnight. And there were many lights in the upper chamber where we were gathered together. . . . And when he was gone up, and had broken the bread, and eaten, and had talked with them a long while, even till break of day, so he departed.

The Church of Troas clearly met on the first day of the week. But it should not be assumed that this meant Sunday morning, as is customary today. In fact, the Church of Troas had its meeting on Saturday night. In the author's own response to the paper issued by Grace Community Church, the following was stated:

Furthermore, your citation of Acts 20:7 as proving of Sunday observance is not really true. The passage does say the first day of the week, but you are ignoring that for Jews the first day of the week happened to be sundown Saturday until sundown Sunday, and did not begin with the midnight hour between Saturday and Sunday. The Jewish believers did not meet Sunday morning as the Grace Community Church has chosen to do (and you have the freedom to do so), but met Saturday night. The meeting referred to in Acts 20:7 occurred on a Saturday night and not on a Sunday morning. A careful exegesis of verse 7 will clearly bring that point out. The verse says that "On the first day of the week, when they were gathered to break bread, Paul began talking to them." So far the verse has stated that the church got together on the first day of the week, which for Paul as well as for all Jews began sundown Saturday. The very next phrase states, "intending to depart the next day." The next day would have been the Gentile Sunday. He would have been traveling on Sunday morning rather than worshipping on Sunday morning. And the proof of it all is in the final phrase of verse 7, "he prolonged his message until midnight." This makes perfect sense if it's realized that the meeting of the church occurred Saturday night and not Sunday morning. If Grace Community wishes to believe that the meeting of Acts 20:7 occurred Sunday morning at 11:00 a.m., they would have to claim that Paul preached for 13 straight hours until midnight on Sunday! That would certainly make the whole passage totally nonsensical.

The simple exegesis of Acts 20:7 is that the church at Troas met on the first day of the week, Saturday night after sundown, and Paul was planning to leave the city the next morning, or Sunday morning. Because the service started at night, and because of other elements involved in the worship,

Paul began preaching and continued to preach, and was already going past midnight. The fact that the church was meeting at night and not in the morning becomes rather evident in two ways: first, that Paul preached until midnight, and secondly, that in verse 8 it was necessary to have lit lamps in the upper room where they were gathered.

Those messianic congregations that insist on a Friday night or Saturday morning worship are wrong if they make it a requirement. But if they merely make it optional, they have the total freedom to do so. But those who insist on an absolutely required Sunday worship are equally wrong, because they have no biblical validity. If Grace Community Church wishes to use Acts 20:7 as the rule of thumb, then they will have to insist on a Saturday night worship but not on a Sunday morning worship! But the clear teaching of the New Testament is that in this dispensation of Grace, there is no particular date that is obligatory to be set aside, and there is freedom in the Lord in the matter, and therefore let each individual congregation make its own choice on the matter. To claim as the paper does that, "The insistence of all Christians, both Jews and Gentiles, in the early church to observe the Lord's Day (Sunday) rather than the Sabbath (Saturday) is proof positive that all Christians perceived the day change as more than just a matter of preference, convenience, or sentimentality," is, frankly, false from several perspectives. It is first of all historically false, in that the historical records of Jewish Christianity in the land for the first four centuries shows that Jewish believers as a rule met together on Saturday night and not on Sunday. It is also theologically untrue, because first of all, Sunday is never referred to as "the Lord's Day," nor is there any so-called "proof positive" that the day of worship was changed.

Concerning your question, "Why do the proponents . . . encourage their Hebrew Christian constituents to reassert the Sabbath over against the Lord's Day?"; if they truly encourage people to reassert the Sabbath over against any other day, then they are wrong, and I agree that they are wrong. But if they're merely giving Jewish believers the option of which day to choose, then they are right. Those Jewish congregations that insist that the Sabbath must be the day of worship are wrong. But those Gentile congregations that insist that Sunday must be a day of worship are equally wrong.

Evidence is strong that the practice of the church meeting on the first day of the week actually began with Jewish believers within the land of Israel itself. Since Jewish believers continued to attend the synagogue and Temple on Saturday morning, they needed another time to gather together as believers, and did so on the first day of the week. But in Jewish timetables, the first day of the week begins sundown Saturday and not midnight Saturday. So while they did meet on the first day of the week, it was Saturday night.

Even the Talmud contains an implication that first day observance began with Jewish believers:

On the eve of the Sabbath they did not fast out of respect to the Sabbath; still less did they do so on the Sabbath itself. Why did they not fast on the day after the Sabbath? Rabbi Johanan says, Because of the Nazarenes (B. Taanit, 27b).

The Sabbath is a time of eating; so Jews generally do not fast before or on the Sabbath. The question is, why not fast at any time on the day after the Sabbath? The answer is, to avoid showing any respect to the day regarded as special by the Nazarenes. The significance of this quotation seems to

be that Jewish believers were worshipping on the first day of the week.

This is also the conclusion of the authors of From Sabbath to Lord's Day. Turner, in his article quoted earlier, also states:

We must conclude that it is barely imaginable that first-day Sabbath observance commenced before the Jerusalem Council. Nor can we stop there; we must go on to maintain that first-day Sabbath observance cannot easily be understood as a phenomenon of the apostolic age or of apostolic authority at all . . . If an apostolic decision was made after the council on so important matter as this, it would have been an easy decision to reach and it would inevitably have left its mark in the epistles and in Acts. But as we have seen, Acts is silent on the issue and Paul's handling of the controversies involving the Law and the Sabbath makes it difficult to believe that he knew of any Sabbath transference theology (pages 135-136).

Turner makes the point that while the first day of the week was observed by the Jewish believers even within the land, they did not view it as a Sabbath, nor were they practicing "transference theology" by applying Sabbath laws to Sunday. The Jewish believers did meet on the first day of the week, but did not make it a Sabbath or a day of rest, or transfer Sabbath laws to Sunday.

But as with the Jewish believers' practice of observing the Law, the New Testament only states what the early believers did on the first day of the week. Nowhere is the first day of the week an obligatory day of observance. Nowhere is there a command that the church meet on the first day of the week. It is not wrong to do so, but it is not mandatory either.

While in most of the western world Sunday is certainly a convenient day, it cannot be imposed. As Turner further states:

Paul's contribution to our quest, then, is limited but of significance. While he forbids us from stating that Christians may not observe Sunday as the Christian day par excellence, he also forbids us from imposing such observance as a duty upon our fellow believers. Since, at least in much of the world, Sunday is allowed to the majority of us as a day of rest and a day suitable for worship, we may surely gratefully receive it as such; but our study of Paul forbids us from erecting any theological edifice upon this convenient, but fortuitous fact (pages 185-186).

If a Jewish believer chooses to observe the Sabbath, he is free to do so, whether it be a day of rest or a day of worship. If a Jewish congregation chooses to have its meeting on Saturday, it is also free to do so. However, it is forbidden to impose a mandatory Sabbath observance either individually or corporately, as it is forbidden to mandate a Sunday observance individually or corporately.

In conclusion, we again quote from Turner:

It is not unreasonable to suppose that Sunday was seen at an early stage as an appropriate day for a Christian feast, and no doubt every Christian feast was at least in part a eucharist. Nothing that we have seen in Paul's writings could lead us to suppose that he would deny the appropriateness of a meeting for worship and eucharist on Sunday, whether or not he or the churches ever in fact contemplated such a practice. Some contemporary writers, however, wish to go further than this, in claiming that Sunday is the Christian Sabbath, and that its observance is therefore a fulfillment of the fourth

commandment. We have already seen enough to realize what short shrift this approach would have received from Paul. Not only is he opposed to the re-establishment of the Decalogue as a law for the Christian life, but he is also quite happy to allow the seventh-day Sabbath to be observed--a position quite incompatible with any identification of Sunday as the Christian Sabbath (page 185).