

THE SABBATH,

THE LAW

&

OTHER INFLUENCING AND RELATED SUBJECTS

A Scripture study
by
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(Study # 3)

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PREFACE

Most errors and heresies are the result of a failure to rightly divide the Word of Truth, 2 Tim. 2: 15. This is usually a failure to make distinctions between the different Dispensations, or keep things within their context. It is also a failure to recognise to whom a particular portion is addressed, and whether it be addressed to Jews, Gentiles, Christians, individuals, or groups. By being diligent in these areas, we can avoid a lot of error and misinterpretation.

The question of the Sabbath has been a cause of division amongst Christians since the days of the Apostles. Evidence for this can be found in Paul's letters to the churches.

We also see the results of division amongst us today, there being a number of Christian groups that observe the Seventh Day Sabbath, and many individuals in other mainline churches that are also confused over the issue, uncertain as to whether or not the Sabbath should be observed.

I pray that through this study of God's Word regarding the Sabbath you may see more clearly what God intended. It is His desire that all believers have understanding, and should be strong in their beliefs. Rom. 14: 5, reads, "*...Let each be fully convinced in his own mind*".

The earliest inference in the Scriptures to the Sabbath can be found in Gen. 2: 2, 3, where we are told that after the six days of Creation, God rested on the Seventh Day and sanctified it. There is however, no record of a Law as such for people to observe the Sabbath until God gave the Law to Moses on Mt. Sinai.

The Sabbath was given as the 4th Commandment.

We can get a clear picture, and understanding of the Sabbath by looking into the following subjects that are all allied and tied in with it. They are, Covenants, Dispensations, Law, & Spiritual Israel, and the influence each has on the Sabbath, and the part that each plays in the lives of Jews, and Christians.

It is my prayer and hope that this study may help to bring understanding, confidence, assurance, and peace to the reader.

THE SABBATH

In Exod. Chapters, 19 to 40, we read that God gave the Ten Commandments and many other National/Civic, Religious, and Ceremonial Laws to Moses for him to present to God's people (Israel). Exod.19: 3. & 20: 1, 2.

The 4th Commandment, regarding the Sabbath is expounded in Exod. 20: 8-11. - In verse 11, the reason given for the Sabbath observance is that it was to be a commemorative memorial of God's finished creative act. (The preparation of the Earth for mankind, and their creation). The Israelites however observed the Sabbath prior to this commandment. We find in Exod. 16: 1,5, & 21-30, that God was testing the Israelites regarding the Sabbath and other Laws 12 days before the Commandments were given in Exod. 20. Then in Gen. 39: 7-9, we also see that about 280 yrs before the Commandments were given, Joseph honoured what we now know as the 7th & 10th Commandments, as given in Exod. 20: 14 & 17. - The Hebrew's were aware of God's standards and Laws long before God made them binding on Israel in Exod. 20. They were also, no doubt kept by God fearing communities from the time of Adam.

The first recorded occasion that the Sabbath was to be a binding act of Law is found in Exod. 20: 8-11.

The issue at stake here is whether it was to be binding only on the Israelites, selected others, or all believers. To find the answer we must look at what the Scriptures teach. Read Exod. 31: 12-18. Note in Vs. 13, God addresses the Sabbath law to the Children of Israel. It was to be **a special sign between God and Israel for all their generations**. - Throughout this reading the fact that it is addressed to Israel is emphasised over and over again. It is the only one of the Ten Commandments to be singled out with this special emphasis.- Just how much emphasis does God have to put on something to make it clear?

It is also noticeable that the Sabbath Law is clearly different from the other nine, which are distinctly Moral Laws, whereas the Sabbath could best be described as a national, religious, social, and ceremonial Law.

The nine moral Laws were elaborated and expanded upon in the New Testament. Paul himself endorsed the principle of the nine, but not as Law, rather as an admonition to good behaviour.

Paul's allusions to the Ten Commandments are found as follows;

1st = 1 Thes. 1: 9. 2nd = Acts 17: 29. 3rd = Col. 3: 8. 5th = Eph. 6: 1,2. 6th = Gal. 5: 21.
7th = Gal. 5: 19. 8th = Eph. 4: 28. 9th = Eph. 4: 25. 10th = Eph. 5: 3.

But of the fourth he says in Col. 2: 16, 17. *"So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbath's, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ."*

The substance of the Moral Law still exists in this Dispensation of Grace, but is no longer a law written on stone that says 'we must', or 'must not', instead it is engraved with love in the heart of the believer. It has become, 'I will', or 'I won't', out of love.

When Christ spoke of the Sabbath, it was mainly to rebuke the Jews for their hypocrisy concerning it. It would appear that by not expounding the Sabbath, He was preparing His Disciples for the coming change of Dispensation, when the Gospel would be taken to the Gentiles. The Sabbath though remains as God's special sign between Himself and Israel.

Note also the requirement that goes with the keeping of the Sabbath.

Exod. 31: 14-17, reads, *"You shall keep the Sabbath therefore, for it is holy to you. Everyone that profanes it shall surely be put to death: for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off*

from among his people. Work shall be done for six days, but the seventh is the Sabbath of rest holy to the LORD. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. Therefore, the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between Me, and the children of Israel forever.”

Can you keep the Sabbath and yet ignore the command to put to death those that don't? - Then, in James 2: 10, we read; ***“For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.”*** – So it is clear that by breaking one commandment, or part thereof, he is as guilty in the eyes of God, as if he had broken all of the Commandments. – What then is the point of attempting to observe the Sabbath when the Laws that you ignore condemn you anyway? - The Sabbath was designed to be a blessing to Israel. It was to be a time of rest and worship, and a sign to all other peoples that Israel are Yahweh's chosen/set aside people. But over time, the Jews added many man-made laws to it, and instead of its intended purpose, it largely became a millstone around their necks. This is why the Lord said in Mark 2: 27, 28. *“The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath. “Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.”* The Sabbath Laws were probably the most misinterpreted and added to, of all the Laws as given through Moses.

LAW

The Hebrew Old Testament was divided differently to ours. It was divided into three sections; The Law, The Prophets, and The Writings.

Law; = 5 books; Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.
 Prophets; = 8 books; Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, & the Twelve Minor Prophets were combined into one.
 The Writings; = 5 Rolls; Song, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther. &
 “ “ = 3 books: Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, Chronicles.

When Jews were speaking of the Law, they would generally be referring to the first five books of the Bible, but depending on context, they could be referring to the Ten Commandments. Nine of the Ten Commandments were purely moral laws. The fourth being a National and Ceremonial law was one specially set aside to identify God's chosen people Israel with Himself. All the Laws contained in those first five books; fall into the category of National, Ceremonial, Religious and Moral Laws.

The Law was temporal, added because of sin, and has a cut-off point at the cross.
 See Rom. 6: 1-23, Gal. 3: 1-29, Col. 2: 1-23.

The purpose of the Law was:

- (1) To reveal God's Holiness;
- (2) To reveal man's sinfulness;
- (3) To be a guide or Schoolteacher to those of faith;
- (4) To be a source of Law enforcement, and judgement on the ungodly.

With Christ's death on the cross, a new dispensation (covenant/testament) was begun. The Dispensation of Law written on stone was over. Christ had completed, fulfilled and met the requirements of the Law, and the Prophets, (that is, the first 13 books of the Bible) Mat. 5: 17, & Rom. 10: 4, & Gal. 2: 21. By His death, He had annulled the Old Covenant/Testament, and just as we leave a will (testament) to come into effect on our death, Christ did the same. Read Heb. 9: 16. By His death Jesus established the new law of love which embraces all the old moral laws and has written them on the hearts of His believers. The purpose of the Law was to reveal God's Holiness as contrasted to man's sinfulness. It was to be a Schoolteacher to us, and still is, in order that we might comprehend God's nature and Holiness. Gal. 3: 10-24. & Rom. 3: 19, 20. It was not given so that we might establish our own righteousness by good works, but in order we might perceive our own helplessness, and be appreciative of God's mercy and forgiveness as we repent and confess our sins before Him. - God expressed His great love and mercy towards us in the death of Christ on the cross: Christ's death brought an end to the Dispensation of Law, and revealed the new Dispensation of Love and Grace.

Gal. 5: 14, shows all of the Law (including the Sabbath) is fulfilled in Love; it reads, "*For all the Law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself."*" See also, Mat. 22: 36-40.

In 2 Cor. 3:, we read that the Old Covenant (Written on tablets of Stone), all the Law, not just the Ceremonial, had passed away. See, Rom. 2: 12-29, & 3: 9-31, & 1 Tim. 1: 5-11. It has been replaced by the new Law of Love and Grace, which is written on the hearts of believers. Rom. 10: 4, reads, "*For Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness, to everyone who believes.*" Read, Heb. 12: 18-24.

For we are justified by the Grace of Christ, not the Law, as seen in Acts 13: 39. It reads, “*And by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the Law of Moses*”.

We cannot obtain righteousness through the keeping of the Law; for none can truly keep it. Justification by the works of the Law, cannot be attained, indeed it never could. This is revealed clearly in Rom. 3: 23, which reads, “*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*” So by faith, grace, (unmerited favour), and love, we establish the Law, in its rightful place in our hearts. For God is Love, and when a person repents, (acknowledges and turns from) his or her sins, and accepts Christ into their heart, then that person is born again. Read John 3, and Rom. Chap’s. 2 & 3.

When Christ enters our heart, Love enters, for Christ is Love. If we truly have Christ in our heart, then the Law is fulfilled and written on our heart. It is no longer a case of ‘I must,’ or ‘I must not’, but rather because love is there it’s a case of, ‘I will’, or ‘I won’t’, out of love. For how can one love God and his fellow man, and yet murder, steal, lie, covet, curse, when love is present? For sin and love cannot co-exist. Or how can one not rejoice in truth, and worship God, when love is present? For, Rom. 13: 10b reads, ‘*Love is the fulfilment of the Law.*’ All of the Law, including the Sabbath, is fulfilled by love, and 1 Cor. 13, teaches us what Love is, and is not. If we do not possess this spirit of Love, then we need to ask ourselves, “Am I a believer?” – “Am I saved?” – “Have I been born again?” – If not dear reader please consider why Christ died and rose again, for this is Christ’s message to you from His word. He holds His hand out to you. Please accept His message of, Love, Grace, and Hope. Trust Him and let His Spirit indwell you. Read also Acts. 15: 1-31. All of Romans, 2 Cor. 3: 1 Tim. 4: 1-5. Heb. 7: 6-14, and all of Gal. especially Chapters 3,4,5,6..

The Dispensation of Law is over, but this freedom does not give the believer a licence to sin. Indeed if a person truly believes, having God’s love in his heart he will have no desire to sin, in fact he will have an abhorrence of sin. For habitual sinning would reveal that God’s love was not in our heart in the first place. – But should we at some time as a result of our own weakness slip into some sin, then as long as we truly repent we can claim the mercy of God as found in, 1 John 1: 7,9, & 1 John 2: 1, 2.

I have said much about the old system of the Law being over for the Christian; but that does not leave the Christian in a completely lawless state. We find the nine moral laws have been restated in the New Testament as being the way that God expects Christians to live. However, these Laws are not what we will be judged by. Rather it is our faith (or lack of it) we will be judged by. For these Moral Laws, are written on the heart of the believer when he/she is converted, and guide the believer in a spirit of love. God’s Spirit gives the believer the guidance, the desire, and the power to live a better life.

See Rom. 6: 14-18, & 7: 6-12, & 8: 1-4.

In the following, a contrast is shown between the two main Dispensations; the beginning of, the giving of the Law, and the beginning of the era of Grace.

At the time of the giving of the Law, 3,000 were slain. – Exod. 32: 28.

At the time of the gift of God’s Spirit, 3,000 were saved. – Acts 2: 41.

SPIRITUAL ISRAEL

Many say that Christians are spiritual Israel and therefore all the laws that applied to Israel should be applied to Christians.” – But should they? The title of “Spiritual Israel” is a man-made title not found in Scripture and conveys some different meanings to different people. The view however is mostly held by people who also follow the Calvinistic teachings.

Some who think of themselves as “Spiritual Israel” say we should observe the Sabbath, some believe that Israel has been permanently cast off by God, and that all the promises and Covenants (including the 10 commandments) with the nation of Israel no longer stand and now apply only to ‘Spiritual Israel’. (This view is also known as “Replacement Theology”)

Therefore in order to make sense of some of the promises and prophecies, such as the ‘Restoration of the nation of Israel in their land,’ and ‘the salvation of all Israel at the end of the Tribulation’, they spiritualise these and apply them in some way to the Christian Church. They do this with many Scriptures taking them completely out of context. True, the Church now shares in many of the blessings and promises made to Israel, but there are promises made specifically to the nation of Israel alone which stand until God grants them the Kingdom which He has promised them during the Millennium.

There also appears to be others who bind themselves with selected portions of the Laws as given to Israel, yet ignore others. The fact is however that no one can truly keep all the Law, and at this point we need to be reminded of Matt 5 19 which reads, *“Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”* – To keep this verse in context, remember; Jesus (a Jew under Law) was speaking to Jews (under the Law).

We find that God made a Covenant with Abram in Gen. 12: 1-3. This Covenant clearly identifies Abram’s seed as the Nation of Israel. Then Gal. 3: 16, makes it clear that of that seed Christ came. It is further pointed out in Gal. 3: 29 that true believers in Christ are Abraham’s seed and heirs according to the promise. This definitely shows Christ and the Church are of the seed of Abraham.

We need to understand that ever since the Covenant was made with Abram there has been both an Israel of faith and a secular Israel. This is brought out to some degree in Rom. 9: 6-13, which reads, *“⁶But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel,⁷ nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, **“In Isaac your seed shall be called.”** ⁸That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed.⁹ For this is the word of promise: **“At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son.”**¹⁰ And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac¹¹ (for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls),¹² it was said to her, **“The older shall serve the younger.”**¹³ As it is written, **“Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.”**”*

Here it shows “Secular Israel” as represented through the seed of the servant woman, Hagar (under bondage or law), whereas the seed of faith, ‘Faithful Israel’, is represented by the free woman, Sarah. – See also, Gal. 2: 11 to 5: 8. - Faithful and secular Israel (Faith, and Law) existed from the time of Abraham, not just the beginning of the Christian Church. - Read also, Rom. 4: 1 to 5: 11.

Christians are not Spiritual Israel as generally defined, but **share in** the blessings and promises (not the Law and its ceremonies as given to the nation of Israel).

Like Christians, Israel has always been divided in two groups, being the faithful (believing God and not relying on works) and the secular (nominal followers lacking faith & putting their trust in works). Hereafter I will refer to these two groups as - The Faithful and the Secular.

The fact is that Israel always was, is, and shall remain God's chosen people and no one else, Christians or otherwise, can claim for themselves, the Covenants, Promises, Blessings, or Curses that were given specifically to the nation of Israel.

There is one slight variation to the above which is revealed in Exod. 20: 10. There was a requirement that visitors within Israel had to observe the Sabbath. The reason for this obviously was that the Sabbath was intended to be national in character, and it would be impractical, and damaging to have visitors working when locals were not allowed to do so. Generally though, the Law applied to the Jews only.

Those who believe the Church is Spiritual Israel, tend also to believe that the Nation of Israel (The Jewish people) have been permanently cut off, cast aside by God, and all the promises, blessings, etc. have been transferred to Christians. This however is completely contrary to Scripture.

The clear teaching of Scripture is that the church is not Spiritual Israel.

Some confusion may have come from a misinterpretation of the four Gospels. We need to be very careful of how we interpret the Gospels. The main points we need to always bear in mind is that Jesus Christ is a Jew, born under and subject to the Mosaic Law until his death. His ministry on Earth was primarily to the Jews. His message was from a Jew under the Law to Jews under the Law. He also told His disciples in Matt. 10:5-6 ⁵*These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: "Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans."* ⁶*But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*

Then to the gentile woman who approached Christ He said in Matt 15 24, it reads ²⁴ *But He answered and said, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."*

(Remember, this is Christ's own words)

It was after Christ's resurrection we find that his command was completely changed for we read in (Mark 16: 14- 16.). ¹⁴ *Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen.* ¹⁵ *And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."* ¹⁶ *He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.*

The message was salvation through repentance and faith in Christ to all nations. This was the transition period between Covenants and Dispensations. God gradually, during this time, educated and prepared them for the Gospel of Grace message He would send them through Paul. The Covenant of Grace would be primarily to the Gentiles, but also to all Jews who would hear in faith.

Because of Israel's rejection of Jesus the Gospel was sent to the Gentiles. This does not mean that Israel is forever cut off, rather they have for a time (during the Church Age) been put to one side while God works through the Christian Church.

Rom. 11:25-27 reads;

²⁵ *For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.* ²⁶ *And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, And He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob;"* ²⁷ *For this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins."*

This shows that during the Tribulation, after the Church has been removed (Raptured) all Israel will be saved.

Jesus later chose and empowered Paul to take the new message of the Gospel of grace to the Gentiles. The reason for this is found in Matt 23. After condemning Israel for their sins and rejection of Him He said in verses 37-39, ³⁷ *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!"* ³⁸ *See! Your house is left to you desolate;* ³⁹ *for I say*

to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' "
 The Gospel before Christ's death was "The Gospel of the Kingdom" then between the resurrection and Paul's conversion there was a transitional period "The Gospel of repentance, and faith in the finished work of Christ on the Cross" Then Paul brought in the final stage of Christ's message, The Gospel of Grace (unmerited favour) based on faith, not works."

The Christian Church was a secret, a mystery hidden from all until the day of Pentecost. The Gospels are the Lord's message to Israel, not the Church.

The Church commenced when the Holy Spirit came upon the believers at Pentecost and the Gospel of grace followed from Paul's conversion.

Paul had to write rebuking Christians at Rome, and Galatia, who wanted to cling to the Laws as given to Israel, and not only that, but they wanted to bind Gentile Christians by those same Laws. As one of the first steps of conversion, they were insisting on circumcision as an outward sign of their obedience to the old Covenant Laws. For this reason, those Christian Jews became known as "The Circumcision Party". Rom. 4: 1-16, and Acts 15: 24-29.

One Scripture often taken out of context is Gal. 6: 16, which reads, "*And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God.*" – Some say that "*The Israel of God*" refers to the Christian Church, but Paul was writing to Gentile Christians in Galatia who had come under the influence of the Circumcision party and were now considering placing themselves back under the Law, but the previous verse shows Paul was telling them that circumcision (a part of the Mosaic Law) was not required as a law or sign for the Christian. Verse 15 reads, "*For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation*".

Paul was saying that circumcision of the flesh made no difference to salvation.

In verse 16 the "them" referred to are the Christian believers of verse 15 who do not recognise circumcision (the Law) and the Israel of God he refers to, are the Jewish believers of faith who were present with them.

Another taken out of context is Rom. 2: 17, It reads, "*Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest on the law, and make your boast in God*" Here it is clear Paul is addressing Jewish believers in Rome who were trying also to embrace the Law. Paul is simply saying, it's not works, outward appearances, or reliance on being a Jew under the Old Covenant that would save them. Rather he was saying, being a Jew under the Covenant of Grace, (the Law written on the heart) is what would save them. To keep the verse in context we need also to read

Rom 2: 28-29.

*"For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh
 "He is a Jew, who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God."*

What Paul was saying here is, that these Christian Jews citizenship is now in Heaven (not national or secular Israel) and they were no longer bound by the Laws given to Israel and should not look to outward signs in the flesh or the keeping of the Law for justification. To be the Jew that God wanted them to be, it was necessary for them to have faith just as Abraham did, Rom. 4: 1-5, and accept the lineage through the free woman (Sarah), not the Law as pictured through the bondwoman (Hagar). Paul is saying to these Jews, 'If you want to be a good Jew (one pleasing to God), then be a Jew of faith, not law.' See also Rom. 11: 5, 6. Gal. 5: 1

Paul, writing to the Ephesians in Eph. 2: 8 to 3: 7., goes on to show that Gentile believers are now fellow citizens of Christ's promised Kingdom through the Dispensation of Grace, and sharing the citizenship with the Old Testament saints of faith; Faithful Israel. Thus, true believers share the

blessings of Faithful Israel that has existed since Abraham.

If a person puts their faith in Christ, thereby becoming a Christian, then that person indeed shares the blessings, but by no means replaces Israel, nor can claim promises or laws made to National Israel alone.

Many people seem to forget that Jesus Christ was born a Jew and until His death was subject to all the Mosaic Law. On His death He left a will, The New Testament/ Covenant/ Dispensation which freed us from the Mosaic Law.

During the Lord's earthly ministry, (while under the Law), He proclaimed His message of the Gospel of the Kingdom, which was aimed at any Jews who would accept Him, and His message. Then at the end of His ministry He warned the spiritual leaders and those that were rejecting Him saying, in Mat. 21: 43. *"Therefore I say unto you the Kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof."* - But when Christ was speaking to His Jewish disciples earlier in Luke 12: 32. He said, *"Fear not little flock: for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom."* - Christ was speaking to faithful Jews saying, He is taking from National secular Israel and giving to faithful Israel. For this is the Kingdom that was promised to faithful Abraham, and also later to the remnant of the Nation of Israel who are alive and repent towards the end of the coming Tribulation. (Israel will repent as a nation at the end of the Tribulation.). Read, Rev. 7. 1-8. (Verses 9 & 10 refers to Gentile believers), & 14: 1-5. - Christ said in Mat. 15: 24. *"I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel"*

In this last quote it appears that Christ was speaking of the Israelites, and those of Judah, that had been dispersed among the nations during their captivities. These are mentioned in Ezek. 37: 1-24. Verses 15-20, mentions the two sticks that represent the divided kingdom of Israel and Judah. In verses 21-24, the promise is made that God will reunite these dispersed ones from both kingdoms, and they shall have one shepherd back in the land of Israel. – During the Great Tribulation, when they have been returned to their own land, they will as a nation, repent and accept Christ as their Messiah, Saviour, and King. Read, Ezek. 39: 21-29. They will then all be with Christians the Church of grace by faith

Recommended reading covering this subject is;
 'The Basis of the Pre-millennial Faith', by Charles C. Ryrie.

COVENANTS

The titles we have for Old and New Testaments are positioned by the will of man.

Perhaps to be more correct the New Testament should not be regarded as starting at Mat.1: 1, but rather from the time of the crucifixion. For we find the New Testament first being initiated in Mat. 26: 28, which reads, *“For this is My blood of **the new covenant**, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”*

Christ was up to His crucifixion, a minister in the flesh, under the Law; but once resurrected became a minister of grace in the Spirit. This is why we read in 2 Cor. 5: 16, *“Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer.”*

The issue that is overlooked by many is that the Bible is divided into a number of Covenants and Dispensations.

A Covenant or testament; Is a will, or a promise that has been made by one party to another. Read Heb. 9: 16 to 10:10. .

God made a Covenant with Abram in Gen. chapt. 12:1-3. This Covenant clearly identifies Abram’s seed as the Nation of Israel, but Gal. 3: 16, also makes it clear that the seed is Christ. No problem there; for we recognise Christ was born a Jew. It is then further pointed out in Gal. 3: 29 that Christ and the Church are of the seed of Abraham. This shows that all believers by faith, Jew or Gentile, are of the seed of Abraham.

We can also observe the introduction and additions to Covenants in the following:

In Gen., chap. 17, God made a Covenant with Abram, saying He would make Abram the father of many nations. (Vs. 4.), and He would further establish it through his son, Isaac. (Vs. 21.). Isaac passed on the Covenant blessing to his son Jacob. In Gen. 28: 1-4, and God later confirmed that blessing in Gen. 32: 24-30, when He changed Jacob’s name to Israel. Thus Jacob (Abram’s grandson) was the first Israelite, and through him, all of the covenant promises, and blessings flow to the nation of Israel. When Abram was given the Covenant, God sealed it by changing the name of Abram to Abraham. God also gave the outward sign of a Covenant change, with the sign in the flesh of circumcision, thus indicating that the people with this sign were set apart as His.

Jacob also when the time came, was given the name change to Israel, and the sign in the flesh of circumcision was continued on through him. Other additions to the Abramic Covenant can be found in Gen. Chapters 13 to 22. Through his line also, Moses was given the written Law. In contrast to this, in Acts chap. 9, when Saul was called and given the Covenant of Grace, his name was then changed from Saul to Paul. - Acts. 15: 1-13, and Rom. 2: 17-29, shows that circumcision and the Law of Moses are not binding on Christians, be they Jew or Gentile. For the outward physical sign in the flesh was then replaced by the inward spiritual sign of the indwelling Spirit of God, and the Law of Love with its moral commandments, written on the heart, and not on stone.-

God made a number of Covenants with Israel, including the Mosaic, Davidic, Palestinian, and the New Covenant.

Jerem. 31: 31-34, mentions the New Covenant that God will make with Israel and Judah (the whole House of Israel) at a future time. We find Christ was the minister and mediator of that New Covenant, for it was a Covenant based on faith. Christ included Christians in it, for it is repeated in Acts. 15: 14-17. This is a Covenant Gentile believers share with Jewish believers of faith, moulding Jewish and Christian believers into the one people - Israel as a nation cannot share in this Covenant until they repent as a nation and accept Christ by faith during the Tribulation.

The institution of this New Covenant is found in; Luke 22: 20. 1 Cor. 11: 25. 2 Cor. 3: 6. Heb. 8: 8, & 9: 15, & 12: 24.

When Israel rejected her Messiah (John 1: 11.), this New Covenant was opened by Christ to all who would believe, (Jew and Gentile), but the Jews as a nation will not enter into this Covenant until they repent during the coming Tribulation. God has not given up on Israel, neither did the early Apostles.

- When national Israel repents, God will pour out His Covenant blessings upon her and re-establish her.

Read, Gen. 15: 13-16. Lev. 26: 44, 45. Deut. 28: 62-65, & 30: 1-3. Jer. 23: 5-8, & 25: 11, 12, & 31: 31-37. Ezek. 34: 11-31, & chapters 36 to 40. Hosea 3: 5. Zech. 2: 8-13, & 8: 1-23, & 14: 16-21. Amos 9: 9-15. Luke 1: 24, & 30-33. Acts 15: 14-17. Rom. 9: 1-5, 10: 1, & 11: 1-36. 2 Cor. 3: 14-16. Rev. 1: 7, & 7: 4-8, & 14: 1-5.

The Gentile church was a mystery hidden from all Jews up until Paul's conversion.

Read, Acts:9: 15. Rom. 16: 25, 26. Eph. 3: 1-12. Col. 1: 24- 27.

In John 10: 16. The Lord hinted at a future Gentile Church. He could only hint, for His mission at that time was purely to the Jews. It reads, "*Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.*" Christ was speaking to Jews, both believers and non-believers. The "other flock", are the Gentile believers from the Dispensation of Grace, which He will call. Then the Gentile and Jewish believers will become one flock under the banner of faith, and grace. - Acts 15: 14-17, shows that afterwards the Lord would gather out of the Gentiles "*a people for His name*", (Gentile Christians). Gentiles would be given a place in the Kingdom the Jews had temporarily forfeited due to their lack of faith.

Mat. 8: 10-12. Rom. chapt. 11. Ephe. 2: 16-18 & 3: 1-7.

Many prophecies and other Scriptures use a figurative or type language, just as today we use figures or types to explain something. This is not spiritualising, but making something that is literal, easy to understand. In Scripture, the figurative language stands for that which has literal interpretation.

The day is fast coming when Israel as a nation will turn to the Lord and call upon Him, and be restored. For again in Acts 15: 14-17, we find that after Christ has called believers from the Gentiles, He will return and "*Build again the tabernacle of David which is fallen down*".- ... "*I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up*".- See also Lev. 26: 44,45.

In Rom. 11, particularly verses 25 to 27 it clearly teaches that Israel's blindness is temporary, and when the full number of the Gentiles has been saved, then all Israel shall be saved. This makes a clear distinction between saved National Israel, and the Gentile Church. This saving of National Israel shall happen towards the end of the Tribulation. –

See also 2 Cor, 3: 14-16. & Zech.2: 8-13 & 8: 1-23.

The Jews however always were, are, and shall continue to be, God's chosen people.

Read the Covenant in, Gen. 12: 1-3. 1 Chron. 16: 14-18. & Psa. 105: 6-11.

At this point we need also to remember that Jesus Christ (in the flesh) was born a Jew, and under the Law until His death. – To hate or despise Jews is to hate God, for Christ is God. –

Remember also the words of Numb.24: 9, which reads, "*...Blessed is he who blesses you (Israel), And cursed is he who curses you.*"

DISPENSATIONS

A Dispensation is an era; a period of time in which there is a change in method, instruction, rule, law, or purpose, such as a different covenant, or testament, of which there are a number in the Scriptures. An understanding of these simple dispensations is a major key to unlocking all of what is otherwise mysterious or confusing in Scripture. God does not change, but He does change His methods, and rules, to achieve His purposes, and what is best for mankind.

The Dispensation of Law (including the Sabbath) stretched from Moses at Mount Sinai to the death of Christ on the cross. Christ Himself (in the flesh) is a Jew, and as such, during the whole of His earthly life was subject to the Law of Moses, as were His disciples, and His mission was only to Israel. Mat. 10: 6,7, & 15: 21-28.

His message to them was 'The Gospel of the Kingdom,' and if Israel had heeded it, and accepted Him as Messiah and King He would have been able to establish His Kingdom then and there. Israel would then have taken salvation to the Gentiles.

Israel though rejected her King, and Christ told them just before His death in Mat. 23: 37,38, that their house was left to them desolate; and in John 1: 11, we read, "*He came to His own, (Israel) and His own did not receive Him,*".

(See also, Study #5.)

The Gospel of the Kingdom was proclaimed as the last part of the Dispensation of Law to the Jews, and overlapped into the Dispensation of Grace, phasing out after Paul's conversion. So, the Gospel of the Kingdom, (Salvation by repentance, new birth, and faith in Christ) was a necessary transition period between the two major dispensations.

There has of course been a number of Dispensations. It is necessary though to give most of them man-made titles.

Check out the following dispensations:

Dispensation of	Innocence,	= Creation to the Fall. Gen. Chapt. 1 to 3.
“	“ Conscience, & Curse.	= Adam to the Flood. Gen. Chapt.3.to 5
“	“ Human Govt.	= Noah to Abraham. Gen. Chapt. 6 to 11
“	“ Promise.	= Abraham to Moses. Gen. 12 to Exod. 20
“	“ Law.	= Moses to Christ's crucifixion. Exod. 20 to Mat. 27.
“	“ Kingdom	= Beginning of Christ's ministry, to Paul's conversion; then in suspension till its recommencement during the Tribulation, and will finish at end of the Millennium. Mat. 3. Acts 9. Rom. 9. Rev. 14.
“	“ Grace	= Paul's conversion to Tribulation. Acts 9.& Dan. 7 & 9. Matt. 24 & 25. 2 Thes.2. Rev. 2, 7, & 13.
“	“ Eternity	= From the end of the Millennium. Rev.:20. & 21.

There have also been dispensations of food:

- Adam to the Flood, Allowed only fruit, vegetables, and herbs to eat.
Gen. 1: 29,30. & 2: 16,17.
- Noah to Moses. Allowed to eat anything except blood.
Gen. 9: 1-4.
- Moses to Paul's Conversion. Allowed vegetables, plus restricted animals, fish, and birds.
Lev. 11.
- Paul to the Rapture All foods clean.
Acts 10: 9-16. 1 Tim. 4: 1-5. Rom. 6: 14. Eph. 3: 2.

DISPENSATION OF GRACE

We are no longer in the Dispensation of Law, but now in the Dispensation of Grace (Unmerited favour). It could also be called the Dispensation of Love. Read, Eph. 3: 1-8.

The Gospel of the Kingdom which Christ and His disciples proclaimed was suspended at Christ's death due to the Jews rejection of Christ. It will be reinstated during the coming Tribulation period when they will respond to it, and turn as a nation to Christ accepting Him as their Messiah and King. See Zech. 12: 14. John 1: 11. Acts 13: 46 & 28: 28. Rom. 11: 1-27. Rev. 11: 3-10.

A phasing out process of the Gospel of the Kingdom commenced at Christ's death. Then at Paul's conversion the Gospel of Grace was phased in. See Acts 9. - During the phasing out process, the Apostles and Disciples had to be steadily re-educated. We get an example of this in God's dealing with Peter in Acts 10: 9-48. & Gal. 2: 11-21.

Then with Paul's conversion the Gospel of Grace, and Dispensation of Grace was instituted. This New Covenant of Grace through the shed blood of Christ was given primarily to the Gentiles, but to the Jews also if they would but heed it.

So, Christians are no longer bound by the Law (including the Sabbath), but by Grace.

Col. 2: 16, 17, tells us that we are not to be judged, nor are we to judge others on matters of the Law. – Read also Gal. 4: 4-10.

Though the Sabbath does not bind Christians, a Christian's love for God will cause him to want to worship regularly. The day itself is not important, for Christianity is international, not like the Sabbath Laws as given to the Jews which were national in character.

It is impossible to keep the Sabbath worldwide at the one time, for when it is Saturday in one part of the world it will be Friday or Sunday in another. The Sabbath was given specifically to the Jews to be observed nationally. Christians should worship in some form every day, but nevertheless need to meet together regularly for fellowship, support, and joint worship. We are reminded of this need in Heb. 10: 24, 25, it reads,

“And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”

The day of the week was not so important, but the early Church set aside Sunday as a day that would distinguish them from the Jews, and also in commemoration of Christ's resurrection. See Acts. 20: 7, and 1 Cor. 16: 2. Also, worth noting, is the day the Holy Spirit came upon the Church, i.e. Pentecost was a Sunday. See Lev. 23: 15, 16, and Acts 2: 1.

Paul however did regularly meet with the Jews on the Sabbath in order to preach to them. This he did, not because he was under the Law, but because it gave the best opportunity for him to present the Gospel to the Jews. - Read, 1 Cor. 9: 19-23.

Yet when preaching to the Disciples, he did so on the first day of the week (Sunday). Acts 20: 6, 7, and from this reading it is obvious the disciples regularly met on that day.

Through Christ, the Law has given way to grace.

Rom. 3: 27, 28, & 7: 4-6, & 8: 1-4, & 9: 30-33, & 10: 4. Gal. 3: 10-14. Eph. 1: 7. Heb. 8: 7-13.

Christ's work was finished on the cross, bringing through His grace, justification and redemption.
John 17: 4. Rom. 3: 21-26. Gal. 2: 16-21. Titus. 3: 4-7.

The salvation Christ offers to us was purchased by His blood; and has become to us a free gift of His grace (unmerited favour). It is now up to us, as to whether or not we accept that gift.
Rom. 3: 21-31, & 10: 13. 2 Cor. 6: 2.

Heb. 2 : 3. reads,
"How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? ..."

HISTORICAL QUOTES

Some Sabbath keepers agree with the R. Catholic Church claim that Pope Silvester, changed the Sabbath to Sunday observance in AD 321.

Some also claim that Biblical references to the ‘Lord’s Day’ are actually referring to the Sabbath. – The fact the Sabbath and the Lord’s Day are distinctly different days, is made clear in the writings of Ignatius, which were written over **200 years before** Pope Sylvester’s ruling.

Ignatius was a Christian, martyred to wild animals in Rome about AD 107/110 – He is said to have been a pupil of John, and a bishop of Antioch. He is credited with having written a number of letters to the churches. He was a man who appeared to observe a spiritual form of keeping the Sabbath, but also observed the ‘Lord’s Day’ (Sunday).

In his letter to the Magnesians, he wrote the following.

“... Let us therefore no longer keep the Sabbath after the Jewish manner, ... But let everyone of you keep the Sabbath after a spiritual manner, rejoicing in meditation on the Law, and not in relaxation of the body. ... and after the observance of the Sabbath, let every friend of Christ keep the Lord’s Day as a festival, the resurrection-day, the queen and chief of all the days.” Then in another part he wrote; *“If therefore, those who were brought up in the ancient order of things have come to the possession of a new hope, no longer observing the Sabbath, but living in the observance of the Lord’s Day, on which also our life has sprung up again by Him and by His death...”*

In ch. 9, of his letter to the Trallians, he wrote concerning Christ’s crucifixion and resurrection as follows.

“... During the Sabbath He continued under the earth, in the tomb in which Joseph of Arimathaea had laid Him. At the dawning of the Lord’s day He arose from the dead, according to what was spoken by Himself. “As Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly, so shall the Son of man also be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” The day of the preparation, then, comprises the passion; the Sabbath embraces the burial; the Lord’s Day contains the resurrection”.

In the Epistle of Barnabas, that was written about AD. 100 we find the following.

Barnabus 15: 8,9. *“Furthermore He says to them, “Your new moons and the sabbaths I cannot, away with.” Do you see what He means? The present sabbaths are not acceptable to Me, but that which I have made, in which I will give rest to all things, and make the beginning of an eighth day, that is the beginning of another world. Wherefore we also celebrate with gladness the eighth day in which Jesus also rose from the dead, and was made manifest, and ascended into Heaven.”*

Tertullian, (AD 145 to 220) wrote;

“We kneel at other times, but on the Lord’s Day, ... we stand in prayer, nor do we count it lawful to fast on Sundays.”

Justin Martyr, (AD 110 to 165), in Chapter 67 of his ‘First Apology of Justin’ wrote concerning the way Christians worship, as follows;

“And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits... But Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Saviour on the same day rose from the dead.”

What it was that Pope Silvester really did, was to make legal, or official, the custom which was already in practice.

The Lord's Day 'Sunday' was already being observed as a day of worship by Christians, and though not bound by any Law chose that day to commemorate the resurrection, and the beginning of the New Covenant.

Evidence for the keeping of the Lord's Day (Sunday) as a day of meeting and worship can be found in the following Scriptures.

"When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place." Acts 2: 1, and Lev. 23: 16, shows this to be a Sunday. --

"One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind." (Rom. 14: 5.).

"So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbath's," (Col. 2:16.).

"Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight." (Acts 20: 7.).

"On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside". (1 Cor. 16: 2.)

The overriding factor is Love and Grace, not Law, or works.

Does this mean a person who observes the Sabbath is condemned for doing so? Certainly not! For so long as his motivation is not to seek righteousness or justification by observance of the Sabbath, or for that matter the Law, then his only error is in giving to himself unnecessary burdens. Though it could be argued that by doing so, he is certainly taking away from the finished work of Christ on the cross, He having shed His blood to free us from the burden of the Law. Read, Acts. 15: 24-29, & Rom. 14.

If however a person should seek to establish his/her own righteousness by the works of the Law, then that very Law will condemn him/her. Read, Gal. 3: 10-14.

So, the keeping of the Sabbath in itself does not affect our salvation one way or the other, unless, we rely on it as works to justification.

Being a Christian requires us to put our faith and trust in Christ's finished work on the cross.

Acknowledging and repenting of our sins, and accepting Him, His forgiveness, Grace, Love, & His Moral Law into our hearts.

Nothing else is required.

May the Love of God, the Grace of Christ, and the Guidance of the Holy Spirit be with you. Amen.

*The author highly recommends
the free Christian literature available through*

<http://www.ebcwa.org.au/>

<http://www.christiansunite.com/>

<http://heraldofhope.org.au/index.php/publications>

<http://www.blueletterbible.org/>

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