

# HOLY DAYS OR HOLIDAYS???

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*THE TRUE BIBLICAL FEAST DAYS FOR THE  
NEW TESTAMENT BELIEVER*

## Part X: The LORD's Day



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## INTRODUCTION

Of all the possible Biblical topics, few can spark an argument or flare a temper quicker than a discussion of the Sabbath. Those who observe the traditional seventh day Sabbath—from sundown Friday evening until sundown Saturday evening<sup>1</sup>—are convinced that few other topics are equal in importance. Mainstream Christianity, on the other hand, tends to discourage seventh day Sabbath observance with equal vigor, believing rather that Christians should observe Sunday in honor of the resurrection of the Savior. Both sides pick out a few verses key to their position and stand firm. Numerous books, arguing both sides, have been written on the topic.

In our examination of the Sabbath, we will resist calling on the opinions of the various ‘experts’ but instead abide by the watchword of the reformation, “Sola Scriptura.”<sup>2</sup> We will, therefore, use only the Bible to make the determinations of whether the Sabbath is important, to whom it applies, when it occurs, etc. Therefore, the question that stands before us is, “What does the Bible teach about the Sabbath?”

## IS THE SABBATH IMPORTANT?

Before we actually examine whether or not the Sabbath is important, it might be a good idea to take a quick poll. What importance do you think most Christians would place on their keeping the Ten Commandments? Today’s moral relativism notwithstanding, most practicing Christians would probably answer that the Ten Commandments are important and should be observed.<sup>3</sup> But, have you ever taken a really close look to see which is the longest of the Ten Commandments? Coincidentally, this longest commandment—four whole verses—just happens to be the only one that begins with the word “Remember,” as if the people of the Most High would forget it at some point in the future:

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of Yahowah<sup>4</sup> your Elohim: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, not thy son, not thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor the stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days Yahowah made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore Yahowah blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it. (Exodus 20:8-12)

We see in this passage several key points that should not be overlooked. First, the people of the Most High are to “remember the sabbath” and to “keep it holy.” Whichever day is really the

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<sup>1</sup> The Biblical day goes from sundown to sundown: “And the evening and the morning were the first day” (Genesis 1:5); “And the evening and the morning were the second day” (Genesis 1:8); etc.

<sup>2</sup> “Solely the Scriptures”

<sup>3</sup> The importance of the Ten Commandments was the subject of Judge Moore’s ill-fated 2003 legal struggle as the former Chief Justice of Alabama tried to keep his Ten Commandments monument in the State Supreme Court building. He eventually lost his case before the U.S. Supreme Court.

<sup>4</sup> From the Hebrew “יהוה”. See the Elijah’s Cry study, “The name of Messiah for a discussion of the pronunciation.

Biblical Sabbath, the Creator “blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.” He has set apart and designated it as something “holy.”

Furthermore, we find that the Creator had sanctified the Sabbath—made it holy—long before the Ten Commandments were etched in stone, during the creation week itself,

And Elohim blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made<sup>5</sup>. (Genesis 2:3)

The second thing that we should notice from Exodus 20:10 is that the Sabbath is not simply the Sabbath of the Jews or any other religious group, but rather “the sabbath of Yahowah” Himself. In other words, the Sabbath is the Creator’s Sabbath. We find Moses pointing out this fact to the people as they wandered in the desert, again, even before the Ten Commandments were given at Mt. Sinai,

And he said unto them, This *is that* which the Yahowah hath said, To morrow *is* the rest of the holy sabbath unto Yahowah... (Exodus 16:23)

And Moses said, Eat that to day; for to day *is* a sabbath unto Yahowah: to day ye shall not find it in the field. (Exodus 16:25)

While it is probably not politically correct in the milk-toast Christianity of today, we should point out that the Most High was very serious about the sanctity and importance of the day that He had hallowed as a memorial of His creation event. As a matter of fact, it was so important that people who violated it were to lose their lives,

Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it *is* holy unto you: every one that defileth 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 may work be done; but in the seventh *is* the sabbath of rest, holy to Yahowah: whosoever doeth *any* work in 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 for ever: for *in* six days Yahowah made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed. (Exodus 31:14-17)

We find a subsequent reinforcement of the importance of the Sabbath to the Almighty and the emphasis that He placed upon it four chapters later,

And Moses gathered all the congregation of the children of Israel together, and said unto them, These *are* the words which Yahowah hath commanded, that ye should do them. Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day there shall

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<sup>5</sup> Because the Creator hallowed the Sabbath at the completion of His creation event, it would appear that He established it as a de-facto memorial of this event. As we continue to examine this Sabbath through the Scriptures, we will find this to be the case.

be to you an holy day, a sabbath of rest to Yahowah: whosoever doeth work therein shall be put to death. (Exodus 35:1-2)

The importance of the Sabbath, and the fact that the people of the Most High were to continue to observe it, is a theme we see repeated many times in the Bible. For example,

Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day *is* the sabbath of rest, an holy convocation; ye shall do no work *therein*: it *is* the sabbath of Yahowah in all your dwellings. (Leviticus 23:3)

Keep the sabbath day to sanctify it, as Yahowah thy Elohim hath commanded thee. Six days thou shalt labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day *is* the sabbath of Yahowah thy Elohim: *in it* thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that *is* within thy gates; that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou. (Deuteronomy 5:12-14)

Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing *is* this that ye do, and profane the sabbath day? Did not your fathers thus, and did not our Elohim bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the sabbath. (Nehemiah 13:17-18)

Neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on the sabbath day, neither do ye any work, but hallow ye the sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers. But they obeyed not, neither inclined their ear, but made their neck stiff, that they might not hear, nor receive instruction. And it shall come to pass, if ye diligently hearken unto me, saith Yahowah, to bring in no burden through the gates of this city on the sabbath day, but hallow the sabbath day, to do no work therein; Then shall there enter into the gates of this city kings and princes sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they, and their princes, the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: and this city shall remain for ever. (Jeremiah 17:22-25)

Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shewed *difference* between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them. (Ezekiel 22:26)

And in controversy they shall stand in judgment; *and* they shall judge it according to my judgments: and they shall keep my laws and my statutes in all mine assemblies; and they shall hallow my sabbaths. (KJV Ezekiel 44:24)

We can see from these verses that the prophets of the Most High convey to His people the same consistent message that we saw conveyed by Moses, namely that the Sabbath of the Most High is

important to Him and He expects His people to observe it. But exactly to which people do these passages refer?

## WHO IS THE SABBATH FOR?

If we return briefly to the Ten Commandments, and take another look at the Sabbath commandment, we see an interesting notation in both Exodus 20:10 and Deuteronomy 5:14. Not only was the Sabbath to be observed and revered by the Israelites, but also by “the stranger that is within thy gates.”

But the seventh day *is* the sabbath of Yahowah thy Elohim: *in it* thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that *is* within thy gates...  
(Exodus 20:10)

But the seventh day *is* the sabbath of Yahowah thy Elohim: *in it* thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that *is* within thy gates; that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou. (Deuteronomy 5:14)

In other words, those non-Israelite Gentiles<sup>6</sup> sojourning with the Israelites, and following the Elohim of the Israelites, were to remember and observe His Sabbath as well. But just where did these Gentiles, who were following the Elohim of the Israelites, come from?

Well, if we look back to the time when Moses led the Israelites out of Pharaoh’s Egypt, we find that Moses and the Israelites were not alone. We find, in fact, that Moses led a mixed multitude of Gentile peoples out of Egypt with the Israelites,

And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand on foot *that were* men, beside children. And a mixed multitude went up also with them; and flocks, and herds, *even* very much cattle. (Exodus 12:37-38)

But does the Bible give any examples of such Gentiles, sojourning with the Israelites and observing the Sabbath of the Most High? As it turns out, the Scriptures give us a great example of a Gentile following the ways of the Elohim of the Israelites. As a matter of fact, this particular Gentile was following the ways of the Most High so well that most of us have probably assumed that he was Jewish, or at least an Israelite.

We encounter this individual when Moses sent forth 12 men to spy out the land of Canaan. The man’s name was Caleb and many believe that he was an Israelite because of the following verse,

And Yahowah spake unto Moses, saying, Send thou men, that they may search the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel: of every tribe of their

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<sup>6</sup> The English word “Gentile” comes from the Hebrew word “Goyim” which means the non-Israelite nations.

fathers shall ye send a man, every one a ruler among them. And Moses by the commandment of Yahowah sent them from the wilderness of Paran: all those men *were* heads of the children of Israel. And these *were* their names: of the tribe of Reuben, Shammua the son of Zaccur. Of the tribe of Simeon, Shaphat the son of Hori. Of the tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh. (Numbers 13:1-6)

And the names of the men *are* these: Of the tribe of Judah, Caleb the son of Jephunneh. (Numbers 34:19)

But notice, Caleb is specifically referred to twice as “son of Jephunneh.” So, why this emphasis, and who was Jephunneh? Again, the Bible provides us with our answer,

Surely none of the men that came up out of Egypt, from twenty years old and upward, shall see the land which I swear unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob; because they have not wholly followed me: Save Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite, and Joshua the son of Nun: for they have wholly followed Yahowah. (Numbers 32:11-12)

Then the children of Judah came unto Joshua in Gilgal: and Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite said unto him, Thou knowest the thing that Yahowah said unto Moses the man of God concerning me and thee in Kadeshbarnea. (Joshua 14:6)

Jephunneh was a Kenezite; the Kenizites were not Israelites, but one of the pagan peoples that inhabited the land of Canaan—the land that was promised to Abraham and his descendants,

In the same day Yahowah made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: The Kenites, and the Kenizites, and the Kadmonites, And the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims, And the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Gergashites, and the Jebusites. (Genesis 15:18-21)

This brings us to an interesting series of questions. If Caleb was the son of a Kenezite, what was he doing as a leader of the tribe of Judah in Joshua 14:6? How could a non-Israelite be treated as an Israelite—so much so that he was a leader in the tribe? The answer lies in a passage we have already seen dealing with Gentiles who would turn from their pagan ways, follow the ‘Holy One of Israel’, and sojourn with the Israelites.

And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the passover to Yahowah, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one that is born in the land: for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof. One law shall be to him that is homeborn, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you. (Exodus 12:48-49)

Even though Caleb’s father was a Kenezite, Caleb had obviously elected to sojourn with the Israelites and was either part of the “mixed multitude” that had departed Egypt with Moses or

had joined them soon after their departure. He had decided to follow the Most High, followed the same commandments taught by Moses, and was then treated “as one who is born in the land,” with all the rights and privileges of native-born Israelites. That is how he could be able to be a leader in the tribe of Judah.

Not only did Caleb follow the Almighty’s Law, but the Bible indicates that he followed it to his utmost and he was blessed with part of the land inheritance promised to the descendants of Abraham.

And Joshua blessed him, and gave unto Caleb the son of Jephunneh Hebron for an inheritance. Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite unto this day, because that he wholly followed Yahowah Elohim of Israel. (Joshua 14:13-14)

It makes perfect sense that He would expect them to observe the day He had sanctified during the first week of creation (see Genesis 2:3). But do we find the non-Israelite Gentiles observing the Sabbath elsewhere in the “Old” Testament?

If we look to the Book of Isaiah, we see those Gentiles following the Creator were still to remember and observe His Sabbath hundreds of years of years Caleb and the Creator etching His Ten Commandments in stone:

Thus saith Yahowah, Keep ye judgment, and do justice: for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed. Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it: that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil. Neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to Yahowah, speak, saying, Yahowah hath utterly separated me from his people... Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to Yahowah, to serve him, and to love the name of Yahowah, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer...  
(Isaiah 56:1-8)

We see here a consistency between what the Most High proclaimed to Moses, the actions of Caleb, and what the Almighty proclaimed through Isaiah, some 700 years later. Once again, we find total consistency in the Scriptures and that that both Israelites and non-pagan Gentiles were supposed to observe the Sabbath of the Most High.

“But”, one might argue, “that was the Old Testament and we are no longer under the law!” Some might even reason, as is often stated, “the Sabbath commandment is the only one of the ten that is not repeated in the New Testament.” But is this really the case?

## **WHAT ABOUT THE SABBATH UNDER THE NEW COVENANT?**

If we turn to the New Testament, we find a pretty consistent message that Believers are to walk according to the example set by the Messiah. We find this spelled out, for example, in the book of 1 John,

He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.  
(1 John 2:6)

But just what was the Savior's example concerning how one should approach the Sabbath? Did he "remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy," as the Most High had commanded Moses and reiterated to Isaiah, or did he change things under the New Covenant?

### The Savior's Example ("What would Jesus do?")

If we really want to see Messiah's practice concerning the Sabbath, it is pretty clearly spelled out in the book of Luke,

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read.  
(Luke 4:16)

We see here that, not only was the Messiah remembering the Sabbath and keeping it holy, per the command of the Most High, but that it was "his custom" to do so! If we are to "walk even as he walked," perhaps we should consider adopting His custom as our own. After all, when we ask the question, "What would Jesus do" regarding the Sabbath, we have our answer in black and white!

But, one might argue, "Of course Messiah was keeping the Sabbath; he was after all a Jew and that was before the cross." Does the Sabbath commandment still apply after the cross?

### Was the Sabbath Done Away With by the Cross? ("What would Paul do?")

One does not have to look very far to find post-cross statements about Sabbath observance. As a matter of fact, we can find a definitive statement from the Book of Acts as relates to the life of Shaul (Paul), "the apostle of the Gentiles" (Romans 11:13). Perhaps, therefore, we can take Paul's example of how to approach the Sabbath,

Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews: And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures. (Acts 17:1-2)

Oops, there goes the Bible agreeing with itself again! We see here that Paul—even AFTER THE CROSS—was still obeying the Creator of the Universe, as did Moses, Caleb, and the Messiah,



Himself. Furthermore, the Bible tells us that it was his custom—“as his manner was”—to observe the Sabbath, just like the Messiah. So, if Paul, as the apostle to the Gentiles—and the one to whom pastors most often look for guidance how to run the modern church—was still following the example set by Messiah concerning the Biblical Sabbath, shouldn't we?

But, Paul's clear example notwithstanding—not to mention Messiah's example and the admonition for Believers to walk “even as he [Messiah] walked” (1 John 2:6)—there are still those who would make the argument, “Paul and the Savior were both Jews; that's why they kept the Sabbath.” But given all we have seen thus far, does this argument even make sense? Or, rather, is it a specious argument, based upon no more than a manmade tradition, unsupported by the Bible?

If the Sabbath commandment is in fact still important after the cross—as the examples of Messiah and Paul seem to indicate—then we should also be able to find instances of first-century Gentiles observing it as well.

#### “What Would the Gentile Followers of Paul Do?”

And as we might expect—given the consistency of the Scriptures—we indeed find clear examples of Gentile believers observing the Sabbath in the New Testament. If we look to the Book of Acts we find a fairly long, but interesting passage.

Now when Paul and his company loosed from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia: and John departing from them returned to Jerusalem. But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day and sat down. (Acts 13:13-14).

We should probably take a short pause here to note that this action, by Paul and his company, was in total agreement with the Acts 17:2 statement that it was Paul's “manner” to observe the Sabbath. But we continue:

And after the reading of the law and prophets... Paul stood up, and beckoning with his hand said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear Elohim, give audience... (Acts 13:15-16)

Again, we should pause here to take note of Paul's reference to those that “fear Elohim.” This designation is, in addition, to the “men of Israel,” as if he is speaking to two groups. This distinction becomes even clearer 10 verses later as Paul continues his message to:

Men and brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you that fear Elohim. (Acts 13:26)

Again, Paul makes reference to a term, which might be called today “God fearers.” It is interesting to point out here that the Jews have often referred to non-pagan Gentiles (such as those found in Isaiah 56) as the “gerim,” or God-fearing Gentiles. And indeed, approximately 16

verses later, the Bible clarifies that Paul was doing just that while referring to a group of people present in the synagogue:

And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath day.  
(Acts 13:42)

Note here that, not only were there Elohim-fearing Gentiles present in the synagogue in Antioch on the Sabbath day, but that these Gentiles beseeched Paul to preach the same message the “next sabbath day.” This request indicates that—just like the Messiah, and just like Paul—it was also their manner or custom to “remember the sabbath day to keep it holy.”

It should also be pointed out that Paul—if he believed that they should be worshipping on Sunday—could have taken this opportunity to correct these first-century Gentile believers and instruct them to observe Sunday rather than the Sabbath. We find, however, that Paul did not do this. We find instead that he did return the “next sabbath day,” just as they had requested:

And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of Elohim. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy...  
(Acts 13:44)

We see here that, not only did Paul indeed return on the Sabbath “as his manner was,” but these Gentile believers brought all their Gentile friends to the synagogue in Antioch on this particular Sabbath day, provoking the Jews to jealousy. But Antioch was not an isolated example. Acts 18 indicates that this was a regular occurrence between Paul and other believers also in Corinth:

And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks. (Acts 18:4)

And of course, Acts 17:2 states that Paul repeated this activity “as his manner was” on at least three occasions in the synagogue in Thessalonica. But now, let’s take a look at another New Testament Gentile that we have probably never considered from this point of view—Cornelius the centurion.

#### The “After the Cross” Example of Cornelius

Cornelius is often spoken of in Christian teachings today. He is acknowledged as being a “devout man that feared Elohim,” according to the following passage:

There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian *band*, A devout man, and one that feared Elohim with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to Elohim always.  
(Acts 10:1-2)

We see here that the Bible calls Cornelius was a “devout man” who “feared Elohim with all his house.” But just what does this mean? An adherent of any religion can be devout, but Cornelius

was devout man that “feared Elohim.” Could that mean that Cornelius feared him like Caleb and Ruth feared Him? Would it not make sense that Cornelius also obeyed Him? A closer look will indicate that he did in fact obey the Most High by keeping his Law!

There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian *band*, A devout *man*, and one that feared Elohim with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to Elohim always.  
(Acts 10:1-2)

We again note that Cornelius feared Elohim and prayed to Him always, but we also see that he “gave much alms to the people.” What kind of alms was he giving? We must remember that there were no Gentile ‘believers’ before Cornelius; he was the first. So, where did he get the idea to give alms? And to which people did he give them?

We covered this topic earlier in the paper. Alms giving is a requirement of the Law and is addressed in such passages as Deuteronomy 14:22-29, Deuteronomy 26:12, etc. Messiah likewise addressed alms giving in Matthew 6:1-4. And if we look to another verse in Acts 10, we will see a good indication that Cornelius was providing these alms to the Jewish needy, in accordance with the Law.

And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth Elohim, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from Elohim by an holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee.  
(Acts 10:22)

But how would this be possible? Alms were usually brought to the Temple in Jerusalem and to the synagogues in other towns and cities. Could it be that Cornelius was attending worship services with the Jews in the synagogue in Caesarea? Of course it is possible—and indeed likely—because we see numerous instances of Gentiles worshipping in synagogues on the Sabbath day (e.g., Acts 13:42-47, Acts 14:1, Acts 17:2-4, Acts 18:4) just like they were instructed to do in Isaiah 56:6.

Not only did Cornelius fear the ‘Holy One of Israel,’ pray always, and give alms to the Jewish needy, but we also find that he fasted and that his fasting was also approved by the Most High. As we have seen earlier, fasting is also addressed in the Law of the Most High (e.g., Lev 23:27, Isa 58:5), and addressed by the Messiah in Matthew 6:16.

And Cornelius said, Four days ago I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing, And said, Cornelius, thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of Elohim. Send therefore to Joppa, and call hither Simon, whose surname is Peter; he is lodged in the house of *one* Simon a tanner by the sea side: who, when he cometh, shall speak unto thee. (Acts 10:30-32)

By all indications, Cornelius was a Gentile that feared the ‘Holy One of Israel’ and followed His Law—as indicated by his prayer, fasting, and alms giving in a setting wherein he was of good

report among the nation of the Jews. No wonder he was chosen to be the first Gentile to receive the Gospel; he was acting just like Caleb and Ruth!

To say that the New Testament does not emphasize Sabbath observance can only be made if one is taught to ignore the customs of the Messiah, Paul, and Gentile believers. And unfortunately, mainstream preachers coming out of most seminaries, are taught to do just that—to overlook the clear examples we have just examined right from the pages of Scripture.

### **BUT WHAT ABOUT RESURRECTION SUNDAY? (The long count to three...)**

But what about Sunday, wasn't the Savior raised on Sunday morning and didn't Christians break bread on the first day of the week? These are good questions and these are the points that are emphasized from the pulpit and by hundreds of radio broadcasts weekly. But again, should we not look to Scripture rather than to doctrinal teaching of denominations?

First, was the Savior really raised on Easter Sunday morning? If we look to the Messiah's own words, we find a curious statement which seems to raise serious doubts about this teaching. The setting was the Sabbath day and Messiah had earlier been in the grain fields answering charges that he had violated Pharisaic commandments relating to Sabbath worship (Matthew 12:1-3). Per his custom, he later entered a synagogue and taught on proper Sabbath activities (Matthew 12:9-14). And finally, he left the synagogue and was followed by a group which included religious authorities that demanded a sign that he was in fact the Messiah,

Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonah: For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. (Matthew 12:38-40)

We see here that the chief sign that he was the Messiah included the fact that he was to be “three days and three nights” in the heart of the earth. The issue of this timing is dealt with in greater detail in the study on the Passover week, but some simple math will suffice for now. If Messiah went into the earth on “Good Friday” afternoon and was raised on “Easter Sunday” at sunrise, as is the prevailing teaching, there is no way that he fulfilled his own prophecy of being in the heart of the earth “three days and three nights.” Friday—Saturday—Sunday might be three days, but only two nights are covered by this period, namely Friday night and Saturday night. So, where is the third night? Did the Savior fail to fulfill His own prophecy proving that He is the Messiah?

The mainstream Christian tradition of an Easter Sunday resurrection dictates that He failed this test and cannot, therefore be the Messiah. Of course creative interpretations are often used to try to make the mainstream teaching work, but intellectual honesty cannot support this position. Furthermore, John 20:1 states that the women who came to his tomb Sunday morning got there before sunrise, “when it was yet dark,” and the Messiah was already gone. So it would appear that He even violated the “third day” part of the prophecy. So, did Messiah get it wrong and

violate his own prophecy and the “sign of the prophet Jonah” that he was the Messiah? Or have we had it wrong for most of the last 2000 years?

What we do know from Scripture is that in all the Gospels, when the ladies arrived at the tomb, while it was yet dark, he had already departed. The question was, when did he raise and when did He leave the tomb? The answer to the second part of the question is obvious, He left the tomb sometime before their early morning arrival—sometime BEFORE Sunday morning.

While the Passover study addresses these issues more completely, the question we need to ask ourselves for now is, “Should such an ‘iffy’ interpretation of resurrection morning events be used to throw out this longest of the Ten Commandments, especially given the fact that our Heavenly Father has placed such importance on it and we see His Son, Paul, and first century Gentile believers continuing to observe it? On judgment day, “My pastor told me so” might not be a real good excuse.

Acts 20:7—“And upon the first day of the week...”

“But,” one might argue, “didn’t the believers break bread on the first day of the week in Acts 20:7, thus proving that they gathered on Sunday to worship?”

And upon the first *day* of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight. (Acts 20:7)

The answer at first glance might be, “sure they did, but is this a good reason to ignore the longest of the Almighty’s Ten Commandments, especially when we consider that the first century believers—and everyone else in the Bible—were also observing the Sabbath? But it gets more complicated and less convincing if we take a slightly closer look at the passage.

First, if we look at the fifth word, “day,” we find it to be italicized in the text. When an italicized word is used in the Bible, the italics are used to denote that that particular word is not actually found in the text, but implied by it, in the opinion of the translator.<sup>7</sup> So, the word “day” is not really found in the passage at all. But can it be implied or should the translators not have added it, in fact?

If we look at the Greek of Acts 20:7, we find that the phrase interpreted as “first day of the week” appears in the Greek as ‘mia| tw̄h sabbatwn’ (pronounced “mee’ -ah tone sab-baw-tone”). The word ‘mia’ (Strong’s key number 3391) means “one” or “first”; the word ‘tw̄h’ means “of the.” Therefore, the literal meaning of ‘mia| tw̄h sabbatwn’ is “the one of the sabbatons” or the “first of the sabbatons.” And at this point we encounter a curious coincidence. Namely, there just happens to be a Hebrew word that looks and smells almost identical to the Greek “sab-baw-tone” we just examined—the Hebrew word, “!AtBv;” (pronounced “shab-baw-tone”). As a

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<sup>7</sup> A typical example of the explanation of italicized words in the Bible can be found in *The Hebrew-Greek Key Study Bible, King James Edition*, compiled and edited by Spiros Zodhiates, Th.D., Word Bible Publishers Inc., under the section entitled “Explanation of General Format, How to Use the Hebrew Greek Study Bible.”

matter of fact, there is a high probability that the Greek “Sabba,twn” may be the transliteration of the Hebrew “!AtBv”, especially given the context of the verse.

The Hebrew word “!AtBv” is rendered by *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* as,

!AtBv shâbbathôwn, shab-baw-thone'; from 7676 [shabbat] a sabbatism or special holiday:—rest, sabbath.

So, it is very likely that the Greek word “sabbaton” might just be an in-text transliteration of the Hebrew “shabbaton” as we will now explore.

“The first of the shabbatons.”

If we take a quick look into chapter 23 of the book of Leviticus 23, we will find a detailed explanation of the Biblical feast days. Just like the Biblical Sabbath, we see in this chapter that these feast days are not “Feasts of the Jews” but rather “Feasts of Yahowah”<sup>8</sup>,

And Yahowah spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, *Concerning the feasts of Yahowah*, which ye shall proclaim *to be* holy convocations, *even these are my feasts...* These *are the feasts of Yahowah*, *even* holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their seasons... And Moses declared unto the children of Israel the feasts of Yahowah. (Leviticus 23:1-2, 4, 44)

Not only is this fact stressed FOUR times in Leviticus 23, but if we take a slightly closer look at the chapter, we will find that the Hebrew word “!AtBv” (shabbaton) is used five times in the chapter to delineate five of the Almighty’s Feast Days or His ‘Appointed Times’,

- (1) In Leviticus 23:3, the seventh day Sabbath is a “!AtBv; tBv̂”, (shabbat-shabbaton).
- (2) In Leviticus 23:24, the Feast of Trumpets is a “!AtBv” (shabbaton).
- (3) In Leviticus 23:32, the Day of Atonement is a “!AtBv; tBv̂”, (shabbat-shabbaton).
- (4) In Leviticus 23:39, the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles is a “!AtBv” (shabbaton).
- (5) In Leviticus 23:40, the eighth day of the Feast of Tabernacles is a “!AtBv” (shabbaton).

Notice that the first “shabbaton” listed (Leviticus 23:3)—literally the “first of the shabbatons”—is the Sabbath. Either this is an unbelievable coincidence, or Acts 20:7 is simply relating what goes on in every observant Jewish home today—traceable back over 2000 years in Jewish writings—and in the homes of most Sabbath-keeping Christians today: the brethren simply gathered together to “break bread” and have a fellowship meal following the Sabbath service

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<sup>8</sup> Although it is beyond the scope of this study, the term “feasts of Yahowah” is more accurately translated as “the appointed times of Yahowah.” See the study entitled, *Holy Days or Holidays, Part One: Introduction*.

earlier in the day. Is this the correct interpretation? It certainly merits a lot of study and prayer by believers who want to “worship the Father in spirit and in truth” (John 4:23).<sup>9</sup>

### **“BUT, WHAT ABOUT THE LORD’S DAY?”**

Incidentally, we often hear reference to “the Lord’s day;” but just what is “the Lord’s day?” Of course, mainstream Christian teaches us that it is Sunday<sup>10</sup>, but there is absolutely no Biblical verse stating this. As a matter of fact, the Bible, unsurprisingly, does contain numerous verses indicating that—if the Almighty has designated a particular day of the week to be His—it is the Biblical Sabbath. If we look, for example Isaiah, we find a passage referring to the only day that the Most High unequivocally proclaims to be His day:

If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of Yahowah, honorable; and shalt honor him, not doing thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in Yahowah... (Isaiah 58:13-14)

We also find no less than 15 instances where the Creator refers to the weekly seventh-day Sabbaths as “my sabbaths,”

Exodus 31:13, Leviticus 19:3, Leviticus 19:30, Leviticus 26:2, Isaiah 56:4,  
Ezekiel 20:12, Ezekiel 20:13, Ezekiel 20:16, Ezekiel 20:20, Ezekiel 20:21,  
Ezekiel 20:24, Ezekiel 22:8, Ezekiel 22:26, Ezekiel 23:38, Ezekiel 44:24

And, as has already been pointed out, the Creator declares the Sabbath to be the first of His feast days (appointed times) in Leviticus 23:3.

With such overwhelming evidence as to the importance of the Almighty’s Sabbath, we should be very slow to follow the mainstream Christian teaching that the seventh-day Sabbath has been abolished. As a matter of fact, we should be so bold as to ask if it will ever be abolished.

### **IS THE SABBATH EVERLASTING—WILL WE OBSERVE IT IN THE KINGDOM?**

We have seen that Sabbath was to be revered and observance by both Jews and Elohim-fearing Gentiles in the Old Testament. We have seen in the New Testament that Messiah observed it, and that Paul and believing Gentiles followed His example—after the cross. But even more revealing is that the Sabbath will continue to be important even in the Kingdom to

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<sup>9</sup> Even if “the first *day* of the week” is the correct translation, it would simply state that they were breaking bread on the first day of the week—not superceding the Almighty’s Sabbath, especially given the plethora of Biblical evidence to the contrary.

<sup>10</sup> Some Christian interpretations hold that the “Day of the Lord” refers to the End-Time period when the Most High will judge the inhabitants of the Earth (e.g., Joel 1:15, Amos 5:18, etc), but most hold that it means Sunday.

come. Isaiah speaks to this when the Sabbath will continue to be observed after the earth's judgment—when “the LORD will come with fire” (Isaiah 66:15),

For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before saith Yahowah, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me saith Yahowah. (Isaiah 66:22-23)

We find that in the Kingdom to come—after the new heavens and the new earth—are restored, that ALL flesh will still be observing the Biblical Sabbath. From creation week to re-creation week, the Sabbath of the Most High will still be important and observed.

## **SO, HOW DID SUNDAY WORK ITS WAY INTO CHRISTIAN WORSHIP?**

While this study has been guided by “Sola Scripture” and cited only the Bible as controlling authority for the points made, one would be remiss to leave the reader with no idea how Sunday worship came about—especially because it is taught, in violation of the Scriptures, from the vast majority of mainstream Christian pulpits around the world.

### Constantine—the First Pope

The war against the Sabbath of the Most High has been long and hard. One need only look at many of the Old Testament passages listed in this study to find that the pagan peoples had drawn many Israelites away from the Sabbath of the Most High, with harsh rebukes from prophets such as Ezekiel. Those closely following the Most High—both Israelites and righteous Gentiles—did not succumb to these pressures, as we have consistently seen in the Scriptures.

When Emperor Constantine came into the picture in the fourth century, he tried a different tactic. First, he legalized Christianity and then systematically set about to paganize it. During his reign in the fourth century, he adopted the following creed and forced it—under pain of persecution and death—upon the Christian Church.

I renounce all customs, rites, legalisms, unleavened breads and sacrifices of lambs of the Hebrews, and of all the other feasts of the Hebrews, sacrifices, prayers, aspirations, purifications, sanctifications and propitiations, and fasts and new moons, and Sabbaths, and superstitions, and hymns and chants and observances and synagogues and the food and drink of the Hebrews; in one word I renounce absolutely everything Jewish, every law, rite and custom...

Perhaps the good Emperor Constantine should have read his Bible a little more and spent a little less time writing creeds and paganizing the Church. Had he done so, he might have noted that most of the customs, rites, unleavened breads, feasts, fasts, new moons, Sabbath, food and drink, etc. of the Hebrews were commanded by the Most High to Moses. These practices were not



“Jewish”, but rather the instructions of the Creator concerning how His people should live their lives. But let us return to the creed of good Emperor Constantine,

I accept all prayers, purifications with water, sanctifications by the Pontificus Maximus (Pope), propitiations, and feasts, and the New Sabbath “Sol dei” (day of the sun), all new chants and observances, and all the foods and drinks of the Romans. In other words, I absolutely accept everything Roman, every new law, rite and custom, of Rome, and the new Roman religion.<sup>11</sup>

Had the emperor spent a little more time reading the Scriptures, he might have realized that the Roman traditions, with which he filled the Roman church, were not from the Most High, but of pagan origin, complete with an abundance of idols (statutes) and pagan holidays.<sup>12</sup>

And we must remember that, unlike the actions of Constantine, the Bible alone should be our guide for the correct way to live our lives and worship the Creator. The writings of the “Early Church Fathers” who came after the Bible, or archaeological indications that some “early Christians” worshipped on Sunday, should not be used to develop doctrine if they are not in agreement with the written word of Scripture. We can find even older archaeological indications that some Israelites violated the Sabbath and adopted other pagan practices, but so what? The prophets testified that they were wrong!

#### One Final Point — Sunday is Not the Seventh Day

Because, as we have seen consistently throughout the scriptures, “the seventh day is the sabbath of Yahowah your Elohim” (Exodus 20:10), some Christian expositors try to make a case that Sunday is really the seventh day of the week, and therefore the Sabbath. There is absolutely no historical precedent for this belief, as any amount of independent research will show.

By all indications, the division of time into the seven-day week seems to have been a tradition developed in the Bible and made its way into the calendar under the influence of the Israelites. The calendar we have today clearly indicates that “Saturday” is the seventh day of the week, and “Sunday” is the first day of the week.

This calendar—known as the “Gregorian” calendar and developed in 1582 by Ugo Boncompagni, after he had become Pope Gregory XIII ten years earlier—was a modification of Julius Caesar’s 46 B.C.E. “Julian” calendar. For speakers of Spanish—a “Romance” language derived from the Latin of the Romans, the reality that Saturday is the seventh day, and therefore the Sabbath, is even more evident. The Spanish word for “Saturday” is “Sabado”, which means “Sabbath.”

To remove all doubt as to which day is the seventh-day Sabbath, we can get our final determination by looking to the example of Messiah. Throughout the New Testament, we see that He was observing the Sabbath on the same day that the Scribes, Pharisees, and other

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<sup>11</sup> Jeffrey Weiss, *The Truth of Reformation*, pp. 32-33, Stefano Assemani, *Acta Sanctorum Martyrum Orientalium at Occidentalium*, Vol. 1 Rome 1748, p. 105.

<sup>12</sup> For a discussion of the true Biblical Holydays, see the study, “Holy Days or Holidays?”

Israelites were observing it. In other words, what we have been taught as the “Jewish” Sabbath is the same Sabbath that was observed by our Savior, Paul, and the Believing Gentiles of the New Testament.<sup>13</sup>

## CONCLUSION

When New Testament Believers state that the Bible does not contradict itself, they are quite correct. The Biblical message is constant, no matter what the topic. In those instances where the Most High does make a course correction, He clearly states what He is doing. In those instances where He has not made a course correction, we should not assume one, especially if such an interpretation goes against the plain teaching of Scripture.

The Biblical Sabbath—the Sabbath of the Most High—is just one of those Biblical truths that has not changed and the message of which has remained constant since creation week. The Bible shows that the Creator, Himself, hallowed the day and then taught His people to reverence it, under pain of death. We find that throughout the Old Testament, His people reverence and observed His Sabbath.

In the New Testament, we see that it was our Savior’s custom to reverence His Father’s Sabbath and to go to the Temple or Synagogue to worship Him on that day. We also find that Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, had the same custom as the Messiah. Likewise, the Gentile Believers observed the seventh-day Sabbath as well and that is where Paul most often encountered them. And finally, we found in Isaiah that the Biblical Sabbath will continue to be observed after the “new heavens” and the “new earth” are reestablished by our Father in Heaven.

Believers who have missed these Scriptural realities have done so because they have been taught not to see many of the words they read in the Bible. As the power of evil continues to increase in the world, it probably time for Believers to study and pray so that they will be in the Almighty’s will as things get worse. We are told in a latter-day prophecy by Jeremiah,

O Yahowah, my strength, and my fortress, and my refuge in the day of affliction, the Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and *things* wherein *there is* no profit. (Jeremiah 16:19)

We are told that the end-time remnant, will “keep the commandments of Elohim, and have the testimony of Yahoshua the Messiah” (Revelation 12:17). Perhaps as we strive to “keep the commandments” we should look to Messiah’s testimony concerning His Father’s Sabbath. Will you be part of this end-time solution?

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<sup>13</sup> For an in-depth discussion of New Testament passages (e.g., Colossians 2:16-17, etc.) used out of context to argue abolition of the Sabbath, the reader is encouraged to read the Elijah’s Cry study, “The Law and the New Testament Believer.”

Endnote—An Example of the Twisting of Paul’s Writings Regarding the Sabbath  
and What the Jerusalem Counsel Decreed on the Matter

In the foregoing study, by relying on “Sola Scripture”, we have seen a consistent Biblical message—from Genesis to Revelation—that the Sabbath of the Most High is important to Him and was observed by His true followers throughout the Bible. Not only was it the day of worship for Israelites and believing Gentiles in the Old Testament, but it was similarly the day of worship for Israelites and believing Gentiles in the New Testament. We have seen that the Messiah likewise observed it, as did Paul and his followers after the cross.

But to be really thorough, there is a short Pauline passage, which seems to indicate—at least by the interpretation normally attributed to it—that the Sabbath still might not matter,

Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; *And* having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it. Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath *days*: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body *is* of Messiah. (Colossians 2:14-17)

As the conventional wisdom of many pastors would have us believe, “Paul clearly shows us here that the Old Testament Law was nailed to the cross and we no longer have to worry about the dietary laws, Jewish holidays, or keeping new moons or the Sabbath.” But, given all we have seen thus far, could that really be what Paul meant by these words? Again we must ask if he is really attempting to change “thus saith the LORD” and the teachings of all that went before—to include those of the Messiah and his own example that we have observed from the Scriptures.

To properly answer these questions we will, of course, have to determine what Paul meant by the “handwriting of ordinances” and to whom he referred by the terms “principalities and powers.” But first, let us take a look at a stern warning that some would seek to corrupt the writings of Paul,

And account *that* the longsuffering of our Lord *is* salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all *his* epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as *they do* also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know *these things* before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. (2 Peter 3:15-17)

Armed with this knowledge and the wisdom to proceed slowly, let us briefly look at just what was supposed to have been done away with in Colossians 2:16-17. According to the passage, that would be ‘meats’, ‘drink’, ‘holydays’, ‘new moons’, and the ‘Sabbath day.’

But, if these four things were truly done away with, it would be pretty good idea to ask a few questions. Why, for example, was it Paul’s “manner” to keep the Sabbath (Acts 17:2) well after

the cross? Why would we find Gentiles observing the Sabbath after the cross as well (Acts 14:1, 17:4, 17:10-17, 18:4)? Why did Paul fail to tell the Gentiles that the Sabbath was changed to Sunday in Acts 13:42-48? With respect to holy days, why would the post-cross believers have observed the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost) in Acts 2:1-10—both Jews and proselytes? Why would Paul have referred to the “fast” of the Day of Atonement (Acts 27:9) if it were no longer being observed? Why would Paul have used the Passover metaphor of “leaven” and then told the Corinthians to “keep the feast” (1 Corinthians 5:8) if they were not already doing so? And finally, why would Paul have made the following statement when referring to himself?

When they desired *him* to tarry longer time with them, he consented not; But bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem:<sup>14</sup> but I will return again unto you, if Elohim will. And he sailed from Ephesus. (Acts 18:20-21)

Because none of these instances would agree with the mainstream interpretation of Paul’s words in Colossians 2:16-17, perhaps Paul was making one of his statements which are “hard to be understood” as Peter warned. Perhaps Paul’s own words will clarify the matter for us if we just look a little closer. Let us, therefore, take another look at the passage to see if we can find a clue or two.

Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; *And* having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it. Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath *days*: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body *is* of Messiah. (Colossians 2:16-17)

Notice here that Paul did not say, “Elohim will not judge you.” He specifically stated that the readers were not to let any “man” judge them. Who might be wanting to judge the congregants in religious matters such as ‘meats’, ‘drink’, ‘holydays’, ‘new moons’, and the ‘Sabbath days’?

For an in-depth examination of this issue, the reader is encouraged to read the Elijah’s Cry study entitled, *The Law and the New Testament Believer*. That study demonstrates that those seeking to judge the followers at Colosse were most likely the Pharisees, and the Gentile congregants who accepted the Pharisaic “yoke”<sup>15</sup> prescribing how one is to observe the Law of the Most High. The study shows that there are scores—if not hundreds—of extra-Biblical rabbinic commandments concerning food and drink, as well as the observance of the new moon and the Sabbath day.

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<sup>14</sup> The King James Bible contains this underlined portion, but those Bibles (NIV, RSV, and NASB) based on the ‘Codex Vaticanus’ Greek manuscript—‘found’ in the Vatican—omits these underlined words without a footnote, although they are contained in the majority of Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. (Note: perhaps it has something to do with goals of Rome and the warning found in Daniel 7:25.)

<sup>15</sup> The Pharisees teach that when a Gentile converts to Judaism (just as the Gentile proselytes had done in the Roman congregation), they must first accept the ‘ol malchut shamayim’ (yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven), followed by the acceptance of ‘ol mitzvot’ (‘yoke of the commandments’ or ‘yoke of the Law’).

A close examination of Messiah's dealings with the Pharisees pertains to some of the scores of commandments dealing with Sabbath observance. It would probably come as no surprise to the reader that there are scores of commandments dealing with observance of the other holy days and the new moon.<sup>16</sup> But could Paul be referring to Pharisaic traditions in his letter to the Colossians as well? Let us therefore, unlike the average mainstream expositor, go back toward the beginning of Paul's letter to the Colossians to determine if his focus is Pharisaic traditions.

Let us start 16 verses earlier at the beginning of chapter 2 to capture the context of Paul's statements 16 verses later.

For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and *for* them at Laodicea, and *for* as many as have not seen my face in the flesh; That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of Elohim, and of the Father, and of Messiah; In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words. For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Messiah. As ye have therefore received Messiah Yahoshua the Lord, *so* walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Messiah. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power: In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Messiah: Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with *him* through the faith of the operation of Elohim, who hath raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;  
(Colossians 2:1-13)

Paul states that he was involved in a conflict (verse 1), which had to do somehow with enticing doctrines (verse 4) that might lead that might lead them astray. In verse 8, he makes the statement that these doctrines are after the "tradition of men...and not after Messiah," just as Paul had argued to the other congregations.

Almost any of the modern study Bibles will point out that the Greek word for "handwriting" ("cheirographon", Strong's 5498) refers to a legal document of some type. The Greek word for "ordinances" ("dogma", Strong's 1378) refers to a teaching that does not allow for an alternative opinion or way of thinking. The Pharisaic "traditions of the elders" was just such a document, a dogmatic legal document, which literally brought one's entire set of daily actions under the

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<sup>16</sup> The appearance of the new moon set the month in the Almighty's calendar, and, by extension, all of the Biblical Holy Days of Leviticus 23, except the weekly Sabbath. Observance of the new moon is directed in the Law (Leviticus 23:24, Numbers 10:10, Psalm 81:3). For a deeper study on the Holy Days and their importance for the New Testament believer, see the study, *Holy Days or Holidays*.

Pharisaic microscope. That is undoubtedly why the “scribes” always accompanied the Pharisees whenever Messiah was challenged concerning his teachings. Paul’s use of the words “principalities and powers” further illuminate this reality. The Greek word for “principalities” in the passage is ‘arche’ (Strong’s 746), and the Greek word for “powers” is ‘exousia’ (Strong’s 1849). The same two Greek words are translated as the “magistrates” and “powers” in the book of Luke,

And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and *unto* magistrates (‘arche’), and powers (‘exousia’), take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: (Luke 12:11)

So, let us take another look at Paul’s statement to the congregants in Colosse.

Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; *And* having spoiled principalities (‘arche’) and powers (‘exousia’), he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it. Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath *days*: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body *is* of Messiah. (Colossians 2:16-17)

We do not have Paul violating “thus saith the LORD” and the example set by his Savior, but rather an exhortation to the congregants not to let the traditions of the Pharisees govern what they are to eat and drink or how they are to observe the holy days, new moons, and Sabbaths of the Most High. Paul’s reference to Messiah having ‘spoiled’ these “principalities and powers” was his acknowledgment that Messiah had prevailed in every argument he ever had with them. All of these arguments were done in front of the disciples and others so that Messiah’s triumphed over the Pharisees “openly” in His defeat of their manmade power base.

This becomes even more clear if we follow Paul’s words past verse 17 to the end of the second chapter. Paul goes on to make the following statement:

Wherefore if ye be dead with Messiah from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, (Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments (‘entalma’) and doctrines of men?<sup>17</sup> (Colossians 2:20-22)

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<sup>17</sup> The Greek word for commandments used here is “entalma” (Strong’s 1778), and is the same word we see used in Messiah’s reference to the “commandments of men” (Matthew 15:9). Notice that this word, **en-TAL-ma**, contains the same phonetic root as used in the Hebrew word **TAL-mud**, the complete codification of these “commandments of men.” In contrast, the Greek word used to describe the Torah “commandments” of the Almighty (Matthew 19:17) is the Greek word “**en-TO-lay**” (Strong’s 1785). This word contains the same phonetic root as the Hebrew word **TO-rah**. Is this mere coincidence or a conscious effort to point out this important distinction by those who recorded for us the New Testament writings? Given all we have seen thus far, the distinction seems intentional.

We find, therefore, that Paul’s letter to the Colossians is teaching against the “commandments of men” and not against the “commandments of Elohim” found in His Law. Again, mainstream Christianity would do well to look to Peter’s (2 Peter 3:15-16) warning before trying to use Paul’s statements out of context to teach against the commandments of the Almighty. To do so violates the words of the Messiah and all the rest of the Bible—to include the example of Paul. But, more about that later.

For the sake of brevity—which has been lacking thus far—we will not address the rest of Paul’s letters in any great detail. Note only that Paul lifts up the Scriptures throughout and those things “which are hard to be understood”<sup>18</sup> should be examined for the same pattern that has characterized the rest of Paul’s writings. In all of them, a careful examination in context will find Paul exalting the Scriptures, to include the proper observance of all the commandments of the Law. As he said to Timothy,

But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned *them*; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Messiah Yahoshua. All scripture is given by inspiration of Elohim, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of Elohim may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. (2 Timothy 3:14-17)

We should not miss the significance of the fact that Paul links his statement back to the time when Timothy was “a child.” What is seldom stressed from the pulpit is that the “holy scriptures” of Timothy’s childhood were the “Law and the prophets.” The writings of what would later become the ‘New Testament’ had not even been penned yet! Paul’s exhortation that Timothy should “continue thou in these things” meant that Timothy should continue to follow the “Law and the prophets.” We again, therefore, find Paul exalting the “Law and the prophets” and exhorting one of his closest followers to live in accordance with them. Oh, that our pastors today would follow Paul’s example today instead of encouraging Christians to violate the Law of the Most High...

“But wait,” one might protest, “what about Acts 15?” And, given the traditional teachings of mainstream Christianity, that would be an excellent question at this point. After all, was it not James, the Messiah’s half-brother who assumed leadership of the Nazarene sect in Jerusalem, who proclaimed that the Gentiles had to observe only 4 commandments? Let us move then to the famous council in Jerusalem, which had before it the decision of how the Gentile congregants were to live their lives to be members in good standing...

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<sup>18</sup> Examples include 1 Timothy 4:1-4 and 1 Corinthians 10:25. These are addressed in detail in the Elijah’s Cry study, *Biblically Clean Foods*.

ACTS 15: “We trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles...” (Acts 15:19)

As indicated above, Acts 15 contains a very-oft discussed passage, which is used to teach Christians that the Creator’s commandments do not apply to New Testament Gentile Believers. The statement, made by Messiah’s half brother, James, seems to say just that if taken alone and out of context.

Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to Elohim: But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day. (Acts 15:19-21)

But just what is going on here? Is James telling the Gentiles that they do not have to pay any attention to “thus saith the LORD?” Were the Gentiles in his congregation any less intelligent or dedicated than Caleb, Ruth, or Cornelius? Perhaps they were and perhaps not. Perhaps, on the other hand, there was an underlying dynamic we have never paid attention to, but those of Jerusalem knew very well. Let us probe a bit and use some of the insight that Paul, the “apostle to the Gentiles,” had provided us.

The first thing to notice here is that James is considering Gentiles who had turned—or were turning—from their pagan ways to worship of the Most High. Unlike Caleb, they had not grown up in the faith, but had come out of paganism and were experiencing something entirely new. Furthermore, these Gentiles were faced with something that neither Caleb nor Ruth had to worry about. These Gentiles were in the congregation in Jerusalem and were right in the middle of the ‘mainstream’ of Pharisaic influence! After all, it was in Jerusalem that the Pharisees had constantly challenged Messiah and years later, Josephus recorded that their influence still controlled “the masses” of the populace. And, if we look back to the words of Messiah, we will realize that this influence even extended into the Nazarene congregation in Jerusalem.

To determine how the Nazarene congregants were living their lives in Jerusalem, one need only look back at the words of the founder of this Nazarene sect of Judaism—Messiah, himself. Remember his admonition to His followers late in His ministry?

Then spake Yahoshua to the multitude, and to his disciples, Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, *that* observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay *them* on men's shoulders; but they *themselves* will not move them with one of their fingers. (Matthew 23:1-4)

While Messiah acknowledged that the scribes and Pharisees had placed their ‘yoke’ upon the shoulders of the people, He nonetheless commanded His Jewish followers—there were no recognized Gentile followers of Yahoshua until Cornelius—to live in accordance with the Pharisaic pronouncements, because they “sit in Moses’ seat. For them, it was not a change, because the Pharisees—as Josephus reported—had been in control of the masses since the time



of the Maccabees (almost 200 years). The Jerusalem congregants were believers, but they lived and worshipped in accordance with the Pharisaic traditions.<sup>19</sup>

Mainstream Christianity, unaware of this reality, had misinterpreted the Jerusalem council in a monumental way and has twisted this event in a way unintended by the writer of the book of Acts. Mainstream pastors and teachers explain that these four directives were given to the Gentiles so that they would not offend the sensitivities of the Jews. This idea, while partially true, misses the main event taking place when examined in context of the passage. Let us then take another look at the passage.

Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to Elohim: But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day. (Acts 15:19-21)

First, the focus of the discussion is not Jewish Believers, but rather Gentile Believers who are only turning to the Almighty and therefore ‘spiritual babes’. That is why James stresses the need not to make this transition difficult for them. If the focus was the sensitivities of Jewish Believers, then the sentence should have begun by reflecting those difficulties rather than those of the Gentile Believers. The Jewish Believers, who grew up in the Torah, and under Pharisaic influence, would have no transition to worry about.

Second, the question was not whether or not the Gentiles should observe the Law, but whether or not they should observe it per Pharisaic tradition and take upon themselves ‘the yoke’. Let us back up and capture the context of the debate, so that we truly understand the meaning of Peter’s statement, which won the day at the council. And notice once again that the catalyst for this debate is the Pharisees—only this time believers in Yahoshua that are Pharisees!

But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command *them* to keep the law of Moses. And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter. And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men *and* brethren, ye know how that a good while ago Elohim made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. And Elohim, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as *he did* unto us; And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore why tempt ye Elohim, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? (Acts 15:5-10)

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<sup>19</sup> It might surprise the reader to know that there is a sect of Nazarene Jews in Israel today who believe that Yahoshua is the Messiah of Israel. They are unique because even though they are ‘believers’, they still live their lives in accordance with the “halacha” of Pharisaic Judaism. They have a website at [www.netzarim.co.il](http://www.netzarim.co.il).

Could it be any clearer? The debate focused on whether or not the Gentiles had to be immediately circumcised and follow the Law per the Pharisaic interpretation and traditions ('the yoke') in order to be part of the congregation! After more discussion, James made his statement.

Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to Elohim: But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day. (Acts 15:19-21)

James mandated that the new Gentile believers would have to turn away from paganism by observing immediately four commandments dealing with matters relating to idol worship: (1) pre-sacrifice consorting with temple prostitutes, (2) strangling of the sacrificial animal, (3) consumption of the animal's blood, and finally (4) sacrifice of the animal. They were not expected to take on the Pharisaic 'yoke' with respect to observance of the Law, but tied his proclamation to the reason, "For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day."

The very clear context of these statements was that the Gentiles were to start with the basic four and then, as they heard Moses preached in the synagogues every Sabbath day,<sup>20</sup> they would come to internalize the rest of the *written* commandments. They could then observe the law as Caleb, Ruth, and Cornelius had done, without being overwhelmed—and potentially 'scared off' by the hundreds of additional Pharisaic commandments.

This is the same practice used in synagogues and churches today. Once an 'unsaved' soul accepts the importance of the Word of the Most High, he is not expected to give up all his sinful ways right on the spot, but rather invited into fellowship, given a few absolutes, and then lovingly taught the finer ways of a Believer's life as he continues to hear the Word preached every week. Nothing has changed in this approach toward new congregants. In this way, rather than the Torah commandments of the Father being a burden, they would come to want to follow them. That, after all, is what the New Covenant is all about. Paul describes it as follows:

This *is* the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them.  
(Hebrews 10:16)

Paul is referring back to Hebrews 8:10, which is a direct quote from Jeremiah 31:33. In Jeremiah, the word "laws" is "Torah"—the Law of the Most High. In other words, the New Covenant is NOT to do away with the Torah commandments of the Almighty but to have them put into the hearts and minds of the New Testament Believer!

Oh, that the scales would fall from the eyes of our mainstream Christian teachers as they did for Paul in Acts 9:18 and that they would teach the whole truth of the Gospel—to include the seventh-day Sabbath of the Creator of the universe!

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<sup>20</sup> The Gentile believers at that time observed the Biblical Sabbath, not Sunday, as we have already seen in the main body of the study.