

# The TRUE SABBATH of GOD

## Part 2, God's Sabbath in the New Testament

Light on the Rock  
by Philip Shields

Abstract: Do you worship God out of tradition – or according to God's word? This message will encourage you to freshly examine the Sabbath of God. Did Jesus really break the Sabbath? Did He and the apostles change the 7<sup>th</sup> Day Sabbath to Sunday worship to honor the resurrection? Or, is there now no Sabbath required in the New covenant, because Jesus is our rest? Did the New Testament Gentiles keep the Sabbath? Will the Sabbath be kept forever and ever? These and more will be addressed in this message.

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Greetings again, brothers and sisters of Abba's House. Have you ever investigated and questioned your religious beliefs? Most of us simply believe what we were raised to do and believe. I'm specifically asking you if you have ever questioned the predominant belief that the primary day of worship is Sunday.

Is it? Last time we began an in-depth discussion of the True Sabbath of God.

It is *traditional* today to worship on the day of the Sun, but is it what God wants? It is *traditional* today to *forget* the Sabbath of God, to minimize it, to do away with it, to call it Jewish, when God thundered "*Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy*" and then thundered that He means the 7<sup>th</sup> day of the week, and meant all Israel and visitors, servants and animals to even keep it holy, on the 7<sup>th</sup> day. Of course last time we covered how God introduced the Sabbath to all mankind through Adam and Eve in Genesis 2. If you haven't heard part 1 first, please do that first. Turn now to Mark 7.

Why is this important? Well, you can claim to know God, and believe the Master knows you – but listen to this warning Jesus gave to religious people of His time when they questioned why He didn't do what their traditions said. The Pharisees of Jesus' day had added a lot of oral traditions that they believed had as much weight as Scripture. Orthodox Jews today still believe that. The Sadducees, who were the priestly class, also had their own traditions—and didn't believe in angels, the resurrection, and so on. Jesus didn't go along with either group, so both groups sought His death. Many of you who will hear this keep Sunday because of your tradition. But listen to Master Jesus:

### **Mark 7:5-9**

Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, "Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?"

6 He answered and said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written:  
"This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me.

7 *And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'*

8 *For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men -- the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do."*

9 He said to them, "*All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition.*"

Did you hear that? We throw out the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment of God, in which the 7<sup>th</sup> day is called the “Sabbath of the LORD” (Ex. 20:10; Lev. 23:3) – so we can keep our beliefs and propagate our anti-Semitic bias against anything we label “Jewish”. Jesus was the same One who thundered those words on Mt. Sinai, He was the One who rested on that day in Genesis 2, and He is the One who made the Sabbath and calls Himself “the Lord of the Sabbath”. The 7<sup>th</sup> Day each week is His day, His Sabbath.

***On the other hand, you may strictly keep the Sabbath and still not know Him, either!*** So don’t get smug, if you DO keep a 7<sup>th</sup> Day Sabbath. Paul says his number one goal in life was to “know Him...” (Philippians 3:9-10). Jeremiah said if you want to glory in something, glory in that you know and understand God, *not* that you are wise, or strong or wealthy (Jeremiah 9:24). Do you know Him, and does God know *you* and me? You may wish to review my message on knowing Him, which I gave in March 2006. I encourage you to review the list of sermons in the Transcripts list on the website [www.LightontheRock.com](http://www.LightontheRock.com).

### **WHY DO WE NEED TO DISCUSS the SABBATH of GOD?**

We need to discuss this because there is the prevailing opinion that God either changed (though He says “I change not” Mal 3:7; Heb. 13:8) His Sabbath to Sunday *or* that the Sabbath is fulfilled fully now in the Messiah and we no longer have to keep that commandment or any other commandment.

One paper I read even says, “In fact nowhere in the New Testament, are we commanded to keep a Saturday or Sunday Sabbath”. I don’t understand that, since Paul clearly says in **1 Cor. 7:14** that “circumcision is nothing, uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments is what matters” (NKJV). That has to mean all 10. **1 John 2:3-6** says if we claim to know God but don’t keep His commandments, we are a liar. Later he says the commandments are not burdensome (**1 John 5:3**). Jesus taught that no command would be done away with as long as there is heaven and earth and warned men from teaching against the commandments! (read it – Matthew 5:17-19). Nowhere do I read there are only nine commandments now, or no commandments now.

I do preach imputed righteousness, and I also preach Jesus in us will once again live obediently to His Father in us. See my series on Righteousness. But now it is HIS righteousness fulfilling it.

So though I agree that the Sabbath pictures our ultimate rest in the kingdom and in Christ, when everything is new, I also read what Paul says in **Heb. 4:11** that we haven’t fully entered that state yet, and need to be diligent or strive to enter into His rest. *If I’ve entered a room already, why would I be told to strive to enter that which I’ve already entered?* Obviously we haven’t fully entered that state of being so much in His rest that we no longer have to keep the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment literally.

We’ll talk more about the Rest we have in Him later in this sermon and when that happens.

### **Last time I covered in detail these following points – and many more. Let’s do a quick recap:**

- Sabbath should be a great joy and delight, a gift from God to all mankind through Adam and Eve. Even in the wording of the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment, God clearly says even the aliens, visitors and servants were to keep the sabbath. There was one rule for the Israelite and Gentile alike.
- Elohim established the Sabbath and the 7-day week, not at Sinai, but at Creation, by putting His holy presence into it. The One who created all things was the One who became Jesus the

Christ, Yeshua Messiah.

- God established the Sabbath originally with Adam and Eve, the father and mother of *all mankind*, 2,000 years before there was a Jacob, Israel, or Judah. We are Israel of God today, and there remains for the people of God a keeping of the Sabbath (Hebrews 4:9). "People of God" includes converted Gentiles! Based on Gen. 26:2-5, I'm convinced Abraham and the other patriarchs knew and kept the Sabbath and the other commandments.
- We also covered some of the reasons *why* God gave the Sabbath
- I also touched on the fact that Scripture teaches we can't claim to know God and not be keeping His commandments (1 John 2:3-6)

### **TODAY WE'RE GOING TO COVER:**

- will God's people be keeping a 7th day sabbath for all eternity?
- What Jesus did on the Sabbath and what we can learn from that
- *Because Jesus ascended to heaven on Sunday, the first day of the week after His resurrection, does that now mean Sabbath was officially changed to Sunday? If so, was that by God's decree?*
- Has the Sabbath been changed to Sunday? Didn't the early Christians start meeting on Sunday? How do we explain those verses?
- Did early believers continue to keep the 7<sup>th</sup> day Sabbath?
- Or, we are no longer required to keep *any* day, because we have "entered into His rest"?
- How was the 7<sup>th</sup> day Sabbath clearly changed to Sunday worship at least by the law of the land? Was GOD behind that? You'll find this material very intriguing.

### **WILL a 7<sup>th</sup>-day SABBATH BE KEPT FOREVER?**

First of all, GOD knows the answer to that for sure. My guess, my opinion, may surprise you. If I'm wrong, God will show me. If I'm right, I pray God shows you. I think it's an interesting question. Jesus does imply that parts of the law could pass once heaven and earth pass away.

Jesus said:

#### **Matthew 5:17-20**

"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. 18 For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. 19 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."

Last time I looked into the sky, the heavens are still there. So God's law and commandments are still there. But there *is* coming a time when heaven and earth will pass away, when we will have new heavens and earth.

What's the point of the Sabbath? Ultimately it is to enjoy the rest we have in Christ and Abba our heavenly Father as Hebrews 3 and 4 teaches; a rest that is free from our own past works, but enjoying Him and knowing Him. At that time we will fully understand the Sabbath as a delight. We also keep

the sabbath remember the true God, to remember He redeemed us from the most real slavery of all – spiritual slavery, and to honor and glorify Him even as we delight in Him.

Once everyone in the universe is of the right spirit, part of the family of God, and we're all truly one – and once we are always in His presence, and fully into His rest, will we need to have a 7<sup>th</sup> day sabbath each week? Let's ponder that! Are we there yet? I think not, because Paul says in Hebrews 4:11 KJV and NKJV – “*Strive to enter into His rest*”. That may sound funny to some of you, but that's what scripture says!

**2 Peter 3:10-13 explains the heavens and earth will pass away with fervent heat – and then there will be new heavens and earth. Read it for yourself.**

Now let's read about the holy city that will come from God the Father, after the present universe is destroyed and renewed. When the present universe, moons, stars, planets, suns all disappear in fervent heat, will we have days, weeks and months as we now know them? Ponder that! What makes a day, a week, a month, a year?

**Revelation 21:1-2**

“Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea.”

How big will be this new earth? Will we have days and months and years as we know them today? Then we read something about the Holy City, the Heavenly Jerusalem that comes down to earth.

**Revelation 21:22-27**

“But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. 23 *The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it.* The Lamb is its light. 24 And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it. 25 Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (*there shall be no night there*). 26 And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it. 27 But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.”

If there's no night there, there aren't perceptible days or weeks or years either. That's the time we're fully in His rest in its full fruition. When the works of mankind apart from God are done. It's the time when we are all resting fully in the Lord of the Sabbath, who IS the Sabbath rest. Without days and nights, there will be no way to count day 1 or 2 or 3 – and – God is outside of time and space anyway - -and so will we be, at that time. If I'm wrong, that's fine. We'll see. I'm sharing how I see it.

In the new heavens and new earth we will all have fully entered His rest – heavens and earth will have passed away – and the meaning of the 7<sup>th</sup> day each week being a rest day will be fulfilled in Christ and in the new heavens and earth, so at that time, I really don't think we will be keeping a 7<sup>th</sup> day sabbath literally. Without day and night, how could we? The Sabbath will still be kept – but at that time, in its true spiritual meaning, and perfectly. You'll see later in this sermon that Paul is clear that “there remains a keeping of the sabbath to the people of God” right now (Hebrews 4:9-11).

**WHY GENESIS 2 DOESN'T SAY "Evening and morning were 7<sup>th</sup> day" after 7<sup>th</sup> day?**

Notice something else in Genesis 2: at the end of every other day, scripture says "and **the evening and the morning** were the first day..." or second day, etc. We find no such verse or description for the 7<sup>th</sup> day. Why? The Bible doesn't spell out why in so many words. But I think it is because the purpose of the Sabbath – to point us to God as the Creator of the creation, and later to the saving of the Israelites in the Exodus out of Egypt and sin – the meaning and purpose of the 7<sup>th</sup> day is an ongoing thing. It has no ending point until all mankind has either chosen and accepted redemption – or the Lake of Fire.

There is no "evening and morning were the 7<sup>th</sup> day" – because though the physical work was finished by the 7<sup>th</sup> day, the *spiritual* creation of people filled with God's nature, God's spirit – had just begun. What the Sabbath pictured fully was yet in the future! The redemptive work pictured by the Sabbath continues until we have new heavens and a new earth, when only those who are absolutely obedient to their Maker through the redemptive work of our Savior, are the only ones on the earth. They will at that time have all been transformed to life-giving spirit bodies.

**Jesus' Example and His RECORD on the Sabbath**

Let's move now to the New Testament and study Jesus' example on the Sabbath.

Many also concede Christ observed the 7<sup>th</sup> day Sabbath, but they say He did so "because He had to" in order not to sin. But let's read what it says about Jesus' observance of the Sabbath, since we're also told to follow Christ.

It's noteworthy to notice that **Jesus began His public ministry on a Sabbath (Luke 4:16), probably a High Day (Atonement?)** and ended His mission on Passover day, which was also the preparation for the annual holyday, the first day of Unleavened Bread. He was not crucified on a Friday, but on Passover, the day before the High Day (John 19:36). In many cases – seven times in all – healings are performed on the Sabbath days.

**Jesus, AS HIS CUSTOM WAS, KEPT THE SABBATH**

**Luke 4:16** "So 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 to read."

Jesus fellowshiped and worshipped on the Sabbath, obviously. What did He choose to read? What He read, revealed His purpose: to set spiritual captives free from the tyrant Satan. Remember Deut 5:19 says that as we keep the Sabbath, we are to remember we were once slaves and were freed from God, given rest from slavery! I think it is very profound that what Jesus read, as He began His ministry, was about freedom, and liberation. And He read it on the Sabbath, probably in a Sabbatical year. Keep your finger in Luke 4:16, but look at the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment again in Deut 5:15.

**Deuteronomy 5:15**

"And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day."

This was also a reminder to Israel to be gracious in extending rest to others who have not yet attained to their liberty: to the work animals, the servants, the foreigners – just as God has been gracious to US, pictured by the delightful Sabbath He has given us.

**When did Jesus actually begin His ministry? I suggest He began His ministry in a Sabbatical year – the year of Jubilee.** Why do I suggest that? Because the scripture He read, is commonly understood to be a scripture that refers to the sabbatical year. We can't know for sure, but since we know he began his ministry in the Fall, and since Jubilee sabbatical year started on the Day of Atonement, I think it is probable He began His ministry on the Day of Atonement, 3-1/2 years before the crucifixion. So let's continue reading in Luke 4:17 now. He specifically looked for this passage to read:

**Luke 4:17-22**

“And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written:

18 ‘The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me  
To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me **to heal** the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, To **set at liberty** those who are oppressed; 19 **To proclaim the acceptable year** of the LORD.’

20 Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. 21 And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

So I think He began His teaching on the sabbath, possibly even a high-day Sabbath (Atonement) and read about the Sabbatical year to hi-lite his mission and His redemptive purpose on earth – all of which the Sabbath pictures when we really understand it.

It's a far cry from the assertion of one of the early Catholic church fathers that “God imposed the Sabbath upon the Jews as a brand of infamy to single them out for punishment in the eyes of the Romans”. That is simply not the statement of scripture but that of a badly deluded Jew hater.

Later, in Capernaum, on the Sabbath, a city nearby Nazareth, in Luke 4:31-37, the first healing Jesus did on “the Sabbaths” (NKJV) – possibly on the holyday-- - was to cast out the demons from a demon-possessed man. Again, it gives credence to the idea that this “Sabbaths” was the day of Atonement, which pictures when Satan and his demons will be cast out.

After that, still on the Sabbath, he heals Peter's mother-in-law (yes, Peter was married!). And after she was healed, she served them – still on the Sabbath (Luke 4:38-39). Then, as the sun was setting and the Sabbath was over, many came to him and were healed or “made whole” (verses 40-41).

By the way, the wording here about people coming to be healed **as the sun was setting**, shows when the Sabbath began and ended: at sunset. That's one reason why I do not agree at all with those who are espousing a lunar Sabbath. Don't be hoodwinked into believing a Lunar Sabbath. It's a heresy.

My point though is that Jesus used the Sabbath to show it was a time to heal, to do good for people, to make people whole, to free people from Satan, and help people rejoice – all on the Sabbath.

In Jesus' example of healing on the Sabbath day, He is making the point that the Pharisees had made the Sabbath a burden, and that was never God's intention. The Pharisees taught it was unlawful to do anything that would cause healing on the sabbath. You could stop a wound, but not put antiseptic on it. They felt that carrying anything more than the weight of a fig was a burden – so when Jesus would tell someone to pick up their rattan mat bed and walk, he was (in their mind) teaching people to break the sabbath.

Jesus was teaching them God's way of keeping the sabbath as a delight, and not a burden. Jesus could not have broken any of the commandments, as that would have made Him a sinner and ineligible to be our Savior. Jesus did break the Pharisees' legalistic laws, but not God's commandments. Let's read a few examples. (this sabbath may have been a very special sabbath – see Luke 6:1 in KJV or NKJV)

### **Jesus' Sabbath Keeping was not BURDENSOME**

#### **Matthew 12:1-14**

At that time Jesus went through the grain fields on the Sabbath. And His disciples were hungry, and began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. 2 And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, "Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!" [by THEIR definition]

3 But He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: 4 how he entered the house of God and ate the showbread which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? 5 Or have you not read in the law that **on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless?** 6 Yet I say to you that in this place there is One greater than the temple. 7 But if you had known what this means, '**I desire mercy and not sacrifice,**' **you would not have condemned the guiltless.** 8 For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

#### **9 Healing on the Sabbath (LAWFUL TO DO GOOD ON THE SABBATH)**

Now when He had departed from there, He went into their synagogue. 10 And behold, there was a man who had a withered hand. **And they asked Him, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" -- that they might accuse Him.**

11 Then He said to them, "What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out? 12 Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep? Therefore **it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.**" 13 Then He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched it out, and it was restored as whole as the other. 14 Then the Pharisees went out and plotted against Him, how they might destroy Him."

(also see Luke 13:10-16 – healing a woman who had been sick for many years, on the sabbath)

### **Jesus taught:**

- those in ministry must sometimes work very hard with their work on the sabbath; that's OK. Doing work of salvation and redemption on the Sabbath is OK.
- it is lawful to heal on the sabbath – and by extension, to do good on the sabbath. Jesus' sabbath healings also pictured His spiritual purpose – to make us whole again in every way.

I caution one thing here though: I don't know any believer who would ever claim to intentionally "Do bad". In other words, everything we do, is "doing good", so be careful not to think we can do whatever we like if it falls in the realm of "doing good". Some acts, and work, of "doing good" can wait, but if

it's an emergency, or one's life or quality of life is at risk – then we can do good on sabbath. Keep in mind God's (Jesus') teaching in Isaiah 58, that on the Sabbath we are not to be working, thinking our own thoughts and doing our “own thing” – our own pleasures. We don't go shopping on the Sabbath, it's not a day to be doing our yard work or any work, remember. Jesus is making it clear that to heal someone on the Sabbath is not work and does not break the Sabbath.

It is OK to be reasonable on the Sabbath. You could deal with true emergencies without guilt. You could help people on the sabbath – and the context was healing. We shouldn't plan to “help people” by mowing their lawns on the Sabbath, for example – but if a widow next door has a true emergency that occurs on the Sabbath, we could help them.

Jesus says something also very interesting:

***Matthew 24:20 “And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath.”***

Jesus obviously anticipated his followers in the end time would be keeping the Sabbath. He obviously was not defining whether or not we could flee on the Sabbath, anymore than we shouldn't flee in winter – but would, if that was the time to “get out of Dodge”. This was showing His concern for His flock that we pray for favorable circumstances at that time – not to be pregnant, not to be in winter, or on Sabbath because there could be obstacles and difficulties with fleeing on the Sabbath. My point though is simply that Jesus matter-of-factly expected Sabbath keeping to be in vogue still among His followers in the last days, no matter how else you interpret His statement.

Keeping in mind what we've learned already, let's continue to learn what Jesus did.

### **Did Jesus ‘Break the Sabbath’ by God's standards?**

Let me be clear: Scripture does use the words about Jesus: “Because he not only broke the sabbath” – John 5:18. Jesus also is accused in John 9:16 by bystanders with these words: “this man does not keep the sabbath”. What does all that mean?

Since Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath, and since He is the One who created it in Genesis 2, Jesus also knew exactly how to keep it and what it was intended for. The Pharisees by Jesus' day, had added hundreds of legalistic do's and don'ts and it was this set of rules that Jesus broke! He broke the Pharisees' list, not God's commandment. If Jesus had even one time truly broken the Sabbath, he would have been a sinner and would have been unable to be our Savior. It's that simple.

Most of the acts of “doing good” on the Sabbath that Jesus did, were acts of healing.

One example of healing on the sabbath, in this case a blind man, is found in John 5:8-11. Later Jesus touches base with him again. Let's pick up:

### **John 5:15-19**

“The man departed and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had **made him well**.

16 For this reason the Jews persecuted Jesus, and sought to kill Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath. 17 But Jesus answered them, ***“My Father has been working until now, and I have been working.”*** 18 Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, **because He not only broke the Sabbath**, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.” (again, Jesus “broke” *their* sabbath rules, but not the sabbath as GOD intended it kept).



Healing the physical body is a picture of the spiritual healing of the mind and innermost being of mankind. Jesus is clearly teaching that work having to do with salvation and redemption is OK on the Sabbath. Healing is often described as being “made whole”, complete. Nothing lacking.

**John 7:21-24**

21 Jesus answered and said to them, "**I did one work, and you all marvel.** 22 Moses therefore gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath. 23 If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath, so that the law of Moses should not be broken, **are you angry with Me because I made a man completely well on the Sabbath?** 24 Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment."

He's saying: "You'll cut off a part of man to circumcise on the Sabbath to obey God's word (if it was the 8<sup>th</sup> day since birth), but don't let me make a man "every whit whole" on the Sabbath (KJV)?

**John 9:13-16**

14 Now it was a Sabbath when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes. 15 Then the Pharisees also asked him again how he had received his sight. He said to them, "He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see." [making the clay poultice was considered "work"] 16 Therefore some of the Pharisees said, "**This Man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath.**"  
[Remember this was based on their definition of sabbath-keeping. But if Jesus did not keep the Sabbath, he would have no savior, for our Savior has to be sinless. Obviously their statement that 'this man is not from God' is also dead wrong!]  
Others said, "How can a man who is a sinner [by those standards] do such signs?" And there was a division among them."

He was accused of breaking the Sabbath, but he only broke man's codes of how to keep it. That's what we know about Jesus' Sabbath keeping. He observed the Sabbath, but not as the Pharisees did. He went to Synagogue on Sabbath, and He healed people on Sabbath.

**Was Jesus' resurrection on Sunday? Does Scripture ANYWHERE say that honoring His resurrection replaces the 7<sup>th</sup> day Sabbath?**

I've talked about this before, so will cover this quickly here. Yeshua had said he would be 3 days and 3 nights in the tomb. We know he was placed in the tomb just before sundown of the annual sabbath, not the weekly sabbath.

**John 19:31** "Therefore, because it was the Preparation Day, that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (*for that Sabbath was a high day*), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away."

Many of us believe Jesus was killed and buried on Passover, a Wednesday night, and that Thursday of that week was the High Day, the 1<sup>st</sup> Day of Unleavened Bread. He was entombed just before sunset.

**Luke 23:50-54** "Now behold, there was a man named Joseph, a council member, a good and just man. 51 He had not consented to their decision and deed. He was from Arimathea, a city of

the Jews, who himself was also waiting for the kingdom of God. 52 This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. 53 Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a tomb that was hewn out of the rock, where no one had ever lain before. 54 That day was the Preparation, and the Sabbath drew near.”

**Sabbath began at sundown (Lev 23:32), and Jesus was in the grave just before Sundown. If he prophesied that the only sign He would give of His Messiahship was that he would be exactly 3 days and 3 nights in the earth, when would He be resurrected?**

**Obviously just before sundown.**

**But you say, “no way! Scripture says he was resurrected early Sunday morning”. Does it? Let’s read it carefully.**

What scripture says is that by early morning “on the first of the weeks” (as it says it in the Greek), the tomb was already empty! If the tomb is already empty, we know the resurrection has already taken place but we are not told when. The women did not witness the resurrection taking place, they witnessed Jesus’ empty tomb – and later the resurrected Jesus. But seeing the empty tomb does not tell us when the resurrection took place. For that matter, even a large stone against the entrance would not have kept Jesus in the tomb once He was resurrected in power!

I also want to point out that God was inspiring the Gospel writers to remind us that this particular day was the Wavesheaf Offering Day, and the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the 7 week count to Pentecost. I covered all that in detail in a previous sermon about the Wavesheaf last spring 2007. Yes, it was on Sunday, or the first day of the week, but more importantly it was the “1<sup>st</sup> of the weeks”, as the Greek has it. In fact, the Greek there for “weeks” is *sabbaton* – usually translated “sabbath”. Check it out yourself in any interlinear. The word “day” is not even in the original Greek. The original is “On the first of the weeks” or “first of the sabbaths” – because 7 sabbaths had to be counted to Pentecost.

**John 20:1** “Now the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb.”

Mark 16:2 says the sun had risen, John 20:1 says it was still dark. In any case the body was gone. The resurrection had already happened some time before that.

It IS absolutely true that on this day Jesus ascends to Heaven to be presented in our behalf as the beginning of the harvest. He is the wavesheaf. If this is strange material to you, please go back and study my sermon on the Wavesheaf that I gave earlier.

So though I believe Jesus was resurrected late Saturday night, and they found the tomb empty early Sunday, He did appear to the disciples on that 1<sup>st</sup> day of the week, and on that first day he did ascend to heaven.

**So now what?**

We can find zero scripture that says, “therefore since Jesus ascended to heaven on our behalf on the first day of the week, we’re going to start worshipping on Sunday from now on and this replaces the 7<sup>th</sup> day sabbath”. There simply is no such scripture.

Jesus is LORD of the Sabbath. He is the one who made it. I think a lock-tight case can be made that if you want to honor his resurrection, that Jesus was resurrected at the very end of the 7<sup>th</sup> day of the week, right on cue, just before sundown. But even then, there's nothing in scripture to say we are to honor His resurrection with a special day of worship – though in this case, I think it was late Saturday anyway.

### **REFERENCES TO MEETINGS ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK**

**But didn't the disciples start meeting on the first day of the week? Let me first say this: even today, we often meet with fellow believers on any day to share a meal, to discuss our great salvation, etc. – but that doesn't change God's commandments, which Jesus said wouldn't be altered by one little jot or tittle until heaven and earth pass away. But now let's read what scripture does say:**

#### **John 20:19-20**

“Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where *the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews*, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace be with you."

**Scripture is very clear they were not assembling to honor the risen Christ. No. In fact some didn't yet believe. They were assembled to figure out what to do now, and they were afraid of the Jewish leaders.**

#### **Acts 20:7**

“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.”

Many recognize this was a meeting that started on Saturday night, probably after regular Sabbath services – and now they were having their potluck and further discussions before Paul had to leave early Sunday on his trip.

Today's English Version actually translates it that way in their paraphrase:

**Acts 20:7(TEV)** “*On Saturday evening* we gathered together for the fellowship meal. Paul spoke to the people and kept on speaking until midnight, since he was going to leave the next day.”

One other reference to the first day of the week involved a lot of work to gather in an offering of money, and perhaps some foodstuffs, that Paul could take with him to the poor Jews in Jerusalem who were having a famine. It was not about changing the Sabbath to Sunday! We can read of that prophesied famine in Acts 11:28-30 and Rom. 15:26-27. So as Paul went around what is now Turkey (Galatia), Macedonia and Greece, he urged brethren there to set aside some money and supplies for the brethren. It was not a “sabbath service”. Paul was urging them to get the job done now, and the hard work could begin on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the week.

#### **1 Corinthians 16:1-3**

“Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: 2 On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.”

**Those are the passages that mention the first day of the week. Not a single one would indicate that God had changed his mind now, had decided to cancel the 7<sup>th</sup> day Sabbath and replace it with worshiping on the Day of the Sun. No such scripture.**

**GOD instituted the 7<sup>th</sup> Day Sabbath Himself (Gen. 2:1-3); and GOD calls the 7<sup>th</sup> day Sabbath “the Sabbath of the Lord”. Only God can make anything holy, and God who changes not makes no statement that He now prefers a different day than He Himself had originally selected as His Holy Sabbath for His people.**

**But does God cancel the Sabbath and say our rest is now eternally in Christ?**

**DID THE EARLIEST BELIEVERS KEEP THE SABBATH on the 7<sup>th</sup> day?**

**If Sabbath was to be done away with, surely we would be reading about riots in the street on that issue, and a huge Jerusalem conference to settle it – as we saw regarding the issue of circumcision.** But Scripture is completely silent. In fact, 30 years later, writing to the Hebrews, Paul refers only to the “rest” and the “7<sup>th</sup> day” in Hebrews 3-4, and never even mentions the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the week or cancelling the sabbath. It would have been an obvious opportunity to mention the 1<sup>st</sup> day.

**We need to also ask this: did the early believers act like they no longer had to keep the Sabbath?**

I say this to devout 7<sup>th</sup> day Sabbath keepers: I do think it is clear that they no longer felt constrained to *limit* worship and publicly meeting to one day. That is clear. They were praising, meeting, and worshiping every chance they got, from house to house. But does that negate the 7<sup>th</sup> day Sabbath?

**Acts 5:41-42**

“So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. 42 And *daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching* Jesus as the Christ.”

So there we clearly read that what they preached was done daily, in the temple and in every *house* they could get into. Not just on the Sabbath. And we also see that what they preached was not *just* the kingdom of God, but they were “preaching Jesus as the Christ”. Some of you Sabbath keepers gotta get over this belief that they somehow only preached the kingdom of God and not the person of Jesus the Messiah.

- Philip preached Christ in Samaria (Acts 8:5)
- Philip preached Christ to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:35)
- The very first preaching Paul did was preaching Jesus as the Christ (Acts 9:20; 17:2-3)
- Paul said the life, death and resurrection story of Jesus was the gospel he preached (1 Cor. 15:1-7—read it!) Also 1 Cor. 1:23; 2:2; Gal. 6:14; Phil. 1:16-18; Rom. 16:25 + many more.

I mention “in every house” because I really feel that is the example of the early believers. That’s for another topic. There were elders, but there was also much more free-flowing fellowship and sharing

with one another, trusting in the leading of the Holy Spirit to guide the group where God wants it to be. Everyone participated. In people's homes. In Small groups. More on that in later sermons.

But we need to also note this: if they really thought the 7<sup>th</sup> Day sabbath was superseded by the ascension of Jesus to the Father on Sunday, they sure didn't demonstrate that in their actual conduct.

### **GENTILES AND THE SABBATH IN THE NEW COVENANT**

They continued to keep the annual sabbaths, the holydays. It was on an *annual Sabbath* – on Pentecost that always does fall on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the week, that they received the Holy Spirit. Even the Gentile Corinthians obviously kept the Passover, even 25-30 years after the resurrection (1 Cor. 5, 11). The Feast of Tabernacles is mentioned, as is “the Fast” – the Day of Atonement. So they continued to keep the holydays.

On Sabbaths, they continued to meet with Jews in synagogues as long as the Jews allowed them to do so. Even when Gentiles were being converted to the truth about Messiah, they continued to teach them on the Sabbath.

In Acts 13:14, they entered a synagogue and were invited to speak.

Later it got testy. But the Gentiles continued to be interested. Here was a golden opportunity for Paul to say “You Gentiles don't need to wait a week. We can meet tomorrow, on the day of the Sun, because you're not bound by Jewish laws...”. But do we read that? Here's what scripture says.

#### **Acts 13:42-46**

“So when the Jews went out of the synagogue, the **Gentiles** begged that these words might be preached to them *the next Sabbath*. 43 Now when the congregation had broken up, many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God.

44 *On the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God.* 45 *But when the Jews saw the multitudes*, they were filled with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul.”

Some will protest that **the Jerusalem Council** in Acts 15 limited what the Gentiles had to be concerned with. I think when you read it carefully, the list they send the Gentiles are the things they wanted them to be especially careful about, because .... Let's read it:

#### **Acts 15:19-21**

“Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God, 20 but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood. 21 **FOR Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath.**”

Paul makes it very clear to the Gentile Corinthians that no one who is a commandment breaker *as a way of life* will be in the kingdom of God! (1 Cor. 6:6-9). So Acts 15 is saying, “they'll get the rest of the instruction in the course of what they hear when Scripture is read every Sabbath”. And here, “every Sabbath” is in context of the instruction being given to the Gentiles, not just the Jews.

**When Paul went to Corinth, here's what is said:**

**Acts 18:4** “And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks.”

Some will say Paul was an opportunist and went to the synagogues because a crowd was always there, and they were there on the Sabbath, so that's why Paul did it. Brethren, that's simply not being honest with scripture.

**Acts 17:1-4**

“Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. 2 **Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures,** 3 explaining and demonstrating that the **Christ** had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, “**This Jesus whom I preach** to you is the Christ.” 4 And some of them were persuaded; *and a great multitude of the devout Greeks*, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas.”

**In Rome, under house arrest initially, here's what it says about Paul:**

**Acts 28:30-31**

“Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented **house**, and received all who came to him, 31 **preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ** with all confidence, no one forbidding him.”

**Often used Scriptures to try to annul God's commandment to keep the 7<sup>th</sup> Day Holy**

Paul penned the passages we're about to read in Galatians, Romans and Colossians under God's inspiration. Before we read those passages, let's hear what Paul himself said was his set of beliefs and conduct:

We know Paul as his custom was, kept the Sabbath. We know Paul said he was never called into question for any of his teachings or practices, except that Jesus Christ had died and been resurrected. Sometimes he was questioned on Circumcision. That's it. Notice carefully what *Paul* says about his own beliefs.....he clearly shows he was never persecuted regarding Sabbath beliefs. He surely would have been attacked and persecuted, had he been trying to change Sabbath to Sunday or to remove the Sabbath altogether or teach against the Sabbath.

**Acts 24:10-21**

Then Paul, after the governor had nodded to him to speak, answered: "Inasmuch as I know that you have been for many years a judge of this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself, 11 because you may ascertain that it is no more than twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem to worship. 12 And they neither found me in the temple disputing with anyone nor inciting the crowd, either in the synagogues or in the city. 13 Nor can they prove the things of which they now accuse me. 14 **But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets.** 15 I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust. 16 This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men.

17 "Now after many years I came to bring alms and offerings to my nation, 18 in the midst of which some Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with a mob nor with

tumult. 19 **They ought to have been here before you to object if they had anything against me. 20 Or else let those who are here themselves say if they found any wrongdoing in me while I stood before the council,** 21 unless it is for this one statement which I cried out, standing among them, 'Concerning the resurrection of the dead I am being judged by you this day.'"

That was Paul's testimony. Never was he accused of breaking the Sabbath. If he taught against it, or did break it as a way of life, we'd be reading about it. Paul says that in his life, he was **"concerning righteousness which is in the law, blameless"** (Phil. 3:6). He also realized his own obedience wasn't saving righteousness, and that he needed God's perfect righteousness gifted to him (Phil. 3:9) through faith in Christ. So it's clear Paul continued to keep Sabbath, continued to teach even Gentiles on Sabbath (Acts 17:1-4; 18:4, etc). Paul even had Timothy circumcised, though it wasn't required (Rom. 16:2-3). Paul cut his hair and made a vow (Acts 18:18), though it wasn't required. There's no hint he ever gave up on the Sabbath or taught against it, though he did clearly teach against circumcision as a spiritual requirement. And if he had preached against Sabbath keeping, there would be plenty of rioting against him for doing so and we'd be reading a lot about it. But not one hint.

With that context in mind, next time we'll read Gal. 4:9-11, written to a Gentile group of brethren probably in Lystra, Iconium and Derbe in what is now Central Turkey. They served pagan gods – Gal. 4:8 – so were clearly Gentile Paul was trying to convince them they were children of Abraham by faith. If these had been Jewish brethren, they would need no such argument, as they were Abraham's seed by birth!

So anyway, I'm out of time – so I'll cover next time three passages often used to preach against God's commandment of the Sabbath: Galatians 4:9-11; Romans 14:2-6; Colossians 2:16-17.

I hope to cover in the next message how Sunday became the accepted day of worship in the Roman Catholic church, instead of the Seventh Day sabbath.

For now, however, it should suffice to say – there is *no scripture* giving mankind any authority to change the laws of God, the commandments of God. Nor is there any scripture that shows the early believers in the first 40 years after Christ did so. True, some who called themselves Christian, did begin to worship on Sunday 100-150 years after Christ's resurrection – but not in the beginning. It makes an interesting study to see how they came to change it, and how a pagan emperor Constantine, claiming conversion but whose life had no fruit of conversion, made Sunday worship official in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, on pain of death, if you tried to continue keeping the 7<sup>th</sup> Day sabbath.

Brethren, I hope you will see it is paramount we fully obey God, and believe all of God's word – and start to do what God Almighty commands us, including to remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy. It's not the only commandment, it's not even the greatest commandment. But it IS part of God's holy commandments we must obey.

I invite feedback from you, and especially if you feel you were convicted by this – and will now obey God's holy Sabbath – or if you were not persuaded, and will continue to worship on Sunday. I'd like to hear from you.

And if you feel others can benefit from these first 2 sermons – please feel free to alert others to this website and this message. God bless you – as you obey and keep all His ways, including the 7<sup>th</sup> Day Sabbath. Until next time, this is Philip Shields, your fellow servant in Christ and our Father.