

The following is a letter between two Christian friends. They had a habit of sharing their faith and love for Jesus. One day as they were sharing, the topic of the Sabbath and the Ten Commandments came up and for the first time, they were not in agreement. The position of one friend was that the Sabbath Commandment is no longer necessary for us as Christians. The position of the other was that the Sabbath commandment, along with the other nine commandments, is still a part of God's will for His people and Christians are called to obey. The wonderful thing is that they were able to disagree, without being disagreeable. They both were very excited to share their understanding on this often controversial topic. However, this discussion began at a time when one of them was in the process of moving away, so they decided to continue their discussion via email. This is a letter between them in response to a document that was shared in support of the position that the Sabbath was ceremonial and is no longer necessary for Christians. Although I have not obtained permission to share that document, I believe that this discussion will prove useful to Christians for reflection on their faith and the role that the Ten Commandments play in the lives of all people. If you would like to share your comments or have more discussion or Bible study after you've read this document, you may contact me at isaiah1-18@vimap.net. If you would like more information on the Sabbath, or would like to learn more about God and His word, consider these websites. They contain lots of free Bible study resources and devotional material that you can enjoy at your own pace in the privacy of your home.

www.penn.vi/goodnews/sabbathtruth.html
www.penn.vi/goodnews/bibleuniverse.html
www.penn.vi/goodnews/discover.html

I am not a Bible expert or instructor. I am just one who has been touched by the miracle of grace in my life, that Jesus gave His life for me. He left the wonders and glory of Heaven, clothed Himself in humanity, lived among us and suffered and died for us. He lovingly took the penalty we deserve, in order that we might live. He is coming again! Let's all get ready to meet Him. May God bless you as you read and reflect on His word.

Bruds,

Well you are certainly missed already. I pray this communication greets you well. I just wanted to keep our conversation going while you are away. Thank you for sharing the document concerning the Sabbath in the context of the covenant. It was an interesting read. I've reflected on it and would like to discuss it with you. Now, I mean this with a sincere heart. It means a lot to me that you shared this with me. Many I know are not even willing to have these types of reflections on their faith, much less to be able to do so in love. God bless you and may He be with us as we continue to study His Word.

Now I pray that the same Holy Spirit that inspired the Bible will visit with each of us as we continue this study and reflection on God's Word and may it be that we will all grow closer to Christ and each other as we wait on His appearing with eager readiness. In Jesus' name, Amen.

It is wonderful that we are able to have such a discussion. What's even greater is that the more we talk, the more we can understand about each other and God. It's good that by providing the document, we have a better platform for a discussion. I can understand more of what we have in common and what we

disagree on. Let's start with what I know is common. We love the Lord! Based on our existing friendship, it's safe to say that we all know that this discussion would not even make sense without our recognition and acceptance of the love of God expressed to us through the person of Jesus Christ. It is our acceptance of His love that enables us to love Him, love each other and diligently seek after Him in His Word. The Bible says that the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23) so we really have just two choices: we can pay our own wages, or we can accept the sacrifice of Jesus on our behalf and be saved. So on the basis of our individual acceptance of Jesus Christ as our Savior, we have a platform on which to stand to have our discussion and depend on Him, through the power of the Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth (John 16:13).

An interesting thought comes to mind when I think of truth. I've grown to really respect the permanence of God's law and even more so when I reflect on Revelation 12:17 which gives two distinct characteristics of God's remnant people. They will keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ. Remembering those two characteristics in the context of truth, consider these texts:

(Psalms 119:151) Thou *art* near, O LORD; and all thy commandments *are* truth.

(John 14:6) Jesus saith unto him, **I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.**

The Bible says Jesus is truth and all God's commandments are truth. Now this is where our discussion narrows. I think we both agree that Christians should keep the commandments, but we differ somewhat to what degree and for what reason. You'll have to correct me if I'm wrong, but I think I remember you saying that we should keep them, but we are not commanded to do so. However, In Matthew 5:17-19, Jesus is very direct about the commandments when He says that He did not come to destroy the law or the prophets, but to fulfill them. He goes on to say that whoever breaks one of these least commandments and teach men so will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does and teaches them, they will be called great. Jesus here is telling us that the law is intact and we should keep the commandments. It's important to say something about the word fulfill because I've heard some say that the law is done away with because Jesus fulfilled them. It really wouldn't make sense for Jesus to say that I did not come to destroy, but to do away with. Jesus came to live the law. That's something that we often miss when we consider Christ's sacrifice. He not only died for us, but He lived for us. When we accept Christ, we get the benefit of His death in our place, but we also get the benefit of His sinless life. In fact, if He did not live a perfect, sinless life, His life would not have been a worthy sacrifice for us and He would not be able to save us. He lived and died for us and in His life, He kept the law PERFECTLY! Thanks and praise be unto Him forever! One more look at the word fulfill. In Matthew 3:15, we read Jesus' answer to John after John was objecting to the idea of Jesus being baptized by him. Jesus said to John, "**Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness.**" Was Jesus

saying that He was doing away with righteousness? No, I think this makes it clear that when Jesus says fulfill, He does not mean do away with.

However, on the basis of the document, the Sabbath commandment is singled out as being ceremonial and not moral as the other nine are, therefore it would be of a passing character as the other ceremonial laws and ordinances. Now most Christians I know agree that the moral law of God (the Ten Commandments) is not of a passing character as the hundreds of ceremonial laws and ordinances are, but generally disagree on the 4th (Sabbath) commandment for one reason or another. Since this document states that the Sabbath is the only one of the Ten Commandments that is ceremonial, my burden is to prove from the Bible that the 7th day Sabbath is not of a passing character and is not part of the ceremonial laws and ordinances that are done away with. This is crucial to our faith because the Ten Commandments are more than just some rules. They are the standard which defines sin (Romans 3:20). They are the standard by which we shall be judged (James 2:12). It is the only part of the bible that God literally wrote Himself (Exodus 31:18, Exodus 32:16). Everything else was written by His chosen servants through His inspiration (2 Timothy 3:16). And as I mentioned above, God's remnant people will keep His commandments. This point is further illustrated in Revelation 22:14 where the Bible says that only those that do God's commandments will have a right to the tree of life. Since the 7th day Sabbath is expressed in the fourth commandment, we should keep it; since James 2 and verse 10 says "for whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all", we should keep it; since sin is the transgression of the law (1 John 3:4) and whoever commits sin is of the devil (1 John 3:8) and whoever is born of God does not commit sin (1 John 3:9) we should keep the Sabbath day holy. So my burden, as mentioned above, is to prove that the 7th day Sabbath is part of the Ten Commandments, that it is not part of the ceremonial laws and is indeed just as important as "thou shalt not kill".

The Old and the New Covenants

Before we go fully into that, I would like to share some reflections on the Old and New Covenants. The document does make mention of the Covenants and it does so in great detail. A misunderstanding of these covenants often leads people to think that God's Ten Commandments are done away with and are no longer necessary and that is not so. Now I don't intend to go into as much detail as the document, but only to discuss the fundamentals in order to focus on the permanence of God's law. One detail discussed in the document stood out to me. It stated that the Sabbath was the sign of the Old Covenant. The Sabbath is actually a memorial of creation and the Creator. It is the only commandment that lifts up God as Creator. Consider the commandment as it is written:

(Exodus 20:8) Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.

(Exodus 20:9) Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work:

(Exodus 20:10) But the seventh day *is* the sabbath of the LORD thy God: *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 20:11) For *in* six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them *is*, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

Much of the principles expressed in the other commandments can be shared by the other religions of the world. Even a noble atheist can agree with “thou shalt not kill” or “thou shalt not steal”. A Buddhist can teach you to respect another man’s wife. A Muslim can agree that it is not wise to covet another’s possessions. But if someone keeps the Sabbath day holy, it can only be traced back to the Bible and our God, the Creator of heaven and earth. If we all focused on the principles embodied in this commandment, there would be no atheists and evolution would not be an issue because we would remember that in six days, the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is. The Sabbath then really is not a sign of the Old Covenant, but it is a memorial of creation and it exalts God as our Creator.

Now with regard to the fundamentals of the Old and New Covenants, we should focus on what a covenant is. As the document stated, a covenant in its simplest definition is an agreement. In this case the agreement is between God and His people. The basis of this agreement is the Ten Commandments:

(Exodus 34:28) And he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the ten commandments.

(Deuteronomy 4:13) And he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, *even* ten commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone.

Often when people focus on the New Covenant, they automatically think that something was wrong with the Old one and they place the blame on the Commandments. It’s true that there was fault with the Old Covenant (Hebrews 8:7). It’s important for us to recognize that of the three parts of the Old Covenant (God, His people, and the Ten Commandments) the only problem was with His people. There’s obviously no problem with God and the Bible says that the commandments are holy and just and good (Romans 7:12). The problem was with His people as expressed in Hebrews 8:9 where the Bible says that “...they continued not in my covenant...”. But what happened to the law in the New Covenant? God said He will place His law in the hearts and minds of His people (Hebrews 8:10). That’s why Jesus says “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). That’s why 1 John 2:4 says “He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar...”. That’s why 1 John 5:3 says that the love of God is the keeping of His commandments. So the law has

not been done away with in the New Covenant and that's important for us to remember as we continue this discussion.

The Sabbath: Ceremonial or Not

Now back to the Sabbath and whether or not it is part of the ceremonial law. We do learn of many ceremonial laws and ordinances that were given to the Jews and in order to prove that the Sabbath was not a part of the ceremonial law and is a non-discriminative part of the Ten Commandments, I'll start at the beginning.

In Genesis chapter 2, God had completed creating the heavens and the earth. This is when He ended His work and rested. But it goes on to say that He blessed the seventh day and made it Holy.

(Genesis 2:1) Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.

(Genesis 2:2) And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.

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

It's important for us to recognize a few things about what took place here. 1) The seventh day was the only day that God blessed and set aside for holy use. That's what sanctified means. That's why the commandment tells us to remember the day and keep it holy. He is the one that made it holy and we are commanded to keep it that way. 2) There was nothing wrong with anything God made. There was no sin in the world at that time and God's Sabbath day was a perfect part of His creation. The ceremonial laws and ordinances came as a result of sin and were necessary to point the people to Jesus. That's why they are referred to as types and shadows. But the 7th day Sabbath was established before sin and was a perfect part of God's creation.

In Exodus chapter 16, we read about the children of Israel in the wilderness of Sin where they murmured about hunger. God, in His mercy, told them He would provide them with bread from heaven. But in His provision He would see if they will walk in His law or not.

(Exodus 16:4) Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no.

(Exodus 16:5) And it shall come to pass, that on the sixth day they shall prepare *that* which they bring in; and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily.

It is important for us to notice that God had not given them the Ten Commandments on the tables of stone as yet, but He expected them to keep His law. The Ten Commandments were not given until Exodus 20. This is very important to our understanding because although Genesis chapter 2 proves that the Sabbath existed way back in creation; people still insist that the Sabbath was for the Jews. The Sabbath did not begin at Mount Sinai, it was established at creation. And God's expectation of them to keep His holy day here in Exodus 16 confirms this. When the people failed to comply, God's question to them was, "How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws?"

(Exodus 16:26) Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, *which is the sabbath*, in it there shall be none.

(Exodus 16:27) And it came to pass, *that* there went out *some* of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none.

(Exodus 16:28) And the LORD said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws?

Not only does this confirm that the Sabbath existed before Sinai, but all the Ten Commandments existed before Sinai. That's the only way that Joseph could have known that adultery was a sin in Genesis 39:9.

Now, what about the types and shadows? These are the laws and ordinances that were added because of sin and they typified Christ and pointed forward to Him, hence no longer necessary after His death and resurrection. Remember, as we focus on this, that the Ten Commandments are the standard which defines sin, and that the Sabbath was created before sin. A good way to see this point is to consider this. If Adam and Eve did not sin, everything would have remained perfect and there would be no need for us to go to heaven and for the earth to be made new. And we would all be keeping the Sabbath day holy every 7th day. We'll establish that further when we look at Isaiah.

In the ceremonial laws, there were several ceremonial Sabbaths that were separate from the 7th day Sabbath. The Day of Atonement (Leviticus 23:27) was one of these. There are others you may read about in Leviticus chapter 23. These ceremonial Sabbaths are part of the ceremonial law which pointed forward to Christ and was indeed nailed to His cross. They are separate from the 7th day Sabbath, which is part of the Ten Commandments. These ceremonial Sabbaths came on a date, not a day as the 7th day Sabbath does. For example, the Day of Atonement came on the tenth day of the seventh month. For us that would be like July 10th. Of course their calendar didn't have July, but just so we can see the reference. Now in our example, July 10th could be on a Monday one year and Tuesday the next. And when a ceremonial Sabbath fell on the same day as the weekly Sabbath, it was called a High Day (see John 19:31 for an example). It was like a double blessing and they appreciated it as such. But to further prove that these days were indeed different from the 7th day Sabbath, consider the

following texts in Leviticus where these days are described and regarded as "...Besides the Sabbaths of the Lord..." meaning other than the Sabbaths of the Lord. This meant that the addition of these ceremonial Sabbaths did not nullify the Sabbath of the Lord and were indeed separate.

(Leviticus 23:37) These *are* the feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim *to be* holy convocations, to offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD, a burnt offering, and a meat offering, a sacrifice, and drink offerings, every thing upon his day:

(Leviticus 23:38) Beside the sabbaths of the LORD, and beside your gifts, and beside all your vows, and beside all your freewill offerings, which ye give unto the LORD.

A look at Isaiah 66:22-23, provides overwhelming evidence that the Sabbath is not of a passing character. It becomes abundantly clear that the Sabbath is not part of the ceremonial law which was done away with; as it will be the day we worship God in the new earth. That should let us know that God has no intention of changing His holy day. At this point, the issue of sin is settled, Christ has returned and the earth is made new! And God says all flesh shall come to worship before Him, one Sabbath to another.

(Isaiah 66:22) For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain.

(Isaiah 66:23) 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 the LORD.

Nailed to the cross?

Lastly, let's look at Colossians 2: 14-17 because that's a necessary part of this discussion. This was listed in the document under the texts as to why Christians go to church on Sunday with a special note on verse 14. I'm hoping that our discussion above regarding the ceremonial law and ceremonial Sabbaths shed some light on the fact that these types and shadows were indeed separate from the 7th day Sabbath, which is a part of the Ten Commandments and that should address verses 15-17. The Ten Commandments were not nailed to the cross, the ceremonial laws, along with the ceremonial Sabbaths were nailed to the cross. Perhaps it will become clearer as we discuss verse 14. But consider this: If Paul is saying here that the Ten Commandments were nailed to the cross and then tells us in Romans 2:13 that not the hearers of the law shall be just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified, then he would seem to be contradicting himself. It wouldn't make sense for him to tell us one place that the law is done away with, and then tell us to do it. We have to agree that the Bible

does not contradict itself. If the discussion about the ceremonial law above does not make it clear what was nailed to the cross, a close look at verse 14 should. In verse 14, the Apostle says:

(Colossians 2:14) 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;

Let's now look at the distinction that is made between the Ten Commandments and the ceremonial laws; the Law written with the finger of God on tables of stone and the law written by the hand of Moses in a book. Once we look at these differences closely, paying attention to the language used in verse 14 above, it will be clear what was nailed to the cross.

The Law of God, the Ten Commandments, written by God Himself on tables of stone:

(Exodus 31:18) And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God.

(Exodus 32:15) And Moses turned, and went down from the mount, and the two tables of the testimony *were* in his hand: the tables *were* written on both their sides; on the one side and on the other *were* they written.

(Exodus 32:16) And the tables *were* the work of God, and the writing *was* the writing of God, graven upon the tables.

The ceremonial law given to the people, by the hand of Moses, written in a book:

(Leviticus 26:46) These *are* the statutes and judgments and laws, which the LORD made between him and the children of Israel in mount Sinai by the hand of Moses.

(Leviticus 27:34) These *are* the commandments, which the LORD commanded Moses for the children of Israel in mount Sinai.

(Deuteronomy 31:24) And it came to pass, when Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book, until they were finished,

The Ten Commandments were placed inside the Ark of the Covenant (Testimony):

(Exodus 40:20) And he took and put the testimony into the ark, and set the staves on the ark, and put the mercy seat above upon the ark:

(Deuteronomy 10:2) And I will write on the tables the words that were in the first tables which thou didst break, and thou shalt put them in the ark.

The ceremonial law, written by Moses in a book, was placed in the side of the Ark:

Notice the language used here. The Apostle said that the “handwriting of ordinances that was against us” was nailed to the cross and Moses said that book of the law (which he wrote) would be a witness against thee.

(Deuteronomy 31:25) That Moses commanded the Levites, which bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD, saying,

(Deuteronomy 31:26) Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee.

That is what was nailed to the cross! It simply would not make sense that the Bible would tell us in one place that God’s commandments are nailed to the cross and then tell us in another place “Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have a right to the tree of life...” (Revelation 22:14). Thank God that His word does not fail and does not contradict and with His help, we can understand.

I know this has been a lengthy response, but I trust that it has been fun fellowship and God’s spirit will be with us as we continue to study His word. There were several other scriptures in the document in support of Sunday worship, but it’s probably best that we pause the discussion here. I have studied them and I remain convinced, from the Scripture that God has not changed His holy day, as we saw in Isaiah 66. I’d like to share one last thing with regard to Sunday worship. I’ve heard personally from the mouth of Catholic clergy (on the Catholic TV channel) that they exalt their tradition above Scripture. This means that they claim to have the authority to change the Bible. I would not repeat this if I didn’t hear it myself. I recently read a booklet titled “Rome’s Challenge”. In this booklet, the Roman Church boldly challenges all Protestants who worship on Sunday. The Protestant churches broke off from the Roman church viewing it as the apostate church and the theme of the Protestant reformation became “sola scriptura” or the Bible only. The challenge of the Roman church to the Protestants is this: if your only authority is the Bible, then why do you worship on Sunday? Their answer is we did it! Consider the following quotes: “The Catholic Church for over one thousand years before the existence of a Protestant, by virtue of her divine mission, changed the day from Saturday to Sunday.” pg. 24. “Their [Protestants] profession of holding the Scripture alone as the standard of faith, is false. PROOF: The written word explicitly enjoins the observance of the seventh day as the Sabbath. They do not observe the seventh day, but reject it. If they do truly hold the Scripture alone as their standard, they would be observing the seventh day as is enjoined in the scripture throughout.” pg. 26.

To be continued....May God be with us as we continue to study His word, recognize sin and turn from it to Jesus.