

# MISHPAT V'CHESED

## M I N I S T R I E S

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### **Does the Original Sabbath Apply To Today?**

**April 15th, 2024 – By Greg Wilson**

Many of us know the 10 commandments of Exodus 20 and how it includes a command to keep the sabbath holy. We also know the Jews see this as Saturday, or “Shabbat” in Hebrew, which comes from the root verb “shavat”, meaning “to cease/stop”. So they “stop” what they do Saturday, actually Friday sundown to Saturday sundown, and worship God, enjoy time together with meals, and overall have a very sweet time in fellowship, rest, devotion, and worship. Meanwhile, Christians generally observe this time on Sunday, with the famous Sunday morning church service, and then generally relaxing at home, although these days it seems more common for Christians to use the rest of Sunday to perhaps get things done or go shopping, etc...

So which one is it, Saturday or Sunday, and does it really matter? Didn't the apostle Paul say, after all, in **Romans 14:5** that

***“One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind.”***

And also in **Hebrews 4:9-11**, some would say the author is speaking of a spiritual sabbath rest we now enter where the day doesn't matter –

***“So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. 10 For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His. 11 Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience.”***

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## A Bigger Question

This question of Sabbath is actually part of a bigger question, though, that being how literally and to what extent do we apply the Law of Moses given by God to our lives today?

I want to lay a little bit of a foundation to clarify some theologies out there which would say that the Law is bad and done away with.

First off, GOD HIMSELF gave this Law!! And God is holy and perfect. Thus the Law cannot be bad. BUT, when the Apostle Paul writes in terms of the Law being his enemy - this refers to the fact that the Law points out our sin and condemns us!

Ever since Adam and Eve went their own way in rebellion to try to become like God, that sinful selfishness has been passed down and the Law just seems to take delight and really laying out each and every way in which we are sinful and bad! Thus it gets a bad rap. But note, Paul also clarified that it's OUR SIN that is really the bad guy - not the Law - but since we are sinners, the Law appears like the bad guy to us – **Romans 7:12-13** –

***“So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good.***

***Therefore did that which is good become a cause of death for me? May it never be! Rather it was sin, in order that it might be shown to be sin by effecting my death through that which is good, so that through the commandment sin would become utterly sinful.”***

And sin in the Law, if it was grave enough, was punished by death. But note, as the Jews call the entire first 5 books of the Bible “Torah” (Law) - even in Genesis we see God declaring this curse because of sin – in the day we would eat of the fruit, WE WOULD DIE. And die we did - spiritually. It's like a cell phone - once we disconnected from God, we started the process of losing our charge. And a phone that's left unplugged long enough eventually dies completely - black screen, no life. So, **Romans 6:23** -

***“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”***

We were born into sin - we sin by nature, yet God has provided remedy. Jesus has become sin for us and born its punishment so we can receive His holiness instead via His Spirit. This is the great exchanged when we come to Him like a prodigal son, coming home to a loving Father. He takes our sin, and gives us His holiness.

So in **Romans 3:31**, after Paul finishes talking about us being saved by this faith in Jesus, he comes back to the Law. What do we do with it now that we've been saved from its penalty of death? We now have His life flowing through us. We've been "connected to the electrical outlet" again, so-to-speak. Let's see what Paul says:

***"Do we then nullify the Law through faith? Far from it! On the contrary, we establish the Law."***

Wow. No, the Law is not going away in a sense. On the contrary, the Law is being established. I believe a distinction should be made though - the Law contains many commands of what to do and what not to do. It is these righteous precepts that I believe the Holy Spirit lays on our hearts to do, which the Law itself sums up as love God with all you are (Deuteronomy), and love your neighbor as yourself (**Leviticus 19:18**) –

***"You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD (YHWH - 4 letter Hebrew holy name of God, sometimes pronounced Yahweh or Jehovah)."***

Thought that was a new testament concept? Think again. Jeremiah speaks of a new covenant, in which His laws will be written on our hearts. And surely this happens when the Holy Spirit via our conscience woos us to love God and others.

So what happened to the death penalties and the animal sacrifices of the Torah (Law of God), or the ritual cleansing washing, etc?

Friend, I have to admit - this is a grey area for me. I do not know if Jesus' death means that we should annul death penalties given by the government, or if He merely died for our spiritual eternal life, and the justice of Torah should carry on. In any case, as the name of my ministry efforts suggests - God still can carry out Mishpat (Justice) but also show great Chesed (Kindness/Mercy), and human governments can follow suit. As far as the animal sacrifices, Hebrews makes it pretty clear, regardless of if a temple would ever come back, that Jesus' sacrifice brings in something greater - the direct access to God, the removal of sin, and the way open to Heaven with God instead of sleeping in the dust. The word says Jesus went and made proclamation to the spirits of those who died in the flood, which says to me that those spirits were held in bondage and maybe suffering, but that He offered them a chance and a way to LIGHT and eternal life.

And regarding ritual cleansing, Jesus was perfectly pure and LIFE, and he touched the unclean and made THEM clean. So obviously cleanliness is good, but if we have the spirit of Jesus in us, the more important thing is being cleansed from the inside out, and having that LIFE of His sanctifying us - yet perhaps the washings associated with seminal emissions, etc, could still have their place in keeping our outer bodies clean.

And now we come full circle back to the Sabbath, one of the basic 10 commandments. Most Christians would have respect for at least the 10 commandments, and as we've seen, the righteous statutes of the Law indeed should guide us today, but in a Spirit-filled way, full of life and newness instead of heavy rules and bondage that the Pharisees had made out of it. Remember, you can't put new wine into old wineskins!!

## Enjoying the Sabbath Command?

So if the 10 commandments apply to us today, how would the Sabbath command apply?

As for me, I do not see any solid evidence really for it changing to Sunday. I am aware the women found Jesus' body resurrected on Sunday morning, and that is AWESOME. Even meeting on Sundays to celebrate this sounds great! But a command to rest for the WHOLE SEVENTH day does not seem to be abolished. Remember the words of Jesus in **Matthew 5:17-19** –

***“Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. 18 For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.***

***19 Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”***

Also, the seventh day is a very special day, going back to even creation - God set this day apart to be special from the foundation of the world! When He had finished His vast work of creation in all its glory, and all was perfect, then came the seventh day when He fellowshiped with man and woman. I do not think this memorial to creation can be easily overturned, and neither do I see any substantial evidence in the New Testament saying the day has been changed.

Now. Regarding when the seventh day actually IS that exodus 20:8 refers to, let's look at some historical evidence. I quote from [www.biblethingsinbibleways.wordpress.com](http://www.biblethingsinbibleways.wordpress.com) who is quoting from a Roman historian named **Cassius Dio**, in the work ***Roman History 37.16.1-4 [A]***.

*“A Roman historian named Cassius Dio who wrote about Roman History, gives an account of Wars waged between Rome & Judea. In it he explains the capture of Jerusalem in **63 BC** saying “As it was, they made an exception of what are called the days of Saturn, and by doing no work at all on those days afforded the Romans an opportunity in this interval to batter down the wall. The latter, on learning of this superstitious awe of theirs, made no serious attempts the rest of the time, but on those days, when they came round in*

*succession, assaulted most vigorously. Thus the defenders were captured on the day of Saturn, without making any defense, and all the wealth was plundered". Cassius wrote that the Romans who learned that the Jews rested on the Days of Saturn (Saturday which was known as Saturn's Day in Rome), attacked the Jerusalem stronghold on those days.* These words also tally with the writings of Josephus, showing us that Saturn's Day in Rome coincided with the day kept as the Sabbath by the Jews, even in the 1st Century BC."

So there it is. The Jewish Sabbath lined up with Saturday, (Saturn's day), which is still in our week today. And if the Jews had it on the wrong day – which is highly unlikely considering the meticulousness of their scribes who would count every single letter of the Torah - I think Jesus would have said something about it and it would have been recorded in our scriptures, as that would be a pretty big issue.

So because of this, it is my conviction the sabbath is Saturday, BUT, because Genesis says that there was EVENING and there was MORNING, the first day - it appears the first day started with evening. And thus the Jewish practice of observing Sabbath Friday night to Saturday night, which I hold to as well. Also in the book of Nehemiah he would close the gates before sundown, implying they were starting sabbath at sundown – **Nehemiah 13:19** –

***"It came about that just as it grew dark at the gates of Jerusalem before the sabbath, I commanded that the doors should be shut and that they should not open them until after the sabbath."***

Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) is also said to be from sundown to sundown. So it's a pretty established pattern in scripture. Nevertheless, if it still seems like the answer is not 100% clear, perhaps this is a chance for us to apply Romans 14:5 mentioned above, and give grace to one another regarding this issue, following our conviction of when and what to observe, not judging other well-meaning servants of the Lord. Remember also, Jesus said sabbath was a GIFT, made for man to enjoy, not a burden for men to have to be slaves to - sabbath is made for man, not man for the sabbath - **Mark 2:27**. Embracing the Jewish practice of Shabbat is an ancient, rich, and now Spirit-filled practice we can do to draw closer to Jesus (Yeshua - a Jewish Rabbi, even after resurrection 😊) and our Heavenly Father יהוה - the 4 Hebrew letters equivalent to English Y H (W or V) H - sometimes pronounced Yahweh, Jehovah, or Yahuah. I believe the Father has left this pronunciation a bit mysterious on purpose - because He is the Great I AM, shrouded in mystery, and perhaps He doesn't want His name being profaned so much in the world today. Nevertheless, I treasure this name that comes from Exodus 3, that does seem related the Hebrew verb "TO BE" as He is the foundation of all existence.

## Conclusion

Anyhow, I hope this article has been helpful to you the reader, whoever you are, in regards to application of the Law of God to our lives, and specifically, the 4th of the 10 commandments, the command to rest and remember the sabbath day and keep it holy - **Exodus 20:8-11** –

***“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 For six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath of the LORD your God; on it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male slave or your female slave, or your cattle, or your resident who stays with you. 11 For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and everything that is in them, and He rested on the seventh day; for that reason the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”***

Amen Amen. Let us enter the rest our Father wants to give us physically, emotionally, and spiritually, a rest from our own strivings and sin, and a breath of fresh air of His Spirit of love and peace and patience. Selah (Meditation). Amen.

Sincerely,

**-Greg Wilson**

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