



A Publication of CJF Ministries and Messianic Perspectives Radio Network

# Messianic Perspectives®

*God has not forgotten the Jewish people, and neither have we.*

## Should Christians Keep The Sabbath?

BY DR. GARY HEDRICK

### Exodus 31

And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak also to the children of Israel, saying: 'Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you. You shall keep the Sabbath, therefore, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people. Work shall be done for six days, but the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever; for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed.'" And when He had made an end of speaking with him on Mount Sinai, He gave Moses two tablets of the Testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God.



Who would have ever thought that a day—a simple, 24-hour period—could be so controversial? Yet few issues have been more contentious in Christendom than that of Sabbath observance.

The Hebrew term *Shabbat* refers to Saturday, the last day of the week. For millennia, the Jewish people have observed the Sabbath as a special day set apart for God. For them, Sunday is the first day of the week—another work day.

However, most Christians have historically observed Sunday as their day of rest and worship. Some of them even claim that the Sabbath has been changed from Saturday to Sunday and that's why (they say) believers today should worship on Sunday.

## Controversies

The term often used to describe someone who worships on Saturday is “Sabbatarian.” Historical Sabbatarianism includes not only “seventh-day Sabbatharians” who worship on the seventh day (Saturday), but also “first-day Sabbatharians” who worship on Sunday because (as I mentioned earlier) they believe the Sabbath has been changed from Saturday to Sunday.<sup>1</sup>

The Puritans, for instance, were first-day Sabbatharians who taught that Sunday is “the Lord’s day” and should be set apart for worship, fellowship, and rest—much like the Jewish Sabbath is. Some of them imposed strict laws regarding what their people could or could not do on the first day of the week. If someone was caught engaging in a prohibited activity on Sunday, he or she might be put on trial, fined, or even imprisoned.

Those are the first-day (Sunday) Sabbatharians. Then there’s the seventh-day variety, where there’s a broad spectrum of approaches and ideas about the Saturday Sabbath. Adherents include groups like the Seventh Day Adventists, the Seventh Day Church of God, Seventh Day Baptists, and numerous others.

The late Ellen G. White, founder of the Seventh Day Adventist movement, taught that the “two great errors” of the end-time, apostate church are (1) the immortality of the soul, and (2) Sunday worship.<sup>2</sup> Mrs. White felt so strongly about keeping the *Saturday* Sabbath, that she and her early followers declared *Sunday* worship to be the dreaded “mark of the beast.”<sup>3</sup> Even today, some Adventists still teach that world authorities will enforce Sunday worship in the end times and those who dare to worship on Saturday will be summarily rounded up, imprisoned, or even killed.<sup>4</sup>

However, not all seventh-day groups go to such aberrant extremes. For example, the Seventh Day Baptists today are quite orthodox in their beliefs—and their congregations have gathered on Saturday for worship since 1671.<sup>5</sup>

John Bunyan (1628-1688), the famous English Baptist preacher and writer, argued vehemently against observing the Saturday Sabbath. His main objection to Saturday observance was that it’s the Jewish day of worship—and “the Jews” were “Christ’s deadliest enemies.”<sup>6</sup>

Never mind that Yeshua himself was Jewish, and also that the writers of the New Testament (NT) were Jewish, the Apostles were Jewish, the first church was Jewish (in Jerusalem), and the earliest believers were Jewish—we can’t worship on the Sabbath, Bunyan declares, because it’s a Jewish practice! With all due respect to Mr. Bunyan, a truly notable figure in church history, this is utter poppycock.

Just google “Sabbatarianism” and you’ll see 50,000-plus hits showing that the debate rages on! Extremists (whether pro or con) accuse anyone who disagrees with them of heresy. Some people say you won’t go to Heaven unless you observe the Saturday Sabbath and others claim you won’t go to Heaven if you do! Opinions abound, and emotions, at times, overwhelm reason.

## Was the Sabbath Changed to Sunday?

We might as well get right to the heart of the matter: did God change the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday? Well, if He did, some of us didn’t get the memo.

The most recent Catechism of the Catholic Church declares that Sunday has become “the Lord’s day” and that “its ceremonial observance replaces that of the sabbath.”<sup>7</sup> Ironically, this is one of the few tenets of faith where Catholics and Protestants historically have found themselves in agreement! Strange bedfellows, one might say.

Charles Halff, our late founder (1929-2000), grew up in a Jewish culture where families typically gathered on Friday evening to mark the beginning of the Sabbath.<sup>8</sup> When he became a believer in Yeshua (Jesus) in the 1940s, and began preaching in churches all over North America, Charles found himself thrust into a strange, new world where most Christians gathered on Sundays rather than on Saturdays. As a young Jewish believer, he sometimes found himself confronted by well-meaning Christians who insisted that the Church had replaced Israel as the People of God; and part of that spiel, unfortunately, was that Sunday had replaced Saturday as the Sabbath. But he was never convinced!

Charles often told us, “Nowhere does the Bible say that God replaced, changed, or did away with the Sabbath. The Sabbath has always been Saturday—not Sunday.” He had no problem with believers worshiping on Sunday (or on any other day of the week, for that matter); but he didn’t take kindly to the notion that God had replaced Israel with the Church and had thereby changed the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday.

What, then, are we to make of all of this? Should NT believers keep the Sabbath, or not?

## Messianic Perspectives®

Dr. Gary Hedrick, *Editor in Chief*  
Erastos Leiloglou, *Creative Director*



*Messianic Perspectives* is published bimonthly by CJF Ministries, P.O. Box 345, San Antonio, Texas 78292-0345, a 501(c)3 Texas nonprofit corporation: Dr. Charles Halff (1929-2000), Founder; Dr. Gary Hedrick, President; Brian Nowotny, Vice President for Administration; Erastos Leiloglou, Creative Director. Subscription price: \$10 per year. The publication of articles by other authors does not necessarily imply full agreement with all the views expressed therein. Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the New King James Version of the Bible (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982). Visit us online at [cjm.org](http://cjm.org). Toll-free OrderLine: (800) 926-5397. © 2017 by CJF Ministries. All rights reserved.

# Did Sunday Worship Begin With Constantine?

There are militant seventh-day Sabbatarians who claim that it's wrong for believers to worship on Sunday. To some of them, Sunday worship is a "mark" signifying disobedience to God. One key tenet of their position is that the Roman Emperor Constantine changed the official day of worship from Saturday to Sunday in the fourth century.

While there is a strain of truth in this proposal, the allegation itself is overblown. It represents an oversimplification of history.

It's true that Constantine I issued an edict in AD 321 making Sunday the official day of rest throughout the Roman Empire.<sup>1</sup> Many Messianic (Jewish-Christian) scholars believe this move was meant, at least in part, to further distance the emerging institutional church in the West from its Jewish roots a few centuries earlier. Anti-Judaic leaders in Christendom wanted to purge the Church of Jewish practices like Sabbath worship.

However, history tells us that Christians were worshipping on Sunday long before Constantine came along.

Many churches during the first to the fourth centuries conducted services both on the Jewish Sabbath (either on Friday night or on Saturday morning) and also on Sunday morning,<sup>2</sup> much like churches in Israel do today.

Justin Martyr (AD 100-165), an early Christian writer, mentions Sunday worship as a widespread practice during his lifetime (two centuries before Constantine).<sup>3</sup>

The Book of Acts tells us that in at least one instance, the early church met on "the first day of the week" (Acts 20:7), which would have been sometime after dusk on Saturday night. In this instance, Luke mentions the detail that Paul preached "until midnight." This doesn't mean that they met for church on Sunday morning and Paul spoke for 14 or more hours until midnight on Sunday night. It means they met on Saturday night and the service continued for several hours until around midnight.

Luke also tells us that the early believers met "daily with one accord" and "from house to house" in Jerusalem (Acts 2:46). Naturally, if they met daily—or every day of the week—that would have included Sunday.

Paul provides yet another detail when he says that the Sunday meeting was when they brought their offerings (1 Cor. 16:1-2). Those early believers, being mostly Jewish, would not have wanted to conduct business (i.e., receive a collection and count the money) on the Sabbath; so they waited until the next day. It was not a problem because they were coming together every day anyway.

So, it's misleading to demonize Sunday worship as something evil and wrong. It's not.



A bust of Constantine the Great (AD 280-337), one of the few remaining fragments from a colossal seated statue of the Roman Emperor that was destroyed in ancient times. The head measures more than eight feet across.

<sup>1</sup> "Codex Justinianus," lib. 3, tit. 12, 3; translated by Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. 3 (1903 edition), 380.

<sup>2</sup> *The Ecclesiastical History of Socrates, Surnamed Scholasticus, Or the Advocate: Comprising a History of the Church in Seven Books, from the Accession of Constantine, AD 305, to the 38<sup>th</sup> Year of Theodosius II, Including a Period of 140 Years*, Book V. (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1853), np.

<sup>3</sup> Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, Ch. 67.

## Keeping the Sabbath

The Sinai Covenant, or the Torah, encompasses the five Books of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. It includes what we call "the Ten Commandments." The fourth of those commandments instructs Israel to "remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Ex. 20:8).

*Rabbinic* Sabbath observance (i.e., traditional Jewish observance) and biblical Sabbath observance are two different matters.<sup>9</sup> The Judean powers-that-be in Yeshua's day ("Jews") objected to His setting aside certain aspects of rabbinic observance (Matt. 12:1-12; Mark 2:23-28; Luke 13:10-16; 14:1-6; John 5:5-16); yet the fact remains that Yeshua and early believers like Paul virtually always met with the wider Jewish community on the Sabbath.<sup>10</sup> Then Luke tells us that they met in homes for fellowship, prayer, and study on the other days of the week (e.g., Acts 2:42-47).<sup>11</sup>

The Gospels are especially informative because Yeshua is the ultimate authority on Sabbath observance. As the long-anticipated Messiah and rightful King of Israel, His judgment carries more authority than all the rabbinic councils of the past 2,000 years combined. Yeshua was (and is) Lord of the Sabbath because Sabbath commemorates Creation and He is the Creator (John 1:1, 3; Col. 1:16)!

No one today would (I hope!) insist that the Old Testament (OT) Sabbath laws are still in effect. Enforcing these laws would require the observant Jewish community to stone to death anyone who walks too far, or who builds a fire on the Sabbath (Ex. 35:1-3; Num. 15:32-36; cp. Acts 1:12).

Even aside from the death penalty problem, observing the Sabbath in a traditional, rabbinic sense is a complicated and challenging enterprise. There are literally hundreds of "do's" and "don'ts" (mostly "don'ts") in rabbinic Judaism regulating Jewish life on the Sabbath. They are derived from the Talmud, where an entire tractate (*Shabbat*) is dedicated to this topic. It records the rabbis' back-and-forth debates and discussions about Sabbath life. The original, stated purpose of the Sabbath was to provide a day of "rest," so the Mishnah (in the Talmud) lists 39 categories of work that are prohibited on the last day of the week.

So, in an ironic sort of way, the Israelites' main activity on the Sabbath was inactivity. What they were supposed to do was nothing—no creative work of any kind. They were to remain in or near their homes and take a break from their weekly routine.

For the people of Israel, keeping the Sabbath holy meant not treating it like the other six days. The Mosaic requirement was that there should be a clear division between the secular and the sacred.<sup>12</sup>



# The 39 Melachot<sup>1</sup> Prohibited Activities on Shabbat

In traditional Judaism, the ancient sages identified 39 categories of work that are forbidden on Shabbat. They appear to have been based originally on the various tasks that were required in the construction and maintenance of the *Mishkan*, or the wilderness Tabernacle.

### Field Work

Sowing  
Plowing  
Reaping  
Binding Sheaves  
Threshing  
Winnowing  
Selecting  
Grinding  
Sifting  
Kneading  
Baking

### Making Material Curtains

Shearing Wool  
Cleaning  
Combing  
Dyeing  
Spinning  
Stretching the Threads  
Making Loops  
Weaving Threads  
Separating the Threads  
Tying a Knot  
Untying a Knot  
Sewing  
Tearing

### Making Leather Curtains

Trapping  
Slaughtering  
Skinning  
Tanning  
Smoothing  
Ruling Lines  
Cutting

### Making the Beams of the *Mishkan*

Writing  
Erasing

### The Putting up and Taking down of the *Mishkan*

Building  
Breaking Down

### The *Mishkan's* Final Touches

Extinguishing a Fire  
Kindling a Fire  
Striking the Final Hammer Blow  
Carrying

More recently, rabbinic authorities have wrestled with issues like electricity and other modern inventions. For instance, since flipping a light switch kindles (or extinguishes) a “fire” (spark), is it kosher to turn lights on and off in your home on the Sabbath? The decision handed down is that one should not flip a light switch on or off on Shabbat. However, since most of us know in advance when we’re going to want the lights on and off, it’s permissible to rig a timer to do the work for us. It’s a kosher work-around.

Elevators obviously utilize electricity, switches, and buttons—so riding an elevator should be prohibited on the Sabbath, right? Not necessarily; at least, not if a Shabbat elevator is available (and they’re always available in Israel, where they are mandated by law). A Shabbat elevator is configured to operate automatically (without pushing buttons) and stop at every floor.<sup>2</sup>

*Shabbat* is a 24-chapter tractate in the Mishnah (part of the Talmud) that deals with thousands of details concerning rabbinic Sabbath observance.

<sup>1</sup> “Jewish Holidays: Shabbat” by Rabbi Jack Abramowitz on the Orthodox Union website at ou.org.

<sup>2</sup> Sometimes the Shabbat elevator goes all the way from the ground floor to the top floor and then begins its descent stopping at one floor at a time. In other cases, it stops at each floor in both directions (on the way up and again on the way down). It may linger at each stop for five minutes or more. It’s not uncommon for a Shabbat elevator to be furnished with a chair or two because the ride in a high-rise can last for half an hour or more.

## The Sabbath and the Law

Two important issues concerning Torah observance are the *unity* and *permanence* of the Mosaic Law. Regarding unity, is the entire OT Torah<sup>13</sup> still in effect as a legal covenant between God and His people?

If we’re not obliged to keep the fourth commandment (Sabbath observance), what about the sixth commandment (which prohibits murder)? Or the eighth one (which tells us not to steal from others)? Or the prohibition of adultery? Can we pick and choose which commandments we will observe?

Many evangelicals try to get around this problem by dividing the Law into sections: moral, civil, and ceremonial. The moral law (primarily the Ten Commandments), they say, is still in effect. The civil law, however, passed away (they say) when Israel ceased to govern itself as a sovereign nation during the Second Temple Period (under Rome). Likewise, they claim that the ceremonial law was destroyed with the Temple in AD 70. After all, how can you have the ceremonies without the Temple? This is the crux of their argument. It may sound logical, but the fact is that any such trisection of the Law is artificial and man-made. It’s found nowhere in Scripture. So, whatever position we end up with, it must treat the Mosaic Law as a package deal. If it’s still in effect, we don’t get to pick and choose which parts of it we wish to follow.

The Sinai Covenant—the Torah or “instruction” given through Moses—was said to be “forever” (Ex. 31:16-17). However, it was also conditional. So, it would continue in perpetuity if Israel kept her part of the agreement. And yes, Israel was party to an agreement. Moses laid before the elders of Israel “all these words which the LORD commanded him” (Ex. 19:7). God would bless and keep them *if* they obeyed His Law. That was the agreement. Their response is recorded in the Torah: *Then all the people answered together and said, “All that the LORD has spoken we will do.” So Moses brought back the words of the people to the LORD* (Ex. 19:8).

Moses told the LORD, in essence, “It looks like we have a deal. They will obey You in exchange for Your blessing and protection.”

The problem, of course, is that Israel didn’t keep up her part of the bargain. In fact, the people were already breaking several of the commandments before Moses even made it back down from Mount Sinai (Ex. 32:19-20)! And they failed in their obligations many other times during their wilderness wanderings and beyond. The Sinai Covenant was broken countless times and therefore is no longer in force as a legal, binding contract. (A bilateral contract, by definition, is invalidated when one party breaks its terms.) But even the broken Torah is still useful “for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, [and] for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16), even though it no longer acts as a regulator of Israel’s covenantal relationship to the LORD.

Fortunately for Israel, her position as God’s covenant people had been settled centuries earlier with the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 12:1-3; 15:18-21; 17:9-14). The Land aspect of that covenant was reiterated in Deuteronomy 30:1-10.<sup>14</sup> So Israel’s failure

to keep the later Sinai Covenant didn't affect her unique and secure relationship with God—or her ownership of the Land. But it had a great deal to do with Israel's experience of many trials and judgments throughout her history—up to and including the destruction of the nation in AD 70.

It's indisputably clear that Israel failed to keep the Sinai Covenant. The Prophet Jeremiah said the reason God was going to make a New Covenant (*Berit Chadashah*, ברית חדשה) with Israel was that she had “broken” the old one:

*“Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—not according to the [Sinai] covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD”* (Jer. 31:31-32, emphasis added).

The covenant they broke was the one God gave them at Sinai when they left Egypt. The New Covenant Jeremiah prophesies about hearkens back to the original Abrahamic Covenant—an unconditional contract based on God's lovingkindness and mercy rather than on Israel's ability to comply with an external set of requirements. God promises to replace a heart of hard, lifeless stone (like the tablets of the Law) with a warm, beating heart of flesh (Ezek. 36:26).

The New Covenant, then, is essentially a reiteration or reframing of the Abrahamic Covenant. Fortunately (for Israel and for all of us), it's grace-based rather than performance-based.

No wonder the NT is often referred to as “the New Covenant”; and no wonder it begins with these words: *The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham* (Matt. 1:1, emphasis added). It's all about the promises God made to Abraham.

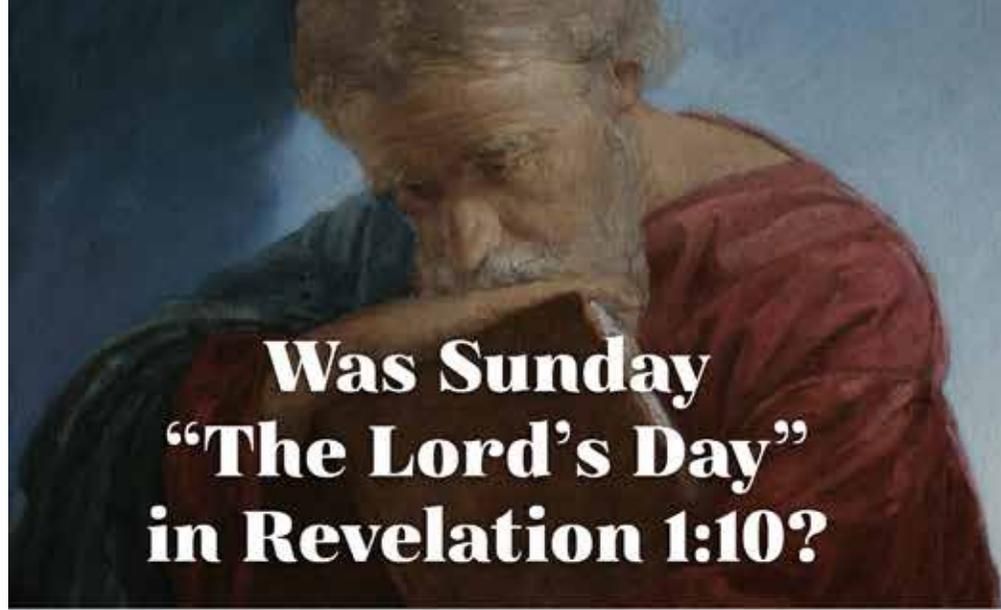
## Did the Resurrection Change the Sabbath?

The conventional wisdom in much of Christendom is that the Sabbath was changed from Saturday to Sunday because Messiah Yeshua was resurrected on Sunday morning. We have already seen that this is exactly what the *Westminster Confession of Faith* says (see Endnote 1).

However, there are problems with this notion. Aside from the distinct possibility that the Lord arose and walked out of the tomb on Saturday night after dusk (see Endnote 10) rather than on Sunday morning, another difficulty is that the Apostle Paul continued to observe the Sabbath in his own life and ministry long after the Lord had risen and returned to Heaven.<sup>15</sup>

This raises the question: if the Sabbath was changed from Saturday to Sunday years earlier, when the Resurrection took place, why did Paul, even decades later, continue attending services on Saturday?

Gathering on Saturday night may be the most appropriate way of memorializing the Lord's Resurrection—because that's when it actually happened!



## Was Sunday “The Lord's Day” in Revelation 1:10?

*I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day,  
and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet . . .*

John's revelation occurred on the Lord's Day while he was in the Spirit. Some have indicated that “the Lord's Day” refers to the first day of the week. However, the word “Lord's” is an adjective and this expression is never used in the Bible to refer to the first day of the week. Probably John was referring to “the day of the Lord,” a familiar expression in both Testaments (cf. Isa. 2:12; 13:6, 9; 34:8; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14; Amos 5:18, 20; Zeph. 1:7-8, 14, 18; 2:3; Zech. 14:1; Mal. 4:5; 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10). “In the Spirit” could also be rendered “in [my] spirit” (cf. Rev. 4:2; 17:3; 21:10). That is, he was projected forward in his inner self in a vision, not bodily, to that future day of the Lord when God will pour out His judgments on the earth.

The stirring events beginning in Revelation 4 are the unfolding of the Day of the Lord and the divine judgments related to it. The idea that the entire Book of Revelation was given to John in one 24-hour day seems unlikely, especially if he had to write it all down. Being transported prophetically into the future day of the Lord, he then recorded his experience.

—John F. Walvoord, “Revelation,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 930.

Another way of writing The Lord's Day is The Day of the Lord. From a grammatical standpoint, both are in the genitive (possessive) case and express the same meaning. [Many scholars reject this viewpoint because John's Greek (*kuriakei heimera*) differs from the Septuagint's uniform rendering of “the day of the Lord” (*heimera kuriou*). However, John's Greek in Revelation is notably irregular in many other respects, as well, so this argument is hardly persuasive. —Ed]

There are numerous Scriptural references to the Day of the Lord (Isa. 2: 12-18; 13: 9; Jer. 46: 10; Joel 1: 15, 16; 2 Peter 3: 10). All speak of a day in which Yahweh brings destruction on the earth. It is not a quiet day of worship on the first day of the week. Read the whole Book of the Revelation. The writer has described a time of destruction. There is reference to the voice sounding like a trumpet in the passage under discussion. This is consistent with subsequent references in this book (4:1; 8:13; and 9:14). John was taken in the Spirit to a great day of the future . . .

In conclusion, it does not matter on which day of the week John saw his vision. It could have been any day. The important point, which has been missed by many translators and commentators, is that John was taken in the Spirit to be shown what the Day of the Lord, at the end of the world, would be like so that he could provide a warning to all people.

—Adapted from “The Lord's Day in the Book of Revelation” at the Tyndale Archive (tyndalearchive.com)

# Psalm 92 & The Sabbath

Psalm 92 is the only one that's specifically designated as "a Song for the Sabbath day." It provides some important clues about the original purpose of Sabbath observance. Here's how it opens:

1. It is *good to give thanks to the LORD, And to sing praises to Your name, O Most High;*
2. *To declare Your lovingkindness in the morning, And Your faithfulness every night,*
3. *On an instrument of ten strings, On the lute, And on the harp, With harmonious sound.*
4. *For You, LORD, have made me glad through Your work; I will triumph in the works of Your hands.*
5. *O LORD, how great are Your works! Your thoughts are very deep.*

First, the writer's comment that God's "thoughts are very deep" could well be a clue to look for a sub-text (or more significance than what presents itself on the surface) in these verses.

Second, it says we should be thankful to the LORD and sing praises to His name (v. 1).

What are we thankful for? God's lovingkindness and faithfulness (v. 2). "Lovingkindness" here is the Hebrew *chesed*. It's translated in various ways in English Bibles: "lovingkindness" (KJV and NKJV), "unfailing love" (NLT), "love" (NIV), "steadfast love" (ESV), and "faithful love" (HCSB).

"Faithfulness" is *emunah*. Its literal meaning is "firm" or "secure." When it's connected to God in Scripture, it points to His reliability and promise-keeping power: *Your faithfulness [emunah] endures to all generations; You established the earth and it abides* (Psalm 119:90).

In another passage, God encouraged ancient Israel with these words: *(for the LORD your God is a merciful God), He will not forsake you nor destroy you, nor forget the covenant of your fathers which He swore to them* (Deut. 4:31). God always keeps His promises.

This same reliable, promise-keeping God is the God of New Testament believers! The Apostle Paul declared, "For I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day" (2 Tim. 1:12b).

Next, we note the emphasis on music (v. 3). Remember, this psalm was specifically dedicated to Sabbath worship. To this day, music and singing are an important aspect of Sabbath observance both in Jewish homes and in the synagogue.

And finally, the psalmist here mentions God's work(s) three times: "Your work," "the works of Your hands," and "how great are Your works" (vv. 4-5). So what's the connection between God's work(s) and Shabbat?

It's very simple: the Sabbath marked the conclusion of the Creation week. Just as Creation was God's work, salvation, too, is His

work—not ours. Yeshua redeemed us when He sacrificed Himself on Calvary 2,000 years ago. Just as God said He had finished Creation at the end of the sixth day (Gen. 1:31-2:3), Yeshua cried, "It is finished!" when His work of Redemption was complete (John 19:30). The sacrifice had been offered. The price had been paid. God's justice and righteousness were satisfied. It was, in every meaningful sense, done.

All that remains is for us to receive and accept what the Lord has already done. *But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name* (John 1:12). He did it—and we appropriate it for ourselves by faith.

The writer of Hebrews said, *There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His* (4:9-10).

In the Hebrew New Testament that passage literally says, *There remains therefore a Shabbat for am Elohim* (v. 9).

Are New Testament believers Sabbath-keepers? Yes, of course we are! Our Sabbath-Rest is *haAdon Yeshua* (the Lord Jesus). We rest in Him for salvation, not relying on our own works (Titus 3:5). This act of faith and utter self-abandonment is the highest and most sublime expression of Sabbath observance. This is why God guarded the sanctity of the Sabbath so zealously in the Old Testament, even invoking the death penalty whenever someone flagrantly and openly desecrated it (Ex. 35:2; Num. 15:32-36). He was protecting the sign-post that pointed His people to salvation by grace and not by works under the provisions of the New Covenant (Jer. 31).

Is this glorious truth somehow diminished, like some people claim, if we worship on a Saturday? Does it make us legalists or Judaizers? Of course not. If anything, it enhances the true meaning of the Sabbath and brings it into even greater clarity in our lives.

In Israel today, the Sabbath (Saturday) is part of the culture and just about everyone goes with the flow. It works! Virtually all churches and denominations in Jerusalem conduct services on either Friday night or on Saturday morning (or both), including Anglicans, Presbyterians, Lutherans, Baptists, Methodists, Nazarenes, Pentecostals, independent churches, and others, in addition to their Sunday services.

If you somehow find this disconcerting, you'd better get used to it! After all, in the future millennial world, all nations will dispatch representatives to present themselves before the Lord in Jerusalem on the Sabbath and on the LORD's feast days (Isa. 66:22-24). So there's nothing inherently wrong or unbiblical about Saturday worship.

*"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," says the LORD.*

Isaiah 66:23

## Old and New Covenants: Contradictory or Complementary?

Anyone who thinks the NT (or New Covenant) lowers the bar for Christian behavior had better think again. Any part of the Sinai Covenant that's repeated in the NT becomes part of the New Covenant and is therefore incumbent on NT believers, whether Jewish or Gentile.

For instance, every one of the Ten Commandments is repeated in the New Covenant—with nuances and inferences that even Moses didn't mention:

1. Do not have any other god before the LORD—Matt. 4:10; 6:24; 22:37-38; Luke 4:8; Rev. 14:7
2. Do not make an idol for yourself—Acts 15:20; 17:16, 29; 1 Cor. 5:10-11; 6:9; 10:7, 14, 19; 12:2; 2 Cor. 6:16; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:3, 5; Col. 3:5; 1 Thess. 1:9; 1 Peter 4:3; 1 John 5:21; Rev. 2:14; 9:20; 21:8; 22:14-15
3. Do not take the Lord's name in vain—Matt. 5:33-34; James 2:7
4. Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy—Matt. 12:8; Mark 1:21; 2:27-28; 6:2; Luke 4:16, 31; 6:5; 23:56; Acts 13:14, 42, 44; 15:21; 16:13; 17:1-2; 18:4; Heb. 4:4, 9-10
5. Honor your mother and father—Matt. 15:4; 19:18-19; Mark 7:10; 10:19; Rom. 1:29-30; Eph. 6:1-2; Col. 3:20; 2 Tim. 3:2

6. Do not murder—Matt. 5:21-22; 19:18; Mark 7:21; 10:19; Luke 18:20; Rom. 1:29; 13:9; Gal. 5:21; 1 Tim. 1:9; James 2:11; 1 Peter 4:15; 1 John 3:15; Rev. 9:21; 21:8; 22:15
7. Do not commit adultery—Matt. 5:27-28; 19:18; Mark 7:21; 10:11-12, 19; Luke 16:18; 18:20; Acts 21:25; Rom. 1:29; 2:22; 7:3; 13:9; 1 Cor. 5:11; 6:9, 18; 10:8; Gal. 5:19; Eph. 5:3; 1 Thess. 4:3; Heb. 13:4; James 2:11; 2 Peter 2:14; Jude 1:7; Rev. 2:14, 21-22; 9:21
8. Do not steal—Matt. 19:18; Mark 7:22; 10:19; Luke 18:20; Rom. 2:21; 13:9; 1 Cor. 5:10-11; 6:10; Eph. 4:28; 1 Peter 4:15; Rev. 9:21
9. Do not bear false witness against your neighbor—Matt. 15:19; 19:18; Mark 10:19; Luke 18:20; John 8:44; Acts 5:3-4; Rom. 1:29; 13:9; Eph. 4:25; Col. 3:9; 1 Tim. 4:2; 2 Tim. 3:3; Rev. 21:8; 22:15
10. Do not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor—Mark 7:22; Luke 12:15; Acts 20:33; Rom. 1:29; 7:7; 13:9; 1 Cor. 5:10-11; 6:10; Gal. 5:19-20; Eph. 5:3, 5; 1 Tim. 6:10; 2 Tim. 3:2; 2 Peter 2:14; Heb. 13:5

What's notably absent from the NT Torah are the OT Torah's more severe injunctions—like mandating a death sentence for crimes such as deviant sexual activity, gathering sticks on the Sabbath, or disobeying one's parents—penalties that were meant primarily as a deterrent in Israel's early history when she was up against almost unimaginable odds during the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness.<sup>16</sup>

## A Typical Shabbat

At about two or three o'clock on Friday afternoon, observant Jews leave the office to begin Shabbat preparations. The mood is much like preparing for the arrival of a special, beloved guest: the house is cleaned, the family bathes and dresses up, the best dishes and tableware are set, a festive meal is prepared. In addition, everything that cannot be done during Shabbat must be set up in advance: lights and appliances must be set (or timers placed on them, if the household does so), the light bulb in the refrigerator must be removed, so it does not turn on (creating a spark or "fire") when you open it, and preparations for the remaining Shabbat meals must be made.

The Shabbat, like all Jewish days, begins at sunset, because in the story of creation in Genesis 1, you will notice that it says, "And there was evening, and there was morning, one day." From this, we infer that a day begins with evening, that is, sunset. Shabbat candles are lit and a blessing is recited no later than eighteen minutes before sunset. This ritual, performed by the woman of the house, officially marks the beginning of the Shabbat. Two candles are lit, representing the two commandments concerning Shabbat: *zachor* and *shamor* ("remember" and "observe").

The family then attends a brief evening service (forty-five minutes—that's brief by Jewish standards). After services, the family comes home for a festive, leisurely dinner. Before the dinner, it is customary for parents to bless their children. Then the man of the house recites *Kiddush*, a prayer over wine sanctifying the Shabbat. The usual prayer for eating bread is recited over two loaves of challah, a sweet, eggy bread shaped in a braid. The family then eats

dinner. Although there are no specific requirements or customs regarding what to eat, meals are generally stewed or slow-cooked items, because of the prohibition against cooking during the Shabbat. (Things that are mostly cooked before Shabbat and then reheated or kept warm are okay).

After dinner, the *birkat ha-mazon* (grace after meals) is recited. Although this is done every day, on the Shabbat, it is done in a leisurely manner with many upbeat tunes.

By the time all of this is completed, it may be nine o'clock or later. The family has an hour or two to talk or study Torah, and then go to sleep.

The next morning Shabbat services in the synagogue begin around nine o'clock and continue until about noon. After services, the family returns home and says *kiddush* again, followed by another leisurely, festive meal. A typical afternoon meal is *cholent*, a very slowly cooked stew. By the time *birkat ha-mazon* is done, it is about two in the afternoon. The family studies Torah for a while, talks, takes an afternoon walk, plays some checkers, or engages in other leisure activities. A short afternoon nap is not uncommon. It is traditional to have a third meal before the Shabbat is over—usually a light meal in the late afternoon.

Shabbat ends at nightfall, when three stars are visible, approximately forty minutes after sunset. At the conclusion of Shabbat, the family performs a concluding ritual called *Havdalah* ("separation, division"). Blessings are recited over wine, spices, and candles, followed by a blessing regarding the division between the sacred and the secular, between the Shabbat and the working days, etc.

—Adapted from "Shabbat: What Is Shabbat?" at the Jewish Virtual Library ([jewishvirtuallibrary.org](http://jewishvirtuallibrary.org))

## Is the Sabbath Only for Israel?

Some anti-Sabbatarians (i.e., believers who say Saturday worship is wrong because the Sabbath has been fulfilled and changed to Sunday) point out that the Sabbath command was directed to Israel, not to the Gentiles—and that is true (e.g., Ex. 31:16).

However, that doesn't mean the Sabbath command cannot have a secondary application to non-Jews. They would do well to remember that the New Covenant itself was also directed to Israel (more specifically, to the Houses of Israel and Judah; see Jeremiah 31:31). I hope they wouldn't therefore deduce that the New Covenant has no applicability to the Church, either! Just because a promise or directive was given originally to Israel surely does not preclude the subsequent co-participation of non-Jewish believers who have been grafted into the "olive tree" of Abrahamic faith (Rom. 11:17-24).

Hebrew Terms for Days of the Week		
Secular Weekday Name	Hebrew "Name"	Hebrew Meaning
Sunday	Yom Reeshone	First day
Monday	Yom Shaynee	Second day
Tuesday	Yom Shlee'shee	Third day
Wednesday	Yom Revee'ee	Fourth day
Thursday	Yom Khah'mee'shee	Fifth day
Friday	Yom Ha'shee'shee	Sixth day
Saturday	Shabbat	Rest

—Adapted from "Hebrew Days and Month Names" at Yashanet.com.

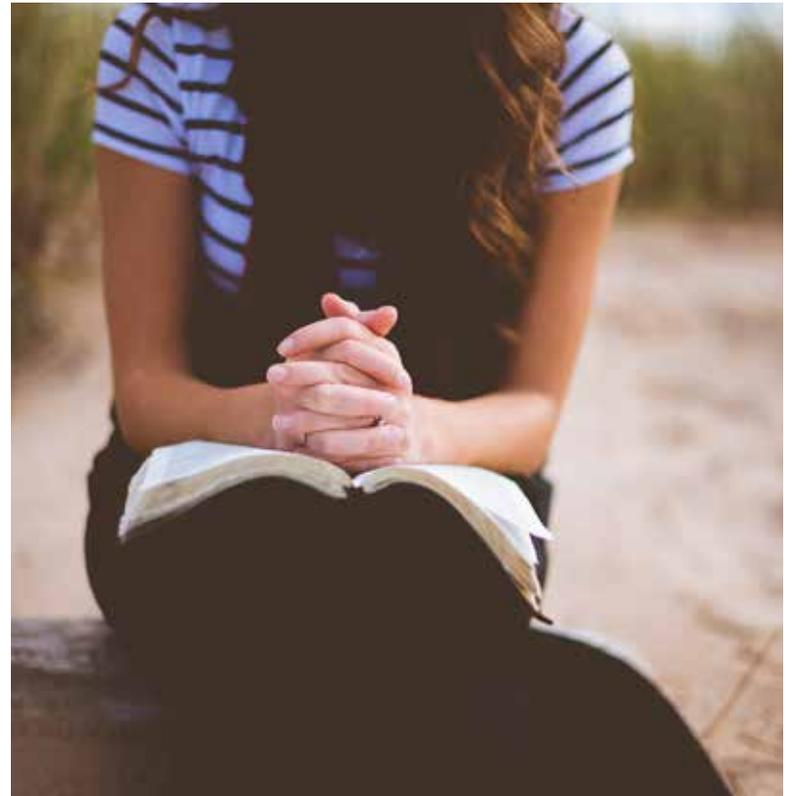
## The Sabbath: Not Primarily for Corporate Worship

There's a disconnect between the original, ancient Sabbath and modern Sabbath practices. For instance, Sabbatarians today invariably make the Sabbath (whether they say it's Saturday or Sunday) a day of corporate worship in church. However, the original Sabbath (in the Torah) was observed at home, not in a church or synagogue.<sup>17</sup>

Messianic scholar Arnold Fruchtenbaum explains it like this:

Even Leviticus 23:3 states concerning the Sabbath, "it is a sabbath unto Jehovah in all your dwellings." Again, the emphasis has to do with staying at home (Exod. 16:29) and resting as a family, rather than getting together in corporate worship. As Dr. Goldberg [of Moody Bible Institute] also points out, the rest "was also to include spiritual renewal." The expression *holy convocation* emphasized that on such occasions the priests were to offer special sacrifices. In reality, the Mosaic Law mandated corporate worship only on three occasions (Passover, Weeks, and Tabernacles), when they were to migrate to wherever the Tabernacle, and later the Temple, stood (Shiloh, Jerusalem). Corporate worship by non-Levites was mandated only three times a year, but not on a weekly Sabbath. This would have been physically impossible in light of the time it took to journey during biblical times. The penalty for profaning the Sabbath was death, and to profane the Sabbath was to consider it like any other day. Therefore, on the Sabbath they were to do no labor and they were to stay home and rest (Exod. 16:29).<sup>18</sup>

When Yeshua and the early NT believers participated in synagogue services on the Sabbath (e.g., Luke 4:16-17), they were following post-exilic cultural practices. God always takes us wherever we are at any given point in time and works with us from there. And in the first century AD, the Jewish people were not only in the Temple, but they were also in synagogues—nothing wrong with that! But there were no synagogues in Israel's pre-exilic history.



## Summary

What all of this means is, that if we had to pick just one day of the week to devote to prayer, rest, and reflection, that day would be the ancient Sabbath, or Saturday. However, the NT nowhere demands such a choice. Instead, it assumes that the believing community is praying, serving, and worshiping God full-time, every day of the week. It also assumes that we understand the necessity of observing the ultimate Sabbath-Rest by ceasing from our own works and trusting in the finished work of the Messiah on Calvary.

If a believer—whether Jewish or non-Jewish—wants to try to observe a strict "Sabbath rest," and he's willing to stay close to home on Saturday (or, I suppose, on Sunday) and refrain from cooking, the use of electricity, and everything else that goes with it, I think that's harmless enough—as long as he doesn't think it enhances his standing before God (which would be legalism) and he doesn't feel compelled to impose this practice on others who may not agree with him (which would be annoying).

For many Jewish believers, worshiping in a Messianic congregation on Friday night or on Saturday morning is an issue of culture. It's what they're accustomed to—and I don't see anything in Scripture that says a Jewish person who comes to faith in Yeshua must abandon his Jewish heritage and become like a Gentile Christian who worships on Sunday. We've already seen that it works perfectly well in Israel, where Jewish and non-Jewish believers worship on either Saturday or Sunday, or both.

Whenever we're in Jerusalem on a Friday afternoon, we are delighted to see thousands of Orthodox Jewish people—men, women, and children—crowding the sidewalks as they hurry to their homes to prepare for Shabbat and light the Shabbat candles on time. While it's true that many synagogues have a Friday night service, the focus of Shabbat is still on the home. The lighting of the candles, the Kiddush cup and wine, the loaves of challah (bread), the meal, the Sabbath blessings and prayers—these are all things that are practiced by families in their homes.

In the NT, the Apostle Paul acknowledges that some believers (most likely those who are Jewish, although it's not explicitly stated) “esteem one day above another” while others (perhaps those who aren't Jewish) esteem “every day alike” (Rom. 14:5).<sup>19</sup> Rabbi Paul's ruling in this matter is that these “camps” should respect each other's

cultural backgrounds and sensitivities. That's good advice for us today!

After everything that can be said about the Sabbath has been said, one irrefutable truth remains: what matters most in worship is the heart, not the day (Psalm 95:1-11).



Dr. Gary Hedrick  
is president of  
CJF Ministries.

<sup>1</sup> *The Westminster Confession of Faith* (1646) declares that God “hath particularly appointed one day in seven, for a Sabbath, to be kept holy unto him: which, from the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, was the last day of the week; and, from the resurrection of Christ, was changed into the first day of the week, which, in Scripture, is called the Lord's day, and is to be continued to the end of the world, as the Christian Sabbath.”

<sup>2</sup> “Through the two great errors, the immortality of the soul and Sunday sacredness, Satan will bring the people under his deceptions” (Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* [Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing, 2005], 588).

<sup>3</sup> In *The Spirit of Prophecy*, one of her best-known works, Mrs. White wrote, “That institution which points to God as the Creator is a sign of his rightful authority over the beings he has made. The change of the Sabbath is the sign, or mark, of the authority of the Romish Church. Those who, understanding the claims of the fourth commandment, choose to observe the false in place of the true Sabbath, are thereby paying homage to that power by which alone it is commanded. The change in the fourth commandment is the change pointed out in the prophecy, and the keeping of the counterfeit Sabbath is the reception of the mark” (Vol. 4, p. 281; accessed at text.egw writings.org). See also *Advent Review*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (August 1850).

<sup>4</sup> This view is based on Mrs. White's teachings on passages like Daniel 7:25, Revelation 13:15, and Ezekiel 20:12-20. See *Mark of the Beast* (Chapter 18: “The Image Beast and 666”) by Ellen G. White [Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 23]. Available online at whiteestate.org.

<sup>5</sup> The website of the Seventh Day Baptist Conference is at seventhdaybaptist.org. They are evangelical in every way. Their practical distinctive is that they gather for services on Saturday.

<sup>6</sup> “[I]f the seventh day sabbath was by divine authority, and to be kept holy by the churches of the Gentiles, it should not have so remained among the Jews, Christ's deadliest enemies, and have been kept so much hid from the believers, his best friends. For who has retained the pretended sanction of that day from Christ's time, quite down in the world, but the Jews, and a few Jewish Gentiles, I will except some. But, I say, since a sabbath is that without which the great worship of God under the gospel cannot be well performed: how can it be thought, that it should as to the knowledge of it, be confined to so blasphemous a generation of the Jews, with whom that worship is not?” (“Questions About the Nature and Perpetuity of the Seventh Day Sabbath—and Proof That the First Day of the Week is the True Christian Sabbath” from *The Works of John Bunyan* [London: Printed for Nath, Ponder, at the Peacock in the Poultry, 1685]).

<sup>7</sup> “Sunday is expressly distinguished from the sabbath which it follows chronologically every week; for Christians its ceremonial observance replaces that of the sabbath. In Christ's Passover, Sunday fulfills the spiritual truth of the Jewish sabbath and announces man's eternal rest in God” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Part 3, Section 2, Chapter 1, Article 3 on “The Third Commandment,” Paragraph 2175).

<sup>8</sup> In the Jewish culture, a day begins at sundown and continues until the following sundown. This evening-morning (rather than morning-evening) pattern is based on the Genesis account of creation: “So the evening and the morning were the first day” (Gen. 1:5).

<sup>9</sup> Rabbinic Sabbath observance requires attention to literally thousands of details passed down through Judaism's revered Oral Tradition—including the careful analysis of debates and discussions between noted rabbis of past ages. Biblical Sabbath observance, on the other hand, is based on the data provided in the biblical text (both the OT and the NT).

<sup>10</sup> Interestingly, this same pattern holds true in the Resurrection narrative. The women waited until after the Sabbath (on Saturday night) to come and anoint the Lord's body (Matt. 28:1). The Greek *epiphosko* (lit., “unto light”) can mean either sunrise (“as it dawns toward”) or more metaphorically, to dusk or sundown (“as it draws near to”; see Luke 23:54 for an example of this usage). Even in English, we use the term “dawn” in ways that aren't related to sunrise—like, “it was the dawn of a new age in England.” Darby's Literal Translation renders Matthew 28:1 this way: *Now late on sabbath, as it was the dusk of the next day after sabbath, came Mary of Magdala and the other Mary to look at the sepulchre.*

<sup>11</sup> Luke's perspective on Sabbath observance is particularly informative because he wrote his accounts (Luke and Acts) long after the time of Yeshua and His apostles. Yet there is no hint in anything Luke says, even in those later years, that the Sabbath had been abrogated or replaced by Sunday. If Luke wrote Hebrews, like David Allen and other evangelical scholars suggest, this argument is even more compelling.

<sup>12</sup> Under the New Covenant, there's no longer any difference between the secular and the sacred: *And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work* (2 Cor. 9:8 NIV). In the new economy, every hour of every day is sacred. Nothing is “common” anymore. No matter how taxing, tiring, or tedious one's “day job” may be, it becomes a sacred calling when it's done for the Lord: *Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God* (1 Cor. 10:31). Nonetheless, if someone wishes to elevate one day above the others, with no suggestion of legalism or superiority in doing so, it's permissible under the New Covenant (Rom. 14:5).

<sup>13</sup> We sometimes use the term “OT Torah” (Old Testament instruction/law) to distinguish it from the NT (New Covenant), which the Apostle Paul also considered “law/instruction” (i.e., NT Torah): *Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ* (Gal. 6:2; cp. 1 Cor. 9:21). The Hebrew equivalent of the English term “law of Christ” is *Torat HaMashiach*—“Torah [of] the Messiah.” In fact, that's exactly how the Hebrew NT renders it in Galatians 6:2: תורת המשיח (*Torat HaMashiach*; lit., “Torah [of] the Messiah”). The Greek term *nomos* (νόμος) has a range of meaning almost identical to that of the Hebrew *torah* (תורה). In 1 Corinthians 14:21 (among other passages), in fact, Paul equates the two terms. Some Messianics would disagree and claim that Paul is referring to the Torah of Moshe (Moses) in Galatians 6:2—not the NT. Nonetheless, we would respectfully submit that Paul uses the term *Torah* here to refer to the teachings of Yeshua as recorded in the New Covenant (i.e., the NT). This is more consistent with the statements in Hebrews regarding the preeminence of Yeshua over Moshe (i.e., Moshe being a “servant” in Someone else's house but Yeshua a “son” in His own house; 3:1-6). It's true that the NT wasn't yet complete when Paul wrote Galatians; however, the Gospels (containing the biography and teachings of Yeshua the Messiah) were already in circulation and well known by that time. Note, for instance, that Paul's reflections in 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 show that he had studied in some detail the events recorded in Luke 22. The Torah of the Messiah, then, is the teaching/instruction of Messiah Yeshua as recorded in the New Covenant (i.e., the NT) and not just another name for the OT Torah of Moshe.

<sup>14</sup> Sometimes we call this the Palestinian Covenant or the Land Covenant; but it's essentially an extension of the original Abrahamic Covenant where God promised Abraham (among other things) a Land for his descendants.

<sup>15</sup> Acts 13:14, 42, 44; 15:21; 16:13; 17:1-2; 18:4.

<sup>16</sup> Interestingly, there's no record in the annals of Judaism of some of these capital penalties—like the one for homosexual activity in Leviticus 20:13, for instance—ever being enforced. These penalties may have been intended to serve as a protective deterrent during the critical period of Israel's wilderness wanderings. It should also be pointed out that in all cases, offenders were judged for what they *did* (activity) rather than for what they *were* (identity).

<sup>17</sup> Most historians agree that the practice of gathering weekly in synagogues (which continues in Judaism to this day) originated during the Babylonian Captivity. Prior to the Captivity, Israel gathered corporately three times annually to worship in the Tabernacle or (later) the Temple. During the rest of the year, Israelites observed Shabbat in their homes. There were no synagogues in those days. See “Synagogue” by Wilhelm Bacher and Lewis N. Dembitz in the *Jewish Encyclopedia* at jewishencyclopedia.com.

<sup>18</sup> *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology* (San Antonio, TX: Ariel Ministries, 1989), 600.

<sup>19</sup> Since the early church in Acts was accustomed to gathering in homes throughout the week (“daily”), it's understandable that the non-Jewish believers might not have been acculturated to the concept of one special day. To them, every day was special—and Paul doesn't condemn them for it. But neither did he condemn or criticize those who elevated a singular day over the others!

# Bible Questions AND Answers

by DR. GARY HEDRICK

## Have a Bible question?

Submit it to Dr. Hedrick at [garyh@cjfm.org](mailto:garyh@cjfm.org), or mail it to 611 Broadway, San Antonio, Texas 78215.

You may see your question addressed in a future issue of *Messianic Perspectives*.

**QUESTION:** *What did Jesus mean in Matthew 16:18 when He said to Peter, “You are Peter and upon this rock I will build My Church?” Was Jesus building His Church on Peter himself (as some of my friends claim), or did Jesus mean something else?*

**ANSWER:** Scholars have debated the meaning of this particular verse for years. The wording does allow for more than one possible interpretation, but a look at the word “rock” in the original language may point us in the right direction. Other Scripture can also shed further light on the subject. Let’s look first at the context of the verse in question.

According to Matthew 16:13, our Lord and His disciples had just entered the region of Caesarea Philippi, an area known for its pagan rituals and worship of false gods, including the goat-man Pan. In this unusual setting, Jesus asks His disciples the question, “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” The disciples volunteer several possibilities, including John the Baptist or one of the Old Testament prophets. Jesus then asks the important question, “But who do *you* say that I am?” Here Simon Peter replies boldly, and without hesitation, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

In response to Peter’s bold confession, Jesus says, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. *And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it*” (Matt. 16:17-18, emphasis added).

So, when Jesus said, “on this rock,” did He mean Peter, whose name means “rock”? Did He mean Peter’s confession? Or did He perhaps mean something more subtle?

*The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, produced by the faculty of Dallas Theological Seminary (DTS), offers this perspective on the question:

Peter’s words brought a commendation from the Lord. Peter was blessed because he had come to a correct conclusion about the person of Christ and because great blessing would be brought into his life. The Lord added, however,

this was not a conclusion Peter had determined by his own or others’ ability. God, the Father in heaven, had revealed it to him. Peter was living up to his name (it means “rock”) for he was demonstrating himself to be a rock.

Peter (*Petros*, masc.) was strong like a rock, but Jesus added that on this rock (*petra*, fem.) He would build His church. Because of this change in Greek words, many conservative scholars believe that Jesus is . . . building His church on Himself. Others hold that the church is built on Peter and the other apostles as the building’s foundation stones (Eph. 2:20; Rev. 21:14). Still other scholars say that the church is built on Peter’s testimony.

So, how are we to understand what Jesus said? The DTS scholars conclude that Jesus was introducing His work of building the Church on Himself (1 Cor. 3:11). Further, when the Church would later be founded on Pentecost, Peter and the other apostles would have important roles to play. They were to be given significant responsibility and the authority to “bind and loose” as they were directed by the Spirit. We see Peter doing this in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost when he proclaimed the Gospel and announced forgiveness of sins to those who repented and responded in faith (Acts 2). Later, he did the same at the Gentile home of Cornelius (Acts 10-11; Acts 15:19-20). But note: Jesus gave this same privilege and authority to *all* the disciples (John 20:19-23).

While this passage in Matthew 16 is open to several possible interpretations, other passages in Scripture are unambiguous—*Christ* (not Peter) is the rock on which the Church is built. *He* is the chief cornerstone and the head of the Church (Acts 4:11-12, 1 Corinthians 3:11, Ephesians 1:22; 5:23). Nowhere else in Scripture is Peter singled out for an honor belonging to Christ alone. Peter himself speaks of believers as living stones who come to Christ, the chief cornerstone (1 Peter 2). Yes, Peter and the other apostles played an important role in the founding and building of the Church (Eph. 2:20), but Peter was just a servant to whom the Master’s keys were entrusted; preeminence and headship belong to Christ alone. “I am the LORD, that is My name; And My glory I will not give to another” (Isa. 42:8a). 

[smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com)

NOW YOU CAN SUPPORT CJFM ANY TIME YOU MAKE A PURCHASE. SIMPLY TYPE SMILE.AMAZON.COM AND CHOOSE CJF MINISTRIES. A PERCENTAGE WILL AUTOMATICALLY GO TO HELPING US DO THE WORK YOU CARE ABOUT.

amazon smile Prime

All



Supporting: Cjf Ministries

Departments

Cjf Ministries

Location: San Antonio, TX

Share your support:



Your AmazonSmile impact

About AmazonSmile

# Fruit from the Harvest

by Violette Berger



## From Darkness to Light

**Michelle Beadle, CJFM representative (New Orleans)** recently had the opportunity to share a teaching she calls “Messiah: The Light Shining in Darkness” at a local church. This is an in-depth study Michelle wrote, using Isaiah 9:1-7 as her text. She states: “At the conclusion of the service, two young women prayed the sinner’s prayer and were transported from darkness into light. What a joy it was to see them come forward during the altar call.” Michelle also writes that a few weeks earlier, at another church, seven individuals gave their hearts to the Lord at a presentation of “Jesus in the Feast of Tabernacles.” She asks that we join her in praying for these new believers—“that their faith will not waver, that they will continue to attend these churches so that the body of believers will help them grow in their newly found faith.”

*You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:17-18a).*

## Campus and Beth Yeshua Salvations

**Richard Hill, CJFM representative (Las Vegas) and pastor of Beth Yeshua Messianic Congregation** praises the Lord for the response he and his team of volunteers have received as a result of their campus ministry at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV). Rich and two of his volunteers each led a student to the Lord. He writes: “Many times we share with students who are really close to receiving the Lord but do not pray with us. It was an added blessing when I saw the young woman who prayed with me on campus again. She had previously said that her aunt had continuously shared the Gospel and prayed for her over the years.” This time she told Rich, “I have peace in my life now. Something was lifted from my shoulders when I prayed to receive Jesus!” Rich asks that we pray for these three young students to become strong disciples of Jesus.

Richard’s wife, Oanh, was privileged to lead a young woman to the Lord at *Beth Yeshua*. She was eager to be baptized and began sharing her faith in Jesus with her classmates and friends. One of her friends, “D,” attended a service with her, and after talking with Oanh for a while following the service, she prayed to receive Jesus as her Lord and Savior. Since then, she has been attending *Beth Yeshua* regularly. Please pray for “D’s” new walk with Jesus.

“In 16 and a half years of ministering in Las Vegas as CJFM missionaries,” Richard says, “we have led a total of 1,098 souls (including 61 Jewish people) to the Lord. We praise the Lord for using us for His glory!”

## A Divine Appointment

**CJFM representative, Violette Berger (Phoenix)** reports, “A friend of mine brought a guest to our Messianic fellowship, *Tikvah Ba Midbar* (Hope in the Desert). I recognized the woman, “L,” as she had attended our City-wide Messianic Passover Seder (2016) with her husband and family. As I approached her following our Bible study, she began to cry and tell me that her husband had served her with divorce papers that morning—and that she was in shock. I attempted to comfort her as I listened to her story and told her that I would be praying for her. (She was not a believer.) The mutual friend who had invited her holds a monthly Bible study in her home that I attend regularly. The following month at my friend’s home Bible study, only two of us showed up—me, and, much to my surprise, “L.” Everyone else had cancelled. The Lord opened the door, and gave me an opportunity to share the Gospel with “L” after she spoke about her circumstances. She then quietly prayed with me to receive Jesus as her Lord and Savior. What a blessing! He had orchestrated this special evening for her! Please pray for “L’s” spiritual growth and peace in her heart.”

*“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27).*

## A Calling

A shout-out to **Ruth Nessim, CJFM representative (Israel)** who looks back as she celebrates her 46th year in Israel. She made a decision to follow Jesus in 1950, had a definite call to Israel at age 16, and eventually arrived in Israel 46 years ago with her husband, Albert, and three very young children in tow. Although her dear Albert is home with his Lord, the ministry they began is ongoing. During the time they lived in Israel, Ruth said: “We have been through at least seven wars, two severe terror attacks on our town itself, and our son’s house was badly damaged by a rocket. Apart from the wars, our town was often intermittently shelled or rocketed. However, in the midst of all of this we managed, with God’s help, to start a small gathering which eventually attracted Jews, Arabs, UN Catholic, Spanish speakers from Colombia, who on their return to Columbia began to spread the Gospel there. Today, Colombians are still coming to faith as a result of their stay with us. A couple who had returned to Colombia wrote how they discovered their Jewish roots and linked up with Messianic Jews. It was only as a result of Albert’s hospitalization that we came face to face with Palestinians (in the next bed) and met a dear Christian Palestinian couple who sparked our interest in Arabic work, which continues to this day.”

*“Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest” (John 4:35).*

## IN THIS ISSUE

### Should Christians Keep The Sabbath?

by Dr. Gary Hedrick  
Page 1

### Bible Q&A: Was Jesus Building His Church on Peter?

by Dr. Gary Hedrick  
Page 10

### Fruit from the Harvest

by Violette Berger  
Page 11

## CJF Ministries®

Post Office Box 345

San Antonio, Texas 78292-0345

# DID YOU KNOW?

YOU CAN ACCESS THIS COPY OF

## *MESSIANIC PERSPECTIVES*

AS WELL AS OUR ARCHIVE  
OF PREVIOUS ISSUES.



VISIT [CJFM.ORG/PAPER](http://CJFM.ORG/PAPER) ON ANY COMPUTER OR TABLET.