

# Know Your Bible

## 40. THE SEVENTH-DAY SABBATH

Jewish or Christian?

Was the Old Testament, with its Ten Commandments and its Sabbath, given to and intended for the Jewish dispensation, exclusive of all other times and peoples?

AN objection frequently raised against the Decalogue in general, and the seventh-day Sabbath commandment in particular, is that they belong to the ancient Jewish religion comprehended in the Old Testament, and that with them we now have nothing to do. It is held, further, that when Christ came to this earth, He established a new religion, which has nothing in common with the precepts which had been given to the Jews; and that the New Testament is our only guide.

This tract will endeavor to prove these objections invalid by showing that Christ did not establish a new religion, and that in accepting Christianity and the New Testament, a person binds himself to obedience to the commands of God as found in the Old Testament.

We shall examine first the statements of the apostles. Nothing in all the utterances of these men is clearer than that they were not establishing a new religion by their world-wide preaching, but were simply announcing the fulfillment of “the promise made of God unto our fathers,” the promise of the Christ who was to die for our sins. Paul emphatically declared that in his preaching he was not giving forth new doctrines, but was “witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come.” Acts 26:6, 22.

Paul founded his teaching on the Old Testament, “saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come.”

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### Christ Endorsed the Old Testament

On the Old Testament, the only Scriptures in His day, Christ rested His argument for His divinity, and from it He drew for His teachings in theology and ethics. Christ's disciples after Him followed the same methods; and thus we find the New Testament, which is the record of their discourses and letters, to be an inspired exposition of the promises found in the Old Testament. The burden of the whole New Testament is to prove that Jesus of Nazareth is indeed the long-hoped-for One spoken of in the Old Testament. The prophets before Christ prophesied that He would come. The prophets, or apostles, after Christ proclaimed and wrote that He had come. The same Spirit controlled both.

As to the manner of proclaiming this divine salvation, the apostle Peter wrote: "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven." 1 Peter 1:10-12.

Surely such scriptures as the foregoing so firmly weld together the Old and the New Testament that no sophistry can break them asunder.

But let us examine this argument more closely. We shall look carefully through the Gospels, those four books which are the center of all the New Testament writings, and find what they say regarding the people to whom the teachings of Christ and His apostles were addressed. When the woman of Canaan, a Gentile, appealed to Christ for help, He answered: "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Matthew 15:24. As Christ sent out His disciples on their first missionary journey, He instructed them: "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter you not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Matthew 10:5, 6. Even after the death of Christ we find the apostle Peter thus addressing the Jews: "Unto you first God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." Acts 3:26.

### Is the New Testament Jewish?

The argument that would throw out the Old Testament because it is the record of instruction given to a people called the Jews, and given through Jewish prophets, must also throw out the very heart of the New Testament, the four Gospels, with their Christ and their apostles; for the Gospels are but the records of instruction given almost exclusively to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel," by One who was a Jew of the tribe of Judah, and by disciples who were of the stock of Israel. It must throw out the very salvation which they preached; "for," declared Christ, "salvation is of the Jews." John 4:22. To such lengths does a false course of reasoning lead!

A still closer examination proves that almost the whole Bible is Jewish in its setting. The first company of Christians were Jews. The great leaders of the Christian church were all Jews. Paul, the mightiest Christian preacher that ever lived, unreservedly affirmed that he was also "a Jew," "a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee." Acts 22:3; 23:6.

Ought we, therefore, to infer that practically none of the good Book applies to us who are not Jews? Far from it. But does not the logic of this false argument bring us to this? How, then, shall we understand these statements which seem to show that one certain people are addressed in both the Old and the New Testament? The answer is not hard to find. God, in imparting instruction to the world, has ever followed the plan of instructing one man or perhaps a company of men, and laying upon them the task of giving this same instruction to others, so that the whole world might eventually benefit.

### If Christ's, Then Abraham's

It was through Abraham, the father of all true Israelites, that "all families of the earth" were eventually to be blessed. Genesis 12:3. This was to be true of Abraham because the Lord could say of him: "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which He has spoken of him." Genesis 18:19. He was chosen, not because the blood of a certain race ran in his veins, but because the Lord knew that he would faithfully give to those about him and to those who should follow after, the instruction which the Lord desired that men should have.

And that this divine instruction and these heavenly commands were to be carried to all nations is made clear by the words of Jehovah to Abraham: "You shall be a father of many nations." Genesis 17:4. Paul, commenting on this phrase, in a letter to Christians, declares that Abraham is "the father of us all."

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Romans 4:16. He also informs us how this is so. "If you be Christ's," says Paul, "then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Galatians 3:29.

So, if you are "Christ's"-if you are a Christian-then, no matter what may be your nationality, you are a child of Abraham and must heed the instruction divinely given to Abraham and his children. This instruction is found, in its completeness, in the Old and the New Testament. For the New Testament is the complement of the Old, and the two together make up the perfect revelation of God's will to man. The New Testament is concealed in the Old. The Old Testament is revealed in the New, wrote Augustine.

### Christianity Is Perfected Judaism

The editor of that excellent interdenominational weekly, the Sunday School Times, gave utterance to this same truth when he said: "We must not forget that 'Judaism' contained not only the law of God, which men could not keep, but it contained also, from its earliest days, the gracious promise of the redeeming work through the shed blood of the only Savior Christ Jesus. . . . When the risen Lord talked with two disciples on the way to Emmaus, 'beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.' (Luke 24:27) . . .

"Christianity is perfected Judaism. The Christian believer is, according to God's word, the true Israelite. (Romans 2:28, 29.)"-Sunday School Times, August 27, 1921.

How different does this sound from the view which we have under consideration! That strange position would represent God as following a plan which He has never employed; namely, imparting to a certain people at one time in the world's history instruction which was to be for the benefit of them only and to be carried out by them only, and then at a later period changing His entire plan, giving another class of people instruction wholly different and which bears little or no relation to that which has gone before. The idea is preposterous and an insult to the eternal God, who changes not.

Let us illustrate the folly of this position: What would be thought of a man who would insist that Christ's Sermon on the Mount, with its many strong commands, is binding upon the Jews only, because they were the only ones addressed? Or what would be thought of one who would maintain that Jehovah's command on the mount of transfiguration, "This is My beloved Son: hear Him," was binding upon the three Jewish fishermen and their literal descendants only, because these were the only ones addressed. Impossible! The logic forbids it. To hold such a position, a person must not only blind himself to the foregoing analogy; he must hold his view contrary to the plain words of Scripture.

In the opening chapters of Exodus, that book which tells us of God's dealings with the first of the descendants of Abraham, we read: "One law shall be to him that is home born, and unto the stranger that sojourns among you." Exodus 12:49. Again: "One ordinance shall be both for you of the congregation, and also for the stranger that sojourns with you, an ordinance forever in your generations: as you are, so shall the stranger be before the Lord. One law and one manner shall he for you, and for the stranger that sojourns with you." Numbers 15: 15, 16.

How plain and emphatic are these statements of Scripture! Surely no one living at the time the great laws were given from Mount Sinai could possibly have got the idea that only the Jewish people, the "home born," were under obligation to keep the commands there uttered.

And so there is naught for the true believer in God to do but to accept the moral commands of Jehovah, no matter when or to whom given. We of all races must come to the mount to hear the Lord deliver in an audible way His divine law to mankind; for there ring in our ears the words: There is "one law" for all.

We listen in reverence as the Creator of the universe, in awful majesty, commands obedience to ten great moral precepts, the Ten Commandments. Silence follows. Jehovah's instruction to man by His own voice is wrapped up in these ten commands, for the record declares that "He added no more." Deuteronomy 5:22.

But we are not left to rely on feeble memories as to these ten precepts, which are the essence of our duty to God and man. God not only spoke to man, but-most notable and most singular event of all history - God wrote out His instruction for man. We read: "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." Again: "The tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables." Exodus 31:18; 32:16.

Of course, there were given at this time many other laws, which, though binding upon all, were in general of a transitory and ceremonial nature, due to expire by limitation when the great Sacrifice should

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come. But these laws were clearly kept separate from the eternal moral code, both by their nature and by the manner in which they were given.

With the evidence so plain that the law is not a Jewish but a world code, and that it must therefore be binding upon us as Christians today, the reader may be led to exclaim: "How is it that the churches in general do not see this truth?" This query can be answered convincingly by reference to the fact that virtually all Protestant denominations do see and at least theoretically believe this truth.

We quote first from the Methodist Church: "Although the law given from God by Moses, as touching ceremonies and rites, doth not bind Christians, nor ought the civil precepts thereof of necessity to be received in any commonwealth; yet, notwithstanding, no Christian whatsoever is free from the obedience of the commandments which are called moral." - Articles of Religion, Number 6.

The Baptists state: "We believe that the law of God is the eternal and unchangeable rule of His moral government; that it is holy, just, and good." - Church Manual, article 12. In their catechism we read: "QUESTION 46: Where is the moral law summarily comprehended? ANSWER: The moral law is summarily comprehended in the Ten Commandments."

The Presbyterian Confession of Faith, article 5, reads: "The moral law doth forever bind all, as well justified persons as others, to the obedience thereof. . . . Neither doth Christ in the gospel in any way dissolve, but much strengthen, this obligation."

Here are the statements of two of the greatest leaders of Protestantism in its earliest days: Martin Luther: "QUESTION: Are we under obligation to keep the moral law? ANSWER: Yes; because it is founded on the nature of God; and cannot be changed; it is of universal application, which was impossible with respect to the ceremonial and civil laws. Christ demands obedience to His law."--Shorter Catechism, edition of 1834. Calvin: "The law has sustained no diminution of its authority, but ought always to receive from us the same veneration and obedience." - Institutes, book 2.

Two quotations from the commentaries published on the International Sunday School Lessons, which are used in most Sunday schools, surely will suffice, with the above, to prove our point. We quote first from the commentary for the year 1887, published by W. A. Wilde & Company. On page 169 we read: "They [the commandments] are called the Ten Words, as the only words in the Old Testament given directly by the voice of God to man, and as expressing not merely duties, but the great principles which underlie the whole kingdom of God and the moral natures He has given us. Only by obeying them can man be saved, for they are the law of heaven as of earth. They are called the testimony because they testify God's will to men, and testify as witnesses against all sin."

### Eternal Principles of God's Kingdom

The second is a comment in the International Lessons of 1892, on the topic of the new covenant. It squarely refutes the statement often made that when Christ brought in the new covenant, the so-called "old law" was done away and a "new law" instituted. We read on page 57: "God gives, not a new law, but a new power to the old law. In Christianity it becomes an inner force, shaping the man's character from within."

Therefore we must conclude that the current doctrine that the law is exclusively Jewish finds no support either in the Bible or in the articles of faith of the great Protestant churches.

Now the fourth in order of these ten unchangeable moral precepts is the command which says in part: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shall you labor, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work." Exodus 20:8-10. Therefore it follows from the teaching of Scripture and the confessions of Protestant faith that the command to keep holy the seventh day of the week is a moral precept as binding upon all in this present age as is the third precept, which prohibits the profanation of God's name, or the fifth, which commands obedience to parents. The conclusion is obvious and inevitable.

Having proved the whole law universal, we have thereby proved each part universal. No man, having admitted that the whole law is non-Jewish, can claim that any one part of it is Jewish; for the nature of the parts determines the nature of the whole.

To use a simple figure: If it be proved that a certain ten-inch rule is straight, it follows that each inch of that rule is straight. If even one inch of it were crooked, the entire rule would be defective and worthless. Thus it is with the divine rule of God's law, the rule by which all lives are to be measured in the judgment day. By the Scriptures, and by the foregoing articles of Protestant churches, that rule has been pronounced divinely straight. Therefore each precept of the ten which compose it must necessarily be, and is indeed, straight and true. Not one of them has in it a curve or twist to fit in with the warped standards of sinful men. The messages and the commands of this law fall upon our ears with the same compelling force

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as when delivered from the heights of Sinai, and the fourth precept of this immortal ten declares that “the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God.”