

The Sabbath

A Christian Marker

As the reality of the ancient Azazel goat or scapegoat, Christ Jesus today bears the sins or lawlessness—the definition of sin is law-breaking or lawlessness (1 John 3:4)—of every disciple so that the Church as the Body of Christ will appear spotless and without blemish when it is revealed at the end of the age. Disciples are no longer under the law if they are lead by the Spirit of God (Gal 5:18), for the Spirit has written the laws of God on the hearts and in the minds of born-from-above disciples (Heb 8:10 & 10:16). Under the second covenant mediated by the glorified Jesus, the hearts and minds of Israelites have become the two tablets of flesh upon which the laws of God are written. This second covenant was first given on the plains of Moab (Deu 29:1) to the uncircumcised children of the nation that could not enter God's rest because of unbelief (Ps 95:10–11 & Heb 3:19) that became disobedience (Num 14:40–41 & Heb 4:6) when it tried to enter the following day. Originally, Moses was the mediator of the second covenant, which promised the physically uncircumcised children circumcised hearts and souls or minds [naphesh], a euphemistic expression for receiving the Holy Spirit, if they would return to God and to keeping His laws after they were sent into captivity in far countries (Deu 30:1–10). The Apostle Paul cites this second covenant mediated by Moses and identifies this second covenant as the righteousness that comes by faith (Rom 10:6–8 — compare with Deu 30:11–14), for returning to obedience while in a far country requires faith. And the writer of Hebrew says that when the mediator of this second covenant was changed from Moses to the glorified Jesus, better promises were added. This same writer says that Christ's death redeems those who are called "from the transgressions committed under the first covenant" (Heb 9:15)—the first covenant was given at Sinai or Horeb, not at Moab. And the primary better promise that was added to the second covenant when the mediators changed was receipt of the Holy Spirit prior to obedience, for with Calvary salvation had come to Gentiles who were already dwelling in far countries, who were at home in these countries, and who had no compelling reason to begin living as Israelites unless their hearts and minds were pricked by the Holy Spirit.

In order for salvation to come to a spiritually firstborn nation holy to God (1 Pet 2:9), abolishing the first covenant through death was required (Heb 9:16–17 & Rom 7:1–4). And the first covenant, made at Sinai with the circumcised descendants of the patriarch Israel who were the physically firstborn (Exod 4:22) nation made holy to God (Exod 19:5–6), was utterly abolished (Eph 2:15), so that there is with God no longer a distinction between Jew or Gentile, male or female, bond or free (Gal 3:28–29). All who are lead by the Spirit are Abraham's seed (v. 29)—all are of the one holy nation promised to Abraham (Gen 12:1–2), the promise of which required Abraham to "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you" (v. 1). Abraham did go, and this going is counted to him as faith (Heb 11:8–9). And the land God showed him was the hill country of Judea where he lived by obeying God's voice, keeping God's charge [ordinances], God's commandments, statutes, and laws (Gen 26:5).

The righteousness that comes from faith, that makes a person Abraham's seed is while living in a far country for the person to turn to God and to begin obeying God's voice, and keeping His commandments and His statutes that are written in the second covenant, in the second giving of the law (Deu 30:10) with all of the person's heart and with all of the person's mind or soul. The righteousness that comes from faith isn't in clever arguments, or in disputing about words, or in hypocrisy. It is in obedience when the person is in the world and could remain a part of the world if the person could ignore the pricks of his or her heart. It is in becoming obedient when a person has been living as a son of disobedience (Eph 2:2–3). It is in obeying God with the person's mind and heart when the law of sin and death still dwells in the person's flesh (Rom 7:25). It is in obeying God even though the person has been consigned to disobedience (Rom 11:32), so that God will exercise His promised mercy.

Jesus said the person who has everlasting life—this isn't a life to obtain, but life that has already been given—is the person who hears His words and who believes the One who sent Him (John 5:24). And His words concerning the law are, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets" (Matt 5:17). The Sinai covenant that separated Jew from Gentile has been abolished, but not the commandments of God which were made a part of the second covenant, or additional covenant given to the second nation of Israel; i.e., the uncircumcised children of Israel born in the Wilderness of Sin (Josh 5:2–7). These uncircumcised children were, however, circumcised after they crossed the Jordan and entered the promised land. They crossed on the 10th of the first month, when the paschal lamb was penned awaiting sacrifice on the 14th at even. Jesus was of this nation, and He was sacrificed on the 14th, entering the grave at even—as was this entire nation then sacrificed to death under the law. The first covenant was abolished with the death Christ Jesus; disciples are no longer under an external law that enters their hearts and minds through the hearing of their ears. The second covenant was established three days after Calvary with the resurrection of Jesus and with His acceptance by the Father as the reality of the Wave Sheaf offering. The harvest of firstfruits, of the barley could begin. And the early and later harvests of the Judean hill country has been from Adam forward the focus of the Law and the Prophets.

Under the second covenant, the law of God enters the spiritually holy nation of Israel with receipt of the Holy Spirit [Pneuma 'Agion]. This law is never far from disciples, nor is it too hard to keep (Deu 30:11). And the law has as its central principle the same commandments as were uttered by the Breath or Pneuma of YHWH from atop Sinai.

The covenant made at Sinai or Horeb was made with both the nation that left Egypt and with that nation's children (Deu 5:2–3)—with all circumcised Israelites, including the natural branches that were broken from the root of righteousness so that Gentiles as wild olives could be grafted to this root. Again, this is the first covenant, the covenant broken by the death of the Logos (John 1:1) or Spokesperson for YHWH who was made flesh and dwelt among men. This Logos spoke the words of YHWH from atop Sinai. And as the man Jesus of Nazareth, this Logos again spoke the words of the One who sent Him (John 14:24). And He said, "Whoever does not love me does not keep my words" (same verse). Therefore, to love Jesus is to keep His words. His words are the words of the One who sent Him, are the same words He spoke from atop Sinai.

The second covenant was only made with the uncircumcised children of the nation that left bondage—and this second covenant was not to go into effect until these children had the blessings

and the cursing of Deuteronomy chapter 29 come upon them, and they, in far lands, turned to God. They became, with physical circumcision once they entered Judea, the children of the present Jerusalem (Gal 4:24–26) who were always under the first covenant. But they were also under the second covenant, its terms applicable if when they were in far lands they returned to keeping the law of God. Jesus, however, said of the Pharisees that none of them kept the law as given by Moses (John 7:19), for they sought to murder Him. Their seeking to murder Him corresponded to actually murdering Him, which they would do at Calvary. Jesus made intent the same as action. And this is what is seen in His Sermon on the Mount, where the law is under discussion.

The law as spiritually written on hearts and minds makes hate the same as murder and lust the same as adultery (Matt 5:21–22, 27–28). When moving from physical to spiritual, transgression of the law moves from what the body or flesh does to what the mind thinks. The commandments are not magnified as is usually taught, but internalized. The commandments no longer rule from outside the body as a schoolmaster might rule a student, but rule from within the mind and heart of the person—and actually make war against the law of sin and death that still dwells in the flesh. Lawlessness, however, remains lawlessness. If a disciple now breaks the Sabbath commandment with the person's mind, this commandment which was spoken by the Logos from atop Sinai is just as broken as if a Pharisee had labored in lugging home temple loot.

The second covenant required the uncircumcised children of the nation that left Egypt to keep everything written in Deuteronomy, which means the second covenant reaches back into the first covenant to take from that covenant the commandments uttered from atop Sinai. For Christians, the least of these commandments—as evidenced by the frequency of transgression and the reverence given—is the Sabbath commandment. And if someone relaxes even the least of the commandments, this person will be called least in the kingdom of God (Matt 5:19), assuming the person is not a hypocrite who knows to keep the law but willfully doesn't. This person's righteousness has not exceeded that of the Pharisees; this person will not even enter the kingdom (v. 20). And those who teach lawlessness—those individuals who have taken it upon themselves to serve God in mighty ways, but who teach disciples to commit spiritual suicide by erasing the laws of God from the disciples' minds and hearts—will be denied by Christ when their judgments are revealed (Matt 7:21–23).

Eden shrank from its original size (Gen 2:10–14) to become the promised hill country of Judea. Following God sending first the northern kingdom of Samaria into Assyrian captivity, then the southern kingdom of Judah into Babylonian captivity, Israel shrank until it was scarcely larger than the polis of Jerusalem (Ezek 12:9–14). Only a few Israelites escaped the sword, famine and pestilence to repent of their lawlessness (v. 15). And from these few, a remnant from Babylon returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. So when the Logos was born as the man Jesus of Nazareth, the garden of God (i.e., Eden) was no larger than the rededicated temple at Jerusalem.

Today, disciples are the temple of God (1 Cor 3:16–17), in which the Holy Spirit dwells. The mental topography of disciples forms the geography of a spiritual Eden which will grow to encompass all of the earth—but this spiritual Eden is today even less than the rebuilt temple under Ezra was in the eyes of those who remembered Solomon's temple. Spiritual Eden has to be built from the burnt stones of the former Jerusalem, the Apostle Paul's present Jerusalem (Gal 4:25). Many wild olive branches have been grafted unto the root of righteousness, but these branches, with a few exceptions,

have continued to bear wild fruit as is their nature, and the nature of grafting. The broken off natural branches will be grafted back onto their cultivated root when the Tribulation begins. The Sabbath will then mark who is of God and known to God—and the natural branches will not give up the Sabbath whereas the wild branches will not keep it but will try to enter God's rest (i.e., the hill country of Judea) on the following day. The great falling away that is sure to occur will be the greater Christian Church, once liberated from the law of sin and death that has dwelt in its members, returning to lawlessness 2300 days before the Messiah comes to restore all things. This return to lawlessness or sin will be the greater Church's rejection of the 7th day Sabbath and its observance of the 8th day. The greater Church will be sincere, will want to serve Jesus, and will not believe what He said about the law. The greater Church will claim the dispensation of grace exempts Christians from keeping the law of God, especially the Sabbath commandment. The greater Church by its disregard for this commandment has identified the Sabbath as the least of the commandments. So this smallest commandment becomes the test commandment, for if disciples will not be faithful in little things, they won't be faithful in the weightier matters of the law.

The natural branches take their identification from the Sabbath commandment, as do a few Christian sects. So when the man of perdition, that lawless one who comes by the workings of Satan, attempts to change times and the law (2 Thess 2:3–10 coupled with Dan 7:25 & 12:11)—this abomination that makes desolate will compel all Sabbatarians to seek God more than they previously have. The natural branches will again be grafted onto the root of righteousness; they will be spiritual virgins. And the greater Christian Church will be rejected just as the nation that left Egyptian bondage was rejected for its unbelief that became disobedience when it tried to enter God's rest the following day. God will send a great delusion over the lawless Church (2 Thess 2:11) in that this firstborn son of the last Eve, when in the Tribulation it formally rejects the Sabbath, will be unable to repent of its lawlessness. It will from then on truly believe that it does the will of God when it persecutes Sabbatarians. It will again be Cain murdering righteous Abel because this spiritual Cain's offering (i.e., taking of the sacraments) isn't accepted. This last Cain, like its visible physical shadow, isn't willing to do what is right (Gen 4:7).

The firstborn son of God that left Egyptian bondage agreed to perform "All that [YHWH] has spoken we will do" (Exod 19:8), but this nation lied to both God and itself. Likewise, the spiritually firstborn nation of God that will leave bondage to the lawlessness that has dwelt in its members has agreed to perform all that Jesus spoke, but this nation weekly proves that it will not live as spiritual Judeans, how the Apostle Peter taught Gentile converts to live (Gal 2:14 — Paul doesn't condemn Peter for what he taught, but for separating himself according to the tradition of the first covenant that made a distinction between Jew and Gentile; again, this first covenant was abolished at Calvary).

Today, Jesus bears the law-breaking of disciples who sincerely keep Sunday as the Sabbath—no transgression is imputed to these disciples. This, however, will change when the Son of Man is revealed at the end of the age. Then the 7th-day Sabbath will again be the marker of who is of God and who is known to God (Exod 31:13, 17). And if a disciple today knows to keep the Sabbath but doesn't, what this disciple does is not of faith—this disciple commits sin, and is a hypocrite. This disciple needs to begin or to return to keeping the Sabbath as the appropriate expression of faith, of mentally leaving the land of one's birth and journeying to the hill country of spiritual Judea.

More elaborate arguments can be made proving that Christians are to keep the Sabbath. These

arguments are wasted upon the lawlessness, and upon those who have not yet been born-from-above. As the angel tells John in his vision, Let the evildoer still do evil, and the unclean still be unclean, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy (Rev 22:11). The holy will keep holy the little Sabbath (Heb 4:9) that is weekly symbolic of Israel entering into God's rest. The evildoer or lawless person will not, nor will the person who has not been made clean through spiritual birth. And under the second covenant each disciple gets to choose for himself or herself life or death (Deu 30:15). God would have every disciple choose life, but He knows that many won't love righteousness enough to forsake the ways of the world and live as a spiritual Judean.

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