

THE SABBATH, THE LAW & THE PROMISE

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CREATION

Before Creation, God planned to send Jesus into the world to save mankind.

1 Pet. 1:20 says, “*he was chosen before the creation of the world*” and Eph. 1:4 says, “*he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.*”

In the beginning, there was no sin or death in the world and Adam & Eve had only one command to obey. Adam sinned when he rebelled against this command.

ADAM & SIN

When Adam sinned, death entered the world. Rom. 5:12 says, “*sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin.*” Rom. 5:14 says that “*death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as Adam did*” and the previous verse said that this occurred “*before the law was given.*”

There was no Law at this time so the Ten Commandments, being part of the Law given through Moses, were not known.

ABRAHAM & THE PROMISE

Before the Law was given, God credited Abraham with righteousness and gave him a PROMISE. James 2:21 & Gal. 3:6 tell us that, through his faith alone, Abraham was declared righteous because he offered his son Isaac on the altar (See Genesis 22:15-18). In Gen. 22:18, God made the PROMISE to Abraham that all nations would be blessed through him and his Seed (Gal. 3:16 tells us that the Seed is Jesus). This PROMISE is that, in the same way that Abraham was declared righteous because of his faith, now, through trusting in Jesus alone, the Gentiles would be declared righteous by their faith and receive the Spirit (See Romans 4). Gal. 3:14 says, “*He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.*” Gal. 3:9 says, “*So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.*” So, the PROMISE, given before the Law, is righteousness by faith. (See Rom. 4 and Gal. 3)

MOSES & THE LAW

Gal. 3:17 says that the Law was introduced 430 years after Abraham. God gave the Law to Moses at Mt. Sinai. There was no Law before this as already shown in ‘Adam & Sin’ above.

Are the Ten Commandments the Law?

No, the term ‘Law’ is not a reference to only the Ten Commandments as: In Matthew 22:37-39 both Leviticus and Deuteronomy are referred to as the Law; in Matt. 12:5 Numbers is called the Law; in John 10:35 the Psalms are referred to as the Law and in 1 Cor. 14:21 Isaiah is referred to as the Law. To the Israelites, the first five books of the Bible are the Law. Nowhere in the Bible are the Ten Commandments said to be separate from the Law. They are part of it.

What was the purpose of the Law?

Rom. 7:7 says that the Law was given so that we would know what sin was and Rom. 3:19-20 say that through the Law we become conscious of sin and accountable to God. Then Gal. 3:24 says, “*the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith.*” So the Law was given to lead us to Jesus and the PROMISE of righteousness through trusting in Him, the Seed of Abraham.

JESUS, THE PROMISED SEED, BRINGS SALVATION BY FAITH ALONE

Gal. 3:17 says that the Law did not “*set aside the covenant previously established by God [with Abraham] and thus do away with the promise*” and Gal. 3:19 says the law was only in effect “*until the Seed [Jesus] to whom the promise referred has come.*” So when Jesus came the Law, having served its purpose, was done away with and righteousness by faith, through the Holy Spirit, came into being.

Keeping the Sabbath was part of the Law and was for Israel alone. Ex. 31:13 says, “*Say to the Israelites, ‘You must observe my Sabbaths. This will be a sign between me and you for the generations to come...’*” The term ‘for the generations to come’ (the KJV says ‘throughout your generations’) occurs many other times in the Law and these commands are plainly for Israel alone ... some other examples are Ex. 12:14, Ex. 29:42, Ex. 30:8, Ex. 30:10 & Ex. 30:31. The Sabbath cannot be separated from these other commands of God to Israel. If, like Israel, we are to keep the Sabbath then we must keep the other commands and be subject to the total Law.

The Law had a purpose and that was to lead us to Jesus for salvation by faith alone. Romans 7:1-6 says that Christians have died to the Law. Eph. 2:8-9 says “*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast.*” The ‘works’ spoken of here is doing things (like keeping the Sabbath) to gain righteousness. In Phil. 3:1-9, Paul speaks against all his former self-righteous works (vs.4-6) and in vs.8-9 says “*I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Jesus...*”

The moral righteousness of God, as seen in the Ten Commandments, has not been done away with. 1 John 5:3 says, “*This is love for God: to obey his commands*” and 1 John 3:23 tells us that these commands are “*to believe in the name of his son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us.*” Jesus said in Matt. 22:37-39 that loving God and our neighbour was fulfilling the Law and Prophets and Romans 13:10 says, “*love is the fulfillment of the law.*” 1 Cor. 9:21 tells us that we are under Christ’s law and that Law is to love.

If we say we must keep *any* law, other than Christ’s Law of love, then God’s Promise of salvation by faith alone has failed and Jesus’ death is not enough to cover our sins. There are harsh warning against this: Gal 3:10 says, “*All who rely on observing the law are under a curse...*” and Gal. 5:4 says, “*You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace.*”

We are saved by grace, through faith, not by works. Romans 4:16 says “*the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace*” and Romans 11:6 says, “*if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.*” (Read Romans 3:21-31).

Matthew 5:17-18 And Fulfilling The Law

In Matt. 5:17-18, Jesus said He had come to fulfil the Law and Prophets and that nothing would disappear from the Law until they were fulfilled. In Luke 24:44, He made it clear that this fulfilling was the fulfilling of everything that was written **about Him** in the Law, Prophets and Psalms.

When Jesus fulfilled all that was written about Him, the Law of the Old Covenant was replaced by the New Covenant of Salvation by Faith Alone. The Old Covenant vanished away when the Temple was destroyed by the Romans in AD 70 ... Hebrews 8:13.

Sabbath Days

Romans 14:5-8 say very plainly that one person may consider one day sacred while someone else may consider all days alike. There is no command for us to keep this day or that day special but, like eating or not eating meat, whatever we do, we do to the Lord.

In Galatians 4:9-10 the Christians are chastised for keeping special days, months, seasons and years. In doing this they are said to be going back to weak and miserable principles and being enslaved again.

In Colossians 2:16 the Christians are told not to judge people with regard to religious festivals, New Moon celebrations or Sabbaths. (The Greek word used for Sabbath in this verse is the same word used in Matt. 28:1 and other verses and it means the Sabbath Day in those verses).

The Ten Commandments

Nowhere in the New Testament are we told to keep the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments themselves are in the books of Exodus and Deuteronomy which are part of the Law of Moses that was replaced by the New Covenant. Sometimes the word 'Law' is said to be referring to just the Ten Commandments but on the previous page (Moses & The Law) the 'Law' quoted in the Gospels referred to various books in the Old Testament. The Hebrew word 'Torah' is translated 'Law' and refers to the first five books of the Old Testament.

In 1 John 5:3 (KJV), we are told that to love God is to keep His commandments. These commandments are given in 1 John 3:23 and tell us to 'believe in Jesus and love one another'. The only way we can love God and love our neighbour is to not sin against them.

The 'Sabbath Rest' Of Hebrews 4

According to the SDA, in Hebrews 4:9, the word translated as 'rest' should read 'Sabbath.' The Greek word used in this verse is not the word normally used for the Sabbath Day and in fact it only appears once in the New Testament. It does not refer to the Sabbath Day but a Sabbath Rest.

Heb. 3:7 to 4:10 is talking about the Sabbath Rest of God and not a Sabbath Day. It says in v.4:3, "*we who have believed enter that rest...*" This is not speaking of keeping a Sabbath Day but entering, by faith, into the Sabbath Rest of God. V.4:10 says, "*for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work*". This Rest is the heavenly state of blessedness and peace that comes through entering into the right relationship with God.

When saved, a person rests in the assurance of his salvation because there is no longer a need to strive to please God through rules such as keeping the Sabbath. In John 6:28-29 the disciples asked Jesus, "*What must we do to do the works God requires?*" Jesus answered, "*The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.*" "

Circumcision & The Sabbath

Regarding the Covenant of Circumcision, in Genesis 17:9, God said to Abraham, "... *you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come.*"

Regarding keeping the Sabbath, in Exodus 31:13, God said, "*Say to the **Israelites**, 'You must observe my Sabbaths. This will be a sign between **me** and **you** for the generations to come.*"

Clearly, both of these commands are for the nation of Israel. If anyone feels that they must keep the Sabbath then they must be circumcised also ... as well as follow the many other commands given 'for the generations to come' (KJV says 'throughout your generations').

Jesus & The Sabbath

Jesus was a Jew, born under the Law, and like all Jews He was subject to the Law and had to keep the Sabbath. Not only did He keep the Sabbath but, in order to fulfil all righteousness, He also kept all the Laws and Commands of God ... including all the Feasts such as the Passover and He was circumcised.

If He failed to keep the Law on any point then He would not have dared to ask the question, "*Can any of you prove me guilty of sin?*" John 8:46. He kept the Law perfectly and was sinless.

If Jesus failed to keep the Law fully then He would have been just another sinner and would not have been the perfect sacrifice that He was.

Some Definitions

Righteous - Right or acceptable to God.

Justified - JUST-AS-IF-I'D never done it.

Redemption - Bought/purchased back from sin.

Reconciled - Made right with - no longer enemies of.

Atonement - AT-ONE-MENT - at one with - reconciled.

Justice - What is fair or right.

Grace - God's undeserved favour. (Grace is God giving us what we don't deserve and Mercy is God not giving us what we do deserve).

For an in-depth study of Seventh-day Adventism, please go to
<http://www.exadventist.com/Home/Covenants/tabid/54/Default.aspx>