

## God's Everlasting Covenant

### **Who Changed the Sabbath Day...and Why?**

#### **God's Appointed Times**

Ardent followers of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob view the Bible as the manifest word of God. The Holy Scriptures are the very foundation upon which Judaism and Christianity rest. The Bible provides historical and prophetic references for both past and future events. For the faithful it serves as a guide for how we are to live our lives in accordance with the will and purposes of God.

Scripture also provides details about the Feasts of the Lord, also known as "appointed times" [Moyadim]," or "holy convocations." There are seven such feasts. The Spring feasts are Passover, Unleavened Bread, First Fruits, and Shavout [Feast of Weeks]. The Fall feasts are Rosh Hashanah [Feast of Trumpets], Yom Kippur [Day of Atonement], and Sukkoth [Feast of Tabernacles]. God instructs us about these in Leviticus 23 indicating observance of His feasts are "*a permanent regulation for all generations.*"

There is also an "appointed time" which is not counted among the biblical feasts. It is the very first of the 'Moyadim' set aside by God, known as Shabbat, commonly referred to as Sabbath. The Shabbat is first referenced in Genesis 2: 2-3- "*.....on the seventh day God was finished with his work...so he rested.....God blessed the seventh day and separated it as holy....*" Exodus 31:17 further instructs us about keeping the seventh day holy- "*it is a sign between me and the people of Israel forever.*"

Indeed, when the Law was given to Moses on Mt. Sinai the first three of the Ten Commandments were about God himself. The fourth commandment was instructing us to "*remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy.*" In plain language God is saying this is His day for us to set aside normal activities in order that we rest and worship Him.

## **The Seventh Day**

The seventh day of the week is Saturday. Historically Jews have always observed Shabbat on this day. Many Christians and Jews may not know that Jesus was a Jew, whose name is Yeshua ben Yosef. Thus the only houses of worship He taught in were synagogues, and this occurred only on Saturday/Shabbat- [Matthew 4:23, 13:54, Luke 4:16, 21].

Moreover, Saul/Paul, also Jewish, and a Pharisee, whose ministry was to the Gentiles observed Shabbat on Saturday, which is also when he taught- [Acts 13:42, 44, 17:2, 18:4]

## **Replacement Theology**

Yet for Christians Sabbath isn't Saturday, it's Sunday. Why? Much of the reason has its origins in "replacement theology." This is a belief that Jews are no longer considered God's chosen people because Jesus [Yeshua] was rejected as Messiah. They believe the Jews have been replaced by "the Church." Although there is no biblical basis for this, most of Christianity embraces replacement theology.

Paul addresses this issue quite clearly when he says "*Did God reject his people? By no means!*" [Romans 11:1] In spite of this clear statement by the person more responsible for Christian doctrine than anyone else, most of Christianity doesn't share Paul's view and embraces replacement theology.

However, a growing number of Christians known as 'Christian Zionists' see things differently. They recognize the Jewish people as God's covenantal promise holders, offering strong support for them as well as the nation of Israel.

Christian Zionists see themselves as being "grafted in" to the family of Israel as defined in Romans chapter 11 in the Apostolic writings [New Testament]. This is a way of honoring their "older brothers" as some like to call the Jews.

While an increasing number of Christians are rejecting replacement theology, the vast majority of the 38,000 Christian denominations consider Sunday as the Sabbath. Less than a dozen denominations observe Sabbath on Saturday.

We have clear instruction from God regarding the observance of the Moadim and setting aside the seventh day as Sabbath. Yet Christianity in its infancy while divorcing itself from its Jewish birth, and increasingly

embracing replacement theology, began the move toward changing the day God set aside as holy unto Him from Saturday to Sunday.

## **The Change to Sunday**

How did the change come about? Historical records indicate Saturday was observed as Shabbat by Gentile believers until roughly 300 A.D. During the second century persecution of the Jews had become so intense many Gentile believers who were worshipping with Jewish believers began worshipping separately for fear of their lives. Some started keeping Sunday as Sabbath.

In 321 A.D. Emperor Constantine, a professed Christian who was also an avowed Sun worshiper, proclaimed the first 'Sun'day law requiring businesses be closed and people should rest. This was the beginning of the move away from Saturday to Sunday. Constantine also led the effort to establish Christianity as the official religion of Rome.

In 330 A.D. The Council of Laodicea enacted 59 laws. Law XXIX [29] reads as follows: "*Christians must not judaize by resting on the Sabbath, but must work on that day, rather honoring the Lord's Day; and if they can, resting then as Christians. But if any shall be found to be judaizers, let them be anathema from Christ.*"

Thus, instead of God, we have 'man,' in the form of the Catholic Church, proclaiming Sabbath was to be changed from Saturday to Sunday. This is not the seventh day, as God instructed, but the first day of the week, or the Lord's Day, as they called it. A thorough search of the Hebrew Scriptures [Old Testament] and Apostolic writings [New Testament] finds nothing indicating it should be changed from Saturday to Sunday.

## **Saturday or Sunday Worship?**

Does this mean people shouldn't worship on Sunday? No. However, if we are obeying the Ten Commandments the fourth commandment tells us Saturday is the seventh day, and is the day God instructs us to set aside as the Sabbath. Peter and all the Apostles indicate . "*We must obey God, not men.*" [Acts 5:29] So what about Sunday worship? People should feel free to worship God whenever they choose, including Sunday. However, according to Scripture Saturday remains the seventh day, and 'The' Sabbath.

Jews have always worshipped on the seventh day. Messianic congregations worship on Saturday, as do many Christian Zionists. Several Christian denominations are Saturday worshippers, as well as a growing number of Christians who are returning to their Hebrew roots.

## **The Age to Come**

In spite of "the Church" changing the Sabbath day, Scripture confirms it is the seventh day – Saturday. Scripture also confirms it shall remain unchanged in the Age to Come, or Messianic Kingdom. Isaiah 66:22-24 says *"For just as the new heavens and new earth that I am making will continue in my presence," says God, "so will your descendants and your name continue. Every new moon and every week on Sabbath all mankind will come to worship in my presence," says God.*

## **God Doesn't Change**

Malachi 3:6 says *"I am the L-rd, I do not change."* So if God doesn't change why did newly birthed Christianity change what God instructed? Maybe the Jews, Messianic Jews, Christian Zionists, and Christians returning to their Hebrew roots are onto something...