

**A Rest for Israel**  
**Matthew 12:1**

In the last lesson we began looking at the Sabbath. God instituted the concept of a Sabbath when He rested on the seventh day after six days of creating (Genesis 2:2—3). This carries through to Israel when they were commanded to keep the Sabbath in the Mosaic Law (Exodus 20:10). This was a perpetual covenant (Exodus 31:16) that needed to be kept by Israel as long as God was dealing with them as a nation. We in the Church, the Body of Christ, are not under the Law because of our position with Christ (Romans 6:14; 10:4; Galatians 5:18). The Law is still in effect for those who are not in Christ (1 Timothy 1:9—10; Galatians 5:1—3).

**A word picture**

The keeping of the Sabbath is not an end in itself but a picture of the future, a shadow of what was to come. When God rested on the Seventh day He didn't do so because He was tired but to present a picture of the future. His example became Israel's example when they were commanded to rest on the seventh day of the week. The picture being presented has to do with the Israel's final promise of rest. Israel was promised a Kingdom and a time of refreshing (Exodus 31:17; 23:12; Acts 3:19). Matthew 12 shows the connection of the Kingdom with a time of restoration, refreshment, and hope as Jesus went through the land and healed the people. Jesus promised rest to those who believed the Gospel of the Kingdom (Matthew 11:28—29). Hebrews speaks of the rest promised to Israel, exemplified by the Sabbath. This rest will be fulfilled in the Kingdom. These word pictures are also depicted in the required seven feasts that Israel had to observe; the Passover (Christ's death), Unleavened Bread (Christ's burial), First Fruits (Christ's Resurrection), Pentecost (Giving of the Holy Spirit), Trumpets (Tribulation), Atonement (Second Coming) and Tabernacles (Millennial Kingdom). Notice that the Feast of Tabernacles is the seventh and last feast and that it marks the millennial rest promised to Israel.

**Hebrews 4:10** For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.

**Keep it or die**

The penalty for breaking the Sabbath was quite severe—death (Exodus 31:13—17; Numbers 15:32—36). Death seems harsh for someone who walked further than a mile or picked up some firewood but doing so would break the Sabbath, which was a sign to Israel that God separated out Israel for a special purpose. God used the Babylonians to punish Israel when she didn't keep her Sabbaths (2 Chronicles 36:21). As a result of this chastisement the leaders of Israel instituted their own set of laws that were to make sure Israel didn't break the Mosaic Law.

Those who say we are still under the Mosaic Law should find it hard to explain why they are going to church on the first day of the week instead of the day when God told Israel to do so. The assumption is that since Jesus arose on the first day of the week (Mark 16:9) and we see Jesus meeting with His Disciples on the first day (John 20:19) and Paul preaching on the first day (Acts 20:7) that the “Christian Sabbath” has now been changed from the seventh day to the first day. God never changed the day of the Sabbath since doing this would break the perpetual covenant that God made with Israel and break the picture of the Sabbath. Those who think they are now the people of God in place of Israel take the Law pretty lightly. If churches accept that they are Israel and therefore under the Law they should put anyone to death who breaks the Sabbath. I'm guessing their church attendance would drop sharply.

## Today's Sabbath

Paul makes it clear that we are not held to observe the Sabbath or any other feast day, new moon or special days. The Sabbath was given to Israel as a sign and as a picture of their future rest. We are not Israel and we are not under the Law. Those who claim to be spiritual Israel would also have to claim to be blinded since Israel was temporarily blinded (Romans 11:25). Why do people insist on stealing what was given to Israel?

**Colossians 2:14—17** <sup>14</sup> Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; <sup>15</sup> And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it. <sup>16</sup> Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: <sup>17</sup> Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.

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