
◆ THE EDIFIER ◆

Volume 17

CHURCH of GOD 7th DAY - AUSTRALIA

JULY 2011



Have you ever had a relative who for some reason was not the family favourite? They were not treated the same as Uncle Bill or affable Auntie May. The family preferred to exclude them from family functions as they only caused them embarrassment. We colloquially call them 'the poor cousin'. The Sabbath, in a way, has become like that. In fact, we might say it has become the poor cousin of all of God's or Christ's commands. This should not be so! Some examples of how this is the case, are given below.

The Sabbath is the only commandment that some Christians say Jesus broke. This is a serious allegation for those who have said this, since Jesus lived under the old covenant with all of its laws. The law defined sin (Romans 7:7). Therefore Jesus had to keep the law, or He was a sinner. If He sinned He could not be the unblemished Lamb of God who redeemed us from our sins. We would still be in our sins!

The Poor Cousin

Those who say Jesus broke the Sabbath look to the situations in the New Testament where the priests objected to Him performing healings on the Sabbath day. Jesus however corrected them by showing them that they had the intent of the Sabbath all wrong. He demonstrated that it is right to do good on the Sabbath. Remember also Luke 4:16 which says that it was Jesus' custom to go to the synagogue on the Sabbath. Jesus certainly questioned the way people were keeping the Sabbath, but never questioned their need to keep it.

Another way the Sabbath has become the poor cousin, especially of the Ten Commandments, is evidenced by the way the church usually handles those who neglect the Sabbath as compared to the way it disciplines members for other sins. If a church member is overtly a thief or an adulterer they will most likely be disciplined, but such discipline for Christians who neglect the Sabbath is indeed rare by comparison.

Further, consider which of the Ten Commandments Christians are most prepared to compromise just a little, or for a little while, when under some kind of tempting pressure,

such as financial pressure, or indeed, when under no real pressure at all. On the one hand try to imagine a Christian deciding to murder or steal just a little or for a little while whilst under some kind of pressure. On the other hand, try to imagine a Christian who decides to work occasionally or even regularly on the Sabbath. The latter is far easier to imagine isn't it? Again the Sabbath resembles the poor cousin who is ill-treated with partiality.

Ironically, the Sabbath is also the only command of the 'ten' that it 'seems' okay to ask others to break for our benefit. This is particularly ironic because it is the only command that specifically tells us not to do this. It says "in it you shall do no work: you, *nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant ... nor your stranger who is within your gates*" (Exodus 20:8-11). Christians, however, will often ask others to work on their behalf on the Sabbath when there is no need or pressing emergency to do so. (Note though that Jesus modelled a Sabbath

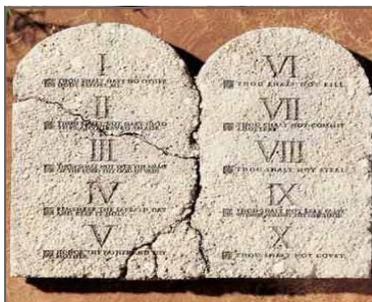
A magazine dedicated to uplifting and transforming peoples lives through the uncompromised word of God.

that was not neglectful of the needs of others: see Mark 2:23-28, 3:1-6 & Luke 14:1-6)

The Sabbath cousin seems all the poorer when we recognize that it is the only one of the Ten Commandments* (at least in most churches*) that has been widely modified, spiritualized, or abandoned. The original commandment in Exodus 20 specifies the 'seventh day', yet many instead choose to honour the first day (Sunday). Other churches say any day or time will do. Yet others say Christians are 'not under the law' (which is true) so we need not keep the Sabbath anymore, or we keep it in a spiritual sense by resting in Christ. Hang on a moment though. Can I murder, steal, dishonour my parents, or blaspheme God etc because I am 'not under the law'? I think not. Are any of the other commandments spiritualized so as to ignore their literal meaning, and nullify their intended purpose? Again, I think not! At the same time, however, it should be stressed that adherents to the Sabbath teaching should be careful not to let man-made rules and regulations detract from the intended blessing of the Sabbath.

Many believe, as I once did, that Colossians chapter 2 and Romans 14 allow the more liberal kinds of approaches mentioned above toward the Sabbath. In considering these texts, however, one crucial thing that is often forgotten is the fact that history shows that the change from Sabbath to Sunday (or any day) had not yet occurred in the first century when Paul wrote these epistles. The Christians were still

keeping Sabbath, not according to the misguided strictness of the Pharisees, but in the compassionate way Christ demonstrated throughout His life. This confirms (as many scholars recognize) that Colossians 2 and Romans 14 were providing instruction on controversial, doubtful, or heretical practices, not well established principles such as the kind of Sabbath observance of the 4th commandment which Jesus beautifully modelled while He walked the earth.



It is also rather strange that Christians would treat the Sabbath like the shunned poor relation when it, along with the fifth commandment about honouring one's parents, is the only one we are encouraged to keep because of the great blessings associated with it. According to Genesis 2:1-3, God blessed the Sabbath day and sanctified it from the beginning. Getting much needed rest, finding special time to worship our God and learn more of Him and His ways, and being together with our brethren and families are very important blessings we share on the Sabbath. Indeed it is likely that Adam, the busy caretaker of the garden of Eden, enjoyed such blessings too, as why would God

on the seventh day of earth's history bless the day for man's benefit (Mark 2:27), set it apart for holy purposes, and then wait thousands of years until the time of Moses before sharing the blessing of the Sabbath day rest with anyone? I am sure that from the beginning Adam enjoyed his day of rest with God too.

I encourage you not to think of this subject in terms of 'rules, rules, rules', such as, 'how can I do this great wickedness and break the Sabbath rule?' Let's give paramount importance to thinking about the Sabbath in terms of relationship – e.g. 'how can I do this great wickedness and sin against my beloved God?' This kind of attitude endeared Joseph to God. Again it is highly ironic that Christianity in general rightly gives utmost importance to one's 'relationship, relationship, relationship' with God above giving emphasis to keeping God's 'rules, rules, rules'. The reason why this is so ironic is because when we contemplate which of the Ten Commandments is most relevant to the cultivation or growth of our relationship with God we will observe, that of the ten, only the Sabbath commandment is specifically designed to be useful in strengthening our relationship with God. That it has become the poor cousin is therefore very odd indeed. This should not be so.

Continued on page five

*Note that the Catholic and Lutheran churches feel it's okay to butcher the Ten Commandments God gave thousands of years ago by deleting the commandment against idols. How any church in good conscience thinks it has the authority to do such a thing is a mystery to me. Nevertheless, to restore the number to ten, they have chosen to divide the last commandment against coveting into two.



THE SIGNS OF HIS COMING

Over the many centuries people have been anxious about the Second coming of Christ, especially regarding the events associated with His return. They speak about the end of the world, the Antichrist, times of tribulation, earthquakes, famines, pestilences and wars.

It is true that Scripture shows the Second Coming of Christ will be a spectacular and dramatic event, (Rev 1:7) witnessed by all the nations and peoples of the earth, but how many of these predictions will precede the Lord's return? Many failed predictions and prophecies by well meaning believers litter the road of history bringing disappointment and discouragement to many who believe.

People for centuries and including this current generation have used verses such as; *"And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars.... For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places."* NKJV (Matthew 24:6-7) to

predict the return of Christ, to no avail.

To understand these verses we must go to the Gospels, (Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21) which contain the information needed to know the true meaning of these verses. In Matthew 24 : 2, Jesus tells His disciples that in the future the Temple will be destroyed. (destroyed in 70 A.D.) Then they asked Jesus, *"Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"* NKJV (Matthew 24:3). He declares to them that famines, pestilences, earthquakes and wars will come upon the earth in their life-time, (Matthew 24:6-7) which will precede the destruction of the Temple and that they will go through tribulation and be killed for the sake of Christ. (Matthew 24:9)

Jesus didn't say that these signs would enable the disciples and believers in the future to predict a time-line for His return, but they would help to remind them that we live in a sinful and fallen world and not to be alarmed by it. *"You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come"* NIV, verse 6.

It also reminds us that Jesus, the Prince of Peace will return and bring peace to this earth.



It may be true that these events are increasing or even getting worse and the Lord's return is near. But to use as some people have, the recent flood which devastated Queensland as a sign of perilous times and then encourage people to watch for the imminent return of the Lord, is misleading! It was a sad and tragic time for the people of Australia. One million square kilometres went under water and the state was declared a disaster zone. Billions of dollars were lost, thousands of properties were destroyed and a number of lives lost. It was declared the worst flood in Australia's history!

Is this the meaning Jesus was relaying to His disciples, when He instructed them to *"keep watch"* and *"be ready"*?

"Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.. ... So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him." NIV (Matthew 24 : 42, 44)

"Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come..... What I say to you, I say to everyone: 'Watch!'" NIV (Mark 13 : 33, 37)

The understanding of the word 'watch' isn't relating to watching world events or disasters, but watching yourself, being faithful and not being caught up in this sinful world. Jesus warned the listeners in Luke 21:34-36, *"Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on"* *Continued on page five*



JESUS IS COMING

It's probably the most balanced world-view you could ever have – a longing and a hope and yearning for the return of our Lord and Maker, Jesus Christ.

In signing off the epic, last book of the Bible, Revelation, Jesus said, "I am coming quickly," and John responded with, "Yes, come Lord Jesus." (Rev 22 : 20)

As long as I can remember, whenever I have looked up at the skies, and pondered the stars at night, or eyed the clouds by day, my thoughts have often drifted to the promise of Jesus Christ's return.

See, two thousand years ago Jesus' followers also stood there looking intently into the sky as He ascended to heaven. Two angels suddenly appeared among them and asked, "Why do you stand there looking into the sky?" They then told them that Jesus would return in the same way they had seen Him go.

Unfortunately over the ages, expectations of Jesus' return have gone beyond what the scriptures actually tell us. Jesus simply explained that no one knows the

day or the hour of His return, except the Father. Yet even today there are still would-be prophets peddling specific dates and times.

Prediction addiction and such speculation often result in subverting a believer's relationship with the Lord. Being primarily focussed on end-time events, it is easy to neglect "the weightier matters" of, for example, "justice, mercy and faith" – the important things in the here and now.

On the other hand, we should not be ignorant of the times in which we live.

From what we understand, Jesus was born at a time of heightened Messianic expectation. A remarkable example of this, was recorded by Luke, when the baby Jesus was taken to the temple.

"And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. And this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel. And the Holy Spirit was upon him." (Luke 2 : 25)

And it happened to him, being instructed by the Holy Spirit, he was not to see death before he would see the Christ of the Lord.

And he came by the Spirit into the temple. And as the parents brought in the child Jesus... even he received Him in his arms and blessed God, and said, Lord, now You will let Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word.

"For my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all the peoples..." (Luke 2:30-31 NKJV)

Simeon knew, it seems, with absolute certainty that he would see the Messiah in his lifetime! Perhaps this was something that he had wondered about for many years. We also know that wise men travelled from afar after witnessing a star in the eastern sky; they were also familiar with the ancient prophecies that related to the Messiah's coming. In fact, the Bible notes that Enoch, only seven generations from Adam, spoke of the Lord's coming.

Today, we are not only privy to having the prophecies of old, but also of Jesus' own words when He repeatedly said: *"I am coming soon."*

Various parables Jesus told echoed that promise. For example, Jesus began a narrative with, *"A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive a kingdom for himself, and to return."* (Luke 19:12 NKJV)

In telling these simple parables, Jesus often pointed to a greater truth, of which He is the focus.

Jesus wants us to be waiting and expectant, no matter where we are in history. Our thoughts and affections are to be Christ-centred; He wants us to love Him with all our heart, all our mind, all our soul and all our strength; He wants us to be about His work daily, sharing the good news and effecting care in the lives of others.

There's no need to feel apologetic when we pray, for example, "*Your kingdom come...*" or find ourselves asking with child-like anticipation, "Are we there yet?"

Unfortunately most people today take no thought of Jesus, let alone of His return.

The question is, will you recognise Jesus' coming? Are you ready? Because scriptures indicate that many, in fact, will mourn his coming – be it they don't recognise Him, don't want His authority, or - dare I say it - even want to oppose Him.

The truth is, Jesus' coming is the best news we could ever hear.

And so, in the meantime, live expectantly. Let your faith be un fading. And, enjoy each day as another one yet closer to when He surely does return.

*A transcript of a short film "Jesus Is Coming" by John Klassek.
Message Week - www.message7.org*



Continued from page two

The Sabbath was never treated by God as a lesser command. In fact, in Israel's penal system it attracted the penalty of death (Exodus 31:15), just as murder, idolatry, and blasphemy did. Of the 'ten' it seems that only stealing and coveting did not attract the death penalty. Lying did for the perjuring witness in trials for crimes that attracted a death penalty for the accused. The Apostle James also accepted that the Sabbath was not a lesser command when he wrote in James 1:10-11 that if a Christian breaks one command, he or she has broken them all.

All Christians of all denominations fail to *perfectly* understand or obey God. It's not my place, or anyone's place, to point the finger at Christians in denominations who disregard or reinterpret the Sabbath day. Firstly, I am not their judge. God is. Secondly, they may be honouring other commands of God that I have neglected, or me or my church may be teaching other things in error, so who am I to point the finger at them? If I judge them, the measure that I use on them will be used on me (Matthew 7:2). Thirdly, many in Sabbath churches (including myself, if I am honest) fall short from time to time and do treat the Sabbath command like a poor cousin in some unacceptable way.

To focus on our relationship with God ahead of rules is the key, for it is only in having a close relationship with God that we will be strengthened to obey Him and be desirous of doing so.

How then can we continue to treat the Sabbath like a poor relative and neglect our relationship with God in this way?

David Kidd



Continued from page three

you unexpectedly like a trap. For it will come upon all those who live on the face of the whole earth. Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man." NIV

The most important thing for us, is being faithful and busy doing the Masters will. Jesus said, "*It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns.*" NIV (Matt 24:46)

It will not matter if we do not know the time of His return or understand certain 'signs' of His appearing. What does matter is that we are ready for His return each and every day of our life. Jesus said, in Revelation 22:20, "*Yes, I am coming soon*" Amen. Come, Lord Jesus." NIV

Phil Kordahi



Top 10 Reasons for Observing the Sabbath

The question is frequently asked, "Why do some people observe a day of rest and worship on Saturday instead of Sunday?" The fundamental answer is because they believe that the Bible identifies Saturday as the Sabbath, the day of the week that God reserved for rest and worship. While many reasons could be given, this booklet gives the top 10 reasons for Sabbath observance.

Come Aside, With Jesus Abide

I come aside from the world of strife
With its burdens, trials, and the cares of life,
To a beautiful, quiet, restful place
Where I meet with my Jesus face to face.

Forgetting all the clamour and din,
With fears that assail from without and
within,
I find joy and rest in every case
When I meet with my Jesus face to face.

O, What peace of mind as I meet Him there,
For I am relieved of my every care;
I'm warmed by His love and blest with His
grace.
When I seek my Jesus face to face.

By Edward M. Brandt

**Please send for the
FREE BOOKLET**

*"Seek the LORD and His strength, seek his face
continually."*

1 Chronicles 16:11

Insights From the Past



Human Derelicts

By C.H. Wetherbe

A derelict means that thing which has been abandoned by its proper owner. The term is commonly applied to a ship which has been deserted or given up by its owner or guardian and allowed to float on the sea. Such a vessel is a great stumbling block to the other vessels which ply the ocean. The greatest care has to be taken by the captain and crew of a steamer lest their vessel should run into a derelict and get shipwrecked by it.

Rev. J. Wilbur Chapman, in a sermon, says: "One of the ocean dangers that captains fear almost more than anything else is the danger of coming in contact with a derelict, as a ship abandoned at sea is called." There are now supposed to be about thirty of such vessels floating about at the will of the currents in the Atlantic waters. They are without pilot, have neither crew nor rudder, are bound nowhere, and carry no cargo to any port. One of them, which has a cargo of mahogany on board and is level with the water's edge, has been drifting since March 1891.

"There is scarcely any peril at sea which is so terrible to the mariner. No sound will reveal their nearness, no temperature of air or waves will make known their approach. Though it carries no guns, a derelict is often a more deadly enemy than a man-of-war.

"The ship that steers for no port can only have one influence, and that is to be a stumbling block in the way to send other ships to the bottom of the ocean."

Such a derelict is a forcible illustration of the human character and influence of a human derelict. There are thousands of such ones all over our land. Many of them once made a fair profession of faith in God and love for Christ, but not having the real life of God in them, they kept on drifting away from spiritual light, abusing their privileges, practically denying Christ, until they were abandoned by the Holy Spirit. And one of the worst features of the case of many of these is that they are still spoken of by some unconverted ones as being Christians. Indeed these derelicts, in many instances, persist in calling themselves Christians. And what awful stumbling blocks to the unconverted they are!

To assume to be a Christian, when in fact one is nothing but a rudderless, pilot-less person, abandoned by God is a most fearful thing. Avoid such a condition.

EDITOR'S NOTE: *This article appeared in the October 23, 1900 issue of the Sabbath Advocate and Herald of the Advent. Two months later the name of the magazine would be changed to The Bible Advocate and Herald of the Coming Kingdom.*

