

THE SABBATH AND THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

There is a teaching in the professing church that New Testament Christians are bound under the Old Covenant to keep the sabbath. Those who teach this contend that New Testament Christians as Abraham's seed, are bound by the fourth commandment, the same as the Jews, and that those who fail to do so will take the mark of the beast and be cast into hell (CP Ex 20:8). To say that New Testament Christians who fail to keep the sabbath will take the mark of the beast and be cast into hell presupposes that the church will go through the tribulation, for the mark of the beast will only become an issue during the last three and a half years of the tribulation. Scriptures are clear though that the church will not go through the tribulation. It is not appointed to wrath, which the tribulation is – God's wrath poured out upon sinners (CP Isa 13:6–13; Zeph 1:14–18; Eph 5:6; Col 3:5–6; 2Th 1:6–9; 2:11–12; 2Pe 2:9). New Testament Christians will not incur that wrath – God has promised to save them from it (CP Lu 21:11; 22–26, 34–36; Ro 5:8–9; 1Th 1:9–10; 5:1–11; 2Pe 2:9; Rev 3:7–13). The plain teaching in all those scriptures is that the church will not go through the tribulation. It will be taken up to heaven by Jesus prior to the onset of the tribulation (CP Jn 14:1–3; 1Cor 15:51–58; Php 3:20–21; 1Th 4:13–18; 2Th 2:1–10; Rev 4:4, 10–11; 5:8–10). These scriptures all establish the fact of the church being taken up to heaven by Jesus. 2Th 2:1–10, Rev 4:4, 10–11, and 5:8–10 proves that it takes place prior to the tribulation. The four and twenty elders identified themselves in Rev 5:9 as the church, redeemed to God from out of every tribe, language, people, and nation in the earth (CP Rev 5:9). *That man of sin ... The son of perdition ... that wicked* in 2Th 2:1–10 is Antichrist. He is the beast whose mark will incur God's wrath upon those who receive it (CP Rev 13:1–8; 11–17 with 14:9–11). The mark of the beast will only become an issue during the last three and a half years of the tribulation. The church is in heaven during that time.

In 2Th 2:1–10 the one restraining lawlessness in the earth and preventing Antichrist from being revealed is the church. Antichrist will only be revealed when the church is "taken out of the way" – taken up to heaven by Jesus. Let us read that scripture again (CP 2Th 2:1–10). *A falling away* in V3 refers to the departure of the church from the earth. In Rev 4:4, 10–11, we see the church in heaven represented by the twenty – four elders seated around the throne of God. We know the elders represent the church in heaven in Rev 4:4, 10–11, because in Rev 5:9 they identified themselves as having been redeemed to God by the blood of the lamb – Jesus – out of every kindred, and tongue, and nation on earth (CP Rev 4:4, 10–11 with 5:9). Only the church has been redeemed to God by Christ's blood out of every race, language, people and nation in the earth. It is also only the church that has been made to be kings and priests unto God, to reign with Him throughout eternity (Ac 20:28; 1Pe 1:2–5 with 1Pe 2:9; Rev 1:5–6; 22:3–5). This is irrefutable proof that the church is in heaven before the emergence of Antichrist and the onset of the tribulation. Neither Antichrist nor the tribulation are revealed until Rev 6, and as we learned in Rev 13:1–8, 11–17, the mark

of the best will not become an issue until at least another three and a half years after that (CP Rev 6:1–4). Antichrist is depicted here as the rider of both the white horse in V2 and the red horse in V4. The tribulation begins after he takes away peace from the earth in Rev 6:4 (CP 6:5–17). To claim that Christians who do not keep the sabbath will take the mark of the beast and be cast into hell, begs the questions how, when they are no longer on earth, but in heaven throughout this time?

Furthermore, although this is academic now in light of the foregoing teaching, nowhere in scripture are Christians commanded to keep the sabbath. In fact, the opposite is the case: Christians are strictly forbidden to keep any particular day as a sabbath, or respect one day as being holy any more than another (CP Ro 14:5–6; Ga 4:8–11; Col 2:6, 13–17). The sabbath was instituted by God specifically for the Jews as a sign between Him and them. Its sole purpose was to commemorate the Jews' deliverance from slavery under Pharaoh in Egypt. It has no relevance whatever for New Testament Christians. It is only relevant for the Jews – they have to keep it "throughout their generations", which means for eternity (CP Ex 20:8–11; 31:12–17; De 5:12–15; Isa 58:13–14). The Jews have to observe the sabbath throughout eternity as a day of rest for them; a cessation of labour (CP Ex 31:13; De 5:15; Isa 66:22–23). The example for the sabbath was set by God when He ceased from His labour after completing the work of creation on the seventh day (CP Gen 2:1–3).

Still another reason – also academic now – is that the Old Testament in its entirety, including the Ten Commandments, of which keeping the sabbath was one, is abolished in Christ. A great many Christians do not know this truth. They argue that only the ceremonial law – the sacrifices etc. – have been done away with, not the moral law – the Ten Commandments etc. But that is not correct – the entire Old Testament was abolished, as scriptures clearly teach. The Old Testament and everything pertaining to it was merely a shadow, or type, of which Christ is the New Testament fulfilment (CP Ga 3:23–26; Col 2:16–17; He 9:8–11; 10:1). Since Christ the reality is come, the shadows, or types, have no value; they are made obsolete and done away with (CP Hos 2:11 with Ro 3:21–22; Mk 2:27–28; Ro 10:4; 2 Cor 3:7–14; Ga 3:19–26; 4:21–31; 5:1–4; Eph 2:13–16; 2 Ti 1:8–10; He 7:12, 18–22; 8:6–13; 9:8–15; 10:1–18). *Abolished* in 2 Cor 3:13, Eph 2:15 and 2 Ti 1:10 (KJV) means to cease, done away with, to render inactive, idle, useless, ineffective. *Old* in He 8:13 (KJV) means to abrogate, annul, be antiquated, no longer in force, to be obsolete, out of date. The clear teaching in all these scriptures is that the Old Testament in its entirety no longer exists in God's economy, and therefore is irrelevant for New Testament Christians. Jeremiah also prophesied that the Old Covenant would be completely replaced by a New Covenant (CP Jer 31:31–34). The reason that the Old Testament has been replaced by the New Testament is that the Old Testament was only for a time – until its abolition (CP He 9:8–10). *Reformation* here (KJV), refers to correcting the faults and weaknesses of the Law of Moses by abolishing it in its entirety and substituting it for a new covenant which meets every need perfectly (CP He 9:11–19). The Old Covenant was temporary; the New is everlasting (CP

He 13:20). This is not demeaning the value of Old Testament scriptures in Christian life and ministry.

They still stand for our example (CP Ro 15:4; 1Cor 10:1-11; 2Ti 3:16-17; He 4: 1-11). Those in the church who argue that the Old Testament in its entirety has not been abolished refer to Mt 5:17-18 to support their view, not realizing that it was Christ Himself who fulfilled it (CP Mt 5:17-18).

In light of what scriptures so plainly teach it is inconceivable that a teaching such as the subject of this study could exist in the professing church. It is patently obvious that there is nothing whatever in scripture to validate any teaching that New Testament Christians are bound under Old Testament law to keep the sabbath, and that those who fail to do so will take the mark of the beast and be cast into hell. This is false teaching which must be rejected out of hand. The New Testament church will not go through the tribulation, so no Christians will receive the mark of the beast for any reason. The sabbath has no relevance for Christians. It was instituted by God for the Israelites alone as a memorial of their deliverance from slavery in Egypt. And last, but not least, the Old Covenant no longer exists in God's economy. It has been completely abolished in Christ. The sabbath and everything else pertaining to the Old Covenant were merely shadows, or types, of which Christ is the New Testament fulfilment.

Now we will look at the New Testament Christians' sabbath. In the New Testament *sabbath* is used only of an eternal rest with God (CP He 4:9). *Rest* here is

from the same Greek word as *Sabbath* – **Sabbatismos**. According to **Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible**, it means the repose of Christianity (as a type of heaven): - rest.

This is the rest that God promised to the Israelites in the land of Canaan, but God would not let that generation of Israelites enter into His rest because of their unbelief and disobedience (CP He 3:7-4:10). We learn here that Canaan, the promised land into which Joshua – *Jesus* in V8 (KJV), should have been translated Joshua, for he is the one referred to here – led the Israelites, was not the final rest which God has prepared for those who love Him. Otherwise God would not have needed to offer another opportunity to enter into His rest at the time of King David (CP Psa 95:7-11). This rest is the spiritual rest available for all who trust in Christ (CP He 12:22-24). Christ gives this rest to all who come to Him (CP Mt 11:28-30). This rest may be viewed as both a present possession, and a future blessing. Those who do enter in have ceased from their labours, just as God ceased from His on the seventh day. This rest is based upon a finished work which God purposed in Christ before the foundation of the world (CP He 4:3-11). Although God's rest for the Israelites in the Old Testament remains in the sphere of promise, it is fulfilled for New Testament Christians by faith on Christ.

This also proves that the Jewish sabbath was merely an Old Testament shadow, or type, of which Christ is the New Testament fulfilment. The rest that is found in Christ is the only sabbath that is relevant for New Testament Christians. It is not the Jewish sabbath, as some would have us believe.