

# A Message to the Church Today

By Scott D. Oliver

1. I am very disturbed when I hear ministers and clergy today saying that God's Torah and the Sabbath have very little to do with the doctrines of the church today. It does offer, they say, a back drop of history and a sense of context for the rest of the Bible, called the "New Testament". I wonder how they accept such a theology or doctrine when it is compared to what Yeshua (Jesus) said in Matthew 5: 17-19, <sup>17</sup> **"Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. <sup>18</sup> For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. <sup>19</sup> Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven"**, and in Luke 16:17, <sup>17</sup> **"But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Law to fail (or to become void)"**. From my observation, Heaven and earth are still present today, so the Torah of God should still be in effect also. And then some say Paul in his teachings did away with the Torah and/or law. I cannot see Paul contradicting God and Yeshua in the first place; but then, why in his own defense against the courts of Rome does he say, in Acts 24:14 and 15, <sup>14</sup> **"But this I admit to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect I do serve the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law (Torah) and that is written in the Prophets;"**<sup>15</sup> having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves, that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. It definitely looks like to me that both Yeshua and Paul have the same theology or doctrine about the Torah's importance in the church today. Why does their theology or doctrine differ from the main line position of the present day church? Could it be that we are interpreting the meaning of Paul's writings all wrong. It is interesting to note how the early church determined that Paul was teaching the truth. **"Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true."** (Acts 17:11) What Scriptures did the Bereans examine? Remember, the New Testament was not written yet; the Scriptures referred to here would be the Torah, the Prophets and the Writings of the Old Testament. It is interesting that they checked the Torah, Prophets and Writings to make sure Paul's doctrine was sound. It seems we need more followers of Messiah in the pews today checking on their minister's and clergy's sermon materials. We seem to accept any and all doctrine without question. One does not need to have a degree in theology or Bible to be able to read plain English or whatever your native language is. The last part of Matthew 5: 17-20 has a harsh warning attached to it for anyone, and that means just what it says, anyone, who dares to teach against the Torah of God. I would be very concerned if I was teaching that the Torah of God is no longer in effect for the church today! If we look at Acts 7 and the account of Stephen's death, the false accusations of the "false witnesses" were that Stephen was speaking against the Holy Place (Temple), against the Torah and against the customs of Moses. Remember, these were "false witnesses"; they accused Stephen of false charges that he in his defense says are not

true. By saying the false charges are not true, he is really saying the he was teaching about "the Holy Place (Temple), the Torah and the customs of Moses". Interestingly enough, here is a follower of Messiah still teaching and learning Torah. It is sad, but many church members and ministers would levy the same charges against those few of us that still accept the vitality of the Torah, Prophets and the Writings in the church today. They consider us to be "crazy", but I would rather be "crazy" for God rather than be "sane" for manmade doctrines! As Yeshua said, before one throws a stone he or she should examine his or her own life; in this case weigh his or her doctrine against God's Holy Word. A modern parable that I feel might help at this point is the story of three high school aged boys who go out on a Friday night and they drink even though under age. They try to determine which one of them had consumed the least amount of alcohol and would possibly be the best candidate to drive all of them home. They make their choice and on the way home they get pulled over by the police. This is a city that has night court and they are immediately brought into the court with evidence in hand. To the young driver's surprise the judge that night was his own father. Evidence was presented, guilt was evident and the sentence was pronounced; \$1000 fine or 3 months in jail. The young man pleaded with his father for mercy knowing that he did not have the \$1000 and as a result would have to spend time in jail, but the reality of the situation was, the father could not change the Law even for his own son. The father at this instant takes off his judge's robe, comes down off the platform and pulls out his check book and writes a check for \$1000. He then returns back to the platform, puts his robe back on and cracks his gavel and says, "pay your fine or go to jail". Notice, the father extended grace to his son without changing the law; so did God send His only Son to earth; he took off His Heavenly clothes and put on earthly human clothes so that God might extend His grace to forgive all of our sins. The extension of grace does not mean that God abandoned His "perfect Law" (Psalms 19:7); God has completed His plan of salvation within the context of His Law. Something perfect like God's Law cannot be improved upon and never becomes obsolete. So on this issue, as Paul would say, "what do you say now breather?" Do we not even investigate the matter further? Are we satisfied with our own present doctrine about the Torah or is it that we really don't want to spend the time to study the issue. The only problem is our eternal life could very well depend on it.

2 Timothy 3: 16, 17 <sup>16</sup> **All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; <sup>17</sup> so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.** Again, what "Scripture" is verse 16 referring to? It's not the New Testament; it is the Torah, Prophets and Writings. An

even harsher warning in when Yeshua says, <sup>21</sup> **"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my**

**Father who is in heaven.** <sup>22</sup> Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name do many

**mighty works?** <sup>23</sup> And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." (Matt. 7:21-23). And in Daniel's prophecy we see a very troubling picture: Daniel 7:25 says, **"And he (the little horn of the beast) shall speak words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High; and he shall think to change the appointed times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and half a time."** Whatever your interpretation of Daniel, it is certain that this is a future time occurrence. Satan loves to tempt us to

change or even disregard the Torah instruction or Law of God. Satan seems to know God's Torah better than most of us. I feel Satan has been working overtime in a lot of theological seminaries in the past several hundred years. God speaking in the Torah, Prophets and Writings means what He says; so why do we think God when speaking through Yeshua His Son, Paul and the other apostles does not really mean what He in clear language says. How do we deceive ourselves into thinking that manmade distorted doctrines are better than the eternal God's holy words?

2. The next puzzling issue for me is the Sabbath. God sanctified (or made holy) the Sabbath in Genesis chapter 2. Genesis 2: 1-3, before Jews or Israel even existed. God made it holy for all of human-kind. **"Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts.<sup>2</sup> By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. <sup>3</sup> Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made".** The Sabbath is clearly one of the Ten Commandments: Exodus 20: 8-11 **<sup>8</sup> "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. <sup>9</sup> Six days you shall labor and do all your work, <sup>10</sup> but the seventh day is a Sabbath of the LORD your God; *in it* you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. <sup>11</sup> For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy."** It is interesting that this is the only commandment prefaced with the word "remember"; meaning God gave it some time ago in Genesis, now He is reminding Israel of it. It is also important for the Gentiles to observe the Sabbath: Isaiah 56: 6,7 **"Also the foreigners (Gentiles) who join themselves to the LORD, To minister to Him, and to love the name of the LORD, To be His servants, everyone who keeps from profaning the Sabbath and holds fast My covenant; <sup>7</sup> Even those I will bring to My holy mountain And make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar; For My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples."** The Sabbath was observed by the majority of early congregations of The Way sect or Nazarene sect until about 325AD, when the organized, political, Roman church, administrated by Emperor Constantine, officially changed it and moved worship to Sunday (the sun god's day). Initially there was much resistance from many congregations (the Bishop of Florence still worshiped on Sabbath, but Bishop of Rome changed to Sunday worship; hence, the phrase from the Bishop of Florence, "when in Rome do as the Romans do") until there was no choice; about 16 years later, at the Council of Laodicea, it was determined that you worship on Sunday or else you suffer the consequences (see history note below). Yeshua, the apostles, Paul and the early church in Acts frequented the Temple for the 9am and 3pm prayer times and burnt offering times daily, and the synagogue on the Sabbath. Peter, the apostles and Paul often used these worship times to teach about Messiah and His resurrection in the Torah and Prophecy. The Temple remained a worship center for them until just before its destruction by Rome in 70AD (clearly seen in the Book of Acts). There is no scripture commanding a change in Sabbath worship; only a manmade edict in 337 AD by the pope of what later

became the Roman Catholic Church (see history note at end of this document). The phrase “first day of the week” is a mistranslation from the original Greek manuscripts to support this manmade idea. (In each place “first day of the week” is translated, in the Greek it says, “mia ton Sabbaton”, literally “one of the Sabbaths”.) Most churches today still follow this manmade mandate rather than God’s given Sabbath Law, even though it is one of the Ten Commandments. In essence most churches break the Sabbath commandment once a week deliberately, when they do not honor the Sabbath as God’s day of worship and rest. God is not going to bless a church, no matter how well intentioned they are, if they continue to ignore His commandments and His Laws. He did not bless Israel for their disobedience in the past; why should He bless us today for our disobedience. In Hebrews 4: 1 we read, **“Therefore, since the promise of entering His rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it.”** The phrase “His rest” is a Hebrew idiom for the Sabbath; the writer of Hebrews is warning us not “to have fallen short of it”, or in other words, to not forget to observe it.

3. On both issues of the Torah and the Sabbath I challenge each and every minister and church member to ask the Holy Spirit to guide you in a real, soul searching, objective study of the word of God; that is a study that includes all of the Word of God, the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings, as they will help explain the intended meaning of the New Testament scriptures. Manmade commentaries are often somewhat helpful in Bible study; although if not used with great care, they can propitiate wrong information and/or doctrine for many years without anyone questioning the person, who is regarded as a so called “authority in the Scriptures”, that wrote the commentary. Always remember the best commentary for studying the New Testament (Gospels, Letters and Revelation of John) is the Old Testament (Tanakh). It is in the Old Testament (Tanakh) that God defines (not man) all His basic terms and establishes His basic concepts and patterns that we need to use to extract a complete and a correct meaning from the New Testament. In Roman’s 2:26-29, Paul says, **“<sup>26</sup> So if the uncircumcised man keeps the requirements of the Law (Torah), will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? <sup>27</sup> And he who is physically uncircumcised, if he keeps the Law, will he not judge you who though having the letter of the Law and circumcision are a transgressor of the Law? <sup>28</sup> For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. <sup>29</sup> But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God”**. This is a great example where Paul is challenging today’s basic assumption that the Torah Law is not in effect today. Notice, Paul clearly states here that our circumcision not made by hands or “not physical” is dependent on us keeping the Torah or law. If we do not keep the Torah, are our hearts truly circumcised? I feel that it is time for today’s church to stop creating God’s doctrines in their own human image, but to take a moment and listen to what God intends the image of His eternal doctrines to look like. In the end it will not matter at all what we think, but it will matter a whole lot what God thinks! Remember Matthew 5:19 **“<sup>19</sup> Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the**

**same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven**". The time has come, before Messiah returns, for a Messianic revival in God's congregations back to what God intended His church to be at the time His Son Yeshua and His apostles established it! May the God of our Fathers through Yeshua His Son's death, His Holy Spirit, His Holy Torah and His Holy Scriptures make us into a new creation to serve God until the fullness of His Kingdom comes! Amen.

**History note:** In 313 Constantine and [Licinius](#) announced "that it was proper that the Christians and all others should have liberty to follow that mode of religion which to each of them appeared best", thereby granting tolerance to all religions, including Christianity. The [Edict of Milan](#) went a step further than the earlier [Edict of Toleration by Galerius](#) in 311, returning confiscated Church property. This edict made the empire officially neutral with regard to religious worship; it neither made the traditional religions illegal nor made Christianity the [state religion](#), as occurred later with the [Edict of Thessalonica](#). The [Edict of Milan](#) did, however, raise the stock of Christianity within the empire and it reaffirmed the importance of religious worship to the welfare of the state. Constantine's laws enforced and reflected his Christian reforms. [Crucifixion](#) was abolished for reasons of Christian piety, but was replaced with [hanging](#), to demonstrate the preservation of Roman supremacy. On March 7, 321, Sunday was declared the official day of rest, on which markets were banned and public offices were closed, except for the purpose of freeing slaves.

**Here is the first Sunday Law in history, a legal enactment by Constantine 1 (reigned 306-331):**

"On the Venerable Day of the Sun ["venerabili die Solis"--the sacred day of the Sun] let the magistrates and people residing in cities rest, and let all workshops be closed. In the country, however, persons engaged in agriculture may freely and lawfully continue their pursuits; because it often happens that another day is not so suitable for grain-sowing or for vine-planting; lest by neglecting the proper moment for such operations the bounty of heaven should be lost--Given the 7th day of March, [A.D. 321], Crispus and Constantine being consuls each of them for the second time."

*The First Sunday Law of Constantine I, in "Codex Justinianus," lib. 3, tit. 12, 3; trans. in Phillip Schaff "History of the Christian Church," Vol. 3, p. 380.*

**The Church of that day, then followed suit, and legislated on Sunday worship at the Council of Laodicea.**

"The Council of Laodicea ... forbids Christians from judaizing and resting on the Sabbath day, preferring the Lord's day, and so far as possible resting as Christians."

*Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1899 Edition, Vol. XXIII, page 654.*

**Here is the first Sunday Law decree of a Christian council. It was given about 16 years after Constantine's first Sunday Law of A.D. 321:**

"Christians shall not Judaize and be idle on Saturday [in the original: "sabbato" shall not be idle on the Sabbath], but shall work on that day; but the Lord's day they shall especially honour, and as being Christians, shall, if possible, do no work on that day. If, however, they are found Judaizing, they shall be shut out ["anathema,"--excommunicated] from Christ."

*Council of Laodicea, c. A.D. 337, Canon 29, quoted in C.J. Hefele, "A History of the Councils of the Church," Vol. 2, p. 316.*