

Sabbath Rebuttal
A Formal Response to Philip Hess and Leo Eby's
Objections to the Sabbath

Dear Brothers Philip and Leo,

Thanks for taking the time to examine my beliefs and writings on the Sabbath and graciously responding with your points. And thanks for finding time in your busy schedules to engage me on this topic. I must apologize for how long it's taken me to respond back to you. But living in a foreign country has had its challenges for my family and finding time to properly address your doctrinal points has not been easy. Anyway, I have finally gotten to it. Enclosed you will find my response to most of the points raised in either of your original emails. Brother Philip, I have included your original points and Brother Leo's in red. Mine will be included in black.

Note: For the sake of brevity I have clipped out most of the text in your emails so that we can strictly focus on your main points of difference. Both of your original emails are included at the end in full.

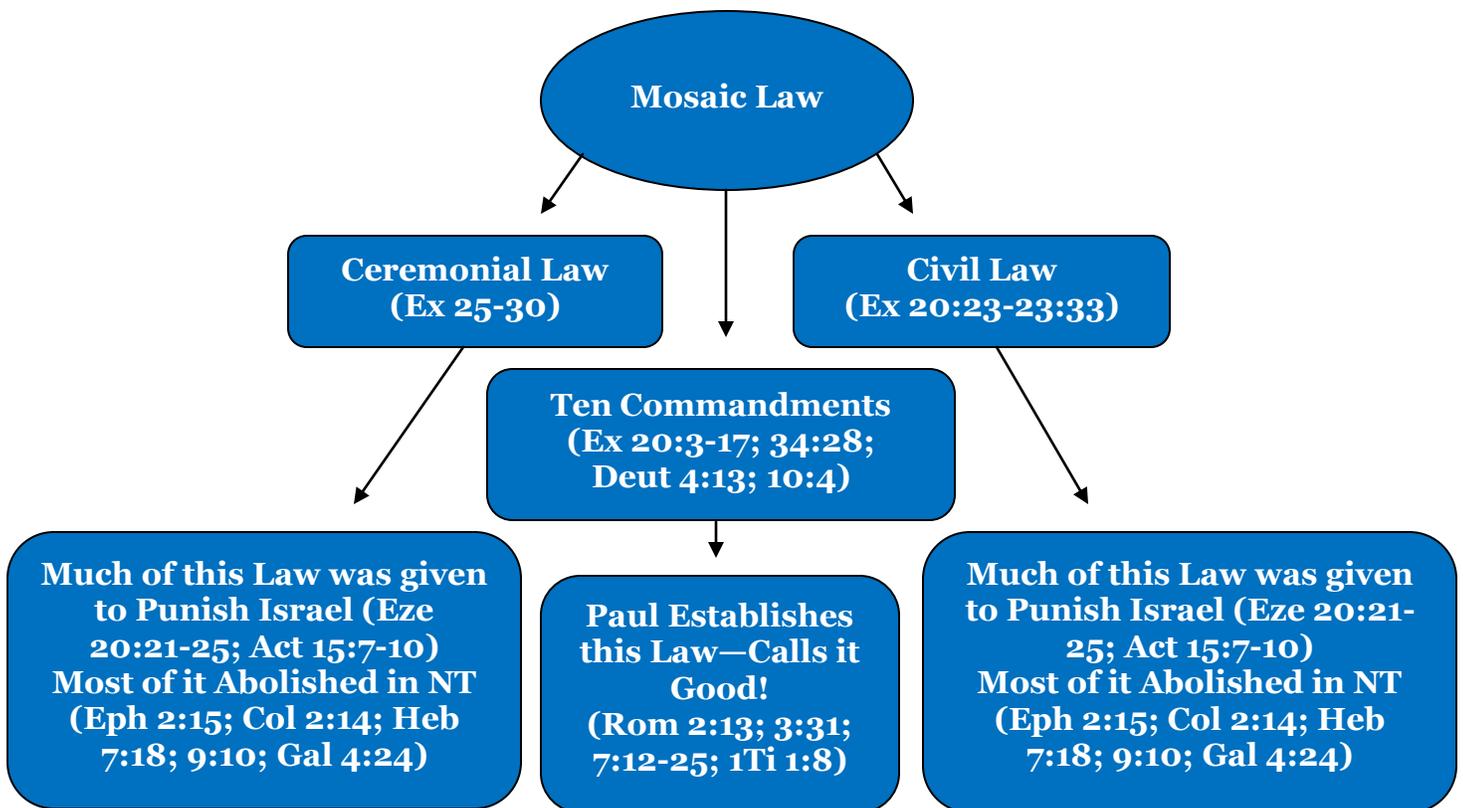
PHILIP'S OBJECTIONS TO THE SABBATH

“The Old Covenant was never intended to last forever--the Book of Hebrews makes this clear. Heb. 7:18 ‘There verily is a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. For the law made nothing perfect’...Heb. 8:7 ‘For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place had been sought for the second.’ Galatians 3:24: ‘The law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ...But after that faith is come we are no longer under a schoolmaster.’

I agree with your assertion that the Old Testament was never meant to last forever. And I fully support the obvious meaning of the scriptures you list here. However, Hebrews 7:18, 8:7, and Galatians 3:24 should not lead us to imagine that the Ten Commandments engraved by God's finger in stone tablets (God's eternal Law) was disannulled. On the contrary, it was fulfilled to the utmost (Mat 5:17). Jesus gave these Laws dual meaning, as seen in the Sermon on the Mount. He advised us about their spiritual and physical applications. Most of the Ten Commandments are to be kept spiritually and physically. We should not set up idols in our hearts

(spiritual application) and we should not set up idols of stone (physical application). We should not commit adultery with our neighbor's wife (physical application) and we should not lust after her either (spiritual application), etc.

So what specific portion of the Law was considered imperfect, temporal, and disannulled (Heb 7:18; 8:7, Gal3:24)? Was it the Ten Commandments (the Decalogue), or was it the other parts of the Law? To be clear, all of the Law was imperfect standing apart from faith and standing apart from the New Testament's ministry of the new birth, which gives us a "new heart and a new spirit" (Ezek 36:26). We were powerless to keep the Law the way God had always intended without the finished work of the Cross. However, the portion of the Law that was temporal and disannulled is the portion containing the ceremonial and civil commandments, most of which was entirely done away with. Notice this diagram that I made to illustrate my point:



“That was the job of the law--to teach us spiritual lessons such as understanding of the nature and penalty of sin, and types and shadows so that we might be ready to understand and follow Christ. It is why we have the law in our Bibles today. We still need to learn the lessons it teaches us. We learn very much about morality, what is sin and what is not, by reading the Torah Code. We don't follow it in stoning adulterers and setting up cities of refuge, but we learn important things from it that might be debatable otherwise. Without the moral teachings of the law, we would hardly know that a man should not marry his aunt or how evil bestiality is.”

Yes, Brothers, we agree on this point completely. The law was merely a shadow of God's perfect plan for mankind (Heb 10:1). It was not the complete realization of everything God had intended for His people. And yet, how does this change the fact that we are called to observe all ten of the Ten Commandments physically and spiritually? And the Sabbath is no exception. By resting on the seventh day we observe the Sabbath physically and by ceasing from sin and our own works of righteousness, we observe it spiritually. We are called to enter into Christ's rest both presently and eternally (Heb 4:1-11). But we will fall short of God's eternal rest if we don't "labor to enter in" by obeying God's binding commandments.

“I feel that the *root reasons* that many keep Sabbath today are from a flawed understanding of the Old and New Covenants, and I feel that this tends to lead people in a negative direction.”

I would have to both agree and disagree with your statement here. As I mentioned before, my views on this matter have fluctuated. We started off by keeping Sabbath in a very legalistic manner (like the Pharisees), which ended up destroying our ability to appreciate the day the way the Lord intended. However, now that I've devoted considerable study to the subject and have come to realize what the Sabbath is for, and why and how we must observe it, the Sabbath has become a tremendous blessing to us.

“I interpret ‘He that regardeth the day, to the Lord he doth regard it’ to include the Sabbath and you do not.”

I've already provided sufficient evidence in my main article titled, "The Sabbath", for why I don't believe Paul's statement, "He that regardeth the day, to the Lord he doth regard it", refers to the seventh day Sabbath. It is clear, at least to me, that Paul was referring to matters pertaining to the ceremonial law such as the Jewish feast days. He begins the chapter (Rom 14) with a discussion of debatable matters.

“Based on ancient church history and Biblical hints the Lord intended for us to celebrate the day of Resurrection in the New Covenant.”

I fear that there is an unhealthy tendency amongst many conservative evangelicals to rely upon the writings of the Ante-Nicene church fathers in order to settle matters of doctrine. But this is highly unwise. Simply because there is abundant evidence in Scripture to suggest that heresy and false teachings began to creep into the Church even during Paul's day and much more so by the time the Apostle John penned the book of Revelation. The letters to the seven Churches of Asia are a classic example of how bad things soured early on. False doctrines don't take more than a few years to develop simply because man is so prone to error. Christians have a tendency to backslide and lose their convictions over a short period of time if they are not careful. Demas deserted Apostle Paul on account of his worldly affections (2Ti 4:10). Why would Tertullian, Irenaeus, Polycarp, Clement, and Ignatius be any less faulty than Demas or Alexander the Coppersmith?

The "Biblical hints" you mention that seem to support the Lord's intention to substitute the seventh day Sabbath with the first day of the week (Sunday), are nothing more than 3 or 4 passages in the New Testament where there is mention that the Church met on the first day of the week. In my article on the Sabbath I give compelling proof for why these ambiguous claims are unsubstantiated. In fact, if anything, they serve to remind us that the first century Church met with their Jewish friends and family members in the synagogues on Sabbath and used it as a spring board to evangelize their fellow Jews. So it would be natural for them to intentionally hold their Christian gatherings a day later (the first day of the week) in order to avoid having to abandon the Sabbath meetings in the synagogues.

“You quoted 1 John 3:4, ‘Sin is the transgression of the law.’ We can quickly see that this is not meant to be a rigid or exclusive definition of sin by comparing to Romans 5:13, ‘For until the law, sin was in the world.’ If sin existed before the law, we can hardly say that sin is strictly defined as the transgression of the law.”

Yes, sin existed before the Mosaic Law, but there is evidence to suggest that even Abraham was given a summary of God’s commandments and Laws and expected to obey them: *Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws* (Gen 26:5).

In fact, I feel it’s improper to suggest that God’s ordinances and edicts were nonexistent simply because they didn’t yet appear in the Mosaic Law. Or that they would have been different had Israel not received the Ten Commandments on Mt Sinai. In other words, whether specified in writing or not, God’s primary laws are always the same.

I find it interesting that although the Bible does not directly record any instruction pertaining to sacrifice prior to the Mosaic Law, we still find Cain and Able offering up sacrifices for sin. By the same token, could it be possible that they kept Sabbath even though we cannot prove it according to biblical record?

“I very much agree with your concern that many Christians imagine that since we are under grace we don't have to worry about laws, or ‘rules’. I agree this is a perversion of the scripture. However, my solution is slightly different than yours. In my understanding, when Paul speaks negatively of the law, he is referring to the ‘law of commandments contained in carnal ordinances.’ In other words, he is speaking against exterior observances that do not affect the heart. Specifically, he is referring to the Torah Code, which has passed away with the Old Covenant. Under the New Covenant, we are simply under a different law, which is not opposed to grace. It is called the ‘law of Christ.’”

Like you, I too make a distinction between the “carnal ordinances” (ceremonial law) and the rest of God’s Law. However, I simply cannot ignore the uniqueness of the Ten Commandments. I see them as comprising God’s eternal Law. Hence these laws were engraved in stone by the very finger of God twice, before Moses broke the tablets and after (Ex 31:18; 34:1).

The “law of Christ”, the “law of liberty”, the “law of grace”, the “perfect law”, and the “royal law” are simply spiritual expressions of the same Law. They derive their meaning from the applicable sections of the Mosaic Law, and not from anything else.

When Jesus said that the Law and the prophets hinge upon our love for God and neighbor (Mar 12:30-31), we can easily see how the Ten Commandments divide nicely into these two categories. The category pertaining to God requires us not to have any idols or worship any other gods. It requires us not to take God’s name in vain. And finally it requires us to hallow the Sabbath day and to rest thereupon in deference to the fact that God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh. If we break any one of these first three commands, we become disobedient to God. This is just as much a heart issue as when we disobey any part of the Ten Commandments pertaining to loving our neighbor. What else would we call it? Romans 2:13 says, “For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law”.

But then you might say that the Sabbath is symbolic for a spiritual rest and that we are observing that rest in Christ. And so we don’t need the physical rest if we have the spiritual one. However, can we take this principle and apply it across the board? For instance, can we apply it to the woman’s head covering, water baptism, and communion? All of those are also symbolic for spiritual truths and yet Christians have been observing them both spiritually and physically for many hundreds of years. Why is the Sabbath any different?

“I will quote from another letter:

‘Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith.’ Rom. 3:27

‘For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.’ Rom. 8:2

‘Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ’. Gal. 6:2

‘But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it’....

Jas. 1:25

‘But if you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself,’ you shall do well. Jas. 2:8”

How do we reconcile such statements as "you are not under the law, but under grace," and "so fulfill the law of Christ". Martin Luther set up a false dilemma between faith and works, and we are still sorting out the consequences. I feel much of our fear of the terms "law" and "works" stems back to the problems he started. But the answer is simple. When Paul uses the term "law" he usually (especially in his extended discussion of law) is specifically referring to the Mosaic Law, or the Torah Code. What has been done away with is the "Law of Commandments contained in Ordinances" (Eph. 2:15). "Then indeed, even the first covenant had ordinances of the divine service and the earthly sanctuary.....concerned only with foods, and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation..." (Heb. 9:1,10)

I think we completely agree on this point. But I do not see how it negates the Sabbath rest.

The reason that all the letters and details of the Mosaic Law have been done away with is two-fold. First, the ceremonial stuff pointed to Christ and other New Testament realities (such as the church), and second, that most of the other details were given to explain how to keep the two greatest commandments--"You shall love the Lord your God....and your neighbor as yourself." Laws such as how to let the poor glean the fields, how to treat widows, etc., simply tell how to keep these two. Indeed, that is why Jesus said, "On these two hang all the law and the prophets."

Once again, the New Testament requires us to observe water baptism, woman's head veiling, and communion. All are symbolic and point to a spiritual truth, yet we are required to observe them physically and spiritually. God, who is perfect, set the supreme example by resting on the seventh day at the beginning of creation. Jesus, who is perfect, set the supreme example when partaking in water baptism and communion while still on earth in flesh form. Why would we then imagine that we are somehow exempted from doing the same in respect to the Sabbath?

God's goal is to transform people into a certain type of beings who are holy and loving--transforming them into the character of Christ. But the Torah code didn't work. So God said in Jer. 31:33, "I will put my law in their minds, and write it on their hearts. Notice that He didn't say, "I will abolish the law," but "I will put it in their minds." When the law is said to be abolished, it is not this law of righteousness that has been written on the hearts of Christians that is abolished, but the carnal commandments associated with it.

I completely agree.

To sum this up, we have been changed by Jesus into people who can fulfill the righteousness that the law required and desired. As such, we are not under the Torah code, but we achieve its goal by living under the "Law of Christ", which is called the "Royal Law," , the "Law of Faith," the "Law of Liberty", and the "Law of the Spirit of Life." To say that we are not under any law would mean that we are under no commandments, as law means that a commandment exists, and a commandment is a law. But on the contrary, the Law of Christ does have commandments. John 14:15, "If you love me, keep my commandments." John 13:34 "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you."

I completely agree.

Brothers! Keep the commandments of the Law of Christ, but do not keep them in legalism and self righteousness, but rather by faith, and the law of

the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus shall keep you free from the Law of Sin and Death!

I completely agree.

It is quite interesting, and I think intentional, that the New Testament repeats in some form or another all of the Ten Commandments in a context directed at the Christian EXCEPT the Sabbath Commandment. (Unless you count Hebrews 4, which could be interpreted that we keep the Sabbath commandment by entering into Christ's rest.)

The Sabbath is one issue that Jesus refused to ignore. He lectured on it multiple times, almost incessantly. **He corrected the common errors surrounding its physical observation and set the precedent for how to observe it the proper way: ... Wherefore it is lawful to do good on the sabbath days** (Mat 12:12).

So here is what Jesus taught us about keeping Sabbath:

1. It's ok to collect food on the Sabbath when the situation demands it (Mat 12:1).
2. It's ok to heal on the Sabbath (Mat 12:10).
3. It's ok to rescue a lost animal on the Sabbath (Mat 12:11-12).
4. It's ok to provide livestock with fresh food and water on the Sabbath (Luke 13:15).
5. It's ok to recover your possessions on the Sabbath (John 5:8).
6. It's ok to do good on the Sabbath (Mat 12:12; Mar 3:4; Luk 6:9).
7. And it's ok to minister and evangelize on the Sabbath (John 5:17).

Clearly, Jesus never taught us to break the Sabbath or ignore it completely. And He did indeed teach us about keeping Sabbath. He taught us how to keep it **properly**. So therefore we are not to keep Sabbath like the Pharisees or to keep it legalistically. But rather we are free to keep it according to God's **original design**, and to do good deeds on the Sabbath when the need arises.

It is interesting that Jesus restored marriage to its original design before the curse. And made sure the Pharisees were aware of it when stating, “but from the beginning it was not so” (Mat 19:8). Similarly, He did the same for the Sabbath. He stripped away all of the Pharisees’ traditions and the Mosaic curses associated with its observation and restored it to the way Adam would have kept it. Yes, Adam kept Sabbath!!! Jesus said the “Sabbath was created for man” (Mark 2:27). This would directly implicate Adam as well. Of course, to me this is obvious because God would have rested on the seventh day as an example to Adam and no one else (Gen 2:2). Can you now see how the Sabbath long preceded the Mosaic Law and has nothing to do with it?

Also, just because the New Testament does not expressly repeat every commandment found in the Mosaic Law does not necessarily indicate that it negates it either. Such logic is what we call an argument from silence. Of course, if we take this principle too seriously, we would have to allow Christians to tattoo their bodies or make carvings for the dead (Lev 19:28), and we would have to stop enforcing the prohibition against cross-dressing located in Deuteronomy 22:5. We can just say, “hey, that’s Old Testament stuff. Jesus never once forbade it and neither did the Apostles for that matter.” Do you see what kind of slippery slope would result from such argumentation? Do we really want to go there?

Furthermore, many claim that a direct commandment for Sabbath keeping cannot be found anywhere in the New Testament. This is actually false. Notice:

Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest (STRONG’S G2663=KATAPAUSIS), any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. For we which have believed do enter into rest (STRONG’S G2663=KATAPAUSIS), as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest (STRONG’S G2663=KATAPAUSIS): although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest (STRONG’S

G2663=KATAPAUSIS) *the seventh day from all his works. And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest (STRONG'S G2663=KATAPAUSIS). Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief: Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. For if Jesus had given them rest (STRONG'S G2663=KATAPAUSIS), then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. **There remaineth therefore a REST (STRONG'S G4520= SABBATISMOS=SABBATH KEEPING) for the people of God.** For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief (Heb 4:1-11).*

The anti-Sabbath bias that has existed in the Church for hundreds of years is nowhere more evident than in these passages. Unmistakably, the English translators had an agenda to push. They had to convince the Church that the Sabbath was obsolete in the New Testament. So how best to do so then to incorrectly translate the only word in the entire Greek New Testament which expressly means Sabbath keeping. Yes, that's right. *Katapausis* the Greek word for rest is translated correctly throughout chapter 4, all except in verse 9 where it is *not*. *Sabbatismos* only occurs once in the entire New Testament appearing exclusively in Hebrews 4:9. And it means Sabbath keeping!!! No wonder the English translators had to keep it hidden!

Notice how the Thayer's lexicon defines *Sabbatismos*:

Thayer's Greek Lexicon

σαββατισμός (sabbatismós to keep sabbath)

1. *a keeping sabbath*

Well, you may say, that doesn't really prove anything. We still believe in keeping Sabbath strictly spiritually. I ask you then to please consider the fact that everywhere Jesus reinforces the Ten Commandments, He maintains the physical layer but adds to it a spiritual one also. He "fulfills them" [makes them fuller]. So then upon what basis or scripture can we

justify removing the physical layer of the Sabbath in order to only observe it spiritually?

Everywhere the New Testament invalidates the Law, it expressly does away with the “carnal ordinances” or its ceremonial portion. The New Testament never undermines the Ten Commandments! This is a crucially important point. Notice:

Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace (Eph 2:15).

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 (Col 2:14).

Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation (Heb 9:10).

Now some see Christ’s emphasis on correcting the common misconceptions surrounding the Sabbath as a token of His condemnation of it. They may even use this to suggest that He broke the Sabbath. However, both of these notions are incorrect and inconsistent with the testimony of Scripture. For instance, if Jesus was obliged to obey the entire Law as a Jew who was born under the Law (Gal 4:4) and if He was perfect and without sin (2Cor 5:21), then we must conclude that He kept the Sabbath as required by the Law. Friends, if Jesus kept the Jewish feast days, it’s a sure bet He was keeping Sabbath also (Mat 26:17; Jon 7:10; 10:22).

I'm not sure whether Jesus broke the Sabbath or not, although John 5:18 could be seen as saying that, but He certainly said that "the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless," indicating that there is a violation of the Sabbath that is not sinful.

You are making a very good point here. And the verse you quote validates my belief that there are certain things we can do on the Sabbath without

breaking it. Perhaps then we should expect that all of the things Jesus did on the Sabbath were allowable according to the Mosaic Law. Hence He never broke Sabbath once!

I'm not sure why scholars would think that Romans was written to a primarily Jewish audience (as you said). I would take Romans 1:13 to be saying the opposite, and imagine that the weak brother in Romans 14 who thinks certain foods are unclean is the Jew, whose infirmities the strong who understand their liberty in Christ need to bear with. I certainly don't see how it is a given that the Sabbath was not one of the "disputable things", in light of the fact that we simply have no church history or clear Biblical verses showing that the Gentiles ever kept the Jewish Sabbath. What history we do have seems to show that the Lord's Day was observed from very early times and there is no indication that the Gentiles defected away from an original understanding that they were to keep Sabbath.

In respect to my assertion that the epistle of Romans was written to a primarily Jewish audience, let me say this: While there were certainly Gentiles in the Church at Rome, which Paul addresses in Romans 1:18 and 11:13, it is commonly recognized that Paul was addressing a primarily Jewish audience for the following reasons:

- The main thrust of the epistle of Romans is to persuade the Jew not to rely on the Law for salvation: *Behold, thou art called a Jew, and restest in the law, and makest thy boast of God... For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written... Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?* (Rom 2:17; 24; 7:1)
- Paul calls upon the Gentile Believers at Rome to respect Jewish sensitivities (Rom 14).
- Paul personally greets Priscilla and Aquila and the Church that is in their house at the end of his letter (Rom 16:3-5). Priscilla and Aquila are said to be Jewish Believers in Jesus (Acts 18:2-3). And since the

Church would have been meeting in their house, it is proper to assume that they would have been elders therein. Naturally, if the leaders of a Church are Jewish then you might expect to find a predominately Jewish assembly.

Furthermore, my conviction that the Church at Rome would have known the Law well and would have never considered the Sabbath a “disputable matter” is taken from Paul’s own testimony: *Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth?* (Rom 7:1)

You mention that we do not have any testimony from Scripture of Gentiles meeting in Jewish synagogues on the Sabbath. I would have to disagree with you. Notice the following examples:

And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath. Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God (Act 13:42-44).

And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks (Act 18:4).

While God rested at the end of Creation Week, I don't see any indication that He ever commanded this of man before the giving of the Law, which encourages me to believe that the Sabbath commandment is part of the Old Covenant.

We don’t have any biblical record that God commanded Cain and Abel or Adam and Eve to offer up sacrifices for sin. Yet we have clear evidence suggesting that He did, or else why did Cain and Abel offer up sacrifices? It is interesting to note that God gave Abraham laws and commandments prior to the Mosaic Law. Could they have been similar or the same as what was given to the children of Israel? I do believe so. Notice: *Because that*

Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws (Gen 26:5).

I would understand Acts 15 a bit differently from you. "For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath Day." I see two possibilities for this. Maybe they are saying for the Gentiles to keep these 4 necessary things to keep from offending the Jews, and since they (Jews) are everywhere, these commandments ought to be kept everywhere. Or, possibly, this is saying that "We really only need to give special mention to these 4 things because the Torah is available everywhere and you can learn about morality from that without the church drawing up a huge list. I lean toward the second possibility, thinking that the Apostles and elders are actually telling us which parts of the Mosaic Law still need observed because of their importance. In defense of this, I would note the following:

The prohibition against eating blood actually predates Moses, although he repeated it. It is found in Gen. 9:4. So, in my view, although the Mosaic Law was nailed to the cross, the Apostles are saying that this even more ancient rule is still in force. "Things strangled" comes under this category, because something that is strangled still has the blood. "Pollutions of idols" was a terrible temptation to the Gentiles, and needs special mention. Fornication refers to sexual immorality, and with one broad sweep, they reaffirm that the sexual sins mentioned in the Mosaic Law (such as Lev. 18 and 20) still need to be avoided under the New Covenant. I would see the Sabbath as being in the category excluded in Acts 15:28 when they said, "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these necessary things."

I'm afraid that if we would understand Acts 15:28 as you are suggesting then Gentile Believers should be allowed to lie, dishonor parents, take the Lord's name in vain, engage in covetousness, and things like tattooing one's body, etc. I would say the best way to understand Acts 15:28 is to realize that the Apostles were casting judgment against the most offensive practices of the Gentiles and expecting them to cease and desist from these matters immediately. The rest of the Law could be learned by the Gentile converts as

they frequented the synagogues on the Sabbath and heard the reading of the Torah. This is what the Apostles expected of them.

LEO'S OBJECTIONS TO THE SABBATH

I/we do not believe the Sabbath Day is on Sunday. The Sabbath Day will always be Saturday/Seventh Day as long as the earth shall stand. The reason we gather together to worship a Risen Jesus on the First Day of the week is because we are New Creatures in Christ and this is a bold but not Presumptuous position in Christ. What has changed is not the Decalogue, [The Sabbath commandment being the fourth commandment in the canon of the Decalogue], but OUR relationship to the Decalogue. I/We believe the Decalogue was but a shadow and not the essence of the Righteousness of Jesus Christ. Scriptures for consideration and study: 2Cor 3:7-18 The Ministration of Death and Condemnation give way to the Administration of the Spirit! Rom 6, Newness of Life Rom 7: 1-6 The Law/Decalogue is in effect as long as our Flesh/husband is dictating our life, but if our Flesh/Husband be Dead than are we free to married to Jesus Christ our new Husband otherwise we are in Spiritual adultery! Rom 8:1- "For the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus hath made us free from the Law of sin and Death" Rom 10:4 Heb 7:12 Jesus not only fulfilled the Ceremonial Law , the Civil Law, the Sacrificial law, but also the Moral Law. Compare Jesus's sermon on the mount with the Decalogue.

Math 5:18 - what does Jesus mean "till all be fulfilled" . Also study Gen 1:14 -18 and then compare to 2Cor 3 , do you see a parallel between the laws of the universe concerning the two Lights that were to Rule and the two spiritual Laws of Letter verses the Spirit ? Read Gal 3 and 4 especially verse 3:19 "till the Seed should come" and the allegory Paul draws from Ishmael and Issac . The Sabbath Day/Seventh Day/Saturday Day verses Sunday/First Day/ Lords Day subject is but the tip of the iceberg of deeper Life in Christ.

Most Christians want to live by the Righteousness of the Decalogue and die by the Righteousness of Faith in Jesus Christ, but the Scriptures teach we need to die by the Righteousness of the Decalogue and Live by the Righteousness of Faith in Jesus Christ!

Brother Leo, I fully agree with your understanding of the New Testament and its relationship to the Old Testament, and realize that we are no longer under the Law, but under grace. Yet I don't see how this would exempt us from observing a physical day of rest. Furthermore, I believe your objections here are similar enough to Phil's that I will allow the responses directed at his objections to apply to yours as well. Also, to understand my position on the differences between the Old Covenant and the New please refer to my article titled, "Comparing God's Covenants".

ORIGINAL EMAIL CORRESPONDENCE

Brother John,

Thank you for permission to bring a friend of mine who has put a lot of thought into this topic, Brother Leo Eby, into this discussion.

Leo, I am responding to a paper written by Brother John (see attached) regarding Sabbath keeping. Please feel free to jump in with your opinions.

John, I really appreciate your diligent study of the word and your zeal to do whatever you find there, regardless of the opinions of man or how difficult it may be. However, I would differ with respect to the Sabbath question.

I want to say for starters, that it is perfectly lawful for a Christian to keep the Sabbath. I think we have the freedom to rest a day of the week. I actually rejoice in that privilege and am happy to do so on Sunday, as Christians have for centuries and millennia, although it is not binding on my conscience. I look at resting a day a week as having very beneficial physical and spiritual benefits, much like eating healthily or having daily prayer and scripture reading.

Although I know from your writing that I interpret "He that regardeth the day, to the Lord he doth regard it" to include the Sabbath and you do not, yet as a non-Sabbatarian, this verse gives me freedom to respect those who keep the Sabbath, although I do not feel that it is binding on my conscience. I must add however, that I feel that the *root reasons* that many keep Sabbath today are from a flawed understanding of the Old and New Covenants, and I feel that this tends to lead people in a negative direction. In this, I think I have the same concern as Paul, who was very worried that if people began to observe the Torah

Code, they would put trust in it and fall from grace. However, the same thing can happen to Anabaptists if they put their trust in their heritage, culture, or church rules. (Lord have mercy!) It is my suspicion based on ancient church history and Biblical hints that the Lord intended for us to celebrate the day of Resurrection in the New Covenant. If someone wants to observe the Resurrection Day by resting as additional to meeting in the weekly gathering, I see that as a good thing.

I think we would look somewhat differently at the function of the law. You quoted 1 John 3:4, "Sin is the transgression of the law." We can quickly see that this is not meant to be a rigid or exclusive definition of sin by comparing to Romans 5:13, "For until the law, sin was in the world." If sin existed before the law, we can hardly say that sin is strictly defined as the transgression of the law. Actually this seeming contradiction comes from a translation problem. This is a very odd translation of the Greek, and I wonder why the KJV translators did it that way. "Transgression of the law" here comes from a Greek word that is usually translated "iniquity" or "lawlessness", as in "The mystery of iniquity doth already work...." Young's Literal Translation renders the verse this way: "4Every one who is doing the sin, the lawlessness also he doth do, and the sin is the lawlessness." Or, as the NASB has it, "Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness." (Incidentally, I once heard a brother defend masturbation by saying that since sin is the transgression of the law, and since that sin was not mentioned as such in the law, that it must not be sin.)

In my understanding, The Torah Code was given as part of the Old Covenant. The Old Covenant was never intended to last forever--the Book of Hebrews makes this clear. Heb. 7:18 "There verily is a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. For the law made nothing perfect...Heb. 8:7 "For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place had been sought for the second." Galatians 3:24: "The law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ...But after that faith is come we are no longer under a schoolmaster."

That was the job of the law--to teach us spiritual lessons such as understanding of the nature and penalty of sin, and types and shadows so that we might be ready to understand and follow Christ. It is why we have the law in our Bibles today. We still need to learn the lessons it teaches us. We learn very much about morality, what is sin and what is not, by reading the Torah Code. We don't follow it in stoning adulterers and setting up cities of refuge, but we learn important things from it that might be debatable otherwise. Without the moral teachings of the law, we would hardly know that a man should not marry his aunt or how evil bestiality is.

I very much agree with your concern that many Christians imagine that since we are under grace we don't have to worry about laws, or "rules". I agree this is a perversion of the scripture. However, my solution is

slightly different than yours. In my understanding, when Paul speaks negatively of the law, he is referring to the "law of commandments contained in carnal ordinances." In other words, he is speaking against exterior observances that do not affect the heart. Specifically, he is referring to the Torah Code, which has passed away with the Old Covenant. Under the New Covenant, we are simply under a different law, which is not opposed to grace. It is called the "law of Christ."

I will quote from another letter:

Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith. Rom. 3:27

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. Rom. 8:2

Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ, Gal. 6:2

But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it.... Jas. 1:25

But if you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you shall do well. Jas. 2:8

How do we reconcile such statements as "you are not under the law, but under grace," and "so fulfill the law of Christ". Martin Luther set up a false dilemma between faith and works, and we are still sorting out the consequences. I feel much of our fear of the terms "law" and "works" stems back to the problems he started.

But the answer is simple. When Paul uses the term "law" he usually (especially in his extended discussion of law) is specifically referring to the Mosaic Law, or the Torah Code. What has been done away with is the "Law of Commandments contained in Ordinances" (Eph. 2:15) "Then indeed, even the first covenant had ordinances of the divine service and the earthly sanctuary.....concerned only with foods, and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation..." (Heb. 9:1,10.)

The reason that all the letters and details of the Mosaic Law have been done away with is two-fold. First, the ceremonial stuff pointed to Christ and other New Testament realities (such as the church), and second, that most of the other details were given to explain how to keep the two greatest commandments- "You shall love the Lord your God....and your neighbor as yourself." Laws such as how to let the poor glean the fields, how to treat widows, etc., simply tell how to keep these two. Indeed, that is why Jesus said, "On these two hang all the law and the prophets."

God gave the letter of the law (details) to people to explain how to keep the the first two, but he doesn't care about the letter of the law. For example, If I took a widow or an orphan into my home and fed and clothed them, God wouldn't care about whether they were out gleaning my field or not. The point is that I show them love and care. But in a society where people didn't have changed hearts, God had to give many specific details about how to act to make them act properly. But they didn't, and this is why Paul refers to

the weakness and unprofitableness of the (Mosaic) law. While it could tell people what to do, it didn't help them do it.

God's goal is to transform people into a certain type of beings who are holy and loving--transforming them into the character of Christ. But the Torah code didn't work. So God said in Jer. 31:33, "I will put my law in their minds, and write it on their hearts. Notice that He didn't say, "I will abolish the law," but "I will put it in their minds." When the law is said to be abolished, it is not this law of righteousness that has been written on the hearts of Christians that is abolished, but the carnal commandments associated with it.

In Rom. 2:13, "For not the hearers of the law (Jews who know the law but don't keep its righteousness) are just before God, but the doers of the law (Christians--Jews and Gentiles) shall be justified. Verse 14-15 follow and have often been misunderstood. "For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature the things in the law, these although having not the law, are a law unto themselves, which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or excusing them." This is usually interpreted to be a statement about Gentiles having a God-given conscience. However, it makes better sense in light of Paul's train of thought and concern --to show the Jews that they are not superior to others-- to understand that he is actually referring to *Gentile Christians*. Consider: Which Gentiles do by nature the things in the law. Only Christians, who have a new nature. Which Gentiles have the work of the law written on their heart, and a conscience that pricks them if they do wrong. Christian Gentiles! Because God said in Jer. 31 that he would write the law on their heart! And consider, how could a Gentile non-Christian be a doer of the law and be justified (v.13) since justification is only available to the Christian? Yet we are told that the doers of the law (Christians, in whom is fulfilled the righteousness which is contained in the law) shall be justified. "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk after the flesh, but after the spirit."

To sum this up, we have been changed by Jesus into people who can fulfill the righteousness that the law required and desired. As such, we are not under the Torah code, but we achieve its goal by living under the "Law of Christ", which is called the "Royal Law," , the "Law of Faith," the "Law of Liberty", and the "Law of the Spirit of Life." To say that we are not under any law would mean that we are under no commandments, as law means that a commandment exists, and a commandment is a law. But on the contrary, the Law of Christ does have commandments. John 14:15, "If you love me, keep my commandments." John 13:34 "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you."

Brothers! Keep the commandments of the Law of Christ, but do not keep them is legalism and self righteousness, but rather by faith, and the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus shall keep you free from the Law of Sin and Death!

So, if we are not under the Mosaic Law per se but are instead to follow the law of Christ, how do we know what that entails? Well, as I understand it, that is what the New Testament is for. It is true that the New Testament does not contain sections of "rules" quite like the Torah does, but that is in keeping with the fact that it is more about walking in the spirit than keeping a list of regulations. That does not, of course, mean that I feel free to disobey any commandments of Jesus or the Apostles. But it does mean that I look to the New Testament (New Covenant) as the covenant obligations I am under. It is quite interesting, and I think intentional, that the New Testament repeats in some form or another all of the Ten Commandments in a context directed at the Christian EXCEPT the Sabbath Commandment. (Unless you count Hebrews 4, which could be interpreted that we keep the Sabbath commandment by entering into Christ's rest.

I'm not sure whether Jesus broke the Sabbath or not, although John 5:18 could be seen as saying that, but He certainly said that "the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless," indicating that there is a violation of the Sabbath that is not sinful.

I'm not sure why scholars would think that Romans was written to a primarily Jewish audience (as you said). I would take Romans 1:13 to be saying the opposite, and imagine that the weak brother in Romans 14 who thinks certain foods are unclean is the Jew, whose infirmities the strong who understand their liberty in Christ need to bear with. I certainly don't see how it is a given that the Sabbath was not one of the "disputable things", in light of the fact that we simply have no church history or clear Biblical verses showing that the Gentiles ever kept the Jewish Sabbath. What history we do have seems to show that the Lord's Day was observed from very early times and there is no indication that the Gentiles defected away from an original understanding that they were to keep Sabbath.

While God rested at the end of Creation Week, I don't see any indication that He ever commanded this of man before the giving of the Law, which encourages me to believe that the Sabbath commandment is part of the Old Covenant.

I would understand Acts 15 a bit differently from you. "For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath Day." I see two possibilities for this. Maybe they are saying for the Gentiles to keep these 4 necessary things to keep from offending the Jews, and since they (Jews) are everywhere, these commandments ought to be kept everywhere. Or, possibly, this is

saying that "We really only need to give special mention to these 4 things because the Torah is available everywhere and you can learn about morality from that without the church drawing up a huge list. I lean toward the second possibility, thinking that the Apostles and elders are actually telling us which parts of the Mosaic Law still need observed because of their importance. In defense of this, I would note the following:

The prohibition against eating blood actually predates Moses, although he repeated it. It is found in Gen. 9:4. So, in my view, although the Mosaic Law was nailed to the cross, the Apostles are saying that this even more ancient rule is still in force. "Things strangled" comes under this category, because something that is strangled still has the blood. "Pollutions of idols" was a terrible temptation to the Gentiles, and needs special mention. Fornication refers to sexual immorality, and with one broad sweep, they reaffirm that the sexual sins mentioned in the Mosaic Law (such as Lev. 18 and 20) still need to be avoided under the New Covenant. I would see the Sabbath as being in the category excluded in Acts 15:28 when they said, "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these necessary things."

May God give us understanding,

Blessings,

Philip

Dear Brothers Philip and John!

This subject of the Sabbath/Lords Day is close to my heart because it brought a crisis into my life about 9 or 10 year ago.

I'm willing to share on this subject what I learned.

I know Philip but I wish I knew you John ! I wish I was face to face rather than emailing because of potential of misunderstandings .

This subject has had the biggest single impact on my Christian faith than anything else other than my New Birth !

This subject has Staggering, Eternal implications to it. I can't over emphasize this! At least in my opinion.

I share what I learned more as a Testimony than as a Authority on this subject. I would rather be friends than to have a misunderstanding or be offensive on this subject.

To help you grasp what I'm saying, what would seem to be a discussion of a Aspect of faith I discovered to be but just the tip of a Iceberg!

Three years ago I was asked to share on this subject at a congregation in Oklahoma, I ended up with a Power Point of 4 presentations of about 1 and half hrs on each presentation! And more could be added. I've shared it 4 or 5 times now.

To give a little insight into think I'll share a little article I wrote a while ago in answering a man from California.

Here's his comments / questions

Question/Comment: Ever consider Sabbath being on Saturday instead of Sunday?
My beliefs all align except for that one. That will keep me from attending a service.

Here was my response ,

If this article makes any sense to you, I'd be happy to take our discussion farther. This about all I can do for tonight.

Dear Ken

I am responding to your question about the Sabbath Day being on Saturday rather than Sunday. First I want to thank you for looking into website, and also your spiritual interest and diligence. May the Spirit and Word continue to bless and lead you.

Thanks for asking this particular question about the Sabbath Day, because it is a excellent question to ask.

The quick answer to your question is "yes" we have considered it, and "no" I/we do not believe the Sabbath Day is on Sunday. The Sabbath Day will always be Saturday/Seventh Day as long as the earth shall stand. The reason we gather together to worship a Risen Jesus on the First Day of the week is because we are New Creatures in Christ and is a bold but not Presumptuous position in Christ. What has changed is not the Decalogue, [The Sabbath commandment being the fourth commandment in the canon of the Decalogue], but OUR relationship to the Decalogue. I/We believe the Decalogue was but a shadow and not the essence of the Righteousness of Jesus Christ. Scriptures for consideration and study: 2Cor 3:7-18 The Ministration of Death and Condemnation give way to the Administration of the Spirit ! Rom 6, Newness of Life Rom 7: 1-6 The Law/Decalogue is in effect as long as our Flesh/husband is dictating our life, but if our Flesh/Husband be Dead than are we free to married to Jesus Christ our new Husband otherwise we are in Spiritual adultery! Rom 8:1- "For the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus hath made us free from the Law of sin and Death" Rom 10:4 Heb 7:12 Jesus not only fulfilled the Ceremonial Law , the Civil Law, the Sacrificial law, but also the Moral Law. Compare Jesus's sermon on the mount

with the Decalogue.

Math 5:18 - what does Jesus mean "till all be fulfilled" . Also study Gen 1:14 -18 and then compare to 2Cor 3 , do you see a parallel between the laws of the universe concerning the two Lights that were to Rule and the two spiritual Laws of Letter verses the Spirit ? Read Gal 3 and 4 especially verse 3:19 "till the Seed should come" and the allegory Paul draws from Ishmael and Issac . The Sabbath Day/Seventh Day/Saturday Day verses Sunday/First Day/ Lords Day subject is but the tip of the iceberg of deeper Life in Christ.

Most Christians want to live by the Righteousness of the Decalogue and die by the Righteousness of Faith in Jesus Christ, but the Scriptures teach we need to die by the Righteousness of the Decalogue and Live by the Righteousness of Faith in Jesus Christ !

Sincerely from a Friend in Jesus !

Leo V. Eby