

Preparation for the End Time ***The “Change” of the Law***

Lesson #6 for May 12, 2018

Scriptures: Romans 7; 8:1; John 20:19-23; Acts 20:6-7; Daniel 7:23-25; Revelation 13:1-17.

1. The prophet Daniel received some very interesting and detailed visions of the future. In addition to prophesying the progression of nations such as Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece, and Rome, he was given the following information:

Daniel 7:25: And words as an adversary of the Most High it doth speak, and the saints of the Most High it doth wear out, and it hopeth to change seasons and law; and they are given into its hand, till a time, and times, and a division of a time.—Young, R. (1997). *Young’s Literal Translation** (Daniel 7:25). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

2. Why do Seventh-day Adventists understand this verse quite differently from most other Christians? Why has the Sabbath not become a central issue for most Christians?
3. Revelation 13 and 14 make it very clear that the Sabbath will be a critical issue at the end of time. Are we prepared to stand up for the truth? Is this just about a 24-hour period of time?
4. Read Romans 8:1: “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.” (NKJV*) So, what led Paul to speak these very significant words?
5. Read Romans 7:15-25. Do these words just confuse you? In these verses, Paul made it clear that if left to ourselves, we cannot serve God or keep His law. Our natural human tendencies will overwhelm us unless we have God’s help.
6. There have been many different opinions about whether or not Paul was talking about himself in these verses or about a general principle involving Christians. But, most of us who have a significant amount of self-awareness have recognized that we have had this same struggle. As long as the Devil is around, there will be an ongoing battle. (1 Corinthians 15:31)
7. Another debate has arisen about whether or not this was Paul’s struggle before, during, or after conversion. As Christians who accept the truth of salvation and the gospel, we can be so thankful that with the help of Jesus and the Holy Spirit, we can live a life of faith. So, what does it mean to live in union with Jesus Christ? Why does that eliminate any condemnation? Who is the one that might condemn us? Is it we ourselves? Was Paul worried about condemnation from Jesus Christ? Or, is it the Devil who condemns us?
8. Read Romans 7:1-14. In these verses Paul used a somewhat convoluted argument to suggest that in order to truly obey God, we must die to self. But, if we die to self, then we can be united to Christ and live according to His law. There is no other way. The law is not the problem. It is by the law that we understand what sin is. It is like a sharp knife; it is very useful if used correctly but very dangerous if misused. These verses do not in any way suggest that the law has been nullified. Paul himself recognized that the law awoke him to or made him aware of his sin.
9. Read again Romans 7:12-13. It is not the law which causes death; sin causes death. The law warns us about how deadly sin is. It is interesting to note that a careful reading of the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy reveal that almost every one of the Ten Commandments has a death penalty connected to it. Why was that? In many cases God instructed His people to put to death those who disobeyed. Was that an extreme reaction?

10. The *Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Monday, May 7, states that “we live in a faith relationship with Jesus, trusting in His merits and His righteousness for salvation (the theme of so much of what came before in Romans).” So, what are “merits”? How do we trust in the “merits” and “righteousness” of Christ for our salvation? Do we have any merits or righteousness of our own? Sin is so evil and so hard to eliminate from our lives; but, the Holy Spirit can help us to do that. Could the “saints” share their “merits” with us?
11. Why do so many other Christians want to say that the law has been done away with? They love verses such as Romans 6:14: “Sin must not be your master; for you do not live under law but under God’s grace.”—(*Good News Bible**) Do such verses suggest that the law has been done away with? Or, do they suggest that when we have a right relationship with Christ, we will do what is right because it is right? Is there any hint in Romans 6:14 that Paul intended for us to change the day on which we worship?
12. Our Christian friends have used a number of verses in the Bible to try to suggest that the Sabbath has been changed. Look at some examples.
13. Read John 20:19-23.
- ¹⁹ It was late that Sunday evening, and the disciples were gathered together behind locked doors, because they were afraid of the Jewish authorities. Then Jesus came and stood among them.—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation**(2nd ed., John 20:19). New York: American Bible Society.
14. Why were the disciples in the upper room when Jesus came to them? They were gathered there because of fear of the Jews. And they had been there since Thursday night! This is certainly not a reason to suggest that Sunday is the new day of worship!
15. Read Acts 20:7.
- On Saturday evening we gathered together for the fellowship meal. Paul spoke to the people and kept on speaking until midnight, since he was going to leave the next day.—*Good News Bible** (Acts 20:7).
16. This verse clearly does not support Sunday worship. The beginning of the first day of the week in Jewish reckoning is actually Saturday evening as noted in the more modern translations. A Saturday night gathering in preparation for leaving early the next day is certainly not a reason for worshipping on Sunday.
17. Read 1 Corinthians 16:1-4.
- 16 ¹ Now, concerning what you wrote about the money to be raised to help God’s people in Judea. You must do what I told the churches in Galatia to do. ²Every Sunday each of you must put aside some money, in proportion to what you have earned, and save it up, so that there will be no need to collect money when I come. ³After I come, I shall give letters of introduction to those you have approved, and send them to take your gift to Jerusalem. ⁴If it seems worthwhile for me to go, then they can go along with me.—*Good News Bible** (1 Corinthians 16:1-4).
18. Once again, this is talking about people at home reviewing their financial conditions and deciding on how much money they can safely donate to help the people in Jerusalem. It has nothing to do with establishing a new day for worship!
19. There are some clear references to the Sabbath as a day of worship for Jesus. A good

example is Luke 4:14-16 in which it clearly states that Jesus's custom was to go to the synagogue on Sabbath.

20. Read Luke 23:55-24:1.

⁵⁵ The women who had followed Jesus from Galilee went with Joseph and saw the tomb and how Jesus' body was placed in it. ⁵⁶Then they went back home and prepared the spices and perfumes for the body.

On the Sabbath they rested, as the Law commanded.

¹ Very early on Sunday morning the women went to the tomb, carrying the spices they had prepared.—*Good News Bible** (Luke 23:55-24:1).

21. Once again, we see that modern translations make it very clear that the early Christians worshiped on Sabbath and not on Sunday.

22. Look at some other passages that talk about how the early Christians observed the Sabbath. Read Acts 13:14,42-44; and Acts 16:12-13. It was clearly Paul's custom when he went to a new city to go first to the synagogue on Sabbath to preach. But, it is interesting to notice that as recorded in Acts 16:12-13, there was not a synagogue to which Paul could go in Philippi. So, he went out to the side of the local river to see if he could find some Jews worshiping there. Clearly, Paul intended to worship on Sabbath whether or not there was a synagogue or even any Jews present.

23. It is a challenging and delicate problem to ask Christians who are normally Sunday observers about the Sabbath. Can you think of some non-condemnatory ways to do that? On at least one occasion, Jesus approached someone who did not understand who He was by asking questions. See the story of the woman at the well in Sychar. (John 4) Is that a possible way to approach our Christian friends?

24. James, the oldest stepbrother of Jesus, made it very clear that he still regarded the Ten Commandments as necessary for Christians. See James 2:10-12.

25. More than 500 years before the coming of Jesus, Daniel wrote in Daniel 7 about the future of nations and the rise of a little horn power. (Daniel 7:8) This little horn power was still a part of the "Roman Empire"; but, it was significantly different from the previous Roman Empire in some interesting ways. Thomas Hobbes in the 1600s wrote:

"If a man consider the original of this great ecclesiastical dominion, he will easily perceive, that the Papacy, is no other than the ghost of the deceased Roman empire, sitting crowned upon the grave thereof."—Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 463.—[as quoted in *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Thursday, May 8].

26. Read again Daniel 7:23-25. Notice that these verses suggest that this little horn power will attempt to, or try to, or intend to change God's law. He will not succeed; but, he will try.

27. So, what happened historically? Over a period of about 200 years as the Christian church became the dominant church in the Roman Empire and was recognized as such, a change came about. Pagans had been worshiping on Sunday as the venerable day of the sun. Faithful Christians were worshiping on Saturday. For a while when Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, people worshiped on Saturday and celebrated on Sunday according to their old habits. Gradually, the emphasis shifted to Sunday. And finally, the Roman Church declared that Sunday was the right day on which to worship in celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Was there any scriptural support for that?

28. Will the issue of Sabbath versus Sunday arise once again? Read Revelation 13:1-17; compare it with Daniel 7:1-8,21,24-25. Notice that in these two chapters, there are beasts that represent nations or significant powers. In both cases, those beasts or religious-political powers try to force men to do what they command.
29. It is interesting to note that in the chapter immediately following Revelation 13, we read in Revelation 14:6-7 a reiteration of the fact that God's holy law is eternal.
30. Read Revelation 12:7-10. The dragon, who was none other than Satan himself, made war against God in heaven. In Revelation 12:17, we see that he will eventually make war against God's commandment-keeping people. He hopes to set himself up as the object of worship instead of God. (Revelation 13:4) In order to do that, he must try to destroy the central focus of God's law and the day on which we worship Him.

In the fourth commandment, God is revealed as the Creator of the heavens and the earth, and is thereby distinguished from all false gods. It was as a memorial of the work of creation that the seventh day was sanctified as a rest day for man. **It was designed to keep the living God ever before the minds of men as the source of being and the object of reverence and worship.** Satan strives to turn men from their allegiance to God, and from rendering obedience to His law; therefore he directs his efforts especially against that commandment which points to God as the Creator.—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy** 53.3-54.0. [Bold type is added.]

31. One of the most important proofs that *Yahweh*-God is the only true God is the fact that He can create out of nothing. (See Isaiah 40-55.) God asks us to celebrate on the seventh-day Sabbath as a memorial of His Creatorship. So, when we set aside the Sabbath and choose to worship on another day of the week, we are falling prey to Satan's trap.
32. So, what is the problem with talking about the reality of sin and yet arguing that God's law has been done away with? If God's law has been done away with, what is sin? If sin is rebellion against God's law, then those who reject God's worship day are, in fact, rebelling.
33. Many Sunday worshipers try to claim that keeping the seventh-day Sabbath is a sign of attempting salvation by works. But, if any effort to obey any of God's commandments is an attempted salvation by works, then there is no way to obey God's commandments!
34. Have you ever felt that the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath is a little bit legalistic? Why did you think that? Does it seem legalistic to begin worshiping at sundown on Friday and continue for 24 hours until sundown on Saturday? Why did God ask us to do that?
35. There are, in fact, very good reasons why God asks us to begin the Sabbath on Friday evening at sundown. First of all, sundown and sunrise are the only two times in the day when everyone without having a timepiece or a watch can know exactly that the precise time has arrived. Thus, in ancient times, it was the right time to begin or end the day.
36. But, there is another very important reason why sundown on Friday evening is the right time to begin the Sabbath. The burden of preparing the household for Sabbath often falls most heavily upon wives. They need to prepare food, the house, etc. God wants them to have this work finished early enough so they can relax in the evening, enjoy a spiritual time with their families or with Sabbathkeeping friends, and rise refreshed in the morning on Sabbath so they can enjoy the Sabbath services. Wives who work late into the night on Friday to prepare for Sabbath will find it much harder to stay awake and really enjoy the Sabbath services the next day.

37. So, why do you keep God's law? Do you ever do it from fear that you might lose your salvation if you do not?

The man who attempts to keep the commandments of God from a sense of obligation merely—because he is required to do so—will never enter into the joy of obedience. He does not obey. When the requirements of God are accounted a burden because they cut across human inclination, we may know that the life is not a Christian life. True obedience is the outworking of a principle within. It springs from the love of righteousness, the love of the law of God. The essence of all righteousness is loyalty to our Redeemer. This will lead us to do right because it is right—because right doing is pleasing to God.—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons** 97.3-98.0 (1900).

A sullen submission to the will of the Father will develop the character of a rebel. By such a one service is looked upon as drudgery. It is not rendered cheerfully, and in the love of God. It is a mere mechanical performance. [If he dared, such a one would disobey. His rebellion is smothered, ready to break out at any time in bitter murmurings and complaints.] Such service brings no peace or quietude to the soul.—Ellen G. White, *Manuscript 20*,* 1897; *Signs of the Times*,* July 22, 1897, par. 11; *12MR** 236.1. Section in brackets is included in *Manuscript 20*,* *ST*,* and in *12MR*,* but is omitted in *That I May Know Him** 120.4. [Bold type is added.]

38. Why do you think Jesus stated as recorded in John 13:34-35 that to love Him means we will keep His commandments? Why is that such a clear way of distinguishing between those who are faithful Christians and those who are not? But, could we become like the ancient Pharisees in our Sabbathkeeping? Do we ever sullenly keep the Sabbath?
39. Do you think of the Sabbath as our opportunity to enjoy fellowship with God? Do you worship on the Sabbath because it is the right thing to do? Is it the loving thing to do?
40. Is God asking too much of us when He asks for one-seventh of our time to fellowship with Him? Does it really matter on which day we worship Him? God has specified that the seventh-day Sabbath is the time when He wants to fellowship with us. Does your spouse care about whether or not you remember her/his birthday or your anniversary on that specific day? Will we miss blessings if we ignore God's Sabbath day?
41. On page 81, the *Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** asks the following question: "Do we observe God's commandments only because we think that they are wise and rational, or because we believe they will make us happier?" Are those good and adequate reasons for keeping God's law? Or, do we keep God's law and observe the Sabbath just because we are told to do so?
42. The Old Testament and even the New Testament are full of commands given by God in various forms. In fact, God's very first words to Adam were in the form of a commandment. (Genesis 2:16) Sometimes, we almost limit our understanding of commandments to the Ten Commandments. But, Psalm 33:9 and Isaiah 45:12 tell us that God can command and create worlds. "All His biddings are enablings." (*RH*, November 9, 1897; *COL* 333.1)
43. Read Exodus 24:12 and Nehemiah 9:13. These verses suggest that the Sabbath is a gift. Do you think of the Sabbath as a gift?
44. Many health studies have suggested that human beings need a day of rest. Thus, the Sabbath is a great blessing to mankind. Our bodies are not designed to work nonstop.

45. God created the sun and the moon and the rotation of our earth giving us days and nights. (Genesis 1:14,17) So, as the Creator of time on planet earth, God certainly has the right to tell us how we should use that time. The prophet Daniel picked up on that idea in Daniel 2:21 when he said:

“He controls the times and the seasons; he makes and unmakes kings; It is he who gives wisdom and understanding.”—*Good News Bible** (Daniel 2:21).

46. So, when another power seeks to change times and laws, (Daniel 7:25) it is specifically attempting to take the place of God. The only commandment which specifically deals with time is the Sabbath commandment.

47. So, what do we see as the fulfillment of Daniel’s prophecy?

The Roman Catholic Church did exactly as the prophecy predicted, replacing the sacredness of the Sabbath with Sunday worship. The main historical reason that motivated the Roman emperors, along with the Catholic authorities, in the direction of Sunday observance was that this change would facilitate the integration of most people in the Roman Empire. They were worshiping the sun and were thus keeping Sunday, the day of the sun. This “evangelistic” strategy and compromise greatly helped the political success of the Roman Catholic Church.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 83.

48. In order to justify their change of the day, they encourage people to celebrate and worship on Sunday because Jesus arose on that day instead of recognizing it as the venerable day of the sun.

49. So, is it possible for human beings to change God’s laws?

50. It was really impossible for the Roman Catholic Church to change the second commandment; so, they eliminated it completely. They have claimed that they represent God on this earth and claimed that gives them authority to change God’s law. In order to separate themselves from what they regarded as Jewish customs, they changed the “Jewish” Sabbath to Sunday, the venerable day of the sun.

51. A careful reading of Revelation 12-14 will make it clear that Satan will make an all-out attempt to force the world to follow him and disregard God’s law. See especially Revelation 12:17; 14:7,9,12. The faithful servants of God will “keep the commandments of God, and have the faith of Jesus.”

52. The rejection of the true Sabbath in ancient times because of anti-Jewish or anti-Semitic feelings was never justified by God. Would it be correct today to say that those who worship on Sunday are anti-Semitic?

53. One Jewish Rabbi said to a Seventh-day Adventist: “You seventh-day Adventists keep the Sabbath while we Jews celebrate Sabbath.” Do you agree with that statement? Could we learn to truly celebrate the Sabbath? From our study of this lesson, is it clear to you why the Sabbath will be the final test for God’s faithful people?

© 2018, Kenneth Hart, MD, MA, MPH. Permission is hereby granted for any noncommercial use of these materials. Free distribution of all or of a portion of this material such as to a Bible study class is encouraged.

*Electronic version.

Info@theox.org

Last Modified: April 8, 2018

Z:\My Documents\WP\ASSTG-Hart\End Time\SS-6-End Time-2018_05_12-Fin+.wpd