

A SNAPSHOT OF CHURCH HISTORY AND MOSAIC LAW

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The 7th day Sabbath (Gen. 2:1-3; Ex. 20:8-11; Lk. 4:16) and Passover (Lev. 23:4-8f.; Mt. 26:26f.) aren't observed by Christians today, but in the days of the Apostles they were (Acts 21:20; 1st Cor. 5:6-8). This is confirmed by Church history, which says that until about 100 AD, *all* Christians kept the 7th day Sabbath and Passover, and walked out their faith in Christ through all the rules of Moses that applied to them.

Samuele Bacchiocchi, in his classic, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, writes that the Nazarenes are attested to as late as Jerome (347-420 AD) and "appear to be the direct descendants of the Christian community of Jerusalem."¹ Noted French scholar Marcel Simon confirms that, saying that the Nazarenes were,

"characterized essentially by their *tenacious attachment to Jewish observances*...They well represent...*the very direct descendants* of the primitive (apostolic) community."²

In other words, the Nazarenes kept Mosaic Law, just like the Apostles. Bacchiocchi writes that they *accurately reflect how the Apostles walked out their faith* in the Lord Yeshua (Hebrew for Jesus):

"If the Nazarenes, as most scholars maintain, are indeed the 'direct descendants of the primitive community of Jerusalem,' we would expect...(them) to have retained *the original practice of...Christianity*."³

The Nazarenes kept the Feasts of Israel hundreds of years after the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 AD, and also, all the laws of Mosaic Law that applied to them. Eusebius (260-340 AD), a church historian, bishop and a "Father" of the Roman Catholic Church writes of the leadership in the Church of Jerusalem, when Jerusalem was destroyed (a second time) by Rome, in 135 AD, saying that the leadership had,

"consisted of converted Hebrews and was administered by 15 bishops from the *circumcision* (they were Jewish believers)⁴ and they were "zealous to insist on the *literal observance of the Law*."⁵

Those Nazarenes were living out their faith in Jesus the way all the Apostles, *after* the resurrection, had done. Scripture *and* Church history confirm this. Mosaic Law is an essential part of biblical Christianity because it reveals the full extent of what is sin, and therefore, what is also pleasing to God (e.g. Passover): "Therefore...by the Law is the *knowledge of sin*" (Rom. 3:20, cf. 2nd Tim. 3:10-17). If we don't know what sin is, in God's eyes, we sin against Him without realizing it. Many Christians are sinning in ignorance because they have been deceived by their church leaders, who in turn were deceived by the Roman Catholic Church, which threw out Mosaic Law and brought in Sunday, Easter and anti-semitism in 120 AD. That's why Christians don't keep the 7th day Sabbath holy; nor the Feasts of Israel (Lev. 23), and why they eat

¹ Samuele Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath To Sunday* (Rome, Italy: The Pontifical Gregorian University Press, 1977). This is the definitive work on the issue of Sabbath vs. Sunday. In my free PDF of the book at <http://seedofabraham.net/From-Sabbath-to-Sunday.pdf>, it's p. 93, note 400: Jerome reports to have come across the Nazarenes in "Beroes, a city of Syria" (*De Viris ill.* 3, *NPNF* 2nd, III, p. 362).

² *Ibid*, note 401: M. Simon (p. 90, note 388)...J. Danielou...also views the Nazarenes as the descendants of the...Christians [i.e. the Jewish believers] who fled to Transjordan and who "regarded the Jewish observances of Sabbath and circumcision as still of obligation."

Marcel Simon (1907-1986) "was a French specialist in the history of religions, particularly relations between Christianity and Judaism in antiquity. His major work, *Verus Israel*, was published in 1948. It has been described as 'seminal.'" (From http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marcel_Simon)

³ *Ibid*.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 91. Eusebius, *HE* 4, 5, 2-11; Epiphanius, *Adversus haereses* 70, 10, *PG* 42, 355-356.

⁵ *Ibid*. Eusebius, *HE* 3, 27, 3, trans. by Kirsopp Lake, Eusebius, *The Ecclesiastical History*, 1949, I, p. 263.

meats that God calls unclean (Lev. 11). If Jesus had eaten bacon just one time, He would have been a sinner and His sacrifice worthless. The Apostle John wrote, “He who says he abides in Him *ought himself also to walk just as He walked*” (1st John 2:6, written about 90 AD, 60 years *after* the resurrection). The Gospels show us *how* Yeshua *walked*. He always kept the 7th day Sabbath holy, as well as the Feasts of Israel, and the Mosaic dietary laws, and all the other rules and laws of Mosaic Law that applied to Him. If He hadn’t, He would have sinned. How is it that the Church teaches that Christians can do what would have been sin for Christ, but it’s not sin for them? Scripture says that “Jesus Christ is the *same*, yesterday, **TODAY** and forever!” (Hebrews 13:8) Jesus is our Head; we are His Body. Jesus would not break Mosaic Law *today* and *He does not want His Body to break those rules, either*.

The Church says that Mosaic Law was done away with at the Cross, but what was done away with at the cross was our sins,⁶ not God’s holy Standard, as Paul calls it (Rom. 7:12, 14). Epiphanius (315-403), another Church Father (of the Roman Catholic Church), bishop and church historian offers a wonderful description of the Nazarenes in his time, 300 years *after* the resurrection, saying that,

“The Nazarenes *do not differ* in any essential thing from them [i.e. Jews], *since they practice the custom and doctrines prescribed by the Jewish Law*, except that they believe in Christ. They believe in the resurrection of the dead and that the universe was created by God. They preach that God is one and that Jesus Christ is his Son. They are very learned in the Hebrew language. They read the Law...Therefore, they differ both from the Jews and from the Christians; from the former [the traditional Jews] because they believe in Christ; from the true Christians because *they fulfill till now Jewish rites as the...Sabbath and others*.”⁷

Epiphanius speaks of the Nazarenes as *not* being ‘true Christians’ because they kept Mosaic Law (just as Yeshua did!). Church history reveals that the spiritual descendants of the Apostles, the Nazarenes, kept Mosaic Law. This confirms that it *wasn’t* God who gave Christians Sunday and anti-Mosaic Law theology, but it was the Pope (Roman Catholicism). Bacchiocchi adds a poignant comment, saying, the

“excessive attachment of the Jerusalem Church to Jewish religious customs may perhaps perplex the Christian who regards the Mother Church of Christendom as the ideal model of his religious life. One must not forget, however, that Christianity sprang up out of the roots and trunk of Judaism. The early Jewish converts viewed the acceptance of Christ *not as the destruction of their religious framework*” (i.e. Mosaic Law), “*but as the fulfillment of their Messianic expectations, which enhanced their religious life with a new dimension*.”⁸

More than 60 years *after* the resurrection the Apostle John wrote that we should walk out our faith in Yeshua the same way that He walked out His faith in His Father. To ‘walk just as He walked’ certainly includes the keeping of God’s holy days, for Yeshua kept them, as the Gospels record Him doing, and the Mosaic dietary laws, etc. The Church does not have God’s authority to make up holy days, no matter how noble the concept might appear (e.g. ‘to honor Christ’s birth,’ or resurrection), or to keep Sunday as its ‘Sabbath.’

Only Scripture is authoritative. It tells us God’s will. When Church teaching clashes with Scripture shouldn’t we follow God’s Word and not the traditions of man that nullify it?

⁶ For more on this ask for the PDF, *Col. 2:14—What was Nailed to the Cross?* (Our sin indebtedness to God.)

⁷ Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath To Sunday*, p. 93. Epiphanius, *Adversus haereses* 29, 7, PG 41, 402. Circumcision of the eight day old Jewish boy is still required by God because the Jew is literally part of the covenant that God made with Father Abraham (Gen. 17:10-14; Acts 21:20-24), but the Gentile believer and his son must not be physically covenantally circumcised because entry into Messiah’s Kingdom isn’t through physical, covenantal circumcision, but the circumcision done without hands (Col. 2:11). Both the Jew, who is physically covenantally circumcised, and the Gentile who isn’t, come into the New Covenant the same way—through faith in Messiah Yeshua. God prohibits physical covenantal circumcision for the Gentile in the New Testament. For why this is, see *Gentile Circumcision?* at <http://seedofabraham.net/Gentile-Circumcision.pdf>.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 88-89.

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