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Commentary — From the Margins

Keeping the Sabbath

I spend a considerable amount of time answering queries: I recently received one that requires a book-length answer, but my initial return message couldn't be *book-length* so I abbreviated what I wanted to write and said only:

Dear Doctor —,

My introduction to the Sabbath was when trying to prove my stepfather, a Seventh Day Adventist, wrong about the Sabbath in October/November 1959, when I was still a twelve-year-old high school Freshman. I found that when the commandments move from written words on two tablets of stone to being written on hearts and placed in minds, with anger being equivalent to murder and with lust being equivalent to adultery, the Sabbath didn't move to the eighth day, but moved inside the person to regulate the thoughts of the mind and the desires of the heart on the seventh day. But you should know my history if you have read *A Philadelphia Apologetic 2010* (<http://homerkizer.net/APA2010.pdf>), probably the most complete expression of my typological writings and up-to-date as of December 2009.

Your concerns about keeping the Holy Days can be addressed from a physical perspective, what you will find expressed by most Messianic Christians, or from a more typological perspective. But before beginning, an understanding of what Paul writes about the law in Romans 2:13 and Romans 3:20 (also Gal 2:15–21) needs to exist. If “it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified” (Rom 2:13), but if “by the works of the law no human being will be justified in his [God's] sight” (Rom 3:20), then it isn't what the hands do that justifies a person but the thoughts of the minds, with faith in Christ being belief of God. For when a person *believes* God, the person will desire to keep the commandments as the reasonable expectation of the household of God—and it is this desire to keep the commandments that causes a person to be a doer of the law who will be justified. So when you write, “I cannot see how anyone could possibly keep all of the ancient Jewish rules, ceremonies, feasts,” you somewhat miss the point about why these ancient rules were given.

A hasty overview of Israel's history here seems reasonable: even though David asks not to have the spirit taken from him (Ps 51:11), and Luke records that John

the Baptist's father Zechariah was filled with the spirit (Luke 1:67), no one was born of spirit prior to Christ Jesus receiving the spirit [*pneuma*–breath] of the Father when emerging from baptism (Matt 3:16). Jesus would not be the last Adam if anyone had been born of spirit prior to when He received the spirit of God [πνεῦμα θεοῦ]; i.e., a second breath of life. Therefore, ancient Israel did not have indwelling eternal life, the reason why the lawyer and the rich young ruler ask what they must do to *inherit* eternal life (Luke 10:25; 18:18 respectively). ... As the life of the flesh is sustained by the cellular oxidation of simple carbohydrates [dark fire], eternal life is sustained by the bright fire that comes as the breath of the Father, with this bright fire seen by the prophet Ezekiel (1:26–28). This bright fire would consume a person so “the free gift of God is eternal life in [ἐν] Christ Jesus” (Rom 6:23): without the indwelling of Christ Jesus in the form of His spirit [πνεῦμα Χριστοῦ— from Rom 8:9], no human being can have indwelling eternal life, for the indwelling of Christ becomes the *vessel* able to contain the bright fire of God [i.e., eternal life]. Hence, Jesus speaks of letting the dead bury the dead of themselves (Matt 8:22); for the inner self of every person is humanly born dead (without eternal life). This inner self remains dead until the person receives a second breath of life, the breath [spirit] of God. And for God to typologically represent in a person who has only one breath of life the reality that although the flesh lives, the inner self is dead (from lack of a second breath of life, the spirit of God), God placed Israel in slavery to Pharaoh.

The Passover now represents the liberation of Israel from slavery. The reason for keeping the Sabbath under the Moab covenant is: “You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore, the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day” (Deut 5:15). So in the Sabbath day is the representation of Israel's liberation ... Paul writes that “no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart” (Rom 2:28–29). Hence, Israel today is the nation that is circumcised of heart, with *sin* or *disobedience* being metaphorically represented by the land of Egypt. And since every person is humanly born as a son of disobedience (Eph 2:2–3), every person is born spiritually as Israelites were born physically when the nation was enslaved in Egypt. For Christians, the Sabbath represents liberation from disobedience: the Christian who continues to keep Sunday as the Sabbath remains in bondage to sin. This person simply refuses to leave sin when sin has no dominion over the person.

If the Lord hadn't forcibly evicted Israel from Egypt, would the nation have ever left ... the question can be answered by asking whether the greater Christian Church would ever willingly cease observing Sunday and begin keeping the Sabbath? And if you have read enough of my typological writings, you know that I claim that there will be a Second Passover liberation of Israel when humankind can get no farther from God than it is, that one long spiritual night of waiting and

watching began at Calvary and that the midnight hour of this single night comes when humankind is the farthest it can get from the Light. Thus, the Passover individually represents the liberation of the single Christian from bondage to disobedience, but collectively the Passover represents the near future liberation of the greater Christian Church from bondage to disobedience; for Paul writes that Christians “are the body of Christ and individually members of it” (1 Cor 12:27). It is the collective Body of Christ that remains inwardly dead (as represented by Israel’s slavery to Pharaoh) and that will be made alive under the New Covenant through being filled-with and empowered by the spirit of God. Then, every Christian regardless of denomination, sect, or fellowship will have the Law [Torah — from Jer 31:33] written on hearts and placed in minds so that all *Know the Lord* ... no one can honestly claim that Christians are today under the New Covenant when the first covenant that was “becoming obsolete and growing old [and] ready to vanish away” (Heb 8:13) a quarter century after Calvary continues on; for Christians do not have the Torah [the Law] written on hearts and placed in minds.

Again, it isn’t what the hands do that justifies a Christian, but what the mind believes—and when the mind believes God the mind will cause the hands and body to keep the commandments. So it isn’t keeping the commandments that justifies, but believing the writings of Moses so that the person can hear the words of Jesus (John 5:46–47) and believe the one who sent Jesus (*v.* 24). This person, the one who believes God, will pass from death [the status of every inner self prior to receipt of a second breath of life] to life without coming under judgment.

When Israel dwelt in Egypt as slaves to the Pharaoh, they were not under the Law so they did not have their lawlessness reckoned [counted] against them (Rom 5:13). Pharaoh was responsible for their lawlessness. Likewise, sons of disobedience in this world are not under the Law and do not have their lawlessness reckoned against them: they are bondservants of the Adversary, who is responsible for their lawlessness. But when liberated from bondage to Pharaoh, Israel at Sinai was given the commandments which made sin alive (Rom 7:8–9), and once made alive, sin devoured Israel in the golden calf incident (Ex chap 32). And this “devouring” is recorded when Moses delivered to Israel the second Sinai covenant [the first one was ratified by the shedding of blood — Ex 24:5–8 — and ended with the shedding of blood — Ex 32:25–29]; this second Sinai covenant is a heavenly or eternal covenant ratified by the glory that shone on Moses’ face. And the “devouring” of Israel is not a part of the second Sinai covenant, but was added to it when Moses told Israel, “You shall kindle no fire in all your dwelling places on the Sabbath day” (Ex 35:3) ... the Sabbath represents a mental landscape for which geographical Judea served as a metaphor; the Sabbath represents entering into God’s rest, into God’s presence. Thus, the command not to kindle a fire on the Sabbath is a prohibition against having indwelling life in God’s presence, with fire representing life. And as long as Judaism continues not

to kindle a fire on the Sabbath, the nation shows what the Lord told Moses: “Whoever has sinned against me, I will blot out of my book ... in the day when I visit, I will visit their sin upon them” (Ex 32:33–34). The nation has no indwelling eternal life.

Thus, the Sabbath is the first of the appointed feasts of the Lord (Lev chap 23); for the Sabbath represents liberation from sin, from disobedience, from being the slave of the Adversary through receipt of a second breath of life. The inner self that was humanly born dead is made spiritually alive through receipt of the breath of the Father. But the Sabbath is not alone in this representation of liberation from sin—keeping the Sabbath only begins the journey from sin to entering into God’s presence, a journey that took forty years for the children of Israel and a journey that will take seven years for the liberated Christian Church following the Second Passover, but a journey that individually takes until the Christian keeps the holy days for the Christian is the temple of God, with the inner new self represented typologically by the Levitical priesthood serving in the earthly temple, and with this spiritual temple located in heavenly Jerusalem, where every Israelite is to appear three seasons [times] a year.

It will be argued that Christians daily enter into the presence of God, that they are always in the presence of God, but this is also the argument made for not keeping the Sabbath: if every day is a spiritual Sabbath day, when does the work occur that is needed for the mundane maintenance of the flesh? And those who make this argument will ignore the Sabbath so that work can occur seven days a week, for the flesh needs maintained every day. The argument at its core is bogus.

On the first unleavened (from Matt 26:17 — Τῆ δὲ πρώτῃ τῶν ἀζύμων), Jesus ate the Passover before He was taken. This is the night when Israel in Egypt ate the Passover (remember, Moses commanded Israel not to leave their houses until morning — Ex 12:22 — so Israel didn’t begin to gather their flocks to leave Egypt until the daylight portion of the 14th and didn’t leave Egypt until the beginning of the 15th, the High Sabbath). ... Rabbinical Judaism follows the practices of the Pharisees and keeps the first of its two Seder services [one on the 15th, the other on the 16th of Abib] on the night that Sabbatarian Christians have traditionally called *the Night to Be Much Observed*. Hence, secular calendars identify the 15th of Abib [Nissan] as the Passover, but according to the example that Jesus left with His disciples, the sacraments of bread and wine are to be taken on the dark portion of the 14th, after the example of Israel in Egypt; for it is this first covenant—this Passover covenant made “on the day when [the Lord] took [the fathers of Israel] by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt” (Heb 8:9)—that will be replaced by the New Covenant that has the Torah written on hearts so that all *Know the Lord*.

This first covenant that was growing old and becoming obsolete and was about ready to vanish away a quarter century after Calvary remains in effect, but

without the daily sacrifice of bleating lambs for Christ Jesus is the reality of “the daily” — by faith, disciples daily put on the garment of Christ’s righteousness through prayer, with the garment of Christ’s righteousness being the reality of grace — and with the inner new selves of Christians serving in the temple as Levites served in the earthly temple. Therefore, Christians are as obligated to keep the Passover as Israel in Egypt was obligated to keep the Passover; for according to Matthew, “Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, ‘Take, eat; this is my body.’ And He took a cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins’” (26:26–28). ... The disciple who doesn’t drink from the cup—with the mouth of the disciple represented metaphorically by the two doorposts and lintel, the doorway, of the Israelite’s house in Egypt—does not have his or her sins forgiven, but will be as an Israelite in Egypt would have been who hadn’t sacrificed a Passover lamb and put some of the blood on the doorway. The firstborn within the house of the Israelite in Egypt who hadn’t put some of the blood on the doorway would have been slain as the firstborn of Egyptians were slain (Ex 12:29). Spiritually, the inner new self born of spirit is a firstborn son of God, with Christ Jesus being the First of these firstfruits. Thus, the truly born of spirit Christian has within the person’s tent of flesh a firstborn son of God that needs to be covered by the forgiveness of sin that comes through drinking from the cup after the example Jesus left with His disciples.

Returning to the second Passover liberation of Israel for a moment: in moving from physical to spiritual, the physically circumcised Israelite in Egypt becomes the circumcised-of-heart inner self of the Christian [the son of God], and Egyptians become spiritually lifeless Christians, and the beasts of Egypt become the common pool of humankind. On the midnight hour, “the Lord struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of the livestock” (Ex 12:29). Isaiah records, “For I am the Lord your God, / the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. / I give Egypt as your ransom, / Cush and Seba in exchange for you. / Because you are precious in my eyes, / and honored, and I love you, / I give men in return for you, / peoples in exchange for your life” (43:3–4) ... in the structure of Hebraic poetics, poetic verse is composed in thought-couplets, with the first presentation of the idea being physical or natural [the Lord giving Egypt as a ransom for Israel] and the second presentation being spiritual [the Lord again giving the lives of men in exchange for Israel].

The Passover that liberated Israel from bondage to Pharaoh and its resulting Exodus will no longer be remembered when Israel, now the nation circumcised of heart, is liberated from bondage to indwelling sin and death at the Second Passover (see Jer 16:14–15; 23:7–8). But this Second Passover liberation of Israel

will see all uncovered [by the blood of Christ] firstborn sons of God, angelic and human, plus all uncovered firstborns of Christians and of other human beings suddenly slain when humankind can get no farther from the Light that is God than it is. This means, simply, that the firstborns of Seventh Day Adventists—because they refused to keep the Passover after the example Jesus left with His disciples—will die suddenly and unexpectedly on a second Passover day near in time ... there is no love in not trying to get Christians to take the Passover sacraments on the dark portion of the 14th of Abib; for the matter isn't one of interpretation of Scripture but of belief.

Most Adventists have been humanly born into their faith—you are an exception—thus in continuing in the teachings of the Adventist Church, the Christian makes no journey of faith that will cleanse the heart so that it can be circumcised. Again, this is not true of yourself. Therefore, the Adventist Church with a few exceptions is spiritually lifeless, and if you find yourself feeling frustrated by lack of spiritual understanding, you will understand why I am a little harsh in my condemnation of Adventists, who should be teachers of circumcised-of-heart Israel but are in need of being taught the basic doctrines of Christ.

This message has become way long and I haven't begun to touch the reasons for keeping the holy days. I would ask that you read at least the first four chapters of [APA 2010](#); for that will give you enough background that I can address specifically the teachings of Ellen G. White concerning the holy days as well as the reasons for keeping them. But before I quit this message, let me say that when moving from physical to spiritual, most of the statutes given to ancient Israel do not make the transition for salvation isn't a matter of what the hands do but what the mind believes, with these beliefs manifested in actions that are appropriate to this endtime era.

Respectfully,
Homer Kizer

Keeping the Passover on the dark portion of the 14th of Abib, with the month of Abib beginning after with the first sighted new moon crescent following the spring equinox, is not a matter open to dispute, but a matter of whether the *Christian* believes God ... unbelievers do not keep the Passover; believers do. And in a complicated world filled with gray areas, keeping the Passover is neither complicated nor in a gray realm: either a Christian will or won't.

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