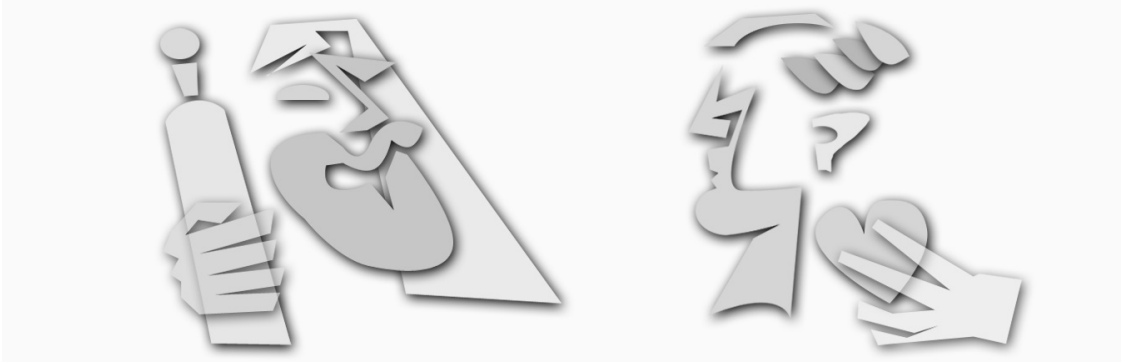


Jew and Gentile (Non-Jew)



SABBATH—JULY 3

READ FOR THIS WEEK’S LESSON: Leviticus 23; Matthew 19:17; Acts 15:1–29; Galatians 1:1–12; Hebrews 8:6; Revelation 12:17.

MEMORY VERSE: “Moses gave us the law. Jesus Christ has given us grace¹ and truth” (John 1:17, NlrV).

THE FIRST CHRISTIANS WERE ALL JEWS. The New Testament does not show that the Jews were told to stop practicing circumcision.² They did not have to stop keeping the Jewish festivals³ either. But when the Gentiles began to accept Christianity, they had many important questions. Should the Gentiles practice circumcision? How carefully should they keep other Jewish laws? Finally, a council was called at Jerusalem to settle the matter (read Acts 15).

The council decided not to bother the Gentiles with rules and laws. But some teachers kept bothering the churches by making the Gentile believers keep these rules and laws. Circumcision was one of them.

In some ways, these problems are still with us today. There are also those who would like us as a church to follow more Old Testament rules. We find that Romans has an important message for us today as it did for the Roman church back then.

1. grace—God’s gift of forgiveness and mercy (kindness) that He freely gives us to take away our sins.

2. circumcision—the act of cutting off the skin (called the foreskin) at the end of the penis of a man or a boy.

3. festivals—special times or events when people gather to celebrate something (doing something special or enjoyable for an important event).

SUNDAY—JULY 4**BETTER PROMISES****(Hebrews 8:6)**

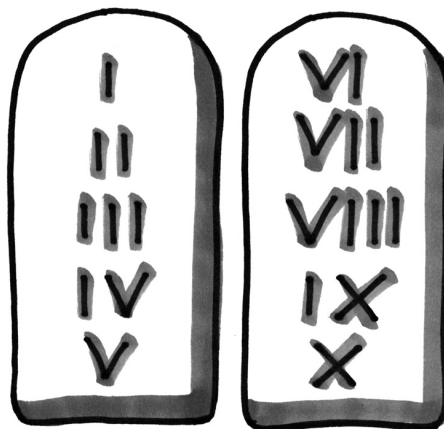
What is the message in Hebrews 8:6? How do we understand what these “better promises” are?

Perhaps the biggest difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament is the coming of the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. He was sent by God to be the Savior. Men could not refuse to accept Him and expect to be saved. Only through Jesus’ sacrifice⁴ could their sins be forgiven. Only through Jesus’ perfect life could they stand before God without being judged guilty for their sins. In other words, salvation⁵ came only through the righteousness⁶ of Jesus.

Old Testament believers hoped for the Messiah to come with the promise of salvation. In New Testament times, the people were faced with the question, *Would they accept as their Savior Jesus of Nazareth whom God sent as the Messiah?* If they believed in Jesus and were faithful to Him, they would be saved through the righteousness He gives to them freely.

Meanwhile, God’s law remains

unchanged in the New Testament. This is because it was founded in the character of God⁷ and of Christ. Following God’s law is just as important in the New Covenant⁸ as it was in the Old.



God’s law remains unchanged.

What do Matthew 19:17, Revelation 12:17, Revelation 14:12, and James 2:10, 11 tell us about God’s law in the New Testament?

The ceremonial laws⁹ were tied to the Old Covenant.¹⁰ All of the laws pointed to Jesus and to His death and ministry (work) as High Priest. But these laws were no longer needed when a new way of coming to God was set in place. It was the way based on “better promises.”

4. sacrifice—the act of giving up something of value, such as a life, to save or help someone or something.
 5. salvation—God’s plan for saving sinners from eternal (without end) death; the gift of eternal life; being saved from sin or evil.
 6. righteousness—God’s character (the qualities, such as goodness and love, that make Him who He is). God’s character, or righteousness (holy life), is given to us by faith in Him; holiness.
 7. character of God—who God is; having and understanding the character of God is the same as being kind, loving, honest, and so on. God’s law (Ten Commandments) shows us His character.
 8. New Covenant—the promise or agreement between God and His people that was made when Jesus died on the cross and rose from the grave. Many people believe that the New Covenant removes the Sabbath commandment.
 9. ceremonial laws—laws dealing with the sanctuary (the house where God was worshiped by the Jews in Bible times). The sanctuary services helped the Jews to better understand God’s plan of saving them from sin.
 10. Old Covenant—the law and promises God gave to His people through Moses.

In the book of Romans, one of Paul's goals, maybe the most important one, was to help both the Jew and the Gentile learn how things would change from Judaism (Jewish religion) to Christianity. It would take time to make the change.

What are some of your favorite Bible promises? How often do you claim them? What are you doing that could keep these promises from coming true in your life?

MONDAY—JULY 5

JEWISH LAWS AND RULES (Leviticus 12; Leviticus 16; Leviticus 23)

If you have time, quickly read through the book of Leviticus. (Read, for example, Leviticus 12; Leviticus 16; and Leviticus 23.) What do you think about as you read all these rules and services? Why would many of these rules be impossible to follow in New Testament times?

It may be better for us to list Old Testament laws in different groups. They are, (1) moral law,¹¹ (2) ceremonial law, (3) civil law,¹² (4) statutes¹³ and judgments, and (5) health laws. It

is important to remember that people in the Old Testament did not list the laws this way. That is because the laws in each group had many things in common. So, the people thought of all the laws as belonging to only one group.

God's law is summed up by the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1–17). This law tells us how God expects us to live our lives. The Ten Commandments are made clearer in all of the different laws and rules in the first five books of the Bible. These examples show what it meant to keep the law of God in different situations. Among them are the civil laws. These, too, depend on God's law. These laws show how a person must act toward government leaders and the people of his or her own country. They list the kinds of punishment¹⁴ for different laws that are broken.

The ceremonial law was the law the people followed for the sanctuary service.¹⁵ It told about the different offerings and what each person needed to do. The feast days are listed with explanations on how they were to be kept.

The health laws follow the other laws. There are different laws that explain how to deal with being unclean.¹⁶ They even include health principles (rules). Laws about clean and unclean meats are based on health.

11. moral law—The Ten Commandments.

12. civil law—the laws that show how a person must act toward government leaders and the people of his or her own country.

13. statutes—written laws.

14. punishment—a penalty (price to be paid) for, or the result of, doing something wrong; when someone must suffer loss or pain for doing something bad, wrong, or against the law.

15. sanctuary service—the offering of animal blood as a payment for sin. The animal blood was offered in place of the sinner's blood. This service represented Jesus' dying on the cross for our sins. After Jesus died, the service was not needed.

16. unclean—not innocent and good; morally impure. Not allowed to be used by religious law.

TUESDAY—JULY 6**WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED? (Acts 15:1)**

What issue in Acts 15:1 was causing people to disagree? Why would some people believe that this issue was not just for the Jewish nation? Read Genesis 17:10.

Certain Jewish teachers told people that in order to be saved, they had to be circumcised and must keep the whole ceremonial law. The Jews always had taken pride in their religious services. And many Christian Jews still felt that the old Hebrew way of worship was the only way to worship God. They thought that God would never permit a change in any of the services. They told people that the Jewish laws and ceremonies¹⁷ should be an important part of the services of the Christian religion. The reason they wanted the old ceremonies was because they did not understand that there was no more need for sacrifice services. The death of the Son of God took the place of all those sacrifices forever. It was an example of type (model) being fulfilled by anti-type (real Person). After His sacrifice, the services and ceremonies of the sanctuary¹⁸ were no longer needed.



All the services of sacrifice had been fulfilled by the Son of God.

How was the disagreement in Acts 15:2–12 settled?

Paul often talked about his call to be a prophet¹⁹ and how Jesus called him to serve and gave him his mission.²⁰ But Paul was willing to work with the larger church group too. Yes, Paul was a prophet. But he also understood that he was part of the church and that he needed to work with the whole church.

How do you feel about church leadership? How well do you work together with the leadership? Why is it so important to work together? How could we work together if everyone was doing only what he or she wanted? Explain and discuss your answer.

17. ceremonies—formal acts or events that are part of a social or religious occasion.

18. sanctuary—the home of God on earth in early Bible times in which the high priests offered prayers and the blood of animals to God for the sins of the people of Israel.

19. prophet—a man or woman who is a spokesperson for God. God gives a prophet special messages to give to His people. A prophet also speaks to God on behalf of His people. God may also give a prophet warnings about what will happen in the future.

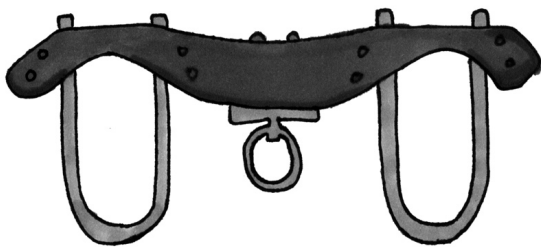
20. mission—the special duty (work) for God that a church sends a person or a group out to do.

WEDNESDAY—JULY 7**“NO GREATER BURDEN [LOAD]” (Acts 15:5–29)**

According to Acts 15:5–29, what decision did the council make? And what was the reason for their decision?

The decision was against the beliefs of the Judaizers.²¹ These Jews said that the Gentile believers should be circumcised and that they should also follow the entire ceremonial law.

It is interesting that in verse 10 Peter pictured these old laws as a “yoke”²² that no one could carry. It does not make sense that the Lord, who made those laws, would make them a yoke on His people. But over the years, some of the Jewish leaders turned many of the laws into curses instead of blessings. The council tried to save Gentiles from these curses.



Peter pictured the old laws as a yoke that no one could carry.

But even though the council did not make non-Jews obey all these laws, there was no argument against them needing to obey the Ten Commandments. Could we imagine the council telling them not to eat blood, but that there was nothing wrong with cheating on your husband or wife or murdering someone?

According to Acts 15:20, 29, what rules were placed on the Gentile believers? Why were these rules chosen?

The Jewish believers were not allowed to force their rules on Gentiles. But the council also wanted to make sure that the Gentiles did not do things that would upset the Jewish believers. So, the apostles²³ and leaders agreed to teach the Gentiles to avoid meats offered to idols, sex outside of marriage, and blood. Some say that because Sabbath keeping was not mentioned it must not have been meant for the Gentiles. Of course, the commandments against lying and murder were not mentioned either, so that argument means nothing.

Do we put burdens (loads) that are not necessary on people? If so, how? Bring your thoughts to class on Sabbath.

21. Judaizers—Jewish Christians who tried to force certain things about the Jewish religion on new Christians.

22. yoke—a wooden bar or frame by which two work animals (such as oxen or horses) are joined at the heads or necks for working together. Also, a frame fitted to a person’s shoulders to carry a load in two equal portions.

23. apostles—the disciples (followers) of Jesus who preached and taught the gospel (the good news about Jesus) after Jesus rose from the dead and returned to heaven.

THURSDAY—JULY 8**THE GALATIAN²⁴ HERESY²⁵
(Galatians 1:1–12)**

The advice of the council was clear. But there were still people who tried to go their own way and who kept pushing the idea that the Gentiles follow Jewish religious laws. For Paul, this became very serious because it meant people would be denying the gospel²⁶ of Christ itself.

Read Galatians 1:1–12. How serious is the problem that Paul finds in Galatia? What should that tell us about how important this question is?

Paul started his letter to Rome because of the problem in Galatia. In fact, the letter to the Romans discusses many of the same things as the letter to the Galatians. The Judaizers felt that the law God had given them through Moses was important and should be obeyed by Gentile believers. Paul was trying to show the true interpretation (meaning) of the law. He did not want these Judaizers to grow strong in Rome like they had done in Galatia.

The point of Paul's argument is not whether in the books of Galatians and Romans he is speaking of ceremonial or moral²⁷ laws. The argument was about whether Gentile believers should be required to be circumcised²⁸

and obey the law of Moses. The Jerusalem council had already ruled on this question. But some refused to obey its decision (ruling). Some even used Paul's own letters to the Galatians and the Romans to argue against the council's ruling. They claimed that Christians no longer needed to obey the Ten Commandments (or, in truth, only the fourth commandment). They did not understand that Paul was telling them that salvation came through faith alone and not through following the law. That does not mean that the moral law should not be obeyed. Still, some people today use these verses to argue against obeying the Sabbath, even though Paul was talking about something completely different.

What do you say to people who claim that Christians no longer need to keep the Sabbath? How can you show that the truth of the Sabbath does not disagree with what the gospel teaches?

Faith

Paul's letters explain that salvation was by faith alone.

FRIDAY—JULY 9

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read Ellen G. White, "Jew and Gentile," pages

24. Galatian—of or relating to a territory (an area of land) east of what is now Turkey.

25. heresy—false doctrine (belief) or teaching.

26. gospel—the good news that Jesus saves us from our sins; the good news about salvation.

27. moral—having to do with knowing what is right or wrong.

28. circumcised—the cutting away of the foreskin of the penis, a man's sexual organ.

188–192, 194–197; “Apostasy²⁹ in Galatia,” pages 383–388, in *The Acts of the Apostles*; “The Law Given to Israel,” pages 310–312; “The Law and the Covenants,”³⁰ pages 370–373, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*;³¹ “The Chosen People,” pages 27–30, in *The Desire of Ages*.

“God’s covenant to Abraham included the promise of salvation. Then why was another covenant made at Sinai? During their slavery in Egypt, the people had lost the knowledge of God and of . . . God’s covenant to Abraham.

“The people did not understand how sinful their own hearts were. They did not know that without Christ it was impossible for them to keep God’s law. So, they quickly entered into a covenant with God.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pages 371, 372.

“Through the influence³² of false teachers from Jerusalem, the believers in Galatia were accepting false beliefs. They fought more and grew more sinful. These false teachers were mixing Jewish traditions³³ with the truths of the gospel. They refused to obey the decision of the council in Jerusalem. They encouraged the Gentile believers to obey the ceremonial law.”—Adapted from Ellen G.

White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, page 383.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

❶ In class, go over your answer to Wednesday’s last question. In what ways might you or your local church be putting unnecessary burdens (loads) on others (or on yourself)? How can we tell if we are doing these things? Could we be in danger of going too far the other way? How can we tell if our lifestyle and standards³⁴ do not show the high principles of Christ?

❷ What are some of the arguments people use to claim that Christians today do not need the Ten Commandments anymore? Why are those claims so wrong? How do we answer them? And if some people think the commandments have been removed, why do they still live as though the commandments are necessary?

❸ Read the first 12 verses in Galatians 1 again. Notice how strong Paul is about his understanding of the gospel. What should that tell us about how we must stand strong in certain beliefs, even now, when people think religion is old-fashioned? How does this show that certain teachings cannot be weakened in any way?

29. apostasy—giving up faith in God and falling back into sin.

30. covenants—promises or agreements between God and His people. If the people obeyed God, God would bless them.

31. patriarchs and prophets—patriarchs were leaders of God’s people in early Bible times, men such as Abraham and Isaac, or other leaders of Israel, such as Moses; prophets are men or women who are spokespersons for God.

32. influence—the power to affect or change persons or things.

33. traditions—customs or rules made by people. Traditions usually are not written down but are taught by families to their children generation after generation.

34. standards—levels of quality or achievement that are very good and that are used to make judgments about the quality of other things or how good they are.