

# Should Christians Keep the Mosaic Law

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Let's begin with a definition.

The Mosaic Law is the body of directives given to Moses which are recorded in the first five books of the Bible (the Pentateuch or Torah).

## **Definition: The Mosaic Law is the Law given to Moses**

With many individual and ecclesiastical variations, there are **four** basic views about the question, "Should Christians keep the Mosaic Law?" I shall list them in what seems **to me** to be from the least (or worst) to the most (or best) Biblically based positions. There are those who believe:

### **1. The Mosaic Law should be kept by all Christians today**

These are the Hebrew Roots Ministries (HRMs) like Messianic Judaism, 119 Ministries (named from Psalm 119), and those influenced by the British Israelite-ism of Herbert Armstrong's Worldwide Church of God.

### **2. The Ten Commandments are eternal and should always be kept, but the rest of the Law was temporary**

This is the view of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

### **3. The moral and civil laws should be kept today, but not the ceremonial laws**

This is the position of John Calvin (Institutes published in 1541) and covenant communities, like the Reformed, Presbyterians, and Lutherans.

### **4. The Mosaic Law as a directive ended at the cross, but it should be applied today, like all Scripture**

Historically, this includes the Anabaptists (beginning in 1525) and the literal-Bible communities, such as the Baptists, Brethren, Pentecostals, Bible colleges and churches. Modern-day Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox authors also favor this position.

## **Position #1. The Mosaic Law should be kept by all Christians today**

For the sake of simplicity, we shall focus on the beliefs of 119 Ministries.

The website gotquestions.org, a well-respected Christian information source, says this:

119 Ministries is associated with the Hebrew Roots movement, which claims Jesus did not do away with many of the Old Testament restrictions on diet, ceremonial purity, and so forth. This is a view long rejected by the majority of Christian theologians. Most Hebrew Roots teachers accept generally correct views of salvation, sin, Christ, and the Bible. However, they often reject the Trinity...

Another problem with 119 Ministries, as with many Hebrew Roots organizations, is the tendency to focus outrageous levels of time and attention on minutiae...Legalistic gnat-straining like this (Titus 3:9) is exactly the kind of bureaucracy we were meant to be freed from.

Here are some statements from the 119 Ministries "Faith Statement" [119ministries.com]:

- "Yeshua basically means 'Salvation' in Hebrew. Through transliterations from Aramaic/Hebrew to Greek to Latin to Old English to modern English, He is now often known as Jesus."

[My comment: I'm not sure why they think this is important, but one must ask, "Where is Jesus ever called Yeshua in the Bible?" Answer: never. True, in the Old Testament the word יְשׁוּעָה (Yeshua) means salvation, but it is never a name for Jesus. And it's not in the New Testament because the New Testament is written in Greek, not Hebrew. The New Testament Greek word for Jesus is Ἰησοῦς (*Iesous* – pronounced, ēāsous). When the New Testament is translated into Hebrew, like for today's Hebrew Christians, the word *Jesus* is translated יְשׁוּעָה (*Yeshua*). They say this came "from Aramaic/Hebrew to Greek to Latin to Old English to modern English." But just the opposite is true,

it went from the Greek of the New Testament to Hebrew, as in our modern Hebrew translation. And, our translations come from the Greek New Testament, not Latin or Old English (whatever that means).]

- “Our obedience is the evidence and substance of our faith.”

[My comment: This is like today’s New Calvinism, where our works are not just the evidence of our faith but the “substance” of our faith, thus connecting works to salvation. For example, they would not say Sabbath-keeping gets you saved, but they would say the substance of your salvation includes Sabbath-keeping. For them, the two are inseparably tied together.]

- “Another purpose of Yeshua was to begin calling back the scattered 10 tribes of Israel that were divorced, scattered, and became Gentiles.”

[My comment: This sounds like the British Israelitism of Herbert Armstrong, who said the 10 “lost tribes” of Israel became the Gentiles of Europe, such as England (identified as Ephraim) and America (identified as Manasseh). In reality, there are no “lost tribes.” The 10 tribes taken into captivity by the Assyrians in 722 B.C. remained in Jewish ghetto communities (as featured in the film “Fiddler on the Roof”). These are Russian Jews, Polish Jews, etc. who began to return to Israel after 1947. Biblical prophets say both northern and southern kingdom Jews will return to the land (Ezekiel 37:16ff), not “become Gentiles” and migrate to Europe and America.]

### **Additional Problems with Position #1**

**No influential Bible teacher has taught this in the 2000 years of church history.** Of course, that’s their point. They are here (raised up by God or something) to correct this historic error of the church. It is certainly possible for those studying the Bible to discover Biblical truth which others before them have not found. The mega example is the Reformation of the 1500s. But those who have shaped Biblical theology over the years have two things in common which are lacking in the HRMs:

- (1) Men who have developed our theology (like Martin Luther), represent a greater focus on the Bible over against those who have ignored the Bible (such as the Roman Catholic Church of the Middle Ages). HRMs are doing just the opposite, contradicting those who have focused on the Bible.
- (2) When a good theologian discovers a new/true Biblical concept, a significant amount of Bible teachers across the church will see the new position as Biblically consistent. This not the case with the HRMs.

For example, before and after Luther, the Waldensians, Wycliffe, Hus, Zwingli, the Anabaptists and many others across Christianity understood the Reformation observations to be Biblically true. The HRM’s Mosaic Law-keeping position is as old as the Judaizers of the first century. But it was rejected by Augustine of Hippo, Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Wesley, Jonathan Edwards, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, D. L. Moody, C. I. Scofield, or more recently J. Vernon McGee, John Walvoord, Charles Ryrie, R. C. Sproul, and all the major Bible-oriented colleges and seminaries.

**The HRMs impose their view on a passage rather than seek the author’s intended meaning.** They claim they are the only ones examining a passage and the only ones following the context. In reality they are just imposing their conclusions on the passage as a basis of determining its meaning. There is never an attempt to determine the author’s intended meaning. Let’s consider their often-used passage—Matthew 5:17-18. Jesus said,

*“Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.”*

The HRMs impose their idea that the *Law* is the Mosaic Law which will not pass away. But any serious look at the broader context of Jesus’ teaching reveals, “‘The Law and the prophets’” refer to the entire Old Testament (cf. 7:12; 11:13; 22:40; Luke 16:16; Acts 13:15; 24:14; 28:23; Romans 3:21).” [“The Bible Knowledge Commentary”]. Jesus was saying, He did not come to abolish the Old Testament, He came to fulfill it. And He fulfilled it by reflecting the character God, not keeping the particulars of the Law. *Heaven and earth* will indeed *pass away* (Revelation 21:1-3), but the written Word of God, the Law (the Torah), and the Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, etc.) will not pass away until all its prophecies are *accomplished*.

**Many of the 613 commandments, which make up the Mosaic Law, cannot be kept today.** The HRMs are forced to be selective in their law-keeping. Obedience to the Mosaic Law is impossible outside the physical land of Israel. It was designed for the Israelites in that specific land which God chose for them (Deuteronomy 11:12).

Also, the Mosaic Law cannot be kept without locating and using Levitical priests, specifically those of the line of Zadok (Ezekiel 40:46). Even if one deleted the animal sacrifices due to the payment of Jesus on the cross (which we will deal with under #3), there are many other specific commands that require a Levitical priesthood (such as if someone touches something unclean or has a skin disease—Leviticus 5, 7, 13).

Also, would those who insist on Sabbath-keeping also insist on removing all debts on the Sabbatical Year and returning all property to its original owners every Jubilee Year?

And then there are all the personal commands that are (hopefully) not kept by the HRMs. Consider the following list. Do they keep/obey these commands? Remember they cannot just say these represent a good mentality or that we should “apply” them, because one might “apply” the “mentality” of the Sabbath command by resting any day of the week. So, if the HRMs are keeping the Mosaic Law, and saying every Christian should, then they must specifically perform, these commands:

- **Exodus 21:17** *He who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death.*
- **Leviticus 19:19** *You shall not breed together two kinds of your cattle; you shall not sow your field with two kinds of seed, nor wear a garment upon you of two kinds of material mixed together.*
- **Leviticus 19:27** *You shall not round off the side-growth of your heads nor harm the edges of your beard.*
- **Leviticus 20:13** *If there is a man who lies with a male as those who lie with a woman, both of them have committed a detestable act; they shall surely be put to death.*
- **Deuteronomy 15:1** *At the end of every seven years you shall grant a remission of debts.*
- **Exodus 12:3-6** *On the tenth of this month they are each one to take a lamb for themselves, according to their fathers’ households, a lamb for each household... You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month, then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel is to kill it at twilight*
- **Leviticus 25:10-11** *You shall thus consecrate the fiftieth year... It shall be a jubilee for you, and each of you shall return to his own property, and each of you shall return to his family. You shall not sow, nor reap its aftergrowth, nor gather in from its untrimmed vines.*
- **Leviticus 21:17-20** *Speak to Aaron, saying, “No man of your offspring throughout their generations who has a defect shall approach to offer the food of his God. For no one who has a defect shall*

*approach: a blind man, or a lame man, or he who has a disfigured face, or any deformed limb, or a man who has a broken foot or broken hand, or a hunchback or a dwarf, or one who has a defect in his eye or eczema or scabs or crushed testicles.”*

The rebuttal often given is that we are only expected to keep commandments that we can keep. So, for example, we don't have to keep temple-related commands because there is no temple. Well, none of the commands recorded above require a temple. For example, someone is not keeping the Passover by doing a Seder meal but only if they take a lamb into their house for 14 days, kill it, and eat the roasted meat all night. That does not require a temple.

## **Position #2. The Ten Commandments are eternal and should always be kept, but the rest of the Law was temporary**

The Seventh-day Adventist Church was founded at Battle Creek, Michigan in 1863 by Ellen Gould White (1827-1915), together with her husband James White, Hiram Edson, J. N. Andrews and Joseph Bates. Bates was part of a group that promoted the Seventh-day (Sabbath) concept of keeping Saturday instead of Sunday as a day of rest. The Seventh-day Adventists believe the Sabbath should be observed from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset. They say about “the Ten Commandments. THEY WERE NOT SHADOWY TYPES TO PASS AWAY WITH THE DEATH OF CHRIST” [April 15, 1875. “SDA Bible Commentary,” Vol. 1, p. 1104, emphasis theirs]. Ellen White believed the rest of the Mosaic Law was for “illustrating and applying the laws of the Ten Commandments...unlike the Ten Commandments, they were delivered privately to Moses” [“Patriarchs and Prophets,” p. 310]. So only the Ten Commandments are eternal, since they come from the hand of God.

### **Problems with Position #2**

#### **Jesus did not single out the Ten Commandments as being eternal.**

If the Ten Commandments are the “eternal” part of the Law, as the Seven-day Adventists claim, then why did Jesus not refer to them collectively, or to any one of them, when He was asked, “*Which is the great commandment in the Law?*” Instead of quoting or referring to the Ten Commandments, Jesus said, “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and foremost commandment. And the second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself*” (Matthew 22:35-39). This is a reference to Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18, not the Ten Commandments.

#### **Keeping the fourth commandment today is fraught with problems.**

- Exodus 16:29 commands, *Remain every man in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day. A Sabbath day's journey* is defined by Luke in Acts 1:12 as *to Jerusalem from the Mount called Olivet*. A little more than a half mile (about one kilometer). So, anyone driving more than a half mile (1 km), to get to their church or synagogue, is violating the Sabbath.
- Another violation of the Sabbath is all the work one has to do to get to church (especially mothers who get the children ready and all those who preform duties to put on the meetings—like the pastors).
- Then there is the violation of the Sabbath by turning on lights, heating, air conditioning, or other electronic equipment. Do they heat or air condition their homes on Saturday?
- The weekly Sabbath for Israel was about physical rest, not about worshiping or going to a meeting. At the time when Moses received the Ten Commandments, the Jews had no community meeting places.
- If keeping the Sabbath meant gathering on Saturday, why did Paul not reprimand the church in Troas for gathering on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7)? Actually he participated in the gathering on Sunday.

- Both in Exodus 20 and in Deuteronomy 5, the Ten Commandments are addressed to those who God *brought...out of the land of Egypt*. In Exodus 31:16-18, God said the Ten Commandments *written by the finger of God* were specifically for *a sign between Me and the sons of Israel*. They are never given as a basis for God's relationship with the church, or anybody else.
- In the Jerusalem Council (recorded in Acts 15), the elders and the apostles gave four directives for Gentile Christians (keep from idols, fornication, blood, and things strangled). They made no mention of Sabbath-keeping, but rather determined to *lay on you no greater burden than these essentials*. Apparently, Sabbath-keeping is not an essential.

### **Position #3. The moral and civil laws should be kept today, but not the ceremonial laws**

When it came to the ceremonial laws, John Calvin believed they were ended by Christ's death on the cross. In his Institutes (1536), Calvin wrote, "We must attend to the well-known division which distributes the whole law of God, as promulgated by Moses, into the moral, the ceremonial, and the judicial law." Calvin believed both the moral and civil (judicial) laws were in effect today. For example, he believed that since "Rebellious teenagers were to be executed in Israel [Deuteronomy 21:18-21]—rebellious teenagers should be executed in Geneva" [yinkahdinay.wordpress.com].

Calvin's more serious adherence to civil law, and more casual view of ceremonial law, can be seen in his application of the fourth commandment. Concerning the Sabbath, he asked and answered: "Does he order us to labor on six days, that we may rest on the seventh? Not absolutely; but allowing man six days for labor, he excepts the seventh, that it may be devoted to rest" ["Geneva Catechism," 169 (ca. 1560)].

Calvin was highly influenced by Augustine (354-430) on this issue. With respect to Augustine on the Sabbath, R. C. Sproul writes:

Augustine, for example, believed that nine of the Ten Commandments (the so-called "moral law" of the Old Testament) were still intact and imposed obligations upon the Christian church. His lone exception was the commandment with respect to the Sabbath day... Augustine was persuaded that the Old Testament Sabbath law had been abrogated [<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/defining-debate/>]

R.C. Sproul included this about Calvin and the Sabbath:

There is an old story, which may be apocryphal, that when John Knox came to Geneva to visit John Calvin at his home on the Sabbath, he was shocked to find Calvin engaged in lawn bowling. If the story is true, it may indicate that the theologian most devoted to Sabbath-keeping in history, Calvin, did not see recreation as a violation of the Lord's Day... [ibid]

### **How Sabbath keeping became Sunday-keeping**

The case for keeping Sunday, instead of Saturday, as "the Lord's day" has five arguments:

1. Since Jesus was raised from the dead on the first day of the week, it is appropriate for Christians to worship on Sunday rather than Saturday.
2. In Acts 20:7, Luke wrote that it was, *On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread*. So, the church in Troas assembled on Sunday.
3. In 1 Corinthians 16:2, Paul wrote, *On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come*. This was a giving activity on Sunday.
4. In Revelation 1:10, The Apostle John introduces his revelation saying, *I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day*. Since he did not say the Sabbath day, it is assumed this was Sunday.

5. The Sabbath day command is seen as referring to a weekly cyclical day of rest rather than a specific day of the week.

R.C. Sproul wrote,

John Calvin argued that it would be legitimate to have the Sabbath day on any day if all of the churches would agree, because the principle in view was the regular assembling of the saints for corporate worship and for the observation of rest [ibid].

### **Problems with Position #3**

#### **The Bible does not have Calvin's three-fold division.**

Calvin's whole case is based on dividing the Mosaic Law into three parts: moral, civil, and ceremonial (a distinction which apparently originated with Thomas Aquinas), then eliminating the ceremonial. But there are no such divisions in the Bible. Moses referred to his revelations in various places as *commandments, statutes, ordinances* and a few times *testimonies* (Exodus 4:28; 20:6; 4:28; Numbers 36:13), but he never called them moral, civil, and ceremonial. Actually, James seems to connect all parts of the Law together when he said that anyone who *stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all* (James 2:10).

#### **Separating out the ceremonial laws because of the cross of Christ is unjustified.**

The animal sacrifices of the Mosaic Law were called an *atonement* for the sins of Israel (stated repeatedly in Exodus 29–32 and most of the chapters of Leviticus). Blood sacrifices of animals will also make an *atonement* for the nation Israel in the future Millennial Kingdom (Ezekiel 43:18-26; 45:15, 17, 20). The death of Jesus was not about replacing the atonement sacrifices. The blood sacrifices were a type or foreshadow of the death of Christ in the sense that *without shedding of blood there can be no forgiveness* (Hebrews 9:22). But an atonement is not a payment for sin. *It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin* (Hebrews 10:4). An *atonement* was a covering for sin which needed to be repeated. Atonement (a covering) for sin is not propitiation (satisfaction), redemption (purchase), or reconciliation (positional change) for sin. Nor could *atonement* justify anyone before God. Whereas, Christ's death did all of that. Christ was never called our atonement. He was called *our Passover* (1 Corinthians 5:7). That's why He died on the Passover, not the Day of Atonement. The atonement is a covering, like Peter's statement *love covers a multitude of sins* (1 Peter 4:8), true but it doesn't pay for any of them. So, Christ's death is not a basis for separating the ceremonial laws from the others.

#### **The case for Sunday-keeping is unconvincing.**

1. It is good to honor the fact that Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week, but there is no command from Christ or the apostles that would indicate the church was instructed to remember that by having a meeting (or resting) on Sunday.
2. The meeting of the church in Troas (described in Acts 20:6-12) included *the first day of the week*. But this is just an example of what one church did one time, possibly because Paul was *intending to leave the next day*. There is no command or implication that all churches did that or were supposed to do that. The church in Jerusalem met every day of the week (Acts 2:46). Is that example a command for everybody? Jesus and Paul were single and celibate. Does that mean we should all be single and celibate? Examples are not commands.
3. First Corinthians 16 is Paul's request for *each one of you* believers to *put aside and save some money on the first day of every week*. Paul was making a collection from the believers in Macedonia and Achaia to help the poor believers in Jerusalem. He was asking them to take some of their salary and set it aside weekly *so that no collections be made when I come*. There is no reference here to a meeting of a church.
4. There is no evidence that *the Lord's day* in Revelation 1:10 is Sunday. E. W. Bullinger's "Commentary on Revelation," explains,

In the New Testament this day is *always* called “the first day of the week.” (See Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:2 2, 9; Luke 24:1; John 20:1, 19; Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 16:2.)... There is no evidence of any kind that “the first day of the week” was ever called “the Lord’s Day” before the Apocalypse was written.

You have to bring Sunday to the verse to get Sunday out of it. John could just as well be referring to a Saturday Sabbath. Isaiah called *the Sabbath day a delight, the holy day of the Lord*. Also, if we look at it in the context of the prophecy of the book of Revelation, it could be referring to the Old Testament prophetic *day of the Lord* (Isaiah 13:6, 9; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; Amos 5:18). That is the time beginning with the future tribulation (Revelation 6ff). At any rate, nothing says *the day of the Lord* is Sunday.

5. One can say that keeping a weekly day of rest, instead of a specified day of rest, is a cyclical application of the Genesis creation rest and the Sabbath command for Israel. But that is an **application**, not an interpretation, of those passages. It is unrealistic to suppose God was telling Israel to just pick any day of the week to rest.

#### **Position #4. The Mosaic Law as a directive ended at the cross, but it should be applied, like all Scripture**

All Scripture should be applied today (2 Timothy 3:16). But a prominent theme of the New Testament is that the Mosaic Law is not mandated as a directive for the church. This is recognized today by most Protestants, Roman Catholics, and Eastern Orthodox. The Catholic “Answers Magazine” says,

The answer is... Old Testament law, as such, is not binding on Christians. It never has been. In fact, it was only ever binding on those to whom it was delivered—the Jews (Israelites) [Jim Blackburn, December 1, 2008 (catholic.com/magazine)].

Orthodox author Dr. Peter Bouteneff wrote, “Firstly, the Old testament, from a Christian position, can only be understood through the New Testament.” He quotes Justin Martyr in a debate with Trypho the Jew. Justin says,

The law promulgated on Horeb is now old and belongs to yourselves alone... a covenant which comes after in like manner has put an end to the previous one; and an eternal and final law—namely, Christ—has been given to us, and the covenant is trustworthy, after which there shall be no law, no commandment, no ordinance.”

Actually, the Mosaic Law was not mandated for much of the Old Testament either (Genesis 1—Exodus 19). The Mosaic Law was not given until the 1500s B.C. Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and Moses (for the first 80 years of his life) were part of the Torah, but they were not under the Mosaic Law. For example, Abraham was married to his half-sister, which would have been sinful under the Mosaic Law (Leviticus 18:9-11). Adam was to be a vegetarian and Noah could eat any animal if he drained the blood out of it. Neither of those food commands are part of the Mosaic Law. So, the Torah has laws that contradict the Mosaic Law. The Law was given to Moses to establish Israel as a nation of God, after He separated them from Egypt. When God spoke with Moses about the Sabbath on Mount Sinai, He specified that *the sons of Israel shall observe the sabbath, to celebrate the sabbath... It is a sign between Me and the sons of Israel forever* (Exodus 31:16-17).

Christ and the apostles grew up and lived under Judaism, so they did Jewish things, not just Mosaic Law things. Going to synagogues on the Sabbath is not part of the Mosaic Law. Actually, Jesus seemed to strengthen the other commands (*You have heard...but I say to you* – Matthew 5:21ff) and weaken the Sabbath (Matthew 12:8; 10-12; Mark 1:21; 2:23-24, 27-28; 3:2-4; Luke 6:1-9; 13:10-16; 14:1-5; John 5:9-18; 7:22-23; 9:14-16).

For example, in Israel, when a man was found *gathering wood on the sabbath day...the Lord said to Moses "he shall surely be put to death,"* so the congregation stoned him to death (Numbers 15:32-36). But Jesus defended His disciples for picking grain, rubbing it in their hands to remove the chaff, and eating it on the Sabbath. It is hard to specify a difference between the mechanical act of gathering wood on the Sabbath and the mechanical act of gathering, rubbing the chaff off, and eating grain on the Sabbath. Jesus said things like, *"The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath...Is it lawful to do good or do harm on the Sabbath...the Sabbath was made for Man, not man for the Sabbath"* (Luke 6:1-9; Mark 2:27). And the Sabbath Jesus is referring to is part of the Mosaic Law, not Pharisee tradition.

The mega point Jesus made throughout His ministry was that pleasing God was not about keeping mechanical laws but conforming to the character of God. Even under the Mosaic Law, Sabbath keeping held no intrinsic value. Through Isaiah God told Israel,  
*"Bring your worthless offerings no longer, incense is an abomination to Me. New moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies...they have become a burden to Me"* (Isaiah 1:14).

Peter was a Jew to the core, which means he tried to keep all the dietary regulations of the Law. But God showed him a sheet with all kinds of animals forbidden to eat under the Mosaic Law. Then God told Peter to *kill and eat. But Peter said, "By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything unholy and unclean."* Again a voice came to him a second time, *"What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy."* This happened three times (Acts 10:14-16). The point seems to be, don't argue with God when He says the Mosaic Law is over.

After Paul and Barnabas had been teaching for a while in Antioch, some Jewish Christians came from Judea telling believers they had to be circumcised to be saved. Paul and Barnabas had a *great dissension and debate with them,* so the brothers in Antioch decided Paul and Barnabas should go to the *apostles and elders* in Jerusalem to make a decision about this. When they all got together and heard everyone's arguments, Peter stood up and said,

*"Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?"* Acts 15:10).

Peter made an interesting point. How realistic is it to ask the Gentile believers to keep the Mosaic Law, when the Jewish believers couldn't keep it? When the Lord's half-brother James spoke, he suggested they *not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles* but only require four things: (1) *abstain from things contaminated by idols* and (2) *from fornication* and (3) *from what is strangled* and (4) *from blood*. It is not necessarily clear to us today what each of those entailed, but one thing is very clear, the apostles and elders did not require the church to keep a Sabbath day.

Paul and Barnabas went on the first missionary journey up into Galatia. After that, Paul wrote to them about some Judaizers who were telling them to keep the Mosaic Law. Paul called that a *different Gospel* (Galatians 1:6). Paul added, *if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly* (Galatians 2:21) and *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law* (Galatians 3:13). Paul drove home his point about the end of the Mosaic Law in Galatians 3:24-25.

*Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.*

Here Paul calls the Law a *tutor* and clearly says, we are no longer under it. He emphasized the point in Galatians 4:9-11 when he wrote,

*...how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again? You observe days and months and seasons and years. I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain.*

Apparently, the *days* he is referring to are Sabbath days, because he told the Colossians,



*Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day Colossians 2:16).*

The danger of keeping a “Lord’s Day” is to think the other days are our days. It’s the same as tithing which assumes 90% is ours. In fact, every day and all our money is the Lord’s. So, if you want to keep the Sabbath day, fine, no problem, unless you tell others that they should also keep it. The principle is, *One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind (Romans14:5).*

## **Conclusion**

I have organized the views on Christians keeping the Mosaic Law into four categories. These are just artificial categories I have created from my research, for the sake of understanding the issue.

**Position #1 The Mosaic Law should be kept by all Christians.** This has not been recognized by any Christian theologian for 2000 years. It is a position brought to a passage, not taken from the passage, and it cannot be kept today by Gentiles living outside the land of Israel and without a Levitical Priest.

**Position #2 The Ten Commandments are different in that they are eternal and should always be kept.** This overlooks the fact that groups promoting Sabbath-keeping do not keep the Sabbath if they travel more than a mile (1.6 km), turn on lights, heating, air conditioning, or other electronic equipment on Saturday. Also, why do they say we should keep a Sabbath day and not a Sabbatical or Jubilee year.

**Position #3 The moral and civil laws should be kept today, but not the ceremonial laws.** This depends on a moral-civil-ceremonial division which is nowhere found in the Bible. Also, it’s an unjustified switch from Saturday to Sunday and focuses on traditional church meetings rather than rest.

**Position #4 The Mosaic Law as a directive ended at the cross, but it should be applied today.** This is the most biblically-supported position, although most of these groups make an unjustified case for changing the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday.

*For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes*  
(Romans 10:4)