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The Shabbat Covenant & Righteousness #2

By Jim Myers

Continued from Issue #46

In the previous article we were studying Isaiah 58 and the connection Isaiah made between the Shabbat Covenant and Righteousness. The fact that Jesus was not only aware of the teachings of Isaiah, but that they played an important role in his message was clearly demonstrated in the last article also. Now let's look at the role of the Shabbat Covenant in Isaiah 58 as seen in verses 13-14:

13 "If because of the Shabbat, you turn your foot from doing your *own* pleasure on My holy day, and call the Shabbat a delight, the holy *day* of Yahweh honorable, and shall honor it, desisting from your *own* ways, from seeking your *own* pleasure, and speaking *your own* word, 14 then you will take delight in Yahweh, and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth; and I will feed you *with* the heritage of Jacob your father, for the mouth of Yahweh has spoken. "

The Shabbat was to be a day that focused on righteous acts. The result would be that those who held fast to the Shabbat – both Jew and Gentile – would be recognized as “righteous people.” The theme of the inclusion of the Gentiles in the Shabbat continued in 66:23

"And it shall be from new moon to new moon And from Shabbat to Shabbat, all mankind will come to bow down before Me," says Yahweh.

Jesus, the Synagogue & Shabbat

Read the following verses and see if you notice any patterns in the life of Jesus.

21 And they *went into Capernaum; and immediately on the **Sabbath** He entered the synagogue and *began* to teach. (Mark 1)

2 And when the Sabbath had come, He began to teach in the synagogue. . . (Mark 6)

16 And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the **Sabbath**, and stood up to read. (Luke 4)

31 And He came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee. And He was teaching them on the Sabbath; (Luke 4)

6 And it came about on another Sabbath, that He entered the synagogue and was teaching. . . (Luke 6)

10 And He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. (Luke 13)

1 And it came about when He went into the house of one of the leaders of the Pharisees on *the Sabbath* to eat bread. . . (Luke 14)

Where would you expect to find Jesus on the Shabbat? If you wanted to hear Jesus teach

where would you go to find him? The authors of Mark and Luke make it very clear that it was Jesus' custom to go to a synagogue on the Shabbat and that, in many cases; he also was allowed to teach there. Don't you find it a little strange that Jesus never mentioned a "church" or told his disciples that they should attend church every Sunday?

I always think about this section when I see someone wearing a "WWJD" bracelet – **What Would Jesus Do.** I always want to ask them when was the last time they attended a synagogue on Shabbat. Since that is what I would expect to Jesus to do on Shabbat, shouldn't I also expect his followers to do the same thing too? **WWJD?**

Even though I included the above paragraph some what in jest, the idea behind it seems to be the same as that of the early leaders of the Jesus Movement. In the last article I discussed the fact that the appearance of Gentiles in the Jesus Movement created a tremendous challenge for its Jewish leadership. In Acts 15 we read about the conflict that arose and launched the Jerusalem Council. The head of the council, Jacob, the brother of Jesus, made the following ruling --

13 And after they had stopped speaking, Jacob (James) answered, saying, "Brethren, listen to me. 14 "Simeon has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name. 15 "And with this the words of the Prophets agree, just as it is written,

16 'AFTER THESE THINGS I will return, AND I WILL REBUILD THE TABERNACLE OF DAVID WHICH HAS FALLEN, AND I WILL REBUILD ITS RUINS, AND I WILL RESTORE IT, 17 IN ORDER THAT THE REST OF MANKIND MAY SEEK THE LORD, AND ALL THE GENTILES WHO ARE CALLED BY MY NAME, ' 18 SAYS THE LORD, WHO MAKES THESE THINGS KNOWN FROM OF OLD.

19 "Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, 20 but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood. 21 "For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath."

How many modern churches teach potential converts that the basic requirements for "salvation" are these?

- (1) abstain from things contaminated by idols;
- (2) abstain from fornication;
- (3) abstain from what is strangled and from blood;
- (4) keep the Shabbat;
- (5) study at the synagogue.

You may ask where the last two requirements came from since they are not specifically mentioned in the above English translation. The key to understanding their origin comes from an understanding of the second Greek word in verse 21 – **GAR** – which is translated as 'for' (first English word).

Many of you have heard **Dr. Ike Tennison**, President of the Biblical Heritage Center, and a former professor of Greek, teach about the Greek word **GAR**. When we encounter it we expect to find information that will further explain the words that came before it. In other words, the Council's ruling would be more accurately understood if it were translated as follows –

19 Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles (with more than the following minimum requirements -- the three things mentioned above); because they will be studying Moses (the first five books of the Hebrew Bible – Torah) every Shabbat in the synagogue and will be learning more as time passes. **BHR**

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