

May God bless you on His Sabbath day!

Sabbaths are a sign between God and His chosen people but a sign of what?

EXODUS 31:13, 16-17 “Speak also to the children of Israel, saying: ‘Surely **My Sabbaths** you shall keep, for it **is a sign between Me and you** throughout your generations, **that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you.** ... 16 ‘Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, **to observe the Sabbath** throughout their generations **as a perpetual covenant.** 17 ‘**It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel** forever; for *in* six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed.’ ”

EZEKIEL 20:12, 19-20 “Moreover **I [the LORD] also gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between them and Me, that they might know that I am the LORD** who sanctifies them. ... 19 ‘*I am* the LORD your God: **Walk in My statutes, keep My judgments, and do them;** 20 ‘**hallow My Sabbaths, and they will be a sign between Me and you, that you may know that I am the LORD your God.**’

The seventh-day Sabbath is a sign or token of those who “**know** that I am the LORD.” However, a sign is not actual evidence, especially when people are involved. It is simply an indication that something MAY be true. Remember the old saying? “Red sky in the morning, sailor’s warning; red sky at night, sailor’s delight.” A red sky is a sign of pending weather but it is not a guarantee. The sign of the Sabbath did not prove the ancient Israelites knew God; in fact, they rebelled against God:

EZEKIEL 20:13, 16 “Yet **the house of Israel rebelled** against Me in the wilderness; they did not walk in My statutes; they despised My judgments, ‘which, *if* a man does, he shall live by them’; and they greatly defiled My Sabbaths. Then I said I would pour out My fury on them in the wilderness, to consume them. ... 16 “because **they despised My judgments and did not walk in My statutes, but profaned My Sabbaths;** for their heart went after their idols. ...

Rebelling against the Law of God was EVIDENCE that the ancient Israelites actually did not know God. The Law of God consists of commandments, statutes, precepts, testimonies, and judgments. Was this a case that the Law was just too complex for them? No, the priests were responsible for teaching them if there was any doubt:

LEVITICUS 10:11 “and that **you [Aaron] may teach the children of Israel all the statutes** which the LORD has spoken to them by the hand of Moses.”

How can anyone know God if they do not know His Law? Today, many know very little of the Law of God beyond the Ten Commandments and that is a problem. **The Ten Commandments do not express the fullness of the Law. Obeying them alone does NOT PROVE someone knows God.** Take the first four for example:

- 1) Have no other gods besides God;
- 2) Make no graven images and do not worship them;

- 3) Do not take God's name in vain;
- 4) Keep the Sabbath day.

Someone can obey these to the letter but at the same time not know God. Having no other gods is not the same as obeying the true God. The last six commandments are universal statutes that prohibit behaviors harmful to others so they are not proof that someone knows God either. The only one that comes close is the fourth commandment to keep the seventh-day Sabbath. It is a sign of those who know God but simply gathering and listening to a sermon on the Sabbath falls far short of knowing God. The Sabbath is only a sign and these days it is not even a reliable indicator much less proof. But why is knowing God important?

JOHN 17:3 “And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

Those who know God will have eternal life in the Kingdom. And, yet, many believe that Sabbath-keeping is the number one indication of knowing God. It may be shocking to hear, but it is NOT. The big question many people want answered is whether or not someone keeps the Sabbath and holydays (subject to the ‘correct’ calendar of course). But that is not the RIGHT big question because it does not prove someone knows God. The sign of the Sabbath is nothing more than an indication someone MIGHT know God. Too often there is an abundance of evidence to the contrary. What proves someone does not know God? Rejecting the Law of God just as the ancient Israelites did. But the Law requires observing the Sabbath so why is that not proof? Because the Law of God is much, much more than that. The Law of God is FULFILLED by three commandments that focus on the singular requirement of loving God and people¹:

- 1) FIRST GREAT COMMANDMENT: You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.
- 2) SECOND GREAT COMMANDMENT: You shall love your neighbor and enemies as yourself. (NOTE: Jesus Christ included enemies in the Second Great Commandment—Matt. 5:43-44.)
- 3) NEW COMMANDMENT: A new commandment that you love one another; as I [*Jesus Christ*] have loved you.

The whole of the Law is contained in these three very simple and easy-to-remember commandments that have one central and common theme—agape love. Agape love is only PROOF that someone knows God and is known by God:

1 JOHN 4:7, 11-13, 21 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is begotten of God and knows God. ... 11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. 13 By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. ... 21 And this commandment we have from Him [*Jesus Christ*]: that he who loves God must love his brother also.

¹ Matt. 5:37-40; Mark 12:29-31; John 13:34-35; 15:12.

On the other hand, a lack of agape love proves someone does NOT know God:

1 JOHN 3:10-11, 14-15, 22-23 In this the children of God and **the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice [justice] is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother.** 11 For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should **love one another**, ... 14 We know that we have passed from death to life, because we **love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death.** 15 **Whoever hates his brother is a murderer**, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. ... 22 And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. 23 And **this is His commandment**: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and **love one another, as He gave us commandment.**

What could be clearer? Anyone who does not keep the Law AND does not have agape love does not know God. In fact, many observe the Sabbath according to some very strict rules that they loudly demand others follow. This is evidence that they do not have agape love. The Law is meaningless without agape love. The RIGHT big question is whether or not someone DEMONSTRATES agape love for God, neighbors, enemies, and brethren. Those who do so will also keep the Sabbath and holydays. But simply keeping the seventh-day Sabbath is not evidence by itself. **Agape love for God, neighbors, enemies, and the brethren is proof positive someone knows God.** For those who do not have agape love it is evidence to the contrary—they do NOT know God. Lack of agape love is revealed in many ways, most often through offenses:

MATTHEW 18:7 “**Woe to the world because of offenses!** For offenses must come, but **woe to that man by whom the offense comes!**”

Offenses are sins but they are the worst of all sin because they are Woes. Sadly, most offenses go unreconciled within the *ekklesia* these days. Offenses are ALWAYS the result of getting angry with someone. Unresolved anger festers into hatred and hatred breeds malice, a desire to harm others. Prolonged anger, hatred, and malice are increasing degrees of evil and proof someone does not know God:

1 JOHN 4:8, 20 **He who does not love [others] does not know God**, for God is love. ... 20 **If someone** says, “I love God,” and **hates his brother, he is a liar**; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?

The presence or absence of agape love is unmistakable proof of knowing and not knowing God. While most people get angry on occasion, those with agape love are not easily angered and they are diligent to put anger away:

1 CORINTHIANS 13:4-5 **Love is ... not easily angered or resentful.**

EPHESIANS 4:26-27 **“Be angry, and do not sin”: do not let the sun go down on your wrath,** 27 nor give place to the devil.

Those who are easily angered cause offenses time and time again. Resolving offenses is evidence of agape love because the true children of God are grieved and

saddened and want to reconcile. People who refuse to reconcile have no agape love. They make excuses or blame others but the Law of God clearly says agape love is the basis of reconciliation:

PROVERBS 17:9 The **one who forgives an offense seeks love**, but whoever repeats a matter separates close friends.

It is impossible to reconcile with someone (beyond putting aside one's own anger and forgiving their offense to God) who has unresolved anger or worse. Whether someone was a victim or offender, holding on to anger and refusing to even make an effort to reconcile is grounds for eternal death:

LUKE 17:1-2 Then He [*Jesus Christ*] said to the disciples, "It is impossible that no offenses should come, but **woe to him** through whom they do come! 2 "**It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should offend** one of these little ones.

The Holy Spirit is given to those who are united through baptism into the sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is the mind and power of God that produces agape love² but the Spirit is stressed when someone fights against it more than submitting to it:

1 THESSALONIANS 5:19 **Do not quench [extinguish] the Spirit.**

And that is a serious problem because God will not force someone to have agape love. Many things grieve the Holy Spirit but the greatest stressors all come from prolonged anger that breeds every evil thought and emotion:

EPHESIANS 4:30-31 And **do not grieve the Holy Spirit** of God, by which you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 **Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, [along] with all malice.**

ROMANS 1:29-31 being **filled with all [injustice], sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers [gossipers], 30 backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, 31 undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful;**

All of these begin with unresolved ANGER, all of these involve RELATIONSHIPS, and all of these GRIEVE the Holy Spirit. Continuing in them will eventually cause God to withdraw His Spirit. The judgment for unresolved anger is death:

ROMANS 1:32 who, **knowing the [just] judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death,** not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

Prolonged anger, hatred, and malice show contempt for the sacrifice of Jesus Christ to bring all who were once enemies of God into a relationship of agape love with

² 2 Tim. 1:7.

Him. They are all Sins of Rebellion for which there is no forgiveness. Worst of all, they INSULT the Holy Spirit:

HEBREWS 10:26-29 For **if we sin willfully [Sins of Rebellion]** after we have received the knowledge of the truth, **there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, 27 but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries [of God].** 28 Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 29 Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and **insulted the Spirit of grace?**

Grieving and insulting the Holy Spirit is the direct result of prolonged anger in RELATIONSHIPS. It is utter contempt for relationships of agape love with God and people. Prolonged anger, hatred, and malice reject, deny, and destroy agape love in a relationship. They cause strifes, divisions, and offenses³. Agape love always pursues peace:

HEBREWS 12:14 **Pursue peace with all people,** and holiness, **without which no one will see the Lord:**

Peace with God and people is the result of obeying and keeping the Law of Love:

PSALMS 119:165-166 **Great peace have those who love Your law,** and nothing causes them to stumble. 166 LORD, I hope for Your salvation, and **I do Your commandments.**

Those with agape love KNOW God who is the God of love and peace:

2 CORINTHIANS 13:11 ... Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and **the God of love and peace** will be with you.

Those who bring agape love to their relationships make gathering together on the seventh-day Sabbath a beautiful and joyous time and prove they KNOW God:

2 TIMOTHY 2:22 ... **pursue** [justice], faith, **love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.**

May God's grace and peace be upon you!

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³ Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 3:3.