

THE CORE MESSAGE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Introduction – The core message of Israel centered on creation, promises to the patriarchs, the exodus, preservation in the wilderness, gift of the Law, conquest of Canaan, Davidic kingship, exile, and restoration. The practices of festivals and the Sabbath Day were based on a remembrance of these mighty acts of God.

- A. The New Testament says that God has acted anew in the person of Jesus for our salvation.

1 Corinthians 15:1-8

- B. This message of Jesus is a mindset for our behaviors and attitudes as Christians.

Philippians 2:1-11

- C. Christians assembled to remember Jesus in communion on the day of the resurrection instead of the Sabbath.

Mark 16:9

Acts 20:6-7

1 Corinthians 16:2

Historical Confirmation

In 115 AD Ignatius wrote, “If therefore those who lived according to the old practices came to the new hope, no longer observing the Sabbath but living according to the Lord’s day, in which our lives arose through him and his death, through which mystery we received faith, and on account of which we suffer in order that we be found disciples of Jesus Christ our only teacher, how shall we be able to live apart from him for whom even the prophets were looking as their teacher since they were his disciples in spirit.” (Magnesians 9)

In 135 AD Barnabas wrote, “Moreover God says to the Jews, ‘Your new moons and Sabbaths I cannot endure.’ You see how he says, ‘The present Sabbaths are not acceptable to me, but the Sabbath which I have made in which, when I have rested from all things, I will make the beginning of the eighth day which is the beginning of a new world.’ Wherefore, we Christians keep the eighth day for joy, on which also Jesus arose from the dead and when he appeared ascended into heaven.” (15:8-9)

- D. Baptism as immersion embodies the gospel message.

Romans 6:3-7

Historical Confirmation

In 135 AD Barnabas wrote “Let us inquire if the Lord was careful to make a revelation in advance concerning the water and the cross. Concerning the water it was written with regard to Israel how they will not receive the baptism which brings the forgiveness of sins but will supply another for themselves.... Blessed are those who place their hope in his cross and descend into the water.... We descend into the water full of sins and uncleanness, and we ascend bearing reverence in our heart and having hope in Jesus in our spirit.” (11:1, 8, 11)

In 360 AD Basil of Caesarea wrote, “How then do we become in the likeness of his death? We were buried with him through baptism.... How then do we accomplish the descent into Hades? We imitate the burial of Jesus through baptism. For the bodies of those being baptized are as it were buried in water.” (On the Holy Spirit 15:35)

Conclusion – The New Testament has many potential approved examples and specific commands with which we do not need to conform. The essential ones are Christ-centered. One can test one’s conclusions by the historical record of the early church. This is how we can separate the core issues from disputable matters.