



Daily Verse and Comment

Jeremiah 17:19-27

(19) Thus the LORD said to me, "Go and stand in the gates of the children of the people, by which the kings of Judah come in, and by which they go out, and in all the gates of Jerusalem. (20) And say to them, 'Hear the Word of the LORD, kings of Judah, and all Judah, and all the people of Jerusalem who enter in by these gates! (21) Thus says the LORD, "Take heed to yourselves, and carry no burden on the Sabbath day, nor bring *it* in by the gates of Jerusalem. (22) Nor carry out a burden from your houses on the Sabbath day, nor do any work, but keep the Sabbath day holy, as I commanded your fathers. (23) But they did not obey, nor inclined their ear, but made their neck stiff, so that they might not hear nor receive instruction. (24) And it shall be, if you diligently hearken to Me," says the LORD, "to bring in no burden through the gates of this city on the Sabbath day, but keep the Sabbath day holy, to do no work in it; (25) Then kings and rulers sitting on the throne of David shall enter into the gates of this city, riding in chariots and on horses, they, and their rulers, the men of Judah, and the people of Jerusalem. And this city shall remain forever. (26) And they shall come from the cities of Judah, and from the places about Jerusalem, and from the land of Benjamin, and from the plain, and from the mountains, and from the south, bringing burnt offerings, and sacrifices, and grain offerings, and incense, and bringing sacrifices of praise to the house of the LORD. (27) But if you will not hearken to Me to keep the Sabbath day holy, and not to carry a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day; then I will kindle a fire in its gates, and it will devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it will not be put out." ' '

A Faithful Version

For years, the folk of the Kingdom of Judah walked in the footsteps of their brethren in the Kingdom of Israel. However, a number of them then took a different path. The result of that change, of course, is in itself proof that God's [Sabbath](#) is a sign pointing to Him and His creation.

[Jeremiah 17:19-27](#) records God's promise to a Sabbath-keeping people. Here, He warns Jerusalem's inhabitants to "bear no burden on the Sabbath day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem; . . . nor do any work, but hallow the Sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers" (verses 21-22). If they heeded, [God](#) continues, "then shall enter the gates of this city kings and princes sitting on the throne of David, . . . accompanied by the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and this city shall remain forever" (verse 25). Conversely, Sabbath-breaking will have dire consequences: "But if you will not heed Me to hallow the Sabbath day, ... then I will kindle a fire in its gates, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched" (verse 27). (For the fulfillment of this prophecy, see [Jeremiah 39:8](#) ; [II Chronicles 36:19](#).)

The people of Judah did not heed God's warning and, as a result, "kings and princes" no longer sit "on the throne of David" in Jerusalem. God moved the Davidic monarchy northwest to the British Isles, and the people He moved to Babylon. Jerusalem burned.

Those who returned from Babylon after seventy years did not learn their lesson. Nehemiah must have stood aghast at the Sabbath-breaking he witnessed among post-exilic Jews. [Nehemiah 13:15](#), 17-18 bears the record. Nehemiah

. . . saw in Judah some people treading wine presses on the Sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and loading donkeys with wine, grapes, figs, and all kinds of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. And I warned them about the day on which they were selling provisions. . . . "What evil thing is this that you do, by which you profane the Sabbath day? Did not your fathers do thus, and did not our God bring all this disaster [i.e., the destruction of Jerusalem] on us and on this city? Yet you bring added wrath on Israel by profaning the Sabbath."

Both Ezra and Nehemiah worked assiduously to teach the people to keep holy God's Sabbath. It was during this time that the people of Judah took a different path than those of Israel. For, while Israel *never* (no, not to this day!) returned to the practice of Sabbath-keeping, the descendants of the tribe of Judah (with Levi) came to keep it—albeit not perfectly. [After the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, the Jews' religious leaders became so zealous in their desire to observe the Sabbath properly that they made it a burden. They eventually lost perspective: Failing to grasp the spirit of the [fourth commandment](#), they created hundreds of "do's and don'ts" to define its letter. By Christ's time, their fanaticism had grown to the point that the Sabbath had itself become an object of worship. [Christ](#) had to devote a fair portion of His ministry to teaching the people that "the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath" ([Mark 2:27](#)).]

They kept it throughout the hideous Maccabean period and throughout the long Roman occupation later. They kept it after the fall of Jerusalem in ^{AD} 70. They kept it in the Diaspora—during the Dark Ages, the Renaissance, and the Enlightenment. They kept it whether they dwelt in Europe, Asia, the Middle East, or later, America. Many keep it to this day. Because they do, *they know who they are!* They know who their patriarchs are.

Like a neon sign, the mark of the Sabbath, identifying Jews as worshipping the God of Abraham, [Isaac](#), and Jacob, shines brightly through the ages, through the darkness of ghetto and oven, even piercing the murky gloom of today's secularism and humanism. To a good extent, the experience of the Jews shows that God's mark, the Sabbath, does in fact identify a people as worshipping the God of the patriarchs.

Had the northern [ten tribes](#) "remember[ed] the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" ([Exodus 20:8](#)) even half as well as the folk of Judah do, they would today have a fair idea of their roots. Having forsaken the keeping of the seventh-day Sabbath, the peoples of the Kingdom of Israel came, over time, to forget the God of their fathers, as well as His revelation and His prophets.

"Beware," one of those prophets declares, "lest you forget the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt" ([Deuteronomy 6:12](#)). Forgetting the God who separated them from the other nations, ten-tribed Israel, scattered

and wandering, became separated from their God and ultimately grew to be *like* other nations. Becoming like them, Israel became *lost* among them. Beware.

— Charles Whitaker

To learn more, see:

[Searching for Israel \(Part Twelve\): The Sign](#)

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