



Pastor David B. Curtis

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Media #650



Feasts of the Lord - Prequel: The Sabbath Rest Leviticus 23:1-3 Delivered 04/14/2013

We are getting ready to start a series on the "Feasts of Yahweh," but for today I want to do a prequel, if you will. I want you to notice something in the text that lists all seven feasts:

The LORD spoke again to Moses, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, 'The LORD'S appointed times which you shall proclaim as holy convocations—My appointed times are these: 'For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there is a sabbath of complete rest, a holy convocation. You shall not do any work; it is a sabbath to the LORD in all your dwellings. Leviticus 23:1-3 NASB

The first thing I want you to notice here is that we see the word LORD three times. This is from the Hebrew. Reading from right to left it is: *Yod-Hei-Vav-Hei* (YHVH), which is pronounced as Yahweh. The name (Yahweh) appears nearly 7,000 times (6,824 in NASB) in the Hebrew Scriptures, but not even once in the English Bible, not even in the Completer Jewish Bible. The CJB uses *Adonai*, which means: "LORD." English translators replaced Yahweh with the indiscriminate title of LORD. So, whenever you see LORD in all caps, it is Yahweh.

Before He lists the feasts Yahweh talks about the Sabbath. This could be considered a weekly feast. So, for our time this morning I want to talk about the Sabbath. This is an important topic, because all sincere Christians want to honor God by doing what is right. The problem is they don't always know what the Bible means by what it says. There is a great division among Christians about the Sabbath. Is Sunday, the first day of the week, the Christian Sabbath? Did it replace the seventh day (Saturday) as the day of rest? Has the fourth of the "Ten Commandments" been changed or done away with? These and similar

questions are being asked today by believers all over the globe, and the answers to them are very important. I think there are basically three major views today concerning the Sabbath.

1. The Sabbath still stands, and it is still on Saturday. This would be the view of the Seventh Day Adventist. They would say, "Sunday is not the Sabbath Day at all. The Almighty's Sabbath, according to His unalterable Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:8-11, Matthew 5:17-18), is the seventh day of the week, the day commonly known as Saturday. You may read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and you will not find a single verse authorizing the observance of Sunday. The true weekly Sabbath of Yahweh, the Almighty God of Israel, was, is, and ever will be, the seventh day of the week."

Michael Rood, a self-professed rabbi who holds to Saturday worship says, "Worship on Sundays, and especially sunrise services on Easter, are an abomination to the Lord because the sun god was worshiped on Sunday mornings." (*Mystery of Iniquity*, Chapter 8).

2. The Sabbath still stands, but was changed to Sunday. "The law of God still stands," say others, "but Sunday, the first day of the week, is the new Christian Sabbath. It commemorates the resurrection of the Lord Yeshua the Christ. It is the Lord's Day and has replaced the seventh day Sabbath by the authority of the inspired apostles and, therefore, by Christ Himself. Christians are certainly under obligation to observe it."

Adam Clarke, in his commentary on 1 Corinthians 16, says this, "It appears from the whole that the first day of the week, which is the Christian Sabbath, was the day on which their principal religious meetings were held in Corinth and the churches of Galatia; and, consequently, in all other places where Christianity had prevailed. This is a strong argument for the keeping of the Christian Sabbath."

It was, by and large, the Puritans who were responsible for the view that the Lord's Day (that is, Sunday) should be regarded as the Christian Sabbath and, as such, it's taken the place of the Jewish Sabbath (Saturday). But this viewpoint caused a rigorous legalistic observance of the first day of the week so that its bondage became equivalent to that of its Jewish counterpart.

The Scriptures used to support a Sunday Sabbath are somewhat puzzling when really examined. It's supposed that the mention in Acts 20:7 of the believers coming together to break bread on the first day of the week (Sunday being the first day as Saturday, being the seventh, would be the last) is a reference to the "special" day that the believers came together to break bread, but the Scripture doesn't say this:

And on the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to depart the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight. Acts 20:7 NASB

It only says that they broke bread, and that they did it on the first day of the week. Acts 2:46 says that the habit of the early Church was to break bread *daily*, not to break it just once every week.

1 Corinthians 16:2 also mentions the first day of the week in the context of putting aside some contribution for the relief of the Jewish believers. But, again, this doesn't have to refer to a special weekday on which the Church met to worship Yeshua—their worship continued daily as has been previously noted.

Appeal to the day on which Christ rose from the dead (Sunday) is also often cited as being a good reason for making the day special and to be observed as the believer's day of rest. Although it's true to say that the evidence suggests that the early Church met to worship Yahweh on Sundays, if they did do so, it wasn't that they were compelled from a theological standpoint, but because they chose to do so.

Besides, the early Church met every day to worship Yahweh. By our elevation of one day above all others, we've tended to forget the importance of the other six and push Christianity into the restrictions of one seventh of our lifetimes rather than a hundred per cent of it.

So these first two views are similar in that they both say that the Sabbath still stands. Do you remember what the penalty was for Sabbath breakers?

'Therefore you are to observe the sabbath, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people. Exodus 31:14 NASB

So in either one of these views we are bound to keep the Sabbath. The only argument between these two is which day is the Sabbath.

One Seventh Day Adventist writer states, "What are you going to do about Sunday, which is an ordinary work-day posing as the Sabbath of the Almighty? And, more importantly, what are you now going to do about the seventh day of the week, the Sabbath of the Almighty God? Bear in mind that the seventh day of the week was, is and ever will be the True Sabbath Day. Those who ignore this fact are guilty of breaking one of the Ten Commandments, (Exodus 20:8-11). And that is sin: for sin is the transgression of the Almighty's Law, (1 John 3:4)."

I have to agree with this writer. The Sabbath is the seventh day of the week. I also agree that to violate the Sabbath is to break one of the Ten Commandments:

"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 "Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. 11 "For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy. Exodus 20:8-11 NASB

Which day is the Sabbath? It is the seventh day, Saturday. So the Sabbath is Saturday. Are we bound to keep it? Before you answer that, let's go back and look at the Decalogue. The command to "keep the Sabbath" is part of the Ten Commandments. As we look at these commandments I want you to ask yourself the question, "Are we bound by these commands?"

Do you believe that a Christian is duty bound to obey the first commandment—"Have no other gods" (Exodus 20:3)?

Do you believe that a Christian is duty bound to obey the second commandment—"No idols / images" (Exodus 20:4-6)?

Do you believe that a Christian is duty bound to obey the third commandment—"Don't take God's name in vain" (Exodus 20:7)?

Do you believe that a Christian is duty bound to obey the fourth commandment—"Keep the Sabbath" (Exodus 20:8-11)?

Do you believe that a Christian is duty bound to obey the fifth commandment—"Honor your parents" (Exodus 20:12)?

Do you believe that a Christian is duty bound to obey the sixth commandment—"No murder" (Exodus 20:13)?

Do you believe that a Christian is duty bound to obey the seventh commandment—"No adultery" (Exodus 20:14)?

Do you believe that a Christian is duty bound to obey the eighth commandment—"No stealing" (Exodus 20:15)?

Do you believe that a Christian is duty bound to obey the ninth commandment—"Don't bear false witness" (Exodus 20:16)?

Do you believe that a Christian is duty bound to obey the tenth commandment—"No coveting" (Exodus 20:17)?

What do you say, are we as Christians bound by these commandments? I could put it this way: Is it okay for us to steal? Is it okay for us to murder? Is it okay for us to have idols? Is it okay for us to not keep the Sabbath?

Why is it that we think it is okay to ignore the fourth commandment, but not the other nine? Are we only obligated to the nine commandments today? If so, when was the fourth commandment removed?

Let me put the question to you this way, "Do you believe that the Ten Commandments, written with the finger of God upon the Tables of Stone, are the rule of life for a Christian today?" Who were the 10 Commandments given to?:

Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write down these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel." 28 So he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did not eat bread or drink water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments. Exodus 34:27-28 NASB

These Commandments were for Israel. Along with the Ten Commandment came the temple worship, the sacrifices, the food restrictions. Are you bound by those? Do any of you eat shellfish?

'These you may eat, whatever is in the water: all that have fins and scales, those in the water, in the seas or in the rivers, you may eat. 10 'But whatever is in the seas and in the rivers, that do not have fins and scales among all the teeming life of the water, and among all the living creatures that are in the water, they are detestable things to you, Leviticus 11:9-10 NASB

Why is it that believes can eat whatever they want, but some still feel compelled to obey the Sabbath? James says that the Law is a whole:

For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all. James 2:10 NASB

The Old Covenant Law is a unit. If you break one commandment, you are guilty. Some have tried to divide the Law into three categories: moral, judicial (civil), and ceremonial. This started with Thomas Aquinas (1225-74) back in the 13th century, and most Christians seem to have adopted this division. The problem with this is that there is nothing in Scripture to support the idea that the Law should be divided into three parts, such as the ceremonial law, the civil law, and the moral law. Most teach that God has done away with the ceremonial and civil aspects of the Law, but not with the moral aspect of the Law. Such a distinction is not drawn anywhere in the Scriptures. The Law is viewed as a unit or as a whole. James said that anyone who breaks one point of the Law, breaks the whole Law.

So to answer the question, "Do you believe that the Ten Commandments, written with the finger of God upon the Tables of Stone, are the rule of life for a Christian today?" My reply is this: "I believe that the Ten Commandments, as they are interpreted and applied by our Lord and His apostles in the New Testament Scriptures, are a real and essential part of our rule of life." The New Covenant, as mediated by Christ, is a brand NEW Covenant, which totally replaces the Old Covenant.

Why do I think stealing, lying, adultery, and having idols is wrong? Because Yeshua and the apostles teach us that these things are wrong. I live under the New Covenant, not the Old. And in the New Covenant there is no mention of a Christian Sabbath. Although the New Covenant does restate 9 of the

10 (the Sabbath is excluded) as individual commands, the Ten Commandments as a unit are not brought into the New Covenant era. This brings us to the third view of the Sabbath.

1. The Sabbath still stands, and it is still on Saturday.
2. The Sabbath still stands but was changed to Sunday.

3. The Sabbath is fulfilled in Christ—who is our Sabbath Rest.

This view says the days of the week are all alike. , Saturday, Sunday, or even Friday for that matter, they are all the same to God. The important thing is to keep yourself holy every day of the week and forget about a weekly Sabbath, because it no longer exists. The Sabbath commandment has been fulfilled, superseded, done away with and nailed to the cross. Christians meet for worship on Sunday, not because it is the Sabbath of the Ten Commandments, but because it is convenient. The Law has been fulfilled by Yeshua and is now obsolete: so there is no longer a Sabbath commandment to observe. It is the Spirit that matters, not the day of the week on which you choose to rest.

Now let me say this: It is only those who believe in fulfilled eschatology—those who believe that the Lord returned in the first century—who can consistently hold this view.

Do you know why that is? It is because Yeshua said that the Old Covenant Law— very bit of it—would be in effect until heaven and earth passed away:

"Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. 18 "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished. Matthew 5:17-18 NASB

What is Christ saying here? Look at it carefully. This is a very important verse. What does Yeshua mean by "the Law"? Yeshua said, *"Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill."* The use of the terms "the Law" and "the Prophets" indicates that what the Lord is speaking of in these verses is **the whole of the Tanakh**. If you trace these terms through your Bible, you will find that wherever this expression is used it includes the entire Hebrew Bible. So, what does Yeshua say here about the *Tanakh*?

Gregg Bahnsen, in his book, *Theonomy and Christian Ethics*, says on page 73-74: "It is the point of slightness that Jesus is bringing forcefully before us. Not even the very least extensive number of the very least significant aspect of the Old Testamental Law will become endowed until heaven and earth pass away. It is hard to imagine how Jesus could have more intently affirmed that EVERY BIT of the old law remains binding in the gospel age."

The Mosaic Law is a **unit**. It exists as a unit or not at all. This notion that the Mosaic Law can be sliced and diced into ceremonial, civil, and moral is not one that you will find anywhere in the Bible.

Yeshua said that He didn't come to destroy the Law, but to fulfill it. What does it mean to fulfill the Law? The word "fulfill" is from the Greek word *pleroo*. Matthew uses this word seventeen times, and in fifteen of them it clearly refers to prophecy being fulfilled or **coming to pass**. The Law, which we read in the *Torah*, and everything that has been said by the Prophets, was going to "come to pass" down to the minutest detail. And until it was all fulfilled, it was binding on the people of God.

Christ fulfilled the Law by fulfilling all the types and prophecies of the *Tanakh*. All of the illustrations in the Old Covenant sacrificial system focus on and find their fulfillment in Him. All of the prophecies given regarding the coming Messiah, His kingdom, and His salvation find their fulfillment in Him.

The ultimate way that Christ fulfilled the *Tanakh* is by the one which gets the greatest emphasis in the New Testament; that He met the righteous demands of the Law in providing salvation through His death on the cross. Thus, He has fulfilled the Law and brought it to completion by paying the penalty for our sins.

The Law has been fulfilled:

For, on the one hand, there is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness Hebrews 7:18 NASB

This is truly an amazing statement. God is promising to set aside the Mosaic Law and the Levitical system. The words "setting aside" is from the Greek verb *athetesis*. It is a legal term that points to the complete cancellation of the commandment in question— the Mosaic Law. The same verb is used in 9:26 translated: "putting away":

Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Hebrews 9:26 NASB

The disappearance of the Mosaic Law is as absolute as the putting away of sin.

The purpose of the Law is stated in Galatians 3 where it is indicated that the Law is to reveal their sinfulness and to serve as a tutor or schoolmaster to bring them to Christ. Paul says in Galatians 3 that now that Christ has come, we are no longer under the schoolmaster. Now that Christ has come and the Law has been brought to its completion, the Law has been fulfilled in Christ:

Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith. 25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. 26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Yeshua. Galatians 3:24-26 NASB

Has the Law, the Old Covenant, been fulfilled in Christ? I don't know of any Christian who would say that every single Old Covenant ceremonial Law is still currently in force. Yet, Yeshua said that heaven and

earth absolutely had to pass away before the slightest letter of the Law could be fulfilled. Thus, if the Law has been fulfilled, the heaven and earth Yeshua spoke of must be already taken out of the way.

We can tell that Yeshua obviously was NOT speaking of the literal earth He was standing on and the literal heavens He was standing under. If we understand heaven and earth in that passage to be physical, then the Law is still in effect, and we are all still bound to obey the Sabbath. If we understand heaven and earth as figurative, then it is possible that they have passed along with the Law.

The phrase "**until heaven and earth pass away**" refers to the duration of the whole Old Covenant's authority. So, Yeshua is saying that not a single item of the Law, the Old Covenant, will ever be changed until heaven and earth pass away. Is that what Yeshua said? I think it is!:

"For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished. Matthew 5:18 NASB

None of the law was to pass away until it was ALL accomplished. All of the Law being accomplished would include all of the Old Covenant prophecies being fulfilled— would it not? All the prophetic scriptures had to be fulfilled. This included the prophecies of the "New Heaven and Earth." The New Covenant is always associated with a New Age. This New Age would not come about until all that the Prophets had spoken was fulfilled.

Until God created a "New Heaven and Earth," the Old Covenant remained in tack, every bit of it. So, if we are not living in the "New Heaven and Earth" today, then we are under the Law, every bit of it. But I know of no Christian who would say that ALL the Old Covenant Scriptures are binding on us. If they did, they would have to be keeping the Sabbath.

Luke agrees with Yeshua:

"But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is at hand. 21 Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are in the midst of the city depart, and let not those who are in the country enter the city; 22 because these are days of vengeance, in order that all things which are written may be fulfilled. Luke 21:20-22 NASB

Luke tells us here that ALL things which are written will be fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem. What does he mean by that? "All things which are written" refers to the Old Covenant. The Old Covenant was to be fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem, which was heaven and earth passing away.

So Luke is saying that at the time Jerusalem is destroyed, **all prophecy** will be fulfilled. What does that include? That would include the prophecy of the Second Coming, the Resurrection, the New Heavens and Earth, everything prophesied to Israel would be fulfilled at the time of Jerusalem's destruction.

The passing away of heaven and earth is another way to speak of the end of the Old Covenant. To prove this from the Scripture, look with me at:

And, "THOU, LORD, IN THE BEGINNING DIDST LAY THE FOUNDATION OF THE EARTH, AND THE HEAVENS ARE THE WORKS OF THY HANDS; 11 THEY WILL PERISH, BUT THOU REMAINEST; AND THEY ALL WILL BECOME OLD AS A GARMENT, 12 AND AS A MANTLE THOU WILT ROLL THEM UP; AS A GARMENT THEY WILL ALSO BE CHANGED. BUT THOU ART THE SAME, AND THY YEARS WILL NOT COME TO AN END." Hebrews 1:10-12 NASB

These verses are a word for word quotation from Psalm 102. If all we had was the prophecy of David in Psalms 102, we might think that this is referring to the physical earth. But, the New Testament gives us insight and illumination to the *Tanakh*. How is the world or the heavens and earth of old going to perish? David said, in Psalm 102:26, "They shall *grow old like a garment*," and then they would be "*changed*." Is it just a coincidence that the Bible speaks of the passing away of the Old Covenant using the same language?:

When He said, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear. Hebrews 8:13 NASB

The word "obsolete" is the same Greek word, *palaios* (*pal-ah-yo'-o*), which means: "to make worn out, or declare obsolete," is used in Hebrews 1:11 of the Heavens and Earth and 8:13 of the Old Covenant. The writer of Hebrews teaches us that the "Old Covenant" and the "Heavens and earth" are synonymous.

Believers, if we don't understand the biblical use of "heaven *and* earth," we will not understand Yeshua's words in:

"For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished. Matthew 5:18 NASB

And if we don't understand these words of Yeshua , we will end up in confusion as to the Sabbath and all the other Old Covenant injunctions.

The Sabbath was a type: The essence of "keeping the Sabbath holy" was refraining from physical work. Doing physical work was the only way one could break the Sabbath in Israel. There was no "going to church" or any other prescribed worship connected with the Sabbath. This was clear from the first institution of the Sabbath in Exodus 16:

Now it came about on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for each one. When all the leaders of the congregation came and told Moses, 23 then he said to them, "This is what the LORD meant: Tomorrow is a sabbath observance, a holy sabbath to the LORD. Bake what you will

bake and boil what you will boil, and all that is left over put aside to be kept until morning." 24 So they put it aside until morning, as Moses had ordered, and it did not become foul, nor was there any worm in it. 25 And Moses said, "Eat it today, for today is a sabbath to the LORD; today you will not find it in the field. 26 "Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, the sabbath, there will be none." 27 And it came about on the seventh day that some of the people went out to gather, but they found none. 28 Then the LORD said to Moses, "How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My instructions? 29 "See, the LORD has given you the sabbath; therefore He gives you bread for two days on the sixth day. Remain every man in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day." 30 So the people rested on the seventh day. Exodus 16:22-30 NASB

They were to gather enough manna on the sixth day for two days, and God promised it would not, as was the case on any other day, spoil. They could trust God that the manna would keep. They were to totally rest on the seventh day. They were not even allowed to walk out and gather the manna.

Later, when the Sabbath is given as the sign of the covenant, it became crystal clear that the only way to break the Sabbath was physical work. Exodus 31:14-15 is quite explicit:

'Therefore you are to observe the sabbath, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people. 15 'For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there is a sabbath of complete rest, holy to the LORD; whoever does any work on the sabbath day shall surely be put to death. Exodus 31:14-15 NASB

They are commanded in verse 14 to "not profane the Sabbath," and Moses immediately equates "profaning the Sabbath" with "doing any physical work." Both verses state that any form of physical work would result in death. There is a constant refrain of "Do not work." Don't even lift a finger to pick up sticks. "Cease from your work and rest." God told them they were to gather two day's supply on the sixth day, "trust Me, it will not spoil" as it would on any other day.

As you read all the Sabbath references, you keep hearing, "Cease from your work, trust Me." The message is "faith, not works." You can hear the echoes of Romans 4:4,5 crying out, *"To him who does not work but believes . . ."* The Sabbath pushed a man away from works to the rest of faith. The Sabbath preached the Gospel of rest.

In a culture where work was very hard, very physical, very demanding, the Sabbath was given as a gift. This was one day a week where you could just rest, and God would provide. But there was a greater meaning to that.

The yearly Sabbath also preached the Gospel. The twenty-fifth chapter of Leviticus describes the yearly Sabbath. Just as there was a weekly Sabbath, there was a seventh year Sabbath. Just as the weekly

Sabbath commanded "no work," so the seventh year Sabbath commanded no work during the entire year. They could do no physical work at all for one whole year. They were not allowed to plow, cultivate, or harvest for a whole year:

'But if you say, "What are we going to eat on the seventh year if we do not sow or gather in our crops?" 21 then I will so order My blessing for you in the sixth year that it will bring forth the crop for three years. 22 'When you are sowing the eighth year, you can still eat old things from the crop, eating the old until the ninth year when its crop comes in. Leviticus 25:20-22 NASB

Again, God was teaching: "You do not live by your works, but by my grace. Trust Me, allow the land to lie idle, I will give you all you need." Like the weekly Sabbath, the seventh year Sabbath also pushed the Israelites from works to faith. It preached the Gospel. It forced them to faith as opposed to living by their own work.

The greatest of all Sabbaths was every fifty years. Just as six days were followed by a Sabbath day of rest, and six years were followed by a Sabbath year of rest, the seventh Sabbath year was followed by the Year of Jubilee. All debts and mortgages of every kind were canceled. Everyone returned back to the original land that was given to their fathers.

You can imagine an Israelite who was in debt with the family farm mortgaged: He would rise early on the morning of Jubilee and eagerly wait to hear the trumpet of the ram's horn and the announcement that "Jubilee had come." That is exactly what our Lord did in Luke 4:19 when He said He came to proclaim the "acceptable year of the Lord," or "the year of the Lord's favor." He was putting the Gospel trumpet to His lips and saying, "Jubilee has come, the Lord's great Sabbath Day has dawned."

For we who have believed enter that rest, just as He has said, "AS I SWORE IN MY WRATH, THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST," although His works were finished from the foundation of the world. Hebrews 4:3 NASB

It is by faith in Yeshua that we enter the rest. Yeshua the Christ is our Sabbath rest. He fulfilled the Old Covenant type. We, as believers, rest totally and completely in Him. We have regained in Christ far more than we lost in Eden. Every debt we owe is paid, and we are totally free. We live in the year of Jubilee. We have entered into the true Sabbath rest in Christ.

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1000 Chattanooga Street
Chesapeake, VA 23322