

The background of the cover is a stained glass illustration. It depicts Jesus, with long brown hair and a beard, wearing a white robe with a blue sash, standing in the center. He is surrounded by several disciples in various robes. They are in a vineyard, with green leaves and clusters of purple grapes visible. In the background, there are rolling hills and a body of water under a yellow sky. The entire scene is rendered in a classic stained glass style with visible lead lines.

The Eschatological Significance of the Sabbath

***Dissertation by
Dr. Rick Griffith***

The Eschatological Significance of the Sabbath

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Richard James Griffith

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To my beloved Susan

"She is worth far more than rubies.
Her husband has full confidence in her."

Abstract

The Sabbath follows both a kingdom motif and Israel's existence as a nation. God's rest first appears with the kingdom theme in Genesis 2:1-3, where He "rested" in His perfectly created kingdom. However, sin marred this rest and man never observed the Sabbath in primeval and patriarchal times.

The institution of the Sabbath arrived with the Law, officially beginning Israel's national existence. (Sabbath rest in the manna incident shortly preceded this but pointed forward to Sinai.) The new institution celebrated God's creation rest and Israel's redemption from Egyptian bondage; further, it served as a day of rest and worship. Most importantly, the Sabbath signified God's unique relationship with His people Israel under the Mosaic Law. While Pharisaic legalism overshadowed these divine purposes, Jesus revealed the Sabbath's true nature as a joyful day of divine service, compassion, and acts necessary for man's well-being. He also alluded to its temporal nature (Mark 2:27-28).

As the Sabbath began with the Law, it was abolished at its end with Christ's death. Therefore, God never commanded Gentiles to observe the day. Paul evangelized on Sabbaths, but he condemned requiring believers to observe the day (Col. 2:17). Rather, in celebration of the Lord's resurrection, the "Lord's day" has been practiced since the early church (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2; Rev. 1:10). Sunday is not a "Christian Sabbath," for it has no work prohibitions, but it is a day for corporate worship.

The Sabbath will be reinstituted when Israel's divinely ordained calendar resumes with "Daniel's seventieth week" (Dan. 9:27; Matt. 24:20). This millennial Sabbath will replace the Lord's day and be observed by both Jews and Gentiles (Isa. 56:6; 66:23; Ezek. 46:1). The Sabbath has long been considered typical of the kingdom by Jews and Christians (Hebrews 3–4). At Christ's earthly rule, God will again rest in His creation, but until then He works (John 5:17). Thus the Sabbath follows both Israel's national existence and Scripture's kingdom motif.

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Abbreviations

1QM	<i>War Scroll</i>
AB	Anchor Bible
<i>ABR</i>	<i>Australian Biblical Review</i>
ACNT	Augsburg Commentary on the New Testament
ACW	Ancient Christian Writers: The Works of the Fathers in Translation
<i>AJSL</i>	<i>American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures</i>
Ampl.	<i>Amplified Bible</i>
<i>ANET</i>	<i>Ancient Near East Texts</i> (James Pritchard)
<i>ANF</i>	<i>Ante-Nicene Fathers</i>
Ant.	<i>Antiquities of the Jews</i> (Josephus)
<i>ARSH</i>	<i>Advent Review and Sabbath Herald</i>
<i>AUSS</i>	<i>Andrews University Seminary Studies</i>
<i>b.</i>	<i>Babylonian Talmud</i>
BAGD	<i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> (Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, and Danker)
<i>BA</i>	<i>Biblical Archaeologist</i>
<i>BAR</i>	<i>Biblical Archeology Review</i>
BDB	<i>New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew-English Lexicon</i>
Beck	<i>New Testament in the Language of Today</i> (William F. Beck)
<i>BETS</i>	<i>Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>

BEvTh	Beiträge zur evangelischen Theologie
<i>BiTr</i>	<i>Bible Translator</i>
<i>BJRL</i>	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library</i>
<i>BKC</i>	<i>Bible Knowledge Commentary</i>
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
<i>BQ</i>	<i>Baptist Quarterly</i>
<i>BR</i>	<i>Biblical Research</i>
<i>BRR</i>	<i>Baptist Reformation Review</i>
<i>BS</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
BSC	Bible Study Commentary
BST	Bible Speaks Today
<i>BTf</i>	<i>Bangalore Theological Forum</i>
<i>BW</i>	<i>Biblical World</i>
CAD	<i>The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago</i>
CBC	Cambridge Bible Commentary
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CC	Communicator's Commentary
CD	<i>Damascus Document</i>
CoBC	Collegeville Bible Commentary
<i>Cod. Just.</i>	<i>Codex Justinian</i>
CRS	Commentary Reference Series (Seventh-day Adventist)
<i>CT</i>	<i>Christianity Today</i>

<i>CTM</i>	<i>Concordia Theological Monthly</i>
DSB	<i>Daily Study Bible</i> (William Barclay)
DSBOT	Daily Study Bible: Old Testament (John C. L. Gibson, ed.)
<i>EAJT</i>	<i>East Asia Journal of Theology</i>
<i>EB</i>	<i>Encyclopædia Biblica</i>
EBC	Expositor's Bible Commentary
<i>EJ</i>	<i>Encyclopedia Judaica</i>
<i>'Erub.</i>	<i>'Erubin</i> tractate of the Talmud
<i>ET</i>	<i>The Expository Times</i>
<i>EvQ</i>	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
<i>Exp</i>	<i>The Expositor</i>
FC	<i>Fathers of the Church</i>
<i>GJ</i>	<i>Grace Journal</i>
GNB	<i>Good News Bible</i>
GSC	Geneva Series Commentary
<i>GTJ</i>	<i>Grace Theological Journal</i>
<i>HBC</i>	<i>Harper's Bible Commentary</i>
<i>HThR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
Herm	Hermeneia—A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
<i>IBC</i>	<i>International Bible Commentary</i>
ibid.	<i>ibidem</i> , in the same place
ICC	International Critical Commentary

id.	<i>idem</i> , the same author
<i>IDB</i>	<i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i>
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
<i>IntB</i>	<i>Interpreter's Bible</i>
Interp.	Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching
<i>ISBE</i>	<i>International Standard Bible Encyclopedia</i>
JB	<i>Jerusalem Bible</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JFB</i>	<i>A Commentary</i> (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown)
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
Jos.	Josephus
<i>JQR</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
<i>JRHe</i>	<i>Journal for Religion and Health</i>
<i>JSJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
<i>JThS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
Jub.	Jubilees
K&D	<i>Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament</i> (Keil and Delitzsch)
KJV	<i>King James Version</i>
KRL	Kregel Reprint Library
LCRL	Limited Classical Reprint Library
<i>LexTQ</i>	<i>Lexington Theological Quarterly</i>

LHC	Layman's Handy Commentary
LWC	Living Word Commentary
<i>m.</i>	<i>Misha</i>
MED	<i>Murphy Edition of the Holy Bible(Douay Version)</i>
<i>Midr.</i>	<i>Midrash</i>
MM	<i>Vocabulary of the Greek Testament</i> (Moulton and Milligan)
MNTC	MacArthur New Testament Commentary
Moffatt	<i>A New Translation of the Bible</i> (James Moffatt)
MT	Masoretic Text
NASB	<i>New American Standard Version</i>
n.b.	<i>note bene</i> (note well)
<i>NBD</i>	<i>New Bible Dictionary</i>
NBV	<i>New Berkeley Version in Modern English</i>
NCBC	New Century Bible Commentary
NCE	<i>New Catholic Edition of the Holy Bible</i>
NEB	<i>New English Bible</i>
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NIV	<i>New International Version of the Holy Bible</i>
NKJV	<i>New King James Version</i>
NPF	<i>Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church</i>
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
O&CE	Oxford & Cambridge Edition

OTL	Old Testament Library
PC	Pulpit Commentary
<i>Pesiq.</i>	<i>Pesiqta</i>
Phillips	<i>New Testament in Modern English</i> (J. B. Phillips)
<i>PTR</i>	<i>Princeton Theological Review</i>
<i>R.</i>	<i>Rabbi</i>
<i>RdQ</i>	<i>Revue de Qumran</i>
REB	<i>Revised English Bible</i> (1989 revision of the NEB)
<i>RevBib</i>	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
<i>RExp</i>	<i>Review & Expositor</i>
<i>RH</i>	<i>Review & Herald</i>
RHBC	Randall House Bible Commentary
<i>RQ</i>	<i>Restoration Quarterly</i>
RSV	<i>Revised Standard Version of the Holy Bible</i>
<i>RTR</i>	<i>Reformed Theological Review</i>
<i>Sanh.</i>	<i>Sanhedrin</i>
SBB	Soncino Books of the Bible
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature (Dissertation Series)
SBOT	Sacred Books of the Old and New Testaments
SBS	Standard Bible Studies
SBSS	Shield Bible Study Series
SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
<i>SBTh</i>	<i>Studia Biblica et Theologica</i>

<i>SCJ</i>	<i>Sixteenth Century Journal</i>
<i>SDABC</i>	<i>Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary</i>
<i>SDABD</i>	<i>Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary</i>
<i>SDAE</i>	<i>Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia</i>
Shabb.	<i>Shabbat</i> (tractate of the Talmud)
<i>SJTh</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
Soncino	<i>Babylonian Talmud</i> (Soncino Press)
<i>StEv</i>	<i>Studia Evangelica</i>
<i>SWJT</i>	<i>Southwestern Journal of Theology</i>
<i>TDNT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>
<i>ThD</i>	<i>Theology Digest</i>
<i>ThR</i>	<i>Theologische Rundschau</i>
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
Tob.	Tobit
Torah	Torah: A Modern Commentary
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
t.r.	Textus Receptus
<i>TWOT</i>	<i>Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament</i>
<i>TZ</i>	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>VigChr</i>	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
<i>Vit. Cont.</i>	<i>Vita Constantine (Life of Constantine)</i>
WBC	<i>Wycliffe Bible Commentary</i>

Williams	<i>New Testament in the Language of the People</i> (Charles B. Williams)
Wis.	Wisdom of Solomon
WordBC	Word Biblical Commentary
<i>ZAW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZDMG</i>	<i>Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft</i>
<i>ZPEB</i>	<i>Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible</i>

Chapter 1

Introduction

Should one ask the average Christian entering his church building on a Sunday morning why he attended worship services on *Sunday* rather than another day, the answer would likely be that Sunday is the only day of the week his church has a morning worship service. After probing deeper as to why his *church* sets aside this particular day of worship, the interrogated believer would in all probability have no sufficient answer. Such would likely be his response if he was asked whether his attendance had anything to do with the fourth commandment to "keep the Sabbath day holy."

In the modern age of fast food, instant checking, automated tellers, and time-saving means of transportation, the commodity of time has become highly valued. From such a perspective stems the well-worn adage "time is money." This grasping for more time has seriously eroded the average Christian's observance of holy days, of which the recent, virtually unopposed repeal of the blue laws testifies.¹ In fact, one Roman Catholic leader's solution to this increase in Sunday enterprise is to abandon Sunday as a day of rest altogether:

Abandonment of the Christian Sunday appears to be a sensible response to the threats against it. Rest from work on Sunday cannot possibly be maintained in the future against the onslaught of business. More and more Christians will find it impossible to participate normally in American life and at the same time observe rest from work on Sunday. Moreover, there is no need today for Christians to abstain from work on Sunday.

¹See Hiley H. Ward, *Space-Age Sunday*, for an assessment of the Blue Law controversies prior to 1960, the year in which he wrote.

Sunday rest for Christians began only in the fourth century and was originally a humanitarian social institution established by civil authority to regulate the cycle of work and leisure; only subsequently was the rest of Sunday invested with religious significance.²

This confusion regarding the *importance* of a day of worship has been matched with confusion as to the proper *day* of worship, due in part to the rise of seventh-day keeping groups. A recent series of articles by Harold Lindsell exemplifies such perplexity. In May 1976, he urged believers to press for civil legislation which would close all unnecessary businesses on Sunday for two purposes: to conserve natural resources and to enforce upon non-Christians outward "Sabbath observance" as "a form of pre-evangelism [which] could open the door to the propagation of the Gospel."³ The outcry from Seventh-day Adventists was immediate and strong, asserting that neither Sunday nor Sabbath observance should ever be forced upon people. Six months later Lindsell completely reversed his suggestions, declaring, "We propose that *Saturday* be set aside as the day of rest for all people. Those who choose to join in corporate worship of God that day could do so. Others could spend the time in their own way."⁴ While Seventh Day Baptists responded positively, Seventh-day Adventists again opposed the revised measure which would "deprive [a] segment of our population of religious

²Christopher Kiesling, *The Future of the Christian Sunday*, 16; cf. Willy Rordorf, *Sunday*, 154-73. Kiesling advocates Sunday play rather than Sunday rest: "If Sunday activities are celebration of the pascal mystery by play in the new creation, then they should have the characteristics of play: freedom, joy, recreation, creativity. These four characteristics taken together provide a handy norm for determining which activities are suitable for Christians. They are more positive than the negative norm of 'no work' or the outmoded rule of 'liberal work' but not 'servile work'" (p. 125). Other Catholics are equally concerned but offer more hope (see James Garcia, "Contributions and Challenges to the Theology of Sunday," *Worship* 52 [July 1978]: 369-74).

³Harold Lindsell, "The Lord's Day and Natural Resources," *CTo*, 7 May 1976, 9.

⁴Lindsell, "Consider the Case for Quiet Saturdays," *CTo*, 5 November 1976, 42 (*italics his*).

freedom"⁵ and "hardly induce a worshipful attitude."⁶ Adventists have also opposed Sunday laws based purely upon civil rather than religious purposes.⁷

Need

The Church today is confused about the day of worship, which necessitates still another investigation into the Sabbath question. What significance did the Sabbath have in the Mosaic economy, what bearing does it have upon the believer today, and what is its future? These questions have recently captured the attention of many authors of both Sabbatarian and non-Sabbatarian perspectives, yet the Sabbath question has largely remained unaddressed by dispensational scholarship. In particular, the *eschatological* implications of the Sabbath have been little addressed and for this reason furnish the main subject matter of this study.

Importance

Several factors make the Sabbath issue a crucial one for Christians. It affects one's perspective of law and grace (including the continuance of the law—especially the so-called "moral law"), it determines the use of one's time, it affects one's view on the relationship between the Old Testament and the New, and it clarifies one's perspective on possible distinctions between Israel and the Church. Further, the Sabbath question is intimately related to one's beliefs concerning the nature of God's rest, eschatology, the covenants, ecclesiology, soteriology, salvation history, the documentary hypothesis, the

⁵Leo R. Van Dolson, "Color the Blue Laws Green," *Liberty*, March-April 1977, 30. The "green" is a play on words which describes the profit motive of businessmen who seek dollars seven days a week by repealing the blue laws.

⁶Samuele Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday: A Historical Investigation of the Rise of Sunday Observance in Early Christianity* (hereafter cited as *From Sabbath to Sunday*), 10.

⁷V. Norskov Olsen, "Britain's Sunday," *Liberty*, July-August 1965, 25-26.

nature of prophecy and fulfillment, church history, ethics, and scruples concerning work days. The vastness of the subject is evident in that it touches upon numerous passages in twenty books of both testaments. "The themes of creation, Sabbath, redemption, and sanctification are inseparably linked together, and with the Sabbath's covenant aspect they reach into the eschatological future."⁸

Purpose

This dissertation proposes a system of interpretation which reconciles the abolishment of the Sabbath in the present dispensation with its apparent reinstitution in the kingdom age. Also, Sabbatic typology and the future of the Lord's Day will be evaluated in relation to the kingdom motif in Scripture.

Views Summarized

As an introduction to the complicated Sabbath question it will prove helpful to briefly survey the major viewpoints. These views fall into four major categories, teaching that at the present time the Sabbath is either continued, transferred to Sunday, or abrogated (with Sunday having special significance or with all days being alike).⁹

The first group, commonly called Sabbatarians, believe the Sabbath was instituted at Eden as a universal ordinance continuing throughout history as a day of

⁸Gerhard F. Hasel, "The Sabbath in the Pentateuch," in *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, 21.

⁹A threefold division of Sabbath views is presented by Samuele Bacchiocchi, *The Sabbath in the New Testament: Answers to Questions* (hereafter cited as *Sabbath in New Testament*), 18-25. For other surveys see also D. A. Carson, "Introduction," in *From Sabbath to Lord's Day*, 14-15; Hans K. LaRondelle, "Contemporary Theologies of the Sabbath," in *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, 278-94. LaRondelle contains the most complete discussion of modern teaching by including the viewpoints of radical-critical scholars, neo-orthodox theologians, and "small denominations and sects" (Nazarenes, Seventh Day Baptists, Mormons, and Jehovah's Witnesses). The views of these groups also fit into one of the four views summarized in this section. Interestingly, though a Seventh-day Adventist himself, he does not include the Sabbatarian perspective in his article. For historical surveys of perspectives on the Sabbath, see two excellent Adventist surveys by Bacchiocchi, *Divine Rest for Human Restlessness* (hereafter cited as *Divine Rest*), 42-57, and Kenneth A. Strand, ed., in *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, 132-265.

worship and rest. Continuity between law and grace is therefore emphasized. The largest Christian¹⁰ group advocating worship on Saturday is the Seventh-day Adventist Church,¹¹ which adopted Sabbath-keeping in America in 1845.¹² Their founder, Ellen G. White, has even stated, "Had the Sabbath always been sacredly observed, there could never have been an atheist or an idolater."¹³ Most notable among the Adventists is Samuele Bacchiocchi.¹⁴ Adventists acknowledge their indebtedness to Seventh Day Baptists,¹⁵

¹⁰Jews, of course, comprise the largest non-Christian Sabbath-keeping group, but do not necessarily point to a creation origin. Abraham Joshua Heschel remains the most notable modern rabbi who expounds upon the Sabbath, and, while not specifically addressing the creation issue, notes, "Things created in six days He considered good, the seventh day He made holy" (*The Sabbath*, 75).

¹¹Prominent contemporary Seventh-day Adventist scholars include Daniel Augsburg, Samuele Bacchiocchi, Gerhard F. Hasel, Sakae Kubo, Walter F. Specht, Kenneth A. Strand, and Edwin R. Thiele (cf. biographical sketches of all except Thiele in *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, 9-13). Each of these has taught or presently teaches at the group's most notable institution, the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary of Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, which publishes the scholarly journal entitled *Andrews University Seminary Studies*. The major SDA publishing agency is the Review and Herald Publishing Association, Washington, D.C. and magazines include *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, *Insight*, and *Liberty*.

¹²One could contest whether Seventh-day Adventists actually do fully keep the Sabbath since they kindle fires (Exod. 35:3), carry things (Jer. 17:22), and do not attempt to put people to death who desecrate the day by working (Exod. 31:15). (See Norman C. Deck, *The Lord's Day or the Sabbath, Which?* 175.) However, they tenaciously avoid employment and follow many other spiritual disciplines on Saturdays.

¹³Ellen G. White, *The Story of Patriarchs and Prophets*, 336.

¹⁴Bacchiocchi's dissertation, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, was originally written in Italian at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome (1975). He graduated *summa cum laude* as the only non-Catholic to graduate from this institution. Shortly afterwards he revised this work in an English translation (1977). His thesis is that Sunday observance did not arise in apostolic times as the early church observed the Sabbath; instead, Christians adopted Sunday worship during the reign of Hadrian (A.D. 117-135) to separate themselves from Jews being persecuted by the Romans. In his view Sunday was chosen as a Christian adaptation of day of worship of the pagan Sun cults. For a critique of Bacchiocchi's dissertation, see Everett Ferguson, "Sabbath: Saturday or Sunday: A Review Article," *RQ* 23 (1980): 172-73, 176-81, who disagrees substantially with this thesis. An Adventist evaluation of Bacchiocchi's work is provided by Kenneth A. Strand, "From Sabbath to Sunday in the Early Christian Church: A Review of Some Recent Literature, Part II: Samuele Bacchiocchi's Reconstruction," *AUSS* 167 (Spring 1979): 85-104. Strand agrees with Bacchiocchi in most points except Bacchiocchi's claim (p. 200) that Christians adopted Sunday from pagans and embraced Easter due to anti-Judaistic sentiment.

¹⁵Raymond F. Cottrell, "Seventh Day Baptists and Adventists: A Common Heritage," *Spectrum* 9 (1977): 3-8; cf. Gerhard F. Hasel, "Sabbatarian Anabaptists of the Sixteenth Century," *AUSS* 5 (July 1967): 101-21; 6 (January 1968): 19-28; Ernest A. Payne, "More About Sabbatarian Baptists," *BQ* 14 (October 1951): 161-66; W. T. Whitley, "Seventh Day Baptists in England," *BQ* 12 (October 1947): 252-58.

whose beginnings in America stem back to 1671.¹⁶ About 120 other smaller denominations or groups practice Sabbath-keeping.¹⁷

The second major perspective on the Sabbath sees its rest and worship commands as presently applicable to Sunday, designated the "Christian Sabbath."¹⁸ For all practical purposes, those holding this first-day Sabbatarian view observe Sunday in like manner as Sabbatharians do Saturday, the only difference being the day of worship. Appeal is generally made to apostolic example and Christ's Sunday resurrection as motivations for the change of day. This transference viewpoint found its classic formation by Thomas Aquinas (*ca.* A.D. 1225-1247), whose interpretation of the fourth commandment distinguished between its "moral" aspects (regular time of worship and rest) and "ceremonial" aspects (Sabbath fulfilled in Christ).¹⁹ This perspective has been

¹⁶Herbert E. Saunders remains the most notable contemporary Seventh Day Baptist scholar. Other past scholars include Abram Herbert Lewis and Ahva Bond. The SDB publishing agency is the American Sabbath Tract Society and authorized journal *The Sabbath Recorder*.

¹⁷Herbert W. Armstrong's Worldwide Church of God is among the 120 groups listed in the 1974 *Directory of Sabbath-Observing Groups*, published by *The Bible Sabbath Association* (cf. Bacchiocchi, *Divine Rest*, 53, 270, n. 170). For an excellent historical survey of Sabbath keeping groups see Raymond F. Cottrell, "The Sabbath in the New World," in *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, 244-63. Adventists today number over three million (*ibid.*, 256) as the largest Christian Sabbath keeping group, followed by Armstrong's group which totals between 30,000 and 100,000 members (*ibid.*, 254). Seventh Day Baptist membership was a mere 5,139 in 1978 (*ibid.*, 256).

¹⁸The day is so designated in The Westminster Confession of Faith (1647), Art. 21.7, in *The Westminster Standards*, 23 (also in Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, 649).

¹⁹"The moral precepts [of the Law] are not reducible to the ceremonial precepts, but rather vice versa. But among the precepts of the decalogue, one is ceremonial, viz., *Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath-day*" (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Part 2 [First Part], Q. 100.3 [p. 118], italics his; cf. it is replaced by the Lord's Day, Q. 103.3 [pp. 233-34]).

amplified by Calvin,²⁰ Methodists,²¹ Episcopalians,²² Anglicans,²³ the Reformed tradition (e.g., English Puritans, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and many Baptists),²⁴ the Catholic Church, and modern scholars such as Barth,²⁵ Jewett,²⁶ Beckwith, and Stott.²⁷ It especially gained prominence in post-Reformation English Puritanism,²⁸ and since this time organizations in both England and America have been established to promote Sunday as the "Christian Sabbath."²⁹

²⁰John Calvin, *Institutes*, 1:339-44; id., *The Book of Genesis*, 1:105-106. Calvin refers to the Sabbath as abolished and Sunday appointed in its place (*Institutes*, 1:343).

²¹*Methodist Articles of Religion* (1784) by John Wesley (Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, 3:808).

²²*Articles of Religion of the Reformed Episcopal Church in America* (1875), Article VI (ibid., 3:816).

²³*Thirty-nine Articles of Religion of the Church of England* (1571), Article VII (ibid., 3:491-92); *The Irish Articles of Religion* (1615), Article 84, believed to be composed by Archbishop James Ussher (ibid., 3:541).

²⁴*The Second Helvetic Confession* (1566) of the Reformed Church of Zurich, Chapter XII: "The Law of God" (ibid., 1:405; 3:854-55); *The Westminster Confession of Faith* (1647), Chapter XIX (ibid., 3:640-43); *The Savoy Declaration of the Congregational Churches* (1658) is identical to the former here (ibid., 3:718), as is *The Baptist Confession of 1688* (Philadelphia), based upon the London, 1677, confession (ibid., 3:738).

²⁵Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 3 vols., 3.4:47-72.

²⁶Paul K. Jewett, *The Lord's Day*.

²⁷Roger T. Beckwith and Wilfred Stott, *The Christian Sunday: A Biblical and Historical Study*. Beckwith and Stott, 142, specifically call Sunday the "Christian Sabbath." A critique of their book is provided in Ferguson, "Sabbath: Saturday or Sunday: A Review Article," 172-75.

²⁸For the history see Patrick Collinson, "The Beginnings of English Sabbatarianism," in *Studies in Church History*, 1:207-21; Richard J. Greaves, "The Origins of English Sabbatarian Thought," *SCJ* 12 (Fall 1981): 19-34.

²⁹In 1888 the American Sabbath Union was founded in the USA to propagate Sunday as the "Christian Sabbath." The ASU has since changed its name to the Lord's Day Alliance of the United States, with James P. Wesberry as executive director, who sums up his view thus: "Jesus did not abolish the old Sabbath, but he enlarged and ennobled it and merged it into the Lord's Day" ("Are We Compromising Ourselves?" *Sunday*, April-June 1976, 4). The inside cover of this same issue clearly states the purpose of the LDA: "The Alliance is the only national organization whose sole purpose is the maintenance and cultivation of the first day of the week as a time for rest, worship, Christian Education, and spiritual renewal." The affiliated LDOS (Lord's Day Observance Society) has promoted the same aim in England since 1831.

The third major view of the Sabbath sees the day as abrogated, or done away, in the present age. Appeal is generally made to the lack of a creation ordinance, a sharp distinction between the Old and New Testament economies, and a discontinuity between law and grace. Abrogationalists assert that since Christ rose on Sunday and the early church met on this day, it is now the proper day of worship, but not rest.³⁰ Thus, they are resistant to the term "the Christian Sabbath."³¹ Patristic support for this view is strong,³² and modern exponents include most dispensationalists,³³ Rordorf,³⁴ and Carson.³⁵

A fourth viewpoint sees the Sabbath abrogated and all days alike with no special significance attached to Saturday, Sunday, or any other day. Support for this opinion is often sought in Paul's apparent affinity with those in the Roman church who considered "every day alike" (Rom. 14:5). Luther espoused this notion, yet he also advocated Sunday gatherings since this was the most convenient time for public

³⁰Abrogationists are surely not against rest *per se*, but only against requiring it in a legalistic sense every seventh day: "But even those who jibe at the puritan sabbath or the English Sunday do not propose to work seven days in the week" (S. L. Greenslade, ed., *The Cambridge History of the Bible*, 510).

³¹Representatives include Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 8 vols., 4:100; Charles Lee Feinberg, "The Sabbath and the Lord's Day," *BS* 95 (April-June 1938): 179.

³²Justin (A.D. 155-161) felt that the law was imposed upon the Jews for their hardness of heart (*Dialogue with Trypho* 18.2) as a temporary ordinance until the coming of Christ (*ibid.*, 23.1.2; cf. 16.1; 21.1; 23.3). See also *Didache* 14.1; *Epistle of Barnabas* 15.8-9; Ignatius *To the Magnesians* 9.1; *Pliny to the Emperor Trajan* 10.96.7; Clement of Alexandria *Stromata* 7.12.76; Tertullian *On Idolatry* 14; Origen *Against Celsus* 8.22; Cyprian *Epistles* 58.4 for other witnesses to Sunday observance without "Christian Sabbath" connotations.

³³For example, see Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 4:100-126; Feinberg, "The Sabbath and the Lord's Day," 173-194.

³⁴Willy Rordorf, *Sunday*. For an Adventist response to Rordorf, see Kenneth A. Strand, "From Sabbath to Sunday in the Early Christian Church: A Review of Some Recent Literature, Part I: Willy Rordorf's Reconstruction," *AUSS* 16 (Spring 1978): 333-42, and for a review of one holding to his thesis see Ferguson, "Sabbath: Saturday or Sunday: A Review Article," 172-81.

³⁵D. A. Carson, ed., *From Sabbath to Lord's Day*.

meetings.³⁶ Others who cite no particular day as significant include both Tertullian, "After all every day is a Lord's day..."³⁷ and Origen, "The perfect man... is always living in His days and is continually observing the Lord's Day."³⁸ This view is also held by Jehovah's Witnesses: "So, every day that Christians exercise faith and obedience through Christ, they are keeping sabbath, God's sabbath or rest."³⁹ Those of this "every day alike" persuasion generally observe Sunday as the day of corporate worship, but do so for pragmatic reasons rather than by pointing to apostolic example or Christ's resurrection.⁴⁰

Therefore, modern scholarship views the Sabbath in one of four different ways: as a permanent institution, as transferred to Sunday which is the "Christian Sabbath," as abolished with Sunday serving as a wholly new day for worship (but not rest), and as abolished with all days being alike.

Definitions

Several terms need clarification before embarking upon the present study. While the term "Sabbath" has often been used to mean Sunday by the Puritans and

³⁶Martin Luther, *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, "Apology of the Augsburg Confession," 176-77; *Large Catechism*, 1.85 [p. 20]; *Table Talk*, Luther's Works, 55 vols., 47:51-52; "Augsburg Confession," Art. 7, in Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom*, 3:69-70. However, Luther elsewhere stated that "from the beginning of the world the Sabbath was intended for the worship of God" (*Lectures on Genesis Chapters 1-5*, Luther's Works, 55 vols., 1:80).

³⁷Tertullian *Baptism* 19 (in *Tertullian's Homily on Baptism*, 41).

³⁸Origen *Contra Celsum* 8.22 (p. 468).

³⁹Jehovah's Witnesses (no author cited), *Let God Be True*, 179.

⁴⁰One particularly helpful summary of this fourth perspective is that of John Leland (1754-1841), a Baptist leader whose views on this issue were very contrary to most others in his day (John Leland, "'The Sabbath Examined' and 'Sabbatical Laws': Excerpts from *The Writings of the Late Elder John Leland* [New York: L. F. Greene, 1845], 688-96, 440-46," *BRR* 9 [October-December 1980]: 32-39). Both his teaching and life are surveyed by J. Bradley Creed, "John Leland: American Prophet of Religious Individualism," Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1986.

others,⁴¹ its meaning in this treatise will be consistent with that of the view surveyed above. Technically, it refers to the time period from sundown Friday night to sundown Saturday evening. In like manner, one designated a "Sabbatarian" in the present study refers to one who invests in this period religious significance as a day of rest and worship.

The meanings of the other theological perspectives (designated "transference theology" and "abrogation theology" in its two forms) have already been surveyed above. They affirm that in the present age the Sabbath has been transferred to Sunday or abolished, respectively.

Although the term "Lord's Day" sometimes denotes Saturday in Seventh-day Adventist thinking,⁴² in this study it indicates only Sunday, the first day of the week.

Three other terms also deserve clarification. "Dispensations" designate stages or economies in which God works out His total purpose,⁴³ the final dispensation being the "kingdom" in which the yet unfulfilled promises to Israel will be fulfilled.⁴⁴ Finally, the terms "eschatology" and "eschatological" are seen in their broadest sense. As such they relate not to events which remain yet future from the present time, but to prophecies and types which were future at the time of their initial revelation.⁴⁵

⁴¹For example, Robert A. Morey, "Is Sunday the Christian Sabbath?" *BRR* 8 (1979): 3-19, seeks to refute "Sabbatarian" teaching, by which he means Sunday being promoted as the Christian Sabbath. See also John Alexander, "Sabbath Rest (Bleeding Hearts): Is the Sabbath Relevant to Activists?" *Other Side* 19 (November 1983): 8-9. Dispensationalism and recent widespread propagation of Seventh-day Adventist views outside their own circles has helped to clarify this confusion by contrasting the Sabbath with Sunday.

⁴²Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, 10.

⁴³A fuller definition of dispensationalism can be found in Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, 22-47.

⁴⁴The chief promise to the nation yet unfulfilled is its possession of the land stretching from the River of Egypt to the Euphrates (Gen. 15:18), which must be preceded by Israel's national repentance (Deut. 30:1-10; cf. Rom. 11:26). The kingdom age will also fulfill the promises made to Israel in the New Covenant—promises which see partial fulfillment in the church age (1 Cor. 11:25) but also include the restoration of Israel and Judah as a believing nation (Jer. 31:31-34).

⁴⁵Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 4:255.

Presuppositions and Scope

A comprehensive study of the Sabbath question would necessitate extensive research in every area mentioned above concerning the importance of the institution. Therefore, the scope of this study must be defined with certain presuppositions.

This dissertation does not provide a defense of dispensationalism as a system, which has already been convincingly argued.⁴⁶ Nor does it argue against the documentary hypothesis, but rather deals with the text in its canonical form and addresses the Pentateuch as Mosaic in origin.⁴⁷ Similarly, the historicity of the first eleven chapters of Genesis is maintained in the present study, although no attempt will be made to prove this as such. Also assumed is a pre-A.D. 70 date for the Book of Hebrews, a necessary assumption in order to adequately address the Sabbath rest of Hebrews 3:7–4:14 in Chapter 6.⁴⁸ Further, this study does not address the nature of the kingdom age in a

⁴⁶Notable modern dispensational treatises defending the hermeneutics of the system include J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come*, and Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*.

⁴⁷Refutations of the JEDP theory include those of Oswald T. Allis, *The Five Books of Moses*; Umberto Cassuto, *The Documentary Hypothesis and Composition of the Pentateuch*; Richard Valpy French, ed., *Lex Mosaica*; Edwin Cone Bissell, *The Pentateuch*; J. J. Blunt, *The Veracity of the Five Books of Moses*; A. H. Finn, *The Unity of the Pentateuch*. Among those denying the historicity of Genesis based upon the JEDP hypothesis is Hermann Gunkel, *The Legends of Genesis*, esp. 159-60.

⁴⁸Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 716-18, dates the letter just before the fall of Jerusalem or just before the Neronian persecutions (cf. F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NICNT, xlii-xliv). Evidence for other early dates is presented by William Robinson, "The Eschatology of the Epistle to the Hebrews: A Study in the Christian Doctrine of Hope," *Encounter* 22 (1961): 39-40 (A.D. 65-85); Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, xlii-xliii (A.D. 64-67); James Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, ICC, xvi (A.D. 66-70). Other early date advocates include Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 30-32; Homer A. Kent, Jr., *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 26-27; William L. Lane, "Hebrews: A Sermon in Search of a Setting," *SWJT* 28 (Fall 1985): 13-18. Harold W. Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Herm, 9, suggests an early date with a greater span of time. i.e., A.D. 60-100. These early dates preclude the supposed second century Gnostic elements in the book supported by Ernst Käsemann, *The Wandering People of God*. Käsemann's Gnostic thesis has been strongly disputed by Hofius, who maintains that the background to the letter of the Hebrews is not Gnostic but rather the eschatological-apocalyptic idea (cf. Otfried F. Hofius, *Katapausis: Die Vorstellung vom endzeitlichen Ruhort in Hebräerbrief*; cf. also Edwin M. Yamauchi, *Pre-Christian Gnosticism*, esp. pp. 51-52, 184-86; R. P. Casey, "Gnosis, Gnosticism and the New Testament,"

comprehensive manner.⁴⁹ Finally, while the nature of the Sabbath in several dispensations must be discussed as background (Chapters 2-5), these chapters are by necessity limited in scope in order to emphasize the much neglected *eschatological* significance of the Sabbath (Chapter 6).

Procedure

As mentioned above, Chapters 2-5 address the Sabbath issue by respective dispensations. These include a study of the Sabbath issue in the Pre-Fall (Chapter 2), Pre-Mosaic (Chapter 3), Mosaic (Chapter 4), and Church (Chapter 5) dispensations. However, the emphasis of this dissertation is the final chapter which concerns the future of the Sabbath (Chapter 6).

in *The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology*, 52-80; W. D. Davies, "'Knowledge' in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Matthew 11:25-30," in *Christian Origins and Judaism*, 119-44).

⁴⁹Comprehensive works providing a critical dispensational framework for the millennial age include J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come*; John F. Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom*; George N. H. Peters, *The Theocratic Kingdom*; Herman A. Hoyt, *The End Times*; and Alva J. McClain, *Greatness of the Kingdom*.

Chapter 2

Pre-Fall Sabbath

Non-Biblical Theories of Sabbath Origin

The search for an origin of the Sabbath and the seven day week outside the Old Testament has captured scholarly attention only in the past century. The discovery of several supposed Babylonian parallels to the Sabbath since 1883 has sparked many attempts to find the Sabbath's origin outside of Israel.¹ Many hypotheses have been suggested but can only be mentioned briefly as a full discussion of them is beyond the scope of this chapter.

Babylonian Taboo Days

The earliest critical theory, following Wellhausen's reconstruction of the history of Israel,² claims that Israel adopted the Sabbath from the seven-day week of the Canaanites, who in turn had received the Sabbath from the evil (taboo) days (*ûmê lemnûti*) of the Babylonians, days on which no work was to be done. These taboo days

¹The first to seek the origin of the Sabbath in Babylon is at times credited to Gulielmus Lotz, *Questiones de historia Sabbati libri duo* (Leipzig, 1883), 57, 58, 106 (cf. Hasel, "The Sabbath in the Pentateuch," in *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, 37, n. 3). Other significant surveys of a non-Israelite Sabbath include those by T. J. Meek, "The Sabbath in the Old Testament," *JBL* 33 (1914): 201-12; E. G. Kraeling, "The Present Status of the Sabbath Question," *AJSL* 49 (1932-33):218-28; Robert North, "The Derivation of the Sabbath," *Biblica* 36 (1955):182-201; Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions*, 476-79; C. W. Kiker, "The Sabbath in the Old Testament Cult," Th.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 5-39; W. Rordorf, *Sunday*, 19-24; Paul K. Jewett, *The Lord's Day*, 13-16; Gnana Robinson, *The Origin and Development of the Old Testament Sabbath*, 27-43; *TDNT*, s.v. "sabbaton," by Eduard Lohse, 7 (1968): 2-3; Niels-Erik A. Andreasen, "The Old Testament Sabbath," *SBL Diss. Ser.* 7, 1-16; id., *Rest and Redemption*, 12-22.

²Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena to the History of Israel*, 112-16.

were associated with lunar phases and fell on days 7, 14, (19), 21, and 28 of the month.³ While this practice contains some parallels to the Israelite Sabbath, the Babylonian tablets proscribing these "evil days" are primarily in the seventh century B.C., which is nearly seven centuries *after* Israel received the Sabbath.⁴ Also, the Babylonian rest day applied only to the king, in contrast to the Hebrew Sabbath which was for the population at large.⁵ Finally, no evidence affirms that the Canaanites ever had a Sabbath day.⁶

Babylonian Full Moon Day

Other scholars suggest that the Sabbath originated from the monthly full moon day of the Babylonians (*sabattu* or *sapattu*) and became a weekly rest day only later.⁷ They celebrated this middle day of the month as a day of good omen with a festival identified as "the day of the appeasement of the (god's) heart."⁸ This view claims the

³George Smith, *Assyrian Discoveries*, 12; C. H. W. Johns, "The Babylonian Sabbath," *ET* 17 (1905-1906): 566-67; *IDB*, s.v. "Sabbath," by J. Morgenstern, 4 (1962): 137.

⁴Johns provides evidence for the 19th as a rest day, based in part upon 3,148 documents dating from 604-449 B.C. ("The Babylonian Sabbath," 567). This dating makes impossible any influence upon Israel's Sabbath, which preceded it by seven centuries. As stated in the Introduction, the present study assumes Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch and makes no attempt to refute the ill-fated JEDP theory, yet this late date for the Babylonian hypothesis is its downfall. See also *TWOT*, s.v. "חַבֵּט" by Victor P. Hamilton, 2 (1980): 902; Jewett, 14.

⁵Hutton Webster, *Rest Days*, 254.

⁶*TDNT*, s.v. "σάββατον," by Lohse, 7:3; de Vaux, 478; H. H. Rowley, *Worship in Ancient Israel*, 91-92; *contra* T. J. Meek, "The Sabbath in the Old Testament," 202; Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 2 vols., 1:120.

⁷H. Zimmern, "Sabbath," *ZDMG* 58 (1904): 199-202; id., "Nochmals Sabbat," *ZDMG* 58 (1904): 458-60; Meek, "The Sabbath in the Old Testament," 201-12; *IDB*, s.v. "Sabbath," by Morgenstern, 4:135; *TWOT*, s.v. "חַבֵּט," by Hamilton, 2:902-3; North, "The Derivation of Sabbath," 195-98. North is convinced of the moon theory based upon Marduk's address to the moon in *Enuma Elish* 5.19: "At the month's very start, rising over the land, thou shalt have luminous horns to signify six days. On the seventh day be thou a [half-] crown. At *shapattu*, stand in opposition [to the sun] in mid-month" which equates *shapattu* with the full moon (p. 195). He concludes that "it would seem that by far the most satisfactory derivation of sabbath is as a dual of *sb'* 'seven,' referring to the fourteenth or full-moon day" (p. 196).

⁸*EB*, s.v. "Sabbath," by C. R. Smith, K. Marti, and T. K. Cheyne, 4 (1901): 4179, refutes the above translation of the Assyrian by Friedrich Delitzsch in 2 *Rawl.* 32:16 as a textual emendation; therefore, even

Sabbath was derived from a division of the moon cycle into four weeks,⁹ but the Sabbath and seven day week is independent of lunar cycles,¹⁰ as is shown by Exodus 34:21; 23:12.¹¹ Another weakness of this view is that this division is only approximate.¹² Also, no scholars advocating the moon theory have offered an explanation as to when, why, and how this Babylonian day became a seventh-day institution in Israel.¹³ Further, whether *shabattu* was related to the moon at all is uncertain as it was celebrated on the fifteenth day of the month.¹⁴ A final problem is that the day is not attested as a day of rest.¹⁵

the *existence* of the comment is suspect, let alone its meaning. It has been shown that "the phrase should be rendered 'day of the appeasement of the mind' (of an offended deity). The reference is to a day of atonement or pacification rather than a day of rest, a day in which one must be careful not to arouse the anger of the god who was supposed to preside over that particular day" (*ISBE*, s.v. "Sabbath," by John Richard Sampey, 4 [1939]: 2630). Since the legitimacy of the phrase is questionable this view has largely been discarded.

⁹Some scholars attribute the seven-day week of Israel before Sinai to natural, rather than Babylonian, observation of these four phases of the moon. As such it has been used to explain the mention of seven day periods before the Law (cf. Gen. 7:4, 10; 8:10, 12; 29:27). See Webster, 253-54; *EB*, "Sabbath," by Smith, Marti, and Cheyne, 4:4178-4179; Norman C. Deck, *The Lord's Day or the Sabbath*, 26. However, even this view has fatal flaws, shown by Kraeling, "The Present Status of the Sabbath Question," 219-225, and note 12 below.

¹⁰de Vaux, 477, 480; Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Worship in Israel*, 82; Kraeling, "The Present Status of the Sabbath Question," 219-25; Eichrodt, 1:132, n. 4.

¹¹Ernst Jenni, *Die theologische Begründung des Sabbatgebotes im Alten Testament*, 11.

¹²Werner H. Schmidt, *The Faith of the Old Testament*, 89, "Since the lunar cycle differs substantially from 28 days (it is 29 1/2 days), the week would need constantly to be corrected, so that the sequence of six working days and one day of rest would be destroyed." The best explanation for possible appearances of the week in pagan pre-Israelite cultures may be that they received the seven day periods from a common seven day creation tradition (cf. Gen. 1:1—2:3).

¹³Robinson, 35. The presupposition for the lunar theory and the evil day theory is the documentary hypothesis. With this as a basis, Meek ("The Sabbath in the Old Testament," 204) can boldly state, "All our evidence would seem to indicate that the Sabbath in early Israel had nothing whatever to do with the seventh day of the week!"

¹⁴Eichrodt, 1:132, n. 4.

¹⁵*EB*, "Sabbath," by Smith, Marti, and Cheyne, 4:4179; Schmidt, 89; de Vaux, 477. See also footnote 8 above.

Kenite Saturn Worship

Another theory affirms a non-biblical origin for the Sabbath. This hypothesis is geographically closer to Israel as it suggests that the scriptural Sabbath prohibition against lighting a fire (Exodus 35:3) stems from practices of the ancient Kenite people, who were believed to be smiths in the northern Sinai peninsula desert.¹⁶ Moses came into contact with these people who may have paid homage to Saturn (cf. Saturday) en route to Canaan since he married the daughter of a Kenite (Judg. 1:16).¹⁷ Also, Amos 5:25-26 indicates that Israel worshiped Saturn (Sakkuth) in the desert. However, this theory is based upon a very corrupt text in Amos and many unproven assumptions.¹⁸ Further, the naming of the days of the week after the planets did not occur until post-Christian times (and Saturday was the first day of the planetary week, not the last).¹⁹ Therefore, the seven-day week came into existence prior to the planetary week, not vice versa.²⁰ The Kenite theory also presupposes that Israel could not have received the fire prohibition by direct revelation, which is an untenable proposition.

¹⁶Karl Budde, "The Sabbath and the Week," *JThS* 30 (1928-29): 10-15, who also claims that Israel's monotheistic origin stemmed from the Kenites; North, "The Derivation of Sabbath," 198-201, also sees validity for the Kenite theory because the Kenite day of rest was for humanitarian and sociological reasons, thus finding parallel with the Sabbath in Scripture (e.g., Exod. 23:12). Rowley, 45ff., argues that the entire Decalogue of Israel adapted a similar one of Kenite origin.

¹⁷For other Kenite references see also Gen. 4:17ff.; Exod. 3:1ff.; 2:16ff.; Jud. 4:11, 17, 24; 1 Sam. 16:6; 26:10; 30:29; 1 Chron. 2:25 (cf. Budde, "The Sabbath and the Week," 11).

¹⁸"The hypothesis is both ingenious and fragile. We should beware of attributing too many things to the Qenites, of whom we know almost nothing; in particular, we do not know whether they really were blacksmiths, or whether they knew of the week, or whether they venerated Saturn" (de Vaux, 479); "The theory of Kenite origin is merely an attempt to explain one unknown by means of another" (Helmer Ringgren, *Israelite Religion*, 202). See also Kraeling, "The Present Status of the Sabbath Question," 218-19.

¹⁹Rordorf, 34; S. Douglas Waterhouse, "The Planetary Week in the Roman West," in *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, 309.

²⁰Rordorf, 33-35.

Socioeconomic (Market Day) Origin

The most prominent sociological theory affirms that the Sabbath was an economic and social institution adapted from regular market days in ancient townships.²¹ Proponents convincingly argue that Palestinian peasants would more naturally be concerned with agricultural economic interests than with Babylonian astronomical correctness.²² However, in Israel trade was forbidden on the Sabbath (Amos 8:4f.), so it could not possibly have been a market day.²³ Also, no evidence exists that market-day cycles (or even market weeks) existed in Israel, much less operated on a seven-day cycle.²⁴ Finally, while these days elsewhere recurred at intervals of three, four, five, six, eight or ten days, no record exists that they ever recurred at seven day intervals.²⁵

Mesopotamian or Ugaritic Theory

More recent studies seek to connect Israel's Sabbath worship with the number seven in Mesopotamian and/or Ugaritic texts.²⁶ However, no real association exists between these seven day or seven year sequences and the Biblical Sabbath.²⁷ Also, the

²¹Max Weber, *Ancient Judaism*, 151; de Vaux, 480; Kraeling, "The Present Status of the Sabbath Question," 226-28.

²²Weber, 151.

²³Gordon claims that "even in ancient Israel, in certain periods the people would flock to Jerusalem on the Sabbaths and new moons to buy and sell," a practice Nehemiah had to remedy (Cyrus H. Gordon, "The Biblical Sabbath: Its Origin and Observance in the Ancient Near East," *Judaism* 31 [Winter 1982]: 12). However, this statement confuses the misuse of the Sabbath from God's design for the day as one of rest in private dwellings (Exod. 16:29), which Nehemiah 13:15-21 enforced.

²⁴Rordorf, 22; Robinson, 12.

²⁵Hasel, "The Sabbath in the Pentateuch," 22.

²⁶Gordon, "The Biblical Sabbath: Its Origin and Observance in the Ancient Near East," 13-14; Kraus, 85-87.

²⁷Schmidt, 89; Robinson, 10.

proponents claim that since the Sabbath is to be "to the LORD" (Exod. 20:10; Lev. 23:3), this "suggests that a traditional institution was taken over by the Yahweh faith,"²⁸ but such a conclusion is unwarranted. The phrase merely specifies God as object of the rest rather than other motivations for rest; it does not compare worship of Yahweh with that of another deity.

Calendar Origin

The final conjecture on the origin of the Sabbath proposes two conflicting calendar theories. One is a fifty-day scheme based upon the "seven winds of the world" which develops into the seven-day week,²⁹ and the other is a "fifth of the month" scenario based upon the Akkadian six-day week of ancient West Asia, which had a day of rest added in view of God's rest after creating the world in six days.³⁰ However, both of these calculations are problematic in that neither work out evenly for lunar months.³¹

In summary, all attempts to explain from pagan neighbors the division of Israel's week into seven days are found wanting.³² It cannot be explained by any rhythm in nature, astronomical data, or pattern of social behavior.³³ Had it been borrowed from

²⁸Kraus, 87.

²⁹Julius and Hildegard Lewy, "The Origin of the Week and the Oldest West-Asiatic Calendar," *HUCA* 17 (1942-43): 1-152.

³⁰N. H. Tur-Sinai, "Sabbat und Woche," *BO* 8 (1951): 24.

³¹Argued by Georg Fohrer, *History of Israelite Religion*, 117.

³²Little has been written in recent years about the issue as all of the theories have been refuted. Nevertheless, Gordon has recently advocated the origin of the Sabbath in the creation account, but somehow also acknowledges the day as dependent upon the Babylonian lunar taboo days, the market day, Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Ugarit ("The Biblical Sabbath: Its Origin and Observance in the Ancient Near East," 11-15)!

³³"As a septenary time unit the seven-day week is peculiar, for it is entirely independent of the month and unrelated to an event in nature, such as the movements of the sun, moon, and stars. In the whole of the pre-Hellenistic, ancient Orient it can nowhere be clearly perceived, except among the Hebrews" (Waterhouse, "The Planetary Week in the Roman West," 308); cf. Jewett, 15-16; Robert Douglass

other pagan cultures, it would be strange indeed that God selected this sign to be the sign of His unique covenant with His special people Israel (Exod. 31:12).³⁴ It remains now to explain this scriptural origin of the institution in the Pentateuch.³⁵

Genesis 2:1-3 and the Sabbath

The biblical concept of rest on the seventh day stems back to the cessation of God's creative activity in Genesis 2:1-3.³⁶ These verses read,

Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done (Gen. 2:2-3).³⁷

Several issues arise from this narrative. In what sense did God bless the seventh day? What does it mean that God made this day holy? Did *Adam and Eve* rest every seventh day, or did only *God* rest this one time? If Adam and Eve *did* rest, did this change after they fell into sin? What exactly is meant by God's rest? Answers to these questions will affect one's view of the Sabbath throughout the Scripture.

The central issue in respect to Genesis 2:1-3 concerns whether this passage proves a creation origin for the Sabbath. This question is of paramount importance, for if

Congdon, "Sabbatic Theology" (Th.D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1949), 143; Robert Leo Odom, *Sabbath and Sunday in Early Christianity*, 13-14; Saul J. Berman, "The Extended Notion of the Sabbath," *Judaism* 22 (Summer 1973): 344.

³⁴de Vaux, 478.

³⁵Despite the numerous passages in the Pentateuch about the Sabbath as Israel's most important institution, Fohrer amazingly claims, "The OT contains no historically accurate information about its origin" (p. 117).

³⁶The present study assumes that the creation account indicates six literal, twenty-four-hour days, although the day-age theory has advocates from various persuasions (e.g., Philo *Allegorical Interpretation of Genesis* 2—3 1.2; Gleason L. Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, 58-65; Watchtower Bible & Tract Society, *Let God Be True*, 167-70). This issue is addressed in greater detail at the end of this chapter.

³⁷This reference and all subsequent Scripture quotations are from the *New International Version* unless otherwise noted.

the Sabbath was instituted on the seventh day, then it is possible that it is binding upon all people in all ages.³⁸ However, if no creation ordinance was attached to God's rest, then the Sabbath was for Israel alone and part of the Mosaic Law abolished at the death of Christ. This latter view is held by those advocating an abrogation theology, who unanimously agree that no such institution is in view in Genesis.³⁹ A third, critical perspective, may *appear* to adhere to an Edenic origin for the Sabbath; however, scholars of this perspective attribute the rest narrative to P at the exile, so the actual date which they advocate is centuries later.⁴⁰

Evidence Cited for an Edenic Sabbath

It comes as no surprise that those who teach the legitimacy of a present day Sabbath nearly unanimously argue for the institution in the Genesis account. The reason is simple: if the Sabbath was instituted in Eden, then it is one of the oldest institutions of the world and likely obligatory on all mankind in all ages. In the mind of Edenic

³⁸The existence of certain practices before the Law does not necessarily mean that they are binding upon men today. Circumcision and ritual sacrifice illustrate this truth, both of which are prominent in the Book of Genesis but are abolished now under the gospel. In contrast, marriage was instituted before the Law at creation (Gen. 2:24) and is binding apart from the Law (Matt. 19:3-9). Similarly, the wife's submission pronounced at the Fall (Gen. 3:16) is binding during the present age when the Law is abolished (Eph. 5:22). Therefore, if the Sabbath could be demonstrated to have a creation origin this would be strong, but not irrefutable, evidence for its perpetual and obligatory nature for all people since the creation.

³⁹Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis*, Interp., 35; Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 2 vols., 1:64; August Dillmann, *Genesis*, 91; W. Gunther Plaut, *Genesis*, Torah, 12; H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis*, 1:103; Derek Kidner, *Genesis*, TOTC, 53; Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 60; id., "There Still Remains a Rest for the People of God: An Investigation of a Biblical Conception," in *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*, 101, n. 9; Robert P. Gordon, "Genesis," IBC, 116; Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 8 vols., 4:102-104; Congdon, 122-93; Deck, 15-30; Harold H. P. Dressler, "The Sabbath in the Old Testament," in *From Sabbath to Lord's Day*, 27-30; George W. D'Sena, *The Sabbath, the Lord's Day, and God's Word*, 9; Charles Lee Feinberg, "The Sabbath and the Lord's Day," *BS* 95 (April-June 1938): 180; John Gill, *Body of Divinity*, 965-69; Rodney E. Ring, "Please Don't Call Sunday the Sabbath," *Dialog* 25 (Spring 1986): 139-40.

⁴⁰Willy Rordorf, *Sunday*, 46; John Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis*, ICC, 35, 38; Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary*, 168. Conversely, von Rad ascribes the passage to the Priestly "P" at the exile but does not find in it "the institution of the Sabbath" (p. 60).

adherents, the Sabbath is to be held equal to the other "creation ordinances," such as man's rule over creation (Gen. 1:28), work (Gen. 2:15), and marriage (Gen. 2:24). This creation ordinance teaching is unanimously held among Seventh-day Adventists,⁴¹ their most eloquent contemporary scholar being Samuele Bacchiocchi.⁴² Several arguments for a Sabbath in Eden are proposed, mostly by Sabbatarians, but not exclusively; many non-Sabbatarians also teach an Edenic Sabbath, especially those advocating a transfer theology.⁴³

The first defense for a Sabbath in Eden is the claim that three key passages (Gen. 2:1-3; Exod. 20:8-11; 31:12-17) all "point to the origin of the Sabbath at Creation."⁴⁴ A careful exposition of the latter two passages must wait until Chapter 4 on

⁴¹This has been the Seventh-day Adventist view since the time of Ellen G. White, *The Story of Patriarchs and Prophets*, 47-48, 336. All Seventh-day Adventists hold to a creation ordinance, for they believe this ordinance was not ordained for the Jews only but for all mankind as well (*SDABC*, Francis D. Nichol *et al.*, eds., 1:221). Seventh Day Baptists, of course, also adhere to the same (cf. Herbert E. Saunders, *The Sabbath: Symbol of Creation and Re-Creation*, 18-22). For a modern Jewish perspective see Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man*.

⁴²Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Divine Rest*, 32-57.

⁴³See Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1—15*, WBC, 7, 35-36; George Bush, *Notes on Genesis*, 1:48; Eichrodt, 1:425; Bruce Vawter, *On Genesis*, 62; John Calvin, *Institutes*, 2 vols., 1:339-44; id., *The Book of Genesis*, 2 vols., 1:105-106; W. H. Griffith Thomas, *Genesis: A Devotional Commentary*, 38-39; id., *Studies in Colossians and Philemon*, 94; Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols., 3:321-48; Augustus H. Strong, *Systematic Theology*, 408-10; *ZPEB*, "Sabbath," by G. H. Waterman, 5 (1976): 183; John Murray, *Collected Writings*, 4 vols., 1:205-8; Roger T. Beckwith and Wilfred Stott, *The Christian Sunday*, 2-12; North, "The Derivation of Sabbath," 183; John Bright, *The History of Israel*, 330; A. R. Fausset, "Colossians," in *JFB*, 6 vols., 6:448; Marchant A. King, "The Sabbath and the Spring Feasts," *Moody*, May 1985, 46; Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 3 vols., 3.4:47-72; de Vaux, 478; Herbert W. Richardson, *Toward an American Theology*, 112-18; Hans Walter Wolff, "The Day of Rest in the Old Testament," *LexTQ* 7 (July 1972): 69; Walter C. Kaiser, *Toward and Old Testament Theology*, 76-77; *NBD*, "Sabbath," by E. J. Young and F. F. Bruce, 1042; Glenn N. Davies, "The Christian Sabbath," *RTR* 42 (May-August 1983): 34-36; Charles R. Biggs, "Exposition and Adaptation of the Sabbath Commandment in the OT," *ABR* 23 (October 1975): 14-15. Although not adhering to a transfer theology, Martin Luther also believed in an Edenic Sabbath (*Lectures on Genesis Chapters 1-5*, Luther's Works, 55 vols., 1:79-82), as does the Jewish scholar Samson Raphael Hirsch (*The Pentateuch*, vol. 1, *Genesis*, 44-47).

⁴⁴Hasel, "The Sabbath in the Pentateuch," 22; cf. Andreasen, *Rest and Redemption*, 71-75; id. *The Old Testament Sabbath*, 190-203; Odom, 11-17; Barth (*Church Dogmatics*, 3.4:47-72). By way of preview, Seventh Day Adventists appeal to "Scriptural support" for a creation Sabbath for man in these three Old Testament texts (Gen. 2:1-3; Exod. 20:11; 31:17) and three New Testament passages (Mark 2:27; John 5:17; Heb. 4:4; cf. Bacchiocchi, *Sabbath in New Testament*, 41-47).

the Mosaic Sabbath. However, here it is sufficient to say that while these passages do indeed point back to Genesis 2:1-3 as a *motivation* to obey the Sabbath, they do not state that God's creation rest is the *origin* of the Sabbath. To prove the latter one must convincingly argue that *man*, as well as God, rested on the seventh day of creation—a teaching not found in the creation narrative.⁴⁵ While it is true that the Exodus passages point back to God's example, it must be remembered *when and to whom* this appeal to divine example was made—hundreds of years later, and only to Israel. One searches in vain to find that this was to be an exemplar in Eden for *Adam*.

Second, some scholars (particularly of the Reformed persuasion), affirm that the Sabbath was instituted in the beginning as a moral—not ceremonial—obligation.⁴⁶ A moral command is considered universal in its obligation and known by natural means, but "those commands of the Old Testament which were addressed to the Jews as Jews and were founded in their peculiar circumstances and relations, passed away when the Mosaic economy was abolished."⁴⁷ Thus the true intent of Genesis 2 is, in the mind of such men, not *Sabbath* rest, but only the principle of resting *one day in seven*, used as a justification for Sunday worship.⁴⁸ In response to this appeal to a dichotomy between "moral" and "ceremonial" aspects of the Law, such a distinction in Scripture is wholly lacking.⁴⁹ The

⁴⁵H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis*, 2 vols., 1:103.

⁴⁶This distinction was well articulated by Thomas Aquinas, who divided the Mosaic Law into moral, ceremonial, and judicial precepts (*Summa Theologica* Part 2 [First Part], Q. 100.1, 3, pp. 117-18). Modern advocates include Hodge, 3:323; Herbert W. Richardson, *Toward an American Theology*, 113.

⁴⁷Hodge, 3:323.

⁴⁸Schaff notes that some church fathers "forgot" that the Sabbath and Lord's Day "are one in essence and aim, though different in form and spirit, and that the fourth commandment as to its substance—viz., the keeping holy of one day out of seven—is an integral part of the decalogue or the moral law, and hence of perpetual obligation" (Philip Schaff, *History of the Church*, 3:382). Curiously, he also notes that the early church did not see the Lord's day as a continuation of the Jewish Sabbath (p. 379). See also Merrill F. Unger, "The Significance of the Sabbath," *BS* 123 (January-March 1966): 53.

⁴⁹Sabbatarians argue persuasively against this so-called division of the Law into moral (natural) and ceremonial teachings (cf. Bacchiocchi, *Divine Rest*, 45-49, 53-55).

New Testament affirms that the *entire* Law has been eradicated, not certain portions of it.⁵⁰ Further, since a moral or natural law is one which man instinctively knows is wrong (e.g., murder), can this be said of the Sabbath? Does all mankind innately discern that the seventh day of each week is to be set apart for rest and worship of God?⁵¹ This is the inescapable dilemma of those who adhere to the unscriptural dichotomy between so-called "moral" and "ceremonial" laws in the Old Testament.

Third, advocates of the Edenic Sabbath insist that the next morning after man's creation was a Sabbath. Bacchiocchi expresses this teaching, though with some doubt, "Adam's first full day of life was the seventh day which, *one can legitimately assume, he spent not working* but celebrating with his Maker the inauguration of the completed and perfect creation."⁵² Even the above quote admits that such a teaching is an assumption. In the opinion of the present writer, a doctrine of such monumental importance must be based upon fact, not assumption or implication. Nothing in the Genesis account indicates that Adam celebrated the Sabbath on his first full day of life.

Fourth, advocates of a creation ordinance declare that Adam rested on the Sabbath because man was created in God's image. In other words, since God set the pattern of seventh-day rest upon which the fourth commandment is based (Exod. 20:8-11), Adam must have followed this pattern.⁵³ In response to this logic, one must admit

⁵⁰The question of the end of the law will be addressed more thoroughly in Chapter 5.

⁵¹James Augustus Hessey, *Sunday*, 98.

⁵²Bacchiocchi, *Divine Rest*, 20 (emphasis mine). This perspective also has rabbinic support from R. Judah: "The Holy One, blessed be He, kept the Sabbath first in the heavenly regions, and Adam kept the Sabbath first in the lower regions." See Gerald Friedlander, trans. *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*, 20 (cf. Robert M. Johnston, "Patriarchs, Rabbis, and Sabbath," *AUSS* 12 (July 1974): 101).

⁵³Beckwith and Stott, 3; Bacchiocchi, *Divine Rest*, 20-21.

that God rested only once and continues to do so. If Adam was to follow God's example explicitly, he must have rested continually after his creation from the dust.⁵⁴

Also, scholars of an Edenic Sabbath argue that a Sabbath only for Jews (and thus unavailable to the rest of mankind since the creation) would make God demonstrate special favor towards the Jewish nation. The *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary* maintains that "there were no Jews until some thousands of years after creation, and God never intended that they should seek to monopolize the Sabbath."⁵⁵ Bacchiocchi also voices the same sentiment: "The notion of the Sabbath as an exclusively Jewish institution, established not at creation for all mankind but by Moses for Israel alone, makes God guilty, to say the least, of favoritism and discriminatory practices."⁵⁶

This bold claim can be answered with a similar question: Are Sabbatarians equally as quick to accuse God of favoritism for saving only the elect? "Does the clay say to the potter, 'What are you making?'" (Isa. 45:9). God sovereignly chose only the Jewish nation to give the entire Law: "You only have I chosen of all the families of the earth" (Amos 3:2). Does this make Him unjust towards the other nations? Surely God can do as He wishes since He is God. He provided in many other ways for Israel alone, such as her deliverance from Egypt, supply of manna, and provision of the ark, tabernacle, and sacrificial system. Would God be unfair to give the Sabbath only to His elect nation which was to serve as a "kingdom of priests" to other nations?

A sixth reason that some teach a creation ordinance is because "the blessing of the Sabbath referred to in Exodus 20:11 links the Creation Sabbath with the weekly

⁵⁴This is not to indicate that God's rest does not function as an exemplar in *any sense*, for, as has been already indicated, Exodus 20:8-11; 31:12-17 do point back to Genesis 2:1-3 as an example. However, this model did not function for *all* mankind, but only for Israel, as will be seen in Chapter 3.

⁵⁵*SDABD*, "Sabbath," by Siegfried H. Horn, 935.

⁵⁶Bacchiocchi, *Divine Rest*, 33.

Sabbath."⁵⁷ Appeal is also made to the next statement which proclaims God's declaration of the day as holy (Gen. 2:3). Rabbi Heschel and Saunders (Seventh Day Baptist) note how this divine pronouncement upon the seventh day is unique, for on the other six days of creation God saw that His created objects were "good" or "very good," but no created thing is deemed "holy" except the seventh day. Also, this blessing of a *period of time* (a day) stands in contrast to God's blessing of *objects*, such as marine life and birds (Gen. 1:22), and man (Gen. 1:28).⁵⁸ Without doubt God "blessed and sanctified" the seventh day, but what does this mean? Scholars of various persuasions confess that the text does not expressly state what is meant in the blessing or sanctification of the day.⁵⁹

Admittedly, some special importance does seem to be attached to the day:

In what way God 'blessed' or 'sanctified' the seventh day, we are not told, but it is hard to give the words any meaning unless one understands them to imply that God forthwith appointed the day to be observed in some fashion by mankind, whom he had just created.⁶⁰

These authors bring up a good point—that the blessing and hallowing of the day was for man's benefit, not God's. Nevertheless, the silence of any Sabbath command still remains. One searches in vain for evidence that Adam took the divine blessing as a command to rest. Indeed, the day was blessed and set apart, but no more is said. This stands in contrast to the claim of Beckwith and Stott, who, after citing Exodus 20:8-11, mistakenly read the "rest mandate" back into the Genesis text by saying, "The seventh day, then, was 'blessed' and 'sanctified' to be a day of rest..."⁶¹ although the Genesis narrative says nothing of the sort. The progress of revelation must be considered.

⁵⁷Hasel, "The Sabbath in the Pentateuch," 25.

⁵⁸Heschel, 9, 75, 76; Saunders, 21.

⁵⁹Beckwith and Stott, 2; Bacchiocchi, *Divine Rest*, 84.

⁶⁰Beckwith and Stott, 2. Note that these authors admit that their conclusion rests on implication rather than fact.

⁶¹Beckwith and Stott, 2.

Therefore, whatever Adam may have interpreted the blessing and sanctification to mean (if he knew of it at all), it is evident that he interpreted the sanctification of the day as meaning something different than pause from a toilsome labor which he had not yet experienced.

The solution to this difficulty of a sanctified day not yet instituted relates to the *time* of its institution. As will become evident in Chapter 4, God blessed and set apart the day for its *future* use as a day of rest and worship for Israel under the Law.⁶² Dressler concurs, noting that God separated the seventh day as

an eschatological, proleptic sign indicating some future rest. Thus, the statement in Genesis 2:3 is to be understood not in terms of blessing *the Sabbath* (according to our understanding of Exod. 20:11 such a blessing accompanied the inauguration of the Sabbath at Sinai) but in terms of the ultimate rest for the people of God.⁶³

In like manner He set apart Jeremiah while in the womb (Jer. 1:5), though his ministry as a prophet did not commence until years later.⁶⁴ Arguments which go beyond the clear and unambiguous statements of the text enter into the realm of speculation.⁶⁵ This eschatological interpretation of Genesis 2:2-3 does not mean that the seventh day does not relate to the order of creation, for this is obviously its immediate context. However, the *seventh* day was the climax of creation, not the *sixth* day on which man was created.⁶⁶

⁶²Franz Delitzsch, *A New Commentary on Genesis*, 103, argues against a prospective nuance to the blessing and hallowing.

⁶³Dressler, "The Sabbath in the Old Testament," 29 (emphasis mine); cf. H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis*, 1:103; von Rad, *Genesis*, 1:60; Leon J. Wood, *Genesis*, 27; John S. Kselman, in *Harper's Bible Commentary*, 87. Skinner disagrees that the text has a future institution in mind (p. 38).

⁶⁴Gill, 966.

⁶⁵Andreasen, another advocate for a creation ordinance admits freely, "A careful reading of Gen 2:1-3 reveals that these verses nowhere command that man observe the sabbath. The sabbath is blessed and sanctified, but there is no command to keep it." He also confesses that this pattern contrasts with the creation of man followed by the explicit *command* (to multiply) in Genesis 1:26-28, but explains the difference as such: "Perhaps... the message of Gen 2:1-3 is not so much concerned with the sabbath institution as with God and his creative work." Nevertheless, despite these confessions, he still maintains that the Sabbath was instituted at creation (Andreasen, *Rest and Redemption*, 75-76).

⁶⁶Dressler, "The Sabbath in the Old Testament," 29-30.

Therefore, one should be careful not to give man an undue emphasis in interpreting the nature of God's rest. This fact is supported in the complete lack of any mention of man on the seventh and final day.⁶⁷

A seventh argument that the institution was part of life in the Garden stems from the early appearance of the seven day week:

From the dawn of history the 7-day week was known and recognized as a unit of time measurement (see Gen 7:4, 10; 8:10, 12; 29:27)... man's recognition of the 7-day week in those early times must be traced to God's appointment of the 7th day as a day of rest, blessing, and holiness.⁶⁸

Several factors may be noted in response to this statement. First, it has not yet been proven that the seven day week has been known since the dawn of creation. The Genesis passages cited do not prove that the week was a measure of time. They simply indicate that Noah had seven days to load the ark before the Flood came, that after the Flood he waited seven days before sending out the second and third doves, and that Leah's bridal period lasted seven days. How do these periods prove the existence of the week? Second, even if the week *was* a measure of time employed since the creation, how does this prove that the *seventh* day of each week was man's day of rest? Rest itself does not serve as a divider of time units, and no hint that man ever rested on the seventh day appears in the entire Book of Genesis.

Some have also argued for Sabbath observance since creation based upon man's inherent biological need.⁶⁹ Such is the argument of one who argues for Sunday observance on this basis: "Men, converted or unconverted, are part of nature and need the Sabbath as earthly people who in their bodies are inextricably dependent upon water, air,

⁶⁷An extensive discussion on the eschatological implications of the seventh day is given in the final chapter of this treatise.

⁶⁸*SDABD*, "Sabbath," by Horn, 935, 936.

⁶⁹Harry C. Meserve, "The Creative Pause [editorial]," *JRHe* 3 (October 1963): 3-6.

and soil."⁷⁰ Another adds, "Adam's body was constitutionally made so that it needed rest from the labour God had prescribed for Adam (Gen. 2:15)."⁷¹

No one would deny that rest is a biological need for all people, but has it been demonstrated that a sufficient night's sleep on regular basis does not supply this need? While it may perhaps be demonstrated that Adam was able to experience exhaustion prior to the entrance of sin into the world,⁷² that Adam or anyone needs a day of rest every *seventh day* yet remains an unproven assumption.⁷³ Further, while the Sabbath met a human need, the same could be said for other Mosaic legislation, such as the return of land in the Jubilee year, food laws, etc. Consistency demands that one arguing for present day Sabbath observance must be prepared to do the same for other useful laws of the Mosaic economy.⁷⁴

Proof for an Edenic Sabbath is also sought in the manna incident of Exodus 16. Proponents assert that this narrative presents the Sabbath as an already existing institution. Bacchiocchi declares:

The instructions for the gathering of the double portion of the manna on the sixth day presuppose a knowledge of the significance of the Sabbath: 'On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather daily' (Ex. 16:5). The

⁷⁰Harold Lindsell, "The Lord's Day and Natural Resources," *CTo* 20 (May 7, 1976): 9.

⁷¹Davies, "The Christian Sabbath," 35.

⁷²Davies, *ibid.*, argues that Paul's comparison in 1 Corinthians 15:42-49 between the natural body (including Adam's; v. 45) and the "eschatological body of the Spirit" proves that Adam could get tired even before the Fall and thus needed rest.

⁷³"Various psychological tests have... shown that there is no biological time rhythm, or clock, for a seven-day week in man or animals. Extensive tests have been done with isolated men and animals to see if there is a built-in time clock. The evidence is conclusive that neither man nor animals are Sabbath-keepers by nature or being. Neither does Sabbath-keeping have anything to do with psychological or physiological well-being. Men and animals normally rest *in* their work instead of *from* their work. The classic Sabbatarian argument which claimed that Sabbath-keeping is physically *constituted* in men and animals should be laid to rest forever" (Robert A. Morey, "Is Sunday the Christian Sabbath?" *BRR* 8 [1979]: 7).

⁷⁴D. A. Carson, "Jesus and the Sabbath in the Four Gospels," in *From Sabbath to Lord's Day*, 85.

omission of any reason for gathering a double portion on the sixth day would be quite unaccountable, if the Israelites had no previous knowledge of the Sabbath.⁷⁵

The above quote suggests that no reason is given for the command, but such is not the case. God expressly stated before the manna fell that He would test the people whether they would follow His instructions to gather twice as much on the sixth day (v. 4b).⁷⁶ How does the testing of their obedience to His command just given presuppose an *existing* Sabbath ordinance? One also wonders how the above statement can be made since the reason for gathering a double portion is given at least four times (vv. 23, 25, 26, 29). This reason is because a new feature was added to the seventh day, that being cessation from work (i.e., a "Sabbath"). The fact that God waited several weeks after the Exodus to introduce this stipulation to rest on the seventh day argues *against* a so-called creation ordinance. Why did He not do it sooner, as soon as Israel was free from the oppressive hand of the Egyptians which likely forced them to work seven days a week?⁷⁷

Similarly, Exodus 20 also confirms the Sabbath day as preexisting, in the opinion of Edenic advocates. This argument asserts that "remember the Sabbath day" would have been "know the Sabbath day" if the commandment had not already existed.⁷⁸ Further, the appeal to Genesis 2:1-3 in verse 11 "hardly allows a late Exodus introduction of the festival."⁷⁹ However, this appeal to the word "remember" is speculative in that it assumes knowledge of what Moses *would have said* if the Sabbath was being instituted at that time. Even if "remember" *does* indicate familiarity with the day, this still is not problematic as Israel had been introduced to the Sabbath concept earlier in the manna

⁷⁵Bacchiocchi, *Divine Rest*, 36 (italics mine).

⁷⁶Bacchiocchi neglects to quote the previous verse, which provides the reason for the doubled sixth day portion: "In this way I will test them to see whether they will follow my instructions."

⁷⁷Exodus 16 is discussed more fully in the following chapter.

⁷⁸Bacchiocchi, *Divine Rest*, 36.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*

provision.⁸⁰ In response to the Adventist appeal to Genesis 2 as a creation ordinance, nothing in the account indicates that man followed the Sabbath in Eden. The appeal is simply to *God's* example of rest, not man's.

Finally, proponents of a creation ordinance also appeal to the "implicit allusions to the creation origin of the Sabbath" found in three New Testament passages (Mark 2:27; John 5:17; Heb. 4:4).⁸¹ In the first passage Christ declared that "the Sabbath was made for man" (Mark 2:27). The argument is summed thus, "The Hebrew word for man is '*Adam*,' a name used to designate both a specific person—Adam—and mankind as a whole (cf. Gen. 5:2)."⁸² In response, this correctly asserts that the Hebrew for "man" and "Adam" are identical (אָדָם). However, Jesus' statement is not recorded in Hebrew, but Greek. Therefore, this argument is guilty of reading alternate Hebrew meanings into the Greek word for "man" used here (ἄνθρωπος), which is a Greek word that never refers to Adam.⁸³

The argument continues: Why did Christ not say "the Sabbath was made for Israel" if He did not intend a creation Sabbath?⁸⁴ Also, did not Christ's statement that the Sabbath was "made" (γίνομαι) suggest a connection with the "making" of the world?⁸⁵ In response to these questions, a meaning determined from context should hold greater weight than speculative questions which ask, "Why didn't Christ say...?" Jesus was talking to the Pharisees, who were also fellow Jews. Since the question of Sabbath

⁸⁰The issues surrounding the word "remember" are more properly discussed in Chapter 4 on the Mosaic Law.

⁸¹Bacchiocchi, *Sabbath in New Testament*, 42; *Divine Rest*, 41-42.

⁸²Bacchiocchi, *Divine Rest*, 21; *SDABC*, Nichol *et al.*, eds., 1:220.

⁸³ἄνθρωπος normally does refer to mankind in general, but its more limited meaning in Mark 2:27 will be addressed more thoroughly in Chapter 4.

⁸⁴Beckwith and Stott, 11.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*

observance on the part of Gentiles was foreign to their discussion, it is no surprise that he did not more narrowly define the recipients of the Sabbath. Furthermore, ἄνθρωπος is used of Israel alone no less than 336 times, so its use does not necessitate a broader group.⁸⁶

John 5:17 is also used to demonstrate a Sabbath in Eden.⁸⁷ When charged with healing on the Sabbath, Christ defended Himself with the statement, "My Father is working until now and I am working." Bacchiocchi summarizes the two most commonly held interpretations of this phrase as indicating either God's constant care or continuous creation, with the adverb "until now" (ἕως ἄρτι) understood as "continually, always."⁸⁸ Rather than these perspectives, he suggests an alternate, redemptive view in which the Lord meant that God was about to culminate His redemptive work in Christ's death.⁸⁹ This is supported by two lines of argumentation. First, in the Gospel of John the working and works of God refer not to creation or preservation, but to the redemptive mission of Christ (cf. John 4:34; 6:29; 9:3; 10:37-38; 14:11; 15:24). Second, the adverb "until now" indicates not "the *constancy*, but the *inauguration* and *culmination* of God's working. In other words, God is working *until this very hour* since the first [creation] Sabbath and until the conclusion of His work—the final Sabbath... when redemption will be concluded."⁹⁰

⁸⁶Deck, 25.

⁸⁷Samuele Bacchiocchi, "John 5:17: Negation or Clarification of the Sabbath?" *AUSS* 19 (Spring 1981): 3-19; id., *From Sabbath to Sunday*, 38-48; id., *Divine Rest*, 41-42; Beckwith and Stott, 11.

⁸⁸Bacchiocchi, "John 5:17," 3-11.

⁸⁹Ibid., 11-19; cf. Jewett, 86; Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship*, 88-92; *The Christology of the New Testament*, 300: "Jesus cannot rest because God's saving work has not yet reached the Sabbath rest in the eschatological sense of Heb. 4.3ff. His time is God's time."

⁹⁰Bacchiocchi, *Divine Rest*, 42; cf. id., "John 5:17," 11-13.

Can this redemption view of John 5:17 be sustained? It is problematic in that the context is one of preserving a paralytic's health, not his eternal redemption, but Chapter 6 of this study will address these eschatological factors; the present issue of concern must consider whether a creation ordinance is sanctioned. Bacchiocchi notes, "The adverb 'until now' presumes a 'beginning' and an 'end,'" and then adds (without exegetical support), "The beginning is the creation Sabbath when God completed creation and the end is the final Sabbath when redemption will be concluded."⁹¹ Assuming his own redemptive meaning one must ask, How can the beginning of God's redemptive work be at a perfect creation when redemption is not even in view? On the seventh day of creation, man was in complete fellowship with God, and the first reference to God's redemptive program does not appear until after the Fall (Gen. 3:15). Therefore, the assumption of an Edenic origin for the Sabbath based upon John 5:17 cannot be sustained.

The third New Testament passage used to support a creation origin is Hebrews 4:9, although this passage is rarely cited by Sabbatarians. Morey notes that John Owen stands alone in this interpretation as nearly all great commentators on Hebrews since Calvin have rejected a primeval origin for the Sabbath here—even some of the Puritans, who were very eager to demonstrate a creation origin for the Sabbath.⁹² Nevertheless, contemporary Seventh-day Adventist scholar Bacchiocchi supports the view. In fact, he considers this "the most explicit reference to the creation Sabbath" in the New Testament, which the author of Hebrews takes for granted since he traces the rest back to creation rather than Joshua's day.⁹³ This passage will receive careful attention in the final chapter of this treatise, but it can be stated here that the creation quotations point back not to

⁹¹Bacchiocchi, *Divine Rest*, 42.

⁹²Morey, "Is Sunday the Christian Sabbath?" 11.

⁹³Bacchiocchi, *Sabbath in New Testament*, 45; id., *Divine Rest*, 164-70.

man's rest, but to God's (Heb. 4:3, 4). Also, the Book of Hebrews rebukes believers for giving prominence to Judaistic types over their antitypes, so in context one would hardly expect an encouragement to continue Sabbath observance initiated in the Law. Finally, the concern of the passage is the danger of apostasy, not the proper *day* of worship. While the exposition and implications of this passage will be addressed more fully in Chapter 6, enough has been said here to demonstrate that the text does not support an Edenic Sabbath.

In conclusion, the above arguments often cited to demonstrate a creation ordinance for the Sabbath are unconvincing and based upon unproven assumptions.

Evidence Against an Edenic Sabbath

The approach thus far has dealt with the issue of a creation origin by critical examination of the best arguments for its possible existence. In addition to the responses provided above, other Scriptural evidence indicates that a Sabbath was *not* in effect in Eden. These arguments have been presented by scholars of various persuasions.⁹⁴

First, no command for man to observe the Sabbath is given since only God is cited as resting.⁹⁵ While the Sabbatarian argument that God's "actions speak louder than words,"⁹⁶ nevertheless, the command to follow God's example of resting is still not given until Mount Sinai. The teaching of an Edenic Sabbath is based upon silence as nowhere

⁹⁴"The creation-origin of the Sabbath was challenged long before our time and by such 'conservative' people as the Palestinian Jews, the early fathers, radical groups of the Reformation, and more recently, modern dispensationalists" (Bacchiocchi, *Divine Rest*, 32). Bacchiocchi suggests that: (1) Palestinian Jews viewed the Sabbath as strictly for Jews in intertestamental times to preserve their national identity in the face of Hellenization, and (2) early fathers defended a Jewish origin to counter Sabbatarian believers (pp. 33-34). These assertions, however, presuppose knowing the proper motives of ancient writers which at best is conjectural.

⁹⁵Feinberg, "The Sabbath and the Lord's Day," 180; Schmidt, 92.

⁹⁶Bacchiocchi, *Divine Rest*, 34-35.

in the text is man commanded to observe the day.⁹⁷ Further, if the day had indeed been enforced upon Adam then certainly God would have also instructed him in how it should be observed.⁹⁸

Second, the careful use of terms in the narrative eliminates a creation ordinance. The term for "Sabbath" (שַׁבָּת)⁹⁹ is not even mentioned in the passage.¹⁰⁰ Moses undoubtedly *could* have used it, but instead referred to the "seventh day" (בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי) three times. Although the "Sabbath" and "seventh day" are equated in the Decalogue (Exod. 20:10),¹⁰¹ nevertheless, the more technical term of the two is the Sabbath. One must wonder why, if God intended to communicate a creation Sabbath, He did not use the more appropriate technical term.¹⁰² The text merely states, "and God rested" (וַיִּשְׁבֹּת), but this rest is never equated with "God's Sabbath" *or* "man's Sabbath." In fact, this verb translated "rest" (שָׁבַת) has as its basic meaning "to cease, desist" so that it actually means "to rest in the sense of repose only when the verb is used in the Sabbath

⁹⁷ Seventh-day Adventists have at least two replies to the lack of command to obey the Sabbath. The first is that an origin in the Decalogue (rather than in Genesis) makes not *God* the author of the Sabbath, but a "Moses guilty of distortion of truth or, at least, a victim of gross misunderstanding," which "would cast serious doubts on the integrity and/or reliability of anything else Moses or anyone else wrote in the Bible" (Bacchiocchi, *Divine Rest*, 34). Such a reaction is unwarranted since the entire Decalogue, though *recorded* by Moses, was God's Word. Moses did not invent the Sabbath but only faithfully recorded the commandment for Israel. A second Adventist response is that a lack of divine command more strongly emphasizes "the divine Exemplar whose example man is to follow" (Hasel, "The Sabbath in the Pentateuch," 24). However, even an appeal to follow God's *example* does not appear until the giving of the Law under Moses (cf. Exod. 20:11; 31:17) as it is absent in the Genesis text.

⁹⁸ John Gill, 965.

⁹⁹ BDB 992a, from שָׁבַת, "cease, desist, rest" (BDB 991d).

¹⁰⁰ Robert A. Morey, "Is Sunday the Christian Sabbath?" *BRR* 8 (1979): 6; Gill, 965; Congdon, 122-23; Schmidt, 92.

¹⁰¹ Bacchiocchi, *Divine Rest*, 262, n. 74.

¹⁰² Congdon, 134.

context...."¹⁰³ "The root has nothing to do with resting in the sense of enjoying repose... *sabbath*... certainly cannot be translated 'the day of rest.'"¹⁰⁴

Third, if Adam observed the Sabbath then it might be fair to expect some remains of it in pagan cultures following the Fall.¹⁰⁵ However, as was demonstrated at the beginning of the present chapter, all non-biblical attempts to prove a Near Eastern parallel to the Sabbath have failed. Even the proponents of an Edenic institution acknowledge such.¹⁰⁶ Is it reasonable to suppose that an institution inaugurated at creation would have no remnant in pagan religion? Without question the institution of marriage had its roots in Eden, and consequently it appears in many pagan cultures.¹⁰⁷ Why, then, is the Gentile history before Moses, and even *throughout the Old Testament*, devoid of any institution resembling the Sabbath? The answer is that it was never given to Gentiles, neither before nor after its institution with Israel. Admittedly, this remains an argument from silence, but the silence in the ancient near east supports the silence in Genesis.

The fifth evidence against an Edenic origin for the Sabbath lies in the lack of any *scriptural* examples of Sabbath worship between Adam and Moses. This, however, is the subject of the next chapter.

¹⁰³*TWOT*, "שַׁבָּת" by Hamilton, 2:902.

¹⁰⁴*EB*, "Sabbath," by Smith, Marti, and Cheyne, 4:4173. Although Scripture is silent on this issue, one may question whether Adam actually needed rest in the Garden. He certainly worked before the Fall (Gen. 2:15), but since he lived in a perfect environment it may be that rest from this labor was unnecessary until his work took on its undesirable traits (Gen. 3:17-19) after the entrance of sin (see Isaac M. Haldeman, *Truth About the Sabbath and the Lord's Day*, 8-9; Feinberg, "The Sabbath and the Lord's Day," 180).

¹⁰⁵Gill, 965; Morey, "Is Sunday the Christian Sabbath?" 6-7.

¹⁰⁶Hasel, "The Sabbath in the Pentateuch," 22: "It may be concluded that from the point of view of religiohistorical investigation the Sabbath is unique to Biblical religion."

¹⁰⁷A similar claim might be made for monotheism in that the concept of a supreme god appears repeatedly in the religions of the ancient near east. Although polytheism is embraced in these religions, the emergence of a single god at the top of a hierarchy may be a pagan adaptation of roots in the Genesis account.

However, the most convincing argument against a creation ordinance lies in the clear statements that Israel alone received the day. A multitude of passages indicate that the Sabbath was instituted with the nation Israel, which alone celebrated the day (Exod. 16:29; Neh. 9:14; Ezek. 20:12b; cf. Jub. 2:17-20, 31) as a sign between God and the nation (Exod. 31:13, 17; Ezek. 20:12a, 20). These passages will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

In summary, "the hard exegetical facts are that there is not a single command, example, or precept for Sabbath-keeping in the creation account."¹⁰⁸ It may seem that the above evidences against an Edenic Sabbath are quite brief, but this is by design. The best evidence against a creation origin is the explicit teaching of a Mosaic origin, which is addressed in a later chapter. It remains now to evaluate the scriptural data between Adam and Moses (Chapter 3) and then under the Law (Chapter 4). However, a short discussion of the theology of God's rest is appropriate here as this rest is rooted in the creation narrative.

The Meaning of God's Rest

The Length of the Rest

The nature of God's rest brings up another vital question: Was the seventh day on which He rested a literal twenty-four hour period? The importance of this issue cannot be overstated, for if the seventh day lasted twenty-four hours it gives great weight to the Sabbatarian position. However, if the "day" was not twenty-four hours then the appeal to "God's example" loses much of its force.

Several factors indicate that a literal day is *not* in view in Genesis 2:1-3.¹⁰⁹ First, the repeated formula "and there was evening and there was morning—the first [etc.]

¹⁰⁸Morey, "Is Sunday the Christian Sabbath?" 6.

¹⁰⁹Dillmann, 90-91, argues that the seventh day "surely cannot be thought of as a day stretching on *in infinitum*" because of the Father's continual work mentioned by Christ in John 5:17. However, Jacob

day" (Gen. 1:3, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31) is curiously *not* employed in describing the seventh day.¹¹⁰ This marks this "day" out as distinct from the literal twenty-four hour days preceding it. Deck notes the significance of this fact:

The omission of the formula is no accident. It is surely designed to show that God's 'seventh day' of cessation from creative activity *is still running*; it has not closed. It is a 'day' which has now lasted nearly 6,000 years, and will not close until God creates the 'new heavens and the new earth.'¹¹¹

This "indefinite" view of "day" also better explains the nature of God's rest. Certainly the omnipotent God had no need to recuperate from His creative work (Isa. 40:28), so the meaning of His rest is deeper than recovering from physical exertion. The answer is in the text, which explicitly defines God's rest as *ceasing* from the creative work which He did for six days. Dressler correctly observes regarding God's rest and being "refreshed" (Exod. 31:17), "This can only indicate that the goal of creation is not mankind, that the crown of creation is not man, but that all creative activities of God flow into a *universal rest period*."¹¹² This finds support in the primary meaning of the verb translated as God "rested" (שָׁבַת), which actually means "to cease" more than "to rest."¹¹³ If God's rest referred to cessation from creative activity for only twenty-four hours, it logically follows that this creative work resumed on the eighth day,¹¹⁴ a deduction to

indicates that after God had completed His work "he desisted from it forever" (Benno Jacob, *The First Book of the Bible*, 13; cf. Harold G. Stigers, *A Commentary on Genesis*, 63). The nature and time of God's work is addressed in Chapter 6 of this study.

¹¹⁰Augustine *Confessions* 13.50-51 (chaps. 35-36; Deferrari 454-55); Delitzsch, *A New Commentary on Genesis*, 1:110; Kidner, *Genesis*, 53; Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 159.

¹¹¹Deck, 21 (emphasis his). Whether God's rest is still running as Deck claims depends upon the effect man's fall had on it, which is addressed later.

¹¹²Dressler, "The Sabbath in the Old Testament," 29 (emphasis mine).

¹¹³BDB 991d; cf. *EB*, "Sabbath," by Smith, Marti, and Cheyne, 4:4173.

¹¹⁴Morey, "Is Sunday the Christian Sabbath?" 6, makes this observation in support of an indefinite seventh day.

which no one wants to ascribe.¹¹⁵ The better alternative is to see God's rest as continuing indefinitely as long as the creation was pleasing to Him.

One may rightfully ask if the context of Genesis 2:1-3 can support such a view of "day."¹¹⁶ The answer lies in *the next verse*, which also employs the exact word for "day" (יִום) in a non-literal sense: "This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made earth and heaven" (NASB). Here "day" is used of a period of *six* twenty-four hour days.¹¹⁷ Furthermore, in Genesis 1 "day" is used for the period of light that began with the creation of light on the first creative day (v. 5) which became a period of twelve daylight hours (vv. 14, 16). These parallel, figurative uses do not *confirm* that the "day" of Genesis 2:1-3 denotes a period of time rather than a literal day, but they do suggest the possibility of interpreting "day" in a figurative sense.¹¹⁸ Taken together, the preceding pieces of evidence provide sufficient

¹¹⁵Nearly all scholars agree that God has ceased from creating the heavens and earth. Similarly, all affirm that He has continued to *sustain* the universe. However, God's rest concerns cessation only from the former and not the latter.

¹¹⁶Some support the twenty-four hour perspective of the seventh day based upon the reference to Genesis 2:1-3 in Exodus 20:11; 31:17 and the twenty-four hour usage for the six days of creation (e.g., *SDABC*, Francis D. Nichol *et al.*, eds., 1:220; C. F. Keil, *The Pentateuch*, K&D, 1:69-70). Skinner also notes that "it is plainly a rest of one day that is thought of" (p. 38).

¹¹⁷Many since Philo (*Allegorical Interpretation of Genesis 2—3* 1.2) have followed the day-age view of the six days of creation (e.g., Bush, *Notes on Genesis*, 1:32; E. J. Young, *In the Beginning*, 43; Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, 58-65; Watchtower Bible & Tract Society, *Let God Be True*, 167-70), but this complicated issue need not be addressed here. Both the literal twenty-four-hour day view and the day-age perspective acknowledge that the term "day" refers to various lengths of time depending upon the context. (For a brief survey of four views on the days in Genesis 1, see John J. Davis, *Paradise to Prison*, 51-57. He himself holds to the literal day perspective.) Others who advocate six literal days and/or a young earth include John C. Whitcomb, Jr., *The Early Earth*, 26-28; id., *The Origin of the Solar System*, 7-34; Morris, Duane T. Gish, George M. Hillestad, eds., *Creation*, 77-85. For a critique of Morris' views see Robert William Prince, III, "An Examination of Henry M. Morris's [sic] Interpretation of Biblical Creation," Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1985. Also, for brief surveys of the history of the two major theories and their advocates see Davis A. Young, *Christianity and the Age of the Earth*, 11-67, with recent advocates listed on pages 57-59, 63 (day-age/old earth) and 64-65 (literal day/young earth). This book is a thorough and recent defense of the belief that the earth is extremely old (his refutation of the young earth model is summarized on p. 149). Davis, himself a creationist geologist, also evaluates scientific (pp. 69-131) and philosophical/apologetic (pp. 133-64) considerations. Biblical concerns are addressed in his book *Creation and the Flood*.

¹¹⁸Martin Anstey, *The Romance of Biblical Chronology*, 1:63.

reason to consider the seventh day as of indefinite duration rather than twenty-four hours long.

The Nature of the Rest

The nature of God's rest also argues against seeing the "seventh day" as a twenty-four-hour period. The author of the Book of Hebrews declares that "the promise of entering His rest still stands" (Heb. 4:1; cf. vv. 6, 9) and so exhorts his readers to enter God's rest (Heb. 4:1b, 11). The significance of this passage will be explored later, but the point emphasized here is that God's rest has a future aspect and thus cannot be limited solely to the twenty-four-hour period following the creation.

Having established that God's rest cannot be limited to the seventh day of creation, it must now be defined. It has already been demonstrated what the rest does *not* mean—that God had to recuperate from His "exhausting work of creation." So what *does* it mean? God's rest simply means that He ceased His creative work because it was created with perfection: "By the seventh day God had finished the work which He had been doing; so on the seventh day He rested from all His work" (Gen. 2:2). This "work" obviously is His creating the heavens and earth, for John 5:17 indicates that He has not ceased *every* form of work.¹¹⁹ Until such a time when He will resume this creative work by making the millennial "new heavens and new earth" (Isa. 65:17; 66:22) God's work will continue.¹²⁰ Since He did not cease His creative work for a literal twenty-four hour day and then resume His creative activity on the first day of the second week of history, He did not set an example of seventh-day rest for Adam. This is supported by the fact that no evidence of Adam worshiping on the Sabbath can be found.

¹¹⁹Marcus Dods, *The Book of Genesis*, 7.

¹²⁰That these passages are millennial is carefully supported in Chapter 6.

Although the present discussion addresses the nature of God's rest before the Fall, it is appropriate to ask how man's sin affected this rest. Some scholars maintain that the Fall destroyed God's rest: "God could not rest in a creation marred by sin. He could no longer look abroad upon the earth and say it was good."¹²¹ This makes sense in light of Christ's declaration that God continually works (John 5:17), for God cannot both work and rest simultaneously. Therefore, it seems best to see that God's rest in His perfect creation lasted only as long as that creation was indeed perfect. God's dominion over creation shown in His creation of the world and establishment of man as His agent of dominion (Gen. 1:26, 28) was soon transferred to Satan when Adam and Eve fell.¹²² Since the entrance of sin God has been working in anticipation of the time when His creation is once again under His dominion. For this reason, the concept of God's rest is inextricably connected with the kingdom motif throughout Scripture, as the following chapters will demonstrate.

Summary

Was the Sabbath in effect before the Fall? Sabbatarians and many transfer theology advocates respond in the affirmative, while most non-Sabbatarians provide evidence to the contrary. No command is given for Sabbath observance to Adam and the word for Sabbath is not even employed. Therefore, the belief that the Sabbath

¹²¹Haldeman, 9; cf. Keil, *The Pentateuch*, K&D, 1:70; Merrill F. Unger, "The Significance of the Sabbath," *BS* 123 (January-March 1966): 54. These authors propose that Adam and Eve did in fact adhere to the Sabbath in Eden until their fall, which destroyed man's rest and thus marred God's rest of its symbolism. Murray, a reformed theologian, disagrees. He affirms emphatically, "Sin does not abrogate creation ordinances and redemption does not make superfluous their obligation and fulfillment" (Murray, 1:206). Murray's logic would make sense if man had been commanded to obey the Sabbath, for it makes sense to ask why God would no longer require obedience to His command because of Adam's sin. However, as has been already stated, no such command is recorded. This view which sees a creation ordinance applicable only until the Fall also faces the same obstacles of the Edenic view, namely, the lack of any such Sabbath command.

¹²²For this reason Satan is called the "god of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4).

commandment has been instituted from the beginning upon all mankind must be rejected for lack of scriptural evidence.

However, God's rest did occur when the creation was under His dominion. This is supported by a kingdom motif evident in Genesis 1 as well as by other passages throughout the Scripture, as the subsequent chapters demonstrate.

Chapter 3

Pre-Mosaic Sabbath

The previous chapter concluded that the Sabbath could not have been established at creation. The present chapter concerns the period beginning immediately after man's fall from a perfect creation. In a sense, this chapter serves to test the conclusions of Chapter 2, for the most important test of the existence of a so-called creation ordinance is to evaluate whether Scripture indicates that man followed the institution between the Fall and the establishment of the Law. Should the day be found during this era, it would provide insurmountable problems for those who deny a creation ordinance. However, such is not the case as the Sabbath never appears in the Book of Genesis.¹ In like manner, it is completely absent in Exodus until Israel sojourns in the desert in Exodus 16.

Evidence Cited for a Patriarchal Sabbath

Those who advocate Sabbath worship for all ages are obviously bound to demonstrate the existence of the Sabbath between Adam and Moses, for the burden of proof is upon them.² Despite the total lack of a Sabbath before Exodus, creative

¹God's cessation (יָשַׁבַּת) from work (Gen. 2:2) has already been shown in the previous chapter as indicating His completion of the creation, not His instituting a day of rest for man. The noun form for "Sabbath" appears for the first time during the time of Moses.

²Without citing any proof, Ellen G. White wrote, "The Sabbath institution, which originated in Eden, is as old as the world itself. It was observed by all the patriarchs, from creation down" (*The Story of Patriarchs and Prophets*, 336).

"support" is nevertheless offered. Adventists honestly admit the silence of Scripture in this respect and propose one of two solutions:

How can we account for this apparent silence? Could it be that between Adam and Moses, for some unexplainable reason, the Sabbath, though instituted, was not observed? The non-observance of the feast of booths between Joshua and Nehemiah, a period of almost a thousand years, would provide a parallel situation (Neh. 8:17). Or could it rather be that the custom of Sabbath keeping is not mentioned because it was simply taken for granted? The latter explanation seems more plausible for a number of reasons.³

Although most rabbis believed the Sabbath was observed only by Israel, some held to the first explanation above. R. Eliezer taught that Adam kept the Sabbath and authored Psalm 92, which was written for the Sabbath day (v. 1). R. Simeon added, "The first man said this psalm, and it was forgotten throughout all the generations until Moses came and renewed it."⁴ This implies that the Sabbath should have been observed from Adam to Moses and that Moses only reinstituted a neglected institution.⁵

However, Bacchiocchi believes that the better argument for the silence is to argue from silence elsewhere. Support is sought in: (1) the lack of mention of the Sabbath between the Books of Deuteronomy and Kings, (2) the lack of other commandments in Genesis since it is a book of origins, not laws like Exodus, and (3) the presence in Genesis and the early part of Exodus of "circumstantial evidences for the use of a seven-day week, which would imply the existence of the Sabbath as well,"⁶ since "probably all the mentioned ceremonials [in Genesis] were terminated by the arrival of

³Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Divine Rest for Human Restlessness* (hereafter cited as *Divine Rest*), 35. Other non-Sabbatarian scholars also recognize the silence of Scripture here and advocate that the institution was practiced but mention of it was unnecessary (cf. Roger T. Beckwith and Wilfrid Stott, *The Christian Sunday*, 3-4).

⁴*Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* 18 (cf. Robert M. Johnston, "Patriarchs, Rabbis, and Sabbath," *AUSS* 12 [July 1974]: 101).

⁵Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3:322, "As the observance of the Sabbath had died out among the nations, it was solemnly reenacted under the Mosaic dispensation to be a sign of the covenant between God and Israel."

⁶Evidence for a seven day week is thought to be in Genesis 7:4, 10; 8:10, 12; 17:12; 21:4; 29:27; 31:23; 50:10; Exodus 7:25; 12:15f., 19; 13:6f.; cf. Job 2:12.

the Sabbath."⁷ Others also suggest a parallel in the lack of circumcision in the historical books after Joshua.⁸

The above four arguments for a pre-Mosaic Sabbath can be easily explained. First, the argument from silence concerning the Sabbath between Deuteronomy and Kings cannot actually provide a parallel. It is quite weak to argue from silence based upon a parallel argument from silence. Furthermore, no one questions whether the Sabbath was to be in effect during the period from Deuteronomy to Kings since its existence is based upon irrefutable Scripture (Exod. 20; Deut. 5; etc.). In contrast, patriarchal observance of a "pre-Mosaic Sabbath" is an argument from silence based upon a presupposition that Genesis 2 instituted man's Sabbath.

Bacchiocchi's second argument for a patriarchal Sabbath also cannot stand scrutiny. This is because the silence regarding the Sabbath in Genesis cannot be explained simply because it is a "book of origins and not laws." Several laws are given, including the prohibition of eating blood (9:4), the command against murder with its requirement of capital punishment for offenders (9:5-6), and the requirement of circumcision (17:1-17). Are these not also laws? One who advocates a Sabbath during this age must seriously question why this institution which supposedly had a creation origin never once appears.

Bacchiocchi's third argument seeks to support a pre-Mosaic Sabbath based upon passages which mention a seven day period. The assumption is that *the Sabbath* must have separated these periods into weeks, but no evidence can be cited that these periods were divided by a day of rest. Furthermore, several periods lasting three days also are affirmed before Exodus 16.⁹ Should one suppose that a day of rest marked off

⁷Bacchiocchi, *Divine Rest*, 35-36.

⁸Beckwith and Stott, 4.

⁹See Genesis 30:36; 40:12, 13, 18, 19; 42:17; Exodus 2:2; 3:18; 5:3; 8:27; 10:22, 23; 15:22.

these periods as well? Such is the logic of seeking to support the Sabbath by events which happened to last seven days.

In reply to the final support for a pre-Mosaic Sabbath, how may one answer the "parallel" absence of circumcision within the historical books? The absence of such an important practice as circumcision would certainly be strange during the eight hundred years between Joshua and the Babylonian Captivity. However, such is not the case. That circumcision was practiced is clear through the many references to non-Israelites who were *uncircumcised* (cf. 1 Sam. 14:6; 17:26, 36; 31:4; 2 Sam. 1:20; 1 Chron. 10:4). At the risk of asking the same question again *ad nauseam*, if a Sabbath imposed upon all men from Adam to Moses in fact existed, where is the evidence?¹⁰

Another patriarchal argument, posed by the Jewish scholar Segal, also merits attention.¹¹ He suggests that Abraham was familiar with the Babylonian lunar evil days (*shappatu*)¹² since he originally worshiped the moon god in his pagan homeland of Mesopotamia.¹³ This much may be granted, but Segal takes it a step further. He speculates that while Abraham hated

the whole pagan worship of the moon... the inspired genius of Abraham may have borrowed from the *shappatu* the potentially valuable idea of abstention from work on the seventh day. He then severed the seventh day from its connection with the moon and with the lunar month, transmuted its character and its purpose, and converted it from an ill-omened day into a blest and hallowed day on which the divine creator had rested after the completion of the works of creation.¹⁴

¹⁰Pre-Mosaic Sabbath advocates demonstrate their uneasiness with having to defend this position in their need to use phrases such as "more likely," "seems to be made," "seems more like," "may indeed be," "seems entirely probable," etc. (Beckwith and Stott, 4-5).

¹¹M. H. Segal, "The Religion of Israel before Sinai," *JQR* 52 (July 1961): 41-68.

¹²These evil days are discussed at the beginning of the previous chapter.

¹³Segal, "The Religion of Israel before Sinai," 42-43, 58-60.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 59.

Segal concludes by suggesting that the biblical creation account of God's rest deliberately avoids the use of the word "Sabbath" so as not to confuse it with the contemporary pagan institution *shabbatu*=*shappatu*.¹⁵

This Jewish scholar is to be credited for insightful thinking, but the lack of evidence that Abraham ever celebrated a Sabbath is significant. Chafer notes this silence between Adam and Moses:

It is incredible that this great institution of the sabbath could have existed during all these centuries and there be no mention of it in the Scriptures dealing with that time. The words of Job, who lived five hundred years and more before Moses, offer an illustration. His experience discloses the spiritual life of the pre-Mosaic saint, having no written Scriptures, and striving to know his whole duty to God. Job and his friends refer to creation, the flood, and many details of human obligation to God; but not once do they mention the sabbath.¹⁶

While most modern Sabbatarian and transfer theologians are quick to acknowledge the silence regarding Sabbath observance in the patriarchal age, in the past some specific passages have been cited as verifying a pre-Mosaic Sabbath. The first supposed chronological example is Genesis 4:3, "In the course of time (lit., "at the end of days") Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD." This passage was formally cited as "an observance of the Sabbath day before the Mosaic legislation,"¹⁷ but such a view is impossible when compared to parallel uses of the phrase "at the end of days" (e.g., 1 Kings 14:7; Neh. 13:6; Jer. 13:6; Dan. 12:13) as none of these passages can support such a usage.¹⁸ Other passages from Genesis can be cited which formerly were argued by adherents of a creation ordinance; however, these no longer

¹⁵Ibid., 60.

¹⁶Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Grace*, 248-49.

¹⁷Augustus Strong, *Systematic Theology*, 408; cf. William DeLoss Love, "The Sabbath Under the Old Dispensation," *BS* 36 (October-December 1879): 732-33.

¹⁸For a thorough critique of the Genesis 4:3 question, see Roger Douglass Congdon, "Sabbatic Theology," Th.D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1949, 143-49.

appear in modern works as they are weak and have been convincingly refuted.¹⁹

Therefore, since contemporary adherents of a primeval and patriarchal Sabbath remain silent on the matter, a discussion of the old arguments would be inappropriate in the present study. As far as the scriptural evidence indicates, the patriarchs were never given the Sabbath nor ever rebuked for neglecting it.

The Testimony of the Law

The preceding critique of the pre-Mosaic arguments has shown that support for a Sabbath at that time is an argument from silence as no *real* evidence exists for a "patriarchal Sabbath." In fact, the reiteration of the Law in Deuteronomy specifically states that the patriarchs were *not* under the Law, including the Sabbath law:

Moses summoned all Israel and said: Hear, O Israel, the decrees and laws I declare in your hearing today. Learn them and be sure to follow them. The LORD our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. It was not with our fathers [e.g., Abraham, Isaac, Jacob] that the LORD made this covenant, but with us, with all of us who are alive here today. The LORD spoke to you face to face out of the fire on the mountain.... And he said... "Observe the Sabbath day..." (Deut. 5:1-4, 5b, 12a).

In the above text, Moses declares that the patriarchal fathers did not receive the Decalogue.²⁰ It was first given to the generation of Israelites in Moses' hearing and to their parents. Deuteronomy 5 is perhaps the clearest passage that addresses whether a Sabbath existed in primeval and patriarchal times. Moses declared that the institution was unique to Israel.

¹⁹See Congdon's dissertation (pp. 150-61) for a full discussion and refutation of other older arguments for a Sabbath based upon Genesis 5:29; 7—10; 29—50; Job; and Exodus 15:25. Bacchiocchi, *Divine Rest*, 36, mentions some of these verses but does not elaborate as did other adherents in the past.

²⁰The identity of the "fathers" (Deut. 5:4) cannot refer to the parents of those in Moses' hearing who died in the wilderness; these did in fact receive the Law (Exod. 20). Therefore, it must mean the ancestors of Israel in times previous to the Exodus.

Israel's Calendar

Another line of evidence, relating to Israel's unique calendar, provides further evidence against a Sabbath between Adam and Moses. If the Sabbath existed during patriarchal times, one would expect to find the seven-day week used extensively in the Near East. However, no other ancient civilization employed the week extensively prior to Israel. Gordon has accurately attached *to Israel* the greatest contribution to the development of the heptadic chronological system:

The heptadic system runs through the entire Near East but nowhere is it more pervasive than in Hebrew society. In the Bible, there are seven days in the week. Shavuot [Pentecost] is a 'week of weeks.' The sacred month with the so-called New Year, the Ten Penitential Days ending in Yom Kippur, and finally in the Succot [sic] pilgrimage festival, is the seventh one. Years are grouped into sabbatical cycles of seven, culminating in the seventh or Sabbatical Year when the entire Land is to rest and lie fallow. Seven sabbatical cycles make a Jubilee Cycle of forty-nine years, climaxed by the fiftieth or Jubilee Year.²¹

Although the use of seven-in-time measurement appears in other ancient cultures, it is developed extensively only in Israel.

The Sabbath of Exodus 16

Exodus 16 is a very important passage used by both sides of the debate. Less than nine weeks²² before receiving the Mosaic Law, God provided manna for Israelites in the desert and twice commanded them through Moses not to gather on the seventh day. The LORD said to Moses:

²¹Cyrus H. Gordon, "The Biblical Sabbath," *Judaism* 31 (Winter 1982): 14.

²²The manna incident happened on the fifteenth day of the second month after leaving Egypt, or six weeks later (Exod. 16:1). Two weeks later Israel arrived at Sinai on the first day of the third month, or eight weeks after leaving Egypt (Exod. 19:1). Four more days may be added to account for Moses' trip up the mountain (v. 3) and down again (v. 7), then back up (v. 8b) and down a second time (v. 14). Finally, three days after this God gave the people the Ten Commandments (Exod. 19:16ff.). This means that the Sabbath commandment in the Decalogue was given in the ninth week after leaving Egypt. Therefore, not more than three Sabbaths could have been experienced between the manna provision and the official declaration of the Sabbath institution in the Decalogue. The proximity of these two incidents should instruct interpreters to consider them as virtually simultaneous.

Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you, and the people will go out and gather a daily portion each day. I this way I will test them whether or not they will follow My instruction (Exod. 16:4).²³

Many cite this passage as evidence for a pre-existing practice of Sabbath-keeping on the part of the nation. For example, after noting that Exodus 20 refers to the Sabbath as memorializing creation, Beckwith and Stott say,

It would surely be odd to be instituting a memorial of creation as late as the Exodus. It seems better therefore to see Exod. 16 and 20 not as imposing a new ordinance but as reiterating a much older one (that of Gen. 2, to which Exod. 20, as we have seen, refers), in a manner comparable to the reiteration of the institution of circumcision in Exod. 4 and Lev. 12, long after its first institution in Gen. 17. Exod. 16 may indeed be the *revival* of the sabbath, as something *relatively* new, after its inevitable disuse during the Egyptian bondage.²⁴

Others concur with the above authors that Exodus 16 presumes a pre-existing Sabbath.²⁵ North affirms that in Exodus 20 "the sabbath-law is not presented as a *new* obligation; and in fact prior to the decalogue theophany the sabbath is already presumed in observance Ex 16, 23."²⁶ Support for this view is generally lacking in the commentaries, most assuming a preexisting Sabbath by implication because of adherence to a creation ordinance in Genesis. However, appeal has been made to God's rebuke in verse 28 of those who sought to gather manna on the Sabbath: "'How long,' etc., implies that they had for a considerable time been doing this very thing—breaking the Sabbath, in full knowledge of the fact that they were doing wrong."²⁷

However, a more reasonable manner of viewing the passage is to see this manna incident as anticipatory of receiving the Law shortly afterwards rather than

²³Translation mine.

²⁴Beckwith and Stott, 4-5.

²⁵Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 478; Robert North, "The Derivation of Sabbath," *Biblica* 36 (1955): 182-201; Bacchiocchi, *Divine Rest*, 36; *SDABC*, Nichol *et al.*, eds., 1:578-81.

²⁶North, "The Derivation of Sabbath," 183.

²⁷*SDABC*, Nichol *et al.*, eds., 1:581.

expanding upon an existing Sabbath institution.²⁸ First, contrary to the above view of Seventh-day Adventists, in verse 29 God does not rebuke the nation for a long-time neglect of Sabbath observance. He simply says, "How long will you refuse to keep my commands and my instructions?" The people had complained about dying in the wilderness (14:11-12) and grumbled (15:24; 16:2), thus demonstrating their unbelief in God and Moses despite the LORD's promise to bring them into the land.

Other evidence can be cited that the Sabbath first appeared in Exodus 16. All scholars must confess that the first appearance of the word "Sabbath" in all the Bible appears here, which makes the assumption of the institution prior to this time only an argument based upon silence. Also, the anarthrous "Sabbath" of Exodus 16:23, 25 also brings out the "newness" of the command: "Tomorrow is to be a day of rest, *a Sabbath*, to the LORD"²⁹ and "today is *a Sabbath* to the LORD." This anarthrous construction occurs only two other times in the Pentateuch (Exod. 20:11; 35:2), both of which closely follow Exodus 16 chronologically. Later, when the Sabbath was thoroughly in place, the anarthrous construction does not appear;³⁰ therefore, these four early uses signify the new nature of the command.³¹

²⁸J. Philip Hyatt, *Commentary on Exodus*, NCB, 178; *Pirkê de Rabbi Eliezer* 19 (Gerald Friedlander, trans., 138); C. F. Keil, *The Pentateuch*, K&D, 2:68-69; Harold H. P. Dressler, "The Sabbath in the Old Testament," in *From Sabbath to Lord's Day*, 24, 37, n. 39.

²⁹George Rawlinson, *Exodus*, PC, 52; id., *Exodus*, LHC, 140. Bush disagrees, insisting that the Sabbath had been previously observed since Moses "does not say 'To-morrow shall or will be, but, to-morrow *is* the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord'" (George Bush, *Notes on Exodus*, 211; italics his). This is unconvincing, however, as the Hebrew here lacks a verb; therefore, the tense of the supplied verb must be supplied by the context, which obviously denotes the future. For this reason the NIV ("Tomorrow is to be a day of rest") is preferred over the NASB ("Tomorrow is a day of rest"). One cannot argue either for or against the establishment of the Sabbath here based upon a supplied verb.

³⁰All of the remaining numerous references to the Sabbath in the Old Testament possess the article.

³¹Dressler, "The Sabbath in the Old Testament," 37, n. 39.

In fact, "der ganze Abschnitt V. 25—30 lautet wie eine erstmalige Einleitung des Volks in die Feier des Sabbaths."³² The people did not know why they could collect twice as much manna on the sixth day (v. 5),³³ as evidenced by their bringing the matter to Moses (v. 22). Had they previously known about the Sabbath, this question would be unnecessary, for they likely would expect that God would somehow make provision for them to obey the Sabbath.³⁴ It was the very uniqueness of the day that prompted Moses' explanation in verses 23-26. Nevertheless, "some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather it" (v. 27), thus demonstrating their ignorance of any preexisting Sabbath institution. This prompted God's reiteration of the new command (vv. 28-29), which the people finally obeyed (v. 30). An exclusiveness may also be indicated in God's declaration, "Bear in mind that the LORD *has given you* the Sabbath" (v. 29), meaning Israel alone was privileged with the institution.

Another evidence for the Sabbath as being originally instituted in Exodus 16 is the simplicity of the commandment. Had the Sabbath been observed by man for the thousands of years between creation and the wilderness sojourn, one could naturally expect the day to be vested with theological meaning by Exodus 16. However, no deeper meaning is apparent in the manna incident as the day is simply designated a day of physical inactivity, of bodily rest. Not until later did the emphases of Sabbath worship and joy appear.³⁵

³²August Dillmann, *Die Bücher Exodus und Leviticus*, 175: "the entire section from verses 25-30 rings loud as the people's first introduction to the festival of the Sabbath" (translation mine).

³³The initial instruction about the abundance on the sixth day (v. 5) was given only to Moses (v. 4a), who apparently did not inform the people as is evident in their surprise with the double portion (v. 22).

³⁴The Sabbatarian response to this argument is that during the Egyptian bondage the Sabbath had fallen into disuse due to the nation's oppression. Thus they propose that in Exodus 16 the day was at least *relatively new* (Beckwith and Stott, 4-5, cited above). This admission of the day as newly presented, coupled with the lack of any evidence showing a preexisting Sabbath, makes the Egyptian bondage explanation irrelevant.

³⁵Robert A. Morey, "Is Sunday the Christian Sabbath?" *BRR* 8 (1979): 16. Childs disagrees, seeing a "kernel" of the theme of Sabbath joy in the account with a "festive ring" to Moses' statement in

What, then, was the significance of the manna given to Israel? The text clearly states that the daily provision was designed to test Israel whether they would follow God's instructions (v. 4). Also, "the gift of manna during forty years, many of which were stained by sinful murmuring and disobedience, was a perpetual exhibition of God's patience, long-suffering, and fidelity to His promise."³⁶ It reminded the nation of its constant dependence upon God to meet its needs since no person could store excess manna for the future. It spoke of God's faithfulness despite Israel's faithlessness. Each morning, regardless of the spiritual state of the people, manna lay on the ground. Each sixth day, double portions of manna were provided as a constant reminder of His provision of the Sabbath, which in turn spoke eschatologically and in retrospect of God's own rest at creation and His redemption of the nation from bondage.³⁷

Summary

The Old Testament is silent regarding the existence of the Sabbath between creation and the weeks preceding the reception of the Law. None of the supposed evidence for such an institution can be supported. The first appearance of the Sabbath in Scripture is in the manna account of Exodus 16 only days prior to its official declaration as part of the Mosaic covenant. The next chapter addresses this important period wherein the Sabbath played a significant part in the religious life of Israel.

verse 25 (Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus*, 290). The present author fails to see such an emphasis, though one might argue for a possible worship emphasis in the designation "*holy* Sabbath" (v. 23), although the verse neglects to show *how* the day can properly be construed to be holy.

³⁶F. B. Meyer, *Studies in Exodus*, 188.

³⁷For the retrospective aspects, see Chapter 4. For the eschatological implications, see Chapter 6.

Chapter 4

Mosaic Sabbath

Biblical scholarship has never questioned the Sabbath's existence during the period of the Law. However, as has been noted in the previous chapters, much dialogue exists over whether the institution was *originally* received as part of the Mosaic Law.¹ This issue is of paramount importance, for if the Sabbath originated with the Law and Israel's birth as a nation, then it terminated with the end of the Law and the setting aside of Israel as a nation. On the other hand, if the Sabbath is a "moral" law preceding the Decalogue since the time of creation, then all people of all ages (not just the Jewish nation) are obligated to observe it.² The present chapter demonstrates that Israel alone received the commandment, first in the manna incident,³ then officially shortly afterwards as part of the Ten Commandments.⁴ This chapter explores the significance of

¹Wellhausen's reconstruction of the history of Israel assumes that the Sabbath commandment presupposes agricultural conditions which characterized Israel only after the conquest. Eduard Lohse (*TDNT*, s.v. "σάββατον," 7 [1968]: 3), disagrees, stating that it could have been observed by nomads and "goes back to the very first beginnings of Yahweh religion."

²The fact that a practice *precedes* the Law does not necessarily guarantee its permanence *after* the abolishment of the Law. The tithe is a case in point, for though it preceded the Mosaic regulations, the New Testament does not enforce it as obligatory now. However, the so-called "creation Sabbath" is in a different class than the tithe, for in this "moral law" view it was a creation ordinance.

³This is discussed in the previous chapter.

⁴Some scholars claim that no one really knows when the Sabbath became part of Israel's worship, but this is generally argued on the assumption of the documentary hypothesis. For examples see Werner H. Schmidt, *The Faith of the Old Testament*, 89; Gnana Robinson, *The Origin and Development of the Old Testament Sabbath*, 22; id., "The Idea of Rest in the Old Testament and the Search for the Basic Character of the Sabbath," *ZAW* 92 (1980): 32-42; id., "The Prohibition of Strange Fire in Ancient Israel: A New Look at the Case of Gathering Wood and Kindling Fire on the Sabbath," *VT* 28 (1978): 301-17; N. E. Andreasen, "Recent Studies of the Old Testament Sabbath: Some Observations," *ZAW* 86 (1974): 455; Charles R. Biggs, "Exposition and Adaptation of the Sabbath Commandment in the OT," *ABR* 23 (October

the Mosaic Sabbath in three major sections, first in its purposes in the Old Testament, then in its interpretations in Pharisaism, and finally in the teaching and practice of Christ.

Purposes of the Sabbath

The purposes of the Sabbath are fivefold. Since the first Sabbath commands were given at Mt. Sinai, this study will begin with those enunciated in the Decalogue.⁵

Decalogue: Remembrance of Creation and Redemption

Besides the introduction of the day in Exodus 16, the Ten Commandments provide the earliest regulatory citations on the Sabbath. Two different motivations are conveyed to observe the day: because of God's creation rest and because of His redemption of Israel from Egypt.

The two reasons complement each other and both emphasize man's dependence upon God. To rest on the sabbath day was to remember that man, as a part of God's created order, was totally dependent on the Creator; man's divinely appointed task to have dominion over the created order (Gen. 1:26) carried with it also the privilege of sharing in God's rest. The Exodus, too, was a type of *creation* and thus forms an analogy to the creation account in Genesis. The Exodus from Egypt marks in effect the creation of God's people as a nation, and the memory of that event was also a reminder to the Israelites of their total dependence upon God.⁶

Therefore, in Exodus 20:8-11 the appeal is to God as Creator, and in Deuteronomy 5:12-15 the appeal is to God as Redeemer, but both carry the idea of the Israelites' dependence upon God.⁷ These two passages also indicate that the Sabbath

1975): 13-23.

⁵The complex issue of the origin of the Ten Commandments will not be discussed in this study. For a thorough treatment of the issue, see Harold H. Rowley, "Moses and the Decalogue," *BJRL* 34 (1951-1952): 81-118. As stated in Chapter 1, this study assumes Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch.

⁶Peter C. Craigie, NICOT, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 157; cf. Matitiah Tsevat, "The Basic Meaning of the Biblical Sabbath," *ZAW* 84 (1972): 447-59.

⁷Congdon distinguishes between the Exodus passage (the "pattern") and the Deuteronomy passage (the "memorial"): "It is certain that the Sabbath law which He gave to Moses on Mount Sinai was not a memorial of creation. It memorialized the departure of the Hebrew people from Egypt." (See Roger Douglass Congdon, "Sabbatic Theology," Th.D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1949, 141-42). However, such a distinction is artificial.

served as a social or humanitarian institution to provide rest for dependent *laborers* (Exod. 20:10; 23:12; Deut. 5:14), but more will be said about this later.⁸

Emphasis

That the Sabbath played a significant role in Israel is evident in the great emphasis it had in the Ten Commandments.⁹ Both versions of the Decalogue devote more extensive treatment to this one commandment (four verses)¹⁰ than to any of the other nine (most of which are explained in a single verse).¹¹ In fact, the Sabbath serves as an *inclusio* to the divine stipulations of Exodus 20—31. Following the narrative of Exodus 19, the Sabbath is the most extensively treated command in the Decalogue (20:8-11), then the command is reiterated in Exodus 31:12-18 before the narrative resumes in chapter 32, this *inclusio* emphasizing its importance in the Mosaic covenant. This latter

⁸The rest provisions in Deuteronomy are more expanded and stringent, referring to one's male and female servants, ox, and donkey, which may indicate a laxness in Sabbath observance during the forty year interval between the Exodus and Deuteronomy Decalogues (H. H. Ruskin, "Being Jewish and Jewish Being," *Judaism* 8 [Winter 1959]: 19).

⁹The importance of the Sabbath for Israel is also evident in its appearance in each of the books of the Pentateuch (except Genesis), as well as the death penalty for its desecration (Num. 15:32-36). For comment on the absence of the Sabbath in Genesis, see Chapters 2 and 3.

¹⁰The two forms of the command contain fifty-five (Exodus) and sixty-four (Deuteronomy) Hebrew words, which is far more than any of the other commands. While this mixture of long and short laws side by side has caused some to assume that the Sabbath commandment was originally short, other pre-Mosaic Near East law codes have this characteristic mixture of adjacent long and short laws (Gerhard Hasel, "The Sabbath in the Pentateuch," in *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, 28), such as the Code of Hammurabi (James Pritchard, *ANET*, 166-77).

¹¹Higher critics argue for the importance of the institution by citing references to all the supposed traditions of the Pentateuch: the Elohist Code (Exod. 23:12), the Yahwistic Code (Exod. 34:21), the "redactions of the Ten Commandments" (Exod. 20:8-10; Deut. 5:12-14), the Law of Holiness (Lev. 19:3, 30; 23:3; 26:2), and the Priests' Code (Exod. 31:12-17; Num. 28:9-10). See Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 479-80; Hans Walter Wolff, "The Day of Rest in the Old Testament," *LexTQ* 7 (July 1972): 65-67. Given these assumptions, the present, extensive form of the command is deemed to have resulted from much growth and expansion (cf. Niels-Erik Andreasen, *The Old Testament Sabbath*; Robinson, *The Origin and Development of the Old Testament Sabbath*; Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus*, 413-17; J. Philip Hyatt, *Commentary on Exodus*, NCB, 212-13).

command follows the instructions on the building of the tabernacle, almost as if to say that the tabernacle task is important, but not sufficient ground for disobeying the Sabbath command.¹² The Sabbath is also emphasized in that it remains the only religious institution mentioned in the Decalogue. Further, of all the Ten Commandments, the Sabbath command is mentioned in the Pentateuch more than any other.¹³ Therefore, without question God emphasized its importance over the other commands.¹⁴

Recipients

While all recognize the Sabbath as Israel's most important institution, debate arises whether it and the Ten Commandments were given only to Israel. Andreasen, a Seventh-day Adventist, affirms that the Decalogue (and thus the Sabbath) is for the church as well, noting that its mention as the only institution in the Decalogue makes "it central not only to Judaism but also to Christianity, and it has forced the Christian church to recognize the sabbath in a way unlike that of any other ancient Israelite religious practice."¹⁵ In contrast, Feinberg asserts emphatically, "The ten commandments were not for mankind, but for Israel alone."¹⁶ Obviously the identity of the recipients of the Decalogue is a paramount issue, for it will affect whether these commands are in effect today.

The best evidence indicates that the Decalogue applied only to Israel. Only

¹²George Bush, *Notes on Exodus*, 2 vols. in 1, 2:206.

¹³*SDAE*, s.v. "Sabbath," by Don F. Neufeld, ed., CRS 10 (1966): 1107.

¹⁴It may appear strange that God gave more attention to the Sabbath command than to the prohibitions against even more serious sins, such as murder, adultery, etc. However, the significance of the institution as the sign of the Mosaic Covenant accounts for this emphasis (to be explained later).

¹⁵Niels-Erik Andreasen, *Rest and Redemption*, 1.

¹⁶Charles Lee Feinberg, "The Sabbath and the Lord's Day," *BS* 95 (April-June 1938): 181; cf. John Gill, *Body of Divinity*, 968.

Israel was on Mount Sinai, only Israel received the entire Mosaic Covenant detailed in Exodus 20—31, and only Israel was redeemed from Egypt (Deut. 5:15). Surely it is not consistent to say that at present the Law is abolished but one portion of it, the Ten Commandments, remains in effect today.¹⁷ The text does not indicate that the Decalogue is of a different nature than the rest of the Law, nor are distinctions between so-called "moral" and "ceremonial" laws biblical. Since the entire Mosaic Covenant was made only with Israel, every part of it applied only to Israel, including the Decalogue. Unless God reiterates some of the commands elsewhere outside the abrogated Law, they have no present bearing on believers.¹⁸ This issue of the end of the Law is addressed thoroughly in the next chapter.

Sabbath as a Memorial of Creation (Exodus 20:8-11)

This first statement of Sabbath law deserves special attention as it details

¹⁷This is the commonly held tenant of Seventh-day Adventists ("Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists," Section 6, in the official Seventh-day Adventist Church publication *Questions on Doctrine*, 12, 129-34; Francis D. Nichol, *Answers to Objections*, 141-49; id., *Reasons for Our Faith*, 229-49; A. Jan Marcussen, *National Sunday Law*, 92-93). Even many non-Adventists uphold a "moral" and "ceremonial" dichotomy, as is evident in *The Second Helvetic Confession* (1566) of the Reformed Church of Zurich, Chapter XII: "The Law of God" (ibid., 1:405; 3:854-55); *Thirty-nine Articles of Religion of the Church of England* (1571), Article VII (ibid., 3:491-92); *Articles of Religion of the Reformed Episcopal Church in America* (1875), Article VI (ibid., 3:816); *The Irish Articles of Religion* (1615), Article 84, believed to be composed by Archbishop James Ussher (ibid., 3:541); *The Westminster Confession of Faith* (1647), Chapter XIX (ibid., 3:640-43); *The Savoy Declaration of the Congregational Churches* (1658) is identical to the former here (ibid., 3:718), as is *The Baptist Confession of 1688* (Philadelphia), based upon the London, 1677, confession (ibid., 3:738); *Methodist Articles of Religion* (1784) by John Wesley (ibid., 3:808); Roger T. Beckwith and Wilfrid Stott, *The Christian Sunday*, 45; E. W. Burton, *Galatians*, 447-48.

¹⁸This does *not* mean that God holds guiltless those who steal, murder, commit adultery, etc. today, for nine of the ten commands are impressed upon the consciences of mankind and *do* find reinstatement elsewhere in Scripture, especially in the New Testament. Therefore, while *all ten* commands have been abolished with the Law, *nine* have been reinstituted. The only one not reinstituted in the New Testament is the Sabbath. In other words, there does exist a moral law which has been in effect before the Mosaic Law's institution and continues to the present; however, this moral law is never equated with the Ten Commandments. This issue and the end of the Law for believers is addressed more fully in the next chapter. For further study see Roy L. Aldrich, "Causes for Confusion of Law and Grace," *BS* 116 (July-September 1959): 221-29; id., "Has the Mosaic Law Been Abolished?" *BS* 116 (October-December 1959): 322-35; id., "The Mosaic Ten Commandments Compared to Their Restatements in the New Testament," *BS* 118 (July-September 1961): 251-58.

prohibitions on the day and the creation rationale for such conduct. Israel is commanded,

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy (Exod. 20:8-11).

Often it is maintained that the word "remember" (זָכַר) indicates that the Sabbath already existed before the manna incident.¹⁹ In this view God was taking either a pre-existing pagan institution or a neglected observance of Genesis 2:1-3 and attaching the proper significance to it. Can such a viewpoint be sustained?

Such a conclusion based upon this single word deserves careful examination. Even Hasel admits that extra-biblical sources cannot be traced to prove the Sabbath in effect at the giving of the Law.²⁰ Also, assuming the word does carry a retrospective aspect, the wider context indicates that the previous Sabbath command referred to must be that given a few weeks earlier in the manna incident, which is the only mention of the Sabbath before Exodus 20.²¹ Nevertheless, the command to "remember" is best understood in a prospective sense, tantamount to the command to observe.²² This finds verification in the repetition of the Decalogue command in Deuteronomy 5:12, "Observe (שָׁמַר)²³ the Sabbath day." Further, Exodus 13:3 provides a parallel in the *remembrance*

¹⁹Martin Buber, *Moses: The Revelation and the Covenant*, 80-83, 85; Hasel, "The Sabbath in the Pentateuch," 30; W. H. Griffith Thomas, *Genesis*, 38; Childs, *Exodus*, 416; Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 245.

²⁰Hasel, "The Sabbath in the Pentateuch," 30.

²¹George Rawlinson, *Exodus*, LHC, 168.

²²"If therefore the clause were to be rendered, 'Remember the sabbath day by way of commemoration or celebration,' it would bring us still nearer to its genuine purport" (Bush, 1:268; cf. Martin Noth, *Exodus: A Commentary*, OTL, 164).

²³The Samaritan Pentateuch at Exodus 20:8 also has שָׁמַר instead of זָכַר. This is an instance in which the LXX and MT agree against the SP, thus indicating that the SP is secondary (Bruce K. Waltke, "Prolegomena to the Samaritan Pentateuch," Ph.D. diss., Harvard Univ., 1965, 350); however, it does show that the Hebrews likely considered the two terms שָׁמַר and זָכַר as synonymous.

of the Exodus deliverance through the *observance* of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.²⁴ Finally, the argument for a preexisting Sabbath institution based on the infinitive "remember" is an undue emphasis that does not do justice to grammatical considerations.²⁵ The real emphasis in the fourth commandment is on the six days of work, not the introductory word "remember" (זָכַר). This yields the more accurate translation, "Remembering the sabbath day to hallow it, six days you shall do all your labor..."; this translation is also justified in that it more accurately differentiates the fourth commandment from the other nine, which are all expressed grammatically with an imperative.²⁶

The creation motif also finds amplification in Exodus 31:17, which includes the curious addition that after God blessed the seventh day He "ceased *from labor* and was refreshed"²⁷ (שָׁבַת וַיִּנָּפֶשׂ). This "refreshment" certainly could not be "necessary"²⁸ recuperation from his work of creation since God cannot get tired (Isa. 40:28). Another sees this ceasing and resting as turning His attention from creation to communion with man, the height of his creation,²⁹ but the text mentions nothing of man.

It is best to see this anthropomorphism as theological in nature. The

²⁴Exodus 12:14 uses the noun form of זָכַר: "Now this day will be a memorial (זִכְרוֹן) to you..." through the practical acknowledgment of the day through the feast (Bush, 1:268).

²⁵Because the use of the Qal infinite absolute as an imperative is rare (e.g., 2 Kings 5:10; Isa. 14:31; cf. Ronald J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax: An Outline*, 39, § 211), some place emphasis on its use as such here (e.g., Childs, *Exodus*, 414). However, Gesenius notes that this imperative nuance is restricted to cases emphasizing an abstract verbal idea without regard to the subject or object of the action (*Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, 122-23), which is not found here.

²⁶John D. W. Watts, "Infinitive Absolute as Imperative and the Interpretation of Exodus 20:3," *ZAW* 74 [1962]: 144.

²⁷NASB.

²⁸Wolff, "The Day of Rest in the Old Testament," 70, claims that after God created the world, He *had* to rest, and draws a "parallel" in Christ's declaration on the cross, "It is finished."

²⁹Andreasen, *Rest and Redemption*, 78.

refreshment refers to God's looking back upon His completed work of creation with a sense of pleasure with its beauty and perfection.³⁰ This finds support in God's own testimony of His angels' rejoicing when He finished His creative work (Job 38:7). Such is the example for Israel. As God looked back on His completed creation on the seventh day, so on the Sabbath Israelites were to reflect upon their work completed in the six preceding days and be refreshed. Even work itself could thus be considered a gift of God. God's citing His own example as justification pointed the nation of Israel to the highest authoritative example for rest on the seventh day. This creation motif for the observance of the Sabbath also points toward the sovereignty of God "who gives all things to His people as gifts, to use them for the benefit and well-being of all."³¹

Sabbath as a Memorial of Redemption (Deuteronomy 5:12-15)

The restatement of the Sabbath ordinance in Deuteronomy also provides evidence that the Sabbath was given only to Israel. This version of the commandment requires Israel's observance as a remembrance of the nation's freedom from Egyptian bondage, so that on every Sabbath Israel was to remember that "her God is a liberator."³² This is clearly designated in the passage, which reads:

Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.... On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your ox, your donkey or any of your animals, nor the alien within your gates, so that your manservant and maidservant may rest, as you do. Remember that *you were slaves in Egypt and that the LORD your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm*. Therefore the LORD your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day (Duet. 5:12a, 14b-15; emphasis mine).

This passage clearly looks back to God's redemption of Israel from Egypt. It could refer retrospectively to *no other people* than Israel. Nevertheless, seeking to prove

³⁰Robert Leo Odom, *Sabbath and Sunday in Early Christianity*, 14.

³¹Samuel W. Meshack, "The Ethical Significance of the Old Testament Sabbatical Institutions," *BTF* 14 (September-December 1982): 238-41.

³²Wolff, "The Day of Rest in the Old Testament," 67.

that the Sabbath applies to Christians today, Weber (an Adventist) amazingly declares: "Deuteronomy 5 invites us to rest on the Sabbath in memory of the redemption He accomplished for us."³³ The Church is not spoken of in Deuteronomy, for this relates only to Israel. God ordained the day so that the nation would experience in its memory the past salvation history in the present,³⁴ and while Christians have also been redeemed (through the blood of Christ), the redemption spoken of here is not individual salvation in Christ but national deliverance from Egyptian bondage.³⁵

The significance of this redemption motif is multifaceted. First, as God was merciful to the entire nation of Israel, so the individuals of this nation should be merciful towards one another.³⁶ The extension of the rest provision to all levels of society conveys this truth. God had provided rest for His people, and their granting rest to all levels of their society and even to animals on a weekly basis was to serve as a reminder of His deliverance. In this sense the past redemption of God affected the present freedom from bondage which was granted to them on the Sabbath. A second redemptive implication of the Sabbath command is prospective, looking to the future saving activities of God.³⁷ Surely if God was faithful to save His people at the Exodus, He would preserve them in the future; the Sabbath served to symbolize such a promise. Isaiah described this redemption of Israel in the kingdom age when God promises that "from one Sabbath to

³³Martin Weber, *Some Call It Heresy*, 94; cf. Meredith G. Kline, *Treaty of the Great King*, 63-64.

³⁴Brevard S. Childs, *Memory and Tradition in Israel* (SBT 37), 51.

³⁵This is not to say that the Sabbath had no future aspect, looking forward typologically to Messianic redemption in Christ (see Theodore Friedman, "Sabbath: Anticipation of Redemption," *Judaism* 16 [Fall 1967]: 443-52; Samuele Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, 19-26; id., "Sabbatical Typologies of Messianic Redemption," *JSJ* 17 [December 1986]: 153-76), but this concept is explored later in this chapter in the section on Christ and the Sabbath.

³⁶"The memory of the exodus event reinforced the attitude of mercifulness toward fellow beings and faithfulness toward Yahweh as liberator" (Meshack, "The Ethical Significance of the Old Testament Sabbatical Institutions," 240).

³⁷Samuele Bacchiocchi, "A Memorial of Redemption," *Spectrum* 9 (1977): 16-17.

another, all mankind will come and bow down before me" (66:23).³⁸

Sign of the Law

Even more significant than the Sabbath's reminiscence of creation and Israel's redemption is that the institution served as a sign of God's special covenantal relationship with Israel.³⁹ Throughout biblical history God provided signs, or reminders, of the covenants He made with man. The rainbow recalls God's covenant with Noah (Gen. 9:12-16), and God also provided circumcision as a reminder of the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 17:9-14; cf. 12:1-3).⁴⁰ Likewise, the cup of the Lord's Supper causes believers to recall Christ's initiation of the New Covenant: "This is the new covenant in My blood...." (1 Cor. 11:25). In each case the signs serve as a reminder of God's promise to fulfill His promises contained within each covenant. Specifically, the rainbow points back to God's commitment not to destroy the earth by flood (Gen. 9:15); circumcision signifies His unconditional promise to sustain Abraham's descendants in an eventual possession of Canaan (Gen. 17:7-8); and the Lord's Supper celebrates Christ's past redemption of those who believe and His promise to redeem Israel in the future when the nation repents.⁴¹

³⁸The eschatological redemptive dimensions of the Sabbath are explored in detail in the final chapter of this study, including those in Isaiah 66:23.

³⁹Andreasen, *Rest and Redemption*, maintains that the Sabbath itself is "a sign and a covenant" (p. 76) and "the creation sabbath anticipates the history of the covenant and of grace" (p. 78). This confuses the *sign* of the covenant with the Mosaic covenant itself. Odom adds, "Not once in all Holy Writ is the seventh day of the week called either 'the Sabbath of Moses' or 'the Jewish Sabbath'" (p. 13). This statement is correct, but never has the Jewish nature of the institution been argued on the basis of its name.

⁴⁰Rawlinson argues that the Sabbath *replaces* circumcision as the sign of God's covenant relation with His people. In his view, circumcision was adopted by heathen nations, so it became necessary to have a new sign for Israel to distinguish the nation from the others (Rawlinson, *Exodus*, 271). This view is problematic in that it confuses the Abrahamic Covenant with the Mosaic. Circumcision continued in the Mosaic economy (Lev. 12:3; Luke 1:59; Phil. 3:5) and therefore could not have been replaced by the Sabbath.

⁴¹The retrospective aspect (Christ's accomplished redemption) is evident in the Supper's proclamation of His death (1 Cor. 11:26), whereas the yet unfulfilled eschatological aspects (internalized law, universal knowledge of God, etc.) await the kingdom age when all Israelites will know God (Jer. 31:33-34).

As the other covenants had special signs attached to them, the same applied to the Mosaic Covenant, this sign being the Sabbath. This truth is emphasized in four Old Testament texts. Exodus 31:13 is the most explicit passage which limits the Sabbath institution to Israel as a special sign. Here God commands the nation, "You must observe my Sabbaths. This will be a sign between me and you for the generations to come, so that you may know that I am the LORD, who makes you holy." Three other passages also teach that God viewed the institution as "a sign between you and me" (Exod. 31:17; Ezek. 20:12, 20), which was to be celebrated for "generations to come as a lasting covenant" (Exod. 31:16).⁴²

It now remains to address the meaning of the Sabbath as a "sign." First, it was a "sign of separation." It affirmed to the nations through an external, visible institution that Israel was a people set apart as a holy people for the LORD.⁴³ Interestingly enough, three of the four passages above which affirm the Sabbath as a special sign between Israel and God include this concept of sanctification.⁴⁴ Accordingly, "the Sabbath implies a holy people, not simply a group arbitrarily set apart."⁴⁵ When Israelites kept the Sabbath, they were testifying that "the LORD made them holy" (Ezek. 20:12).

However, the crucial question in this regard is *by what means* this practical sanctification was imparted. In other words, it is not often addressed *how* was Israel set apart from the other nations. Clearly, the means was through the Mosaic Covenant. This

⁴²All four of these passages are viewed by higher critics as exilic addendums which testify to the exaltation of the day after the destruction of the temple. Thus the Exodus references are given exilic dates along with Ezekiel (cf. de Vaux, 482; Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Worship in Israel*, 87-88).

⁴³The sign upon Cain provides a parallel here (Gen. 4:15), which also served as a distinguishing mark or sign of recognition (Hasel, "The Sabbath in the Pentateuch," 34).

⁴⁴Of the four verses which include the word "sign" (Exod. 31:13, 17; Ezek. 20:12, 20), only Exodus 31:13 lacks any mention of holiness associated with the sign.

⁴⁵Sakae Kubo, *God Meets Man*, 52; id., "The Experience of Liberation," *Spectrum* 9 (1977): 11.

covenant provided the means of sanctification through the sacrificial system in the Law. As redeemed Israelites brought animals before the priests for sacrifice, their sins could be forgiven to maintain fellowship with a holy God.⁴⁶ Thus, the Sabbath, as the sign of the covenant, contributed to the holiness of the nation by signifying the sanctification provided by God through animal sacrifice in the Mosaic economy. All references to the Sabbath as a sign are found in context of this covenant God made with His people Israel. Hasel, a Seventh-day Adventist, provides keen insight into the Sabbath as a sign in four respects:⁴⁷ a sign of observation (i.e., obligation), a sign of separation, a sign of remembrance,⁴⁸ and a sign of knowledge.⁴⁹ He even acknowledges the sign as signifying the Mosaic Covenant:

The Sabbath doubtlessly functions as a covenant sign of the Sinai (Horeb) covenant, because it is called a "sign between me and you" (Ex. 31:13; cf. Eze. 20:20) or a "sign between me and the people of Israel" (Ex. 31:17). The expression "a sign between me and you" brings to mind the phrases "a sign of the covenant between me and the earth" (Gen. 9:13) and "a sign of the covenant between me and you" (chap. 17:11) in the covenants of Noah and Abraham, respectively. The language of the entire passage of Exodus 31:12-17 is filled with covenant terminology. The verbs "keep" (*samar*) in verse 13, 14, and 16 and know (*yada*) in verse 13 are filled with covenant overtones. The term "profane" (*hll*), which is used not infrequently with the Sabbath, is a term for the breaking of or doing away with the covenant.⁵⁰

One could hardly hope for a clearer statement of the Sabbath as a sign of the Mosaic Covenant, and yet these words are from a Seventh-day Adventist. One wonders how an Adventist can associate the Sabbath so clearly with the abrogated Mosaic Covenant, but simultaneously uphold the institution as applicable to Christians. The

⁴⁶For an excellent discussion of the efficacy of the Old Testament sacrificial system, see John S. Feinberg, "Salvation in the Old Testament," in *Tradition and Testament: Essays in Honor of Charles Lee Feinberg*, 39-77.

⁴⁷Hasel, "The Sabbath in the Pentateuch," 34-35.

⁴⁸This remembrance aspect points to a so-called creation ordinance of the Sabbath (*ibid.*, 35).

⁴⁹"The Sabbath is a sign that imparts to Israel the knowledge (1) that Yahweh is her God and (2) that her God "sanctifies" His people by making them a holy people, i.e., a people separated for a special covenantal relationship with Him" (*ibid.*).

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 36.

answer is that Adventists do not believe in an abrogated covenant, but rather distinguish between the "moral law" and the "ceremonial law," and within the former they include the Ten Commandments which "constitute in principle God's eternal law... [since] it is the expression of His character."⁵¹ However, such a distinction is totally unwarranted due to lack of support in the biblical text. Also, this placing of the Sabbath among so-called eternal, moral laws leads to a confusion between Israel and the Church so that Hasel can state that "the Sabbath is a sign given *to the believer* that separates him from the rest of men and assures his future existence."⁵² Of course, this view is consistent with Seventh-day Adventist theology which places the believer under Sabbath obligation; however, Scripture designates the Sabbath as a sign only for Israel, not for the believer in Christ (whose sign is appropriately the Lord's Supper).

Another problem must be discussed in connection with the Sabbath as a sign. It is reasonable to suppose that as the sign of the Mosaic Covenant, the Sabbath was to last only as long as that covenant; there would be no need for the sign when the covenant it symbolizes is made void.⁵³ However, one objection to the concept of an abrogated Sabbath is that it is designated "eternal" in the same covenant context. Confusion over the designation of the Sabbath as a "perpetual" (NASB) or "lasting" (NIV) covenant (בְּרִית עוֹלָם; Exod. 31:16) has caused some scholars to interpret this as an "everlasting

⁵¹*Questions on Doctrine*, 129; Hasel, by maintaining that the sign of the Mosaic Covenant is eternal, must make this covenant eternal as well: "In short, just as the Noahic covenant has an eternal sign in the rainbow (Gen. 9:13, 17) and the Abrahamic covenant has an eternal sign in circumcision (chap. 17:11), so the Sinai (Horeb) covenant has an eternal sign in the Sabbath" ("The Sabbath in the Pentateuch," 36). This fails to distinguish between the unconditional nature of the Noahic and Abrahamic covenants and the conditional nature of the Mosaic Covenant.

⁵²*Ibid.*, 35 (emphasis mine); cf. Chuck Scriven, "Beyond Arithmetic: A Look at the Meaning of the Sabbath," *Insight*, 7 September 1971, 17-18; John L. Shuler, "The Sabbath—a Sign of Righteousness by Faith," *ARSH*, 5 August 1971, 6.

⁵³Harold H. P. Dressler, "The Sabbath in the Old Testament," in *From Sabbath to Lord's Day*, 30, 34.

covenant."⁵⁴ Further, the Sabbath is to serve as a sign "forever" (לְעֹלָם; v. 17).⁵⁵ The problem here is how to reconcile these statements with an institution tied to the abolished Mosaic Covenant.⁵⁶ The answer is in properly understanding the meaning of עֹלָם, which indicates perpetuity but not necessarily eternity.⁵⁷ Even if eternity *is* properly attached to the Sabbath, this is still not problematic since the institution will be observed throughout the kingdom age (Isa. 66:23; Ezek. 44:24).⁵⁸ Therefore, the meaning of the Sabbath being "eternal" is that the Sabbath will be obligatory as long as the Mosaic Covenant is in effect.

In relation to this, it cannot be stated too emphatically that as the sign of the Mosaic Covenant, the Sabbath applied only to Israel. In other words, only Israel had the Law, so only Israel had the Sabbath, the sign of the Law. Further, since the sign signified God's special relationship with His covenant nation, it logically follows that the Sabbath did not apply to Gentiles.⁵⁹ The scriptural record confirms this as the Sabbath was never

⁵⁴Wolff, "The Day of Rest in the Old Testament," 74; Hasel, "The Sabbath in the Pentateuch," 36.

⁵⁵"The sabbath as the *'ōt* (sign) is a reminder both to God and Israel of the eternal covenantal relationship which was the ultimate purpose of creation" (Childs, *Exodus*, 416). This statement makes the Sabbath a sign of the Abrahamic Covenant and thus confuses it with the Mosaic Covenant.

⁵⁶Evidence for the abolishment of the Law is addressed in the next chapter.

⁵⁷*TWOT*, 2 vols., s.v. "עֹלָם," by Allan A. McRae, 2:672-73; BDB s.v. "עֹלָם," 761-62, means "long duration, antiquity, futurity"; cf. John Davenant, *An Exposition of the Epistle of St. Paul to the Colossians*, 2 vols., 1:484. On the "everlasting" meaning of עֹלָם one finds the references mostly in contexts dealing with eternal bliss or punishment (cf. Robert A. Morey, *Death and the Afterlife*, 112-19). Elsewhere the meaning of "everlasting" cannot be pressed.

⁵⁸Gary C. Cohen, "The Doctrine of the Sabbath in the Old and New Testaments," *GJ* 6 (Spring 1965): 9, 14. Jews saw the kingdom age as perpetual, but the issues surrounding the eschatological Sabbath are more properly addressed in the final chapter of this treatise.

⁵⁹"The sabbath appears to have been a distinctively Israelite observance, not shared with Canaanite neighbors" (Harold H. Rowley, *Worship in Ancient Israel*, 91, cf. 105). For that matter, *none* of the Law was ever imposed upon Gentiles. God held Gentiles accountable only for those statutes which were impressed upon the conscience of all men (e.g., the Ninevites and other nations were condemned for their murders, ruthlessness, etc., and never for their neglect of the Sabbath).

imposed upon Gentiles⁶⁰ and several passages indicate that the law was given only to Israel. Only Israel had the tablets upon which the Ten Commandments were written (Deut. 4:13), a revelation of God which "He has done for no other nation; they do not know his laws" (Ps. 147:20). In fact, Israelites alone are rebuked and disciplined for neglecting the Sabbath.⁶¹

This brings up another facet about the Sabbath revealed for the first time in Exodus 31, the penalty for breaking the Sabbath. This passage declares emphatically, "Anyone who desecrates [the Sabbath] must be put to death; whoever does any work on it must be cut off from his people.... Whoever does any work on it must be put to death" (Exod. 31:14b, 15b).⁶² Death by stoning was specifically designated as the means of execution in the case of a man who was caught collecting wood on the Sabbath (Num. 15:32-36).⁶³ Such a severe punishment existed for "merely working" on the seventh day because capital punishment for Sabbath disobedience underscored its significance as the sign of the covenant. That it signifies the Mosaic Covenant also explains the disproportionate emphasis given to the Sabbath commandment in the Decalogue; as such,

⁶⁰This obviously excludes Gentile proselytes who were Sabbath-keepers, for Isaiah 56:6-7 promises these foreigners both joy and acceptance by God into the Israelite community (cf. Isa. 56:3).

⁶¹Num. 15:32-41; Neh. 13:15-22; Jer. 17:27; Ezek. 20:13.

⁶²The death penalty seems to be softened by de Vaux, "If an individual failed to observe [the Sabbath], he ceased to belong to the community (Ex 31:14; 35:2; Nb 15:32-36), and if the people failed to observe it, they would bring upon themselves the punishment of God (Ez 20:13; Ne 13:17-18)" (de Vaux, 482). This statement does not indicate the severity of the penalty as clearly as verse 15 does, namely, the death penalty.

⁶³This account follows immediately after the injunction to "cut off" those guilty of defiant sin (Num. 15:30-31); thus it is an illustration of defiant sin for which there was no sacrifice but only the death penalty (William Kent Gravley, "The Sin with a High Hand in Numbers 15:30-31," Th.M. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1982, 2, 10-11; cf. Philip F. Congdon, "An Exegetical and Theological Study of Numbers 15:22-31," Th.M. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1983, v, 14-15, 29-30). J. Weingreen, "The Case of the Woodgatherer (Numbers XV 32-36)," *VT* 16 (1966): 361-64, insightfully notes that the man's death was required because of his *intent* to commit a capital crime (i.e., kindling a fire on the Sabbath in violation of Exod. 35:3). Other references also indicate that "cut off" has the meaning of death (of an animal, Lev. 26:22; of people, Gen. 9:11; Ps. 37:38; Isa. 11:13; Obad. 9; cf. also BDB, s.v. "כָּרַח," 504).

Exodus 31 provides the *reason* for its priority treatment observed in Exodus 20. When one considers that the Sabbath functions as *the* sign of the Mosaic Covenant, this emphasis in the Decalogue is understandable.⁶⁴ Each weekly celebration of the Sabbath reminded the Israelites that God had made a covenant with them and violation of it was a serious sin. To violate the Sabbath was tantamount to violating the entire covenant since the Sabbath served as a sign of that covenant.⁶⁵ Further, to profane the Sabbath was a personal affront upon God,⁶⁶ for working on the holy day was a refusal to imitate God's rest pattern at creation. The very destruction of Jerusalem and captivity in Babylon occurred primarily for the desecration of Israel's Sabbaths (2 Chron. 36:21; Jer. 17:19-27), again underscoring its importance as the sign of the Horeb covenant. Finally, the punishment of death associated with the Sabbath also indicates its temporal nature, for those who advocate its permanence today would hardly enforce this scriptural penalty upon Sabbath breakers.⁶⁷

⁶⁴Perhaps this emphasis can be also explained by the fact that seventh-day rest is the only commandment among the Ten Commandments which is not intuitively known to man. As such, it would need more elaboration than the others.

⁶⁵In addition to the weekly Sabbath as a sign of the covenant, Dressler also adds as a sign of the covenant the Sabbatical year occurring every seventh year (Lev. 25:1-7) and the Year of Jubilee on every fiftieth year (Lev. 25:8-12, 28). However, these years are not designated signs of the covenant in these or other passages. See Dressler, "The Sabbath in the Old Testament," 31.

⁶⁶Paul K. Jewett, *The Lord's Day*, 19. Barth also emphasizes this point as he regards the Sabbath "as a revelation of the nature of God, not simply as a commandment for man" (James Brown, "Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Sabbath," *SJTh* 19 [December 1966]: 409; id., "The Doctrine of the Sabbath in Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics," *SJTh* 20 [March 1967]: 1).

⁶⁷The Adventist reply to such an objection is threefold: (1) Capital punishment is also not presently inflicted upon those who break other commandments of the Decalogue, (2) Sabbath breaking will indeed be punished, though not immediately, and (3) Only the precepts of the *Decalogue* are "moral and thus eternally binding" (Francis D. Nichol, *Answers to Objections*, 134-36). In response, his first point only proves the abrogation of the *entire* Law, his second point ignores human responsibility by placing ultimate judgment in God's hands, and finally, no evidence exists for his third argument.

Humanitarian Rest Provision

A fourth purpose of the Sabbath was to function as a humanitarian institution for rest. This is defended in von Rad's concept of "rest" as originally associated with the Sabbath,⁶⁸ but Robinson argues against this rest provision since Old Testament usage of נָח means more properly "to settle down" and שָׁבַת; carries the idea of "coming to an end" or "to stop."⁶⁹ However, while Robinson's etymology and observations of parallel usage are correct, he neglects to give weight to the *immediate contexts* in which the Sabbath commandment is found since he attributes these texts to the post-exilic period.⁷⁰ When one deals with the canonical text it can easily be observed that the Pentateuch explicitly and repeatedly prohibited all forms of Sabbath work (Exod. 34:21; 31:14-15) as a social concern (Exod. 16:30; 20:9; 23:12; Deut. 5:14). This command applied even "in the time of plowing and harvest" (Exod. 34:21) when the work was especially pressing, since during these times rest was needed more than ever.⁷¹ Further, as the entire household rested together on the Sabbath,⁷² the institution served to equalize all levels of society before God.⁷³ "This brings liberation and freedom; it is a pointer to do away with all inequalities in the social structure. Before God all men are equal. Man's original status

⁶⁸Gerhard von Rad, "There Remains Still a Rest for the People of God: An Investigation of a Biblical Conception," in *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*, 94-102.

⁶⁹Robinson, "The Idea of Rest in the Old Testament and the Search for the Basic Character of the Sabbath," 32-42.

⁷⁰Robinson's entire argument against an early rest provision is based upon the unproved dating assumptions of the documentary hypothesis.

⁷¹Wolff, "The Day of Rest in the Old Testament," 73.

⁷²The Decalogue commandment freed servants and even beasts of burden from normal labor on the Sabbath (Exod. 20:10; Deut. 5:14).

⁷³Saul J. Berman, "The Extended Notion of the Sabbath," *Judaism* 22 (Summer 1973): 347, 349; Niels-Erik Andreasen, "Jubilee of Freedom and Equality," *Spectrum* 9 (1977): 43-47; id., "Festival and Freedom: A Study of an Old Testament Theme," *Int* 28 (July 1974): 281-97. The humanitarian provisions of the Sabbath find parallel in other social institutions of Israel, such as the Sabbatical Year (Exod. 23:10f.; Lev. 25:2-7) and Year of Jubilee (Lev. 25:8-55; 27:16-25; Num. 36:4).

before God is to be reenacted in society."⁷⁴ In pre-exilic times shops were regularly closed on the Sabbath (Amos 8:5), but later after the exile, Nehemiah had to prohibit the sale of goods on the Sabbath (Neh. 13:15-22). Certainly, this abstention from normal work infuses within the Sabbath the concept of a rest provision.

Despite the Sabbath work prohibition, the day did not prohibit *all* work. Travel (2 Kings 4:23) and the changing of the temple guard (2 Kings 11:5ff.) both existed on the Sabbath. Further, there were marriage feasts (Jud. 14:12-18), dedication festivals (1 Kings 8:65; 2 Chron. 7:8), military campaigns (Josh. 6:15; 1 Kings 20:29; 2 Kings 3:9),⁷⁵ and duties of the priests and Levites (2 Kings 11:5-9; 2 Chron. 23:4, 8), such as offering sacrifices (1 Chron. 23:31). Nevertheless, while *some* work was performed, the basic teaching of the Law was that people should rest at home (Exod. 16:29; 35:3; Lev. 23:3)⁷⁶ and not be engaged in their daily occupational work.⁷⁷

Worship

A fifth purpose for the Sabbath was to set aside time for worship.⁷⁸ The day was a sacred assembly and appointed feast (Lev. 23:1-3) in which the nation gathered for public worship.⁷⁹ On the Sabbath the daily offerings were more than doubled (Num. 28:1-10) along with the replacement of the tabernacle loaves of bread (Lev. 24:8). In

⁷⁴Hasel, "The Sabbath in the Pentateuch," 32.

⁷⁵Concerning Joshua 6:15, the seven marches around Jericho on the seventh day is not necessarily designated a Sabbath, but that the marches lasted seven consecutive days obviously includes a Sabbath.

⁷⁶Riesenfeld notes, "The Sabbath does not derive its character from special meetings or ceremonies, but from the content and character of a fellowship in the elementary social unit of the family during this particular day" (Harald Riesenfeld, "The Sabbath and the Lord's Day in Judaism, the Preaching of Jesus and Early Christianity," in *The Gospel Tradition: Essays by Harald Riesenfeld*, 113).

⁷⁷Dressler, "The Sabbath in the Old Testament," 27.

⁷⁸The intention of the Sabbath law was "to relieve the people of Israel of their daily occupational work for one day in seven in which they could worship God and refresh their bodies" (ibid.). This worship aspect is especially developed in later family graces and blessings (Willy Rordorf, *Sunday*, 54).

⁷⁹Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, NICOT, 301.

later times, if a prophet was nearby, the people would gather about him for instruction in spiritual matters on the Sabbath (2 Kings 4:23). In fact, this feast day was to be both a joyous celebration (Hos. 2:11) and a delight (Isa. 58:13).⁸⁰ That it was attended by large numbers of people at the temple is evident in the increase of the temple guard on the Sabbath (2 Kings 11:5ff.; cf. Isa. 1:13).⁸¹ Psalm 92, the only psalm specifically designated for a Sabbath day, includes many activities legitimate for Sabbath celebration: "giving thanks, singing praises, declaring God's loving loyalty and faithfulness, rejoicing with instruments and singing, admiring His works and wisdom, trusting in God's justice, and praising His care, concern, and power."⁸² The modern rabbi Heschel has captured this worship aspect uniquely in his comparison between time and space:

The meaning of the Sabbath is to celebrate time rather than space. Six days a week we live under the tyranny of things of space; on the Sabbath we try to become attuned to *holiness in time*. It is a day on which we are called upon to share in what is eternal in time, to turn from the results of creation to the mystery of creation; from the world of creation to the creation of the world.⁸³

In like manner are the words of Barth, who teaches that the Sabbath forbids man "faith in his own plans and wishes, in a justification and deliverance which he can make for himself, in his own ability and achievement. What it really forbids him is not work, but trust in his work."⁸⁴

⁸⁰Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 2:297.

⁸¹"On the sabbath day... the two companies of guards normally on duty at the royal palace exchanged duties with the single company normally on duty at the temple, and this would imply that larger numbers of people were to be found in the Temple on the sabbath than on other days" (Rowley, *Worship in Ancient Israel*, 90).

⁸²Dressler, "The Sabbath in the Old Testament," 33. Despite these many evidences for Sabbath worship, Scofield declares that, apart from sacrifices and the Sabbath's connection with annual feasts, "the seventh-day Sabbath was never made a day of sacrifice, worship, or any manner of religious service" (C. I. Scofield, ed., *New Scofield Reference Bible*, 1010; cf. Gerhard von Rad, *Deuteronomy: A Commentary*, OTL, 58).

⁸³Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man*, 10 (italics his). The positive aspects of the day from a Jewish perspective have also been noted by Samuel M. Segal, *The Sabbath Book*; Berman, "The Extended Notion of the Sabbath," 342-52; and Ruskin, "Being Jewish and Jewish Being," 16-20.

⁸⁴Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 3:54.

Seventh-day Adventists, who traditionally and almost exclusively emphasized Sabbath observance as obedience to obligation or duty, have recently adopted a more positive perspective.⁸⁵ They now hail the day as "a gracious provision by a wise Creator"⁸⁶ and a "festival of fellowship" in which "for one day in the week, the fellowship of Eden was restored."⁸⁷ However, despite this more positive stance, they continue to teach that all true Christians are Sabbath-keepers⁸⁸ and "anyone who has had his mind enlightened ignores the Sabbath to his everlasting peril."⁸⁹ Therefore, while Adventists emphasize the worship aspects of the Sabbath, they mix this positive teaching with an unbiblical doctrine of justification by works.

⁸⁵This is the frank viewpoint of Cottrell, an Adventist himself (Raymond F. Cottrell, "The Sabbath in the New World," in *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, 259).

⁸⁶Ibid. The many Seventh-day Adventist writers now presenting the day in a positive form include Kubo, 57-62; id., "The Experience of Liberation," *Spectrum* 9 (1977): 9-14; Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Divine Rest*, 17-226; id., "Sabbath Rest as Peace and Tranquility," *ADRH*, 3 April 1975, 9-11; id., "The Sabbath Rest: Its Meaning for the Christian Today," *ADRH*, 27 March 1975, 4-6; Glenn and Ethel Coon, *Lovely Lord of the Lord's Day*; Kenneth J. Holland, *This Day is Yours: Exploring the Many-Faceted Wonders of God's Sabbath Day*; id., *The Magnificent Seventh*; Fritz Guy, "A Celebration of God's Activity: The Meaning of the Sabbath, Part 2," *Insight*, 5 February 1974, 16-18, id., "The Magnificent Sabbath: The Meaning of the Sabbath, Part 1," *Insight*, 12 February 1974, 16-18, id., "Opportunity for Wholeness: The Meaning of the Sabbath, Part 3," *Insight*, 19 February 1974, 12-13, id., "The Presence of Ultimacy," *Spectrum* 9 (1977): 48-54; Gerald Winslow, "Moment of Eternity," *Spectrum* 9 (1977): 55-60; Chuck Scriven, "Beyond Arithmetic: A Look at the Meaning of the Sabbath," *Insight*, 7 September 1971, 14-18; id., "Forgotten Holiday: Why We Should Buck the Establishment to Get It Back," *Insight*, 9 May 1972, 5; Dave Larson, "Celebrating the Sabbath in the Secular Seventies," *Insight*, 23 March 1971, 4-8; Shuler, "The Sabbath—a Sign of Righteousness by Faith," 4-6; Gerald Wheeler, "The Day God Comes Visiting," *ARSH*, 5 December 1974, 5-7.

⁸⁷Roy Branson, "Festival of Fellowship," *Spectrum* 9 (1977): 37-42.

⁸⁸Milian L. Andreasen, *The Sabbath*, 246; cf. Shuler, "The Sabbath—a Sign of Righteousness by Faith," 6, "The acceptance of the full gospel includes the keeping of Christ's Sabbath."

⁸⁹Holland, *The Magnificent Seventh*, 63; cf. Nichol, *Answers to Objections*, 242-44, 247-48; "What it comes down to is this: if we lose the Sabbath we may even lose ourselves" (Chuck Scriven, "Forgotten Holiday: Why We Should Buck the Establishment to Get It Back," 5). The "everlasting peril" spoken of refers not to hell but to annihilation, or missing heaven for eternity, since Seventh-day Adventists reject the doctrine of eternal punishment by claiming that only the *effects* of punishing the wicked last for eternity (Nichol, *Answers to Objections*, 843-47; Seventh-day Adventist Church, *Questions on Doctrine*, 533-43). For a thorough refutation of this doctrine of annihilation, see Robert A. Morey, *Death and the Afterlife*, 72-170, 199-222.

The Intertestamental Sabbath

Before proceeding to the next chapter which addresses the status of the Sabbath under the present age, two more areas must receive attention. First, the attitudes of the people and Pharisees towards the Sabbath in the intertestamental era under Pharisaical influences will be discussed, and second, Jesus' teaching and practice concerning the day will be addressed in light of these influences. Since Christ had much to say about both the Pharisaical perspectives of both the Law and the Sabbath, a knowledge of rabbinic attitudes will prove beneficial in properly understanding His teaching on the Sabbath. In this manner His own views can then be compared and contrasted with the prevailing perspectives of the religious teachers of His day.

The Jewish Sabbath Dilemma

The Deficiency of Specific Sabbath Laws

Even if the average Jew in biblical times sincerely desired to keep the Sabbath, Scripture offered little specific help on how to keep the day. The Decalogue provided the general prohibition against work, but gave few definitions or examples of what this meant. The Torah had forbidden the gathering of sticks (Num. 15:32-36), prohibited the kindling of fires (Exod. 35:3),⁹⁰ and commanded preparation the day before the Sabbath (Exod. 16:22-26), which was to be a day of rest at home (Exod. 35:2) and public celebration (Lev. 23:2). Later, when Israel was in Canaan and involved in commercial

⁹⁰Besides the Kenite hypothesis (see Chapter 1), this fire prohibition has been recently viewed by one JEDP advocate as originally forbidding cultic "strange fire" which was later changed by redactors to indicate *all* forms of fire and only on the Sabbath (Gnana Robinson, "The Prohibition of Strange Fire in Ancient Israel: A New Look at the Case of Gathering Wood and Kindling Fire on the Sabbath," *VT* 28 [1978]: 301-17).

pursuits, Jeremiah enforced the prohibition of carrying burdens (Jer. 17:21, 24, 27) and Nehemiah forbade trade and treading winepresses (Neh. 10:32; 13:15-22). In the dynamic post-exilic period of Hellenization and other influences, these few regulations were deemed insufficient. Furthermore, "Sometimes when explicit advice was given... it proved to present such practical difficulties in its fulfillment that it was inevitable that further explication became necessary."⁹¹

Therefore, this want of particular definitions of work placed the Jews in a dilemma regarding whether they were obeying Scripture or not. For example, one critical issue was whether fighting on the Sabbath was permissible. Jubilees 50:12 prohibited war on the Sabbath⁹² and First Maccabees 2:29-42 related how the Seleucids took advantage of this law. While the Jews would not defend themselves in "strict observance of the Sabbath," their enemies destroyed nearly 1,000 of them on the holy day. After this terrible defeat it was decided by Mattathias and his friends that it would be permissible to fight on the Sabbath to defend their lives and protect their religion (1 Macc. 2:41). Actually, it was not an uncommon practice for enemies of the Jews to attack them on the Sabbath; Nebuchadnezzar took advantage of the Jew's resistance to Sabbath fighting in his siege of Jerusalem.⁹³ Therefore, one should not suppose that in the intertestamental era and during the time of Christ interpretation of the Old Testament Sabbath regulations was an easy matter. Oftentimes both the common people and leaders questioned if they really were obeying the Sabbath's true intent.

⁹¹Chris Rowland, "A Summary of Sabbath Observance in Judaism at the Beginning of the Christian Era," in *From Sabbath to Lord's Day*, 44.

⁹²The Sabbath was especially sacred for the author of *Jubilees*, who believed that Jews would celebrate the Sabbath in heaven as well as on earth (2:17-22) and exhorted Jews to observe a 364-day calendar so that the proper day might be observed (6:32-35; cf. James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2:39, 57).

⁹³Alger F. Johns, "The Military Strategy of Sabbath Attacks on the Jews," *VT* 13 (October-December 1963): 482-86; cf. *SDAE*, s.v. "Sabbath," by Neufeld, ed., CRS 10:1107.

Divergent Opinions

Due to the difficulty in establishing the correct application of the Sabbath commandment, various Jewish sects took different positions on the matter. For example, whereas the Essenes believed that obedience to the Law was paramount even over life itself, the Pharisees allowed temporary disobedience to save life and continue the Jewish religion. The following discussion compares and contrasts the Sabbath teachings and practices of these two major groups.

The Sabbath of the Essenes

Without doubt the strictest observance of the Sabbath among the Jewish sects occurred within the Essene Community.⁹⁴ Given the monastic nature of this sect, they could observe more Sabbath laws than by the general public "as the pressures and problems of life in society would impinge only slightly upon them."⁹⁵

Whether to identify the Qumran Community with the Essene order has been debated. Most scholars agree that the two are one and the same.⁹⁶ However, Schiffman

⁹⁴Josephus *Wars* 2.8.9; Vermes, 126; *TDNT*, s.v. "σάββατον," by Lohse, 7:9; Rowland, "A Summary of Sabbath Observance in Judaism at the Beginning of the Christian Era," 45.

⁹⁵Rowland, "A Summary of Sabbath Observance in Judaism at the Beginning of the Christian Era," 45.

⁹⁶Todd S. Beall, *Josephus' Description of the Essenes Illustrated by the Dead Sea Scrolls*, SNTSMS 58, 3-6; Géza Vermes, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 116-30; id., *Discovery in the Judean Desert*, 53; Frank Moore Cross, Jr., *The Ancient Library of Qumran and Modern Biblical Studies*, 52-243; J. T. Milik, "Who Lived at Qumran?" *Theology Digest* 6 (Winter 1959): 8-10; James A. Sanders, "The Dead Sea Scrolls—A Quarter Century of Study," *BA* 36 (1973): 119; Yigael Yadin, ed., *The Scroll of the War of the Sons of Light Against the Sons of Darkness*, 74-75. Bruce adds that "the identification of the men of Qumran with the Essenes—not with the whole Essene order, but with one group of Essenes—satisfies more of the evidence than does any rival identification" (F. F. Bruce, *New Testament History*, 118; cf. 115-21).

considers the Qumranite sect as unidentifiable⁹⁷ while others⁹⁸ advocate various groups such as the Zealots,⁹⁹ the Ebionites,¹⁰⁰ and even the ninth century Karaites.¹⁰¹

Nevertheless, Cross places the debate in proper perspective:

The scholar who would 'exercise caution' in identifying the sect of Qumran with the Essenes places himself in an astonishing position: he must suggest seriously that two major parties formed communistic religious communities in the same district of the desert of the Dead Sea and lived together in effect for two centuries, holding similar bizarre views, performing similar or rather identical lustrations, ritual meals, and ceremonies. He must suppose that one, carefully described by classical authors, disappeared without leaving building remains or even potsherds behind; the other, systematically ignored by the classical sources, left extensive ruins, and indeed a great library. I prefer to be reckless and flatly identify the men of Qumran with their perennial houseguests, the Essenes.¹⁰²

The Qumran literature is used to represent Essene viewpoints in the present study, supplemented by the classical sources.¹⁰³

⁹⁷Lawrence H. Schiffman, *The Halakhah at Qumran*, 134-36.

⁹⁸For a summary of the adherents and critique of their views, see Sanders, "The Dead Sea Scrolls—A Quarter Century of Study," 120-25. Also, for a dated but helpful survey of recommended books and articles on the Dead Sea Scrolls (as well as works to be avoided) see Simon E. Smith, "The Dead Sea Scrolls: A Bibliographical Orientation," *ThD* 8 (Autumn 1960): 186-88; cf. Leonhard Rost, *Judaism Outside the Canon*, 155-59.

⁹⁹Cecil Roth, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, 63-69, 85-94; G. R. Driver, *The Judean Scrolls*, 570-91.

¹⁰⁰J. L. Teicher, "The Dead Sea Scrolls: Documents of a Jewish Christian Sect of Ebionites," *JJS* 2 (1951): 67-99.

¹⁰¹Solomon Zeitlin, "History, Historians and the Dead Sea Scrolls," *JQR* 55 (October 1964): 97-116; Sidney B. Hoenig, "The Expression BeTalmud in the Scrolls Militates Against the Views of the Protagonists of Their Antiquity," *JQR* 54 (October 1963): 89-98; id., "What is the Explanation for the Term 'BeTalmud' in the Scrolls?" *JQR* 54 (April 1963): 274-76; id., "Qumran Fantasies," *JQR* 63 (January 1973): 247-67; 63 (April 1973): 292-316. For a critique of this view, see Naphtali Wieder, *The Judean Scrolls and Karaism*, esp. 253-57.

¹⁰²Frank Moore Cross, Jr., "The Early History of the Qumran Community," in *New Directions in Biblical Archeology*, 68-69.

¹⁰³For articles on Pliny's comments on the Essenes see Jean-Paul Audet, "Qumrân et la notice de Pline sur les Esséniens," *RevBib* 68 (1961): 346-87; Christoph Burchard, "Pline et les Esséniens: a propos d'un article récent," *RevBib* 69 (1962): 533-69.

Forbidden Activities

The Damascus Document (CD) from Qumran provides the most information on Essene Sabbath observance. It states that an Essene was to abstain from labor "on the Friday from the time when the orb of the sun is distant from the gate by its own fulness,"¹⁰⁴ after which he was not even to *speak* about work. On the Sabbath lending money or possessions (or pressing for repayment) was never to occur,¹⁰⁵ and travel farther than one thousand cubits (about five hundred yards) was prohibited for any purpose.¹⁰⁶ Also forbidden was assisting an animal in giving birth or getting it out of a pit,¹⁰⁷ striking the animal,¹⁰⁸ and reprimanding one's servant.¹⁰⁹ Even the carrying of a child by a pedagogue or wearing perfume was taboo,¹¹⁰ as well as carrying an object from a private dwelling into public.¹¹¹ Finally, the Damascus Document allowed the saving of a life on the Sabbath as long as the man rescued from a body of water or pit was helped with a ladder, rope, or some other object.¹¹²

The only type of labor permitted on the Sabbath in the Essene Community was the offering of sacrifices to God.¹¹³ As incredible as it may seem, Josephus noted that

¹⁰⁴CD 10:15-16, in *The Zadokite Documents*, 52. Subsequent references to the *Damascus Document* in this translation by Chaim Rabin are abbreviated "CD."

¹⁰⁵CD 10:16.

¹⁰⁶CD 10:20 (based on Exod. 16:29; Num. 35:4).

¹⁰⁷CD 11:13-14.

¹⁰⁸CD 11:6.

¹⁰⁹CD 11:12.

¹¹⁰CD 11:10-11.

¹¹¹CD 11:7-9.

¹¹²CD 11:16-17.

¹¹³CD 11:17-18.

even relieving oneself on the Sabbath was prohibited in the Essene Community.¹¹⁴

Punishment for Sabbath Disobedience

For any "profanation" of the Sabbath, the Damascus Document proscribes a seven-year imprisonment.¹¹⁵ In this sense the Damascus Document is less strict than the biblical punishment of death for Sabbath violations (cf. Num. 15:35).

Sabbath as a Day of Joy and Learning

The rigidity of the Sabbath observance of the Essenes should not cause one to suppose that solemnity also characterized the day. Philo remarks how the Essenes used the day for assembly and teaching in the synagogue, so the day was viewed as a day for corporate involvement rather than individual contemplation.¹¹⁶ Therefore, while the Essene Community observed the Sabbath with a great many of prohibitions, it also served as a day of rest and enjoyment. This positive viewpoint, however, was more characteristic of the ascetic Essenes than the common people who had to fight the difficult influences of Hellenism and Pharisaism. Such influences are described below.

¹¹⁴Josephus describes in detail the clean manner of Essene defecation which was done only six days a week (*Wars* 2.8.9), although nothing in the Qumran literature specifically suggests this prohibition (cf. Beall, 97). Nevertheless, certain data from the caves do support his contention. For example, the maximum walking distance allowed on the Sabbath was 1,000 cubits (CD 10:11) but the latrines were located 2,000 cubits from the camp (1QM 7:6-7; cf. Schiffman, 93-94; Yadin, 73-75, 290).

¹¹⁵CD 12:4-6; cf. Vermes, 102.

¹¹⁶Philo *Omn. Prob. Lib.* 81; cf. *Vit. Contempl.* 30f.

The Sabbath of the Pharisees

Influence

The impact of the Pharisees upon the common people can hardly be overstated. From their roots during the Maccabean era,¹¹⁷ Pharisees were the doctrinal leaders of the nation who ruled both the presidency and vice-presidency of the Jerusalem Sanhedrin;¹¹⁸ therefore, they exercised absolute and effective control over all Palestinian Jewry,¹¹⁹ especially since they corporately numbered over six thousand members,¹²⁰ most of whom lived in Jerusalem.¹²¹ Their influence encouraged the propagation of the synagogue as a place of worship, study, and prayer, thus giving it such an important place in the life of the people it even rivaled the temple.¹²² This synagogue influence undoubtedly raised the status of the Sabbath in the eyes of the nation as community worship was facilitated for those not living in close proximity to Jerusalem.¹²³ In fact, during the exile the Sabbath

¹¹⁷Louis Finkelstein, *The Pharisees*, 1:74-81; George William Linhart, "The Pharisees," Th.D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1954, 26.

¹¹⁸R. Travers Herford, *The Pharisees*, 23, 27-29.

¹¹⁹Vermes, 119.

¹²⁰Jos. *Ant.* 17.2.4. While Josephus cannot always be trusted for accurate numbers, nevertheless the New Testament confirms the great influence of Pharisaical legislation upon the populace.

¹²¹Finkelstein affirms the strong following of the Pharisees in Jerusalem: "[The Pharisees] could not all have been residents of Jerusalem, but perhaps we may assume that at least two thirds of them were. Since the organization admitted only men, and presumably only those who were self-supporting and had families, we may take it that the 6000 affiliated members represented an actual following of 30,000 souls, of which 20,000 were residents of Jerusalem. The probable population of Jerusalem at the time was about 75,000; so that these figures imply that about one in every four city families was formally associated with Pharisaism" (Louis Finkelstein, *The Pharisees*, Morris Loeb Series, 609).

¹²²"The Pharisees believed that since God was everywhere, He could be worshiped both in and outside the Temple, and was not to be invoked by sacrifices alone" (*EJ*, s.v. "Pharisees," by Menahem Mansoor, 13 [1971]: 366).

¹²³The rise of the synagogue contributed to the rise of Sabbath observance especially during the exile when Solomon's temple was destroyed (*TDNT*, s.v. "σάββατον," by Lohse, 7:4-5). This is the implication of the Chronicler, who looks back on the pre-exilic era as one of Sabbath neglect (2 Chron.

became a badge denoting membership within the community that worshiped Yahweh.¹²⁴

Oral Tradition

Because of their great interaction with the common people, the rabbis wrestled with the tensions between the Sabbath commandments of the Law and changing social conditions. This led to an extensive body of oral tradition in an effort to detail exactly what constituted an offense to God and to demonstrate the circumstances in which a person might be free from the obligation to fulfill the Sabbath commandment.¹²⁵ The many additions to the Law by the Pharisees verifies that they felt Moses had not been specific enough when he declared God's commandments to Israel. By the New Testament era the Pharisees and teachers of the law had taken it upon themselves to fill in this supposed "gap." They codified the law into prohibitions ("thou shalt nots") and commandments ("thou shalts") which were imposed upon their followers as obligatory. Rather than allow individual conscience to determine how to apply general laws in an urban society, the Pharisees took the responsibility upon themselves to fill in this interpretive gap.

The Pharisees took this same perspective when it came to applying the few Sabbath regulations of the law. They imposed their own interpretations upon the people of Israel as to what constituted a violation of the Sabbath. Edersheim notes,

Indeed, all that Jesus taught must have seemed to these Pharisees strangely un-Jewish in cast and direction, even if not in form and words. But chiefly would this be the case in regard to that on

36:21). This is also the emphasis of Ezekiel, who rebukes the people for their Sabbath desecration (Ezek. 20:13, 16, 24; 2:8, 26; 23:38) and reminds the nation of the Sabbath's uniqueness as the sign of the Mosaic covenant (Ezek. 20:12, 20). Ezekiel's many Sabbath admonitions point to the need for a renewed interest in Sabbath observance, which history records as having occurred partly through the establishment of local synagogues.

¹²⁴Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40—66*, 310.

¹²⁵Rowland, "A Summary of Sabbath Observance in Judaism at the Beginning of the Christian Era," 47.

which, of all else, the Pharisees laid most stress, the observance of the Sabbath. On no other subject is Rabbinic tradition more painfully minute and more manifestly incongruous to its professed subject.¹²⁶

Since the Old Testament did not specify Sabbath violations in detail, this difficulty in defining work led to an extensive portion of the *Mishna* to be devoted to Sabbatical law.¹²⁷ Thirty-nine classes of work in the Shabbat tractate of the *Mishna* are specified (Shabb. 7.2) with no definite reason for this specific number, although it is supposed they are derived from the number of types of workers who were employed in building the Sanctuary:

The juxtaposition of the instructions to build the Sanctuary and the prohibition of Sabbath work caused the rabbis to deduce that it was forbidden on the Sabbath to do any work that was required for the Sanctuary. The rabbinic definition of forbidden work is, therefore, that which was needed for the Sanctuary (Mekh. SbY. to Exod. 35:1; Shabb. 49b).¹²⁸

These thirty-nine¹²⁹ main classes of work were referred to as "fathers of work" (*avot*), which are further broken down into seven categories: food (11 items), clothing (13 items), shelter (3 items), tanning (4 items), writing (5 items), use of fire (2 items), and carrying (1 item).¹³⁰ The entire thirty-nine main classes of work are listed together in Shabbat 7.2:

The main classes of work are forty save one: sowing, ploughing, reaping, binding sheaves, threshing, winnowing, cleansing crops, grinding, sifting, kneading, baking, shearing wool, washing or beating or dyeing it, spinning, weaving, making two loops, weaving two threads, separating two threads, tying [a knot], sewing two stitches, tearing in order to sew two stitches, hunting a gazelle, slaughtering or flaying or salting it or curing its skin, scraping it or cutting it up, writing two letters, building, pulling down, putting out a fire, lighting a fire, striking with a hammer and taking out

¹²⁶Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, 2:52.

¹²⁷That the first two tractates of the second division of the *Mishna* ("Moed," or Feasts) is devoted to the Sabbath demonstrates the priority of this "feast" over any other feast in Judaism.

¹²⁸*EJ*, s.v. "Sabbath," by Moshe Greenberg, Louis Jacobs and Abram Kanof, 14 (1971): 563.

¹²⁹Hoenig believes that the original number of kinds of labor was 22 rather than 39 because the Book of Jubilees lists 22, which was supposedly the number of acts of creation completed in the six day period. However, the 22 was later changed to 39 due to the rabbinic preference of the Pentateuch version over the Jubilees version of the origin of the commandments (Sidney B. Hoenig, "The Designated Number of Kinds of Labor Prohibited on the Sabbath," *JQR* 68 (April 1978): 193-208).

¹³⁰*Ibid.*, 198-99.

aught from one domain to another. These are the main classes of work: forty save one.

The rabbis in Amoraic times broke down these thirty-nine main classes (*avot*) into several subclassifications called "offspring" (*toledot*),¹³¹ though the difference between the two types was often minimal. However, even these chief activities and their subdivisions was not sufficient, for another list of forbidden activities appears in the *Mishna* at Beza 5.2:

On account of the following activities (one incurs guilt on the Sabbath or feasts) by reason of the Sabbath rest: one is not to climb a tree, nor ride an animal, nor swim in water, not clap the hands, nor slap the hips, nor dance. On account of the following activities one incurs guilt even though they are legitimate as such: one is not to administer justice, nor become engaged to a woman, nor go through the ceremony of casting off the shoe (in refusing Levirate marriage), nor contract Levirate marriage. On account of the following activities one incurs guilt even though they are based on a commandment: one is not to sanctify anything, nor make an evaluation, nor bring under the ban, nor separate heave offerings and tithes.

Therefore, this additional list condemns several movements of the body, prohibits otherwise legitimate actions, and even outlaws certain scriptural commands themselves. One may well wonder if the average Jew feared to do *anything at all* on the Sabbath lest he violate a Pharisaical commandment.

Sabbath Priority

The rabbis considered Sabbath observance to be the most important form of obedience. Such is the teaching of two prominent rabbis:

R. Levi said: If Israel kept the Sabbath properly even for one day, the son of David would come. Why? Because it is equivalent to all the commandments; for so it says, *For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the flock of His hand. To-day, if ye would but hearken to His voice!* (Ps. xcv, 7). R. Johanan said: The Holy One, blessed be He, told Israel: 'Though I have set a definite term for the millennium which will come at the appointed time whether Israel returns to Me in penitence or not, still if they repent even for one day, I will bring it before its appointed time.'¹³²

One Jewish legend even affirms that the stones rolling down a riverbed rested on the Sabbath¹³³ and Rabbi Akiba taught that even the dead in torment get a reprieve

¹³¹Ibid., 195-97.

¹³²Exodus Rabbah 25.12 (*Midrash Rabbah*, 5 vols., 2:315).

¹³³Josephus records the legend of the River Sambatyon in *Wars* 7.5.1.

each seventh day.¹³⁴ Such sayings as these demonstrate the supreme importance of the Sabbath institution in the rabbinic traditions passed on to the people.

Sabbath Practice

Hillel and Shammai

Divergent rabbinic opinions on the Sabbath are best represented by the schools of Shammai and Hillel. To the more conservative Beth Shammai the Sabbath was paramount, whereas Beth Hillel recognized the religious value of even ordinary acts. Even soaking things and leaving snares and nets up on the Sabbath to catch beasts and birds were considered work by Beth Shammai, but Beth Hillel allowed indirect work to be performed on the Sabbath to meet the needs of ordinary life.¹³⁵

Healing

Pharisees also debated whether certain types of healing were allowed on the Sabbath. Some excerpts from the *Talmud* specify a few types of healing allowable since they were believed to prevent the loss of life:

A. Associates in the name of R. Ba bar Zabeda: "Any [wound] which is located from the lips inward they do heal on the Sabbath [since such a wound involves danger to life]."

...

F. R. Abbahu in the name of R. Yohanan: "An eye which became inflamed they do treat on the Sabbath."

...

M. Rabbis of Caesarea say this, "[A wound] in the shape of a frog is a danger [to life]."

...

¹³⁴Gen. R. 11.5 (*Midrash Rabbah*, 1:84).

¹³⁵*Mekilta de R. Simeon b. Yohai*; trans. by Neusner, *The Rabbinic Traditions about the Pharisees*, 2:10-11.

O. R. Samuel bar R. Isaac: "A burn is a danger [to life and should be treated on the Sabbath]." ¹³⁶

Other rabbis were not so lenient regarding Sabbath healing, believing it illegitimate to heal even to save a life. Such is the teaching of Rabbi Joshua:

[Joshua b. Levi] had a grandson who swallowed [something dangerous]. Someone came along and whispered over him [and the child was healed]. When he [the magician] went out, [Joshua] said to him, "What did you say over him?"

He said to him such and such a word.

He said to him, "What will be [the child's fate]! If he had died but had not heard [these words], it would have been [better] for him." ¹³⁷

Travel

It has already been shown that a "Sabbath journey" for the Essenes was only one thousand cubits. ¹³⁸ The Pharisees doubled this length to two thousand cubits. ¹³⁹ Josephus records that the Pharisees prohibited traveling on the Sabbath to the extent that Hyrcanus I, who marched his troops under Antiochus VII, had to delay the entire army for two days because the Jews in his troops could not travel on the Sabbath or the day of Pentecost which followed it. ¹⁴⁰ When the Romans learned that Jews who were employed as Roman soldiers refused to travel on the Sabbath they exempted them from military service. ¹⁴¹

¹³⁶*Abodah Zarah* 2:2, trans. by Neusner, *Judaism in Society*, 59-60.

¹³⁷*Ibid.*, 61.

¹³⁸CD 10:20.

¹³⁹*Mishna* Er. 4.3.

¹⁴⁰*Jos. Ant.* 13.8.4.

¹⁴¹*Jos. Ant.* 14.10.11-19 records the edicts regarding Jews who refused to march or fight on the Sabbath, as well as the problem the Roman army had in obtaining native foods to which Jews were accustomed.

Carrying

As mentioned previously, one of the few specific stipulations regarding Sabbath law was found in Jeremiah 17:22. In this passage the prophet forbade the carrying of burdens on the Sabbath. The Pharisees developed a large portion of the Shabbat tractate of the *Mishna* to define what constituted a "burden."¹⁴²

The designations of "carrying" went to extremes. If one could normally carry an object by himself, this was improper on the Sabbath, but if it was carried by two persons then they were not guilty.¹⁴³ However, a man could carry something as long as it was not carried "in his right hand or in his left hand, in his bosom or on his shoulder" since the Kohathites carried the holy pieces in this manner; consequently, it was permissible if the object was carried on his elbow, ear, the back of his hand, and foot, or in his mouth, hair, shirt, shoe, or sandal!¹⁴⁴ The Pharisees also prohibited carrying enough wine to mix in a pitcher, enough honey to dress a wound, enough rope to make a handle for a basket, or enough ink to write two letters of the alphabet.¹⁴⁵ Finally, if a person was in one place, and his hand filled with fruit stretched into another, and the Sabbath overtook him in this position, he would have to drop the fruit, since if he withdrew his hand from one locality into another he would be carrying a burden on the Sabbath.¹⁴⁶

Regulations concerning clothing were also derived from carrying commands. On the Sabbath one was prohibited from wearing ("carrying"!) any clothes which were

¹⁴²*Mishna* Shabb. 5-6.

¹⁴³*Mishna* Shabb. 10.5.

¹⁴⁴*Mishna* Shabb. 10.3.

¹⁴⁵*Mishna* Shabb. 8.1-4. "If a man wrote one letter in the morning and, having forgotten he had done so, wrote a second one in the evening, his status was debated. Rabban Gamliel declared him culpable, but the Sages declared him innocent of a Sabbath violation" (*Mishna* Shabb. 12.6).

¹⁴⁶*Mishna* Shabb. 1.1.

not necessary adornment.¹⁴⁷ As such, Sabbath requirements for a woman's dress became very specific. Bands of wool or flax on head bands were strictly forbidden, along with hair-nets, necklaces, nose-rings, rings that bore no seal, and eyeless needles.¹⁴⁸

The Pharisees also forbade the throwing of something between private and public domains on the Sabbath¹⁴⁹ and the bearing of a burden more than two thousand cubits from one's dwelling (called a "Sabbath journey").¹⁵⁰ At this point he could only walk nine feet in any direction until the Sabbath ended.¹⁵¹ However, should one place two meals at two thousand cubits from his home before the Sabbath on Friday afternoon this allowed him to temporarily extend his place of dwelling to that point. On the Sabbath he then had "permission" from the Pharisees to walk to that point, eat his lunch and continue another two thousand cubits!

Kindling Fires

Moses also commanded that no one kindle a fire in his home on the Sabbath (Exod. 35:3). Years later the Pharisees claimed that this prohibition applied to *all lamps*, even those extinguished Friday night to save oil.¹⁵² Each must be lit before the Sabbath, then during the day none could be extinguished.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁷*Mishna* Shabb. 6.1-9.

¹⁴⁸*Mishna* Shabb. 6.1

¹⁴⁹*Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰*Mishna* Er. 4.3, 7.

¹⁵¹*Mishna* Er. 4.1, 6.

¹⁵²*Mishna* Shabb. 2.5.

¹⁵³*Mishna* Shabb. 2.7.

Accidental Sabbath Breaking

Pharisees even prescribed many binding traditions in an attempt to protect individuals from inadvertently transgressing the Sabbath work prohibition. The *Mishna* warns that "a tailor should not go out with his needle near to nightfall, lest he forget and go out."¹⁵⁴ A similar mandate was required of women, who were not to wear headgear that would require loosening before taking a bath.¹⁵⁵ The intent in composing these regulations was to prevent accidental violations of work prohibitions, but the result of this oral tradition was a burden upon the masses.

Justifying Sabbath Activities

The rabbis recognized that strict, literal enforcement of some Sabbath commands in the Old Testament was not always feasible. For example, Jeremiah's prohibition on carrying burdens could not apply to *every* object since some objects must be carried as a daily routine. Recognizing this problem, they developed the principle of '*erub*', a term describing strategies to justify certain activities on the Sabbath. The *Mishna* section *Erubin* conveniently followed that of *Shabbat* to specify these activities. One example of the principle of '*erub*' concerned Sabbath travel:

If a man was on a journey and darkness overtook him, and he recognized a tree or a fence and said, 'Let my Sabbath resting-place be under it,' he has said nothing; [but if he said], 'Let my Sabbath resting-place be at its root,' he may walk from where he stands to its root [up to a distance of] two thousand cubits, and from its root to his house [up to a distance of four thousand] cubits. Thus he can travel four thousand cubits after it has become dark.¹⁵⁶

Similarly, to circumvent the rigor of the law of burden-bearing, followers of the Pharisees were allowed the '*erub*' of handing something along a street from one person

¹⁵⁴*Mishna* Shabb. 1.3. The basis for prohibiting such actions was the manna account in Exodus 16:29 where God commanded, "Let no man *go out* of his place on the seventh day."

¹⁵⁵*Mishna* Shabb. 6.1.

¹⁵⁶*Mishna* Er. 4.7.

to someone else and so on beyond one hundred people so long as no one person went farther than the maximum allowed distance of two thousand cubits.¹⁵⁷

The Pharisaical additions to the simple teaching of the Old Testament about work on the Sabbath could be listed indefinitely, but the foregoing will suffice. The effect of all these rules was that the true intent of the Sabbath was not impressed upon the minds of the people at all. Rather, the fear of breaking one of the multiplied Pharisaical regulations on the Sabbath actually *prevented* Israelites from experiencing Sabbath rest.

Benefits of Sabbath Observance

The rabbis spoke much about the advantages of obeying the Sabbath. A few examples will suffice.

One benefit of Sabbath obedience was personal fulfillment. The *Mishna* promises, "He who makes the Sabbath a delight shall have the wishes of his heart fulfilled. [The delight is here explained to mean special food.]"¹⁵⁸

God's blessing also attended those who revered the Sabbath. One account records how He granted His rewards to a man who resisted the temptation to work on this day:

It happened that a certain pious man walked out to his vineyard upon the Sabbath to see what it needed, and he found a break in the fence, and he thought about repairing it, and it was the Sabbath. Then he said, "Now I will not do it at all, because I thought about it on the Sabbath day." What did God do? God prepared a caper bush, and it made a fence for his vineyard, and the man sustained himself from it all the days of his life.¹⁵⁹

A third benefit of Sabbath observance taught by the rabbis was wealth. Rabbi Ishmael exemplified this attitude in his teaching that Sabbath observance resulted in

¹⁵⁷*Mishna* Er. 10.2.

¹⁵⁸*Mishna* Shabb. 118b. (*Babylonian Talmud*, Seder Mo'ed, 4 vols., 1:581); cf. C. G. Montefiore and H. Loewe, *A Rabbinic Anthology*, 194.

¹⁵⁹*Lev. R.*, Behar, 34.16 (*Midrash Rabbah*, 2:445); cf. Montefiore and Loewe, 193.

riches:

Rabbi Ishmael, the son of Joshua, was asked, "How did the rich people of the land of Israel become so wealthy?" He answered, "They gave their tithes in due season, as it is written, 'Thou shalt give tithes that thou mayest become rich.'" "But," answered his questioner, "tithes were given to the Levites, only while the holy temple existed. What merit did they possess when they dwelt in Babel, that they became wealthy there also?" "Because," replied the Rabbi, "they honored the Holy Law by expounding it." "But in other countries, where they did not expound the Law, how did they deserve wealth?" "By honoring the Sabbath," was the answer.¹⁶⁰

Consequences of Sabbath Disobedience

The *Mishna* lays down a much more lenient general rule for Sabbath disobedience than the death penalty found in the Pentateuch (Num. 15:32-36). The profanation of the Sabbath is deemed only a matter of forgetfulness:

One who has entirely forgotten the principle of (keeping) the Sabbath and performed many kinds of work on many Sabbath days, is liable to bring but one sin-offering. He, however, who was aware of the principle of Sabbath, but (forgetting the day) committed many acts of labor on Sabbath days, is liable to bring a separate sin-offering for each and every Sabbath day (which he has violated)...¹⁶¹

The tremendous difference in punishments for Sabbath violations between the author of Jubilees and the Pharisees is significant. Rather than death by stoning (Jubilees)¹⁶² one need only bring an offering for each violation (Pharisees). Where Scripture commanded that Sabbath violators be "cut off" from the people (e.g., Exod. 31:14), Jubilees 2:27 interpreted this as death while rabbinic halakha understood this to mean premature or childless death.¹⁶³

Superseding the Sabbath

Although the Pharisees held to a very comprehensive list of Sabbath work

¹⁶⁰H. Polano, trans., "The Sabbath," *The Talmud*, 258-59.

¹⁶¹*Mishna* Shabb. 7.1.

¹⁶²Jubilees 50:13.

¹⁶³Louis Finkelstein, "The Book of Jubilees and the Rabbinic Halakha," *HTHR* 16 (1923): 46.

prohibitions, in certain instances the rabbis allowed the breaking of the Sabbath. These special instances included priestly temple ministry,¹⁶⁴ removing oneself from mortal danger,¹⁶⁵ midwifery to save the life of women in labor,¹⁶⁶ quenching a fire in a rescue operation,¹⁶⁷ circumcision,¹⁶⁸ treating an unknown throat pain,¹⁶⁹ etc. The general rule, formulated by Rabbi Akiba, was that work was permissible only for those things which could not be performed on the day of preparation.¹⁷⁰ Also, "whenever there is doubt whether life is in danger this overrides the Sabbath."¹⁷¹

Therefore, while some rabbis would not violate the Sabbath in *any* case, the general Pharisaical teaching was not exclusive of compassion or understanding of human need. The Pharisees often are unjustly accused of arrogant legalism,¹⁷² but a more realistic interpretation might be stated thus: "The complexities of Jewish Sabbath practices are to be understood as sincere attempts to translate the revealed will of God into the complex social setting of the Hellenistic world."¹⁷³

A final note about rabbinic perspectives concerns their opinion of who actually received the Sabbath command. The teaching of the rabbis is unanimous that the Sabbath

¹⁶⁴bShabb. 132b (*Babylonian Talmud*, Seder Mo'ed, 1:664-65).

¹⁶⁵See 1 Maccabees 2:39-41 where Mattathias and his men took up arms on the Sabbath.

¹⁶⁶*Mishna* Shabb. 18.3.

¹⁶⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸*Mishna* Shabb. 18.3; 19.1-3; cf. Gen. 17:10-12; Lev. 12:3.

¹⁶⁹*Mishna* Yoma. 8.6.

¹⁷⁰*Mishna* Shabb. 19.1.

¹⁷¹*Mishna* Yoma. 8.6.

¹⁷²This is not to exclude Christ's severe denunciation of Pharisaical practices in Matthew 23.

¹⁷³Rowland, "A Summary of Sabbath Observance in Judaism at the Beginning of the Christian Era," 54.

institution was given solely to Israel. However, Seventh-day Adventists generally explain these rabbinic references as motivated by their struggle for identity in the face of Gentile oppression and Christian Sabbath-keepers.¹⁷⁴

Pharisees struggled with how to make the Torah applicable to their generation which was undergoing many changes. While they are often criticized for their multitude of minutia in defining Sabbath work, these regulations were intended to make the will of God relevant for the ordinary people who desired to please God by honoring the Sabbath. This is evident in the many exceptions to Sabbath observance which they allowed to save life and keep the work statute in proper perspective. The rabbis' interaction with society, teaching, and personal reverence for the day made this party the most influential of the Jewish sects in seeing Sabbath observance rise to its eminent position by the time of Jesus Christ.¹⁷⁵ However, as will be seen, the dichotomy between Pharisaical practice and teaching was revealed and condemned by Jesus. The final section of this chapter is devoted to Christ's viewpoint of the Pharisaical perspective.

¹⁷⁴Robert M. Johnston, "Patriarchs, Rabbis, and Sabbath," *AUSS* 12 (July 1974): 94-102.

¹⁷⁵For further study of the Sabbath among the sects, see Robbie H. Scott, Jr., "Jesus and the Sabbath: An Investigation of the Sabbath in Jewish Literature from 200 B.C. to A.D. 100 and Its Impact upon the Ministry of Jesus" (Ph.D. diss., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1988).

Christ's Teaching and Practice of the Sabbath

Confrontation Unavoidable

The Sabbath occupied both a complex nature and preeminent place during the time of Christ, so it is not surprising that Jesus and the Pharisees came into sharp conflict over this issue.¹⁷⁶ While Jesus came as revealer of the true nature of the Law (cf. Matt. 5—7), these leaders had obscured its true intent in a maze of endless regulations. However, this is only part of the picture, for the Sabbath controversies evoked their resentment primarily because of Christ's claims about Himself during these incidents:

It is unreasonable to suppose that the Jewish leaders were determined to kill Jesus because he was correcting erroneous teachings of the rabbis and showing that deeds of necessity and mercy are lawful on the Sabbath. That supposition is not sufficient to explain the violent hatred of the Jews. In it there is nothing for the Jew to fear.... [Rather, it is] for this claim, that as the Son of Man he is greater than the greatest King [David; Matt. 12:3-6], that he is greater than the temple [Matt. 12:6], that he is owner of the Sabbath [Mark 2:28], that Israel is his people [Luke 6:6-11], the rulers determined to kill him.¹⁷⁷

Christ came into conflict with the Pharisees on seven different occasions recorded in the gospels. In every case (except when His disciples plucked the ears of corn) the confrontation concerned a Sabbath healing. Each time in which He "broke" the Sabbath (according to the Pharisaical interpretations) He affirmed truths which the rabbis had taught but never lived: the allowance of ministers of God to work,¹⁷⁸ the legitimacy of healing on the Sabbath as an act of compassion,¹⁷⁹ and the legality of performing other necessary acts.¹⁸⁰ Each of these three exceptions to Sabbath breaking will be discussed

¹⁷⁶Although the view of Jesus is often discussed in New Testament teaching on the Sabbath, it is appropriate to discuss His perspective here because He lived under the Law (Gal. 4:4).

¹⁷⁷William Hersey Davies, "The Relation to the Jewish People Claimed by Jesus in His Sabbath Teaching," *RExp* 32 (October 1935): 365, 375.

¹⁷⁸Matt. 12:5; John 5:17.

¹⁷⁹Matt. 12:9-14 (cf. Mark 3:1-6; Luke 6:6-11); Luke 13:10-17; 14:1-6; John 5:1-47; 9:16; *Abodah Zarah* 2:2, trans. by Neusner, *Judaism in Society*, 59-60.

¹⁸⁰Matt. 12:11; John 5:17; 7:23a.

later.

Christ's Attitude Towards Rabbinical Views of the Sabbath

Jesus left no doubt regarding what He thought of the Pharisaical interpretations and practices of the Sabbath. This attitude comes through clearly in each of the Gospel accounts where Christ was challenged by the Pharisees as a Sabbath-breaker. However, as introduction to Christ's perspective of the rabbinic views, the incident of John 5 may be cited. John alone records how Jesus met an invalid of thirty-eight years at the Bethesda pool in Jerusalem (John 5:1-47). In this incident Christ commanded a paralytic man to get up, take his mat and walk. The man obeyed Christ's command and experienced complete healing.

Since this event took place on the Sabbath the Jews persecuted Christ for breaking their traditions. This He had done by instructing the healed man to be engaged in "burden-bearing" on the Sabbath (John 5:16). As already explained earlier, Pharisaical tradition taught that anyone who intentionally carried something from a public place to a private place on the Sabbath deserved death by stoning; therefore, the healed paralytic acted in direct conflict with their tradition by carrying his mat from the Sheep Gate. According to this rigid requirement, the healed man was in danger of losing his life.

Christ's response to the Pharisaical allegations was to affirm that God Himself worked on the Sabbath (v. 17). The implications of this statement will be addressed in Chapter 6, but at present, it is worthy to note that Jesus purposely *commanded* the healed man to violate the tradition of the Pharisees, and even pointed to divine example as justification. Such a bold action reveals His disdain for the religious leaders' practice of enforcing human rules upon the people.

Christ's Authority over the Sabbath

Although Jesus came into conflict with the Pharisees concerning the Sabbath, it should be noted that He observed the Sabbath Himself (Luke 4:16) since He came as a "minister of the circumcision" (Rom. 15:8) and lived during the period when the law was still in effect (Gal. 4:4). "However, the most casual reading of the Gospels shows that Jesus *broke* the Sabbath in that he refused to observe the day *according to the tradition of the Pharisees*."¹⁸¹ Being God and knowing the true nature of the Sabbath, Christ was able to distinguish between true Sabbath observance and mere formality. He faithfully followed the former but showed no allegiance to the latter.

However, when Christ observed the Sabbath He did not declare Himself to be under its authority. He merely followed the institution which He Himself had sanctified as God. During the controversy over the disciples' picking grain on the Sabbath, Jesus concluded His defense to the Pharisees with the interesting statement, "The Son of Man is Lord [even]¹⁸² of the Sabbath."¹⁸³ By this Christ declared His authority over the Sabbath as the Son of Man, or Messiah (cf. Dan. 7:13-14).

Christ, co-eternal with the Father and co-agent in the creation of both man and the Sabbath, is Lord of the Sabbath, and therefore free to do any work He wills to do on the Sabbath day; He may abrogate, change, or enforce it, without fear or blemish on His character. A man who builds a business and hires helpers may make a law that his workers be present at eight o'clock every morning. The builder and owner of the business made the law and is therefore lord of it. He need never come to the factory at eight a.m. if he does not desire.... He may change the time from eight to ten a.m. if he wishes. No one would be so foolish as to accuse him of immorality for so doing.¹⁸⁴

In like manner, Christ, the Creator and thus Lord of the Sabbath, could not be other than blameless in His relationship to the institution. Though Jesus classified

¹⁸¹Jewett, 33 (*italics mine*).

¹⁸²The word "even" (καὶ) appears only in Mark. Since the day is not compared with anything else in the context, the KJV rendering, "Therefore the Son of man is Lord *also* of the sabbath" is erroneous (*italics mine*).

¹⁸³Matt. 12:8; Mark 2:28; Luke 6:5.

¹⁸⁴Congdon, 177.

Himself with other Sabbath profaners (Matt. 12:1-7) who did what was "not lawful,"¹⁸⁵ He remained guiltless as "Lord of the Sabbath."¹⁸⁶ This could only be because He had unquestioned authority over what could properly be done on the day.¹⁸⁷

Jesus could also can authority over the day because the Old Testament Sabbath typology alluded to Him as Messiah. In His inaugural address He quoted Isaiah 61:1-2, saying,

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor (Luke 4:18-19).

The humanitarian descriptions of this "acceptable year of the Lord" contain characteristics reminiscent of the sabbatical year (seventh year in which the land was to lie fallow)¹⁸⁸ or the year of Jubilee (fiftieth year after seven Sabbaths of years).¹⁸⁹ In both institutions the poor, imprisoned, and oppressed were freed from their bondage. Therefore, through this opening address Christ announces His Messianic mission by using the language of the sabbatical year or the year of Jubilee.¹⁹⁰ These two great institutions saw their fulfillment in His arrival as the Messianic liberator. He had authority over these two institutions because He was above them. By implication one may assume His authority over the weekly Sabbath as well.

¹⁸⁵Matt. 12:4; Mark 2:26; Luke 6:4.

¹⁸⁶One author argues that as "Lord of the Sabbath" Christ was "not asserting his freedom to violate the Sabbath law, but rather he was declaring his qualification to interpret that law" (Donald W. Burdick, "Mark," in *WBC*, 993). This view, however, is not strong enough since Christ was doing more than placing His interpretation over the Pharisees' view. In His statement, Christ was declaring Himself the authoritative word on the Sabbath question since He was Lord of the entire institution.

¹⁸⁷Other evidences of Christ's authority over the Sabbath appear later in this chapter in the section entitled "Exceptions to Sabbath Breaking."

¹⁸⁸Exod. 23:10-11; Lev. 25:1-7.

¹⁸⁹Lev. 25:8-55.

¹⁹⁰Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, 20.

Christ's Teaching on the Temporal Nature of the Sabbath

No one questions Christ's rightful authority to do what He wanted with the Sabbath institution, but what is debated is what He really *did* do. That He both observed the Sabbath and rejected Pharisaical interpretations is clear, but what of the continuation of the Sabbath itself? Mark helps answer this question in his inclusion of Christ's words, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27-28).¹⁹¹ This simple declaration has become a battleground for the various views on how Christ saw the Sabbath.

Some seek to solve the difficult phrase by positing a different original text. Beare feels it inconsistent to shift from "man" in verse 27 ("the Sabbath was made for man...") to "Son of Man" in verse 28 ("the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath"). He supposes that these two words in Aramaic would represent different translations of the one phrase *bar nasha*; consequently, he attempts to make the sayings complementary by taking the underlying Aramaic into account, and either translate *bar nasha* as "man" throughout, or as "Son of man" throughout.¹⁹² Therefore, according to this hypothesis, one possible translation could be, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath; therefore man is master even of the Sabbath."¹⁹³ Beare's other possibility is the

¹⁹¹It is debated as to whether this statement is Mark's commentary or a quote by Jesus Himself. Most scholars opt for the former (e.g., F. W. Beare, "The Sabbath was Made for Man?" *JBL* 79 [1960]: 130-36; Lewis S. Hay, "The Son of Man in Mark 2:10 and 2:28," *JBL* 89 [1970]: 69-75; A. J. Hultgren, "The Formation of the Sabbath Pericope in Mk 2:23-28," *JBL* 91 [1972]: 38-43), including some conservatives (e.g., Walter W. Wessel, "Mark," in *EBC*, 12 vols., 8:638; John D. Grassmick, "Mark," in *BKC*, 1:114-15). In the final analysis it makes little difference who made the statement since it is part of the inspired record but this author sees no valid reason to consider it an editorial comment since the text says explicitly, "Then he [Jesus] said to them..."

¹⁹²Beare, "The Sabbath was Made for Man?" 130-36.

¹⁹³Such a translation is espoused by C. C. Torrey, *The Four Gospels: A New Translation*, 73; cf. Hay, "The Son of Man in Mark 2:10 and 2:28," 74, says, "'Son of man' is here a way of speaking of the disciples." This view is unlikely since it puts man as the undisputed judge as to whether to follow the Sabbath or not. Also, "Jesus never taught that man is Lord over a divine institution" (Morris, *Luke*, TNTC, 122). Finally, "Son of man" never refers to the disciples as it is a messianic title for Christ (cf. Dan. 7:13-

alternate translation, "The Sabbath was made for the Son of man, and not the Son of man for the Sabbath; therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath." After Beare discards even these "possibilities," he concludes that the pair of sayings cannot be authentic with Jesus but originated with the apostolic church in Palestine which had to give the Pharisees some explanation why Christian Jews no longer kept the Sabbath.¹⁹⁴ Significantly, textual or other grounds for doubting the integrity of Christ's statement are not suggested by Beare.¹⁹⁵ While it is certainly possible (perhaps even likely) that Jesus may have originally made this statement in Aramaic, the inspired record is in Greek and therefore any issues must be answered based on the present text.

Mark 2:27 need not be discarded because of its difficulty.¹⁹⁶ Taken in its entire context of the controversy over the grain (Mark 2:23-28), this verse teaches the temporal nature of the Sabbath. By affirming the disciples' legitimate right to pick grain on the Sabbath, which Christ Himself admitted as unlawful (Mark 2:26),¹⁹⁷ Jesus taught that the Sabbath was fading away as was the rest of the law (2 Cor. 3:13).¹⁹⁸ If the statement "the

14).

¹⁹⁴Beare, "The Sabbath was Made for Man?" 135.

¹⁹⁵Also discussing the redactional activity within Mark 2:27-28 is Félix Gils, "Le sabbat a été fait pour l'homme et non l'homme pour le sabbat (Mc, II, 27): Réflexions a propos de *Mc*, II, 27-28," *RevBib* 69 (October 1962): 506-23.

¹⁹⁶"Jesus' pronouncement was not as radical for his day as some would think. Rabbi Simeon ben Menasya (c. A. D. 180) said, 'The Sabbath has been committed to you and not you to the Sabbath' (Mekhilta *Shabbata* 1 to Exod 31:14)" (Walter L. Liefeld, "Luke," EBC, 8:638). While Jesus preceded this rabbi by a century, both are broadly contemporary and acknowledge that the Sabbath was to serve human needs.

¹⁹⁷When the Pharisees accused the disciples of doing something unlawful (v. 24), Christ agreed to its unlawfulness by citing the example of David unlawfully eating the priestly bread (v. 26). It must be admitted that Christ did not specifically call the plucking of the ears unlawful, but this is certainly implied. While Deuteronomy 23:25 allowed such an action ("If you enter your neighbor's grain field, you may pick kernels with your hands, but you must not put a sickle to his standing grain"), this allowance did not specify whether it was permitted on the Sabbath.

¹⁹⁸One may question on textual grounds the authenticity of the pericope of the woman caught in adultery (John 7:53—8:11), but this account also shows Christ's authority over the law. The adulteress was guilty of a capital crime (Lev. 20:1, 10) yet Christ broke the law and dismissed her unharmed (John 8:11).

Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath" means "that the sabbath was made for man of *all times*, then the sabbath law was *not* being fulfilled by Christ."¹⁹⁹ By fulfilling this Mosaic institution Christ must therefore have been contributing to its end.²⁰⁰

Another observation from the passage also indicates that Christ saw the Sabbath as temporary. The context reveals that the word "man" in the phrase "the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath" refers not to mankind in general, but "'man' here is used in a specific sense for Israel."²⁰¹ This would be like an American telling his audience that "the Constitution was for the people and not the people for the Constitution." It would not be necessary to specify which people he had in mind since all the listeners would know that it referred only to those under the United States Constitution, or Americans. In like manner, since the Sabbath was only for the Jewish nation (discussed previously), Christ's reference must have been only to Jews. Therefore, since "man" here has in mind Jews only, this reaffirms the temporal nature of the Sabbath.

This more defined, Jewish usage of "man" is not unique to Mark 2:27. Other passages use ἄνθρωπος of Jews only. First, in Mark 1:17 Christ calls two disciples to be "fishers of men," but when He actually sends them out they are to go only to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 10:5, 6). Second, Paul also uses the word in this

He could do this because He was Lord of the laws on capital punishment (cf. Congdon, 343).

¹⁹⁹Congdon, 340 (*italics mine*).

²⁰⁰Many see Christ not depreciating the *institution itself*, but rather the *Pharisaical misuse* of the day (e.g., *NBD*, "Sabbath," by E. J. Young and F. F. Bruce, 1043). It is true that this is indicated in Christ's statement, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." However, Christ's next statement, "So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath," indicates more than simply restoring the day to its original significance. As Lord over the Sabbath, Christ was free to do whatever He wanted to with the day, since He Himself was more important than it (cf. Matt. 12:6).

²⁰¹Feinberg, "The Sabbath and the Lord's Day," 185.

narrow sense of referring only to Jews (Rom. 2:1, 3, 17). Besides this, the Sabbath is never used in Scripture in reference to Gentiles, and the word "man" is used in the Old Testament no less than 336 times when referring to Israel alone, as well as many times in the New Testament when referring only to Christians.²⁰² For these reasons it is certainly legitimate to understand the Sabbath being made for "man" as the institution being made for the nation Israel.

Using this more narrowly defined meaning in His confrontation with the Pharisees, Christ reiterated what these leaders already knew: God had established a covenantal relationship with Israel as His unique people, giving the Sabbath only to them as a sign. However, the Pharisees had so distorted the real meaning of the day that Christ needed to remind them of the original significance of the institution. The day was originally designed to benefit Israel by reminding the nation of its unique covenant relationship with the Lord and God's workings in its behalf at creation and redemption from Egyptian bondage.²⁰³ However, the Pharisees had twisted the observance into hundreds of burdensome rules that Jews must follow, thus serving the Sabbath rather than vice versa.

Exceptions to Sabbath Breaking

Christ not only taught the temporary nature of the Sabbath but also amplified the day's true meaning through three general exceptions to Sabbath observance. These

²⁰²Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 8 vols., 4:107.

²⁰³This idea of benefit can be observed in the preposition διὰ used in the expression τὸ σάββατον διὰ τὸν ἄνθρωπον where διὰ with the accusative carries the idea of "because of, for the sake of" (cf. BAGD, s.v. "διὰ," 181; Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 134). This proves that the Sabbath was not intended to serve man with the result that man was lord over the Sabbath, using it as he pleased. Rather, the thought is "'the Sabbath was made *on account of* man, and not man *on account of* the Sabbath.' This is a statement of precedence, not privilege" (Congdon, 175). The creation of man chronologically preceded the creation of the Sabbath and man takes priority over the Sabbath in position; therefore, the Sabbath cannot be an eternal moral law.

exceptions brought Christ into sharp conflict with the teachers of His day because they made the Law absolutely inflexible.

Acts of Divine Service

In His first exception to Sabbath breaking, Christ affirmed that the acts performed in God's service are legitimate on the Sabbath. In particular, he upheld the Old Testament teaching that the protection of human life superseded the Sabbath law and all other obligations (Lev. 18:5). He confirmed this principle in the controversy over grain which his disciples picked on the Sabbath.²⁰⁴ This action of the disciples did not actually break Scripture, which allowed plucking ears (Deut. 23:25). However, it did break the rabbinic tradition that plucking grain meant reaping, rubbing it between their hands was considered *threshing*, separating the grain from the husk made them guilty of *winnowing*, and the whole procedure itself made them guilty of *preparing a meal* on the Sabbath.²⁰⁵ In this instance Jesus used three evidences that the action was legitimate.

Christ's first line of defense recalled David's action of eating the consecrated bread proper only for the priests (1 Sam. 21:1-6; cf. Lev. 24:5-9). Why was this legitimate? One view is that it proved that human need was more important than following divine regulations.²⁰⁶ However, the fact that the disciples were not starving indicates that human need is not in view here. Jesus' disciples did not actually *need* this food. Also, the Pharisees themselves recognized that the saving of a life takes priority

²⁰⁴This account follows immediately after Christ's promise of rest for those weary of Pharisaical ritual (Matt. 11:28-30). Several commentators have recognized this connection and thus tied His "easy yoke" with proper observance of the Sabbath (e.g., H. L. Ellison, "Matthew," IBC, 1134; Samuel Bacchiocchi, "Matthew 11:28-30: Jesus' Rest and the Sabbath," *AUSS* 22 [Autumn 1984]: 289-316).

²⁰⁵The complete list of thirty-nine prohibited types of labor is provided in *Mishna Shabbath* 7.2 (cf. Edersheim, 2:56).

²⁰⁶Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, 49; cf. Willoughby C. Allen, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to S. Matthew*, ICC, 127; W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann, *Matthew*, AB, 149; Morris, *Luke*, TNTC, 122)

over Sabbath observance,²⁰⁷ so they could not have accused the disciples of Sabbath disobedience on this basis.²⁰⁸

The context seems to better support an alternate view, that those in God's service are allowed concessions from certain Sabbath commands. Edersheim expresses this perspective well:

In truth, the reason why David was blameless in eating the shewbread was the same as that which made the Sabbath-labour of the priests lawful. The Sabbath-law was not merely one of rest, but of rest for worship. The Service of the Lord was the object of view. The priests worked on the Sabbath, because this service was the object of the Sabbath; and David was allowed to eat of the shew-bread, not because there was danger to life from starvation, but because he pleaded that he was in the service of the Lord, and needed this provision. The disciples, when following the Lord, were similarly in the service of the Lord; ministering to Him was more than ministering in the Temple, for He was greater than the Temple.²⁰⁹

Edersheim's comments find support in the text itself.²¹⁰ In the Old Testament context Ahimelech expressed concern that David's men had been kept from women and thus were ceremonially clean (cf. Lev. 15:18). David replied, "Indeed, women have been kept from us, as usual whenever I set out. The men's things [i.e., bodies] are holy even on missions that are not holy. How much more so today!" (1 Sam. 21:5). David was God's king-elect traveling as a fugitive from Saul, on a holy mission. God permitted this concession of eating the priest's bread since the high priest had requested this special exception from the Lord and it had been granted (1 Sam. 22:10).

Christ's authority over the Sabbath can be seen here as well.²¹¹ The rejected

²⁰⁷*Mishna* Yoma 8.6.

²⁰⁸Etan Levine, "Sabbath Controversy According to Matthew," *NTS* 22 (July 1976): 480.

²⁰⁹Edersheim, 2:58; cf. Ellison, "Matthew," *IBC*, 1134: "Jesus' argument is that those who are doing the work of the Lord of the Sabbath are not under sabbath laws."

²¹⁰*Contra* Allen, *ICC*, 129: "The action of the disciples is in no sense parallel to that of the priests in the temple"; Albright and Mann, *Matthew*, AB, 149; Levine, "Sabbath Controversy According to Matthew," 481-82.

²¹¹John Mark Hicks, "The Sabbath Controversy in Matthew: An Exegesis of Matthew 12:1-14," *RQ* 27 (February 1984): 90.

King David was forced to eat things unlawful to eat and thus held innocent because as long as "David was rejected and a fugitive, the holy things connected with the ceremonials given to Israel by God ceased to be holy."²¹² Barnhouse adds, "David was the Lord's anointed King. He was rejected, and while He was rejected there was nothing in Israel that was holy. So he took the bread because, in that moment, *he* was greater than the *bread*."²¹³

In like manner to the rejected David and his men, the rejected Messiah and his disciples were also held guiltless for eating the grain. At the time of the controversy over the grain the nation was in the process of rejecting Christ as Messiah. Matthew significantly records the event in chapter 12 of his Gospel, just before the leaders committed the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, followed by Christ's teaching of the parables of the kingdom (13:1-52). How hypocritical of the Pharisees to insist that the Sabbath be followed when they were rejecting the Creator of the Sabbath standing before them. Besides this, if *David* was allowed to do something forbidden, how much more could the Son of David, the Messiah.

Christ's second statement in Matthew's account also teaches the exception to Sabbath-breaking for acts of divine service. Jesus continued, "Or haven't you heard read in the Law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple desecrate the day and yet are innocent?" (Matt. 12:5-7). Like the first, this concession was also scriptural, for the law allowed men involved in worship and service of the Lord to work on the Sabbath. Numbers 28:9, 10, 18, 19 commands offering lambs, bulls, rams, grain and drink offerings as Sabbath burnt offerings. Surely the priests had to "break" the Sabbath in order to offer these gifts to the Lord. Even the rabbis of Christ's day acknowledged that there was no Sabbath breaking in the Temple. Priests and Levites could violate all the

²¹²A. C. Gaebelein, *The Gospel of Matthew: An Exposition*, 2 vols. in one, 1:240.

²¹³Donald Grey Barnhouse, *His Own Received Him Not...*, 108.

rules about the Sabbath without fear of profaning the day.

Christ's commentary on this concession in the Law pointed to the supremacy of His work over the Sabbath. Following His citation of the priests' profaning the Sabbath to carry out their duties, He declared, "I tell you that something greater (μεῖζόν) than the temple is here" (Matt. 12:6). While it is argued that Jesus referred to Himself through this designation,²¹⁴ He used the neuter gender of "greater," thus referring not simply to Himself but also to the kingdom He was inaugurating; these two concepts merge into one²¹⁵ as it refers to His ministry.²¹⁶ His opponents understood His point clearly: if the work of the Temple priests was allowed to violate the Sabbath in service for the Lord, how much more can the work of the *Lord* of the Temple violate the institution without blame. In other words, "If the ministry of the temple superseded the Sabbath rules, how much more does the work of the Messiah overrule the Sabbath!"²¹⁷ The Jewish leaders were blind to this order of priority.²¹⁸

Jesus' third statement in the Matthew pericope affirms another important truth: the priority of commitment to Him over commitment to ritual.²¹⁹ To rebuke the Pharisees

²¹⁴Cohen, "The Doctrine of the Sabbath in the Old and New Testaments," 12.

²¹⁵D. A. Carson, "Matthew," EBC, 8:282. This is true especially in that the only other two uses of this neuter in Matthew (12:41, 42) demonstrate "the present reality of the kingdom of God in the person of Jesus" (Hicks, "The Sabbath Controversy in Matthew: An Exegesis of Matthew 12:1-14," 86).

²¹⁶Stanley D. Toussaint, *Behold the King*, 159.

²¹⁷Ibid. Christ here uses the rabbinic analogy of *kal vechomer*, an inference from the less to the more important (David Hill, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NCBC, 211).

²¹⁸Rabbi D. M. Cohn-Sherbok, "An Analysis of Jesus' Arguments Concerning the Plucking of Grain on the Sabbath," *JSNT* 2 (January 1979): 31-41, disagrees that Christ here uses the rabbinic analogy of *kal vechomer* because, unlike the priests, Christ's disciples were not engaged in any form of religious observance nor were they serving Jesus by plucking grain (p. 39). However, this interpretation misses the point of the passage and the analogy, namely, the parallel between the priests who were identified as servants of God and Christ's disciples whose identification with Him allowed disobedience to Pharisaical regulations. The issue is one of identification, not specified service.

²¹⁹By appealing to Scripture for all three of His arguments, Christ affirmed the authority of the Word of God over the oral law of man.

for their wrong priorities, Christ quoted Hosea 6:6, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice" (Matt. 12:7). While the translation "mercy" (ἔλεος) here may seem to indicate the priority of compassion over ritual,²²⁰ the idea is more properly one of *covenantal loyalty* over ritual.²²¹ Several lines of evidence support this view. First, this Hebrew word for "mercy" (רַחֲמִים) is a multifaceted term that, when used in relation to God, often refers to covenantal loyalty.²²² As such the meaning here indicates God's desire for loyalty to Him rather than heartless acts of worship (cf. "loyalty" in Hosea 6:6, NASB). Second, the covenantal interpretation fits the context well since here the Pharisees were holding Sabbath observance above acknowledgment of Christ's exalted position (not above compassion). Third, רַחֲמִים is parallel to the phrase "acknowledgment of God" in Hosea 6:6, indicating a meaning of covenantal loyalty to God more than acts of compassion towards men. Further, this statement by Christ appears not in conjunction with an act of healing or compassion, but with the declaration of the superiority of His ministry (Matt. 12:6). Finally, Matthew also uses Hosea 6:6 elsewhere in Christ's response to an accusation of His eating with "sinners" to express the Lord's pleasure with tax collectors who acknowledged Him in contradistinction to the Pharisees who were ritually clean but unbelieving (Matt. 9:13). Therefore, Christ actually was stressing God's desire as such, "I desire covenant loyalty, not sacrifice," teaching the priority that works of covenantal loyalty take over strict observance to exacting rules. He argued that since this is what God really wanted then it should be the priority of His people also.

²²⁰Bacchiocchi understands the meaning here as a rebuke of the Pharisees' neglect to invite Jesus and the disciples over for lunch (*From Sabbath to Sunday*, 50). Carson has well described such exegesis as fanciful ("Matthew," EBC, 8:280).

²²¹David Hill, "On the Use and Meaning of Hosea 6:6 in Matthew's Gospel," *NTS* 24 (1978): 35; Hicks, "The Sabbath Controversy in Matthew: An Exegesis of Matthew 12:1-14," 88.

²²²*TWOT*, s.v. "רַחֲמִים," by R. Laird Harris, 1:305-307.

Acts of Compassion

Besides works of divine service, Christ also allowed works of showing mercy as a second exception to the law of Sabbath breaking. His many Sabbath healings demonstrated this point, for He would not let man's merciless rules prevent Him from acts of compassion.

In John 5 Jesus taught the legitimacy of Sabbath works of mercy based upon the Father's *own* example. When accused of healing a paralytic on the Sabbath, He declared, "My Father is always at work to this very day, and I, too, am working" (John 5:17). Obviously by "this very day" He meant that the Father had been working every day since creation until that very Sabbath. Thus Christ declared that although God's initial creative work lasted for six days, He compassionately continued meeting man's needs *every* day, including the Sabbaths.²²³

John's account also is significant in its portrayal of Christ's equality with the Father. Jesus referred to God as "My Father" (not "our Father" or "My Father in heaven"), which was a highly unusual way for Jews to refer to God. Through this terminology He claimed an intimate relationship to the Father.²²⁴ Surely if the Father can demonstrate compassion each Sabbath then the Son can perform acts of mercy and grace on the Sabbath. For that matter, Christ could do *any* work on the Sabbath since He is one with the Father (cf. John 10:30).

In no passage does Christ more clearly teach that good works are allowable on the Sabbath than in the account of His healing the man with the withered hand (Matt. 12:9-14; Mark 3:1-6; Luke 6:6-11).²²⁵ In response to the Pharisee's question, "Is it lawful

²²³For support that both providential and compassion aspects are taught in this passage, see Chapter 6.

²²⁴Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, NICNT, 309.

²²⁵The curious phrase ἐν σαββάτῳ δευτεροπρώτῳ in Luke 6:6 has evoked a great deal of controversy both on textual grounds and especially on the date of the incident. Both the NIV and NASB follow the UBS reading ἐτέρω and therefore consider the word to refer simply to "another Sabbath" (i.e.,

to heal on the Sabbath?" (Matt. 12:10), Christ asked His own question: is it lawful "to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" (Mark 3:4; Luke 6:9). The Pharisees remained silent, then Christ illustrated how they themselves would save animal life on the Sabbath should their sheep fall into a pit. "How much more valuable is a man than a sheep!" Christ exclaimed in anger, then concluded, "Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath " (Matt. 12:12).

Christ taught the same compassion principle in regard to circumcision on the Sabbath. The Jews thought nothing of circumcising their baby boys born on Fridays, whose circumcisions had to occur eight days later according to the law (Gen. 17:12; Lev. 12:3), making the circumcision necessary on the Sabbath (John 7:23a). This work violated the Sabbath yet was good and merciful. Since an operation for the benefit of a boy could be performed on the Sabbath, certainly Christ could make a man entirely whole on the Sabbath (cf. John 5:10; 7:23b).

That Christ saw acts of mercy as exceptions to the Sabbath law is clear from several other healings performed on the Sabbath. These include the healing of the man born blind (John 9:14, 16), the curing of the woman who had been crippled eighteen years (Luke 13:10-17), and the healing of the man with dropsy (Luke 14:1-6). Interestingly, all of these Sabbath healings have a common element: none of them involve a case of emergency healing.²²⁶ The rabbis allowed Sabbath healing only if it was a matter of life and death; otherwise, it should wait until some other time (cf. Luke 13:14). Christ challenged this teaching by deliberately healing on the Sabbath in order to model that acts of mercy are not only permitted but should be encouraged on the Sabbath. Well does Bacchiocchi say, "This original dimension of the Sabbath as a day to honor

distinct from the one just mentioned in Luke 6:1). For discussions of the problem, see Edgar Metzger, "Le sabbat 'second-premier' de Luc," *TZ* 32 (May-June 1976): 138-43; Joseph M. Baumgarten, "The Counting of Sabbath in Ancient Sources," *VT* 16 (1966): 282-85.

²²⁶Jewett, 39.

God by showing concern and compassion to fellow beings, had largely been forgotten in the time of Jesus."²²⁷ Christ saw it as His responsibility to set the teachers of the law straight by demonstrating the precedence of the law's spirit over its letter.

Acts of Necessity

Several of the passages already discussed indicate that Christ also saw acts of necessity as legitimate on the Sabbath. These acts include circumcision (John 7:23a) and the rescue of a sheep and therefore a man as well (Matt. 12:11). Further, since God's necessary work of sustaining the universe does not cease on the Sabbath (John 5:17), so all other necessary work is allowable.

Christ's Sabbath Example

Support for Sabbath observance among Christians is sometimes sought in Christ's example, for no one questions that He held the institution in high regard. However, it must be remembered that Christ came under the Law to redeem those under the Law (Gal. 4:4). Therefore, appeal to Christ's example can properly be applied only to those also under the same Law as Christ Himself.²²⁸ Jesus was also circumcised, but Christians are not obligated to follow Him in this respect (Gal. 5:1-6). Christ fulfilled the Law (Matt. 5:17),²²⁹ and in so doing released His disciples from its obligations.

What was Christ's perspective of the Sabbath? He obeyed its true intent, while simultaneously resisting the human encroachments added to the day. As noted previously, the Sabbath was given to Israel as a day of blessing, evident in its declaration

²²⁷Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, 34.

²²⁸The issue whether the believer is under the Law is addressed in the following chapter.

²²⁹The meaning of this verse is explored in detail in the following chapter.

to be a feast (Lev. 23:1-3). However, Pharisaical laws had gained considerable success in destroying the true meaning of the institution. Therefore, Jesus sought to restore to the Sabbath its true meaning.

Nevertheless, Christ accomplished even more than this in relation to the institution, for He also responded in light of its eschatological dimensions. Prior to Christ's coming, the Sabbath had become associated with the future messianic age.²³⁰ Christ seized opportunities to heal on the Sabbath and thus demonstrated His messianic identity in accordance with this Sabbatic eschatological consciousness within the Jewish people. Since He came offering this very messianic kingdom (Matt. 4:17), He was in effect saying that national reception of Himself would bring in this "Sabbath age" of blessing.²³¹ This also indicates how Christ's disciples could pluck and eat grain on the Sabbath, for to Jesus, the eschatological Sabbath will be feasting and not fasting (cf. Matt. 9:14-15).²³²

Conclusion

No one questions the existence of the Sabbath during the period in which the Mosaic Law was operative. However, disagreement exists as to whether the commandment applied only to Israel. Since the Decalogue was given only to the nation, Gentiles were never commanded to obey the Sabbath, the Sabbath reminded Israel of its redemption from Egypt, and it functioned as a sign of God's special relationship with the Jewish nation, it must be concluded that the Sabbath was given *only to Israel*.

The lack of specific Sabbatic teaching in the Old Testament resulted in many

²³⁰See Isaiah 66:23; Ezekiel 46:1 and the rabbinic literature, which are both discussed extensively in Chapter 6.

²³¹The eschatological dimensions of the Sabbath are explored extensively in the final chapter.

²³²Eduard Schweizer, *The Good News According to Matthew*, 277.

additional clarifications by the Jewish sects, particularly by the Pharisees. Through Christ's six Sabbath healings and the incident over plucking heads of grain, He came into conflict with this extensive body of oral tradition, showing the true nature of the institution as designed for Israel's benefit (rather than vice versa). Further, Christ's teaching alluded to the temporary nature of the Sabbath itself in His Lordship over the day (Mark 2:27-28). Finally, He taught that acts of divine service, compassion, and necessity all superseded the Sabbath and therefore were exceptions to unlawful work on this sanctified day, a day of rest which itself pointed to Israel's future age of blessing.

Chapter 5

Sabbath in the Church Age

As indicated in the previous chapter, no scholars debate the legitimacy of the Sabbath under the Mosaic economy. In direct contrast, the following period of the church era finds the greatest amount of discussion. The issue is simply whether the Sabbath institution passed away with an abolished Law or whether believers in Christ should continue Sabbath-keeping today. The present chapter discusses biblical teaching regarding the end of the Sabbath and the rise of Sunday worship.

Reasons the Sabbath is Abolished During the Church Age

It is the thesis of this study that the Sabbath given under the law no longer has jurisdiction over the believer in the present age. This conclusion will be demonstrated through four means: the fulfillment of prophecy, the Jewish nature of the institution, the end of the Law, and explicit teaching in four New Testament texts.

Cessation of the Sabbath (Hosea 2:11)

One interesting Old Testament prophecy in Hosea indicates that the Sabbath will not be in effect during a period of Israel's history. The Book of Hosea serves as a picture of God's relationship with His wayward people Israel. Hosea 2:1-13 provides, in legal terminology,¹ a divine indictment against the nation for her spiritual adultery, part

¹"The word 'accuse' (רִיב [Heb. 2:4]) denotes the succession of speeches before the court and thus the judicial procedure as a whole" (Hans Walter Wolff, *Hosea*, Herm, 33). Within Hosea 2 the nation of Israel as a whole is presented as a mother while the individual members of the nation are her "children" (Charles L. Feinberg, *The Minor Prophets*, 19).

of which is the judgment of the Sabbath days and other festal occasions being stopped at some time in the future: "I will stop all her² celebrations: her yearly festivals, her New Moons, her Sabbath days—all her appointed feasts (Hos. 2:11 [Heb. 2:13])."

It has been proposed that the judgment here only condemns the *misuse* of the Sabbath (and not the Sabbath itself)³ or results in the abolition of the nation,⁴ but these affirmations avoid the central issue. Hosea prophesied that, because of the misuse of the day, God would *remove the institution itself* from Israel for a time. The reference here is clearly to Israel's festal celebrations⁵ in ascending order of frequency, first with the annual festivals, then the monthly celebrations, and finally the weekly Sabbath.⁶ The LORD's warning is that these, the most festive occasions in Jewish life, would disappear from the nation's life because of its sin.

This prophecy of the Sabbath's nonobservance must be fulfilled at some time since God Himself declared it, but the context of the prophecy does not mention when this time will occur. Likewise, most commentators do not attempt to identify the time of

²Israel had not ceased observing the festal calendar but mixed it with Baal worship under Jeroboam (2:13; Derek Kidner, *Love to the Loveless*, BST, 31). This syncretism reduced the celebrations into occasions for social gatherings and merrymaking rather than for communion with Yahweh. For this reason, God does not describe them as *His* festivals, but as *Israel's* ("her") festivals (Frederick A. Tatford, *The Minor Prophets*, vol. 1, *Prophet of the Broken Home*, 37-38).

³NBD, "Sabbath," by E. J. Young and F. F. Bruce, 1042.

⁴SDABC, Francis D. Nichol *et al.*, eds., 4:893.

⁵Those affirming that the entire cultic calendar will be abrogated include William Rainey Harper, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Amos and Hosea*, ICC, 232-33; Leon J. Wood, "Hosea," EBC, 7:177; Francis I. Anderson and David Noel Freedman, *Hosea*, AB, 250; Wolff, 38; James Luther Mays, *Hosea*, OTL, 42; Carl Friedrich Keil, *The Twelve Minor Prophets*, K&D, 58; John Mauchline and Harold Cooke Phillips, "Hosea," in *IntB*, 6:584; Robert B. Chisholm, Jr., "Hosea," in *BKC*, 1:1384; E. B. Pusey, *The Minor Prophets*, vol. 2, *Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, and Jonah*, 34.

⁶One scholar suggests that the Sabbath here is monthly, not weekly, because of its juxtaposition with the new moon and correspondence with the Babylonian *sap/battu* (Gnana Robinson, *The Origin and Development of the Old Testament Sabbath*, 60). This cannot be accepted as the Old Testament notes that the day is weekly (Exod. 20:8ff; Deut. 5:12ff.) and separate from the Babylonian rest day (cf. Chapter 2 of this study).

its fulfillment.⁷ A few suggest that this occurred when Israel was driven into exile with the intermission of its temple existence, sacrifices, and outward worship.⁸ However, several factors make this view untenable. First, during the exile the Sabbath *gained prominence*, so it obviously did not end at that time.⁹ Second, the restoration of Israel noted in verses 14-23 cannot apply to the post-exilic era since this time period included neither a new covenant (v. 18a) nor world peace (v. 18b). Third, the context indicates that all four festal celebrations will be abolished at the same time, which makes it inconsistent to say (as do Adventists)¹⁰ that the feasts and new moon celebrations will be abolished, but the Sabbath is retained in the present age. Finally, while Hosea's prophecy is primarily addressed to the northern kingdom before its fall, both Israel (1:6, 8) *and Judah* (1:7) are included in these prophecies of judgment and restoration. Just as the entire nation came up from Egypt (2:15), so the entire nation will be restored. The post-exilic community was not comprised of both Israel and Judah, so the prophesied restoration must still await its fulfillment.

Since a return of both the northern and southern kingdoms is in view, this restoration has not yet occurred. However, the New Testament indicates that the Sabbath was to be obeyed prior to the death of Christ. Therefore, the most probable time in which the Sabbath is not in effect is the interim period between Christ's death and Israel's

⁷An example of neglecting to specify when the prophecy finds its fulfillment is Jeremiah Burroughs, who lived A.D. 1599-1646. His classic and exhaustive commentary comprises nineteen minutely printed pages on Hosea 2:11 alone, but never does he mention when the prophecy will be fulfilled (*An Exposition of Hosea*, 105-24).

⁸John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets*, vol. 1, *Hosea*, 96-97; *SDABC*, Nichol *et al.*, eds., 4:893.

⁹The many additions to the Sabbath laws by the Pharisees during this time and the New Testament Sabbath controversies demonstrate that the institution took on increasing importance until the time of Christ (cf. Chapter 4 of the present study).

¹⁰Hasel and Murdoch acknowledge the reference as the weekly Sabbath, but do not indicate when it will be abolished (Gerhard F. Hasel and W. G. C. Murdoch, "The Sabbath in the Prophetic and Historical Literature of the Old Testament," in *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, 45-46).

restoration, which is the present age of grace.¹¹ This is not to say that the Sabbath will never again be reinstituted, but chapter 6 will discuss this issue.

Jewish Nature of the Sabbath

The previous chapter has already noted the Jewish origin of the Sabbath. However, even *Jews* are not to observe the day in the present age since "following the resurrection of Christ, there is no injunction given to Jew, Gentile, or Christian to observe the sabbath, nor is sabbath breaking once mentioned among the numerous lists of possible sins."¹² In the Book of Acts it is never stated, or even implied, that Christians kept a Sabbath day.¹³ Similarly, while there are a total of over 650 commandments and exhortations to the church in the New Testament, many of which include grave warnings for disobedience, "never is the least punishment mentioned in the New Testament by Jesus, or any of His Apostles, for Sabbath-breaking."¹⁴ This remains completely in accord with the Sabbath's nature as a Jewish institution.

The Sabbath was given to Israel as part of the Law, which itself was never given to Gentiles. That Gentiles were not under the jurisdiction of the Law is affirmed by Gentiles themselves (John 18:31; Acts 18:14-15; 23:29) as well as by the Apostle Paul (Rom. 2:12, 14; 5:13-14).

¹¹Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 4:111; Dudley M. Canright, *Seventh-day Adventism Renounced*, 289. However, this is not to say that Hosea is predicting the "mystery" of the church or church age, for this was revealed only to the New Testament apostles and prophets and not made known to men in other generations as it was hidden in ages past (Eph. 3:2-13, esp. vv. 5, 9).

¹²Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Major Bible Themes*, 221.

¹³Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 4:108.

¹⁴Roger Douglass Congdon, "Sabbatic Theology," Th.D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1949, 360.

The End of the Law

The Sabbath finds its fundamental formation in the Decalogue, which is obviously part of the law. Therefore, if the law as a whole is abrogated, then every part of it is abolished as well, including the Sabbath. However, the much-debated question concerns whether the law has ended. Those who respond in the affirmative see no warrant for present-day Sabbath observance, but those who stress the continuity of the law generally advocate some form of Sabbath practice today.

One Law or Two?

Before discussing the end of the law, it is necessary to answer the issue of how many laws are addressed in the Scripture. Unfortunately, it has been a long-held tenant of Protestantism that the New Testament refers not to one, but two laws.¹⁵ The leading confessions of faith in Christendom distinguish between the so-called "moral" and "ceremonial" law.¹⁶ In this view the moral law finds expression in the Ten Commandments and has been binding upon men in all ages, including the pre-Mosaic

¹⁵Actually, the dual law teaching stems at least back to Thomas Aquinas (*Summa Theologica* Part 2 [First Part]. Q.100.3 [p. 118]). Markus Barth notes that Origen and Jerome also held to the tradition (*Ephesians*, AB, 1:287, n. 150).

¹⁶Only the twofold division between "moral" and "ceremonial" is used in this study, even though some see a threefold division with the addition of "judicial" law governing polity and economy. See, for example, *The Second Helvetic Confession* (1566) of the Reformed Church of Zurich (Chapter XII: "The Law of God," in Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom*, 1:405). For examples of the twofold division, see *The Second Helvetic Confession* (1566) of the Reformed Church of Zurich, Chapter XII: "The Law of God" (ibid., 1:405; 3:854-55); *Thirty-nine Articles of Religion of the Church of England* (1571), Article VII (ibid., 3:491-92); *Articles of Religion of the Reformed Episcopal Church in America* (1875), Article VI (ibid., 3:816); *The Irish Articles of Religion* (1615), Article 84, believed to be composed by Archbishop James Ussher (ibid., 3:541); *The Westminster Confession of Faith* (1647), Chapter XIX (ibid., 3:640-43); *The Savoy Declaration of the Congregational Churches* (1658) is identical to the former here (ibid., 3:718), as is *The Baptist Confession of 1688* (Philadelphia), based upon the London, 1677, confession (ibid., 3:738); *Methodist Articles of Religion* (1784) by John Wesley (ibid., 3:808); "Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists," Section 6 (Seventh-day Adventist Church, *Questions on Doctrine*, 12).

and present dispensations.¹⁷ On the other hand, the ceremonial law contains sacrificial and civil ordinances which appeared at Sinai and were abrogated at the death of Christ. A distinction between these two laws has been a major tenant of many continuance¹⁸ and transference¹⁹ perspectives of the Sabbath.

Paul and the Law

The important point here is whether this distinction between so-called "moral" and "ceremonial" laws can withstand scrutiny in the light of Scripture. At issue is whether the Bible really teaches two separate laws with differing beginning and ending points. Although such view finds extensive support in the post-Reformation tradition, in the opinion of the present writer this "two law theory" lacks sufficient biblical support.

The main problem with the dual law theory is that never did Paul or any other New Testament writer make such a distinction.²⁰ It is even doubtful that Paul acknowledged the Decalogue as the essence or summary of the Pentateuch.²¹ He saw the

¹⁷For example, McBain notes, "In the Ten Commandments are found the great basic principles which underlie the whole structure of human morals and ethics. They are God-given and, therefore, enduring and permanent" (John M. McBain, *The Ten Commandments in the New Testament*, 7).

¹⁸*Questions on Doctrine*, 129-34; Francis D. Nichol, *Answers to Objections*, 141-49; id., *Reasons for Our Faith*, 229-49; A. Jan Marcussen, *National Sunday Law*, 92-93.

¹⁹Roger T. Beckwith and Wilfrid Stott, *The Christian Sunday*, 45; E. W. Burton, *Galatians*, 447-48.

²⁰*TDNT*, s.v. "νόμος," by Walter Gutbrod, 4 (1967): 1069 (cf. *ZPEB*, s.v. "Law in the New Testament," by C. M. Horne, 4 [1976]: 895). However, later Gutbrod contradicts himself by saying that Paul "does not make any fundamental distinction between cultic and ethical commandments, or between the Decalogue and the rest of the Law. Nevertheless, he works out his position primarily with ref. to the ethical commandments, esp. those of the Decalogue *which apply to all men*" (p. 1072; emphasis mine). Marcus Barth contains an excellent bibliography of those arguing against a moral-ceremonial distinction (1:288, n. 153) and also provides an impressive list of works on Paul's view of the law (1:418-19). For refutations of the Adventist dual-law theory, see Walter R. Martin, *The Truth About Seventh-day Adventism*, 190-204, Canright, 306-15; Norman C. Deck, *The Lord's Day or the Sabbath: Which?* 57-78.

²¹Verses cited to prove such include Romans 13:8f. (cf. 2:20f.; 7:7) but they do not indicate such. See Douglas R. de Lacey, "The Sabbath/Sunday Question and the Law in the Pauline Corpus," in *From Sabbath to Lord's Day*, 176; F. E. Vokes, "The Ten Commandments in the New Testament and First Century Judaism," *StEv* 5 (1968): 151.

law as a whole, which is consistent with John's statement that "the law was given through Moses" (John 1:17).²² This is supported by the contents of the Apostolic Decree (Acts 15:20, 29; 21:25), which probably must be understood at the same time as both moral and ceremonial commandments.²³ Also, it is doubtful that Paul would consider the "ceremonial" regulations only superficial and thus dispensable since he insisted upon the Christian ceremonies of baptism and the Lord's Supper.²⁴ "As a matter of fact both the Old and New Testaments regard the law of Moses as an indivisible unit (Jas. 2:10; Gal. 5:3; Josh. 1:8)."²⁵

Many teachers maintain that the law has abiding validity. Berkhof writes, "The law is a rule of life for believers, reminding them of their duties and leading them in the way of life and salvation."²⁶ Strong agrees: "Christ does not free us from the law as a rule of life."²⁷ Allis also notes, "The law is a declaration of the will of God for man's

²²This is the first New Testament citation regarding the temporal nature of the law. Here John contrasts the law of Moses with grace and truth which came through Jesus Christ.

²³Marcus Barth, 1:288, n. 153.

²⁴De Lacey, "The Sabbath/Sunday Question and the Law in the Pauline Corpus," 173.

²⁵Roy L. Aldrich, "Has the Mosaic Law Been Abolished?" *BS* 116 (October-December 1959): 322.

²⁶Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 615.

²⁷Augustus Strong, *Systematic Theology*, 876.

salvation."²⁸ Likewise, many other scholars also teach that the Law continues into the present age²⁹ or that Paul was confused regarding the law's function.³⁰

Despite the popularity of the belief that the Law is presently valid for believers, the New Testament treats the entire law as abrogated.³¹ This is a major tenant of the Book of Galatians, written in response to the error of supposing that some of the law was still in effect.³² Paul's readers were falsely lead into believing that *most* of the law was abrogated (e.g., the sacrificial system, dietary laws, etc.) but *certain* laws remained, circumcision in particular. Paul forcefully took issue with such teaching:

Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all. Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law (Gal. 5:2-3).

²⁸Oswald T. Allis, *Prophecy and the Church*, 39.

²⁹Horatius Bonar, *God's Way of Holiness*, 63-79, Richard Watson, *Theological Institutes*, 2:470; L. E. Maxwell, *Crowded to Christ*, 222; Patrick Fairbairn, *The Revelation of the Law in Scripture*, 274; P. B. Fitzwater, *Systematic Theology*, 9, 359; J. C. Ryle, *Holiness*, 27; *Matthew Henry's Commentary*, 6:675. For a thorough presentation of the abiding character of the Law, see Greg L. Bahnsen, "The Abiding Validity of the Law in Exhaustive Detail (Matthew 5:17-19)," which is Chapter 2 in his *Theonomy in Christian Ethics*, 39-86 (cf. also Carl F. H. Henry, *Christian Personal Ethics*, 327-62). Bahnsen's work is reviewed by the Adventist professor Daniel A. Augsburg, "Book Reviews: Bahnsen, Greg L. *Theonomy in Christian Ethics*. Nutley, N.J.: The Craig Press, 1977. xvii + 619 pp. \$12.50," *AUSS* 19 (Spring 1981): 75-76.

³⁰E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*, 143, notes that Paul's knowledge that God gave the law, combined with his conviction that Christ (not the law) saves, was a problem that "plagued him and led to some of the most difficult and tortured passages in the surviving correspondence." Also maintaining that a tension exists in Paul's "self-contradictory" attitudes towards the law are Heikki Räisänen, *Paul and the Law*, 8-9, 82-83; Hans Hübner, *Law in Paul's Thought*, 1-7.

³¹Douglas J. Moo, "Jesus and the Authority of the Mosaic Law," *JSNT* 20 (February 1984): 3-49; Roy L. Aldrich, "Causes for Confusion of Law and Grace," *BS* 116 (July-September 1959): 221-29; id., "Has the Mosaic Law Been Abolished?" 322-35; id., "The Mosaic Ten Commandments Compared to Their Restatements in the New Testament," *BS* 118 (July-September 1961): 251-58.

³²Hübner defends the thesis that Paul's attitude toward the Law changed between his writing of Galatians and Romans. He maintains that in Galatians Paul evidenced a negative view of the Law stemming from his misunderstanding of the Jerusalem Council (pp. 21-24), but in Romans his view is more positive due to the mixed nature of the church and his own theological reflection (pp. 60-65). While this view solves the problem of reconciling Galatians 4:10 with Romans 14:5, Hübner's treatment of the texts is inadequate, being extensively and appropriately answered by de Lacey, "The Sabbath/Sunday Question and the Law in the Pauline Corpus," 164-68.

The issue to be emphasized here is Paul's view of the law as a whole. His point is that if one is required to keep *any* part of it, he is obligated to keep *all* of it. Conversely stated, if the believer is free from the law, he is free from *all* of it. This applies whether the part referred to is circumcision, the Sabbath, or any other part.³³

The Pauline epistles uphold the abolishment of the *entire* law, not only part of it. Paul affirmed emphatically that believers are dead to the law (Rom. 7:1-6) and not under its rule (Rom. 6:14; Gal. 3:19, 23-29; 4:25, 31; 5:18). This is because Christ is the fulfillment (cf. Matt. 5:17-18) and termination or end of the law (Rom. 10:4) since His death abolished the law (Eph. 2:15). Further, Paul taught that the Mosaic Covenant has passed away (2 Cor. 3:6-11) and that the Abrahamic Covenant both preceded and followed the period of the law since the law served only temporarily (Gal. 3:14-25). The result is that "now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law" (Gal. 3:25). Also, "the fact that God has (manifestly) accepted Gentiles as sons demonstrates that the period of the law is at an end; the custodian has finished his task and the son has become an heir (4:1-6)."³⁴ Finally, in 1 Corinthians 9:20 Paul very clearly declares himself free from the law:

To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law.

Paul could not have stated more clearly that he himself was not under the law. He makes the same claim for his Roman readers as well: "you are not under law, but under grace" (Rom. 6:14). The preceding verses represent only a select group of passages which indicate that the law has been abolished and thus has no jurisdiction over the believer.³⁵

³³One may object to this reasoning based upon that fact that Paul used circumcision (in the so-called ceremonial law) rather than the Sabbath (in the so-called moral law), but Paul's teaching on the present applicability of the Ten Commandments is noted later in this discussion.

³⁴De Lacey, "The Sabbath/Sunday Question and the Law in the Pauline Corpus," 166.

³⁵No claim is made that the foregoing texts provide an exhaustive list of the passages indicating the end of the law; a detailed exegesis even of these texts is beyond the scope of this treatise.

Indeed, when comparing the Mosaic dispensation with "the dispensation in Christ, Paul found the former, glorious as it had been, to be worthless."³⁶

Paul and the Decalogue

While many passages have been cited above to show the end of the law, those most pertinent to the present study are two texts specifically pointing to the end of the Ten Commandments in the present age. The first text is Romans 7. Here Paul emphatically states that the believer has died to the law by being joined to Christ (v. 4) with the result that he is released from the law (v. 6).³⁷ His following illustration specifies this "law" as the Decalogue by referring to the tenth commandment which prohibits coveting (vv. 7f.).³⁸ The purpose of this prohibition was to reveal Israel's inability to obey the law of God. Specifically, Paul claims freedom from the law because it has already fulfilled its purpose in revealing sin. It follows that since the Decalogue is an essential unity, the abolition of one of its commandments (coveting) indicates the abolition of all of them.³⁹ In other words, since his illustration denotes that believers are free from *one* of the Ten Commandments, and the Decalogue is a unity, it follows that believers are also free from *all* of the commandments, which includes the Sabbath.

³⁶Sanders, 144.

³⁷W. H. Griffith Thomas, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, 181.

³⁸Many commentators acknowledge that Paul refers here to one of the Ten Commandments (e.g., C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 141; Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 279; James M. Stifler, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 123; F. Leroy Forlines, *Romans*, RHBC, 174; Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 221, designating the Decalogue as the "moral law"). However, the commentators neglect to acknowledge Paul as also declaring that coveting illustrates this abolished law and thus proving that the Ten Commandments are abolished as a system.

³⁹This is certainly not to say that believers are now free to covet, for this is prohibited elsewhere in the New Testament (e.g., James 4:2). What Paul means is that the prohibition of coveting in the Decalogue revealed man's inability to follow God's commands.

Second Corinthians 3 is a second passage which even more clearly shows the believer's freedom from the Ten Commandments. In this chapter Paul contrasts his apostolic authority as a minister of the New Covenant with that of his opponents at Corinth who, by implication, were ministers of the Old Covenant (cf. 2:17; 3:14).⁴⁰ One reason the New Covenant is more glorious than the Old is because this New Covenant is internal, written on men's hearts through the Person or activity of the Spirit (3:3b).⁴¹ Conversely, the Old Covenant was engraved upon tablets of stone (3:3, 7). The crucial issue here is *what* was written on stone in the Old Testament. Was it the entire law? No, only the Ten Commandments were engraved upon the tablets at Sinai (Deut. 4:13; 5:22).⁴² In other words, Paul equates the Old Covenant with the Decalogue.⁴³ This law had a fading glory (i.e., lacked permanent validity)⁴⁴ "because only in Christ is it taken away" (v. 14b). Therefore, since Paul contrasts his continuing ministry of blessing with the ministry of cursing in the Ten Commandments, he in effect teaches the abolishment of the Decalogue as a system by which one should live, including the Sabbath.⁴⁵ That the

⁴⁰On 2 Corinthians 3 as a whole, see Rudolf Bultmann, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians*, 70-98; Carol Kern Stockhausen, "Moses' Veil and the Glory of the New Covenant: The Exegetical and Theological Substructure of II Corinthians 3:1—4:6," Ph.D. diss., Marquette Univ., 1984.

⁴¹Bernardin Schneider, "The Meaning of St. Paul's Antithesis 'The Letter and the Spirit,'" *CBQ* 15 (1953): 193-207.

⁴²Charles Hodge, *A Commentary on 1 & 2 Corinthians*, GCS, 428. See also Exodus 24:12; 31:18; 32:15-16 for other verses mentioning the tablets. Many argue that Paul's reference to "tablets of stone" serves as a figurative designation for the entire law or Old Covenant (e.g., Victor Paul Furnish, *II Corinthians*, AB, 200; Bultmann, 73-75; Frederick W. Danker, *II Corinthians*, ACNT, 54; Colin Kruse, *The Second Epistle of the Paul to the Corinthians*, TNTC, 91-93; Knofel Staton, *Second Corinthians*, SBS, 56-57). However, the passage compares in graphic terms the actual writing (content) on the cold, external tablets with that "written" on the warm, internal heart; thus, the comparison drawn is between the Decalogue and that which replaces it—the work of the Spirit in the inner man. However, even if the tablets represent the *entire* law (the Old Covenant is the implied contrast in verse 6 and specifically mentioned in verse 14), this still argues for the abolition of the Sabbath as part of that law.

⁴³De Lacey, "The Sabbath/Sunday Question and the Law in the Pauline Corpus," 167.

⁴⁴Ernest Best, *Second Corinthians*. Interp., 31.

⁴⁵Even Paul's statement that circumcision is nothing but rather what matters is "keeping the commandments of God" (1 Cor. 7:19) is inadequate proof that believers are to keep the Ten Commandments. There is no evidence that ἐντολῶν θεοῦ ("commandments of God") refers exclusively or

Sabbath is included within this abolished Decalogue also finds support in that the death penalty for disobeying the Ten Commandments is never enforced in the New Testament.⁴⁶ It is inconsistent to argue for the continuance of the Sabbath requirement in the present age without a continued penalty for neglecting it.

Answering Objections

Despite the clarity of the above passages, some problem texts seem to indicate the continuity of the law and the Ten Commandments. The most quoted verses in this respect are Christ's words in Matthew 5:17-18:

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law and the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.

At first glance it appears that Jesus said the law would be in effect until the new heavens and the new earth. Equally difficult is Paul's statement in Romans 3:31 that faith does not nullify the law, but rather, one should "uphold the law." This law is deemed later in Romans as "holy, righteous, and good" (7:12). Similarly, Paul expresses a positive attitude towards law-keeping in Galatians 1:14 and Philippians 3:4-6.

A closer look indicates that the above passages can be reconciled with the many texts which indicate the abolishment of the law in the present age. First, the proper

even primarily to the Decalogue (C. K. Barrett, *1 Corinthians*, 169; de Lacey, "The Sabbath/Sunday Question and the Law in the Pauline Corpus," 176). Objection to the preceding presentation of Paul's view of the Decalogue may also be based upon his appeal to the fifth commandment in Ephesians 6:1-3. However, here the primary motive for children obeying their parents is not the Decalogue, but because this is part of one's calling in Christ (4:1) and is right (v. 1b). The appeal to the Ten Commandments is at best a third motivation (*ibid.*, 176).

⁴⁶For an evaluation of the penalties for each of the Ten Commandments, see Aldrich, "The Mosaic Ten Commandments Compared to Their Restatements in the New Testament," 251-58. He shows how the believer is not under the Decalogue, but instead "he is under the eternal moral law of God which demands far more than the Ten Commandments. It calls for nothing less than conformity to the character of God" (p. 257).

interpretation of Jesus meant in Matthew 5:17-18 must be addressed.⁴⁷ In light of the fact that Jesus seems to have abrogated the entire law by His abrogation of the laws of clean and unclean (Mark 7:19), one could rightly wonder how He came *not* to abolish the law. Some suppose that He abolished only the ceremonial and civil law while confirming the moral law,⁴⁸ but this fails to account for the continuance of the all-inclusive "not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen" (v. 18; NASB).

The proper interpretation of Jesus' statement lies in considering exactly *what* Jesus said would not be abolished. Actually, He did not refer to the Law (Mosaic Code); He said He came not to abolish the "*Law or the Prophets.*" The formula "the Law and/or the Prophets" refers not to a moral, ceremonial, or civil code, but was a common designation by the Jews of Jesus' day to refer to the Old Testament canon as a whole.⁴⁹ Therefore, in this saying Christ claimed that He did not come to abolish the Old Testament *as canon*. Paul agreed that in the new dispensation the Old Testament would continue to be relevant for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16), even during the time in which Israel was related to God by the Torah would cease with John (Matt. 11:13). Rather than setting aside the Scripture as His opponents accused, Christ came to carry it out in full obedience; the Old Testament pointed to Him as the One who would completely fulfill God's commands.⁵⁰ Therefore, the issue here is

⁴⁷For a discussion of critical viewpoints on this pericope see D. A. Carson, "Matthew," EBC, 8:142-44; W. D. Davies, "Matthew 5:17, 18," in *Christian Origins and Judaism*, 31-66.

⁴⁸For example, see David Wenham, "Jesus and the Law: an Exegesis of Matthew 5:17-20," *Themelios* 4 (1979): 92-96.

⁴⁹Matt. 7:12; 11:13; 22:40; Luke 16:16; John 1:45; Acts 13:15; 24:14; 28:23; Rom. 3:21. Other designations include "the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms" (Luke 24:44) or simply "Law" (Matt. 5:18; John 10:34; 12:34; 15:25; 1 Cor. 14:21; cf. Carson, EBC, 8:142; D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, 1:184, 187; Richard E. Clark, "An Exegesis of the Ten Commandments," Th.M. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1972, 68-69).

⁵⁰This interpretation is consistent with Matthew's use of *plhrovw* (e.g., Matt. 2:15; 11:13), which refers to the prophetic nature of the Old Testament. When Christ came as the eschatological fulfillment of the Law, "the Law lost its main function of pointing ahead; it ceased to hold the center of the stage. Jesus, not the Law, is now the center of the Christian's (and Mt's) attention, devotion, and obedience—and that

not how long the law would remain in effect as the guiding covenant for Israel. Rather, the issue is whether the Old Testament would remain authoritative as canon. With this interpretation in mind, Jesus' claim here is completely consistent with the abrogation of the law taught in the rest of the New Testament.

Paul's positive view of the law and his statement in Romans 3:31 about upholding the law also are not inconsistent with an abrogated law. That the law is "holy, righteous, and good" (Rom. 7:12) is not incompatible with the end of the law. The law's possession of positive characteristics does not mean that its applicability is indefinite.⁵¹ Further, Paul's insistence upon "establishing the law" (Rom. 3:31) must be taken in its context of justification by faith (3:21f.). In this verse "Paul is declaring that his teaching about faith is confirmed by the law."⁵² Thus, faith in Christ is not contrary to the law since the law witnesses to faith (3:21); also, salvation has always been through faith and never through the law, which is Paul's argument in the following chapter (Romans 4).⁵³ That Paul often argues for morality without appeal to the law also supports his contention that the law has been abrogated.⁵⁴

includes moral observance" (John P. Meier, *Law and History in Matthew's Gospel*, 87). For elaboration of this view see Carson, EBC, 8:143-44; Lloyd-Jones, 1:185-86; Robert Banks, "Matthew's Understanding of the Law: Authenticity and Interpretation in Matthew 5:17-20," *JBL* 93 (1974): 226-42, esp. 242; Moo, "Jesus and the Authority of the Mosaic Law," 3-49.

⁵¹That is to say, its positive nature does not imply the eternity of its precepts. It can simultaneously be both inherently good and abrogated.

⁵²C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, ICC, 1:224.

⁵³Paul argues a similar point in Galatians 3:21 by denying that the law interfered with the promise to Abraham.

⁵⁴"In Corinthians Paul has little discussion on the law—a significant fact in itself. Faced with the problems of incest and prostitution in the church (1 Cor. 5, 7) he might well be expected to point out how diametrically opposed this was to the law of God. Instead he gives a long and sometimes tortuous explanation of why such behavior is wrong for a Christian, based not at all on transgression of a code but rather on the idea of two mutually exclusive unions, one with Christ, and one with the woman in question. This suggests not only that Paul saw an inappropriateness in appealing to the law in the context of the New Covenant, but also that he saw the covenant stipulations as being of a different sort" (de Lacey, "The Sabbath/Sunday Question and the Law in the Pauline Corpus," 167).

Therefore, as part of the Ten Commandments which were given under the law and are now annulled, the Sabbath also has no bearing in the present dispensation.⁵⁵ "While the commandments of the decalogue are otherwise referred to as valid rules even for the Christian life, the commandment about the Sabbath is conspicuous by its absence."⁵⁶

Certainly not all scholars are so quick to dismiss the Sabbath commandment while holding to the other nine. Such is the voice of Murray, who asks, "Has the divine example [at creation] become obsolete?"⁵⁷ and argues,

It would require the most conclusive evidence to establish the thesis that the fourth command is in a different category than the other nine. That it finds its place among the ten words written by the finger of God upon tablets of stone establishes for this commandment and for the labour and rest it enjoins a position equal to that of the third or fifth or seventh or tenth.⁵⁸

Kubo, a Seventh-day Adventist, provides a similar statement in response to the charge that Seventh-day Adventists are legalists:

Many have charged Seventh-day Adventists as legalists, as those who observe the commandments to merit salvation. Primarily they make their accusation on the fact that Adventists insist that the seventh day is the Sabbath and worship on it. Obviously no one would want to label another a legalist if he keeps the first commandment, or the second. The issue basically centers on the fourth commandment, and yet it is difficult to understand why one is *not* a legalist if he follows the other nine commandments but *is* one if he keeps the fourth. The fact of the matter is that no one is a legalist because he keeps the commandments of God as a response of love to His great love. Legalism has to do with one's motivation.⁵⁹

⁵⁵Classical dispensationalists often argued for the abolition of the Sabbath based upon a strong dichotomy between law and grace (e.g., John Nelson Darby, "The Tenants of Plymouth Brethren," *Complete Works*, 31:340; Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 4:101; Charles Lee Feinberg, "The Sabbath and the Lord's Day," *BS* 95 [April-June 1938]: 172-79). The result was that the Sabbath symbolized the Mosaic dispensation and the Lord's Day symbolized the present age of grace (Chafer, *Grace*, 244). Contemporary dispensationalists, however, do not contrast grace and law so sharply, recognizing that grace did exist under the Law and law cannot be entirely divorced from the present age of grace. The former dichotomy has been (unfairly) criticized as teaching salvation by works under the Sinai covenant (Edward Heppenstall, "The Law and the Covenant at Sinai," *AUSS* 2 [1964]: 18-26).

⁵⁶Harald Riesenfeld, "The Sabbath and the Lord's Day in Judaism, the Preaching of Jesus and Early Christianity," in *The Gospel Tradition*, 131.

⁵⁷John Murray, *Collected Works*, 207.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 206; cf. Nichol, *Answers to Objections*, 247-48.

⁵⁹Sakae Kubo, *God Meets Man*, 53 (italics mine).

The point is well taken: is it consistent to adhere to only nine of the Ten Commandments? Can the fourth commandment be this easily dismissed? A proper response can only be offered when it becomes clear *to whom* the Ten Commandments were given in the first place. As stated earlier in Chapter 4, the Decalogue was never given to Gentiles but only to Israel. Although most of these commands are inscribed upon the consciences of men, even Sabbatarians admit that man does not intuitively know to set aside every seventh day for rest and worship.⁶⁰ Since the entire Law is annulled, the Decalogue is annulled. Since the Decalogue is annulled, each part of it is annulled. Despite the clear New Testament evidence, Seventh-day Adventists refuse to acknowledge that the Law is abrogated. While nine of the Ten Commandments are repeated in the New Testament,⁶¹ the fourth not only lacks a repetition⁶² but is done away both by explicit command and apostolic example of worship on the *first* day of the week.⁶³

⁶⁰Weber, a Seventh Day Adventist, notes that "the Sabbath commandment is unique among the ten. It is the only one not an obvious moral duty. Why? Amid the law's stringent demands God offers us rest in the fourth commandment. The other nine tell us *what we must do for God* and neighbor. But the Sabbath instructs us to rest in *what God has done for us*" (Martin Weber, *Some Call It Heresy*, 94; italics his). Ironically, the *non-Sabbatarian* F. B. Meyer stresses, "The Law of the Rest-Day is engraven on the physical nature of man. Even when the revolutionists of France determined to abolish every trace of the Christian faith, they felt that humanity must have a respite from incessant toil, and appointed one-rest-day in ten, which had afterwards to be altered back to the older arrangement.... Man is a seven-day clock. He must be wound up with regular accuracy; and his soul needs time to adjust itself equally with the spirit. The sanctions for Sabbath-keeping lie deep within the heart of Nature, and for this reason it was included with the rest of the Ten Words" (*Studies in Exodus*, 228).

⁶¹Augustine noted that nine of the Ten Commandments are "written by God himself in the hearts of men by the Holy Spirit" ("On the Spirit and the Letter," *Basic Writings of St. Augustine*, 1:488). Luther agreed: "The commandment concerning the Sabbath is different from the other commandments of the Decalogue. The others are general and are all taught by nature, just as a prince gives a general command to all his subjects and then gives special commands to his individual aids. So the Sabbath is special and applies only to the Jews" (Martin Luther, *Table Talk*, Luther's Works, 47:52).

⁶²The issue here is not how many times God must command something for it to be valid. Obviously, one time is sufficient. The point is that when God annuls a command, it remains annulled until it is reinstituted. Such is the case for the Sabbath, which is annulled in this dispensation but reinstituted in the next (see Chapter 6).

⁶³These two issues (command and example) will be extensively discussed later in this chapter.

The question can also be turned around and asked of Sabbatarians, "If the Law has not been abrogated and therefore the Sabbath remains in force, is it not also consistent to follow the other dictates of the Law?" Luther, in his characteristically frank manner, addresses this issue:

Those who insist on the Sabbath ought to be circumcised as well. It would be another matter if they wished for certain reasons to change the Lord's day into the Sabbath and otherwise left it free. But when they say, "You must observe this," we deny it and reply, "Then go ahead and observe all of it!"⁶⁴

In particular, it is not consistent to advocate present Sabbath observance without also imposing the penalty for Sabbath nonobservance. Law cannot be divorced from its proper penalties and still be deemed law, for "a law without a penalty is simply good advice."⁶⁵ One cannot accept a present-day Sabbath obligation without also accepting the death penalty for Sabbath "desecration." This is because adhering to the command without adhering to its penalty accepts scriptural injunctions arbitrarily by accepting some Sabbath commands and rejecting others.

Another argument espoused by those who claim the Sabbath requirement continues today is stated thus: how one can reconcile the apparent contradiction in an abrogated day which memorializes creation itself? In other words, would God really do away with an institution which points back to the creation of the world? Richardson poses this question:

How often we have heard that Jesus Christ abolished the Sabbath so that men might be truly free! But this suggestion is sheer theological nonsense. The work of Jesus Christ cannot contradict the purpose for which God created the world. To assert such a contradiction, by explicitly or implicitly opposing the Sabbath, is to reiterate the old Gnostic claim that the god of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament are two different 'Gods.'⁶⁶

⁶⁴Luther, *Table Talk*, 47:52.

⁶⁵Alva J. McClain, *Law and the Christian Believer in Relation to the Doctrine of Grace*, 10, quoting Daniel Webster (without source citation).

⁶⁶Herbert W. Richardson, *Toward an American Theology*, 130. While he does not directly state it, Richardson seems to assume that the Sabbath is "the purpose for which God created the world."

Richardson's accusation is unjustified. The scriptural distinction between the Mosaic and the present economy can hardly be deemed Gnosticism with its two gods. The real issue is whether God would abrogate an institution begun at creation. To such a question one can appropriately answer, "Why not?" This is exactly what God will do with marriage, which was instituted on the sixth day (Gen. 2:24) but will be abolished at the resurrection (Matt. 22:30).

Another issue must also be addressed: whether an abrogation of the complete law must "leave mankind without moral principles"⁶⁷ Two responses can be offered. First, the fact that the New Testament provides numerous principles makes such a charge unfounded, and second, that the entire Law is abrogated more clearly illustrates "the breathtaking sweep of God's one act in Christ, which makes one new humanity in Him."⁶⁸ While the Mosaic Law is done away, believers still must demonstrate obedience to New Testament laws.

The preceding discussion has addressed the majority of Sabbatarian and transfer-oriented scholars who subscribe to the dual law theory with its moral/ceremonial dichotomy. However, this dual law theory is not upheld by Bacchiocchi, the most prominent Seventh-day Adventist advocate for the Sabbath. Therefore, his view deserves attention before beginning the next section of this chapter. Bacchiocchi advocates that Paul's apparently contradictory statements about the law are better explained as relating to the law either in contexts of salvation or Christian conduct. In the first case the law is presented in a negative light (e.g., Rom. 3:20) because justification (right standing with God) is in view; however, when Paul addresses issues of sanctification (right living before God) "he maintains the value and validity of God's law (Rom. 7:12; 13:8-10; 1

⁶⁷Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, 348, levels this accusation.

⁶⁸See de Lacey, "The Sabbath/Sunday Question and the Law in the Pauline Corpus," 174.

Cor. 7:19)."⁶⁹ Simply stated, "Paul rejects the law as a *method of salvation* but upholds it as a *standard for Christian conduct*," according to Bacchiocchi.⁷⁰ His view rests upon Paul's declaration that "neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision" but rather "keeping the commandments of God" (1 Cor. 7:19), "faith working through love" (Gal. 5:6), and "a new creation" (Gal. 6:15)—a parallelism which in Bacchiocchi's reasoning "equates the keeping of God's commandments with a working faith and a new life in Christ."⁷¹

While Bacchiocchi's presentation is superior to the dichotomy between so-called moral and ceremonial laws, it still does not satisfy the evidence. First, it is tenuous to draw a parallelism based upon three separate passages, and this alignment in particular equates works (keeping God's commandments) with faith, which are two principles Paul elsewhere sees in opposition (Rom. 3:27-28). A second problem with this view is that the "commandments of God" in 1 Corinthians 7:19 refers not to the law but to the just-mentioned commands of the Lord Jesus (v. 10) and the inspired counsel of Paul (v. 12). Further, the remaining two passages cited above as parallel to keeping the law (Gal. 5:6; 6:15) teach the opposite; both verses fall within the context of the Book of Galatians, whose main teaching is that believers are *not* under the law.

Finally, Bacchiocchi's three verses which he cites as maintaining "the value and validity of God's law" (Rom. 7:12; 13:8-10; 1 Cor. 7:19) do not argue what he claims. The first indicates only the law's moral character as holy, which this Abrogationist does not deny. Saying it is holy is different from saying it is in effect,

⁶⁹Samuele Bacchiocchi, *The Sabbath in the New Testament*, 100.

⁷⁰Ibid., 101 (emphasis mine). However, Bacchiocchi precedes this statement by declaring that the believer "is *not* under the law as a revelation of God's ethical standards for his life." In the mind of the present author these two statements contradict one another. The law accepted as a standard for conduct must have God's ethical standards as its foundation for such conduct.

⁷¹Ibid., 100-101.

especially since Paul argues against its applicability to the believer only a few verses earlier (Rom. 7:1-4). Romans 13:8-10 is also cited as teaching the validity of God's law, but this list of commandments is simply used as an illustration of the need for love in the church. He does not say that the Decalogue is still applicable or ever was applicable to the believer. The third verse (1 Cor. 7:19) has already been shown not to relate to the Decalogue at all.

In conclusion, while the Pauline view of the law acknowledges the positive merits of the code, it nevertheless sees its period of applicability as having ended. Since the law is abrogated as a whole, its constituent parts also do not apply in the present age—parts which include the Sabbath. The reader's attention is now drawn to other passages of Scripture which indicate the abrogation of the Sabbath in particular.

Colossians 2:16-17

"Of all of the statements in the New Testament, these verses most strongly refute the Sabbatarian claim for observance of the Jewish Sabbath."⁷² Colossians 2:16 expressly forbids observance of the Sabbath day which served as a mere shadow of what was to come, that reality being in Christ (v. 17). Chafer summarized Paul's argument thus, "Having the Substance, the believer is warned against turning to the mere shadow."⁷³ Throughout Paul's ministry he fought the continued encroachments from Judaizers who sought to place believers under the yoke of the law. Such was the situation with the church at Colosse, which was confronted with infiltrators whose teachings were destroying the believers' freedom under the gospel message and thus threatening a relapse back into Judaism.

⁷²M. Martin, 162.

⁷³Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 4:108.

Some argue that Colossians 2:16 points not to the regular *weekly* Sabbath, but *yearly and monthly* Sabbaths (i.e., "ceremonial" sabbaths). This is the official Seventh-day Adventist position affirmed in the *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*:

SDA's... have usually held that since the context deals with ritual matters, the sabbaths here referred to are the ceremonial sabbaths of the Jewish annual festivals "which are a shadow," or type, of which the fulfillments were to come in Christ; that although the sequence of terms might appear to class the Sabbath with the ceremonial holy days, the rhetorical form cannot outweigh the facts established elsewhere in the Bible, that the types and symbols extending only to Christ do not include the Sabbath of the Decalogue.⁷⁴

The eminent Seventh-day Adventist scholar Nichol also claims that Colossians 2:16 refers to the ceremonial or annual, not weekly, sabbaths.⁷⁵ Nearly all Adventists⁷⁶ and even several non-Adventist⁷⁷ scholars follow this reasoning. The underlying assumption of this argument is a distinction between the so-called "moral" and "ceremonial" aspects of the Law⁷⁸ and the belief that the designation of a weekly σαββάτων as a "shadow" (σκιά; v. 17) is inappropriate:

Paul can hardly be referring to the seventh-day Sabbath of the Decalogue, for the Sabbath is not a shadow of anything, it is the reality. Further, although to some extent the Sabbath points forward to the promised rest in Christ (see Hebrews 4), it does not obtain its primary significance from "things

⁷⁴*SDAE*, s.v. "Sabbath," by Neufeld, ed., CRS, 10:1110-1111.

⁷⁵"If Paul here was referring to the weekly Sabbath of the Decalogue, then the only conclusion to reach would be that in the Christian Era there is no weekly holy day of rest. And does Christendom, in general, believe that? No. The sternly enforced Sunday laws of the different Christian lands... provide... proof... that a weekly holy day is proper, right, and Scriptural" (Francis D. Nichol, *Answers to Objections*, 165; cf. 49, 166-70, 190). Unfortunately, rather than dealing with the textual evidence, Nichol appeals to a recent practice arising from the time of the Puritans which considers Sunday the "Christian Sabbath." This imposing of tradition upon exegesis is unacceptable.

⁷⁶Others include Kenneth H. Wood, "The 'Sabbath Days' of Colossians 2:16, 17," in *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, 338-42; Paul Gien, "Sabbaton in Col. 2:16," *AUSS* 19 (Autumn 1981): 195-210; Donald F. Neufeld, "Sabbath Day or Sabbath Days," *Review and Herald* 148 (April 15, 1971): 13; and especially the official statements of the Adventist movement in *Questions on Doctrine*, 131, and the *SDABC*, Nichol *et al.*, eds., 7:205-6.

⁷⁷Adam Clarke, *Clarke's Commentary*, 6:294; A. R. Fausset, "Colossians," *JFB*, 6:448; Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the New Testament*, 1070; John Davenant, *An Exposition of the Epistle of St. Paul to the Colossians*, 1:477-88; Glenn N. Davies, "The Christian Sabbath," *RTR* 42 (May-August 1983): 39; de Lacey, "The Sabbath/Sunday Question and the Law in the Pauline Corpus," 182-83.

⁷⁸Wood, "The 'Sabbath Days' of Colossians 2:16, 17," 338. The lack of biblical support for such a distinction has already been addressed earlier in this chapter.

to come" but from an event in the past—the creation of the world in six days (Gen. 2:2, 3; Ex. 20:8-11).⁷⁹

Therefore, most Adventists believe that ceremonial sabbaths must be in view since the weekly Sabbath looks *back* to creation whereas the ceremonial sabbaths look *forward* to their fulfillment in Christ.

A second line of reasoning is also used to take away the force of Colossians 2:16. Even if Paul *is* referring to the weekly Sabbath, some Adventists claim that his concern is with a *ritualistic observance* of the day "as part and parcel of the works-righteousness concept of rabbinical Judaism,"⁸⁰ not a prohibition of Sabbath observance itself. Likewise, Wood claims that the verse indicates that "sabbaths have no value for salvation."⁸¹ A modification of this ritualistic observance view sees not the Jewish Sabbath in view, but rather pagan "sacred days" based upon astrological movements.⁸² O'Brien believes that the Sabbath *is* in view but that Paul prohibits observing it with the wrong (astrological) motive.⁸³

A third argument aimed against the meaning of weekly Sabbath here is the use of the plural form "sabbaths." Some believe that this form indicates ceremonial sabbaths.⁸⁴ Bacchiocchi acknowledges that the plural form (σαββάτων) is used for the entire week (LXX Ps. 23:1; 47:1; 93:1; Mark 16:2; Luke 24:1; Acts 20:7), so he suggests that it more properly refers to weekdays rather than to the Sabbath.⁸⁵

⁷⁹Wood, "The 'Sabbath Days' of Colossians 2:16, 17," 33; *SDABC*, Nichol *et al.*, eds., 7:205-6.

⁸⁰*SDAE*, s.v. "Sabbath," by Neufeld, ed., 10:1110.

⁸¹Wood, "The 'Sabbath Days' of Colossians 2:16, 17," 339.

⁸²Eduard Lohse, *Colossians and Philemon*, Herm, 115-16. Samuele Bacchiocchi, "Appendix: Paul and the Sabbath," in *From Sabbath to Sunday*, 339-69, seems to indicate this view as well as the ceremonial view.

⁸³Peter T. O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, Word BC, 139.

⁸⁴Clarke, 6:294; Barnes, 1070.

⁸⁵Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, 360; id., *The Sabbath in the New Testament*, 116-17.

Can these interpretations be sustained? Is Paul really speaking here of ceremonial sabbaths, ritualistic observance of the Sabbath, pagan sabbaths, or even weekdays? The best evidence, as most scholars recognize, is that Colossians 2:16 condemns all forms of Sabbath-keeping, including observance of the weekly Sabbath.⁸⁶

Ritualistic observance is excluded in that all of the practices mentioned are deemed types. Surely Paul would not refer to empty, ritualistic Sabbath worship as a (divinely ordained) type. Pagan sabbaths also must be excluded for the same reason. The apostle would not say that a heretical, astrological observance was now to be abolished because of the appearance of its antitype. Paul warns the church not to allow others to convince them of the necessity of observing Jewish holy days, irrespective of motivation.

The annual ("ceremonial") sabbaths also cannot be in view. All non-weekly Sabbaths are already mentioned in the verse as they are included under "religious festivals" (ἑορταίς), so another designation for yearly and monthly Sabbaths in the same phrase would be redundant.⁸⁷ This same list of holy days in descending order of time is repeatedly used in the Old Testament, and in each case the Sabbaths refer to the weekly day of rest and worship. The law for daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly offerings is

⁸⁶T. K. Abbott, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians*, ICC, 264; Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament*, 3:224-25; F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 113-15; Canright, *Seventh-day Adventism Renounced*, 282-97; H. M. Carson, *Colossians and Philemon*, TNTC, 72 ("weekly festivals"); John Eadie, *Commentary on the Epistle of Paul to the Colossians*, 176-77; Charles J. Ellicott, *St. Paul's Epistles to the Philippians, the Colossians, and Philemon*, 168 ("weekly festival"); William Hendriksen, *Exposition of Colossians and Philemon*, NTC, 123-24; Henry Allen Ironside, *Lectures on Colossians*, 91; R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus and to Philemon*, 127-28; J. B. Lightfoot, *St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and Philemon*, 260; Martin, 162-66; Curtis Vaughan, "Colossians," *EBC*, 11:204; Kenneth Wuest, *Ephesians and Colossians in the Greek New Testament*, in *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*, 1:210; Rordorf, 135; Congdon, 344-47. William Barclay claims that the verse prohibits Gnostic and Jewish weekly sabbaths (*The Letters to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, DBS, 145).

⁸⁷See Congdon, 344-47; Ironside, *Lectures on Colossians*, 91.

explained in Numbers 28–29⁸⁸ then listed in this same order many times elsewhere in the Old Testament.⁸⁹ These are the same celebrations mentioned in Colossians 2:16, which argue convincingly against the Adventist claim that they are peculiar celebrations associated with the Colossian heresy. The contention that ceremonial sabbaths must be in view because the weekly Sabbath looks back at creation (not forward to something) is unwarranted. There is no reason the day cannot have both a retrospective and prospective viewpoint. Indeed, the present tense of τῶν μελλόντων ("which are to come") in Colossians 2:17 indicates that the festivals of verse 16 are typological of things *still* forthcoming.⁹⁰

Further evidence that the weekly Sabbath is in view stems from the New Testament usage of the word σαββάτων. This word is used sixty times in the New Testament in both the singular and plural, always referring to the seventh-day Sabbath.⁹¹ While Adventists themselves admit that fifty-nine times it refers to the weekly Sabbath, they still insist based upon "context" that Colossians 2:16 remains the only use of the word for ceremonial sabbaths.⁹² Such alleged contextual evidence is lacking. It appears that the normal meaning for σαββάτων has been abandoned to maintain a moral/ceremonial dichotomy within the Law. Bruce adds, "When the sabbath is mentioned in the OT or the NT with no contextual qualification, the weekly sabbath is intended."⁹³

⁸⁸Numbers 28:3-4 (daily), 9 (Sabbath), 11 (new moon), 16, 26; 29:1, 7, 12 (five annual feasts).

⁸⁹1 Chron. 23:31; 2 Chron. 2:4; 8:13; 31:3; Neh. 10:33; cf. opposite order (parallel to Col. 2:16) in Ezek. 45:17; Hos. 2:11. The new moon and Sabbath are adjacent in several texts (Amos 8:5; Isa. 1:13; 2 Kings 4:23; Ezek. 46:3), which provides additional weight for the Sabbath referring to the weekly day.

⁹⁰This eschatological meaning is further explored in the final chapter.

⁹¹Canright, *Seventh-day Adventism Renounced*, 285.

⁹²Wood, "The 'Sabbath Days' of Colossians 2:16, 17," 339-40.

⁹³Bruce, *Colossians*, 115, n. 105.

Finally, the use of the plural also does not argue for the ceremonial Sabbaths in that it is simply a Hebraism.⁹⁴ As such the plural is commonly used in Scripture with a singular sense in reference to the weekly Sabbath.⁹⁵ The translators of the Septuagint also felt free to employ the exact plural form (σαββάτων) in their translation of the singular שַׁבָּת in the Decalogue itself (Exod. 20:8; Deut. 5:12), as well as in many other passages where the singular weekly Sabbath is in view.⁹⁶ Also, assuming Bacchiocchi's "weekday" view, one must wonder how Paul would be condemning the church for improper use of weekdays, especially in light of the Jewish emphasis in the book. Further, how "weekdays" serve as a type is never explained by Bacchiocchi.

Since the weekly Sabbath must be in view here, it remains to ask what Paul says about it. His main purpose is to warn the Colossians not to let anyone judge them regarding the observance of the day. In other words, Paul cautions the church members against anyone convincing them of the necessity of Sabbath observance.⁹⁷ He does not declare Sabbath observance wrong *per se*, since Paul's attitude about Sabbath-keeping "is

⁹⁴Both the singular and plural forms indicate the weekly Sabbath in the New Testament: the singular σάββατον and plural σαββάτων both stem from the Hebrew t/b;v' whereas the plural σαββάτα stems from the Aramaic (ܫܒܬܐ; cf. Acts 17:2; A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, 95, 105; cf. James Hope Moulton, Wilbert Francis Howard, and Nigel Turner, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, 4 vols., 2:128, 153; George Benedict Winer, *A Grammar of the Idiom of the New Testament*, 177); "σαββάτα, though plural, means 'a Sabbath day,' being, in fact, a Greek transliteration of the Aramaic, and from its form mistaken for a plural" (Abbott, 264; cf. Lightfoot, 260).

⁹⁵Exod. 31:13; Lev. 19:3; Isa. 56:4; Ezek. 20:12; Matt. 12:5, 10; 28:1; Luke 4:16; Acts 13:14. The misleading translation "sabbath days" (KJV) in Colossians 2:16 does not reflect this usage. Adventists themselves admit that the plural often refers to a succession of weekly Sabbaths (Francis D. Nichol, ["D. F. N." in article] "Sabbath Day or Sabbath Days?" *RH*, 15 April 1971, 13; *SDABC*, Nichol *et al.*, eds., 7:205); nevertheless, most of them follow the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* teaching that the reference refers to the ceremonial sabbaths (cf. *SDABC*, Nichol *et al.*, eds., 7:205-6).

⁹⁶For example, τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῶν σάββατον in Exod. 35:3; Num. 15:32; 28:9 and simply τῶν σάββατον in Isa. 58:13 (cf. Alfred Ralfs, *Septuaginta*, 2 vols.).

⁹⁷C. I. Scofield, ed., *New Scofield Reference Bible*, 1194. See also the many sources at footnote 80.

that it, like many other things, does neither harm nor good."⁹⁸ However, he does forbid required observance of the day. This is because the Sabbath served as a mere shadow, whereas Christ is the substance (v. 17).

Galatians 4:9-10

Although the Sabbath is not specifically mentioned in these verses, Paul warns against the observance of "special days" which he calls "weak and miserable principles" from the law. Christians are warned here against keeping "days (weekly Sabbaths),⁹⁹ months (monthly Sabbaths),¹⁰⁰ times (yearly Sabbaths)¹⁰¹ and years (century Sabbaths).¹⁰² The whole Old Testament Sabbath structure goes out together, according to Paul's teaching."¹⁰³

Sabbatarian scholars do not see the Sabbath in view here. One Seventh-day Adventist response to this verse is that Paul is not referring to the normal, Judaistic,

⁹⁸De Lacey, "The Sabbath/Sunday Question and the Law in the Pauline Corpus," 182-83.

⁹⁹Burton argues that the "days" refer primarily to weekly Sabbaths, but also includes the Jewish festivals and possibly the fast days which were observed on a single day (Ernest de Witt Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians*, ICC, 232-33). The position of "days" here is emphatic. Alford suggests that "days" is a general term under which the sabbath, new moons, and feast days of Colossians 2:16 fall (Alford, 3:42). Guthrie is ambiguous, saying that it refers to "holy days" (*Galatians*, NCBC, 117).

¹⁰⁰Specifically, new moon festivals are probably in view (Burton, 233).

¹⁰¹The modern translations (e.g., NASB, NIV) translate καιρὸς as "seasons," which Burton identifies as "celebrations not limited to a single day, thus to the great feasts, Passover, Tabernacles, etc." (pp. 233-34).

¹⁰²More properly, the year of Jubilee and sabbatical years are in view.

¹⁰³Congdon, 356; cf. Martin Luther, *A Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*, 393; R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Galatians, to the Ephesians, and to the Philippians*, 213-14; J. B. Lightfoot, *The Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians*, ZCS, 171; Herman N. Ridderbos, *The Epistle of Paul to the Churches of Galatia*, NICNT, 162; William Hendriksen, *Exposition of Galatians*, 165; John F. MacArthur, Jr. *Galatians*, MNTC, 111; James Montgomery Boice, "Galatians," EBC, 10:476; Kenneth Wuest, *Galatians in the Greek New Testament*, in *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*, 1:123; Beckwith and Stott, 27, 39.

seventh-day Sabbath. Rather, Paul is speaking of "heresies with some type of sectarian Judaism similar to that of Qumran, instead of with normative Judaism," which are similar to those in Colosse.¹⁰⁴ Bacchiocchi argues against the Sabbath being in view based upon the plural form (ἡμέρας),¹⁰⁵ the lack of specific designation of the days,¹⁰⁶ and the "elemental spirits" of verse 9, which he says were thought by the Colossians to designate "cosmic powers credited with controlling the fate of mankind."¹⁰⁷ He also advocates that if the Sabbath is indeed in view, "it is not the principle of Sabbath-keeping that Paul opposes, but rather the perverted use of cultic observances which were designed to promote salvation not by divine grace but rather by human achievement."¹⁰⁸ Therefore, three Seventh-day Adventist answers are proposed: the Sabbath here with a sectarian Jewish, or pagan, or salvation by works orientation.

These answers are plagued with weaknesses that make them untenable. First, assuming that a sectarian Judaism was being addressed, one would think that the Sabbath would play a major part in the supposed sect.¹⁰⁹ If Paul was a Sabbath-keeper (as were these sects), it is doubtful that Galatians 4:9-10 would condemn even a sectarian Sabbath observance, for the verse does not prohibit a certain *type* of observance but prohibits Sabbath observance as a whole. Further, Adventists make no attempt to show elsewhere in Galatians that a sectarian Judaism is in view in the letter.

¹⁰⁴*SDAE*, s.v. "Sabbath," by Neufeld, ed., 10:1111.

¹⁰⁵This is similar to the argument based upon a plural usage in Colossians.

¹⁰⁶In Colossians 2:16 Paul pointedly refers to them as festivals, New Moons, and Sabbath days. However, to suppose that he must do the same here is not necessary.

¹⁰⁷Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, 366. William M. Ramsay refers to the various celebrations in Galatians 4:10 as both Jewish and "pagan ceremonial practiced in Asia Minor" (*A Historical Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*, LCRL, 395).

¹⁰⁸Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, 367-68; id., *The Sabbath in the New Testament*, 122-23.

¹⁰⁹The Sabbath played a very significant role in the Essene Community, as shown in Chapter 4.

That Paul referred to a so-called pagan Sabbath is also questionable. Although the Galatians were predominantly Gentiles, one cannot escape the strong denunciations in the letter against turning to Jewish practices. Throughout the letter Paul attacks the false doctrine that law plus works leads to salvation (2:16, 19; 3:2, 5, 10-13, 17, 21; 4:5), this law obviously referring to that given at Sinai.¹¹⁰ Also, the false teachers had convinced the believers of the necessity of circumcision (5:2; 6:12), so an appeal to pagan Sabbath practice is very speculative. Bacchiocchi's appeal to the salvation argument (critiqued below) demonstrates that he sees inherent weaknesses in this pagan argument.¹¹¹

Finally, that Paul has in mind even a proper Sabbath observance with a *wrong motivation* (i.e., for salvation) is flawed. Paul says nothing positive about Sabbath-keeping in Galatians or elsewhere in the New Testament, so the issue here is not motivation but actual observance. Some Galatians apparently had reverted back to Sabbath observance, which made Paul feel his work there had failed. In light of this it is difficult to suppose that he opposed keeping Jewish festivals because of wrong motivations on the part of his readers.¹¹²

Therefore, the most probable interpretation of Galatians 4:9-10 is that Paul rebuked the churches for an adoption of Jewish Sabbath practices. He refers to the entire Sabbath system as "weak and worthless elemental things" (v. 9, NASB) which, when practiced, made Paul feel that his work in their midst had been in vain (v. 11).

Hendriksen sums up the significance of Paul's teaching on the Sabbath and Jewish customs in Colossians:

Though it was not wrong for *the Jew*, trained from his infancy in the law, for a period of transition to observe some of these customs as mere *customs*, having nothing whatever to do with salvation, it

¹¹⁰Hendriksen, *Exposition of Galatians*, 165.

¹¹¹Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, 366, n. 80.

¹¹²de Lacey, "The Sabbath/Sunday Question and the Law in the Pauline Corpus," 181.

was certainly wrong to ascribe to them a value which they did not have, and to impose them upon Gentiles.¹¹³

Romans 14:5

As in the case of Galatians 4, neither is the Sabbath specifically designated in these verses, so it can be addressed only by implication. In writing the Roman believers Paul repeatedly sought to address problems between Jews and Gentiles in the church, especially to demonstrate Jew-Gentile equality through Christ.¹¹⁴ The main problem addressed in Romans 14 concerns the legitimacy of eating meat,¹¹⁵ but also the observance of "days" receives some attention, while it is limited to only two verses (Rom. 14:5, 6).¹¹⁶ No doubt some new Jewish Christians at Rome found it difficult to violate their scruples regarding their former Sabbath observance, for the Sabbath was the most important institution in Judaism. It is therefore likely that Paul addressed this "weak" Jewish group (or Gentiles who had adopted Jewish scruples) when he wrote,

One [Jewish] man considers one day to more sacred than another; another [Gentile] man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord.... Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way (Rom. 14:5-6a, 13).

¹¹³Hendriksen, 124 (emphases his).

¹¹⁴That the relationship between Jews and Gentiles looms large in the letter is convincingly demonstrated by Walter B. Russell III, "An Alternate Suggestion for the Purpose of Romans," *BS* 145 (April-June 1988): 174-84; cf. de Lacey, "The Sabbath/Sunday Question and the Law in the Pauline Corpus," 168; C. E. B. Cranfield, "Some Observations on the Interpretation of Romans 14:1—15:13," *Communio Viatorum* 17 (1974): 193-204.

¹¹⁵Rom. 14:2-3, 6, 14, 15, 17, 20, 21, 23. The food issue here is not one concerned with meat sacrificed to idols (cf. 1 Cor. 8—10), but rather one of eating meat as opposed to vegetarianism (Rom. 14:2).

¹¹⁶Roland de Lacey hypothesizes, based upon the γὰρ of verse 6 and the brief mention of the days issue, that the food issue overshadows the "days" issue because the latter had previously been dealt with in the church (de Lacey, "The Sabbath/Sunday Question and the Law in the Pauline Corpus," 181-82). The text is ambiguous on this issue, but Paul's teaching on following one's conscience applies equally to both issues, so elaboration on both would be unnecessary (James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9—16*, WordBC, 805).

Besides a Sabbath/Sunday controversy,¹¹⁷ the nature of the "days" here has also been seen as a reference to the Jewish ceremonial festivals,¹¹⁸ both the Sabbath *and* festivals,¹¹⁹ pagan lucky and unlucky days,¹²⁰ fast days,¹²¹ or both festivals and fast days.¹²² Others, owing to the difficulty of the issue, make no attempt to specify the exact days which were evidently known to Paul and his Roman readers.¹²³

¹¹⁷R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, 821; Henry Alford, *The Greek New Testament*, 2:452; William Barclay, *The Letter to the Romans*, DSB, 200; James M. Stifler, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 178. Cranfield argues that it has to do with "literal observance of the ceremonial part of the OT law," which includes Sabbathkeeping so that the change from the Sabbath to the Lord's Day may be in view (C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, ICC, 2:694-95, 705).

¹¹⁸John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT, 2:177-78; Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 661; Raoul Dederen, "On Esteeming One Day Better than Another," *AUSS* 9 (January 1971): 28-29; Cranfield, 2:694-95, 705. Frederick Godet notes, "The *days* are those of the Jewish feasts, which the Judeo-Christians continued for the most part to observe: Sabbaths, new moons, etc. (Col. ii. 15 [sic.])" (*Commentary on Romans*, 456); thus, while acknowledging feasts, Godet is ambiguous as to whether the weekly Sabbath is in view. de Lacey, "The Sabbath/Sunday Question and the Law in the Pauline Corpus," 181-82, holds a modified ceremonial view elaborated upon below.

¹¹⁹C. K. Barrett, *Reading Through Romans*, 73; Matthew Black, *Romans*, NCBC, 165-66; Dunn, 804-806.

¹²⁰"An alternative is to see the practices of the weak as a relic of pagan religion.... It appears, then, that Christians are in view who are convinced that days stand under lucky or unlucky stars (cf. Billerbeck, Lagrange)" (Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 368, 370; cf. Black, 166). Morris correctly responds to such a contention, "The absence of any words of condemnation makes this [pagan unlucky view] unlikely; it is hard to imagine that Paul would have accepted an appeal to luck as an acceptable Christian lifestyle" (Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 480).

¹²¹"Since nothing suggests that we have here to do with Judaizers, we shall not regard this as an allusion to the Sabbath but to practices of abstinence and fasting on regular fixed dates" (Franz J. Leenhardt, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 349; cf. Bacchiocchi, *The Sabbath in the New Testament*, 120; id., *From Sabbath to Sunday*, 364).

¹²²Everett F. Harrison, "Romans," EBC, 10:145-46; William G. T. Shedd, *A Critical and Doctrinal Commentary on the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans*, 391; Kenneth Wuest, *Romans in the Greek New Testament*, in *Word Studies in the Greek New Testament*, 1:233; Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 480.

¹²³Sanday and Headlam allude to festivals and the Sabbath in their quotations of Galatians 4:10-11 and Colossians 2:16-17 as parallel texts, but they do not specify which exact days are meant before stating, "So these same principles would apply equally to the scrupulous observance of Ecclesiastical rules, whether as in some places of Sunday, or as in others of Saints' days or Fast days" (William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, ICC, 386-87).

Whatever view of the "days" one surmises, it must fit within the Jewish context of the letter. This excludes the pagan unlucky days hypothesis, but also the fast days theory as well. Bacchiocchi advocates fast days since the context deals with meat and wine, but two separate issues are likely dealt with in the same context; he also affirms that Paul could not have referred to the Sabbath since it is a feast day, but the real issue here concerns not vegetarianism on certain days but *a vegetarian lifestyle*.

A modified ceremonial view not listed above also deserves some attention. Roland de Lacey challenges the prevailing view that it is the weak who observes the days; instead he believes that it is the *strong* believer who observes special days.¹²⁴ De Lacey suggests that the parallelism in verse 6 indicates that the meat eater and day observer both are strong since they do so "to the Lord." Therefore, in his view, Paul argues that the "strong" Jewish Christians still observed, as he did, the Jewish calendar of festivals (e.g., Sabbath, Passover, Tabernacles, etc.). De Lacey continues, "But the consciences of the weak might well have forbidden them from enjoying festivals, either because of their link with the Old Covenant or because of astrological links" (p. 182).

However, de Lacey's view is improbable for several reasons. First, verse 6 notes that the abstainer from food also does so "to the Lord," so by implication his counterpart in the days issue (the non-observer of days) does the same in an elliptical chiasmus. Second, Paul's regular practice was *not* to observe the Jewish festivals, implied in his extraordinary offering of a sacrifice and purification rite in Acts 21:17-26. Third, the contention that Paul was a Sabbath-keeper is highly improbable considering his comment in Colossians 2:16 (although the Book of Acts shows that Paul did use the Sabbath for evangelistic purposes). Fourth, Paul affirms that the observance of days is

¹²⁴De Lacey, "The Sabbath/Sunday Question and the Law in the Pauline Corpus," 181-82. In support of the opposite view, Murray, *Romans*, 178-79, remains the only commentator known to this writer who provides a defense for the weak believers being the observers of days. All other scholars assume this without defending the view.

characteristic of the weak in Colossians 2:16 and Galatians 4:10, so it is unlikely that the opposite meaning would apply in Romans. Fifth, de Lacey's view makes a distinction between two *Jewish* factions in the church (Jewish festival observers and non-observers), but the context in Romans as a whole notes Jew/Gentile differences.¹²⁵ Sixth, the observance of food restrictions indicates a weak brother, so the parallel would be that the one who observes days would also be the weak brother. Finally, if appeal to astrology were in view, Paul could never leave the issue up to individual conscience. Therefore, it appears that Paul identifies himself with the strong (15:1) because they recognize their freedom from observing both special days and food requirements. More likely Romans 14:6 simply indicates that both men act with a clear conscience and thus are pleasing to God in these debatable matters.

Therefore, there is no reason to abandon the traditional view that Paul rebukes the weak in faith for expecting the strong to observe festivals, not the least of which is the Sabbath (cf. Lev. 23).¹²⁶ Thus a Sabbath/ Sunday controversy may be referred to as well so that the unnecessary "days" may include the Sabbath, Jewish feasts, or both.

In contrast to Paul's teaching to the Colossian church, he does not condemn these Sabbath-keeping believers in Romans. Why is a stern warning missing? In Colosse, the very essence of the gospel is at stake, so he forcefully enunciates the abrogation of the Sabbath. He confronts the Galatians for Sabbath observance over the same issue. However, the issue in Romans is Christian liberty (not justification by faith) among those with sensitive consciences. In no way does he *advocate* Sabbath worship;

¹²⁵Since the question of diet (v. 2) is almost universally thought to apply in a Jew/Gentile context, it is unlikely that two groups other than Jews and Gentiles would be addressed in the observance of the special days (Dunn, 805).

¹²⁶Murray, *Romans*, 257-59, argues from "Scripture as a whole" against the Sabbath being included in Romans 14:5, but his arguments are not convincing and find refutation elsewhere in the present study.

on the contrary, he labels the Sabbath-keepers as being weak in faith (14:1).¹²⁷ However, he does allow them to continue to observe this tenant of the law as long as it does not challenge the equal status of Gentile Christians.¹²⁸ By allowing Sabbath observance for those who do not yet know their freedom in this issue Paul prevents schism over a non-essential matter which relates neither to sanctification nor justification.

However, one must not allow the debate over *which* days are in question to obscure the overriding principle Paul expresses in this passage. The main principle taught here is that all days are alike before God. Alford notes in this regard:

Now the question is, supposing the divine obligation of one day in seven to have been recognized by him *in any form*, could he have thus spoken? The obvious inference from his strain of arguing is, that he *knew of no such obligation*, but believed *all times and days to be*, to the Christian strong in faith, ALIKE. If any one day in the week were invested with the sacred character of the Sabbath, it would have been *wholly impossible* for the Apostle to commend or uphold the man who judged all days worthy of equal honor....¹²⁹

Therefore, the very fact that Paul considered the controversy over days at Rome to be a secondary issue argues convincingly against a present Sabbath obligation. Actually, it argues against the compulsory observance of *any* day, including Sunday. Sunday worship, as the remainder of this chapter will testify, was practiced in the church from the beginning, but it is never commanded to be observed as was the Jewish Sabbath.¹³⁰ As Jesus had declared all foods to be "alike," or clean (Mark 7:20), so Paul declared that all days are alike and appropriate for worship according to conscience. No day, whether Sabbath or another, holds sanctity over other days in the present dispensation.

¹²⁷Leslie C. Allen, "Romans," in *IBC*, 1341.

¹²⁸de Lacey, "The Sabbath/Sunday Question and the Law in the Pauline Corpus," 191, n. 84.

¹²⁹Alford, 3:452 (emphases his).

¹³⁰R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles*, 825-26.

Scripture Indicating Sunday as the Present Day of Worship

Just as Scripture teaches the abolition of the Jewish Sabbath in the present dispensation, so it also designates Sunday as the present day of worship for believers. However, "the Christian Sunday is not in any sense a continuation of the Jewish sabbath,"¹³¹ for no evidence exists of early Christians attaching a "holy day" meaning to Sunday.¹³² Admittedly, one cannot find a specific statement by Christ or the apostles authorizing the change from Saturday to Sunday.¹³³ However, the abolishment of the Sabbath for this age, combined with the practice of the early church to meet on Sunday,¹³⁴ makes the change of the day of worship unquestionable.

This assertion has often been challenged. Some state that the origin of Sunday as a day of worship is unknown,¹³⁵ while others attribute it to anti-Judaistic

¹³¹Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, 483.

¹³²R. H. Charles, *The Decalogue*, 162-63; Riesenfeld, "The Sabbath and the Lord's Day in Judaism, the Preaching of Jesus and Early Christianity," 123-24.

¹³³James P. Wesberry, "Are We Compromising Ourselves?" *Sunday* 63 (April-June 1976): 5.

¹³⁴Riesenfeld argues that the first Christian worship services were on *Saturday* night, not Sunday night, then were later changed to Sunday morning services before dawn as this was a work day. His reasoning, however, is based upon a faulty translation of τῇ μιᾷ σαββάτων ("the first day of the week") as "the first after the sabbath" in John 20:19. This reasoning cannot stand on two grounds. First, although the word "day" is elliptical, the use of σαββάτων to mean "week" is well substantiated (Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:2; Luke 24:1; John 20:1; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2 t.r.). Second, John 20:19 specifically declares this day to be the same day (τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ, "that day") as the resurrection in verse 1. (See Riesenfeld, "The Sabbath and the Lord's Day in Judaism, the Preaching of Jesus and Early Christianity," 124f.).

¹³⁵Although he argues for Sunday observance from the post-resurrection gatherings of the disciples, Rordorf also notes that the "present state of our knowledge does not enable us to discover *for certain* the origin of the observance of Sunday" (Rordorf, 237, emphasis his; cf. 177).

sentiment in the early second century (after A.D. 135)¹³⁶ or Egyptian¹³⁷ or Roman¹³⁸ influences in the fourth century. One Sabbatarian author even boldly attributes Sunday worship to Satan:

What beautiful truth God gave us in Sabbath rest! You can imagine how Satan hates this weekly reminder of refuge in Christ. How could he destroy the Sabbath by making it appear spiritually illegitimate? Working through his mystery of iniquity, he invented the Sunday counterfeit to ruin our rest in Christ's atonement.¹³⁹

One can only wonder how it is *Sunday worship* (not a return to the Sabbath of Judaism) which ruins the believer's rest in Christ's atonement.

Although much debate centers around when the Sabbath to Sunday change was made, the New Testament is not silent on the matter. Both biblical¹⁴⁰ and theological¹⁴¹

¹³⁶Bacchiocchi, *Anti-Judaism and the Origin of Sunday*, 118f.; id., "How it Came About: From Saturday to Sunday," *BAR* 4 (September-October 1978): 32-40; id., "Rome and the Origin of Sunday," *Encounter* 40 (1979): 359-75; Niels-Erik Andreasen, *Rest and Redemption*, 5-6.

¹³⁷Bishai has proposed that in Egypt apostolic Sabbath observance evolved into worship on Saturday and Sunday at the time of the Council of Nicea, then was replaced with Sunday worship alone about a century later (W. B. Bishai, "Sabbath Observance from Coptic Sources," *AUSS* 1 [1963]: 25-31). However, a fellow Adventist argues against this hypothesis by placing Sunday worship as early as the beginning of the second century and dual worship from the third century (Robert A. Kraft, "Some Notes on Sabbath Observance in Early Christianity," *AUSS* 3 [1965]: 18-33). However, even Kraft's analysis is not early enough as will be demonstrated in the remainder of the present chapter.

¹³⁸For the historical factors involved in Sunday becoming the official of rest in the Roman Empire see Walter Woodburn Hyde, *Paganism to Christianity in the Roman Empire*, 257-64; Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 3:279-80. Constantine's edict of A.D. 321 prohibited non-rural work (i.e., work of judges, city-dwellers, and tradesmen) on Sunday, which officially made it a day of rest *for some people* in addition to its prior Christian significance as a day only for worship. However, the observance was in acknowledgement of "the venerable Day of the Sun" and thus pagan rather than Christian in its motivation (*Cod. Just.* 50.3 in Schaff, 3:380, n. 1). Later, military exercises were prohibited on Sunday as well (Eusebius *Vit. Const.* 4.18-21).

¹³⁹Max Weber, 94.

¹⁴⁰A summary of the biblical arguments for Sunday observance are cited by Darby: "Christ arose, Christ met His disciples on it, and again the same week following. On the first day of the week the disciples met to break bread; on the first day they were to lay by their profits for the poor saints; and in the Revelation it is definitely called the Lord's day" (Darby, "Reply to a Presbyterian Minister on the Law, the Sabbath, etc.," *Complete Works*, 14:354).

¹⁴¹Wolff provides interesting theological reasoning supporting Sunday worship. Arguing from a creation ordinance in which man's first full day was the Sabbath, he notes that "man on the first day of his life could rest with God and look back upon the great work God had done. Only after this does man turn to his work. Hence the early Christians were right in making the first day of the week, rather than the seventh, their day of rest. Moreover, in so doing they exercised theological wisdom. After all, for the person whom

reasons have been proposed, but the biblical data must be given priority. The most important New Testament Scriptures will now be addressed in chronological order.

Matthew 28:1

The most commonly voiced biblical argument for Sunday as the day of worship is the fact that Christ was raised on this important day.¹⁴² This teaching first finds reference at the end of the first century or beginning of the second century¹⁴³ in the pseudonymous¹⁴⁴ *Epistle of Barnabas*, which states that God was not pleased with

God has liberated and richly blessed, the day of rest marks, not the end, but the *beginning* of the week" (Hans Walter Wolff, "The Day of Rest in the Old Testament," *LexTQ* 7 [July 1972]: 69). Darby also notes that the observance of the Sabbath makes no sense for the Christian since Christ lay in the tomb on that day. In contrast, the first day is a day of blessing as the Old Testament verifies in its declaration of the eighth day as a day of special blessing (Darby, "Romanism," *Complete Works*, 18:75-76). The first view is problematic in its arguing from a so-called creation ordinance, and the second approaches allegorical interpretation.

¹⁴²Among the multitudinous references that could be cited, see Oscar Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship*, 10-11; Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, 3:53; de Vaux, 483; James P. Wesberry, comp., *The Lord's Day*, 27; John A. O'Brien, *The Faith of Millions*, 472; Hyde, 259.

¹⁴³The only internal evidence which aids dating in the *Epistle of Barnabas* is 16.3-5, which presupposes that the Jerusalem temple had been destroyed (due to the Jews making war) and was still in ruins while another "temple" was being constructed by the enemies of the Jews. This places the letter after A.D. 70 and before A.D. 135 when Hadrian erected a pagan temple on the same site (Robert A. Kraft, *The Apostolic Fathers*, vol. 3, *Barnabas and the Didache*, 42). Dates for the letter may perhaps be categorized in three eras. Adhering to early dates are J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, I, 1:5 (Flavian dynasty [A.D. 69-96], or A.D. 70-79 noted in his single volume *The Apostolic Fathers*, 135) and A. Lukyn Williams, "The Date of the Epistle of Barnabas," *JTS* 34 (October 1933): 343-44 (A.D. 75-79 or more likely A.D. Sept. 96-Jan. 98). James A. Kleist advocates a medium date of A.D. 117-132 based upon internal evidence (antinomianism, danger to the Christian community, etc.) which places the composition during the reign of Hadrian (*The Didache, The Epistle of Barnabas, The Epistles and the Martyrdom of St. Polycarp, The Fragments of Papias, The Epistle to Diognetus*, ACW, 31-32). Lake also supports a medium dating of "early second century, or possibly earlier" (Kirsopp Lake, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 1:307). Finally, those suggesting later dates between A.D. 130-138 include Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, 1:90-91 (A.D. 132-138); Edgar J. Goodspeed, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 19-20 (A.D. 130-131); William H. Shea, "The Sabbath in the Epistle of Barnabas," *AUSS* 4 (1966): 149, n. 2 ("the first third of the 2d century"); Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, 218 (A.D. 130-138). Even given the latest date of A.D. 138, it is impossible that Sunday worship arose after A.D. 135 (supported by Bacchiocchi, "How It Came About: From Saturday to Sunday," 32) since three years is hardly enough time for the practice to become as widespread as Barnabas indicates.

¹⁴⁴Authorship of this work has been attributed to Paul's traveling companion of the same name, a Gnostic (or one under the influence of Gnosticism), or an anti-Jewish Christian eager to demonstrate God's rejection of Judaism. This last motivation marshals the best evidence (Shea, "The Sabbath in the Epistle of Barnabas," 149-75; Kleist, 29, 33). However, the work is erroneous and anti-Pauline in its affirmation that

Sabbath observance but rather with the eighth day as symbolic of both the "dawn of another world" (eternal state)¹⁴⁵ and "the same day on which Jesus rose from the dead."¹⁴⁶ The specific reference in all four Gospels to Christ's resurrection¹⁴⁷ on the first day of the week is significant, almost functioning as tacit approval for Sunday worship.¹⁴⁸ While it is claimed that early attestation for the resurrection as the rationale for Sunday worship is lacking,¹⁴⁹ that the resurrection was the most significant emphasis in early apostolic teaching cannot be denied. Similarly, while no specific New Testament passage suggests that Sunday worship arose in celebration of Christ's resurrection, this remains the most plausible rationale for the change in the day of worship.¹⁵⁰

John 20:19, 26

It is no accident that the disciples' first two encounters with the resurrected Christ both happened on Sundays. The astute interpreter should find it odd to see these

God never actually had a covenant with Israel after it was broken by idolatry at Mt. Sinai (14.1-4a; cf. 2.4; 10.2; cf. Shea, 152, 157).

¹⁴⁵That this refers to the eternal state is evident in Pseudo-Barnabas' mention that the first 6,000 years of history will end at Christ's return followed by His reign for 1,000 years (15.4-5). This places the present era in the sixth day (J. Daniélou, "La typologie millénariste de la semaine dans le christianisme primitif," *VigChr* 2 (1948): 1-16; Kleist, 179, nn. 160, 161).

¹⁴⁶*Epistle of Barnabas* 15.8-9. While Adventists claim that the celebration of the resurrection is subsidiary to the eschatological motif, nevertheless its mention provides a very early witness for Sunday worship. See Bacchiocchi, "How it Came About: From Saturday to Sunday," 32 (the footnote marked with the double asterisk **), for the accusation.

¹⁴⁷Adventists do not appeal to the resurrection, but do appeal to another aspect of Christ's work—His Sabbath rest *just before* His resurrection: "Christ completed His redemptive mission on this earth on a Friday afternoon, and having said "it is finished" (John 19:30), He hallowed the Sabbath by resting in the tomb (Luke 23:53-54; Matt. 27:57-60; Mark 15:42, 46)" (Samuele Bacchiocchi, "A Memorial of Redemption," *Spectrum* 9 [1977]: 20).

¹⁴⁸William F. Orr and James Arthur Walther, *1 Corinthians*, AB, 355, n. 2.

¹⁴⁹Riesenfeld, "The Sabbath and the Lord's Day in Judaism, the Preaching of Jesus and Early Christianity," 123-24.

¹⁵⁰Charles, *The Decalogue*, 160-61.

Jews, who celebrated the Sabbath all their lives, so quickly meeting together the day *after* the Sabbath. Surely they may have also met on the Sabbath, but nothing is mentioned of this.

It is a striking fact that the Jewish sabbath almost disappears from recorded Christian practice after Christ's resurrection. The very day before the resurrection occurs, we find the disciples resting on the Jewish sabbath (Luke 23:56; cp. also Mark 16:1; John 19:42), but after it has happened the observance of the seventh day is never mentioned except as a tolerated option for Jewish Christians (Rom. 14:5), or an intolerable imposition by Judaizing heretics (Gal. 4:9-11; Col. 2:16f.), or in passages where Paul reasons with the Jews in the synagogue on the sabbath (Acts 13:14, 42, 44; 17:2; 18:4; cp. also Acts 16:13), not apparently because the observance of the day is a regular part of his own devotional practice but because it provides an excellent opportunity for evangelism.¹⁵¹

One must be careful not to argue from silence and specific references to the actual day of worship in early Christianity are few. However, the few verses that are available all support Sunday worship. While the change of day may not have happened immediately, the evidence seems to indicate *at least* the existence of Sunday worship, with possible worship initially on the Sabbath as well.¹⁵² Eusebius mentions in very derogatory terms that the Sabbath was observed along with the Lord's Day by the non-Gnostic party among the Ebionites even to the fourth century.¹⁵³ If the Ebionites observed the Lord's Day, then this provides evidence for Sunday-keeping by the Christian church as a whole since Eusebius mentions that their Sabbath worship was in addition to Sunday

¹⁵¹Beckwith and Stott, 30.

¹⁵²William Hersey Davies, "The Relation to the Jewish People Claimed by Jesus in His Sabbath Teaching," *RExp* 32 (October 1935): 372. Eadie, *Commentary on the Epistle of Paul to the Colossians*, 177, asserts that both days were observed by believers until the Sabbath was condemned by the Council of Laodicea in A.D. 364, but the evidence is lacking for extending worship on both days to this late a date. The observance of both the Sabbath and the Lord's Day initially does not sound strange when one recognizes that the apostles were "continually at the temple" (Luke 24:53; Acts 2:46; 3:1). Surely if they worshipped daily (whether in whole or part), then a regular practice of two days of worship cannot be deemed impossible. Also, the coexistence of a Christian institution (Sunday) with its Mosaic counterpart (the Sabbath) is not strange since circumcision was practiced simultaneously with New Testament baptism (both indicating identification with the community), and Passover continued to be celebrated with the Lord's Supper (Beckwith and Stott, 34).

¹⁵³He claims that their name, Ebionites, means "poor" in Hebrew and is therefore a fitting name due to "the poverty of their intelligence" shown in their observance of the Sabbath and the rest of Jewish ceremonial (Eusebius *Eccl. Hist.* 3.27.5).

observance, not vice versa.¹⁵⁴ Further, since the Ebonites were an anti-Pauline Judaizing sect originating from Palestinian Christianity, their Sunday worship almost certainly came from Jewish Christians and not from Paul.¹⁵⁵ This supports the unambiguous testimony of John's Gospel that Christ met twice with His disciples on Sundays before His ascension. Therefore, it is not improbable that early Christians received the practice of Sunday observance from the disciples themselves, who had practiced it since the resurrection.¹⁵⁶

Acts 2:1

Another reason for Sunday worship is that the Church itself was born on this day, as Pentecost (forty-nine days after Christ's resurrection) also occurred on the first day of the week.¹⁵⁷ While this Sunday meeting obviously cannot be considered normative, nevertheless it is significant that God did not plan this important event on a Sabbath. Thus one finds tacit approval of first day worship from the first day of the Church's existence.

Acts 15:19-21

The Jerusalem Council decree provides further substantiation for Sunday worship. "It is instructive... to note that in the decree of Jerusalem (Acts 15:23ff.) Sabbath observance is as little imposed as binding on Gentile Christians as is that of any

¹⁵⁴Ibid.

¹⁵⁵Beckwith and Stott, 32.

¹⁵⁶Ibid., 33; Leon Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, TNTC, 238; Alford, 3:223.

¹⁵⁷For an extended discussion of Pentecost appearing on a Sunday, see William DeLoss Love, "The Sabbath in the Old Dispensation, and the Change of Observance from the Seventh to the Lord's Day," *BS* 37 (April-June 1880): 359-73; cf. Marchant A. King, "The Sabbath and the Spring Feasts," *Moody*, May 1985, 46; Wesberry, "Are We Compromising Ourselves?" 5.

other holy day."¹⁵⁸ It is evident in the Book of Acts that converted Jews still considered themselves zealous for the Law,¹⁵⁹ but all of these references apply only to Jews. That Gentiles were free from the day even as early as A.D. 49¹⁶⁰ is evident from the omission of the Sabbath in this Jerusalem Council decree. This is not an argument from silence, for the Council specifically declared the four obligations expected of Gentiles, thus exempting them from all other regulations of the law. Also, if the Jerusalem church practiced the Sabbath and expected the Gentiles to do so as well, it certainly would have sent a delegation to the Gentile churches to correct their Sunday worship. Luke records nothing of the sort.

Samuele Bacchiocchi disagrees that the Palestinian church could so easily abandon the Sabbath:

In a climate of such profound attachment to Jewish religious observances, it is inconceivable that a long-standing and cherished custom such as Sabbathkeeping had been abrogated and a new day of worship introduced in its place.¹⁶¹

Although Bacchiocchi's logic may seem acceptable, no specific biblical evidence can be marshalled to prove continued Sabbath-keeping. Paul certainly used the synagogue as his first point of evangelistic contact in a new city, so it is not inconceivable that others evangelized from this point of contact. Indeed, Epiphanius records in the fourth century that some Christian Jews, known as the sect of the Nazoraeans, were unlike other believers in that they were "still fettered by the Law—circumcision, the Sabbath, and the rest."¹⁶² Since this group of Christians practiced the

¹⁵⁸*EB*, "Sabbath," by Smith, Marti, and Cheyne, 4:4175.

¹⁵⁹Paul still celebrated Pentecost (Acts 20:16) and the Feast of Unleavened Bread (20:6), and the converted Jews in Jerusalem were "all zealous for the law" (21:20), which Paul himself demonstrated (21:24).

¹⁶⁰This date for the Jerusalem Council is derived from Harold Hoehner, "A Chronology of the Apostolic Age," Th.D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1964, rev. 1972, 381-84.

¹⁶¹Bacchiocchi, "Rome and the Origin of Sunday," *Encounter* 40 (1979): 359.

¹⁶²Epiphanius *Panarion* 2.29.7.4.

Sabbath more than three hundred years after the apostolic church it is not inconceivable that some *Jewish* believers in the first century could have still held to the Sabbath. This is not stated in Scripture, but it is likely considering passages such as Romans 14:5. However, as previously discussed, Paul's perspective was to consider the institution as a tolerated practice for Jewish Christians and thus not the norm.

Nevertheless, the most significant factor in determining the early church's day of worship must be Scripture. Most of the remainder of this chapter is devoted to the three most significant New Testament texts which convey Sunday observance (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2; Rev. 1:10). Each of these passages takes place in a predominantly, though not exclusively, Gentile congregation. Each also demonstrates Sunday worship to be the norm in the early church.

Acts 20:7

The first of the most important passages substantiating Sunday worship is Acts 20:7, which indicates that Paul preached to believers gathered in Troas to break bread on the first day of the week.¹⁶³ This day is obviously Sunday,¹⁶⁴ the day which had become the regular day to celebrate the Lord's Supper. That the gathering occurred in the evening rather than a "Sunday morning service" is not problematic since Sunday was a regular work day for early Christians and would thus necessitate an evening service.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶³The early church continued the practice of Judaism in its designations for the days of the week: "The last day of the week was called sabbath, Friday was the day of preparation or eve of the sabbath, and the other weekdays were simply numbered first, second, third day, etc. This cannot surprise us if we reflect that Christianity emerged from Judaism and that the planetary week did not, in fact, exist at that time" (Rordorf, 39-40; cf. Lohse, *TDNT*, 7:32).

¹⁶⁴Among the many which can be cited, see Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 584; F. F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 372; id., *Commentary on the Book of Acts*, NICNT, 408; William Neil, *Acts*, NCBC, 211; Alford, 3:223; R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles*, 824-26; E. H. Trenchard, "Acts," in *IBC*, 1302; David Brown, "Acts," *JFB*, 6:146-47.

¹⁶⁵Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of Acts*, 408; Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 104-105.

However, some scholars believe that the phrase translated "the first day of the week" (τῇ μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων) refers to *Saturday* night, not *Sunday* night.¹⁶⁶ The proper day depends upon whether Luke uses a sunrise to sunrise¹⁶⁷ or sunset to sunset form of reckoning time.¹⁶⁸ Some believe the Jewish method initially was sunrise reckoning but later changed to sunset after the Exile¹⁶⁹ or in the Greek era;¹⁷⁰ however, Scripture uses

¹⁶⁶F. Marshall, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 100; Carl R. Holladay, "Acts," in *HBC*, 1107; C. H. Dodd, "New Testament Translation Problems I," *BiTr* 27 (1976): 301-11; Desmond Ford, "Rest Day—Blest Day—Test Day!" *ARSH*, 13 November 1975, 31, n. 9. Several recent English versions hold to a Saturday night reckoning (NEB, REB, GNB, JB [footnote], and translations by J. B. Phillips and William Barclay). Others intimate that a Saturday service *may* be in view (Haenchen, 584, n. 1; C. F. D. Moule, *Worship in the New Testament*, 29) while Hans Conzelmann considers the Saturday/Sunday issue inconclusive (*Acts of the Apostles*, Herm, 169).

¹⁶⁷Supported by P. J. Heawood, "The Beginning of the Jewish Day," *JQR* 36 (April 1945): 393-401; Umberto Cassuto, *Commentary on Genesis*, 28-30. However, Cassuto acknowledges evening reckoning for festivals and appointed times (p. 29).

¹⁶⁸A third major option is the Roman/Egyptian method from midnight to midnight. Pliny presents even more options: "The Babylonians count the period between two sunrises, the Athenians that between two sunsets, the Umbrians from midday to midday, the common people everywhere from dawn to dark, the Roman priests and the authorities who fixed the official day, and also the Egyptians and Hipparchus, the period from midnight to midnight" (*Natural History* 2.79.188).

¹⁶⁹Arguing for a pre-exilic solar reckoning from sunrise and a post-exilic lunar reckoning from sunset are Solomon Zeitlen, "The Beginning of the Jewish Day During the Second Commonwealth," *JQR* 36 (April 1945): 403-14; H. R. Stroes, "Does the Day Begin in the Evening or Morning?" *VT* 16 (1966): 460-75; de Vaux, 180-83. Cassuto, 29, argues the opposite view that nomads employed an evening reckoning which was abandoned for a sunrise method at the rise of "civil life."

¹⁷⁰Jacob Z. Lauterback, *Rabbinic Essays*, 448.

both sunrise¹⁷¹ and, more extensively, sunset¹⁷² methods throughout.¹⁷³ The question here, though, is what method Luke employed.

The clearest evidence shows that Luke employed a morning reckoning so that a Sunday evening service is in view. First, a comparison of the Gospels of Mark and Luke demonstrates that Luke divides the day in the Greek manner.¹⁷⁴ Second, Luke's mention of "until the next day, for it was already evening" (Acts 4:3; cf. 4:5) supports a non-Jewish (i.e., non-sunset) reckoning. Third, the context in Acts 20 indicates that Luke

¹⁷¹Gen. 19:34; Exod. 12:6, 8, 10; 29:39-41; Lev. 7:15, 16; 22:29-30; Jud. 19:9; 1 Sam. 28:8, 18, 25; Matt. 28:1; Mark 11:11-12; 14:12 (Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread on the same day); 16:2; Acts 4:3; 23:32; plus about 50 references which mention "day" before "night" (e.g., Gen. 1:14, 16; 8:22; 31:40; Acts 9:24; Luke 18:7; Rev. 12:10). This last reasoning may perhaps be questioned as indicating "not only by day (which is self-evident) but even *at night* (which one would not so easily expect)" (Stroes, "Does the Day Begin in the Evening or Morning?" 463; emphasis his).

¹⁷²Lev. 22:4-7; 23:32; 1 Kings 8:29; Esther 4:16; Neh. 13:19; Ps. 55:17; Dan. 8:14, 26; plus many references which mention "night" before "day" (e.g., Gen. 1: 5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31; Deut. 1:33; 28:66; 1 Sam. 25:16; Ps. 91:5; Isa. 27:3; 34:10; Jer. 14:17; Mark 5:5; Luke 2:37; John 20:1; Acts 20:31; 26:7; 2 Cor. 11:25; 1 Thess. 2:9; 3:10; 2 Thess. 3:8; 1 Tim. 5:5; 2 Tim. 1:3). Josephus clearly acknowledges sunset reckoning for the Sabbath signaled by the blow of the priest's trumpet in *Wars of the Jews* 4.9.12 (p. 543), also supported in *Antiquities of the Jews* 16.6.2 (p. 344). Sunset reckoning has always been the practice of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (Carl Coffman, "The Practice of Beginning the Sabbath in America," *AUSS* 3 [1965]: 17).

¹⁷³The apparent inconsistency of the reckoning of the Day of Atonement to be on the ninth (Lev. 23:32) and tenth day (Lev. 23:27) of the seventh month suggests that both methods were in use during preexilic times. Zeitlen's contention that this covered "two parts of consecutive days" ("The Beginning of the Jewish Day During the Second Commonwealth," 405) unsuccessfully attempts to defend higher critical divisions into pre-exilic and post-exilic texts. For a thorough analysis of the reckoning the day in the Bible, see Samuele Bacchiocchi, "The Reckoning of the Day in Bible Times," in *The Time of the Crucifixion and the Resurrection*, 65-89; Roger T. Beckwith, "The Day, its Divisions and its Limits, in Biblical Thought," *EvQ* 43 (October-December 1971): 218-27. Both of these authors argue for a coexistence of the two time reckonings. Bacchiocchi also demonstrates this view through Josephus' writings (pp. 80-83).

¹⁷⁴Mark notes that it was still the day of preparation (not the Sabbath) *after* sunset on the day of Christ's crucifixion (Mark 15:42). Similarly, Mark 16:1-2 indicates that the women came to anoint Jesus' body when the Sabbath was over "very early on the first day of the week" (Sunday morning). These two passages (especially the first) indicate that Mark used either a midnight or sunrise reckoning. However, Luke's version of the same account is problematic. Luke 23:54 cites that after Jesus' body was taken down from the cross "it was Preparation Day and the Sabbath was about to begin," which seems to indicate an evening reckoning; nevertheless, this confusion is cleared up when one recognizes Luke's main point is that the Sabbath was beginning *for these Jewish women*. In light of this, one can still argue that Luke normally reckons the day in the Greek manner (Kirsopp Lake and Henry Joel Cadbury, *The Acts of the Apostles*, in *Beginnings*, 4:255).

reckoned the day in the Greek manner from morning to morning¹⁷⁵ or the Roman manner from midnight to midnight¹⁷⁶ since Paul indicated that he would depart the next day (v. 7) which was at daybreak (v. 11). If Luke employed the Jewish evening to evening reckoning, then the next daybreak would have been on the *same* day. Finally, it makes better sense that Luke, a Gentile, writing to other Gentiles, would use their method of reckoning the day. Even John's Gospel employs a non-Jewish reckoning despite the fact that John was a Jew who wrote about the events of Christ's life in Palestine.¹⁷⁷ Thus, Paul presumably began his message on Sunday afternoon or evening,¹⁷⁸ at the close of the first day of the week, and finished it at dawn on Monday.¹⁷⁹

Another evidence for Sunday worship concerns the phrase "the first day of the week," which refers to Sunday elsewhere in the New Testament. Matthew 28:1 is the first such reference. While some would like to translate the phrase "the first day after the Sabbath" so that the genitive σαββάτων is equivalent to μετὰν with an accusative,¹⁸⁰ this

¹⁷⁵Bruce, *Acts of the Apostles*, 372.

¹⁷⁶Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of Acts*, 408, n. 25.

¹⁷⁷John 20:19; cf. Love, "The Sabbath in the Old Dispensation, and the Change of Observance from the Seventh to the Lord's Day," 379-81.

¹⁷⁸The time Paul commenced teaching is not cited, but the beginning of his message in the evening is probably to be preferred due to the presence of the many lamps in the meeting room (v. 8); however, the lamps may not have been lit the entire time and at other times he taught from morning to evening (e.g., Acts 28:23).

¹⁷⁹Even if this reasoning is incorrect and the service began on *Saturday* night, since Seventh-day Adventists reckon the Sabbath from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday, the verse *still* cannot be used as justification for New Testament worship on the Sabbath.

¹⁸⁰R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles*, 824.

is unnecessary since the usage of σαββάτων¹⁸¹ and σάββατον¹⁸² for "week" (rather than "Sabbath") is well substantiated.¹⁸³

Whether Saturday night or Sunday night is in view, Ford argues that the passage is not relevant since it is not based upon explicit command: "If the examples of even good men were binding as laws, what troubles would afflict the church universal."¹⁸⁴ This statement fails to take into account that Luke records not simply a practice of good men, but one of apostolic sanction. The apostles' practice¹⁸⁵ must be deemed authoritative since no *better* example exists for the universal church.¹⁸⁶

Bacchiocchi advocates a Saturday night service, but acknowledges that the passage may also indicate a Sunday service, though not a regular one.¹⁸⁷ His reasonings for seeing an extraordinary service here are several. First,

It is hard to believe that Paul spent seven days at Troas without meeting with the believers until the eve of his departure. The first-day evening meeting must then be regarded as the final farewell gathering organized "to break bread" with Paul.¹⁸⁸

In response to this argument, Sunday worship advocates do not claim that Paul neglected to meet with the believers during the week. They only point out that Luke

¹⁸¹Plural: Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:2; Luke 24:1; John 20:1, 19; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2 t.r.; P. Gardner-Smith, "ΔΕΠΙΦΩΣΚΕΙΝ," *JThS* 27 (1926): 179-81.

¹⁸²Singular: Luke 18:12; Mark 16:2 (t.r.), 9; 1 Cor. 16:2.

¹⁸³BAGD, s.v. "savbbaton," 739; Thayer, s.v. "savbbaton," 566.

¹⁸⁴Ford, "Rest Day—Blest Day—Test Day!" 31, n. 9.

¹⁸⁵This excludes culturally bound practices unique to the first century.

¹⁸⁶Christ's Sabbath practice before His death cannot be properly appealed to as authoritative since He did not live in the present dispensation. The only pattern of weekly worship He showed after His death was to gather with the disciples on Sundays.

¹⁸⁷Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, 101-111; cf. Walter F. Specht, "Sunday in the New Testament," in *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, 122, 124.

¹⁸⁸Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, 107.

takes special note of the exact day of their meeting, which argues more for a regular practice than a special gathering.

A second argument for a special rather than typical service is that the "breaking of the bread" took place after midnight (Acts 20:7, 11). Its association with a prolonged message to sleepy-eyed believers "suggests that its function was more social than cultic," especially since extremely few words are used to describe the event.¹⁸⁹ However, the best evidence indicates that in the early church the Lord's Supper was celebrated in conjunction with a communal meal (1 Cor. 11:20-34).¹⁹⁰

A third argument leveled against the Sunday viewpoint is that *only* Paul ate the bread (v. 11) since all the verbs are in the singular and since he undoubtedly was hungry from preaching.¹⁹¹ However, this claim that Paul ate in front of everyone contradicts their express purpose for the gathering. It was not to hear Paul preach or teach, it was not to sing hymns, it was not to be entertained or amused; they "came together to break bread."¹⁹² Certainly the mention of Paul alone is because of his leadership of the believers. The alternative view is that everyone gathered together for the Lord's Supper or for a communal meal and every single one of them changed his mind and did not eat. As they intended to eat together, one would assume that sufficient food was provided for all¹⁹³ and it is highly improbable that after listening to Paul for hours (until midnight passed) that they would leave the food.

¹⁸⁹Ibid., 107, 109.

¹⁹⁰See Moule's chapter on "The Fellowship Meal and Its Developments" in *Worship in the New Testament*, 18-46, esp. 29.

¹⁹¹Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, 108-109. Specht, "Sunday in the New Testament," 123, agrees by stating that no cup or prayers are mentioned.

¹⁹²Ironside, *Lectures on Acts*, 463-64.

¹⁹³Bacchiocchi suggests that "perhaps there were too many [believers] to be cared for" (*From Sabbath to Sunday*, 107).

It remains to address what motivated Luke to specifically record these events as taking place on the "first day of the week." Bacchiocchi suggests three explanations: (1) because Paul was "ready to depart" (20:7), (2) it was the day of Eutychus' resurrection, and (3) Luke desired to provide a chronological reference for Paul's journey.¹⁹⁴ In response, (1) the mention of Paul's departure has little to do with the time designation, (2) one wonders why mentioning the particular day of the week would be important in regard to Eutychus' resurrection, and (3) Luke's other chronological references relate not to particular days of the week but to numbers of weeks (Acts 17:2), months (Acts 18:11), and years (Acts 28:30). Bacchiocchi fails to indicate how mention of "the first day of the week" helps the reader in establishing a more accurate chronology for Paul's journey.

Therefore, all attempts to discredit the traditional view that Acts 20:7 supports Sunday-keeping are plagued with difficulties of their own. These arguments do not account for the use of the same term ("first day of the week") employed for Jesus' Sunday resurrection. They fail to answer why specific mention is made of the day, and also fail to explain the reason why the believers gathered to break bread together (as opposed to watching their teacher eat alone). While Paul undoubtedly ministered to the believers during his seven day stay at Troas, Luke's special note that Paul would not leave until after their Sunday gathering provides evidence that this was a regular time for the church to meet together.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁴Ibid., 111.

¹⁹⁵Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 814.

1 Corinthians 16:1-2

Paul's instructions to the Corinthian church on collections¹⁹⁶ for the poor also provide additional early evidence for Sunday as the day of worship in the primitive church.¹⁹⁷ Paul here exhorts the saving up of alms every first day of the week to provide famine relief money for distressed saints in Jerusalem:¹⁹⁸

Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made. Then, when I arrive, I will... send... your gift to Jerusalem" (1 Cor. 16:1-3).

The issue again is whether Sunday worship can be justified from this text. Bacchiocchi's extended discussion of this passage¹⁹⁹ asserts that private, not public, almsgiving is in view.²⁰⁰ Another Adventist argues virtually the same point, that "it requires Christians to do their bookkeeping at the beginning of the working week."²⁰¹ Even several non-Adventists have also acknowledged the same: "Jews were forbidden to

¹⁹⁶On the whole subject of the collection in the various churches see Keith F. Nickle, *The Collection*.

¹⁹⁷Among the many adherents, see Fee, 813-14; Frederick Louis Godet, *Commentary on First Corinthians*, 883; Leon Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, TNTC, 238; R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians*, 759; John MacArthur, Jr., *1 Corinthians*, MNTC, 451; Charles Hodge, *1 & 2 Corinthians*, 363; W. Harold Mare, "1 Corinthians," *EBC*, 10:293; Paul W. Marsh, "1 Corinthians," in *IBC*, 1386.

¹⁹⁸The economic difficulties of the Jerusalem church probably resulted from the combination of a variety of factors: Christians being predominantly from the lower classes, persecution for their faith, extended suffering from a famine ten years earlier (Acts 1:28), and overpopulation of the city (MacArthur, 450-51; Godet, 880-81).

¹⁹⁹Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, 90-101.

²⁰⁰*Ibid.*, 94. In response to the supposed private emphasis here, de Lacey responds that this reasoning would exclude Christian gatherings for worship at *any* time (de Lacey, "The Sabbath/Sunday Question and the Law in the Pauline Corpus," 184). This defense of Sunday worship is unacceptable as it goes too far.

²⁰¹Ford, "Rest Day—Blest Day—Test Day!" 31, n. 9.

handle money on the Sabbath; so perhaps the arrangement to lay aside money on the first day of the week was a convenience to avoid offense."²⁰²

Admittedly, the text makes no mention of a worship service.²⁰³ Alford agrees, but also notes that one cannot escape the obvious reference to Sunday as having some religious significance.²⁰⁴ Further, the lack of specific mention of a corporate meeting does not necessarily exclude it, especially if other factors are present which lend credence to the view. Such factors do in fact exist. For one, nearly all of the remaining chapters of the epistle from chapter 11 onward address matters affecting public worship. Paul addresses the issues of male-female propriety in worship (11:2-16), the Lord's Supper (11:17-34), and the corporate use of spiritual gifts (chaps. 12—14, esp. 14:16, 19, 23, 24, 26-40). Therefore, that a public gathering is in view is consistent with the general context.

A second evidence for Sunday worship relates to the time in which one would naturally prepare his offering for corporate giving. Is it really feasible to suppose that one would prepare his offering on Sunday to be given the following Sabbath? This would require believers who received their pay during the week to hold it over the Sabbath and lay aside their offering on Sunday as preparation to give the *next* Sabbath. If the church met on the Sabbath, it would be most natural for Christian workers to prepare their gifts on Friday to be given the following day. Yet the text clearly says that money was to be set aside on Sunday. If the offering was to be set aside at home and kept there,

²⁰²Orr and Walther, 355, n. 2. Other non-Adventists who advocate a private collection without implication of a church service include F. F. Bruce, *1 & 2 Corinthians*, 158; Nickle, 15. Also advocated is Sunday worship with a private, not public, collection (cf. Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, ICC, 304-5; F. W. Grosheide, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT, 398; Lenski, 758-60).

²⁰³Orr and Walther, 355, n. 2.

²⁰⁴Alford, 3:621. Otherwise, Paul would simply have said to lay aside money "once a week" (Fee, 813).

"why mention doing it on Sunday, when they could just as well do it regularly at home at other times?"²⁰⁵

A third evidence for a corporate Sunday collection is that Paul declares that the offerings should be saved up so that no collections will have to be made when he arrives.

The most natural meaning of *lay by him in store* is, as many commentators from Chrysostom down have maintained, that each is to keep the money in store at home. But as Paul expressly depreciates the collecting of the money when he arrives (which would be necessary if they all had it laid by at home) it is perhaps better to think of it as being stored in the church treasury.²⁰⁶

Arguments that this phrase (παρ' ἐαυτῷ τιθέτω θησαυρίζων) means "to lay by at home"²⁰⁷ or "to lay by himself"²⁰⁸ are inconclusive since no specific mention is made of where the money was to be deposited. Obviously, the most natural way for money to be collected and stored each Sunday was for the church to meet regularly on that day. Even if one's offering was to be laid aside at home, this is still not incompatible with a Sunday service; the money could be set aside privately and given at the public gathering.

Another problem with the "private collection" view is that it fails to take into account the fact that the readers of the letter were predominantly Gentiles.²⁰⁹ The claim mentioned above that Jews were forbidden to handle money on the Sabbath therefore is largely irrelevant. As Gentiles the Corinthians would have no scruples about counting their money on the Sabbath in preparation to give the following day. Even if the church did worship on the Sabbath and Paul gave the command to encourage Gentiles not to offend their fellow Jewish Christians, why were not personal offerings prepared on the

²⁰⁵Mare, 10:293.

²⁰⁶Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians*, 238.

²⁰⁷Bruce, 158.

²⁰⁸Hodge, 364.

²⁰⁹That the readership was for the most part Gentile is evident in the (Greek) tendency on the part of the readers to exalt wisdom (1:22; cf. 1:17—2:16), the church's establishment after Paul left the synagogue to preach to Gentiles (Acts 18:1-7), and the well-known illicit reputation of Corinth which befits Gentiles more than Jews.

day of preparation preceding the Sabbath? This would be the more logical day, for it would avoid giving offense to Jews and Gentiles alike. As already noted, it would make little sense for one to hold his gifts collected from the previous week's earnings in a Sabbath service, then on Sunday decide what to give the following Sabbath.

Therefore, although one may possibly argue that Paul exhorted the Corinthians to lay aside their alms money at home, the fact that the church's collection was to be performed on Sunday indicates that this was the regular day for corporate worship at Corinth.

Revelation 1:10

A final verse for consideration regarding the Sunday issue is Revelation 1:10, the only verse with the designation "the Lord's Day." Debate exists, even among those advocating an abrogation theology, whether this day refers to "the Day of the Lord" mentioned often in Scripture²¹⁰ in which Christ returns in power to begin His reign,²¹¹ or whether it simply means Sunday.²¹² Ryrie believes it can have either meaning.²¹³

²¹⁰Isa. 2:12; 13:6, 9; Jer. 46:10; Ezek. 13:5; 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14; Amos 5:18, 20; Obad. 15; Zeph. 1:7, 14; Zech. 14:1; Mal. 4:5; 1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Pet. 3:10.

²¹¹John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 42; id., "Revelation," *BKC*, 2:930; E. W. Bullinger, *The Apocalypse*, 152; Clarence Larkin, *The Book of Revelation*, 8-9; Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, 111-131.

²¹²Among the many adherents these can be cited: Wilfrid Stott, "A Note on the Word *kyriake* in Rev. 1:10," *NTS* 12 (1965): 70-75; G. R. Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, 65; R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John*, ICC, 1:22-23; George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John*, 31; Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, NICNT, 76; William Barclay, *The Revelation of John*, DBS, 1:53-54; Leon Morris, *The Revelation of St. John*, TNTC, 51; R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John's Revelation*, 57-58; Darby, "Reply to a Presbyterian Minister on the Law, the Sabbath, etc.," *Complete Works*, 14:354; id., "Romanism," 18:74; id., "Familiar Conversations on Romanism," 22:73; Arno C. Gaebelein, *The Revelation*, 30; Alan F. Johnson, "Revelation," *EBC*, 12:424-25; Henry Barclay Swete, *Commentary on Revelation*, 13; W. H. Griffith Thomas, *Studies in Colossians and Philemon*, 94; Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Grace*, 270; *NBD*, "Sabbath," by Young and Bruce, 1043; Bruce, "Revelation," in *IBC*, 1599; David E. Aune, "Revelation," in *HBC*, 1303.

²¹³Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Revelation*, 17.

Another view sees the term as referring to an annual celebration of the Lord's resurrection (i.e., Easter) which later evolved into a weekly Sunday worship.²¹⁴ Part of the difficulty in interpretation lies in the phrase itself (τη κυριακη ἡμέρα) which appears only here in the New Testament.

Those who advocate the *parousia* perspective do so for several reasons. First, it fits the general context of the entire Book of Revelation which concerns the Day of the Lord. Second, the day of Christ's resurrection is consistently referred to as the "first day of the week" in the New Testament (Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:2, 9; Luke 24:1; John 20:1, 19; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2).²¹⁵ Third, it is unlikely that John could have seen all he describes in the Book of Revelation in a single day.²¹⁶

However, several lines of evidence suggest that the "Lord's day" refers to Sunday rather than the eschatological day.²¹⁷ The major objection to the eschatological view is that John uses the adjective τη κυριακη which is found only one other place in the New Testament (cf. 1 Cor. 11:20, κυριακὸν δεῖπνον, "Lord's Supper").²¹⁸ When confronted with the evidence of 1 Corinthians 11:20 (the only other New Testament reference which uses the word as an adjective), Bacchiocchi argues that this usage is

²¹⁴C. W. Dugmore, "Lord's Day and Easter," in *Neotestamentica et Patristica in honorem sexagenarii O. Cullmann*, 272-81; Lawrence T. Geraty, "The Pascha and the Origin of Sunday Observance," *AUSS* 3 (1965): 85-96; Kenneth A. Strand, "Another Look at the 'Lord's Day' in the Early Church and in Rev. 1:10," *NTS* 13 (1966-1967): 174-81.

²¹⁵Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 42; Larkin, 9.

²¹⁶Larkin, 9.

²¹⁷Perhaps the best refutation of the eschatological theory is that of Stott, "A Note on the Word *kyriake* in Rev. 1:10," 70-75.

²¹⁸The contention of Rordorf (pp. 221, 274f.) that the term is *derived* from the similar phrase in 1 Corinthians 11:20 is very improbable. "*Kyriakos* is merely the adjectival form of *kyrios*, and its simple meaning is 'belonging to the Lord'" (Beckwith and Stott, 36). Rordorf's teaching that the sacrament alone matters on the Lord's Day (pp. 305f.) also is problematic in that it does not fit the context of Revelation 1:5, 7, 18 which refers to Christ's resurrection (which the Lord's Day celebrates); the context does not refer to the Supper.

unique and used only by Paul in that instance.²¹⁹ This is true, but Bacchiocchi neglects to mention that nowhere else but in 1 Corinthians does Paul ever speak of the Lord's Supper. One cannot so easily dismiss the only parallel usage of a term as "unique" when the meaning is clearly applicable to the phrase under discussion.

Second, the eschatological day of the Lord is introduced elsewhere with an entirely different term. Among other terms (but never *τη κυριακη ἡμέρα*), the Septuagint often refers to it as *ἡ ἡμέρα τοῦ κυρίου*²²⁰ and the Book of Revelation calls it "the great day of their wrath—*ἡ ἡμέρα ἡ μεγάλη τῆς ὀργῆς αὐτῶν* (6:17) and "the great day of God—*τῆς ἡμέρας τῆς μεγάλης τοῦ θεοῦ* (16:14). Although it may be argued that the same term need not always be employed for the same event,²²¹ it must be recognized that no clear example of *τη κυριακη ἡμέρα* exists which designates the eschatological day of the Lord.²²² One would expect *ἡμέρα κυρίου* if the eschatological day were in view, which is the common term employed by both Paul and Peter in parallel texts (e.g., 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Pet. 3:10).²²³

Third, that Sunday could only be referred to by the designation "the first day of the week" lacks sufficient weight. Evidence from *The Didache*, the earliest extant source²²⁴ to mention the Lord's Day, shows another term to be in use perhaps even *before*

²¹⁹Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, 126.

²²⁰Joel 2:11; Amos 5:18 (twice), 20; Zeph. 1:7; Ezek. 30:3.

²²¹Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, 127-28, affirms that the variety of terms throughout Scripture for the eschatological day of the Lord argues for another term for the same event here, but this is an overemphasis which excludes the parallel usage of *κυριακὸν* as an adjective in 1 Corinthians 11:20.

²²²Bacchiocchi agrees that the eschatological interpretation finds no parallel, but then asks, "Why not concede an exception in usage? After all the expression 'Lord's Day—*κυριακη ἡμέρα* is only a minor variation from the commonly used phrase 'day of the Lord—*ἡμέρα (τοῦ) κυρίου*' (*From Sabbath to Sunday*, 126). This appeal to exceptional usage is a possible but not necessary assumption on Bacchiocchi's part.

²²³Mounce, 76, n. 33.

²²⁴Kleist notes that the scholarly opinion on the date of *The Didache* ranges from the first to the third centuries (p. 4); however, while noting factors that seem to exclude the apostolic age, he himself

John wrote. This writing declares, "On the Lord's own day²²⁵ (κατὰ κυριακὴν δὲ κυρίου),²²⁶ assemble in common to break bread and offer thanks."²²⁷ The change from the early Jewish title of the "first day of the week" used in the first few decades of the Church to "the Lord's Day" near the end of the first century when John wrote the Apocalypse may be due to the increase of Gentiles in the Church and increased separation from traditional Judaism.²²⁸ While one can only speculate the *reason* for the name change, that it occurred early finds substantiation; therefore, "the first day of the week" was an early title but not the only title for Sunday in the first century.

Finally, this designation "Lord's day" for Sunday also has other early extra-biblical support. While early patristic references to Sunday worship have recently been challenged by Adventist scholars,²²⁹ many sources reveal Sunday observance to be a

argues for a first-century date (approx. A.D. 50-90) based upon the title, Acts 15:28ff., the language and subject matter, ecclesiastical organization, and baptism in streams (pp. 5-6). Arguing even earlier is Jean-Paul Audet, *La Didaché*; *Instructions des Apôtres*, 219 (A.D. 50-70), and a median date of at the "end of the first or beginning of the second century" is proposed by Kirsopp Lake, *The Apostolic Fathers*, LCL, 1:338. Even later dates cited by scholars include A.D. 100-150 (Quasten, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 1:36-37), "mid-second century" (Kraft, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 3:76), and an original text of A.D. 100 published in A.D. 150 (Goodspeed, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 286). Despite this range of dates, the writing is still very early.

²²⁵Bacchiocchi affirms that "doctrine," not "day," should be supplied as the noun after the adjective "Lord's" since "according to the Lord's commandment" is a common phrase in the document (Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, 114, n. 73). This is refuted by Ferguson, "But in the passages using this phrase, the word 'commandment' is there and does not need to be supplied. The discussion of different interpretations of the passage overlooks the obvious possibility that *kata* with the accusative has its common distributive use, 'every Lord's day.' The adjective 'Lord's' without a noun was a common Christian designation for Sunday" (Everett Ferguson, "Sabbath: Saturday or Sunday: A Review Article," *RQ* 23 [1980]: 177-78). Furthermore, the entire chapter of *Didache* 14 is devoted to congregational worship, which makes the translation "doctrine" foreign to the context.

²²⁶"Lit., 'On the Lord's day of the Lord': a somewhat pleonastic expression, to present the idea that the Sunday is very specially set aside to honor the Lord" (Kleist, 163). This Greek text is from Lake, 1:330.

²²⁷*Didache* 14.1.

²²⁸While John was himself a Jew, his ministry was among Gentiles in the decades preceding the vision of the Revelation.

²²⁹Bacchiocchi claims that "the earliest explicit references to the observance of Sunday as the Christian Sabbath are by Barnabas (ca. 135 A.D. [sic]) and Justin (ca. 150 A.D. [sic])" ("How it Came About: From Saturday to Sunday," 32; cf. his entire published dissertation, *From Sabbath to Sunday*).

regular practice. Since the prevailing Adventist view is that Sunday worship arose in the early second century,²³⁰ attention will be given to the four earliest sources which indicate that Sunday worship was already established by this time.²³¹ Noted above was the *Didache*, which may precede John's writing by several decades. Previous mention has also been made²³² of the early second century document, *Epistle of Barnabas* (A.D. 117-132) which substantiates Sunday worship based upon the first day of creation and Christ's resurrection.²³³

A third extra-biblical witness, Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch during the reign of Trajan (A.D. 98-117),²³⁴ also provides evidence for Sunday observance as an established practice. He wrote that "those who were brought up in the ancient order of things have come to the possession of a new hope,²³⁵ no longer observing the Sabbath,²³⁶ but living in

²³⁰This is the thesis of nearly all of Samuele Bacchiocchi's books and articles (see the Bibliography).

²³¹Orr and Walther, 355, n. 2.

²³²See the comments on Matthew 28:1 earlier in this chapter.

²³³*Epistle of Barnabas* 15.8-9.

²³⁴*The Martyrdom of Ignatius* 1—2.

²³⁵Adventist scholars do not identify these Jewish Christians as believers, but rather Old Testament prophets mentioned in the preceding chapter 14 (Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, 214, 216). However, this identification cannot be accepted since the prophets did "not come to the possession of a new hope." This indicates that Barnabas has changed subjects in this new section of his epistle (chapter 15).

²³⁶Adventists take this verb (σαββατίζω) to mean "sabbatizing" in the negative sense of Judaizing. See Richard B. Lewis, "Ignatius and the Lord's Day," *AUSS* 6 (January 1968): 50, n. 7; Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, 214-16. However, it simply means to "keep the Sabbath" (BAGD, s.v. "σαββατίζω" 738), resulting in the interpretive translation of *Magnesians* 9.1 by BAGD as, "On the other hand, the Jews who have become Christians give up the celebration of the Sabbath in favor of the Lord's Day, Sunday" (ibid., 738-39). Advocates of this negative sense of σαββατίζω fail to provide any examples of this unusual meaning in ancient literature. While σαββατίζειν is not found in the New Testament, it appears eight times in the LXX, where it always bears a good sense (Exod. 16:30; Lev. 23:32; twice in 26:35 [34]; twice in 2 Chron. 36:21; 1 Esdras 1:58; 2 Macc. 6:6).

the observance of the Lord's Day,²³⁷ on which also our life has sprung up again by Him and by His death... that we may be found the disciples of Jesus Christ, our only Master."²³⁸ This witness is about twenty years *earlier* than the time Adventists believe Sunday worship arose (i.e., after A.D 135).²³⁹

Finally, Justin (A.D. 110-166)²⁴⁰ notes that Sunday is the Lord's Day,²⁴¹ and Pliny the Younger (A.D. 112)²⁴² also indicates Sunday as the day of worship for early Christians.²⁴³ Other second century witnesses to the existence of Sunday worship include

²³⁷The word "day" does not exist in the manuscripts, but this was unnecessary since the Lord's Day was the commonly understood meaning with the elliptical "day." A textual problem exists in that the oldest Greek manuscript, *Codex Mediceus Laurentinus*, inserts the noun "life—ζωή" (Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, 215). On this basis, most Adventists argue for the translation of this phrase (μηκέτι σαββατίζοντες, ἀλλὰ κατὰ κυριακὴν ζῶντες) as "no longer sabbatizing but living according to the Lord's life" rather than the universally accepted translation above. This phrase has been deemed authentic yet ambiguous by Guy Fritz, "The Lord's Day" and the Letter of Ignatius to the Magnesians," *AUSS* 2 (1964): 1-17, who argues on this textual note that "the Lord's Day" may also be translated "the Lord's life." Even more forcefully arguing for this alternate translation are Lewis, "Ignatius and the Lord's Day," 46-59, and Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, 213-18. Such a view is based upon a single (though early) manuscript, and even this one has been misquoted. It reads not κατὰ κυριακὴν ζῶντες ζῶντες ("living according to the Lord's life") as claimed above, but rather κατὰ κυριακὴν ζῶντες ("according to the Lord's life"). Employing the correct meaning of σαββατίζω (see immediately previous footnote) yields the senseless translation: "no longer keep the Sabbath but according to the Lord's life." This insertion of ζῶν, coupled with the awkward following words ἐν ᾗ καί., has understandably led every translator of the phrase to reject this minority reading (Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*, II, 2:130). However unlikely the reading, Adventists must accept it because this A.D. 112 mention of the Lord's day is incompatible with their teaching that Sunday worship arose more than twenty-three years later.

²³⁸Ignatius *To the Magnesians* 9.1 (Coxe, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 1:62). The longer version of this text advocates Sabbath observance in addition to Sunday observance (ibid., 1:62-63), but the point is still made that Sunday observance was in practice at this early time.

²³⁹Bacchiocchi, "How It Came About: From Saturday to Sunday," 38.

²⁴⁰A. Cleveland Coxe, *ANF*, 1:159.

²⁴¹Justin Martyr *First Apol.* 67.3. Justin exemplified a negative attitude not only towards the Sabbath, which he saw as imposed upon Jews for their unrighteousness (*Dialogue with Trypho* 21.1), but he felt that the entire Law was required of the Jews for their hardness of heart (ibid., 18.2) as a temporary ordinance until the coming of Christ (ibid., 23.1.2-3; cf. 16.1).

²⁴²The date of A.D. 112 is accepted by many, including Riesenfeld, "The Sabbath and the Lord's Day in Judaism, the Preaching of Jesus and Early Christianity," 128.

²⁴³Believers who had recanted their faith "had met regularly before dawn on a fixed day to chant verses alternately among themselves in honour of Christ as if to a god.... After this ceremony it had been their custom to disperse and reassemble later to take food of an ordinary, harmless kind; but they had in fact given up this practice since my edict, issued in your instructions, which banned all political societies"

Clement of Alexandria²⁴⁴ and Dionysius of Corinth.²⁴⁵ Third century witnesses include Tertullian, who speaks of Lord's day solemnities,²⁴⁶ and Origen²⁴⁷ and Cyprian,²⁴⁸ both of whom cite Sunday as the Lord's day on which to worship corporately.²⁴⁹

In conclusion, while either interpretation of the "Lord's day" (eschatological day of the Lord or Sunday) is consistent with the other scriptural teaching on the abolishment of the Sabbath, the Sunday interpretation has the most to commend it. Therefore, Revelation 1:10 also provides evidence for the early Christian worship on Sunday rather than the Sabbath. Sunday is called "the Lord's Day," or the day consecrated or belonging to the Lord, probably in memory of the resurrection.²⁵⁰

(Pliny to Emperor Trajan 10.96.7). Sunday is certainly meant here (cf. Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship*, 10, n. 4) since one could rightfully question the necessity of a pre-dawn worship service if Pliny had been speaking of the Sabbath (Rome allowed Jews to observe it as a day of rest). Since Sunday was a normal work day, services in the early church needed to be held in the early morning (as here) or in the evening (cf. Acts 20:7). However, some Adventists respond that Pliny's reference more properly refers to Easter rather than to a weekly Sunday observance. See Lawrence T. Geraty, "The Pascha and the Origin of Sunday Observance," *AUSS* 3 (1965): 272-81; Kenneth A. Strand, "From Sabbath to Sunday in the Early Christian Church: A Review of Some Recent Literature, Part I: Willy Rordorf's Reconstruction," *AUSS* 16 (Spring 1978): 339. However, this view is easily dismissed since Pliny would hardly call an annual observance "regular."

²⁴⁴Clement of Alexandria *Stromata* 7.12.76 (*ANF*, 2:545).

²⁴⁵Dionysius says in his letter to Bishop Soter of Rome (A.D. 168-176), "Truly we observed the holy day of the Lord and read out your letter" (quoted by Eusebius *Eccl. Hist.* 4.23) and thus notes that whoever truly keeps the Lord's day glorifies the resurrection of the Lord.

²⁴⁶Tertullian *On Idolatry* 14. For an evaluation of Tertullian's sabbath teachings in his pre-Montanist, early-Montanist, and late-Montanist periods, see Kenneth A. Strand, "Tertullian and the Sabbath," *AUSS* 9 (1971): 129-46.

²⁴⁷Origen *Against Celsus* 8.22.

²⁴⁸Cyprian *Epistles* 58.4.

²⁴⁹Barclay notes that the *Didache*, *Magnesian*, and Melito references all stem from Asia Minor, and the pagan influence in Asia Minor may have influenced the change from observing the Sabbath to observing the Lord's Day. He suggests that the weekly and monthly day dedicated to the Roman Emperor, called "The Emperor's Day," or Sebaste, was adopted by Christians who sought to pay homage to Christ rather than to the emperor (William Barclay, *The Revelation of John*, 54). While this geographical data is correct, the motivation for the day change is apostolic example rather than pagan influence.

²⁵⁰Beasley-Murray, 64-65; Swete, 13.

The Meaning of the Change to Sunday

The remainder of this chapter is devoted to a theology of rest which fits into an abrogated Sabbath view. Since Sunday is wholly a new day for worship but not rest, what role does rest then have? In some sense it is impossible to separate the two, for to worship truly one must lay aside his work and focus upon God.

Transference Theology

Throughout the present study it has been noted that those adhering to a transfer theology see Sunday as the present day of worship *and rest*. One evidence cited for this includes an analogous relationship between the Sabbath, which looks to God as Liberator from Egypt because of the Exodus (Deut. 5:15), and the Lord's Day, which looks to Christ as Liberator from an old life because of His resurrection. The result is that "for the Christian, the principle of the fourth commandment remains in force, though the day has been changed."²⁵¹ While it is a common belief that "the Jewish sabbath has been replaced by the Lord's Day as a day of worship and rest,"²⁵² this transference theology is plagued with many problems.

The first and most notable problem is that the supposition that the early church set aside Sunday as a day of rest cannot be proven either by the New Testament or practically. Riesenfeld insightfully notes regarding the latter:

A glance at the social circumstances permits us to understand that the small groups of people mostly recruited from the lower classes of society which composed the first Christian communities had no practical possibility of simply deciding to set aside a special weekday as their holy day, turning aside from the daily habits of their surroundings. Such an assumption is unrealistic and also lacks support from the sources. The Christians had to follow the customs of their surroundings in the matter of

²⁵¹Peter C. Craigie, NICOT, *The Book of Deuteronomy*, 158; NBD, "Sabbath," by Young and Bruce, 1042; Fausset, in *JFB*, 6:449.

²⁵²Harold H. Rowley, *Worship in Ancient Israel*, 242; cf. Wallace, Ronald S. *The Ten Commandments*, 81.

free days, which meant that the Sabbath was their day of rest in the Palestinian milieu and the various festivals connected with the local cults their free days in the Hellenistic world.²⁵³

In other words, the early believers in Israel in all probability rested on Saturday not necessarily from conviction about the Sabbath but because they had no choice. They *could not work* on the Sabbath, at least in a public sense, as shops were closed, business came to a standstill, etc.²⁵⁴ Then work began again on the following day, Sunday, which was the first day of the Jewish week. Sunday services were thus initially held in the evening after work,²⁵⁵ then apparently in later times gatherings occurred in the pre-dawn hours before the Sunday workday began.²⁵⁶ The lack of New Testament evidence for Christians resting on Sunday is consistent with these findings.

Other problems exist with a transference theology. Those holding to this view often appeal to God's blessing of the seventh day at creation, but they never explain how the shift from a seventh-day blessing to a first-day blessing came about. In other words, "The Sabbath cannot be transferred to any other day, for no other day is the 'seventh day.'"²⁵⁷ While the Scripture does indicate that the Sabbath is abrogated, it does not hint that Sunday took its place. These are two distinct days, enacted in two distinct economies, and they should not be confused.

²⁵³Riesenfeld, "The Sabbath and the Lord's Day in Judaism, the Preaching of Jesus and Early Christianity," 124-25.

²⁵⁴Some Christians may still have followed the Sabbath, probably for pragmatic reasons since this "official day of rest" provided the most convenient time for assemblage (Riesenfeld, "The Sabbath and the Lord's Day in Judaism, the Preaching of Jesus and Early Christianity," 131).

²⁵⁵This finds support in a New Testament example which celebrated the Lord's Supper in the evening (Acts 20:7-12) in memory of Christ's Last Supper, which also occurred in the evening (1 Cor. 11:23, 25), as opposed to celebrating His morning breakfast with the disciples (John 21).

²⁵⁶The reference to early morning services in Pliny the Younger's *Letter to the Emperor Trajan* in A.D. 112 has already been noted.

²⁵⁷Nichol *et al.*, eds., *SDAE*, 1105.

Summary

The teaching of the New Testament indicates that the Sabbath is not binding during the present age. The New Testament evidence for the abolition of the Sabbath is especially noted in the teachings of Paul, who saw a return to the Sabbath as a relapse into Judaism and the institution of Sunday as a day for worship, but not necessarily for rest. It may be that some early Jewish Christians retained Sabbath observance during the first few decades of the church, but no New Testament evidence confirms this and all accounts of the Palestinian church cite Sunday as the day of gathering. However, what *is* clear is that Gentile believers from the earliest times observed Sunday as their day for corporate worship. The motive for this change is not explicitly detailed, but this example of the apostles in all probability stems from Sunday as the day of Christ's resurrection.²⁵⁸

It remains to be determined what will become of the Sabbath in an eschatological context. The final chapter is devoted to the future of the Sabbath.

²⁵⁸"The [Sabbath] was wholly compulsory, [Sunday] is altogether voluntary. We keep Sunday because we want and need it for the public worship without which we cannot get along in our Christian life. The Lord wants his Word preached and taught, and that publicly; to do that to the best advantage we must have a set day. The old covenant serves as an example. Thus without any legal constraint whatsoever, in the most natural and voluntary manner, and in the sensible and wholesome exercise of our New Testament liberty, with the greatest unanimity since the earliest apostolic days, Sunday is our day of worship. We refuse to attach anything legal to it that may be in conflict with Col. 2:16, or Gal. 5:1" (R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles*, 826).

Chapter 6

Eschatological Sabbath

Having established the abrogation of the Sabbath during the present dispensation in the previous chapter, it now remains to address the future of the institution. Several passages in Scripture indicate that the Sabbath still has a future in the coming kingdom age.⁶⁹⁹ This vital subject unfortunately has been little discussed.⁷⁰⁰

The prophecy of the cessation of the Sabbath (Hos. 2:11) has been addressed in the preceding chapter. However, this prophetic word never declared that the Sabbaths would not be *reinstated*. Since the Sabbath is a "perpetual covenant" between God and Israel (Exod. 31:16) it follows that when Israel is no longer set aside, the Sabbath

⁶⁹⁹While these verses will be discussed in this final chapter of the present study, a satisfactory defense of the premillennial framework is beyond the scope of this treatise. For a thorough discussion of the broader issues, the reader is referred to Charles C. Ryrie's *Dispensationalism Today*, Lewis Sperry Chafer's *Systematic Theology* (8 vols.), and the abridged edition of Chafer's work by John F. Walvoord (*Chafer's Systematic Theology*, 2 vols.), as well as and several other leading dispensational works listed in the following footnote.

⁷⁰⁰One would expect that premillennial scholars would be the first to discuss the eschatological dimensions of the Sabbath since they believe in a future kingdom age for Israel. However, the silence in this matter is evident in the major dispensational works on the Millennium. John F. Walvoord makes no mention of a millennial reinstitution of the Sabbath in his major writing on the Millennium, not even in the chapter on "Spiritual Life in the Millennium" (*The Millennial Kingdom*, 305-15). Likewise, Alva J. McClain lacks mention of such in his monumental work which includes the chapter on "The Spirituality of the Kingdom" (*The Greatness of the Kingdom*, 519-26). Also, J. Dwight Pentecost's exhaustive *Things to Come* and one 481 page dissertation (Ernest Pickering, "The Premillennial Concept of the Kingdom of God," Th.D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1957) both never address this Sabbath issue. On the other hand, dispensationalists who do mention the millennial Sabbath include Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 4:111-12; id., *Grace*, 263; id., *Major Bible Themes*, rev. ed., 291; Charles Lee Feinberg, "The Sabbath and the Lord's Day," *BS* 95 (April-June 1938): 188-89; Merrill F. Unger, "The Significance of the Sabbath," *BS* 123 (January-March 1966): 58-59; Henry Allan Ironside, *Expository Notes on Ezekiel the Prophet*, 317-18; also see the following footnote.

commandment will no longer be set aside. Congdon writes, "If the Sabbath were an exclusive Jewish institution, then when the Jews were dispensationally put aside, the Jewish Sabbath would also be dispensationally put aside. That is exactly what happened."⁷⁰¹ In the same vein, when Israel is reinstituted as a believing nation under the Messiah, certain Jewish elements should be expected to accompany this national renewal. Such is the case for the Sabbath.

Sabbath in the Great Tribulation (Matthew 24:20)

Christ made a statement in the Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24—25) which has significant ramifications for the Sabbath. Jesus noted that during the time of "the abomination that causes desolation spoken of through Daniel" (Matt. 24:15) the times would be so perilous that people would hurriedly flee for their lives (vv. 16-20). In particular he advised his listeners, "Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath" (v. 20). Whatever time is in view, it is clear that some form of Sabbath observance would be in existence at this time.⁷⁰²

The time of this tribulation and Sabbath worship falls into the larger context of time of the fulfillment of the Olivet Discourse. If the prophecy is already fulfilled, then one cannot argue for a future of the Sabbath based upon this passage. However, should the fulfillment of this text yet remain, it would make little sense for Christ to advise in relation to the Sabbath if it would not be in effect. In other words, a future fulfillment

⁷⁰¹Roger Douglass Congdon, "Sabbatic Theology," Th.D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1949, 357-58.

⁷⁰²Charles Lee Feinberg, *Israel in the Last Days*, 15, notes, "Since our Lord is speaking to believing Jews, not Christians, they are to pray that the calamity does not strike them on the Sabbath. This is the end of the Jewish age which is under consideration, so the command is in point. No Christian today is ordered to keep the Sabbath of the Jews; in fact, the apostle Paul forbids it distinctly. Col. 2:16-17."

argues for a future for the Sabbath. Therefore, the primary issue is the time in which the declaration of Christ finds its fulfillment.

Seventh-day Adventists rely upon this passage for several of their teachings. They interpret the mention of the Sabbath here as evidence that Matthew's community continued to observe the Sabbath⁷⁰³ and cite this as Christ's prophecy that Christians would be Sabbath keepers when Titus destroyed Jerusalem in A.D. 70. However, even if the passage *did* refer to Titus' invasion,⁷⁰⁴ it does not indicate that Christians would be Sabbath-keepers, but only that Jews who enforced the Sabbath would make escape difficult.⁷⁰⁵ Ellen White also taught that the Sabbath was to be the great and final test of loyalty to God immediately preceding Christ's second coming, those who neglect it being those who accept the mark of the beast,⁷⁰⁶ which is Sunday worship or "Satan's counterfeit Sabbath."⁷⁰⁷ Appeal is made in particular to the angel's call for "those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (Rev. 14:9-13),⁷⁰⁸ the "most

⁷⁰³Samuele Bacchiocchi, "Matthew 11:28-30: Jesus' Rest and the Sabbath," *AUSS* 22 (Autumn 1984): 310; id., *From Sabbath to Sunday*, 69-71; id., *Divine Rest*, 167. Non-Adventists who argue at least some Sabbath observance among *Jewish* Christians in A.D. 70 include Rordorf, 120; *TDNT*, s.v. "sabbaton," by Eduard Lohse, 7 (1968): 29.

⁷⁰⁴This is untenable as the following paragraphs demonstrate.

⁷⁰⁵Norman C. Deck, *The Lord's Day or the Sabbath: Which?* 169-70.

⁷⁰⁶"The Sabbath will be the great test of loyalty; for it is the point of truth especially controverted. When the final test shall be brought to bear upon men, then the line of distinction will be drawn between those who serve God and those who serve him not. While the observance of the false sabbath [Sunday] in compliance with the law of the State, contrary to the fourth commandment, will be an avowal of allegiance to a power that is in opposition to God, the keeping of the true Sabbath, in obedience to God's law, is an evidence of loyalty to the Creator. While one class, by accepting the sign of submission to earthly powers, receive [sic] the mark of the beast, the other, choosing the token of allegiance to divine authority, receive [sic] the seal of God" (Ellen White, *The Great Controversy*, 605, cf. 449, 615, 616; cf. id., *Early Writings*, 64; A. Jan Marcussen, *National Sunday Law*, 44-72; Kenneth J. Holland, *The Magnificent Seventh*, 63).

⁷⁰⁷Raymond F. Cottrell, "The Sabbath in the New World," in *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, 259.

⁷⁰⁸Herbert E. Douglass, "Why God Waits," *These Times*, 1 July 1975, 10. Seventh-day Adventists believe that "when that group [the Adventists] that 'keeps the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus' becomes well known, when God's call to obedience and love becomes front-page news, through their

important" being the Sabbath. The tenuousness of these interpretations of Christ's prophecy recorded by Matthew will be demonstrated in the following discussion.

Mention of the "abomination that causes desolation" (Matt. 24:15) provides the best clue for identifying the time of the Sabbath prophecy, for verse 20 (on the Sabbath) relates intimately with events in Daniel's "seventieth week" (vv. 15ff.; Dan. 9:24-27), a seven year period which follows Messiah's death ("the Anointed One will be cut off," Dan. 9:26). Thus Matthew indicates that the time of which Daniel prophesies is one and the same with the time in which the Sabbath will be in effect.⁷⁰⁹

Daniel's seventy "sevens" prophecy arises in an interesting historical context. As the Babylonian Captivity approached its end, Daniel became aware of the nearness of this time of judgment through reading Jeremiah's prophecy (Dan. 9:1-3; cf. Jer. 25:11-12). With a repentant heart he prayed that His exiled people in Babylon might return to Jerusalem (9:4-19) which was answered by the appearance of the angel Gabriel (9:20-23). While Daniel inquired only about the immediate restoration back to Palestine, Gabriel's response provides even more than he requested (9:24-27). It gives a panorama of Israel's history for a 490 year period in the future. This time is decreed to be seventy

witness, men and women everywhere will be forced to make the decision whether they want this [Sabbath] lifestyle or not" (p. 11).

⁷⁰⁹Many scholars feel that the "abomination that causes desolation" was already fulfilled by Antiochus Epiphanes (cf. 1 Macc. 1:54ff.) when he ransacked the Temple (e.g., David Hill, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NCBC, 321).

"sevens,"⁷¹⁰ composed of one sixty-nine "week" period (483 years)⁷¹¹ and a seventieth "week" (seven years).

The vital question as it relates to Matthew's Sabbath prophecy is whether a separation exists between Daniel's sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks. In general, non-pretribulationist⁷¹² interpreters maintain that the weeks follow consecutively whereas pretribulationists advocate a gap between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks.⁷¹³

Representing the first view is Rose:

If there were "gaps" and "intermissions" the prophecy would be vague, misleading, and deceptive . . . The "62 weeks" joined immediately unto the "7 weeks," and their combined "69 weeks" reached "UNTO MESSIAH." Beyond His birth, but not to his "triumphal entry"; only "UNTO" His public anointing. There was no "gap" between the "69th, and the 70th weeks." . . . The "one week" of prophetic "seventy weeks" began with John the Baptist; from his first public

⁷¹⁰Most commentators agree that "weeks" are here used for years (e.g., Louis F. Hartman and Alexander A. Di Lella, *The Book of Daniel*, AB, 244; Norman W. Porteous, *Daniel*, 140). Nevertheless, H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Daniel*, 409, maintains that the number seven signifies perfection and completion in Scripture so that the period in question is "the period in which the divine work of greatest moment is brought to perfection." This only inadequately explains Daniel's painstaking care to specify the threefold breakdown of the weeks and other chronological indicators ("after," v. 26; "the middle of the week," v. 27, etc.). For extensive support that "weeks" refers to years, see John C. Whitcomb, "Daniel's Great Seventy Weeks Prophecy: An Exegetical Insight," *GTJ* 2 (Fall 1981): 259-63.

⁷¹¹Verse 25 breaks this period into two parts as well: seven "weeks" and sixty-two "weeks."

⁷¹²Rose, a posttribulationist rapturist, is one who asserts the historical fulfillment of Daniel's Seventy Sevens: "All the evidence of the New Testament, and of Christian experience agree with the greatest teachers of the Christian church that, the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy has all been fulfilled more than 1900 years ago. This leaves no future seventieth week yet to be fulfilled in 'the great tribulation after the rapture'" (George L. Rose, *Tribulation Till Translation*, 62). Philip Mauro, *The Seventy Weeks and the Great Tribulation*, 91-99, also objects to a gap in an extended discussion (to which John F. Walvoord provides a long and rather pointed critique in "Is the Seventieth Week of Daniel Future?" *BS* 101 [January 1944]: 30-49). Others who maintain that the prophecy has no gaps but was fulfilled in the first century include Roger T. Beckwith, "Daniel 9 and the Date of Messiah's Coming in Essene, Hellenistic, Pharisaic, Zealot and Early Christian Computation," *RdQ* 10 (December 1981): 521-42 (between 10 B.C. and A.D. 70); Robert J. M. Gurney, "The Seventy Weeks of Daniel 9:24-27," *EvQ* 53 (January-March 1981): 29-36 (mid to late A.D. 30's); R. C. Newman, "Daniel's Seventy Weeks and the Old Testament Sabbath-Year Cycle," *JETS* 16 (Fall 1973): 229-34 (A.D. 27-34); J. Barton Payne, "The Goal of Daniel's Seventy Weeks," *JETS* 21 (June 1978): 97-115 (A.D. 70).

⁷¹³Representative sources include Walvoord, "Is the Seventieth Week of Daniel Future?" 30-49; Whitcomb, "Daniel's Great Seventy Weeks Prophecy: An Exegetical Insight," 259-63; id., *Daniel*, 132; Alva J. McClain, *Daniel's Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks*, 34-35; Raymond Norman Ohman, "The Biblical Doctrine of the Millennium," Th.D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1949, as well as those above in footnote 2.

preaching the kingdom of God, the gospel dispensation commenced. These seven years, added to the 483 years, completes the 490 years . . . so that the whole of the prophecy from the times and corresponding events, has been fulfilled to the very letter.⁷¹⁴

Although it is the minority view, many lines of evidence suggest a separation between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks.⁷¹⁵

First, it is impossible that the six prophecies in Daniel 9:24 were historically fulfilled at Christ's first advent. Israel has not finished transgression or "put an end to sin." The nation has not experienced atonement for her sins or seen everlasting righteousness. Vision and prophecy have not been culminated and the holy of holies has not been anointed yet.⁷¹⁶ All of these six prophecies remain unfulfilled at the present time. Furthermore, they pertain not to the church but to Israel, and Paul still saw a future for Israel (Rom. 11:25-27).

Second, while the idea of gaps may seem strange to the western mind, this was not true of the Jewish mindset. Isaiah 61:1-2 is a passage in particular which records the two advents of Christ in a single context. Christ quoted only the first portion of this passage relating to His first advent in Luke 4:18-19, thus confirming a separation of many years between these two events. Concerning the Jewish mindset Gundry notes, "The possibility of a gap between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks is established by the well-accepted OT phenomenon of prophetic perspective, in which gaps such as that between the first and second advents were not perceived."⁷¹⁷

⁷¹⁴Rose, 46-47.

⁷¹⁵Harold W. Hoehner's treatment of this issue is most helpful. The following comments summarize some of his key points in *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*, 131-33.

⁷¹⁶Although the phrase קֹדֶשׁ קִדְּשִׁים ("most holy") has been sometimes interpreted to mean Christ's anointing (e.g., Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel*, 201), these technical words always relate in the Old Testament to the "holy of holies" (Exod. 26:33-34), "most holy" altar of sacrifice (Exod. 29:37), the altar of incense (Exod. 30:10), or all of the tabernacle furniture pieces (Exod. 30:29). Therefore, the referent is more likely to the consecration of the millennial temple (cf. Ezek. 40—46), discussed extensively later in this chapter.

⁷¹⁷Robert H. Gundry, *The Church and the Tribulation*, 190.

A third support for a gap between the weeks here is the manner in which verse 26 fits into the chronological progression of events from verses 25-27. Verse 25 notes that the sixty-nine weeks end before Messiah's⁷¹⁸ death,⁷¹⁹ and verse 27 notes that the seventieth week begins with a seven year covenant. The intervening verse (v. 26) records several events which occur between these two *terminii*, including the death of Messiah, Titus' destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, and war and desolations. Therefore, it is evident that a gap exists here due to the forty year interlude between the "cutting off of Messiah" (Christ's death) and the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, which both precede the seven year covenant (v. 27). These events necessitate a gap between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks.⁷²⁰

Fourth, the person who confirms the covenant in Daniel 9:27 cannot be Christ,⁷²¹ for He is ruled out by the chronological progression begun in verse 25. In other words, the reader is shown events preceding Christ's coming (v. 25), events surrounding His coming and death (v. 26a), and events after His coming (v. 26b). It is highly unlikely

⁷¹⁸Some scholars suggest that the "anointed" one of verse 25 is Onias III, who was assassinated in the second century B.C. (James A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, ICC, 381; Porteous, 141-42). However, this cannot be since this event occurred many years before the necessary 483 years. Porteous, 141, acknowledges such but explains it as such: "Whether or not the author was aware of this discrepancy it is impossible to say, but, as the historical memory of the Jews retained of the period in question was very dim as regards facts, it may well be that they were equally vague as to the actual length of time that had elapsed since the return from exile." This explanation is unacceptable. One would think that if the book was *not* genuine prophecy (Porteous, 13, dates it at 164 B.C.), an even more accurate dating could be possible, not a less accurate one.

⁷¹⁹That this coming actually *follows* the end of the sixty-ninth week is evident from the use of the words "and after" (וְאַחֵרֵי) in verse 26.

⁷²⁰Edward J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel*, 197, maintains that since the seventy sevens (v. 24) are *decreed* it means that they are to be taken as a unit. However, this period is later divided into three segments, so his point neither proves nor disproves the existence of a gap.

⁷²¹This covenantal perspective of Christ being the confirmer of the covenant finds recent support by Meredith G. Kline, "The Covenant of the Seventieth Week," in *The Law and the Prophets*, 452-69, esp. 461-69; Young, *Daniel*, 208-9.

that verse 27 would retrogress back to the life of Christ. Rather, the "he" in this verse looks back at "the prince who is to come" in the previous verse (Titus in A.D. 70) as its antecedent.⁷²² Also, if Christ is the confirmer of the covenant, then the covenant which He confirmed and then broke remains to be identified.⁷²³

Fifth, the history of the Jews until A.D. 70 records that Christ's death did not "put an end to sacrifice and offering" (Dan. 9:27). The Jews continued the sacrificial system until God stopped their practice with Titus' destruction of the temple. This is additional support that a gap must exist between Christ's death and the termination of sacrifice and offering mentioned here.

Sixth, comparisons with parallel prophecies also reveal the existence of a gap: (1) Christ declared in Matthew 24:15 that the abomination of desolation will occur *after* His earthly ministry, (2) the wicked person of Daniel 9:27 has striking parallels with the future wicked man described in Daniel 7:25 and Revelation 12, 13, 19, (3) the events of the second half of the seventieth week (Dan. 9:27b) correlate with those of the latter half of the future Tribulation Period described in the Book of Revelation.⁷²⁴

This author believes these to be sufficient reasons to establish a separation between the sixty-ninth and seventieth weeks. Since these weeks are not consecutive it may now be determined what seven year time period is referred to by the "seventieth

⁷²²The identity of "he" as Christ is held because "prince" in verse 26 occupies a subordinate position and Messiah is prominent in the passage (Young, *Daniel*, 208), but even these factors should not take precedence over the closest antecedent.

⁷²³A covenantal response to this argument is that the passage does not declare that he will *make* a covenant since the normal Hebrew idiom "to cut a covenant" is not employed; rather, the reference "is not to the making of a covenant but to a covenant which has already been made" (ibid., 209), which is the covenant made with Abraham generally called the Covenant of Grace (ibid., 212).

⁷²⁴The "abominations on a wing of the temple" find repetition in the requirement to worship the image of the ruler (Rev. 13:14-15). Certainly Christ did not set up this abomination. Furthermore, the designation "time, times, and half a time" (Dan. 7:25; 12:7) form the background for the same time period in Revelation 12:14 (J. Dwight Pentecost, "Daniel," *BKC*, 1:1365).

week." Daniel mentions the "abomination that causes desolation" three times in his prophecy. One time is when Antiochus Epiphanes IV desecrated the temple in 167 B.C. (Dan. 11:31), which obviously cannot be the referent in Matthew 24:15 since it had already occurred. The other "abomination that causes desolation" occurs at the middle point of the seven year "seventieth week" (Dan. 9:27b; 12:11), of which Christ spoke in the Olivet Discourse.

It has been affirmed that this abomination in Matthew's prophecy relates to Titus' destruction of the Jerusalem temple in A.D. 70 which was preceded by a desecrating pagan sacrifice.⁷²⁵ This cannot be accepted on several lines of evidence. One may first question how this relates to the context of the chapter as a whole. Whatever view one champions for verses 4-14, whether it refers to the Tribulation Period or church age, the chronology of verses 29-30 is emphatic—Jesus will return "immediately after the distress of those days At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations . . . will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory" (Matt. 24:29-30).⁷²⁶ It is obvious that Christ refers to His Second Coming through this description.

Only by rejecting the plain meaning of language can one deny that these verses relate to the Second Coming of Christ, which follows immediately after the distress connected with the "abomination that causes desolation." This renders untenable the suggestion that this abomination was fulfilled in Titus' devastation.

Another difficulty with the Titus interpretation relates to the severity of this invasion. While the persecution of the Jews was intense, there is reason to doubt whether this time was the worst time of suffering the world has ever experienced or ever will

⁷²⁵D. A. Carson, "Matthew," EBC, 8:495.

⁷²⁶John F. Walvoord, *The Rapture Question*, 47.

experience (vv. 21-22). Surely this time cannot compare to the descriptions in Revelation 4—19 which include worldwide famine, mountains being leveled by earthquakes, the darkening of the heavenly bodies, the turning of the world's water supply into blood, etc. It appears to be more consistent to place the depictions of Matthew 24 into the same time period described by John in the Revelation.⁷²⁷

The foregoing has shown that the time in view in Matthew 24:15ff. is the middle point (Dan. 9:27b) of the seven years preceding Christ's return (Matt. 24:27-31).⁷²⁸ At this time Jews should pray that their flight to escape God's judgment would not occur on the Sabbath (Matt. 24:20),⁷²⁹ indicating that the Sabbath will be in effect once again in the future. Although this Sabbath reinstitution in Israel was undoubtedly perplexing to interpreters before Israel's 1948 restoration as a nation, surely now it is not unthinkable. Even today the Sabbath is legally enforced in Israel, so its existence during the Tribulation Period is not problematic. However, Sabbath worship in the present dispensation is not by divine decree due to the end of the Law, but at the resumption of Israel's calendar (the "seventieth week" of Daniel) it will again be in effect.⁷³⁰

The Old Testament contains Sabbath prophecies which are both fulfilled and unfulfilled. The fulfilled prophecies relate to Israel's punishment for neglecting the

⁷²⁷The writer is aware that many do not see the events of Revelation 4—19 as still future. However, when these prophecies are taken at face value they cannot point to any past period in which they have been fulfilled.

⁷²⁸John F. Walvoord, *The Blessed Hope and the Tribulation*, 77, 87, 132.

⁷²⁹The reinstitution of the Sabbath during the Tribulation provides additional evidence for a pretribulational rapture since this period relates to Israel and not the church. If the church needed to go through the Tribulation Period it would make little sense that God would impose the Sabbath upon these believers for such a short period of time. For a comprehensive list of arguments for pretribulationalism, see Walvoord's chapter "Fifty Arguments for Pretribulationalism," in *The Rapture Question*, 191-99.

⁷³⁰The absence of the Sabbath in the present age is consistent with the premillennial view of the church age, which sees the present time as a "parenthesis" not foretold by the Old Testament prophets. See Merrill F. Unger, "The Significance of the Sabbath," *BS* 123 (January-March 1966): 59.

Sabbath (e.g., Lev. 26:32-35 fulfilled in Jer. 25:1-14; 2 Chron. 36:20-21) whereas the unfulfilled prophecies concern the Tribulation Period and the Sabbath of the Millennium (Isa. 66:23; Ezek. 46:1).⁷³¹ It makes sense that since the Sabbath is a perpetual sign of God's unique relationship with Israel (Exod. 31:17) through her generations (Exod. 31:13, 16) that when the nation is again restored to this relationship with God, this sign will find its reinstitution. Christ's Olivet Discourse is consistent with this line of thought, for it hints at this reinstitution of the Sabbath in the Great Tribulation.

Sabbath in the Kingdom

Not only will the Sabbath be reinstituted during the seven year period of trouble preceding the return of the Lord, but it will play a prominent role in the future Millennium. This millennial reinstitution finds prophetic announcement by two of Israel's Old Testament prophets: Isaiah and Ezekiel.

Isaiah 66:23

In this next to the last verse of Isaiah's prophecy the Lord promises Israel regarding its future, "From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow before me." As is the case with Matthew 24:20, the correct time in which this will occur is crucial to a proper interpretation. Most commentators claim that mention of the new heavens and new earth in the preceding verse establishes the time as the eternal state,⁷³² others advocate Israel's restored earthly

⁷³¹Congdon, 428. These two passages are explained in the next two sections.

⁷³²Scholars who see the eternal state in view here include Rordorf, 46, n. 3; John L. McKenzie, *Second Isaiah*, AB, 200-201, 208, n. 22; Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, NICOT, 3:536; Herbert Carl Leupold, *Exposition of Isaiah*, 2:378; Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40—66*, 426-29. Nichol *et al.*, eds., *SDABC*, 4:332, 338, uses this text in an attempt to establish the perpetual obligation of the Sabbath, even in eternity. Sakae Kubo, *God Meets Man*, 65, agrees by stating that glorified believers in heaven will still meet every seventh day for worship.

kingdom,⁷³³ and Peters even combines these two views.⁷³⁴ Another perspective is more ambiguous, seeing only a time of a new radical theology.⁷³⁵ However, several reasons can be provided to demonstrate that the time in question is the kingdom age which *precedes* the new heavens and new earth.

Peter's combined earthly/heavenly perspective cannot be sustained. This view ignores the Apocalypse's chronological progression from the return of Christ (Rev. 19:11-21) to the Millennium (20:1-6) and the subsequent destruction of the present earth and heavens (20:11), which are replaced with the new heavens and new earth (chaps. 21—22).⁷³⁶ Admittedly, Isaiah uses the same phrase "new heavens and new earth" used of heaven by Peter (2 Pet. 3:13) and John (Rev. 21—22);⁷³⁷ however, Isaiah is not

⁷³³John A. Martin, "Isaiah," *BKC*, 1:1120-1121; Feinberg, "The Sabbath and the Lord's Day," 188-89; Unger, "The Significance of the Sabbath," 59; Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 4:111-12; id., *Grace*, 263; id., *Major Bible Themes*, rev. ed., 291. Bacchiocchi cites the verse as referring to "the Messianic age of the ingathering of all the nations" (*From Sabbath to Sunday*, 23). However, the official Adventist perspective on the Millennium sees it as a literal one thousand year period in which the righteous are in *heaven* judging angels and investigating the wicked deeds of the unrighteous in preparation for the Great White Throne Judgment. Simultaneously, Satan is bound *on earth* (not in the Abyss as in Rev. 20:3) which is unpopulated (*Questions on Doctrine*, 489-508). Ironically, though the major dispensational works neglect to mention the role of the Sabbath in the Millennium (see footnote 2), many dispensationalists believe in a millennial Sabbath while Seventh-day Adventists do not.

⁷³⁴George N. H. Peters, *The Theocratic Kingdom*, 2:499-505, advocates that by "new" Isaiah refers to an eternal and renewed earthly kingdom, also spoken of in Revelation 21 (2:499).

⁷³⁵R. N. Whybray, *Isaiah 40—66*, NCBC, 276, suggests that the prophecy "marks the beginning of a new radical theology, born of the despair of post-exilic life, which the apocalyptic writers later adopted and developed in even more critical times." This teaching dates chapters 40—66 many generations after Isaiah's time during the reign of Cyrus (*ca.* 538 B.C.; *ibid.*, 20-22), and thus places the focus on the time the prophecy was made more than on its content.

⁷³⁶Peters answers that 20:11 is parenthetical since 20:13 indicates the sea has not yet been destroyed (it gives up its dead as though continuing), and since the kingdom in Isaiah is presented as everlasting and never to be destroyed (Peters, 2:502-3). However, since the dead are already standing before the throne in 20:12 it is better to see 20:13 *itself* as parenthetical, especially since 21:1 mentions that the first earth had passed away. Further, the millennial kingdom of Christ, though on earth for one thousand years, is indeed eternal for it will be delivered over to the Father (1 Cor. 15:24)—a teaching which Peters claims is a "modern notion" but fails to rebut (2:504).

⁷³⁷Peters, 2:524-34, claims that Isaiah's "new heavens and new earth" refers to the eternal state because of the usage by Peter and John. However, he marshals patristic and scriptural "evidence" but never

required to point to the same referent since a term used in different contexts may not always have the same meaning. Meaning must first be determined by context with parallel passages used only as supporting data. Several factors in the context of Isaiah's passage indicate an earthly millennial scene.

First, the phrase "the new heavens and new earth" deserves a closer look. As noted above, it is often supposed that the "new heavens and new earth" mentioned twice in Isaiah (65:17; 66:22) refers to the eternal state. However, in the first occurrence (65:17) the phrase is associated with "greatly extended but not infinite life" (v. 20),⁷³⁸ the building of houses and planting of vineyards (v. 21), the bearing of children (v. 23), the peaceful cohabitation of wild animals (v. 25a), and the protection of God in Jerusalem (v. 25b). Surely these descriptions better describe the millennial age than the eternal state, especially since they depict both birth and death, neither of which occurs in heaven.

Regarding Isaiah's second use of "the new heavens and new earth" (66:22), here it is not even used as a chronological indicator. Instead, Isaiah uses it as a comparative to indicate that Israel will never be destroyed. Annihilation of entire populations was not uncommon in the eighth century B.C., but God promised that Israel's descendants will be as enduring as His kingdom. Since Isaiah's previous chapter denotes that "new heavens and new earth" refers to the millennial age, one would expect the same meaning here. The mention of a temple, priests, and Levites in verses 20-21 confirms this, as these will not exist in eternity (Rev. 21:22).⁷³⁹ Another millennial indicator is the gathering of all nations at Jerusalem to see God's glory (66:18-20; cf. Zech 14:16-19).

discusses the passage at hand in Isaiah (this context is addressed in the next paragraph).

⁷³⁸Geoffrey W. Grogan, "Isaiah," EBC, 6:351.

⁷³⁹John explicitly claimed that the new heavens and new earth contain no temple (Rev. 21:22), and from this it may be inferred that priests and Levites are not needed for temple service as well.

Surely this cannot refer to the eternal state. Therefore, a proper paraphrase of Isaiah 66:22 is, "As the millennial age will never be destroyed, so Israel will never be destroyed."⁷⁴⁰

The verse at issue (v. 23) contains yet another notable contextual support for the millennial view—the mention of institutions not befitting the eternal state. Certainly the celebrations of the New Moon and the Sabbath (66:23) cannot be in heaven, for there will be no need for rest in eternity. Nevertheless, Young suggests that worship in the new heavens and new earth (which he sees as heaven) "will be in accordance with and in observance of the prescribed seasons of the Old Testament dispensation."⁷⁴¹ Similarly, the *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* notes that "the Sabbath is an eternal institution."⁷⁴² Kubo agrees by stating that glorified believers in heaven will still meet every seventh day for worship.⁷⁴³ In contrast, Scripture records that in heaven time itself will be abolished with the destruction of darkness and night (Rev. 22:5), so a heavenly day of rest every seven "days" is an absurdity. Further, it may be assumed that rest is unnecessary for those in glorified bodies and that worship will be an ever-present reality, not scheduled every seventh "day." Finally, the mention of the nations worshiping at Jerusalem (Isa. 66:23) is completely consistent with the fact that an earthly scene is in view.

⁷⁴⁰Even if Isaiah has used "new heavens and new earth" differently here than in 65:17 and *does* refer to eternity, this is still not problematic. The meaning would be this: "As heaven will be eternal, so Israel will be eternal." The declaration would not be that the time of the passage is the eternal state, but only that Israel *will last* into the eternal state.

⁷⁴¹Young, *Isaiah*, 3:536.

⁷⁴²Nichol *et al.*, eds., *SDABC*, 4:338.

⁷⁴³Kubo, 65.

That an earthly scene is depicted by Isaiah also finds support in the mention of death in the final verse of his prophecy (66:24; cf. 65:20). Since death is abolished at the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:14) and is not characteristic of the new heavens and new earth (Rev. 21:4), the Isaiah passage in question must address a time prior to the eternal state.⁷⁴⁴

Despite these textual indicators, the official Adventist position is that eternity in the new heavens and new earth would have been brought about had Israel heeded the prophets' preaching. In this perspective, Israel's disobedience postponed this time until after the thousand year Millennium as a "secondary application."⁷⁴⁵ This interpretation candidly relates the difficulties of applying the details in the passage to the future new heavens and new earth, but then adheres to the view anyway. Therefore, it still fails to clear up the above difficulties of identifying the passage with the eternal state. Also, the LORD presents no indication in the text of a conditional nature to His promise.

The millennial interpretation of Isaiah 66:23 finds confirmation elsewhere in Isaiah's prophecy. The reinstitution of the Sabbath in the kingdom age finds support in a promised blessing in the kingdom to Gentiles who keep the Sabbath:

And foreigners who bind themselves to the LORD to serve him, to love the name of the LORD, and to worship him, all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it and who hold fast to my covenant—these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer (Isa. 56:6-7a).

The immediately preceding verses in Isaiah 55:12-13 indicate a millennial context in which the earth is unusually fertile (cf. 35:1-2; 41:18-19; 44:3a).⁷⁴⁶ Since the

⁷⁴⁴Admittedly, Isaiah notes in the same verse that the bodies of the rebellious will experience eternal torment by worm and fire, but the fact that Israel will see these bodies just slain by the LORD (66:17) indicates that mortality still exists at the time of the celebration of the Sabbath and New Moon. This affirms that "their worm will not die, nor their fire be quenched" is best seen as parenthetical, describing the ultimate state of the bodies.

⁷⁴⁵Nichol *et al.*, eds., *SDABC*, 4:332 (cf. 30-38).

⁷⁴⁶Martin, 1:1111.

closest context to chapter 56 describes Israel's restoration in the Millennium, the Sabbath restoration of this chapter also takes place during this same time.

Therefore, for the reasons given above, one can safely interpret Isaiah's Sabbath prophecies in a millennial context. The institution will in fact be reinstituted when Israel is restored as a nation under Messiah, indeed, even shortly before this time as indicated by Matthew 24:20. Sabbath observance will be true of both Jews (Isa. 56:2, 4-5, 8) and Gentiles (Isa. 56:3, 6-7; 66: 23; cf. Zech. 8:20-23). As uncomfortable as this may seem to the modern Sunday observer, this is what the authoritative text indicates. The Sabbath, although not in effect in the present dispensation, will again find divine approval in the next. This teaching also provides substantiation for the premillennial interpretation of Scripture, for Isaiah affirms in his prophecies that Israel has a future.

Ezekiel 46:1

Another significant passage relating to the eschatological Sabbath is Ezekiel 46:1. Here regulations are provided regarding the gate of a temple on the Sabbath day and day of the New Moon:

This is what the Sovereign LORD says: The gate of the inner court facing east is to be shut on the six working days, but on the Sabbath day and on the day of the New Moon it is to be opened.

The particular temple and time period mentioned here have long perplexed scholars. A proper understanding must address both the nature of the temple and the time of its institution (along with the Sabbath). This verse falls within the much debated section of Ezekiel's book (chaps. 40—48) which describes a new temple (chaps. 40—43), a new order of worship (chaps. 44—46), and new boundaries for Israel in Palestine (chaps. 47—48). Ezekiel wrote his prophecy while in exile in Babylon. The Solomonic temple had been destroyed decades earlier and all hope of a national restoration was lost. Nevertheless, God gave him from an eschatological perspective detailed dimensions of a

temple not elsewhere described in Scripture. Included with the temple restoration is also a restoration of the national life, animal sacrifices, and priesthood. These chapters have so puzzled commentators that some deny Ezekiel's authorship⁷⁴⁷ and many are ambiguous as to the time and nature of the prophecy's fulfillment.⁷⁴⁸ However, among those who have proclaimed a position, at least seven different views of these chapters have been proposed.

One suggestion is that this is Solomon's temple,⁷⁴⁹ but this view has several flaws. First, the dimensions of these two temples are different. While Solomon's temple was fairly small (90 feet long, 30 feet wide, and 45 feet high),⁷⁵⁰ Ezekiel's temple measures much larger (175 feet long and 87.5 feet wide).⁷⁵¹ "The square of the temple in

⁷⁴⁷For example, see George Ricker Berry, "The Authorship of Ezekiel, 40—48" *JBL* 34 (1915): 17-40. Arguing to the contrary is Moshe Greenberg, "The Design and Themes of Ezekiel's Program of Restoration," *Int* 38 (1984): 181-208.

⁷⁴⁸G. A. Cooke, "Some Considerations on the Text and Teaching of Ezekiel 40—48," *ZAW* 42 (1924): 105-15; Peter C. Craigie notes that the chapters express "in a profoundly symbolic manner the nature of the restored Israel that God would establish in the future," but then he never explains whether such a restoration has ever occurred (*Ezekiel*, 275).

⁷⁴⁹Adam Clarke, "Ezekiel," in *Clarke's Commentary*, 4:535.

⁷⁵⁰Solomon's temple measurements in 1 Kings 6:2 are noted at 60, 20, and 30 cubits; the above measurements in feet were obtained by multiplying these three lengths by the standard 18 inches per cubit.

⁷⁵¹This is the minimum measurement based upon Ezekiel 41:13 using Ezekiel's long (21-inch) cubit explained in 40:5 (cf. 43:13) where a rod is equal to 6 long cubits, each of which is an 18-inch cubit plus a 3-inch handbreadth; therefore, a rod must be 10.5 feet long since 6 cubits at 21 inches equal 126 inches or 10.5 feet. Nowhere does the account provide the height of the temple although the entire temple area is enclosed by a wall of one rod (הַגֵּזֶן, "stalk, reed" BDB 889d) in height (40:5), or 10.5 feet. (If the measurement is with the normal or shorter [18-inch] cubit, the temple dimensions must be adjusted slightly to 150 feet by 75 feet.) This issue becomes even more confusing as the temple area measurements in 42:16-19 are plagued with textual difficulties. In each verse the MT measures in "rods" (קֶזַיִם; cf. NASB, NIV margin, KJV, NKJV, Ampl), but the LXX follows the Qere which reads the transposed "cubits" (מֵאוֹת; cf. NIV, RSV, GNB). Therefore, a single temple court side in the MT is "500 rods" (חֲמֵשׁ-מֵאוֹת קֶזַיִם) or 5250 feet, but in the LXX it is "500 cubits" (πεντακοσίους) or 875 feet (using the long cubit). Furthermore, the situation is complicated by the fact that Ezekiel uses the cubit (40:5b, 9, 11—42:20; etc.), the rod (40:3, 5a-7; 42:16-19), and an ellipsis (45:1-6; 48:8-21, 30-35) for measurement. Most commentators agree that the cubit is the proper unit since the use of the rod would make four sides of the temple area nearly one mile in length, an unlikely size. For further study on the measurements of the

42:20 is six times as large as the circuit of the wall enclosing the old temple, and, in fact, is larger than the former city itself."⁷⁵² Second, if this description depicted the former temple, it must be asked what hope Ezekiel could offer his oppressed brethren by reminding them of the glory of Solomon's temple which at that time lay in ruins. Third, the Books of Kings and Chronicles already provide detailed descriptions of Solomon's temple, so another record would be unnecessary. For these reasons it is evident that Ezekiel's temple is not the same as Solomon's.

A second interpretation supposes that the temple in view here is the post-exilic temple built under Zerubbabel.⁷⁵³ A plan of Zerubbabel's temple is not provided anywhere in Scripture which makes an exact size comparison of the two impossible. However, since the post-exilic temple failed in comparison to the Solomonic (Hag. 2:3),⁷⁵⁴ and the Solomonic failed in comparison to Ezekiel's temple,⁷⁵⁵ it follows that the temple of Ezekiel is greater than the post-exilic structure. Therefore, Ezekiel's temple is so large that it cannot be one and the same with that built by Zerubbabel. One searches the Books of Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, and Zechariah in vain to find even an attempt on

temple in cubits see Theo G. Soares, "Ezekiel's Temple," *BW* 14 (1899): 93-103. Adhering to the rod view is Cameron M. MacKay, "The City and the Sanctuary: Ezekiel 48," *PTR* 20 (1922): 399-417 (cf. id., "Prolegomena to Ezekiel 40—48," *ET* 55 (1943/44): 292-95), who advocates an enormous temple situated in the Valley of Shechem (cf. id., "Ezekiel's Sanctuary and Wellhausen's Theory," *PTR* 20 [1922]: 661-65, which argues against the documentary hypothesis). MacKay's first article (pp. 399-417) is critiqued by W. F. Lofthouse, "The City and the Sanctuary," *ET* 34 (1922/23): 198-202 and rebutted by MacKay in "The City and the Sanctuary," *ET* 34 (1922/23): 475-76. In either case, whether rods or cubits is used, the temple is one which has never been constructed in Israel.

⁷⁵²Hobart E. Freeman, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets*, 313.

⁷⁵³Walther Zimmerli, *Ezekiel* 2, Herm, 345.

⁷⁵⁴Haggai's prophecy notes that the postexilic temple failed to compare with Solomon's *in glory* and makes no mention of size differences. However, since Ezekiel's temple necessitates topographical changes to fit into Jerusalem (explained later in this section) it exceeds both other temples in both size and glory.

⁷⁵⁵See the paragraph immediately above for size comparisons.

the part of the remnant to follow Ezekiel's plan. Another problem with the post-exilic view is that Ezekiel's temple sits upon a very high mountain (40:2)⁷⁵⁶ in contrast to the post-exilic temple, which was built in Jerusalem. A third difference between the two temples relates to those whom they benefited. Whereas Zerubbabel's temple was for the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, this temple serves all twelve tribes (chaps. 47—48) and aliens as well (47:22-23). Fourth, God promised to dwell in this temple perpetually with the nation never defiling his name (43:7), which obviously did not occur with Zerubbabel's temple as it was defiled by Antiochus Epiphanes IV and eventually removed by Rome. Further, never does the prophecy indicate a conditional aspect to its fulfillment. Fifth, the dimensions of the mysterious sanctuary area (750 feet by 750 feet)⁷⁵⁷ exceed those of the temple mount (525 feet by 660 feet).⁷⁵⁸ Finally, the filling of the temple by the Spirit also mitigates against this Zerubbabel view. This return of the glory of God is prophesied in Ezekiel 43:1-5 but never is the filling mentioned in conjunction with the dedication of the post-exilic temple under Zerubbabel (Ezra 6:13-18). It is inconceivable that Ezra could neglect to record such a happening if it had occurred.

A third temple interpretation is actually a modified version of the preceding perspective. This view perceives the temple as an ideal one⁷⁵⁹ (especially apocalyptic in

⁷⁵⁶It is difficult to determine the exact location of the temple, whether outside of the city (45:1-6) just north of Jerusalem (40:2) and outside Judah (48:8, 15), or within the city itself (40:1-2; cf. Isa. 2:2-3). In any case, other descriptions of topographical changes indicate that this is a vastly altered city from that of Zerubbabel's time.

⁷⁵⁷The temple lies within a sacred area five hundred cubits square (45:2).

⁷⁵⁸M.-Jos. Lagrange, "Topographie de Jérusalem," *RevBib* 1 (1892): 4; Yohanan Aharoni and Michael Avi-Yonah, *The MacMillan Bible Atlas*, 127. This comparison assumes the smaller temple size.

⁷⁵⁹Keith W. Carley, *The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel*, 267; John W. Wevers, *Ezekiel*, NCBC, 207; E. W. Hengstenberg, *The Prophecies of the Prophet Ezekiel Elucidated*, 353; Crawford Howell Toy, *The Book of Ezekiel*, SBOT, 177, n. 3 ("the vision is here a literary device . . . the work of reflection," italics his); G. C. M. Douglas, "Ezekiel's Temple," *ET* 9 [1897/98]: 517; F. W. Farrar, "The Last Nine Chapters of

nature),⁷⁶⁰ some scholars believing it was planned for the post-exilic community but never built.⁷⁶¹ The *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* expresses it thus:

"According to [this view] the temple vision would have been literally fulfilled if the people had been faithful to their trust, but because they failed, the prophecy could not be fulfilled in its original intent."⁷⁶² The main objection to this view is whether God would provide such a detailed prophetic description if it was never to be fulfilled. Surely, He would not invest a full nine chapters of Ezekiel's prophecy in vain.⁷⁶³ Again, God's promise to dwell in this temple perpetually (43:7) indicates that an actual, not ideal, temple must be in view.

A fourth historic temple which could possibly be in view is that built by Herod and completed just prior to Jerusalem's fall in A.D. 70.⁷⁶⁴ However, this view has the

Ezekiel," *Exp 3d series* 9 (1899): 7-9; Toni Craven, *Ezekiel, Daniel*, CoBC, 83. A modification of this view is that the temple in view is a hybrid structure resembling both Solomon's temple and the "walled and fortified sanctuaries in Babylonia" (G. A. Cooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel*, ICC, 425); Walther Eichrodt maintains that "the temple makes its appearance as a heavenly reality created by Yahweh himself and transplanted to earth," with the implication that such a transfer to earth never occurred (*Ezekiel*, OTL, 542).

⁷⁶⁰Moshe Greenberg, "The Design and Themes of Ezekiel's Program of Restoration," *Interpretation* 38 (1984): 181-208; John B. Taylor, *Ezekiel*, TOTC, 253.

⁷⁶¹Nichol *et al.*, eds., *SDABC*, 4:715.

⁷⁶²*Ibid.*

⁷⁶³The Adventist response to this question is: "God left no method untried to induce Israel to accept the high destiny originally planned for them. Up to this point their history had been one of repeated failures. God was now offering them another opportunity to begin again" (Nichol *et al.*, eds., *SDABC*, 4:717). This answer fails to address how the post-exilic community was to initiate the topographical alterations necessary for the temple construction. Ezekiel's temple is to be built upon a high mountain (40:2) with a river flowing from it which extends to the Dead Sea (47:1, 7; cf. Joel 3:18) and supernaturally makes it fresh (47:8). The miraculous trees which bear fruit monthly (47:12) and several other supernatural descriptions in the prophecy indicate that its fulfillment was not possible during the post-exilic age.

⁷⁶⁴*ISBE*, s.v. "Temple," by T. Whitelaw, 5:2935, notes of Ezekiel's temple "that in important respects it forecasts the plans of the second (Zerubbabel's) and of Herod's temples."

same problems as the two above, namely, the dimensions do not match. Further, the sacrificial procedure of Ezekiel 43—46 was not followed during the Herodian era.

All four preceding views (Solomonic, post-exilic, ideal, Herodian) lack the necessary characteristics of the mysterious temple and do not match the worship procedure of chapters 43—46. Recognizing such, a fifth perspective has been proposed, favored especially by amillenarians. This view considers Ezekiel 40—48 as a symbolic description of the church rather than a literal temple.⁷⁶⁵ Greenhill represents such a view, for he soundly refutes the notion that Ezekiel's and Zerubbabel's temples are the same by comparing the locations and measurements of the temples; however, he then surprisingly states, "The vision, therefore, points out the introduction of a better hope, viz. the church of Christ under the gospel."⁷⁶⁶ If this is true, one must wonder how all the specific designations here can be matched with the blessings of the church in the present age. Such a view must spiritualize descriptions which appear to be very physical and literal.⁷⁶⁷ The chapters include measurements, topographical descriptions, etc.; therefore, it is not surprising that those who deny the normal sense of these terms also do not believe in a literal kingdom. Finally, Gray notes that those who hold to this symbolic church perspective differ widely in their explanations and thus cannot explain the symbolism of which they speak.⁷⁶⁸ This inconsistency and subjectivity is shown in the fact that

⁷⁶⁵Carl Friedrich Keil, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Ezekiel*, K&D, 2:180, applies the vision to "the new kingdom of God . . . in which the announcement of salvation for Israel is brought to its full completion," then explains this "Israel" to be the church (2:425); Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Hermeneutics*, 437; William Greenhill, *An Exposition of the Prophet Ezekiel*, 774-75.

⁷⁶⁶Greenhill, 774.

⁷⁶⁷The passage includes a description of a river (47:1-12) with fishermen (47:10) and salty swamps (47:11) which "lend a touch of realism to the passage. These details become meaningless if the passage is only symbolic of spiritual blessing" (Charles H. Dyer, "Ezekiel," *BKC*, 1:1313).

⁷⁶⁸James Martin Gray, *Christian Worker's Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*, 265.

adherents of this view "interpret Ezekiel's earlier, now-fulfilled prophecies literally, yet interpret his yet unfulfilled prophecies symbolically."⁷⁶⁹ There is no reason to abandon the normal grammatical-historical hermeneutic when approaching Ezekiel's prophecy.

A sixth view interprets the passage literally but sees the eternal state in view.⁷⁷⁰ Allis champions this perspective which distinguishes between the kingdom and the Millennium, seeing the "Millennium" as a limited period (the church age) which precedes an endless "kingdom" (the eternal state). He asserts that the passages studied thus far in Isaiah and Ezekiel both apply to this latter period.⁷⁷¹ This view which sees eternity in Ezekiel's prophecy cannot be accepted because of the existence of the temple itself, which is not part of the new heavens and new earth (cf. Rev. 21:22). Other dissimilarities between the temple of this prophecy and the eternal state are evident:

The city's [sic: cities'] dimensions are different (Ezek. 48:30-35; Rev. 21:15-17). The waters that flow toward the east have different sources: the temple in Ezekiel (43:7; 47:1-5) and God's throne in the Revelation (22:1, 3).... The tribal allotments of Ezekiel include the sea as the western boundary (47:15-20), whereas in the Revelation John declares that the sea no longer exists (Rev. 21:1).⁷⁷²

All the above views fail to consider the unique character of these chapters. In contrast, Jewish⁷⁷³ and premillennial⁷⁷⁴ scholarship recognizes that the most natural

⁷⁶⁹Dyer, 1:1304.

⁷⁷⁰Keil holds a modification of this view in which the vision is a symbolic representation of the entrance of spiritual Israel (the church) into the heavenly Canaan, i.e., it "sets forth the kingdom of God established by Christ in its perfect form" (Carl Friedrich Keil, *Biblical Commentary on the Prophecies of Ezekiel*, K&D, 2:417).

⁷⁷¹Allis, *Prophecy and the Church*, 238 (cf. 50, 325-26).

⁷⁷²Alexander, 6:945.

⁷⁷³Rabbi Fisch acknowledges that the coming invasion of Gog (Ezek. 38—39) "is apocalyptic and relates to the indefinite future, the advent of the Messiah, indicated by the phrase *the end of days*," followed in chapters 40—48 by "a design of the Temple, the sacrificial worship, the people and the land in the new era which follows the overthrow of Gog" (S. Fisch, *Ezekiel*, SBB, 253, 265, italics his).

⁷⁷⁴Alexander, 6:942-46; Gleason L. Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, 280-81; Dyer, 1:1302-1304; Paul P. Enns, *Ezekiel*, BSC, 180; Charles Lee Feinberg, *The Prophecy of Ezekiel*, 233-39, 267-68; Walter DeMotte Forsythe, "The Restoration of Ezekiel's Temple," Th.M. thesis, Dallas Theological

reading of this section indicates that it refers to a literal, future temple in the kingdom period. Allis considers the problems associated with the millennial view to be so insurmountable that he calls Ezekiel 40—48 "the Achilles' heel of the Dispensational system of interpretation."⁷⁷⁵ Nevertheless, several lines of evidence suggest this to be the best view.

The first merit of the millennial view is that it fits the argument of Ezekiel's prophecy. The book follows a threefold design: the impending judgment upon Judah by Babylon (chaps. 1—24), followed by the judgment upon the nations (chaps. 25—32), and concluding with God's unconditional restoration of the nation (chaps. 33—48). This last section first promises Israel a *new life* through restoration to the land and national cleansing (chaps. 33—39). This restoration of Israel includes God's defeat of Gog and her allies (chaps. 38—39), which premillennarians place during the seven-year Tribulation Period preceding the Millennium. This premillennial chronology follows Ezekiel's precisely, as he details events in the Tribulation first (chaps. 38—39), followed by the millennial order (chaps. 40—48). It would be strange and misleading for Ezekiel to depict Israel's restoration as a people possessing His Spirit in 39:29 (the verse preceding chapters 40—48), then to suddenly revert to some historical period in the remaining nine chapters. These chapters, the climax of the prophecy, aptly describe Israel's climax as a nation in her final restoration.⁷⁷⁶

Seminary, 1957, 40-54; Freeman, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets*, 312; Arno C. Gaebelein, *The Prophet Ezekiel*, 271, 273; Gray, 265-67; Ironside, *Expository Notes on Ezekiel the Prophet*, 289, 314-15; Raymond Norman Ohman, "The Biblical Doctrine of the Millennium," Th.D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1949, 151-163; Soares, "Ezekiel's Temple," 93; Henry Sulley, *The Temple of Ezekiel's Prophecy*, 13; Merrill F. Unger, "The Temple Vision of Ezekiel," *BS* 106 (January-March 1949): 60, 169-77.

⁷⁷⁵Allis, *Prophecy and the Church*, 248.

⁷⁷⁶Ezekiel's premillennial argument is traced in further detail by Alexander, 6:943-44, 952.

The millennial interpretation is also favorable because it does not abandon the normal grammatical-historical hermeneutic. None of the measurements of the temple need be spiritualized or reconciled with previous temples whose descriptions do not match. The canonical text can stand on its own when one interprets these nine chapters as depicting a future kingdom period.

A related support for the millennial age is Ezekiel's description of the topographical changes characteristic of the kingdom age. Such changes are prophesied about elsewhere in the prophets. For example, Zechariah prophesied that at the return of Messiah the Mount of Olives will undergo a radical change:

Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights in the day of battle. On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south (Zech. 14:3-4).

It is obvious that Zechariah's prophecy has not yet been fulfilled.⁷⁷⁷

"According to this prophecy God is to rearrange the land so that the millennial temple will fit into it."⁷⁷⁸ Ezekiel verifies this as the temple area alone encompasses a three by eight mile area (45:3).⁷⁷⁹ Such a catastrophic realignment in geography is necessary not only for the enormous temple and the "very high mountain" upon which it sits (40:2; 43:12),⁷⁸⁰ but also for the new city.⁷⁸¹ The new boundaries of this city will comprise a

⁷⁷⁷Homer Heater, Jr., *Zechariah*, BSC, 114; F. Duane Lindsey, "Zechariah," *BKC*, 1:1570.

⁷⁷⁸Ohman, "The Biblical Doctrine of the Millennium," 158.

⁷⁷⁹It also includes a large (180 feet by 105 feet) and mysterious extra building (41:12, 15) which appears along with no other known temple in Jerusalem.

⁷⁸⁰Eichrodt suggests that the city is the Zion of Ezekiel's time and that "the assertion of its great height is a strange piece of *poetic license*. To be sure, we have here the influence of the idea, widespread in the ancient East, including Israel, that the mountain of God is the highest of all mountains (cf. Isa. 2.2; Ps. 48.2; Zech. 14.10) and that the river of paradise had its source in it (Zech. 14.8; Ps. 46.4; Ezek. 47.1ff.)" (*Ezekiel*, 541; emphasis mine). This "poetic license" does not fit the general context which is not given to exaggeration but rather to minute detail.

⁷⁸¹A renewed Jerusalem was commonly taught in extra-biblical literature (e.g., 2 Baruch 4.1-6; for

square with each side measuring 6,750 feet,⁷⁸² which is much larger than the Jerusalem of Ezekiel's day. This city also has a river without tributaries flowing from the temple to the east with trees bearing fruit monthly for healing (45:1f., 12)—obviously a depiction which has yet to occur in the land.⁷⁸³ Further, while the size of Palestine as a whole will not change, the inheritances for each tribe will be equal (47:14)⁷⁸⁴ and include portions for the priests and Levites (45:1-5), which never was the case under Joshua (Josh. 13—19). All these topographical changes point to a time period which has not yet occurred.⁷⁸⁵

Furthermore, the exilic prophet Ezekiel is not the only prophet who mentions a millennial temple. Other citations are provided by the pre-exilic prophets Isaiah (2:3; 60:13) and Joel (3:18), as well as the post-exilic prophet Haggai (2:7, 9). Although not an inspired source, 1 Enoch 90:26b-29 also indicates that the "ancient house" would be replaced with a new temple at the end of the age.⁷⁸⁶ Many other rabbinic references

other references see Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum neuen Testament*, 3:531-32, 573).

⁷⁸²Ezekiel 48:15b-16 notes that each of the city's four sides stretch 4,500 cubits. With the standard cubit equal to 18 inches (1.5 feet), this yields a measurement of 1.5 X 4500=6,750 linear feet.

⁷⁸³Terry, 345, describes this depiction as one of the "insuperable difficulties in the way of any literal exposition of the vision," but the miraculous will be commonplace in the Millennium (Paul Lee Tan, *The Interpretation of Prophecy*, 322).

⁷⁸⁴The divisions for each tribe stretch from east to west in regular portions which seem to ignore topographical differences, or, more likely, seem to indicate a regular contour. "We may well question whether Ezekiel's arrangement ever could be carried out in actual life until that day when Jehovah was to return in glory, and every mountain and hill was to be brought low; see Isa. 40:3-5; Zech. 14:10" (G. C. M. Douglas, "Ezekiel's Vision of the Temple," *ET* 14 [1902/03]: 425).

⁷⁸⁵For a fuller discussion of topographical changes in the Millennium, see Carl Eugene Bollinger, "The Land of Palestine in the Millennium," Th.M. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1949.

⁷⁸⁶E. Isaac, trans., *1 (Ethiopic Apocalypse of) Enoch*, in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 1:71.

convey the same idea of a restored earthly temple.⁷⁸⁷ Such references show that the idea of a temple in Israel's kingdom age was not unique to Ezekiel but stretched throughout the pre-exilic, exilic, and post-exilic periods even up to New Testament times.⁷⁸⁸

Finally, the absence of many features associated with the Law of Moses is consistent with a temple which is chronologically subsequent to Israel's other temples.⁷⁸⁹ The account lacks a high priest⁷⁹⁰ and only Levitical priests descending from Zadok serve in the temple.⁷⁹¹ Also missing are the Urim and Thummim,⁷⁹² anointing of the temple, ark with its mercy seat and tablets of commandments,⁷⁹³ lampstands,⁷⁹⁴ a distinction between the holy place and most holy place (i.e., no veil), and the lavers or brazen sea.⁷⁹⁵

⁷⁸⁷Eth. En. 89:73 (135 B.C.); 91:13 (prior to 167 B.C.); Tob. 14:5 (2nd/1st cent. B.C.); Jub. 1:17, 27 (Maccabean). That the temple will function as a universal sanctuary of the nations is seen in Eth. En. 90:33; Tob. 13:13; Jub. 4:26. A few sources advocate a heavenly temple and heavenly Jerusalem (Wis. 9:8; Slav. En. 55:2), but the exegesis for such is questionable as it is based largely upon texts which supposedly indicate that the earthly temple and Jerusalem serve as a copy of the heavenly (e.g., Exod. 25:9, 40; 26:30; 27:8; Ps. 122:3). For further study see *TDNT*, s.v. τὸ ἱερόν, by Gottlob Schrenk, 3:239-40; s.v. ναός, by Otto Michel, 4:882.

⁷⁸⁸The fragmentary *I Enoch* dates from various sources in the second century B.C. to the first century A.D. (ibid., 2:5-7), with chapter 90 dating probably from about 165-161 B.C. (ibid., 2:7).

⁷⁸⁹The following factors are explained by Douglas, "Ezekiel's Temple," 365-67, 420-22, 468-70, 515-18; ibid., "Ezekiel's Vision of the Temple," 365-68, 424-27.

⁷⁹⁰The work of the high priest has already been completed in the once-and-for-all death of Jesus Christ (Heb. 10:11-12), who is the high priest now (Heb. 4:14; 7:26—8:6) and presumably will continue to act as such in the Millennium.

⁷⁹¹Serving in the temple are not just anyone in the Aaronic line, but only priests who were Levites and sons of Zadok (40:46; 43:19; 44:15; cf. Mal. 3:3) because of their faithfulness during Israel's apostasy (48:11).

⁷⁹²Decisions will not need to be settled through this ancient method as the omnipotent Lord will be reigning personally and available for counsel.

⁷⁹³The glory of God will not be confined to a particular place within the temple.

⁷⁹⁴These are unneeded as God's glory has returned to the house (43:6f.). In heaven the situation is even more significant as there will be no need for even the temple itself (Rev. 21:22-23).

⁷⁹⁵These items will be replaced with a river of living water flowing from Jerusalem (47:1-13; cf. Zech. 14:8). By "living water" perhaps that which has no natural source is meant.

Feasts which are not celebrated include Firstfruits, Pentecost (Weeks), Trumpets, and the Day of Atonement.⁷⁹⁶ While these omissions do not prove Ezekiel's is a millennial temple, the lack of many features of the Mosaic dispensation hints that an age other than under the Mosaic law is in view.

The most commonly voiced objection to the millennial interpretation of Ezekiel 40—48 concerns the reinstitution of the sacrifices (40:38-43; 43:13-27), especially the sin offerings (40:39; 43:19, 21-22, 25).⁷⁹⁷ The claim is that such animal sacrifices would constitute a retrogression or return to weak and beggarly elements.⁷⁹⁸ However, such is not the case.⁷⁹⁹ The Millennium, rather than being a retrogression, will be an advancement as it will complete the many prophetic promises which God made to Israel (Ezek. 37:15-28). This era will see the culmination of the many promises in all of Israel's covenants: Abrahamic (37:26; cf. Gen. 12:1-3), Land (37:21-22; cf. Deut. 30:1-10), Davidic (37:24-25; cf. 2 Sam. 7:14-16), and New Covenants (37:15-21; cf. Jer. 31:31-34). Moreover, even the *Mosaic Covenant* will be fulfilled at Israel's restoration, shown in Ezekiel's repetition of the covenant formula "I will be their God, and they will be my people" (37:27).⁸⁰⁰

⁷⁹⁶"The atonement is already complete, the most holy place stands open, and perhaps all priests appear habitually clothed as the high priest used to be on that great day" (Douglas, "Ezekiel's Temple," 421).

⁷⁹⁷That the sacrifices play an important part in Ezekiel's description is evident in that he gives a more detailed account of the altar than of anything else in the temple, and in its enormous size in comparison to the altar associated with Solomon's temple (43:13-17).

⁷⁹⁸Oswald T. Allis, *Prophecy and the Church*, 247; cf. Nichol *et al.*, eds., *SDABC*, 4:715, "It is impossible to conceive that animal sacrifices could ever again be restored by divine command and find acceptance with God."

⁷⁹⁹Tan, 293-98, elaborates on the legitimacy of a reinstitution of the sacrificial system (cf. Alexander, 6:946-52).

⁸⁰⁰This formula is used of both the Mosaic Covenant (Lev. 26:12; Exod. 19:5-6; Deut. 26:18-19) and the New Covenant (Jer. 30:22; 31:33; 32:38).

One must not take the prophecy of Ezekiel in isolation, for millennial sacrifices are affirmed elsewhere in the prophetic writings. Isaiah notes that God will accept burnt offerings from both Israelites (Isa. 60:7; 66:20) and foreigners who bind themselves to the LORD (Isa. 56:6-7). Zechariah's last statement in his prophecy affirms the presence of millennial sacrifices in the temple (Zech. 14:21).⁸⁰¹ While Ezekiel's description provides the fullest explanation of these sacrifices, other prophets besides Ezekiel obviously had no problem with their reinstitution at the national restoration after Messiah's coming.

Another objection, based on the Book of Hebrews, is that the blood of bulls and goats can never take away sin and that Christ's one sacrifice is sufficient (Heb. 10:4, 14).⁸⁰² This is not a concern in relation to millennial sacrifices for several reasons.

First, the context in Hebrews relates to the believer's possible return to the Jewish sacrificial system during the age of grace. Sacrifices in this present age in which the church is prominent should not be confused with sacrifices in the future Millennium when Israel is restored as nation.⁸⁰³ The writer of Hebrews deals not with atonement in a future age but only with atonement in the present dispensation.

⁸⁰¹Similarly, Malachi explains that after the coming in judgment of the messenger of the covenant (Christ), grain offerings will be presented to God: "The LORD will have men who will bring [grain] offerings in righteousness, and the [grain] offerings of Jerusalem and Judah will be acceptable to the LORD, as in former years" (Mal. 3:3b-4). While some consider these *animal* sacrifices (e.g., Beth Glazier-McDonald, *Malachi*, SBL 98, 155), they are grain offerings (BDB, s.v. "תְּבִלָּה," 585b 4). Also, instead of viewing Malachi's description as depicting Christ's judgment associated with His second coming, some commentators suggest that it portrays the Mosaic period as the ideal era (Joyce G. Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, 244) or that it is "symbolic of a cleansed and sanctified church" (Robert L. Alden, "Malachi," EBC, 7:719). However, neither of these views adequately considers the judging nature of the arrival of the messenger (Mal. 3:2-3a).

⁸⁰²Allis, *Prophecy and the Church*, 247.

⁸⁰³Hughes responds sarcastically to this argument: "To restore all these today, under the New Covenant, would be apostasy. But, in a millennium, under the same New Covenant, it is supposed to be according to prophecy!" (Archibald Hughes, *A New Heaven and a New Earth*, 157).

Second, the point of Hebrews is that animal sacrifices never took away human sin anyway. The offerings under the Mosaic system were designed for a people who had already entered a relationship with God under the Abrahamic Covenant. Specifically, the sin and guilt offerings under the law functioned to restore one's *fellowship* with God, not to establish one's *relationship* with Him in a way analogous to confession of sin in the present age (e.g., 1 John 1:9). Old Testament Israelites were saved by grace through faith just as believers in the present age (Rom. 4:3, 9). The point of the Hebrews passage is that Old Testament sacrifices were inadequate in that they could not provide permanent cleansing and found their efficacy only in the Ultimate Sacrifice to which they pointed.⁸⁰⁴ However, while some do not view Old Testament sacrifices as efficacious,⁸⁰⁵ this view is difficult to reconcile with the indications in the Old Testament that the worshipper actually was forgiven when he offered his sacrifice according to the law (Lev. 1:4; 4:26-31; 16:20-22).⁸⁰⁶ Nevertheless, under the Mosaic dispensation all Israelites functioned under the theocracy even if they were not related to God spiritually. This will be the case even to a greater degree in the Millennium when Christ rules the theocracy. For this reason, it is best to see the millennial sacrifices as restoring Israelites to the covenant community in the theocratic state.⁸⁰⁷

⁸⁰⁴Jerry Hullinger, "The Problem of Sacrifices in Ezekiel's Temple," doctoral seminar paper for the course 375 Seminar in the Exilic and Postexilic Prophets, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1989, 26.

⁸⁰⁵Alexander, 6:949; Alva McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom*, 250; Feinberg, *The Prophecy of Ezekiel*, 234; John Mitchell, "The Question of Millennial Sacrifices," *BS* 110 (1953): 344.

⁸⁰⁶Hobart E. Freeman, "The Problem of Efficacy of Old Testament Sacrifices," *BETS* 5 (Summer 1962): 73-79; John C. Whitcomb, "Christ's Atonement and Animal Sacrifices in Israel," *GTJ* 6 (1985): 208-12.

⁸⁰⁷Whitcomb, "Christ's Atonement and Animal Sacrifices in Israel," 201-17; Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, 128.

A third reply may be made as to how millennial sacrifices do not stand in contradiction with the atonement of Christ. New Testament saints freely took part in temple worship (Acts 2:46; 3:1; 5:42) without seeing a contradiction with faith in Christ, and Paul even offered a sacrifice in good conscience (Acts 21:26), perhaps because he viewed it as memorial to the death of Christ. As Mosaic sacrifices prior to the cross looked to Christ's finished work of redemption, so millennial sacrifices after the cross could possibly look back upon this completed work.⁸⁰⁸ Further, as the Lord's Supper commemorates Christ's death in the present, so millennial sacrifices may accomplish this same memorial function in the future.⁸⁰⁹ As such these sacrifices would replace the Lord's Supper as vivid object lessons of Christ's supreme sacrifice on Calvary.⁸¹⁰ Admittedly, nothing in the passage indicates that Ezekiel saw these sacrifices as memorial and this view alone does not explain the expiatory nature of the sacrifices, so it does not marshal as much evidence as does the theocratic view; however, the memorial and theocratic perspectives are not mutually exclusive.

⁸⁰⁸Gaebelein, *The Prophet Ezekiel*, 312; Mitchell, "The Question of Millennial Sacrifices," 267; Merrill F. Unger, "The Temple Vision of Ezekiel," *BS* 106 (January-March 1949): 60; Clive A. Thomson, "The Necessity of Blood Sacrifices in Ezekiel's Temple," *BS* 123 (July-September 1966): 237-48. Archer seeks to explain the view as such: "It is true that the same Hebrew terms are used in Ezekiel 43 as were employed in the law of Moses [e.g., "sin offering"], but they will have a new meaning. They were used by the Old Testament prophet because they furnished the closest analogy to the millennial offerings that the Hebrew believer had any acquaintance with. But like so many other terms employed in connection with the end times, so these designations of sacrifice were sublimated and altered to fit the new conditions of the new age yet to come" (Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, 280-81).

⁸⁰⁹Debate remains whether the Lord's Supper will be celebrated in the Millennium. It is claimed that the celebration will continue since Jesus said He would not "drink of the fruit of the vine again until the kingdom of God comes" (Luke 22:18; cf. Matt. 26:29; Mark 14:25; Alexander, 6:951). However, it is also argued that there will be no more need for the Lord's Supper in the Millennium since it "proclaims the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Cor. 11:26; Dyer, 1:1305; cf. Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, 280). It appears to the present writer that the latter view is correct since Christ's statement in the gospels relates to His celebration of the Passover (Luke 22:15-16), not the Lord's Supper. In either case, nothing prohibits the coexistence of the memorial sacrifices and memorial Supper in the future age.

⁸¹⁰Alexander, 6:951, "Consequently, the sacrifices in the millennial sacrificial system of Ezekiel appear to be only memorials of Christ's finished work and pictorial reminders that mankind by nature is sinful and in need of redemption from sin."

Therefore, one need not be perplexed about the existence of millennial sacrifices when viewed considering their proper purpose. They form a part of the height of Israel's history as a nation (not a return to "beggarly elements"), they are taught by other prophets, they are inappropriate in the present age but not in the future, and they serve both theocratic and commemorative functions as they look back to the finished work of Christ at Calvary.

The preceding discussion on Ezekiel 40—48 has been quite involved. However, it has been necessary to provide the proper millennial context which is vital to understanding the nature of the Sabbath mentioned in Ezekiel 46:1. The evidence indicates that the Sabbath will indeed be reinstituted during this time. Alexander elaborates on the legitimacy of this millennial Sabbath observance:

The Sabbath and the observance of the new moon would [will] be part of the worship ritual during the Millennium. It may seem incongruous that the Sabbath, the sign of the Mosaic covenant (cf. Exod. 31:13, 16-17), would be observed in the millennial kingdom when it is not observed in the church age under the new covenant. Is this a retrogression in God's purposes? Not if it is understood that all God's covenants would be fulfilled and operating in the messianic kingdom (cf. 37:15-28) The Mosaic covenant showed Israel how to live a holy life in a relationship with God, and that type of life is still valid under the new covenant (cf. Jer. 31:33-34; Rom. 8:4). Therefore, for the Mosaic covenant and the new covenant to be fulfilled side by side is not incongruous....⁸¹¹

This reinstitution of the Sabbath along with the sacrifices may seem problematic to some Bible interpreters.⁸¹² However, one should not be troubled about the reinstitution of the Sabbath during the Millennium if the predominantly Jewish nature of this period is remembered.⁸¹³ As the Sabbath was the sign of the Mosaic covenant, so it

⁸¹¹Ibid., 6:986.

⁸¹²An attempt at this problem by one amillennial interpreter is to have the Sabbath signify Christian worship on the Lord's day, the open gate signify the gate of heaven open to believers for blessing, the prince's worship as representative of civil officials' need for worship without meddling in church affairs (or symbolic of Christ's incarnation and intercession), and the six working days as the term of man's life with its labor and sorrow (Greenhill, 810-11). Such is the imaginative exegesis of those who abandon the normal, literal hermeneutic.

⁸¹³One premillenarian sees a typical (n.b., not allegorical) significance to this account: "The six

will be elevated again to prominence when Israel is restored to the Lord in the millennial kingdom.

The millennial era is characterized by many other features of the Mosaic system, including some of the great feasts celebrated under the law (46:9, 11). Ezekiel specifically mentions two of these appointed feasts: Passover (45:21a) and Unleavened Bread (45:21b, 25).⁸¹⁴ The millennial prophecy of Zechariah adds the Feast of Tabernacles or Booths as a third feast (Zech. 14:16-19). Since these three feasts will be operative in the kingdom, this should not evoke surprise that the Sabbath also will be in effect at this unique time. These changes function as part of the Jewish nature of this era.

Lord's Day in the Kingdom

Since the Sabbath will be reinstituted in the future dispensation, it follows that one must ask about the future of the Lord's Day as well. What implications does the Sabbath reinstitution have for the Lord's Day? Will believers continue to worship on Sunday in the Millennium as well as on Saturday, or will the Lord's Day be abrogated in the future as the Sabbath is in the present?

Although this issue was certainly not in Isaiah's mind when he penned his prophecy, he noted of the millennial age, "From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, *all mankind* will come and bow before me" (Isa. 66:23).⁸¹⁵ If one takes the verse at face value then he must acknowledge that all people on earth will be

working days (typical of 6,000 years) are forever gone, the seventh day, the seventh thousand, the Day of the Lord, has come. And when the Millennium ends, the complete, eternal rest comes for all the people of God. The new moon is typical of Israel's re-establishment as a nation. The nation, like the moon, had waned and disappeared, but now she shines again like the new moon" (Gaebelien, 326-27).

⁸¹⁴Alexander suggests that the Feast of Firstfruits is included by implication but does not present his evidence (6:947).

⁸¹⁵Emphasis mine.

Sabbath-keepers, whether Jew or Gentile.⁸¹⁶ Congdon sees Gentile Sabbath practice only in a geographical sense: "All people will recognize the Jewish Sabbath during the millennium when they come to Jerusalem or send representatives there to worship, but there is no indication that the Sabbath will be recognized, observed, or enforced outside of the Holy Land" (cf. Isa. 43:9).⁸¹⁷ Whether this is correct or not is difficult to tell since the prophets did not concern themselves with the status of the Sabbath outside of Israel.⁸¹⁸ However, Isaiah 56:6-7 also makes it clear that foreigners will celebrate the Sabbath and thus reaffirms Isaiah 66:23.

These passages do not explicitly indicate an abrogation of the Lord's Day, for the existence of the two days side-by-side is not an impossibility. However, nothing in Scripture indicates that the Lord's Day will last beyond the present dispensation, and it was never commanded anyway. This admittedly argues from silence, but the Old Testament did not envision the Lord's Day and provides no help regarding its eschatological status.

Kingdom as a Sabbath

The significance of the Sabbath as a reminder of past events (i.e., creation and the Exodus) has been demonstrated in Chapter 4. However, its typical dimensions have not been explored to this point and can bring additional insight into its meaning

⁸¹⁶That Jews and Gentiles will still retain their distinctions in the Millennium (and eternal state as well) is argued by John F. Walvoord, *The Nations, Israel and the Church in Prophecy*, 151-71 (esp. 169-171).

⁸¹⁷Congdon, 434-35; cf. 436.

⁸¹⁸Katheryn Pfisterer Darr, "The Wall Around Paradise: Ezekielian Ideas about the Future," *VT* 37 (July 1987): 271-79 maintains that Ezekiel's marvelous future conditions are exclusive, not inclusive, since they do not mention peoples and lands outside the land of Israel. However, she does not bring Isaiah's teaching into consideration which is addressed above.

eschatologically. In this sense modern scholarship views the institution as typifying one of three antitypes.

The first perspective sees the Sabbath as typifying the messianic redemption accomplished by Christ.⁸¹⁹ In this view Christ's work of salvation fulfills the redemptive aspect of the day—an aspect first seen in Israel's national life through redemption from Egypt (cf. Deut. 5:12f.). These adherents also perceive an eschatological aspect which points to eternity when redemption is complete, for "how can the typological-symbolic function of the Sabbath have terminated with the coming of Christ, when the final rest, to which the present weekly Sabbath points, still lies in the future?"⁸²⁰ Wolff seems to indicate his preference for this redemptive perspective: "The fundamental significance of the seventh day is therefore this: rest from our work is to *remind us of the freedom we have already been given.*"⁸²¹

A second perspective sees no redemptive meaning but rather views the Sabbath as typological only of heaven.⁸²² Richardson notes in this regard,

In American Puritanism, as in Judaism, the Sabbath is regarded as the exemplar of the world to come. In fact, in American religion, the Sabbath replaces the Christological sacraments characteristic of European Christianity: a single eschatological sacrament replaces the two traditional sacraments that focus religious life on sin and redemption (i.e., baptism and the Lord's Supper).⁸²³

In the heavenly typological view God's rest from His creative work continues in the present age in which He works only to sustain the universe (not create). This rest

⁸¹⁹Bacchiocchi, *Divine Rest*, 131-70.

⁸²⁰*Ibid.*, 168.

⁸²¹Hans Walter Wolff, "The Day of Rest in the Old Testament," *LexTQ* 7 (July 1972): 68 (italics his).

⁸²²Adam Clarke, *Clarke's Commentary*, 6:294.

⁸²³Herbert W. Richardson, *Toward an American Theology*, 117-18. He also sees the Sabbath as typifying "the theocracy of God, who is sanctifying His creation through His providential works" (p. 118).

will end at the creation of the new heavens and new earth (2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1, 5).⁸²⁴

In the meantime He continues to work.

The "Kingdom Sabbath" in Extra-Biblical Literature

The final viewpoint on Sabbatical typology perceives the kingdom as its antitype. As the following discussion demonstrates, this perspective finds support from the earliest times and has had the most advocates. The first part of the present chapter has demonstrated how the prophetic literature indicates a reinstitution of the Sabbath in the Millennium; now it remains to show how Jewish and Christian literature indicates that the Sabbath typifies this entire period as well.

Herein is the oldest typological meaning to the Sabbath, finding support from the pre-exilic times when thought in Israel shifted to the future Messianic age, as is seen in the writings of the pre-exilic prophets.⁸²⁵ Along with their search for the ideal Davidic king,⁸²⁶ the people characterized the kingdom age as "an extended or prolonged Sabbath day."⁸²⁷ From such a depiction it is evident that Israel did not view the Sabbath

⁸²⁴Congdon, 136, 139.

⁸²⁵The Pentateuch and historical books prior to the time of Saul contain less eschatological teaching than the era after it, for at this time Israel functioned as a theocracy. Consequently, with God abiding amidst them, the focus was on the present. However, with the rise of the monarchy and the difficulties it presented, thought shifted to a future era which would be characterized by a kingdom without the inequities Israel was currently experiencing. During the preexilic age "a distinctive phenomenon in Israelite thought was the focus of attention on the future and on the radical improvement in existence hoped for in respect to both the nation and the individual" (Harald Riesenfeld, "The Sabbath and the Lord's Day in Judaism, the Preaching of Jesus and Early Christianity," in *The Gospel Tradition: Essays by Harald Riesenfeld*, 114).

⁸²⁶Wayne A. Meeks argues that the Messianic ideals of the intertestamental age find their biblical root not in David as much as in Moses, who was viewed as priest, prophet, and king (see his published dissertation, *The Prophet-King: Moses Traditions and the Johannine Christology*).

⁸²⁷Riesenfeld, "The Sabbath and the Lord's Day in Judaism, the Preaching of Jesus and Early Christianity," 114. The specific sources in this regard are addressed in the next paragraph.

as a day laden with unbearable rules, but rather a day which should be made festive. Isaiah notes that in the kingdom age "the house of Israel will possess the nations" (Isa. 14:2)—a time in which Isaiah promises Israel, "[you will have] rest (מִנוּחַ) from your pain and turmoil and harsh service in which you have been enslaved" (Isa. 14:3). This Jewish eschatological framework saw time in only two dimensions: "this (present) time" and "the time to come."⁸²⁸ As such the prophets and later extra-biblical writings do not clearly distinguish between the Millennium and the eternal state which is delineated in the progress of revelation (cf. Rev. 20—22).

In addition to the prophetical writings, the millennial significance of the Sabbath also appears in the intertestamental era. The book of *Jubilees* in the second century B.C.⁸²⁹ notes,

And at the end of the nineteenth jubilee in the seventh week, in the sixth year, Adam died. . . . And he lacked seventy years from one thousand years, for a thousand years are like one day in the testimony of heaven and therefore it was written concerning the tree of knowledge, 'In the day you eat from it you will die.' Therefore he did not complete the years of this day because he died in it.⁸³⁰

⁸²⁸*Mekhilta According to Rabbi Ishmael* 40 (Vayassa 5.XL:II.7.H. in Jacob Neusner, trans., 255): "R. Eleazar Hisma says, 'In this world you will not find [manna on the Sabbath], but you will find it in the world to come'; *Pirkê de Rabbi Eliezer* 18 (Gerald Friedlander, trans., 127); *Pirke Avot* 9 (Neusner, trans., 202); *EJ*, "Eschatology," by Haïm Z'ew Hirschberg, 6:874. For a later reference see 4 Ezra 8:52 (late first century A.D.), "It is for you that Paradise is opened, the tree of life is planted, the age to come is prepared, plenty is provided, a city is built, rest is appointed, goodness is established and wisdom perfected beforehand" (Charlesworth, 2:544).

⁸²⁹Most scholars acknowledge that *Jubilees* is best dated in the second century before Christ (e.g., J. Daniélou, "La typologie millénariste de la semaine dans le Christianisme primitif," *VigChr* 2 [1948]: 2; O. S. Wintermute, trans., *Jubilees*, in Charlesworth, 2:35, 43-44 [152-100 B.C. or possibly 161-140 B.C.]). However, Albright represents a minority opinion that *Jubilees* is pre-Hellenistic, stemming from the early third century or even late fourth century B.C., as almost certainly the oldest extra-biblical Jewish work (W. F. Albright, *From Stone Age to Christianity*, 266-67).

⁸³⁰*Jubilees* 4.30-31 (Charlesworth, 2:63-64). The Sabbath is also perceived as indicative of the divine ordering of history in a more general sense in *Jubilees* 1:26, 29; 50:1-5.

This passage indicates that "already before the Christian era 1,000 years had become to be regarded as one world-day."⁸³¹ This time of Sabbath rest for Israel was seen in *Jubilees* as an age when Israel will confidently rest since Satan will be bound.⁸³² An additional exhortation a century or so later shows this "day" to be typological of the coming kingdom age. This appears in the first century A.D.⁸³³ writing, *Life of Adam and Eve*, where the archangel Michael says to Seth regarding Eve's death, "Man of God, do not prolong mourning your dead more than six days, because the seventh day is a sign of the resurrection, the rest of the coming age; and on the seventh day the Lord rested from all his works."⁸³⁴ In this age Israel will be free from laborious work.⁸³⁵

The rabbinic writings⁸³⁶ declared the same kingdom motif for the Sabbath: "As sleep foreshadows death and dreams [foreshadow] prophecy, so does the sabbath represent the life of the age to come."⁸³⁷ Palestinian Judaism saw the Sabbath as a type of the rest which the righteous will enjoy in the age to come, as noted by Tamid 7.4, "On

⁸³¹R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, 2:451.

⁸³²Israel "will dwell in confidence in the land. And then it will not have any Satan or any evil (one). And the land will be purified from that time and forever" (Jub. 50.5). This lack of Satanic influence in the kingdom provides very early support for the suppression of his power reiterated in Revelation 20:4.

⁸³³"Given the relationship with the Pseudepigrapha, Josephus, rabbinic traditions, and perhaps Paul, the most natural span for the original composition would be between 100 B.C. and A.D. 200, more probably toward the end of the first century" (M. D. Johnson, trans., *Life of Adam and Eve*, in Charlesworth, 2:252).

⁸³⁴*Life of Adam and Eve [Vita]* 51.2 (ibid., 2:294).

⁸³⁵2 Enoch 65:9 (late first century A.D.; Charlesworth, 2:192).

⁸³⁶The following Talmudic references date after the time of the New Testament, but they nevertheless represent traditions that often reach even prior to the New Testament age; therefore, they can still in some sense be representative of first-century thought.

⁸³⁷*Genesis Rabbah* Bereshith 17.5 (H. Freedman and Maurice Simon, eds., *Midrash Rabbah*, 1:136, translates this source, "There are three incomplete phenomena: the incomplete experience of death is sleep; an incomplete form of prophecy is the dream; the incomplete form of the next world is the Sabbath"). This is repeated verbatim in *Genesis Rabbah* Lech Lecha 44.17 (ibid., 1:372).

the Sabbath they sang *A Psalm: a Song for the Sabbath Day* [Ps. 92]: a Psalm, a song for the time that is to come, for the day that shall be all Sabbath and rest in the life everlasting."⁸³⁸ Another source speaks of a millennial Sabbath from the analogy of the sabbatical year: "Just as the seventh year is one year of release in seven, so is the world: one thousand years out of seven shall be fallow."⁸³⁹ Still again, rabbinic sources describe this Sabbath rest by identifying Psalm 92 as a psalm recited by Adam

of the day which will be all Sabbath, when there will be neither eating nor drinking nor worldly affairs, but the righteous will sit with crowns on their heads enjoying the brilliance of the Divine Presence, as it is stated, *And they beheld God, and did eat and drink* [Exod. 24:11], like the ministering angels.⁸⁴⁰

Many other rabbinic writings also indicate the Sabbath as typifying the kingdom,⁸⁴¹ and others indicate this Jewish eschatological thousand year scenario.⁸⁴²

It should also be noted that while the overwhelming majority of passages relate the end time Sabbath as a paradise restored for a Millennium, two other contradictory Jewish scenarios exist. One persuasion depicts the eschatological Sabbath as a time in which the earth is uninhabited between the days of Messiah and the new age,⁸⁴³ and

⁸³⁸Tamid 7.4 (*Soncino*, Kodashim, 3:37-38); cf. *Pirkê de Rabbi Eliezer* 18 (Gerald Friedlander, trans., 126).

⁸³⁹*B. Sanhedrin* 97a (*Soncino*, Nezikin, 3:657).

⁸⁴⁰*'Aboth D'Rabbi Nathan* 1.7 (*The Minor Tractates*, 17b [1]).

⁸⁴¹"The Holy One, blessed be He, created seven æons, || and of them all He chose the seventh æon only; the six æons are for the going in and coming out (of God's creatures) for war and for peace. The seventh æon is entirely Sabbath and rest in the life everlasting" (*Pirkê de Rabbi Eliezer* 19 [Gerald Friedlander, trans., 137]); the Sabbath is "a reflex of the world to come" and "Sabbath is one-sixtieth part of the world to come," according to *b. Berakoth* 57b (*Soncino*, Zeraim, 356, 357); *b. Rosh Hashanah* 31a (*Soncino*, Mo'ed, 4:146); *b. Sanhedrin* 97a (*Soncino*, Nezikin, 3:657).

⁸⁴²*Midrash on Psalm 90:17* (William G. Braude, trans., *The Midrash on Psalms*, 2:97) affirms, among other interpretations, R. Eliezer's interpretation of Psalm 90:4 that the "day" of Messiah is one thousand years; cf. *Midrash on Psalm 25:8* (ibid., 1:352) interprets "in the day you shall eat of it you shall die" (Gen. 2:17) as indicating that Adam would not live more than one thousand years since to God "a thousand years" equals one day (Ps. 90:4).

⁸⁴³⁴ *Ezra* 7:26-31 affirms a four-hundred year Messianic period, but *b. Sanhedrin* 97a divides the

another perceives the "age to come" as eternal.⁸⁴⁴ However, the quantity of evidence for these other two reckonings cannot compare with that of the millennial view and thus cannot be considered normative.

The millennial time scheme presented by Jews was later adopted by Christians, who interpreted the Sabbath as symbolizing the thousand-year earthly kingdom and Sunday as symbolic of the eternal state.⁸⁴⁵ The concept found repetition in the early⁸⁴⁶ *Epistle of Barnabas*. This text teaches that the six days of creation each represent one thousand years (based upon Psalm 90:4).⁸⁴⁷ These six thousand years are followed by "the Sabbath" which commences "when His Son shall come," and this period lasts another Millennium. Then the eighth day follows as "the beginning of another world."⁸⁴⁸ Herein is a clear reference to the Sabbath as typical of the Millennium and the Lord's Day as typical of the eternal state. The view is expressed through the following diagram.⁸⁴⁹

6,000 years of world history into three 2,000 year segments: the first time period without the Torah, the second with the Torah, and the final Messianic time (*Soncino*, *Nezikin*, 3:657).

⁸⁴⁴*Midrash on Psalm 92:2* (Braude, 2:110-11); 2 Enoch 65:7-11 (Charlesworth, 1:192); cf. Testament of Abraham 19:7, "And Death said, 'Hear, righteous Abraham, for seven ages I ravage the world and I lead everyone down to Hades . . .'" (ibid., 1:894) may by implication indicate an eternal eighth age. Also, the second-century Gnostic treatise, the *Gospel of Truth* (32:18-34), speaks of a perfect day above which has no night and as such depicts an eternal Sabbath (Kendrick Grobel, trans., 134-38).

⁸⁴⁵For a survey of the Christian literature, see Daniélou, "La typologie millénariste de la semaine dans le Christianisme primitif," 1-16; Rordorf, 46-51, 282ff.; cf. also the footnotes immediately following.

⁸⁴⁶For views on the date of *Epistle of Barnabas* see pages 185-85, footnote 143.

⁸⁴⁷"For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night"; this verse finds repetition in 2 Peter 3:8 with respect to the day of the Lord.

⁸⁴⁸*Epistle of Barnabas* 15.4-9.

⁸⁴⁹Adapted from James A. Kleist, trans., 179, n. 161.

Days:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Events:	-----the past-----				--the present--	--the Millennium--	-----eternity----	
Types:							Sabbath	Sunday

This millennial depiction was widely held among many other early Christian writers. Augustine wrote, "Therefore, the eighth day signifies the new life at the end of the world; the seventh day, the future rest of the saints on this earth."⁸⁵⁰ Tertullian's view was similarly stated:

But we do confess that a kingdom is promised to us upon the earth, although before heaven, only in another state of existence; inasmuch as it will be after the resurrection for a thousand years in the divinely-built city of Jerusalem. . . . After its thousand years are over, within which period is completed the resurrection of the saints . . . there will ensue the destruction of the world and the conflagration of all things at the judgment.⁸⁵¹

Likewise, Hippolytus notes,

And 6,000 years must needs be accomplished, in order that the Sabbath may come, the rest, the holy day "on which God rested from all His works." For the Sabbath is the type and emblem of the future kingdom of the saints, when they "shall reign with Christ," when He comes from heaven, as John says in his Apocalypse: for "a day with the Lord is as a thousand years."⁸⁵²

Other writers taught similar views.⁸⁵³ Since the concept of the Sabbath typifying a millennial kingdom pervades the Jewish literature centuries before Christ, stretches into

⁸⁵⁰Augustine *Sermons on the Liturgical Seasons* 259.2 (Mary Sarah Muldowney, trans., FC, 38:368); id., *City of God* 20.7 (Marcus Dods, trans., NPF, 2:426-27).

⁸⁵¹Tertullian *The Five Books Against Marcion* 3.25 (Peter Holmes, trans., ANF, 3:342-43).

⁸⁵²Hippolytus *Fragments on Daniel* 2.4 (in *The Extant Works and Fragments of Hippolytus*, S. D. F. Salmond, trans., ANF, 5:179). While Hippolytus erroneously attributes the final quote (Psalm 90:4) to John rather than Peter (2 Peter 3:8), a chiliastic view is nevertheless maintained.

⁸⁵³Lactantius *The Divine Institutes* 7.14, declares, "Since God, having finished His works, rested the seventh day and blessed it, at the end of the six thousandth year all wickedness must be abolished from the earth, and righteousness reign for a thousand years; and there must be tranquility and rest from the labours which the world has long endured" (William Fletcher, trans., ANF, 7:211); cf. Justin Martyr *Dialogue with Trypho* 80-81 (Thomas B. Falls, trans., FC, 6:276-77). Congdon, 439-45, briefly summarizes the chiliastic teaching from *The Epistle of Barnabas* to John Bunyan.

the first century, and finds expression in the post-apostolic Christian and rabbinic literature, it would not be surprising to find this orientation within the pages of the New Testament itself. Such is the case in some New Testament passages as the following discussion affirms.

Psalm 95

Since Hebrews 3—4 draws extensively upon concepts of rest found in Psalm 95, a brief study of this psalm is warranted before addressing its meaning in Hebrews. Here the psalmist notes the importance of obedience more than he does rest; nevertheless, the judgment for disobedience is failure to enter God's "rest" (v. 11), so this concept is important as well. The contribution to the theology of rest made by Psalm 95 is the equation of God's rest (promised since patriarchal days) with Israel's inheritance of the land of Canaan.

The psalm consists of two parts: a call to worship (vv. 1-7a) and a warning against disobedience similar to that of Israel in the wilderness (vv. 7b-11). Through this twofold means the psalmist's intent is to exhort Israel to praise the greatness of God as King⁸⁵⁴ who establishes both the world (as Creator) and the covenant (as Lord).⁸⁵⁵ Israel, if she indeed realizes the awesomeness of the One whom she worships, would never repeat the disobedience characteristic of their ancestors. Conversely stated, the point of the psalm is that no true worship can be ascribed to God without obedience.⁸⁵⁶ The

⁸⁵⁴Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms II: 51—100*, 353.

⁸⁵⁵Arthur Weiser, *The Psalms*, OTL, 625.

⁸⁵⁶A. A. Anderson, *The Book of Psalms: Vol. 2, Psalms 73—150*, NCBC, 676; cf. "The two parts should not be disassociated from each other: it is a good thing to worship God, but acts and words of worship are acceptable only if they proceed from sincere and obedient hearts" (F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NICOT, 63).

covenant formula ("he is our God and we are the people of His pasture," v. 7a)⁸⁵⁷ ties the first section (vv. 1-7a) into the second (vv. 7b-11), which indicates that Israel has covenant responsibilities as well.⁸⁵⁸

This warning portion of this psalm (vv. 7b-11) looks back at the first "water from the rock" incident of Meribah and Massah. In this account God provided for Israel despite the nation's quarreling over lack of water and testing Him by questioning His presence among them (Exod. 17:1-7). However, Psalm 95:11 curiously reiterates God's judgment declared after a later and climactic incident, the unbelief at Kadesh-Barnea (Num. 14:23). This juxtaposition of the Meribah/Massah incident with the judgment of Kadesh-Barnea indicates that God's refusal to grant His rest was not only for the first incident at Meribah/Massah. The judgment was also for the quarreling which lasted throughout this entire time from Meribah/Massah (before Sinai) until the climactic failure at Kadesh, that is, for the nation's unbelief during the entire forty year wandering (Ps. 95:9-10; cf. Heb. 3:9). The resultant judgment upon all the people (except Joshua and Caleb) was clearly stated as God's refusal to enter the promised land. Without question the psalmist (David)⁸⁵⁹ is looking back at the inability of Israel to enter the land and warning his hearers not to experience the same judgment themselves through the same offense—unbelief. Since the time of Moses the people knew that only a *repentant* Israel would enjoy the promised rest in Canaan (Deut. 28:63-68; 30:1-3).⁸⁶⁰ The psalmist

⁸⁵⁷See this formula in reference to the Mosaic Covenant (Exod. 19:5f.; 2 Sam. 7:24) and New Covenant (Jer. 31:33; Ezek. 11:20; 14:11; 34:30-31).

⁸⁵⁸A. A. Anderson, 679; cf. Charles Augustus Briggs and Emilie Gracie Briggs, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, ICC, 2:292.

⁸⁵⁹Hebrews 4:7.

⁸⁶⁰Kaiser, "The Promise Theme and the Theology of Rest," 135-50, provides extensive biblical support for viewing God's rest in the land promise given to Abraham. This evidence is addressed in the following section on Hebrews 3—4.

warns his people to be obedient so that they, too, would not miss God's genuine rest in Canaan.⁸⁶¹ The fact that the rest was still outstanding demonstrates that, although Israel was living in most of their inheritance, they still had not acquired the entire land and enjoyed rest from their enemies as God had promised. Neither were the promises of the Davidic Covenant fulfilled at this time (2 Sam. 7:11b-16).

Therefore, David associates the incidents at Meribah and Massah and the continual rebellion in the desert with their later inability to enter their rest in Canaan. Interestingly enough, this quarreling incident (Exod. 17:1-7) occurred immediately after receiving the Sabbath commandment (Exod. 16). Perhaps this association was in the mind of the psalmist; the first action on Israel's part after having received a weekly type of Canaan rest was to show itself unworthy of receiving this rest.

The equation of the rest with the land promise is also evident in the classification of Psalm 95 as a royal enthronement psalm. Westermann observes that these enthronement psalms (Pss. 47; 93; 96—99) each possess a dual emphasis: a present liturgical aspect, and an eschatological aspect which looks to the future time when Israel reigns in the kingdom age.⁸⁶² The reign of Israel was certainly perceived as earthly and the land was viewed in an earthly sense; therefore, the judgment for unbelief was the forfeiture of God's rest in the land. This disobedience resulted in temporal discipline and loss of future blessing.⁸⁶³

⁸⁶¹Briggs and Briggs, 296; Dahood, 355; Weiser, 627; A. A. Anderson, 680.

⁸⁶²Claus Westermann, *The Psalms*, 114; cf. Arno C. Gaebelein, *The Book of Psalms*, 357-58; *contra* J. J. Stewart Perowne, *The Book of Psalms*, 2:194; A. A. Anderson, 680, who do not consider it an enthronement psalm.

⁸⁶³Thomas Kem Oberholtzer, "The Kingdom Rest in Hebrews 3:1—4:13," *BS* 145 (April-June 1988): 188.

Hebrews 3—4

The rest motif of Psalm 95 finds amplification and expansion in the New Testament Book of Hebrews. The author of Hebrews quotes the latter portion of Psalm 95 several times and curiously declares, "There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God" (Heb. 4:9). Interpretations of this difficult phrase abound. However, this passage deserves careful attention as it provides significant insight into the eschatological dimensions of the Sabbath.

A proper interpretation of the Sabbath rest of Hebrews 3—4 requires an understanding of the recipients of the letter. This is imperative since the author presents within the letter five "warning passages." These verses exhort the readers against: undergoing divine discipline for drifting away (2:1-4), unbelief (3:7—4:13), continued spiritual immaturity (5:11—6:20), willful sin (10:19-39), and ignoring God's voice (12:18-29). While a detailed exegesis of each of these passages is beyond the scope of this study,⁸⁶⁴ the identity of those warned against cannot be understated. This identification presents many difficulties, but basically two major views exist, suggesting that the readers were *all* believers or that they included some *professing* believers who may not have been regenerate. Thus the warnings in the Hebrews speak of loss of rewards in the first case and eternal punishment in the second.

⁸⁶⁴For a thorough treatment of these passages, see Thomas Kem Oberholtzer, "An Analysis and Exposition of the Eschatology of the Warning Passages in the Book of Hebrews," Th.D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1984. He advocates that the passages are written to believers and as such warn against losing eschatological rewards.

Several scholars postulate the first view above: that the letter's recipients are Jewish⁸⁶⁵ believers⁸⁶⁶ who because of persecution⁸⁶⁷ are in danger of rejecting Christianity by a return to Judaism and thus will lose their rewards for lack of perseverance.⁸⁶⁸ The best evidence that believers are in view includes the fact that they are: enlightened (6:4; 10:32; cf. 2 Cor. 4:3-6), "companions" with the Holy Spirit (6:4; cf. 1:9; 3:1, 14), impossible to bring *back* to repentance if fallen away (6:6),⁸⁶⁹ sanctified (10:10, 29), "made perfect forever" (10:14), and those having already suffered for their faith (10:32-34).

However, a second view on the readership has captured the attention of some scholars—that while the letter as a whole is written to genuine believers, professing believers are the subjects of the warning passages.⁸⁷⁰ They have noted that the severity of

⁸⁶⁵The Jewish readership is evident in the author's polemic against the Hebrew temple service and priesthood as if the recipients were in danger of reverting back to these institutions. The extensive use of the Old Testament also provides evidence of the readers' conviction of its authority. There also exists a notable lack of Gentile customs or laws and the ancient title "To the Hebrews" is consistent with its content. See James Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, ICC, xv; Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, v, xxxv-xlii; John V. Dahms, "The First Readers of Hebrews," *JETS* 20 (1977): 365-75; Zane C. Hodges, *BKC*, 2:778. Considering the problem inconclusive is Harold W. Attridge, *Hebrews*, Herm, 9-12.

⁸⁶⁶The readers are identified as "holy brothers who share in the heavenly calling" (3:1), indicating their regenerate state (cf. 3:12, 14; 4:3, 14; 6:1; 10:32; 12:28; 13:1). Those affirming that believers are in view include P. Steven Abels, "The Rest of God," Th.M. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1977, 5.

⁸⁶⁷The persecution which they were undergoing (10:32-34; 12:4; 13:3) provides the rationale for the author's exhortations to endurance (10:35-36; chap. 11; 12:1-13).

⁸⁶⁸Repeated warnings against slackness, sloth, carelessness, and cowardice abound in the letter (2:1; 3:6, 12-14; 4:2; 5:11; 6:4-12; 10:23, 29, 32-39; 12:4-17, 25-29; cf. C. K. Barrett, "The Eschatology of the Epistle to the Hebrews," in *The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology*, 363). However, Dahms, "The First Readers of Hebrews," 365-75, contends that the readers "were Jewish Christians who were in danger, not of lapsing back into Judaism, nor of merely being slack in their Christian devotion, but of embracing a version of Christianity characterized by serious error" (p. 365) including a defective view of Christ, the incarnation, the promise to Abraham, and grace (p. 375).

⁸⁶⁹One cannot be brought *back* to a point of repentance if he has not yet repented in the first place.

⁸⁷⁰Stanley D. Toussaint, "The Eschatology of the Warning Passages in the Book of Hebrews," *GTJ* 3 (1982): 67-80; Homer A. Kent, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 47-48.

discipline warned against in these passages indicates that eternal punishment (not loss of rewards) is in view.⁸⁷¹ This perspective advocates that while the letter as a whole is addressed to believers, the warning passages address a smaller group of *professing* believers fellowshiping within the church, some of whom may not be Christians after all. This view sees the warning about not entering God's rest as addressed to these *professing* believers, since genuine believers are guaranteed this rest (4:3).

Evidence cited that only *professing* believers are in view is seen in that they are: warned against experiencing retribution (not loss of rewards) instead of ultimate salvation (2:2-3),⁸⁷² compared to (by allusion) the blessed and productive Edenic state prior to the Fall and its cursed state in need of redemption after the Fall,⁸⁷³ and identified as worthless, cursed and burned (6:8) in contrast to the future of the saved (6:9).⁸⁷⁴ These apostates will be: judged by raging fire in the Day of the Lord which consumes God's enemies who deliberately sin (10:25-27),⁸⁷⁵ punished with a judgment more severe than

⁸⁷¹Toussaint, "The Eschatology of the Warning Passages in the Book of Hebrews," 67-80, notes many judgments in the passages which seem to refer to eternal damnation more than they refer to the loss of rewards. While it is beyond the scope of this study to evaluate each of his arguments, for the other (reward) perspective, see the warning passage sections in Zane C. Hodges, "Hebrews," *BKC*, 2:777-813.

⁸⁷²Toussaint, "The Eschatology of the Warning Passages in the Book of Hebrews," 70. Hodges responds by noting that the nature of the retribution is not stated, but that believers are in view is evident in the author's use of "we" so that he "included himself among those who needed to pay attention to these truths" (Hodges, 2:783). The remaining arguments in the paragraph are summarized from Toussaint's article, 74-80.

⁸⁷³Actually, an allusion to a pre-Fall verses post-Fall state in Eden is not certain in the passage. Even if such allusion does exist, the redemptive analogy presses the point too far.

⁸⁷⁴However, only the thorns and thistles are burned (i.e., one's works) and not the land itself (i.e., the unproductive Christian under God's judgment), which both temporary and essentially hopeful (Hodges, 2:795-96). Furthermore, verse 9 does not theologically contrast the lives of the saved with unbelievers just described but rather should be taken as an expression of hope that the readers would persevere to attain millennial blessings (ibid., 2:796).

⁸⁷⁵The connective γὰρ of verse 26 indicates that it explains the significance of "the Day" noted in the previous verse—especially its condemnatory nature (ibid., 76). Hodges' response here is to refer back to the loss of rewards taught in 6:8, which does not adequately address the text here (Hodges, 2:805).

physical death commanded in the law (10:28-29),⁸⁷⁶ in the same state (death) as the unbelieving Israelites of Deuteronomy 32:35-36 (10:30), experiencing the terror of God's judgment (10:31),⁸⁷⁷ prevented from receiving the reward of the kingdom if they "throw away their confidence" (10:35-36),⁸⁷⁸ and destroyed if they "shrink back" (10:39).⁸⁷⁹

While the "profession" viewpoint has its merits, three problems face this view. First, most of the verses which indicate the regenerate state of the recipients fall *within* the warning sections of the book, not in the remaining portions.⁸⁸⁰ Those of the "profession" view would not see this as problematic since the book as a whole addresses believers and—in their view—asks whether they indeed are such. For example, Hebrews 3:12 admonishes, "See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God." But does this really ask members of the Christian community to evaluate whether they indeed are in the faith? This would assume that a genuine believer cannot have a "sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God."

⁸⁷⁶The assumption here is that the only judgment more severe than physical death is eternal death. However, premature physical death with the loss of rewards for a believer certainly is worse than death itself. Additionally, Saul's mental and spiritual torment could also be more severe than death itself (1 Sam 16:14-15).

⁸⁷⁷"For a believer it is a merciful thing to fall into the hands of a loving God, but for apostates it is punitive and terrifying" (Toussaint, "The Eschatology of the Warning Passages in the Book of Hebrews," 78).

⁸⁷⁸Perseverance results in receiving (κομίζω) from God "what He has promised," a verb which elsewhere in Hebrews refers to obtaining the promised kingdom itself (11:13, 39).

⁸⁷⁹This word for "destruction" (ἀπώλειαν) is commonly used for *eternal* destruction in the New Testament (Matt. 7:13; Rom. 9:22; Phil. 1:28; 3:19; 1 Tim. 6:9) and describes both Judas and the Antichrist as sons "of perdition" (John 17:12; 2 Thess. 2:3). See Kent, 215.

⁸⁸⁰For example, 3:12; 4:3 fall within the warning against unbelief (3:7—4:13) and 6:1 is in the section against continued spiritual immaturity (5:11—6:20). Similarly, 10:32-36 is written to suffering believers as part of the warning against willful sin (10:19-39) and 12:28 notes that the recipients will receive eternal rewards as part of the warning against ignoring God's voice (12:18-29).

One need go only to the example of the Exodus generation for the answer. Of the multitudes that showed their faith in the God of Israel by sacrificing a Passover lamb, only two (Joshua and Caleb) entered Canaan rest. Even Moses, Aaron, and Miriam never entered the Promised Land. Surely one would not argue that Canaan represents salvation and only two Israelites were saved! It is more consistent with the context of Hebrews 3—4 which looks back at the Exodus generation to see them as saved people who later would not trust God for their reward in Canaan. The parallel would be, then, that the recipients of the Book of Hebrews also faced a potential fate like theirs—saved but unrewarded, and even entering God’s presence at death before the Lord had intended.

A second problem with the “profession” view is the observation that the author included himself within the warning passages as one who also needed to pay close attention to the truths (Heb. 2:1, 3; 3:14; 4:3, 11; 9:26).⁸⁸¹ Dahms responds to this argument by saying that the author "says 'we,' not because he has any doubts about himself, but because he follows the very common practice of identifying himself with his readers in the exhortation."⁸⁸² But even if he was identifying with his readers and not doubting his own commitment, he still does recognize that any believer can revert to unbelief. If this was not possible, then why write the epistle at all? This must have been a genuine danger for the readers, for the New Testament consistently exhorts Christians to *live* like Christians.

The third problem with the “profession” view is there exists no *prima facie* reason for limiting the warning passages as applicable only to a certain segment of the readership while the letter as a whole addresses believers.⁸⁸³ In response, “profession”

⁸⁸¹Oberholtzer, "An Analysis and Exposition of the Eschatology of the Warning Passages in the Book of Hebrews," 46.

⁸⁸²Dahms, "The First Readers of Hebrews," 47.

⁸⁸³Oberholtzer, "An Analysis and Exposition of the Eschatology of the Warning Passages in the

advocates may claim that nothing prohibits this narrower meaning as warnings to entire groups of individuals always have specific application to those who need to heed the admonitions given. However, while specific applications may apply only to the unfaithful, one must admit that the warnings are directed to all of the readers, indeed, even to the author himself.

Those of the “profession” view claim that professing Christians (apostates) within the community are denounced in the most severe manner. In particular, the readers could potentially be judged with “raging fire that will consume the enemies of God” (10:27). Many commentators argue that this fire must be hell as the readers would be enemies of God as they would thus be unbelievers.⁸⁸⁴ Yet this assumes that a Christian could not be an enemy of God. It also assumes that the fire must be hellfire.

However, the more cogent view of the fire that burns enemies here is that it designates believers who identify with unbelievers and thus incur the temporal judgment in the fires that burned Qumran, Jerusalem, and all other cities resisting Rome in AD 70.⁸⁸⁵ “The point is that new covenant believers cannot presume upon the salvation brought to them in Christ to cause God to overlook their willful disobedience. Just as in Numbers 15, so too here in Hebrews 10, judgment does not result in loss of salvation, nor

Book of Hebrews,” 46.

⁸⁸⁴ Among many commentators seeing the fire as hellfire are Homer Kent, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1972), 205, and “Their fate is the same as those who never turned to Christ or who actively opposed the gospel!” (David G. Peterson, “Hebrews,” in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson et al., 4th ed. [Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994], 1345).

⁸⁸⁵ Randall C. Gleason, “The Old Testament Background of the Warning in Hebrews 6:4-8,” *BS* 155 (Jan-Mar 1998): 62-91; idem., “The Old Testament Background of Rest in Hebrews 3:7-4:11,” *BS* 157 (July-Sep 2000): 281-303; idem., “A Moderate Reformed View,” in *Four Views on the Warning Passages in Hebrews*, ed. Herbert W. Bateman IV (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2007), 359, as well as Joseph C. Dillow, *Final Destiny: The Future Reign of the Servant Kings*, 4th ed. (Monument, CO: Paniym Group, 2012), 653.

does the text overtly say it does.”⁸⁸⁶ Indeed, the text does not refer “eternal” fire, as in other passages relating to hell:

Given the frequency of the use of this adjective throughout the New Testament to speak of eternal judgment (“eternal fire,” Matt 18:8; 25:41; “eternal punishment,” Matt 25:46; “everlasting destruction,” 2 Thess 1:9; “punishment of eternal fire,” Jude 7), and given the frequency of the use of “eternal” in Hebrews itself, the absence of the term in the warning passages is significant.⁸⁸⁷

Dillow, likewise, notes, “The writer quotes Isaiah 26:11 which refers to the physical destruction of Israel’s enemies in time, not eternity.”⁸⁸⁸

Also, the context supports judgment for true believers. After all, the writer of Hebrews 10 applies the warning of fire to *believers* (who will not experience hell) in his exhortation, “The LORD will judge his own people” (10:30b NLT). While Christians are saved from eternal judgment, they are not spared temporal judgment, including even loss of life as in the case of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:5, 10) and Corinthian believers who abused the Lord’s supper and thus had fallen “asleep” (1 Cor 11:30), a metaphor only applied to believers in the New Testament.⁸⁸⁹

Therefore, in the mind of the present writer, the eschatological judgments for apostasy within the letter give greater credence to the rewards view. Such *rewards* could be lost—and even the *lives* of the readers could be lost—should they revert back to Judaism by identifying themselves with unbelievers in rebellion to God as were their unbelieving countrymen who fought against Rome to protect the old covenant. This covenant was “obsolete,” “growing old,” and “ready to disappear” as the temple would soon be destroyed (Heb 8:13). Therefore, they should not abandon their faith.

⁸⁸⁶ David L. Allen, *Hebrews*, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: B & H, 2010), 522.

⁸⁸⁷ Allen, *Hebrews*, 524.

⁸⁸⁸ Dillow, *Final Destiny*, 653; cf. Charles C. Bing, “Does Fire in Hebrews Refer to Hell?” *BS* 167 (July- Sept 2010): 350-56.

⁸⁸⁹ See, for example, Matt 27:52; John 11:11; 1 Cor 15:20; 1 Thess 4:13-15.

Many scholars have also acknowledged a pilgrimage motif in which the recipients are depicted as believers en route to their eschatological home.⁸⁹⁰ This is particularly evident in chapters 3—4 and chapter 11,⁸⁹¹ which depict how Old Testament men and women of faith looked beyond the present life towards future reward. Hebrews has all the necessary elements of a pilgrimage: separation, or leaving home (11:15-16) for a journey to a sacred place (11:10, 16; 13:14) with a fixed purpose (12:14) and entailing hardship (3:12-18; 5:11—6:12; 10:23-26; 12:4) as a "cultic community on the move."⁸⁹²

Equally important to the pilgrimage motif is the doctrinal center of the book. The most defensible position is that Hebrews demonstrates the high priesthood of Christ (8:1).⁸⁹³ Taken together with the pilgrimage motif, one may state the purpose of the book as such: to defend the high priesthood of Christ in order to convince a persecuted Jewish community of believers (including some mere professors) not to return to Judaism but

⁸⁹⁰The view was presented in 1918 by Philip Mauro, *God's Pilgrims: Their Dangers, Their Resources, Their Rewards*, but popularized in 1939 (English ed., 1984) by Ernst Käsemann, *The Wandering People of God*. However, Käsemann's thesis must be corrected as it refers to an aimless "wandering" rather than a purposeful pilgrimage; also, his contention that the wandering motif finds its root in Gnosticism is problematic (cf. Edwin Yamauchi, *Pre-Christian Gnosticism*, 51, 185-86). Others acknowledging the pilgrimage motif include Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 295, 304-6, 375; William Robinson, "The Eschatology of the Epistle to the Hebrews: A Study in the Christian Doctrine of Hope," *Encounter* 22 (1961): 43; William G. Johnsson, "The Pilgrimage Motif in the Book of Hebrews," *JBL* 97 (1978): 239-51; Raymond Brown, "Pilgrimage in Faith: The Christian Life in Hebrews," *SWJT* 28 (Fall 1985): 28-35.

⁸⁹¹Hebrews 11 continually states that the Old Testament models of faithful endurance looked to a future reward (vv. 8-16, 20, 22, 23-28) although they did not receive what was promised (vv. 13, 39). The pilgrimage motif finds explicit mention in the word "wandering" (πλανώμενοι) in verse 38, but many other words in this chapter indicate the pilgrimage motif: ἄλλοτρίαν (v. 9='strange, alien, hostile, enemy'—even though it was the land of promise!), ἐκδέχομαι (v. 10='to expect, wait'), πόρρωθεν (v. 13='from a distance'), ζένος (v. 13='stranger, alien'), παρεπίδημος (v. 13='exile, stranger'), πατρίς (v. 14='homeland, fatherland'), κρείττων (v. 16='better'), πόλις (v. 16='city'), μισθαποδοσία (v. 26='pay, wages, reward'), περιέρχομαι (v. 37='go around, go from place to place') . . . and ἐπαγγελία (vv. 13, 39='promise'); cf. Johnsson, "The Pilgrimage Motif in the Book of Hebrews," 241.

⁸⁹²Ibid., 244-50.

⁸⁹³David J. MacLeod, "The Doctrinal Center of the Book of Hebrews," *BS* 146 (July-September 1989): 291-93; Moffatt, xlv-xlv, liii, 8; Barrett, "The Eschatology of the Epistle to the Hebrews," 366.

rather to recognize their suffering as part of every believer's pilgrimage to his eschatological reward.

The second warning passage in the author's argument relates to the eschatological dimensions of the Sabbath (3:1—4:14). This section both begins and ends with a repetition of the words "heaven[ly]," "Jesus," "high priest," and "confession," thus forming an *inclusio* which marks off the section from adjacent sections.⁸⁹⁴ After demonstrating that the readers function within the worshiping community as believer-priests (3:1-6),⁸⁹⁵ the author uses the generation of Israel as an example to his readers. Just as the Israelites did not enter the land because of unbelief (3:7-19), so the first century Hebrew recipients could forfeit their own experience of God's rest through unbelief (4:1-14). Even though Joshua led the *next* generation of Israel into the promised land, this still could not be equated with the promised rest.⁸⁹⁶ That God's rest still remained is emphasized repeatedly throughout the pericope (vv. 1, 6, 9, 11) and implied through the quotation of Psalm 95 as a reiteration that it still remained in David's day (vv. 3, 5).

One of the difficulties presented in this passage is the use of σαββατισμὸς ("Sabbath rest"), found only here in Scripture (4:9) which makes it difficult to define. Moreover, this is the first occurrence of the term in all of Greek literature.⁸⁹⁷ For this

⁸⁹⁴Other examples of *inclusios* in Hebrews include 2:5-16 ("for . . . not . . . angels"); 5:1-10 ("high priest"); 5:11—6:12 ("dull" or "sluggish," νοῦτοι); 7:1-10 ("Melchizedek . . . met"); 12:14—13:20 ("peace"). For even further examples see Neil R. Lightfoot, *Jesus Christ Today*, 48; cf. David J. MacLeod, "The Literary Structure of the Book of Hebrews," *BS* 146 (April-June 1989): 187.

⁸⁹⁵Oberholtzer, "The Kingdom Rest in Hebrews 3:1—4:13," 186-87.

⁸⁹⁶George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 575-76.

⁸⁹⁷Attridge, 131.

reason several commentators do not take a position as to what is meant.⁸⁹⁸ Nevertheless, most do state an opinion of the rest in view and these are surveyed below.

Present Sabbath Rest and Future Heavenly Rest

Samuele Bacchiocchi believes the author of Hebrews here encourages the believer to continue keeping the seventh-day Sabbath in anticipation of eternal rest with God.⁸⁹⁹ In his judgment the recipients of the letter were so steeped in Jewish liturgy that any mention of the Sabbath was unnecessary.⁹⁰⁰ Also, the "'sabbath rest' that 'remains for the people of God' (4:9) is presented not primarily as a future but as a present experience into which those 'who have believed *are entering*' (4:3)" since this latter verb is emphatic and in the present tense.⁹⁰¹ Third, Bacchiocchi denies that the Sabbath served as an Old Testament type annulled at Christ's coming; rather than being obsolete like the temple and its services (Heb. 7—10), the Sabbath is presented as remaining (4:9) since the verb "remains" (ἀπολείπεται) literally means "to leave behind."⁹⁰² Finally, the author's invitation in verse 11 to "strive to enter that rest" indicates the permanence of the Sabbath until "its eschatological consummation in the heavenly Canaan."⁹⁰³

⁸⁹⁸N. Lightfoot, 97; Congdon, 438-45, 447, merely summarizes three main views without coming to a conclusion. On the other hand, William C. Poston, "Aspects of Rest," Th. M. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 54, holds to *all three* major views: spiritual, millennial, and heavenly rest.

⁸⁹⁹Bacchiocchi, *Divine Rest*, 164-70; cf. id., *From Sabbath to Sunday*, 63-69.

⁹⁰⁰Bacchiocchi, *Divine Rest*, 165; cf. id., *From Sabbath to Sunday*, 63, 65.

⁹⁰¹Id., *Divine Rest*, 166 (emphasis his); cf. id., *From Sabbath to Sunday*, 66. The aorist tense of the verbs "entered—εἰσερχόμεθα" and "rested—εἰσελθὼν" in verse 10 are also cited as opposing a futuristic interpretation (ibid., 67).

⁹⁰²Id., *Divine Rest*, 166-67; cf. id., *From Sabbath to Sunday*, 66. His translation for 4:9 is, "So then a Sabbath rest is left behind for the people of God" (p. 167), which makes the Sabbath still relevant today.

⁹⁰³Id., *Divine Rest*, 167, 169, 170; cf. id., *From Sabbath to Sunday*, 68-69.

Bacchiocchi's bold attempt to see a weekly observance in this passage does not generally find support even among fellow Adventists. Since they universally hold that the Sabbath was observed by the early church (especially among Jewish Christians), "there would have been no point in so labored an effort to persuade the Jews to do what they were already doing—observing the seventh-day Sabbath."⁹⁰⁴ The present author challenges the unproven assumption that the readers of the letter observed the Sabbath, but assuming they did, the above criticism would be valid.

The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary also rebuts a supposed weekly observance with another line of logic: "To declare that what remains for 'the people of God' is the weekly Sabbath, is to declare that what Joshua failed to lead Israel into was the weekly Sabbath."⁹⁰⁵ Since Ellen White was believed to have the "gift of prophecy" and she declared that the rest spoken of here is the rest of grace,⁹⁰⁶ most Adventists follow this as the authoritative interpretation.⁹⁰⁷ Bacchiocchi is an exception, although he also affirms the traditional view in one statement.⁹⁰⁸

Neil Lightfoot (a non-Adventist) appropriately answers the claim of a weekly Sabbath in this text: "The author who has so much to say about the better hope and the better way of life in the new covenant cannot be understood as enforcing the observance of the Mosaic Sabbath."⁹⁰⁹ The author of Hebrews emphasized a strong dichotomy

⁹⁰⁴Nichol *et al.*, eds., *SDABC*, 7:423.

⁹⁰⁵*Ibid.*

⁹⁰⁶Ellen White, *The Great Controversy*, 253.

⁹⁰⁷Nichol *et al.*, eds., *SDABC*, 7:423; M. L. Andreasen, *The Sabbath*, 105; Kubo, 66-67; Roy E. Graham, "A Note on Hebrews 4:4-9," in *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, 344.

⁹⁰⁸Samuele Bacchiocchi, "A Memorial of Redemption," *Spectrum* 9 (1977): 20.

⁹⁰⁹N. Lightfoot, 97.

between the New Covenant of the present age and the Old Covenant with its institutions (7:11-19, 28) which makes the first covenant obsolete (8:13). As the Sabbath was part of the Law associated with this covenant, it has no present bearing upon the believer.

Also, Bacchiocchi claims that 4:9 presents the Sabbath as remaining, but the verse does not even mention the Sabbath. It states only that a *Sabbath rest* remains, and this verse alone fails to note whether this rest is present or future.⁹¹⁰ Bacchiocchi's arguments to prove the present validity of the weekly Sabbath are later discredited by his insistence that the passage has a future heavenly fulfillment. This betrays an inconsistency in applying a single term to both present physical rest and future spiritual rest. Furthermore, he assumes without confirmation that the rest associated with the land in chapter 3 changes meaning to a weekly observance and heavenly antitype in chapter 4.

Another problem with the weekly Sabbath view is the choice of the verb "enter" (εἰσερχόμεθα) in verse 3. One can rightly wonder whether "enter" is an appropriate verb to use for "observe."⁹¹¹

Finally, Bacchiocchi's claim that the verb "remains" (ἀπολείπεται) literally means "to leave behind" is unwarranted. This is but one meaning, the other three being to "remain," to "desert," and to "put aside, give up."⁹¹² This same word is used just three verses earlier: "It still remains (ἀπολείπεται) that some will enter that rest" (4:6). One would expect the same term to have the same meaning in the same context; following Bacchiocchi's reading leaves the absurd translation, "It still is left behind that some will enter that rest."

⁹¹⁰The present tense of verse 3 may perhaps seem to argue for a present nuance in verse 9, but this matter is addressed later in this chapter.

⁹¹¹The use of the present tense here is addressed later in this chapter.

⁹¹²BAGD, s.v. "ἀπολείπεται," 94.

Present Sunday and Grace Rests and Future Heavenly Rest

Some transfer theology commentators hold a position similar to that above except that they add that Hebrews 4:9 also provides justification for Sunday observance.⁹¹³ In this view, "God is already enjoying his sabbath rest in heaven, and his promise that men will share in it is already being realized."⁹¹⁴ This realization is preserved in Sunday as a physical symbol of God's heavenly rest.

This orientation possesses even more serious weaknesses than the Sabbath perspective reviewed above. In the first place, a required weekly day of rest for believers is simply not mentioned in the passage or in the New Testament in general.⁹¹⁵ "Also one cannot properly argue that, because the rest has not yet been consummated, we must therefore preserve the physical symbol of rest."⁹¹⁶ A more cogent view of the Sabbath rest must be in view.

Present Spiritual Rest

Many interpreters affirm that the author indicates in this passage that believers rest from their works at salvation.⁹¹⁷ A modification of this view places the emphasis on

⁹¹³"Since the rest we have in Christ as a present personal possession is also an earnest of a future hope, we too, like God's people of old, have our literal day of rest—a type and sign of that final [i.e., eternal] rest," this Sunday observance finding further confirmation in the admonitions to gather together (10:25) and to encourage one another (3:13; Paul Jewett, *The Lord's Day*, 84; cf. Beckwith and Stott, 12). John Owen holds to modified version of this view. He suggests that while heaven is not included in the rest, it does include both the believer's present rest provided by the gospel (*Hebrews*, 63f.) as well as Sunday, the "weekly sacred day of rest appointed for believers under the gospel" (p. 70).

⁹¹⁴Beckwith and Stott, 12.

⁹¹⁵Chapter 5 of this present study provides support that Sunday was practiced as a day of worship in the early church, but never considered a day of rest.

⁹¹⁶A. T. Lincoln, "Sabbath, Rest, and Eschatology in the New Testament," in *From Sabbath to Lord's Day*, 216.

⁹¹⁷Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 4:108; Robert Jewett, *Letter to Pilgrims*, 66; Homer A. Kent, *The*

sanctification so that believers experience a "faith-rest" which provides peace because of the gospel.⁹¹⁸ The following evidence is cited for these present spiritual rest perspectives: first, the passage uses the present tense of "enter" in 4:3. Second, the present idea is reiterated in the fourfold usage of the exhortation to enter God's rest "today" (3:7, 13, 15; 4:7). This "today" refers not to any specific time, but rather to any time a believer in Yahweh is confronted by a promise of God.⁹¹⁹ For this reason Christ spoke of the rest which He offers (Matt. 11:28-30).

While the text in Hebrews seems to refer to the rest in a present sense,⁹²⁰ this view is incomplete in several ways. First, while it is claimed that God's rest is spiritual,⁹²¹ the context indicates that it is primarily physical. Throughout the Old Testament God offered His people to enter His rest through belief, and in so doing He promised the inheritance of the land of Canaan—a physical place.⁹²² This land was promised unconditionally as part of the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 12:1-3), but

Epistle to the Hebrews, 84, 86; William Manson, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 65; Owen, *Hebrews*, 63-72; John Phillips, *Exploring Hebrews*, 77; Rordorf, 88-90, 111f.; E. F. Scott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 114; Robert H. Smith, *Hebrews*, ACNT, 65-66; W. H. Griffith Thomas, "Let Us Go On," 49; H. Orton Wiley, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 121-44, esp. 133-34; Kenneth S. Wuest, *Hebrews in the Greek New Testament*, Wuest's Word Studies, 2:83. As previously indicated, nearly all Adventists follow Ellen White in this view (White, *The Great Controversy*, 253; Nichol *et al.*, eds., *SDABC*, 7:423; M. L. Andreasen, *The Sabbath*, 105; Kubo, 66-67; Roy E. Graham, "A Note on Hebrews 4:4-9," 344; Bacchiocchi, "A Memorial of Redemption," 20).

⁹¹⁸R. B. Thieme, Jr., *The Faith-Rest Life*, 1-63; John Daniel Hays, "The Use of the Old Testament in Hebrews Three," Th.M. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1980, 31-33. One may perhaps place authors in the preceding footnote under this category as well, depending on how clearly the authors distinguish between salvation and sanctification "rests."

⁹¹⁹C. H. Davies, "Psalm 95," *ZAW* 85 (1973):183-95.

⁹²⁰Whether a present emphasis actually exists in Hebrews 4 is addressed later in this chapter.

⁹²¹Moffatt, 53.

⁹²²George Wesley Buchanan also contends that the "rest" now available is the actual land of Canaan (*To the Hebrews*, AB, 9, 64-65, 154, 169-70, 194, 246).

according to the Palestinian Covenant (Deut. 30:1-10) will only be appropriated by repentant faith.⁹²³ Since Israel still has not repented, the Canaan rest remains outstanding; the promise has yet to be fulfilled due to Israel's unbelief (Ps. 95:7b-11; Heb. 4:3b).⁹²⁴ The point to be made here is that the rest of God includes both spiritual (regeneration of the nation) and physical (land) nuances. A deficiency of the present spiritual rest persuasion of Hebrews 4 is that it does not include the latter nuance.

A second problem with applying the passage only to the present is that this view is incompatible with biblical eschatology. Scripture notes that rest is preceded by resurrection. Revelation records that the resurrection of the righteous precedes a one thousand year period (Rev. 20:4f.) before the eternal state is ushered in (Rev. 21—22). Therefore, the scriptural order of events is resurrection before rest, which means that this rest cannot be that enjoyed by believers now.

The third difficulty with the spiritual rest opinion is the statement in Hebrews that God spoke of the Sabbath rest as "another day" (4:8). Since this contrasts Joshua's own time with another future time period, it excludes the state of the believer's rest from consideration.

The faith-rest teaching also fails to correctly interpret the nature of God's rest from His work. Hebrews 4:10 asserts, "For anyone who enters God's rest also rests from

⁹²³For the relationship between these covenants, see John Charles Hutchison, "The Relationship of the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Palestinian Covenants in Deuteronomy 29—30," Th.D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1981. For a defense that Deuteronomy 28—30 actually serves as a divinely designed prophetic synopsis of the history of Israel, see George M. Harton, "Fulfillment of Deuteronomy 28—30 in History and Eschatology," Th.D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1981.

⁹²⁴One statement which may seem problematic is the declaration at the end of the Conquest that "the LORD gave them rest on every side Not one of all the LORD's good promises to the house of Israel failed; every one was fulfilled" (Josh. 21:14, 15). Similarly, rest is also claimed for David (2 Sam. 7:1), Solomon (1 Chron. 22:9; 1 Kings 8:56), Asa (2 Chron. 14:5, 6; 15:15), and Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. 20:30). These passages can be explained as but temporary periods of rest, not the eternal rest, as the repeated usage of "rest" in Judges bears out (3:1, 30; 5:31; 8:28). Also, none of these are called *God's rest*, which elsewhere refers to an eschatological rest (cf. Ps. 95:11; Isa. 66:1). See Kaiser, "The Promise Theme and the Theology of Rest," 138-39.

his own work, just as God did from His." If the rest refers to a believer's rest from a works-oriented salvation, then the verse teaches that God's works are also bad. Since this contradicts the creation work of God in Genesis 1, which is continually deemed "very good," the passage must be speaking of another rest other than one's rest from his own works to merit salvation.

Finally, the exhortations to diligence (4:1, 11) also indicate an eschatological rather than soteriological perspective. If believers already are experiencing this rest, these admonitions to enter the rest makes little sense; soteriologically speaking, Christians need not make *any* effort to secure or keep their salvation. Salvation is by faith (Eph. 2:8-9), not by striving to enter a faith-rest through works; attainment of salvation cannot be in view here in Hebrews 4 since this would contradict Scripture as a whole.⁹²⁵ The fact that he encourages diligence to enter the rest implies the possibility that some of his readers may *not* enter the rest.⁹²⁶

Present Spiritual and Future Heavenly Rest

Other commentators affirm a combined present/eternal view. Clarke advocates this position that the rest "is *the Gospel*; the blessings it procures and communicates, and the *eternal glory* which it prepares for, and has promised to, genuine believers."⁹²⁷ Likewise, Barrett notes, "The 'rest,' precisely because it is God's, is both present and

⁹²⁵"Unlike the assurance which all Christians have that they possess eternal life and will be raised up to enjoy it in the presence of God (cf. John 6:39-40), the share of the companions of Messiah in His dominion over creation is attained by doing His will to the end (Rev. 2:26-27)" (Hodges, 789).

⁹²⁶Charles Deveau, "The New Testament Concept of Eternal Inheritance," Th.M. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1979, 53.

⁹²⁷Adam Clarke, *Clarke's Commentary*, 6:405 (emphasis his).

future; men enter it, and must strive to enter it."⁹²⁸ (By "it" Barrett refers to the "saints' everlasting rest.")⁹²⁹ Others also adopt the same dual perspective.⁹³⁰

This orientation also possesses some weaknesses which make it unacceptable. In the first place, the parallel with the Israelite generation makes a dual focus improbable. The generation under Joshua could not in some sense have their rest spiritually without having it physically. This combined view also is weak in its attempt to force the passage to mean both a spiritual rest (now) and a physical rest later (in eternity). The parallel between the Sabbath rest available and God's "physical" rest (4:10) suggests only the latter (physical) rest. As indicated in the previous critique of the spiritual rest view, to read a spiritual/salvation rest into the passage goes beyond its stated evidence.

Future Heavenly Rest

Perhaps the most common interpretation of the Hebrews 4 rest is that it refers to the eternal rest guaranteed to all Christians in the future.⁹³¹ Adherents support this

⁹²⁸Barrett, "The Eschatology of the Epistle to the Hebrews," 372.

⁹²⁹Ibid., 366.

⁹³⁰A. T. Lincoln, "Sabbath, Rest, and Eschatology in the New Testament," in *From Sabbath to Lord's Day*, 210-14; Adolph Saphir, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 1:219, 225-26; Warren Wiersbe, *Be Confident*, 39-40; Jeffery R. Sharp, "Philonism and the Eschatology of Hebrews: Another Look," *EAJT* 2 (1984): 293-94.

⁹³¹Many commentators clearly indicate this view (those who are ambiguous but seem to indicate this view are quoted in parentheses): Ceslas Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux*, 2:82, "the rest is no longer Canaan, but heaven," translation mine; Ernest G. Ashby, "Hebrews," in *IBC*, 1512; Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, Herm, 123, 128, 131; id., "Let Us Strive to Enter That Rest"; The Logic of Hebrews 4:1-11," *HTR* 73 (1980): 283; Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the New Testament*, 1253; Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 77-79; id., "The Structure and Argument of Hebrews," *SWJT* 28 (Fall 1985): 7; J. H. Davies, *A Letter to the Hebrews*, CBC, 46; Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 1:198; Gaebelein, *The Prophet Ezekiel*, 326; Otfried Hofius, *Katapausis: Die Vorstellung vom endzeitlichen Ruhort in Hebräerbrief*, 53-54; Käsemann, 87ff.; Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 161-62; Göttlieb Lünemann, *Critical and Exegetical Hand-book to the Epistles to Timothy and Titus and to the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 9:485; William Manson, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 55; Philip Mauro, *God's Pilgrims*, 75 ("the new creation"), 82 ("the glory prepared for those who love Him"); James Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, ICC, 53; Hugh Montefiore,

thinking by several lines of reasoning. First, the Sabbath rest is designated as future since "the promise of entering His rest still stands" (4:1) with the result that believers can be commanded to "make every effort to enter that rest" (4:11).⁹³² Second, the verbal similarity in verse 8 between "Joshua" (Hebrew) and "Jesus" (same name in Greek) "suggests the similarity of the leader into Canaan and the leader into heaven, even while the sentence is stressing the difference."⁹³³ Third, Revelation 14:13 indicates that the believer's rest will occur after death.⁹³⁴ Fourth, appeal is made to rabbinic remarks about the Sabbath typifying "the world to come."⁹³⁵ Fifth, the rest cannot be Canaan because "the Christian expects 'better things' (6:9; 11:40)."⁹³⁶ Sixth, the concept of "rest" in Hebrews 3 is redefined in Hebrews 4:4-5 in a typological exhortation similar to 1 Corinthians 10:1-13.⁹³⁷ Seventh, the writer of Hebrews associates "rest" with the heavenly sanctuary (6:19-20; 8:2; 9:11, 23-24; 10:19), the heavenly Jerusalem (11:10, 16; 12:22; 13:14), and the heavenly promised land (11:14ff.).⁹³⁸ Finally, since the rest is

A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews, BNTC, 85; Leon Morris, EBC, 12:42; James Thompson, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, LWC, 66; Gerhard von Rad, "There Remains Still a Rest for the People of God: An Investigation of a Biblical Conception," in *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*, 99 (rest is "an eschatological hope to which the believer attains only after this life"); Moses Stuart, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 1:327; Geerhardus Vos, *The Teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 66-67; Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 98 ("a rest which closes the manifold forms of earthly preparation and work . . . not an isolated sabbath but a sabbath-life"); R. McL. Wilson, *Hebrews*, NCBC, 85; Charles Scriven, "A Unique Day offers Assurance that Things will Turn Out All Right," *Insight*, May/June, 1977, 16-17.

⁹³²Hughes, 155, 162.

⁹³³Davies, 45.

⁹³⁴Hughes, 161.

⁹³⁵Montefiore, 85.

⁹³⁶Thompson, 64.

⁹³⁷Attridge, "Let Us Strive to Enter That Rest"; The Logic of Hebrews 4:1-11," 283-87; Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 62-63.

⁹³⁸Lincoln, "Sabbath, Rest, and Eschatology in the New Testament," 209.

called "God's rest" it must be that which He has enjoyed in heaven since creation (Gen. 2:2-3).⁹³⁹

The first four arguments may be addressed very quickly. The first is valid, for indeed the text does indicate the eschatological rest to be future. The second (parallel between Joshua and Jesus) certainly does not prove a heavenly orientation since Christ also will lead the faithful into His kingdom as well as into heaven. The third point is also correct by identifying rest as after death for tribulation saints (cf. Rev. 14:13), but the heavenly view fails to see *where* they rest after death. These are the same individuals who "reign with Christ a thousand years" (Rev. 20:4) and through this coregency experience rest in the common Jewish eschatological sense in the kingdom. This same Hebrew concept reveals the fourth view to be problematic in its failure to understand the "age to come" as not referring to a heavenly eternity, but rather to political-geographical experience in the kingdom when all of the promises of the Abrahamic Covenant will be realized.⁹⁴⁰

In addition to these deficiencies, the major flaw with the heavenly view is the fifth support mentioned above—it attaches a different meaning to rest than the author of Hebrews taught in the previous chapter. Most advocates of the eternal rest perspective maintain that the author of Hebrews specifically mentions that the land of Canaan is *not* intended;⁹⁴¹ however, the author in 3:7-11 identifies the rest with the fulfillment of the land promise and then continues using the same term in chapter 4. The eternal rest view

⁹³⁹Ibid., 209-10.

⁹⁴⁰This finds confirmation in the verse itself, which says that "they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them." This reference to rewards for works on earth can as easily refer to millennial rewards as to heavenly rewards.

⁹⁴¹See Barnes, 1253; Thompson, 64; Attridge, "'Let Us Strive to Enter That Rest'; The Logic of Hebrews 4:1-11," 283; Stuart, 327.

mixes the metaphor by attaching a new, heavenly meaning in chapter 4. Advocates defend this exegesis by assuming a typological meaning to the Canaan rest (3:7-11) akin to Paul's identification of the church as Israel in the wilderness (1 Cor. 10:ff.).⁹⁴² However, such a parallel does not exist since Paul's typology is specifically defined whereas Hebrews 3—4 does not clearly indicate the antitype of the Canaan rest. This lack of clarity in designating the alleged antitype has made the passage very difficult to understand for those who insist upon a typical relationship between the Canaan rest and the promised rest; consequently, this approach has led to the many different views surveyed in the present discussion. The present author believes the confusion is solved not through postulating an antitype but rather by employing the same meaning of Canaan rest in both chapters.

In response to the claim that the author of Hebrews associates "rest" with heavenly antitypes, one must notice that such depictions are found farther along in the book in Hebrews 8—13. As such they are not actually contextually related to the rest motif in 4:1-13. In contrast, the immediate context (3:7-19) clearly relates the rest with the earthly land of Canaan, which God calls His rest in accord with the meaning in Psalm 95. The land is also "God's rest" since it was offered according to His promise (Gen. 12:1-3; 15:18) though it will not be claimed apart from Israel's repentance (Deut. 30:1-5).

Present Spiritual Rest and Future Millennial Rest

Another perspective on the Sabbath rest combines the present-day spiritual view with a millennial rest.⁹⁴³ This may be referred to in a general sense by Riesenfeld,

⁹⁴²Attridge, "Let Us Strive to Enter That Rest"; The Logic of Hebrews 4:1-11," 283-87; Bruce, *Hebrews*, 62-63.

⁹⁴³H. A. Lombard, "Katápausis in the Letter to the Hebrews," *Neotestamentica* 5 (1971): 68-69; P. Steven Abels, "The Rest of God," Th.M. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1977, 3. Jehovah's Witnesses also maintain that this Sabbath rest of God is a present reality into which man can enter in a

who declares that by "rest" the author of Hebrews has in mind "the salvation which Christian faith experiences and anticipates."⁹⁴⁴

Such a paradoxical view is not out of character with the rest of the Book of Hebrews. Eschatology plays a major role in the book as indicated in several passages with a view to the future.⁹⁴⁵ In fact, Sharp insightfully notes in Hebrews a *twofold* dualism:⁹⁴⁶ *an eschatological dualism* which includes both the present age⁹⁴⁷ and the age to come,⁹⁴⁸ and *a spatial dualism* which contrasts the transient earthly world⁹⁴⁹ and the eternal heavenly world.⁹⁵⁰ Therefore, that σαββατισμὸς may indicate both a present and future reality is not incompatible with the general tenor of the epistle. A millennial rest with present day application explains how the rest can be both something which can be entered now ("Now we who have believed enter that rest," v. 3) as well as something to strive for in the future (v. 11).

However, this view is problematic in its need to adopt different meanings for the dual ages to which it points. While it may seem acceptable to say that a believer

future millennial age. They advocate the ancient Jewish notion that God's seventh day of creation will last 7,000 years, which includes the present time in which God rests (Watchtower Bible & Tract Society, International Bible Students Assoc., *Let God Be True*, 168, 177-81).

⁹⁴⁴Riesenfeld, "The Sabbath and the Lord's Day in Judaism, the Preaching of Jesus and Early Christianity," 132. The anticipation here could also refer to an eternal home.

⁹⁴⁵Hebrews 2:5; 3:1; 6:5, 11, 12, 18-20; 9:26, 28; 10:19, 20; 11:5, 13, 14, 39; 12:26-28; 13:14.

⁹⁴⁶Sharp, "Philonism and the Eschatology of Hebrews: Another Look," 289-92; cf. Barrett, "The Eschatology of the Epistle to the Hebrews," 363-93; Lincoln D. Hurst, "Eschatology and 'Platonism' in the Epistle to the Hebrews," *SBL 1984 Seminar Papers*, 41-74. These authors argue that the epistle has a Jewish apocalyptic background rather than one in Philo or Plato.

⁹⁴⁷Hebrews 1:2, 3, 10-12; 2:1-4; 10:26-29; 11:3; 12:25-27.

⁹⁴⁸Hebrews 1:11-14; 4:1-3; 6:4-5, 12; 9:28; 10:23-25, 36-37; 12:25-29; 13:14.

⁹⁴⁹Hebrews 1:2-3, 10; 9:26; 11:3, 39-40; 12:26-27.

⁹⁵⁰Hebrews 6:19-20; 7:26; 8:1, 5; 9:11-12, 23-26; 11:10, 16; 12:18-29.

experiences rest now in anticipation of his future millennial rest, this implies that the present rest is figurative and the future rest is literal. Stated differently, adhering to both a present spiritual rest and eschatological physical rest is inconsistent; it applies two different meanings to "rest" in the same context. Furthermore, it must accept a dual meaning to the concept of resting from one's work (4:10), the present aspect viewing this work negatively and the future aspect seeing it positively. Though the view has much to commend it in its millennial emphases (explained below), these inconsistencies make it untenable.

Future Millennial Rest

Other commentators assert that this difficult passage in Hebrews refers not an ultimate future rest in heaven or present rest on earth, but to an intermediate future rest on earth, or millennial rest.⁹⁵¹ A similar view sees in σαββατισμὸς the Second Advent.⁹⁵² The millennial view is favorable for several reasons.

One significant reason this view is favored is that it best fits the eschatology of Hebrews in the chapters preceding the rest motif. In other words, the kingdom viewpoint is mentioned several times before chapter 4. Believers are designated "companions" (μετόχους) with Christ in His anointing by God as messianic King (1:9 quoting Ps. 45:6-7).⁹⁵³ Christ's victory over His enemies before the Millennium (1:13) finds juxtaposition

⁹⁵¹Gleason L. Archer, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, SBSS, 31-32; Buchanan, 72-74; Hodges, 2:788-89; Walter C. Kaiser, "The Promise Theme and the Theology of Rest," *BS* 130 (April-June 1973): 135-50; George Henry Lang, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 75-80; Oberholtzer, "The Kingdom Rest in Hebrews 3:1—4:13," 188-96; id., "An Analysis and Exposition of the Eschatology of the Warning Passages in the Book of Hebrews," 74-110; Joseph Augustus Seiss, *Lectures on Hebrews*, 84-85; Toussaint, "The Eschatology of the Warning Passages in the Book of Hebrews," 67-80.

⁹⁵²Robert Anderson, *Types in Hebrews*, 80-92.

⁹⁵³Thomas Kem Oberholtzer, "The Eschatological Salvation of Hebrews 1:5—2:5," *BS* 145 (January-March 1988): 88-90.

with the promise that believers will share in that victory (σωτηρίαν 1:14).⁹⁵⁴ The same eschatological salvation (σωτηρίαν) is referred to three verses later (2:3), which Christ will share with man in "the world to come," or Millennium (2:5). That Christians share with Christ in His future dominion and joy in the Millennium finds reaffirmation in the repeated mention of believers as companions with Him in chapter 3 (3:1, 14; cf. 6:4; 12:8). However, the saints' promise of reigning with Him is contingent upon their continued faithfulness to their confession (3:6b).⁹⁵⁵ Therefore, the millennial perspective of the second warning passage is not something foreign to the general context within the entire letter. From its first mention (1:9), the concept of the coming kingdom is often referred to up to the present context regarding rest.

Another positive merit to the millennial view is its emphasis upon the land promise mentioned repeatedly in the passage itself (3:7—4:13). The context may seem to assert three rests: Canaan rest (3:11, 18),⁹⁵⁶ creation rest (4:4),⁹⁵⁷ and the promised rest (4:1, 3, 5, 6, 8-11);⁹⁵⁸ however, there is reason to question whether three rests are actually

⁹⁵⁴Hodges, 2:782-83, cautions against assuming too quickly that "inherit salvation" here refers to the believer's past experience of regeneration. That Christ's victory preceding the Millennium is in view is evident from the context (v. 13), the future tense "will inherit," and the well-substantiated LXX use of σωτηρία to designate Messiah's triumph over His enemies (Pss. 3:2, 8; 18:2, 35, 46, 50; 35:3; 37:39; 71:15; 118:14-15, 21; 132:16; etc.). This salvation is also seen as future by Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 25-26; Buchanan, 25.

⁹⁵⁵Should any of the readers turn away from the living God (3:12), "they would forfeit their roles in the Son's priestly house, which is only maintained by holding firmly to their Christian profession (cf. also v. 14 and 10:23-25, 35-36). The author did not mean, of course, that his readers could forfeit their eternal salvation; it is an error to identify the word 'house' with the body of Christ, the true universal church. As the context and the Old Testament background show, the author was thinking in priestly terms. . . . Just as one who was a true Levite by birth could withdraw from participation in the tabernacle of Moses' day, so too one who is truly a Christian by new birth may withdraw from his priestly role within the functioning household. It was precisely this danger which concerned the writer . . ." (Hodges, 2:786).

⁹⁵⁶See Deuteronomy 12:9; Joshua 1:2-3; 21:44; 22:4; 23:1.

⁹⁵⁷This rest is mentioned in Genesis 2:2-3; Exodus 20:11 and explained in Chapter 2 of this study.

⁹⁵⁸These three aspects of rest are seen as intimately related by Toussaint, "The Eschatology of the Warning Passages in the Book of Hebrews," 71.

indicated in the passage.⁹⁵⁹ One would think that the obvious meaning of rest given in 3:11, 18 (Canaan rest) would continue in the subsequent verses unless good reason exists to abandon this previously defined meaning. It is the thesis of this study that the meaning does *not* change, although it is illustrated in God's creation rest (4:4). Therefore, the Canaan rest and promised rest are actually a single rest. God promised the Old Testament Israelites that He would give them the land of Israel from the River of Egypt to the Euphrates River (Gen. 15:18), but the people never possessed it all. This was because of their unbelief (Heb. 3:12, 19) shown in hardened hearts (3:8a, 12, 13, 15) which continually (3:10) rebelled (3:8, 15, 16) and tested God (3:9) in sinful (3:17) disobedience (3:18; 4:6). The unbelief of the Israelites was not unbelief that they should celebrate the Sabbath, nor unbelief in obtaining salvation or entering heaven. Numbers 13—14 records that the reason that they could enter the land was disbelief that God would provide this land as an inheritance. Kaiser's emphasis upon the land promise amplifies this point:

The rest of God is distinctively His own rest which He offers to share first with Israel and through them with all the sons of men who will also enter into it by faith. While there were antecedent aspects of that final rest to come . . . because it was not accompanied by the inward response of faith to the whole promise of God, of which this rest was just a part, the land of Canaan still awaits Israel and the people of God. The rest of God, lost in the fall, again rejected by the older wilderness generation and subsequently by their erring children, is still future to us in our day.⁹⁶⁰

In fact, the rest motif actually has *two* elements: historical (Canaan) and eschatological (the kingdom with the believer's reign with Christ). It looks back at an unfulfilled Canaan rest and forward to this same rest in the kingdom following the end of

⁹⁵⁹The Old Testament concept of rest (נוח) has a minimum of five meanings: (a) literal, physical rest (Gen. 8:4), (b) rest in physical death (Job 3:13, 17); (c) absence of trouble/spiritual rest (Isa. 14:3, 7); (d) victory over Israel's enemies providing security in the land (Deut. 12:10); and (e) Sabbath rest (Exod. 31:15; adapted from *TWOT*, s.v. "נוח," by Leonard J. Coppes, 2:562.

⁹⁶⁰Kaiser, "The Promise Theme and the Theology of Rest," 149.

the Tribulation Period when the nation of Israel will repent and experience salvation (cf. Rom. 11:26-27).

That the rest motif in Hebrews involves the land of Canaan finds validation in the author's use of Psalm 95. In Hebrews 3:7—4:11 verses from this psalm are quoted five times (3:7-11, 15; 4:3, 5, 7), underscoring the importance of the millennial rest in Canaan. It is contextually impossible that the rest depicted here in Psalm 95 be eternal rest in heaven or the spiritual rest of salvation. It has already been demonstrated that the rest depicted here is the repose Israel sought in having her own land. As Psalm 95 is an enthronement psalm which depicts the time in which the Messiah will rule, it is very appropriate that the author use this particular psalm in reference to the millennial rest.

Furthermore, one gets the impression from the passage that the Sabbath rest of this passage must be something that Joshua *could have* offered the people had they believed. Certainly he *could not* have offered them salvation (spiritual peace) or eternal life (heaven). However, what he did offer was access to the land so that wherever the people would tread, that land would be theirs (Josh. 1:3). Unfortunately, as the Book of Judges sadly states (Judg. 1:21, 27-36), the occupation was incomplete. Nevertheless, God's promise of the land given in the Pentateuch⁹⁶¹ and prophesied by the prophets⁹⁶² still remained even after the exile (Zech. 8:4-8). To the present day Israel has never owned the land from the Wadi of Egypt to the Euphrates, although God's promise that this will indeed occur after the nation's repentance also still stands (Deut. 28:63-68; 30:1-

⁹⁶¹Gen. 12:7; 13:15; 15:18; 17:7-8; Deut. 30:1-10.

⁹⁶²Isa. 11:11-12; 14:1-3; 27:12-13; 43:1-8; 49:8-16; 66:20-22; Jer. 16:14-16; 23:3-8; 30:10-11; 31:8, 31-37; Ezek. 11:17-21; 20:33-38; 34:11-16; 39:25-29; 40:2ff.; Hos. 1:10-11; Joel 3:17-21; Amos 9:11-15; Mic. 4:4-7; Zeph. 3:14-20; cf. J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come*, 99.

3). Joshua could have and indeed did offer the fulfillment of this promise in his day, but since Israel rejected it God spoke about its fulfillment in another day (Heb. 4:7-8).⁹⁶³

This millennial perspective also satisfactorily explains the "work" addressed in 4:10: "for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his." Most commentators have explained the nature of the work here in a figurative sense, as "abstention from servile work," that is, from sinful deeds at all times.⁹⁶⁴ However, as Bacchiocchi has suggested,⁹⁶⁵ cessation from work in a literal sense is a more defensible position since the passage compares man's rest with God's rest from His literal work of creation; certainly God does not rest from sinful deeds.

On the other hand, Scripture often depicts Israel as literally resting in the millennial age. God says of Zion, "This is My resting place forever and ever; here I will sit enthroned, for I have desired it" (Ps. 132:14).⁹⁶⁶ As God rests there, so will Israel, for He will give the nation rest from pain and turmoil and harsh service in which it has been enslaved (Isa. 14:3). He also promises, "My people will live in peaceful dwelling places, in secure homes, in undisturbed places of rest" (Isa. 32:18; cf. Ezek. 34:15). No reason exists not to take both this rest and the rest of Hebrews 4 literally. A consistent and

⁹⁶³This does not mean that the land covenant is conditional, for Ezekiel spoke of it as eternal (Ezek. 16:60); therefore, by implication it is unconditional (especially since it enlarges upon the unconditional Abrahamic covenant). "The only conditional element here is the time element. The program is certain; the time when this program will be fulfilled depends upon the conversion of the nation. Conditional time elements do not make the whole program conditional, however" (Pentecost, *Things to Come*, 98).

⁹⁶⁴John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews*, 98; other examples are noted by Rordorf, 100-8. Franz X. Pettirsch notes the opinion of the fathers in this regard, "The early fathers of the Church applied the law of the Sabbath rest only allegorically to abstention from sin; a literal application to work was foreign to their thinking" ("A Theology of Sunday Rest," *ThD* 6 [1958]: 116).

⁹⁶⁵Bacchiocchi, *Divine Rest*, 168-69.

⁹⁶⁶"In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to Him, and His place of rest will be glorious" (Isa. 11:10).

normal approach to both of these rests sees them as depicting the same millennial age. Furthermore, this kingdom age is specifically spoken of as a time in which God "will rest in His love" (Zeph. 3:17).

Besides these passages from the Old Testament, several extra-biblical references can be cited to demonstrate that the Sabbath rest depicted the kingdom age. These have already received treatment above⁹⁶⁷ so it is unnecessary to reiterate them here. Since intertestamental writings clearly affirm the millennial day motif, it is certainly possible, even likely, that this thought influenced New Testament writers. The importance of this millennial mindset among the first century Jews cannot be overstated. Certainly the readers of the letter to the Hebrews would think of an eschatological rest first in regard to the coming kingdom age before they would any other period of time or state of being.

Hebrews did not make the sharp distinction between spiritual and national-political-material that modern scholars make. They understood God's will and blessings in terms that affected their national, social, economic, and personal lives. They understood religion in very practical terms. That which seemed best in their society seemed God's will. At that time, in their judgment, that which seemed best for them was peace and prosperity in the land of Canaan under the rule of a Davidic king, so this was considered God's will.⁹⁶⁸

Not only does Hebrews refer to the Sabbath rest as a fulfillment of God's land promise, but it designates it as a time period. As mentioned earlier, Hebrews 4:8 affirms, "For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day." Obviously, "day" refers to another time period, not another state of being. This does not definitively argue for the millennial perspective since the heavenly rest view relates to a future time period; however, it is consistent with the kingdom view and inconsistent with the "present spiritual rest" orientation.

⁹⁶⁷These references can be found immediately preceding the discussion of Psalm 95.

⁹⁶⁸Buchanan, 73.

This present emphasis in the passage brings up the most perplexing problem which confronts the millennial perspective.⁹⁶⁹ This difficulty is that the readers are warned against missing a present rest taught in verse 3a, "Now we who have believed enter that rest (εἰσερχόμεθα γὰρ εἰς [τὴν] κατάπαυσιν οἱ πιστεύσαντες)." This immediate aspect is reflected in all of the major English translations.⁹⁷⁰ However, despite this support, one has reason to question a present nuance here due to the overwhelming eschatological emphases demonstrated in the passage, in the Book of Hebrews as a whole, in parallel Scriptures, and throughout the extra-biblical literature. Because of these factors it is better to advocate a futuristic (proleptic) use of the present here,⁹⁷¹ which could demonstrate an even more affirmative tone regarding the assurance of rest. Turner notes that futuristic presents "are confident assertions intended to arrest attention with a vivid and realistic tone or else with imminent fulfillment in mind, and they are mainly restricted to the vernacular."⁹⁷² Not only is the usage of the futuristic present well established,⁹⁷³ but, interestingly enough, the verb ἔρχομαι employs the futuristic present perhaps more than any other verb. For example, the Messiah is called the ὁ ἐρχόμενος, the "Coming One" (Matt. 11:3), which means not one who has already arrived or who is in process of arriving (presently) but one who is expected in the future. The same nuance

⁹⁶⁹The objection is voiced by Montefiore, 83: "Contrary to some commentators, the Greek text means neither that they are certain to enter, nor that they will enter, but that they are already in the process of entering"; cf. Westcott, 94-95; Barrett, "The Eschatology of the Epistle to the Hebrews," 372; Lincoln, "Sabbath, Rest, and Eschatology in the New Testament," 212.

⁹⁷⁰NIV, NASB, NEB, REB, KJV, NKJV, RSV, GNB, NBV, Ampl., Moffatt, Phillips, Williams.

⁹⁷¹Jean Héring, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 29-30; Lünemann, 481; Oberholtzer, "The Kingdom Rest in Hebrews 3:1—4:13," 192; Stuart, 323; Toussaint, "The Eschatology of the Warning Passages in the Book of Hebrews," 71.

⁹⁷²Nigel Turner, *Syntax*, in J. H. Moulton, ed., *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, 3:63.

⁹⁷³Raphael Kühner, and Bernhard Gerth, *Ausführliche Grammatik der griechischen Sprache*, 2:1:137-38, § 5.

is used of Ἡλίας μὲν ἔρχεται, "Elijah is coming" (Matt. 17:11), which is present in form but future in meaning. Also, the nobleman who distributed ten minas in Luke 19:13 commanded his servants, "Put this money to work . . . until I come (ἐν ᾧ ἔρχομαι) back," employing a future sense. Again, Christ referred to His future return with the present form πάλιν ἔρχομαι, "I come again" (John 14:3), which obviously has the futuristic sense of "I *will* come again." Furthermore, Paul used the futuristic present διέρχομαι, "I go/am going" (1 Cor. 16:5), to designate an upcoming visit. These examples point to a vernacular usage of various forms of ἔρχομαι. Furthermore, all but the last use above is eschatological in nature, meaning that a futuristic present in Hebrews 4:3 would not be unusual. Even in other languages verbs of going often employ a futuristic present.⁹⁷⁴

Therefore, a grammatically, theologically, and contextually more consistent manner of translating εἰσερχόμεθα would be as a futuristic present. This provides the translation, "Now we who have believed *will* enter that rest." While few translations reflect this nuance,⁹⁷⁵ it certainly is grammatically possible in the context. Indeed, given the overwhelming evidence for the kingdom perspective, it is the best choice of the available translation options.⁹⁷⁶

Colossians 2:16-17 also provides evidence for the millennial perspective. This passage, as seen in Chapter 5 of this work, can apply only to the weekly Sabbath. This

⁹⁷⁴J. Wackernagel, *Vorlesungen über Syntax mit besonderer Berücksichtigung von Griechisch, Lateinisch und Deutsch*, 1:161.

⁹⁷⁵See, for example, Beck, "we who have believed *go to a rest*" (emphasis his), and three Catholic translations: "We, however, who have faith, shall reach a place of rest" (JB), "We then who have believed shall enter into His rest" (NCE), "For we, who have believed, shall enter into rest" (MED).

⁹⁷⁶It has also been argued that the "today" of Psalm 95:11 (cf. Heb. 3:7; 4:7, 8) argues against a view which is purely future since "that time has now come" (Lincoln, "Sabbath, Rest, and Eschatology in the New Testament," 212; cf. von Rad, "There Still Remains a Rest for the People of God," 99). However, the author's point here is not that the *rest* is available today but that the *opportunity to hear God's voice* is available now for believers—especially those who are in danger of defecting and losing their reward.

day is specifically designated as one of the "things which are a *mere* shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ."⁹⁷⁷ The New International Version incorrectly translates the first phrase (ὅ ἐστιν σκιὰ τῶν μελλόντων) as, "These are a shadow of the things that *were* to come."⁹⁷⁸ This rendering is unfortunate as it not only incorrectly translates the present substantival participle τῶν μελλόντων in the past tense,⁹⁷⁹ but it destroys the typological meaning of the Sabbath taught in the passage. The point of the verse is not that the eschatological meaning of the Sabbath is fulfilled in Christ, but rather to contrast the "shadow" with the "reality," Christ. Since Christ has come there is no validity for observing the shadow, but this does not mean that the shadow is presently replaced with its antitype.⁹⁸⁰ Therefore, Colossians 2:16-17 indicates that the Sabbath day is a picture of something still to come. This, of course, does not automatically prove the millennial perspective of σαββατισμὸς, but it does indicate a future (not present) typology for the Sabbath.⁹⁸¹

One may wonder why the author refers to God's rest at creation to illustrate the Sabbath rest. This provides another clue regarding the millennial implications of the passage. In Matthew 25:34 Jesus notes that the kingdom inherited by the righteous has

⁹⁷⁷Col. 2:17, NASB (translator's emphasis denotes word not in the Greek).

⁹⁷⁸Emphasis mine.

⁹⁷⁹A basic grammatical rule is that all participial constructions receive their time from the main verb (F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 174, §339; cf. A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in Light of Historical Research*, 1111, 1124-1125). In Colossians 2:17 this means that the present substantival participle τῶν μελλόντων should receive its tense from the finite verb ἐστιν; therefore, the correct translation is "things which are (present tense) a mere shadow of what is (present tense) to come."

⁹⁸⁰This perspective challenges the assumption that a type must be valid until the appearance of its antitype.

⁹⁸¹A proper understanding of Colossians 2:16-17, therefore, renders the Seventh-day Adventist "present salvation rest" interpretation of σαββατισμὸς untenable.

been prepared "since the foundation of the world." God's rest from His creative work began on the "seventh day" immediately after founding the world (Gen. 2:2-3). One could perhaps say that the believer's faith-rest and eternity in heaven also have been prepared since creation. However, neither of these is identified as a kingdom relating to Israel, which is indicated in the Olivet Discourse.⁹⁸²

Another evidence for the kingdom motif can be found in the kingdom imagery of the Genesis creation account which provides the basis for God's "seventh day" rest. God's command to man to exercise dominion and subdue the earth is pregnant with kingdom overtones (Gen. 1:26, 28).⁹⁸³ The verb to "have dominion" (רָדָה) frequently occurs in Scripture as part of the technical language indicating royal rule over a kingdom.⁹⁸⁴ Likewise, "subdue" (כָּבַשׁ) connotes absolute subjugation.⁹⁸⁵ This kingdom concept is developed by von Rad in relation to man's creation in God's image:

Just as powerful earthly kings, to indicate their claim to dominion, erect an image of themselves in the provinces of their empire where they do not personally appear, so man is placed upon earth in God's image as God's sovereign emblem. He is really only God's representative, summoned to maintain and enforce God's claim to dominion over the earth.⁹⁸⁶

The entire creation account employs kingdom imagery, including the royal fiat (cf. "Let there be light!")⁹⁸⁷ and man's naming of the animals (Gen. 2:19-20) in like

⁹⁸²Matthew 24—25 concerns the eschatological future of Israel and has no references to the church. Therefore, Matthew 25:34 relates to the kingdom promised to the nation.

⁹⁸³Bruce Vawter, *On Genesis*, 57-60; cf. Richard L. McGee, "The Meaning and Implications of *Radah* and *Kabas* in Genesis 1:26, 28," Th.M. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1981, 72-75.

⁹⁸⁴See 1 Kings 4:24 (Heb. 5:4); Ps. 72:8; 110:2; Isa. 14:6; Ezek. 34:4.

⁹⁸⁵Neh. 5:5; 2 Chron. 28:10; Zech. 9:15; cf. Vawter, *On Genesis*, 60.

⁹⁸⁶Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis*, 58; cf. Alfred Lee Detter, "The Image of God: An Exegetical Study of Genesis 1:26-27," Th.M. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1975, 80; William J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation*, 33-34.

⁹⁸⁷John Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis*, ICC, 7, 19; Dumbrell, 34.

manner to God's naming of His own creative work (Gen. 1:5, 8, 10).⁹⁸⁸ Recent discoveries of several ancient creation myths also parallel this kingdom theme seen in the Genesis creation account.⁹⁸⁹ This imagery wherein God defeats His enemies through the creation finds reference several other places in the Old Testament.⁹⁹⁰ Therefore, since the culmination of the creation account (2:1-3) is the Sabbath rest of God, this provides additional proof that this rest relates to the kingdom which He will set up when creation once again responds to His royal authority.

It seems that the millennial perspective of Hebrews 3—4 also best explains the unique word σαββατισμός (4:9). This word appears only here in the New Testament and means "Sabbath rest, Sabbath observance."⁹⁹¹ It is thought that this word may have been coined by the author of Hebrews;⁹⁹² however, since the Septuagint⁹⁹³ uses the cognate

⁹⁸⁸John R. Master, "The Development of the Theocracy in Genesis 1—11," Th.D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1973, 115-17; cf. Ronald Norio Matsuda, "The Theocratic Kingdom Program in Genesis 1—11," Th.M. thesis, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1969, 52-57, which summarizes the kingdom perspective of primeval times.

⁹⁸⁹For example, in the Babylonian creation epic (*Enuma Elish*) the captive enemies of the victorious god Marduk complain of their servile work in Babylon. To ease them of this burden Marduk creates man, whose work provides rest for these gods. Thus, a divine Sabbath is implemented shortly following the creation of the heavens and the earth in like manner to the Genesis account. (One Adventist writer claims that God *shares* this rest with man, but Genesis does not indicate such. See Charles Scriven, "Day of Gladness," *Insight*, January/February, 1977, 15). For additional parallels to creation myths see also Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 1:14; John D. Davis, *Genesis and Semitic Tradition*, 1-22; Bruce Kenneth Waltke, *Creation and Chaos*, 40-48; Merrill F. Unger, *Archeology and the Old Testament*, 37.

⁹⁹⁰Yahweh's victory over Rahab (Job 26:12-13) and Leviathan (Ps. 74:13-17) both appear in a creation context. See also Bruce K. Waltke, "The Creation Account in Genesis 1:1-13. Part I: Introduction to Biblical Cosmogony," *BS* 132 (January 1975): 32-36.

⁹⁹¹BAGD, s.v. "σαββατισμός," 739; cf. "a keeping of days of rest," Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. "Σαββάτιον," 1579; "keeping Sabbath," "the blessed rest from toils and troubles looked for in the age to come," Thayer, s.v. "σαββατισμός," 565; "a resting as on the Sabbath," MMVNT, s.v. "σαββατισμός," 567.

⁹⁹²MMVNT, s.v. "σαββατισμός," 567; Moffatt, 53; Morris, EBC, 12:42; Stuart, 327.

⁹⁹³Exod. 16:30; Lev. 23:32; twice in 26:35 (34); twice in 2 Chron. 36:21; 1 Esdras 1:58; 2 Macc. 6:6.

verb σαββατίζειν⁹⁹⁴ from which σαββατισμός is formed,⁹⁹⁵ it is more probable that the noun was known in Hellenistic Greek (especially among Jews and Jewish Christians). The word σαββατισμούς is mentioned by Plutarch (d. A.D.120) several decades later in his enumeration of many superstitious observances,⁹⁹⁶ but this helps little in understanding the usage in Hebrews. It has been noted that the significance of using σαββατισμός (rather than κατάπαυσις which is used throughout the context)⁹⁹⁷ is that the Sabbath rest functions as the proper consummation of the creation rest of God.⁹⁹⁸ Further, since κατάπαυσις is already associated with this creation rest (4:4) and is used of the weekly Sabbath (Exod. 35:2; 2 Macc. 15:1, LXX), the deliberate substitution of σαββατισμός points to an eschatological usage.⁹⁹⁹

The conditional nature of the Sabbath rest also indicates the millennial view. This rest is entered by believing (4:3), but not belief alone.

The readers' entrance into rest depends on faithful perseverance (i.e., completed works), for the writer linked God's creation work with that offered to Israel (vv. 3-5). God's rest on the seventh day of creation (Gen. 2:2-3) is cited in Hebrews 4:4. As Elohim rested after completing His creation works, so this rest is offered to readers of Hebrews who complete their works (4:10). Their entrance into rest is conditioned on faithful endurance (3:6, 12, 14, 19; 4:1, 2, 6, 10-11). The Exodus generation failed to complete their works of obedience and to possess the land, thus forfeiting His rest (4:5-6). But for the readers the creation type rest remains (4:6a).¹⁰⁰⁰

⁹⁹⁴This verb, meaning to "keep the Sabbath" (BAGD, s.v. σαββατίζω, 746), is not used in the New Testament.

⁹⁹⁵Liddell and Scott, s.v. "Σαββάτιον," 1579.

⁹⁹⁶Plutarch *Superstition* 3 (in LCL, *Plutarch's Moralia* 166a, pp. 460-61). However, a textual problem exists here wherein the majority reading is βαπτισμούς ("immersions").

⁹⁹⁷Hebrews 3:11, 18; 4:1, 3 (2X), 5, 8, 10, 11.

⁹⁹⁸Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 98.

⁹⁹⁹Others assert that the two terms are used synonymously (Nichol *et al.*, eds., *SDABC*, 7:422; Roy E. Graham, "A Note on Hebrews 4:4-9," 344; Stuart, 327).

¹⁰⁰⁰Oberholtzer, "The Kingdom Rest in Hebrews 3:1—4:13," 192-93.

Thus, in the mind of the author of the letter, entrance into rest was not automatic for his readers. This entrance was guaranteed only by belief, which the writer saw as accompanied by diligence in works.¹⁰⁰¹ This conditional aspect would make little sense if the rest referred to was a soteriological rest, whether in the present or in eternity. Furthermore, it is difficult to sustain, as does Oberholtzer,¹⁰⁰² that this rest only applies to *some* (i.e., faithful) believers, since all Christians will judge the world and reign with Christ (1 Cor. 6:2-3; cf. Rev. 2:26-27; 20:4); conversely, this rest is guaranteed to *all* who believe (Heb. 4:3). As such the warning in the entire passage against not entering into the kingdom must necessarily apply to professing Christians who, unless they actually trust Christ for salvation, cannot enter into millennial rest. This finds confirmation in the severe judgments in the warning passages noted earlier.

This kingdom viewpoint also makes the logical connection (γὰρ) between promised rest (4:1-11) and the judging character of the word of God (4:12-13). This refers to the testing of believers' works at the judgment seat of Christ, not to determine salvation, but for rewards in the coming kingdom—to "receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10; cf. Rom. 14:10-12).

Therefore, the kingdom rest perspective marshals the best support among the seven interpretations of the Sabbath rest in Hebrews 3—4. This view finds confirmation through the introduction of kingdom concepts in Hebrews 1—3. It consistently applies the same conception of rest in chapters 3—4 and conveys both the enthronement and land emphases of Psalm 95. It aptly fits the Jewish readers because of their concern for the land, especially in light of the long-endured and much despised Roman occupation. The

¹⁰⁰¹This idea of perseverance for true believers is also evident elsewhere in Hebrews (e.g., 3:14; 6:11).

¹⁰⁰²*Ibid.*

millennial view is supported by the eschatological Sabbatic typology of Colossians 2:17 and the common chiliastic milieu of contemporaneous thinking in Judaism and Christianity. Finally, this view alone properly addresses the eschatological (promise of rest remaining) and conditional aspects of the passage, explaining clearly the reason the section concludes with the judging character of the word of God. Hebrews 3:7—4:13, therefore, serves as a stern warning to these professing believers not to reject the faith and thus experience God's eternal retribution and entrance into the millennial kingdom.

John 5:17

Christ's statement about the Father's continual work also possesses eschatological implications for the Sabbath issue. After the Pharisees' accusation that He broke the Sabbath through healing a paralytic, Jesus "had an answer for them: 'My Father is at work even till now, so I am at work too.'"¹⁰⁰³ The theological import of His statement is that Christ was making claim to deity by referring to God as "My Father" (cf. John 2:16; 10:17),¹⁰⁰⁴ a claim which the Pharisees incorrectly interpreted as acting

¹⁰⁰³This translation by Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John I-XII*, AB, 212.

¹⁰⁰⁴Rudolph Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 244.

independently of God.¹⁰⁰⁵ The profound¹⁰⁰⁶ claim in this verse was so offensive to His accusers that they sought to kill Him (v. 18).¹⁰⁰⁷

While many issues are involved here, for the purposes of the present study the nature of the Father's work must be addressed. Some believe this work refers to His work of creation,¹⁰⁰⁸ while the traditional perspective has been God's providential work of sustaining the universe.¹⁰⁰⁹ One scholar believes that both creation *and* sustaining are in view.¹⁰¹⁰ Others advocate that it refers to God's redemptive activity in Christ.¹⁰¹¹ Another supposes that preservation *and* redemption are in view.¹⁰¹² Others affirm that

¹⁰⁰⁵Bultmann, 245 (the Pharisees "can only conceive equality with God as independence from God, whereas for Jesus it means the very opposite"); cf. R. V. G. Tasker, *The Gospel According to St. John*, TNTC, 87. In rabbinic thinking, to make oneself equal with God is to rebel against divine government with independent authority (W. F. Howard, *Christianity According to St. John*, 71). Christ rebuts this false Pharisaical concept by affirming His dependence upon the Father (vv. 19ff.).

¹⁰⁰⁶The profundity of His answer is well expressed by Godet, "This utterance . . . is like a flash of light breaking forth from the inmost depths of the consciousness of Jesus, from the point of mysterious union where He inwardly receives from the Father's impulse. These sudden and immeasurably profound outbreaks of thought distinguish the language of Jesus from all other languages" (Frederick Louis Godet, *Commentary on John's Gospel*, KRL, 461).

¹⁰⁰⁷"In claiming the right to work even as his Father worked, Jesus was claiming a divine prerogative" (Brown, 217).

¹⁰⁰⁸"For God never leaves off making, but even as it is the property of fire to burn and of snow to chill, so it is the property of God to make" (Philo *Allegorical Interpretation of Genesis* 2—3 1.3); "God's creative activity is still going on, and the eschatological 'seventh day' still belongs to the future" (Riesenfeld, "The Sabbath and the Lord's Day in Judaism, the Preaching of Jesus and Early Christianity," 132); "God is essentially and unchangeably creative" (C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to Saint John*, 213).

¹⁰⁰⁹J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John*, ICC, 1:236-37; Tasker, 87; William Howard Van Doren, *Gospel of John*, 445.

¹⁰¹⁰David J. Ellis, "John," in *IBC*, 1242.

¹⁰¹¹Godet, 462-63 (his translation is, "Since my Father works *up to this moment*, I also work"; emphasis his); Bacchiocchi, "A Memorial of Redemption," 18-19.

¹⁰¹²William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel of John*, NTC, 196; cf. B. F. Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 84, "By the 'work' of the Father we must understand at once the maintenance of the material creation and the redemption of all things, in which the Son cooperated with Him (Heb. 1:3; Eph. 1:9f.)."

John 5:17 means that God never ceases from performing works of healing.¹⁰¹³ Another view is that God's work is one of rewarding and/or punishing men.¹⁰¹⁴

In the opinion of the present writer a combination of the above providential and healing (compassion) interpretations has the most merit. God's care for the entire universe had just been demonstrated in a "meager way" through healing a paralytic. This compassionate work of God had continued on man's behalf regardless of the Sabbath. Likewise Jesus, as God's equal, could not be limited from providential work by the institution. Therefore, in this verse Jesus Himself "gives a Christological foundation for non-observance of the Sabbath,"¹⁰¹⁵ at least for acts of benefit to others. Since He is God, He is greater than the institution and therefore can set it aside at will.

The providential interpretation also best explains the meaning of "until now" (ἕως ἄρτι). Some affirm that the phrase refers to the *culmination* of Christ's work,¹⁰¹⁶ but the concept of *constancy* is supported by the context.¹⁰¹⁷ Jesus was not declaring that God's rest was *at that time* ceasing, for His providential and compassionate work would continue into the kingdom itself.

The eschatological implications of Christ's statement are many. "The expression 'until now' implies that the true divine Sabbath, which is the time when our

¹⁰¹³"There can be no rest for God while humanity is suffering" (G. Campbell Morgan, *The Gospel According to John*, 91; cf. Robert P. Gordon, "Genesis," in *IBC*, 116).

¹⁰¹⁴Rudolph Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to Saint John*, 2:101.

¹⁰¹⁵Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament*, 152.

¹⁰¹⁶Samuele Bacchiocchi, "John 5:17: Negation or Clarification of the Sabbath?" *AUSS* 19 (Spring 1981): 3-19.

¹⁰¹⁷Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 245; Schnackenburg, 2:101. Cullmann writes that the expression "until now" refers "almost certainly at once to Christ's resurrection and to the new creation at the end" (Oscar Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship*, 92).

Lord will work no more, has not yet come."¹⁰¹⁸ In other words, since God is still working now, a day is coming which He will no longer work. Since that time when God's rest was disturbed through sin soon after the completion of the present heavens and earth (Gen. 2:2-3; cf. Heb. 4:3-4) He has worked to bring in His kingdom, also prepared since that time (Matt. 25:34). "This explains why Christ was employed in healing on the Jewish sabbath in John 5. The ultimate sabbath had not yet come so Christ with his Father was working to bring in that ultimate sabbath or kingdom age."¹⁰¹⁹

It now remains to reconcile how God's rest in Genesis 2:2-3 associates theologically with His work in John 5:17. If God is presently working, this must somehow be reconciled with the statement that His rest continues to the present as well. The confusion here results from supposing that God rests now. Hebrews 3—4 never says that this rest is presently experienced. It only indicates that the *opportunity* to enter His future rest presently exists. Until this millennial rest is accomplished the Father and Son continue to work, as should believers. It is no accident that Christ's statement is presented in the context of a healing incident. Through His healing ministry (especially the Sabbath healings) Christ provided a foretaste of man's release from sin and sickness in eschatological dimensions. Kubo notes, "When [Christ] comes again, He will establish His kingdom completely. It will have no devil, and there will be no blind, deaf, maimed, or lame. The Sabbath was a sign of that everlasting rest. In healing on the Sabbath Jesus pointed to the fact that He will restore man whole in the new earth."¹⁰²⁰ This ultimate goal should stimulate believers to diligent service for Him now (Heb. 4:11).

¹⁰¹⁸Jewett, 85.

¹⁰¹⁹Toussaint, "The Eschatology of the Warning Passages in the Book of Hebrews," 73.

¹⁰²⁰Sakae Kubo, *God Meets Man*, 61.

Leviticus 23

One final passage now deserves attention. The eschatological significance of the Sabbath may be hinted at typologically among the feasts in Leviticus 23, wherein the annual feasts are listed in chronological order. The מועד, or appointed times, are used in the Old Testament to designate only annual observances,¹⁰²¹ yet here the Sabbath is said to be among these celebrations. Levine notes in this regard, "There is, however, a problem in using the term *mo'ed* with reference to the Sabbath. Elsewhere in the ritual legislation it usually designates an annual occurrence. A *mo'ed* occurs at the same time each year; its annual date must be 'fixed.' There is, however, no need to 'fix' the time of the Sabbath, which is not, strictly speaking, a calendrical phenomenon...."¹⁰²² Most commentators suppose that the reason the Sabbath is presented first is because it serves as the foundational institution and occasion for sacrificial offerings.¹⁰²³

However, the presentation of the Sabbath first may also be explained with an eschatological motif. It is beyond the scope of the present study to evaluate the eschatological significance of each of the feasts. For an excellent presentation of this, the reader is referred to the thorough and insightful study prepared by Terry C. Hulbert.¹⁰²⁴ His study demonstrates that a typological evaluation of these feasts reveals that their *antitypes* prophesy, in chronological order, God's redemptive program for Israel. Each

¹⁰²¹The word is used in this sense in verse 4: "each at its appointed time" (מועד); cf. Gen. 17:21; 18:14.

¹⁰²²Baruch A. Levine, *Leviticus*, JPSTC, 154.

¹⁰²³Gordon J. Wenham, *The Book of Leviticus*, NICOT, 301-2; George Bush, *Notes, Critical and Practical, on the Book of Leviticus*, 234; Martin Noth, *Leviticus*, OTL, 168; R. K. Harrison, *Leviticus*, 216; Victor Buksbazen, *The Gospel in the Feasts of Israel*, 61f.; Robert P. Gordon, "Leviticus," in *IBC*, 207.

¹⁰²⁴Terry C. Hulbert, "The Eschatological Significance of Israel's Feasts," Th.D. diss., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1965. For other premillennial interpretations see John Ritchie, *The Feasts of Jehovah*; Joseph A. Seiss, *The Gospel in Leviticus*, 350-65.

feast had a double meaning, signifying not only an event in the past or present, but one in the nation's future as well. Therefore, as Israel celebrated the divinely ordained annual calendar, the nation portrayed in typological fashion her eschatological future. This annual sequence is summarized by the chart on the following page:¹⁰²⁵

¹⁰²⁵This chart adds the Sabbath and its antitype to the observations of Hulbert, abstract pp. 1-3. It also adds four feasts at the end (number 9-12) that are celebrated annually though not commanded in the Bible.

Typological Significance of the Appointed Times (תִּשְׁבּוּתֹת) of Israel
Leviticus 23

	<u>Date</u>	<u>Length</u>	<u>Feast</u>	<u>Significance (Past)</u>	<u>Typology (Future)</u>
1.	Weekly	1 day	Sabbath* (Shabbat)	Reminder of: • Creation rest of God • Deliverance from Egypt Sign of Mosaic Covenant (Exod. 20, 31; Deut 5)	Millennial rest (Heb. 4:1-11)
2.	1-14 (Nisan)	1 day (Read Song of Songs)	Passover*† (Pesach)	Redemption from Egypt by blood of the sacrificial lamb (Exod. 12)	Redemption from sin by Christ's death as Lamb (1 Cor. 5:7b)
3.	1-15 to 1-21 (Nisan)	7 days	Unleavened Bread*†	Separation/break from dependence upon Egypt to dependence upon God	Separated life of the redeemed for God (1 Cor. 5:7a, 8)
4.	1-16 (Day after Harvest Sabbath)	1 day	Firstfruits (barley sheaf ceremony)	Anticipation of God's <i>future</i> material provisions -begins grain harvest	Resurrection of Christ (1 Cor. 15:20)
5.	3-6 (Sivan)	1 day (Read Ruth)	Pentecost† (Shavuoth) (Weeks) (Harvest)	Thanksgiving for God's <i>past</i> material provisions -ends grain harvest (Deut. 16:9-12)	Coming of the Holy Spirit to complete Christ's resurrection (Acts 2)
—	Spring-Summer	no feasts	—	Enjoyment of the harvest	Church Age
6.	7-1 (Tishri)	1 day	Trumpets (New Year) (Rosh Hashanah)	Preparation for national redemption and cleansing on Day of Atonement	Rapture (1 Thess. 4:13f.) Revelation (Matt. 24:31) —Kingdom preparation
7.	7-10 (Tishri)	1 day	Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur)	National repentance and cleansing from sins of the people (Lev. 16)	National repentance of Israel in the Tribulation (Rom. 11:26-27)
8.	7-15 to 7-21 (Tishri)	7 days (Read Eccles.)	Tabernacles*† (Booths/Tents) (Sukkot) (the Lord) (Ingathering)	Anticipated fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant (Neh. 8)	Actual fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant —Kingdom (Matt. 17:4)

9.	7-22 (Tishri)	1 day	Shemini Atzeret (Simchat Torah)	"Eighth Day of Assembly" "Rejoicing in the Torah"
The following days are not commanded in Scripture and probably have no eschatological significance:				
10.	5-9 (Ab)	1 day (Read Lam.)	9th of Ab (Tish'ah be'ab)	Destructions of Jerusalem: 586 BC & AD 70
11.	9-25 (Kislev)	1 day + 7 more days of candle lighting	Hanukkah (Dedication) (Lights) (Illumination) (Maccabees)	Saving of the nation under Judas Maccabeus in 164 BC (cf. John 10:22)
12.	12-14/15 (Adar)	2 days (Read Esther)	Purim (Lots)	Saving of the nation under Esther (9:21)



This Typology column shows that the order of Israel's annual feasts prophetically parallels her experience as a nation throughout history!

* Feasts celebrated in the Millennium (Isa. 66:23; Ezek. 45:21; 46:1; Zech. 14:16-19)

† Feasts celebrated in three annual Jerusalem pilgrimages by "all" male Israelites

As revealed on this chart, viewing the Sabbath as a type of Israel's kingdom age forms an "antitype *inclusio*" when seen together with the Feast of Tabernacles, which also typifies the kingdom. In other words, in the *mo'ed* God typologically revealed the millennial age in the first and last "feasts."¹⁰²⁶ This finds verification when one examines only the *annual* feasts as well, for the only ones which will be celebrated in the Millennium are the first (Passover/Unleavened Bread) and the last (Tabernacles). Whether the above eschatological arrangement was in the mind of the human author one cannot tell, but certainly *some* reason exists for appending the Sabbath to the beginning of the annual calendar. The preceding is presented as one possible explanation for the curious addition of the Sabbath within the order of annual feasts. This hypothesis is consistent with the millennial motif demonstrated earlier in both the extra-biblical literature (both Jewish and Christian) and in Scripture (Hebrews 4 in particular). One

¹⁰²⁶In similar fashion, the rest of God enjoyed after creation on the "seventh day" will again be reinstituted in the Millennium, typified by the Sabbath.

author has even stated that the Sabbath in the Millennium "will again be the distinctive sign of God."¹⁰²⁷

Summary

While the weekly Sabbath is abrogated for the present time, the Scripture indicates that it has a future in the Great Tribulation (Matt. 24:20) and in the millennial age (Isa. 66:23; Ezek. 46:1). This is confirmed by the fact that not only will the day be reinstituted, but the rest associated with it fulfills a typological role of Israel's future kingdom as an age of rest (Ps. 95; Heb. 3:7—4:13; John 5:17; Lev. 23). Therefore, the Sabbath is intricately linked to both Israel's history as a nation and to the kingdom motif in Scripture. It came with the Law and left with the end of the Law at the conclusion of Daniel's sixty-ninth week, but it will find reinstitution in the seventieth week when the chronology of the nation again resumes.

¹⁰²⁷William Kelly, *The Feasts of Jehovah*, 12.

Conclusion

After finishing His creation of the world in six days, the Lord rested from this creative work on the "seventh day." However, shortly after this time, the dominion He shared with man was lost in the Fall. In the interim period God continues to work until He reassumes His rightful dominion over the earth in the millennial kingdom. Although the Lord rested after the first creation, the requirement to rest each seventh day was never imposed upon pre-Mosaic man.

The weekly Sabbath was given only to the nation of Israel and is therefore a Jewish institution. This is evident in its representation of the rest God provided man initially in a completed creation, then later in redemption the nation received in the Exodus. The Sabbath also served as a humanitarian institution and day for worship, but most significantly, the day functioned as a sign of the Mosaic Covenant made with Israel. The Sabbath was operative as long as the Law was in effect. At the death of Christ the Mosaic covenant was abolished, the Sabbath being part of this covenant.

Since it was part of the Law, the Jewish Sabbath has no bearing upon Christians of the present dispensation. Rather, a totally separate and unique day—the "first day of the week," the Lord's Day, or Sunday—though not expressly commanded in the New Testament, has been the practice of Christians since apostolic times. The New Testament reveals that on this day first-century believers gathered for worship; however, they did not gather for rest since this was a work day. This is not a "Christian Sabbath" as it does not possess the rest stipulations of the Jewish institution. While some Jewish

Christians may have continued Sabbath observance in the early church, Paul acknowledged that worship on a specific day should be in accord with one's own conscience. As such, weaker Jewish brothers who continued in Sabbath worship were not to impose this practice upon Gentile Christians since a proper understanding of the Jewish Sabbath does not impose the day upon other believers in the present dispensation.

The eschatological aspects of the Sabbath have been variously explained, but the first century milieu indicates that Jews and Christians alike perceived the day as typifying the kingdom rest yet to come. The day will be reinstituted during the Great Tribulation and in the future kingdom age along with other revived characteristics of the past dispensation (e.g., temple, some sacrifices, etc.). This means that during "the times of the Gentiles" the Sabbath is not in effect, but at the national repentance of Israel and the resumption of Daniel's seventieth week, the day will again be celebrated. This association between Israel's eschatological history and the Sabbath may even be hinted at typologically in the ordering of Israel's feasts in Leviticus 23. While one cannot be dogmatic on this final point, it appears that as Sunday replaced the Sabbath as the divinely ordained day of worship in the present age, so the Sabbath will replace the Lord's Day in the next.

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