

A New Look at
the
SABBATH

Is God's Sabbath *Abolished*
with the Old Covenant?
Or
an *Eternal Command* of God,
Still in Force Today?

William F. Dankenbring

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Omak WA 98841

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Chapter 1

Sabbath Versus Sunday?

Should Christians observe Sunday as the day of worship? Why do Jews observe Saturday? What day did Jesus and the apostles and early New Testament Church observe? How did Sunday observance begin in the Church? And when? Does it really make any difference which day we observe today, so long as we worship Christ?

Does it really make any difference which day we observe as the weekly day of worship? Is it necessary to observe any day at all? Why do most professing Christians worship on Sunday, and most Jews on Sabbath, from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset, most Moslems on Friday, and some groups -- like the Jehovah's Witnesses -- observe no particular day at all?

Where did Sunday worship and Sabbath worship begin, anyway? And does it make any difference in God's sight what day we keep, if any?

Strangely, almost all of the professing Christian world worship on Sunday and seem to take it for granted. Most people never question what they do, or why -- their families always worshipped on Sunday, and so they accept it without question. If anyone should ever question them about it, they shrug and often exclaim, "What difference does it make, anyway?"

Some, in their attempt to justify observing Sunday, claim that the laws of God were all done away -- nailed to the cross -- in particular, the weekly Sabbath day! To them, this is a matter of fact, not worthy of dispute, and so the matter is settled for them.

But did Jesus Christ come to do away with His Father's laws and commandments? Was the Sabbath law one among many which were "nailed to the cross"?

What is the TRUTH? Two thousand years ago, Jesus Christ said, "Yet a time is coming and has now come when the TRUE WORSHIPERS will worship the Father in spirit and TRUTH, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers MUST worship in spirit and in TRUTH" (John 4:23-24).

Millions Worship Jesus IN VAIN!

Does it make any difference? Jesus Christ told the people two thousand years ago, "Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written, 'These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. THEY WORSHIP ME IN VAIN; their teachings are but rules taught by MEN.' You have LET GO OF THE COMMANDS OF GOD and are holding on to the traditions of MEN" (Mark 7:6-8).

The Jews of Jesus' day were guilty of this very thing; and millions of people fall into the same trap, today. Rather than living their lives by "every word of God" (Matt.4:4; Luke 4:4), they ignore the Word of God and live according to the traditions of their own particular Church group!

Jesus went on, blasting the Pharisees, and the life style of millions today, when He observed, "You have a fine way of SETTING ASIDE THE COMMANDS OF GOD in order to observe your own traditions! For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.' But you say that if a man says to his father or mother: 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is Corban! (that is, a gift devoted to God), then you no longer let him do anything for his father or mother. Thus you NULLIFY THE WORD OF GOD by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that" (Mark 7: 9-13).

Millions today observe "Sunday" as a tradition. But where did this age-old tradition come from? Is it Biblical? Is it truly "Christian"?

You may search the Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation, and you will not find one single word of "Sunday worship" mentioned in the Bible. In fact, even the words "first day of the week" only occur a few times in the Bible, and NOWHERE do they refer to a regular Sunday-morning type of Church service!

Shocking as it may sound, you will find only ONE weekly day of worship mentioned in the Bible -- in both Old and New Testaments. And that day is the seventh-day SABBATH!

Before we discuss what this shocking discovery means, and the amazing truth about when Sunday worship entered the professing "Christian" Church, and who brought it in, and why, notice what day God's Word says about when we should rest and worship.

You will be amazed!

Origin of the Seventh-day Sabbath

At the creation of mankind, some 6,000 years ago, we 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.2:1-3, NIV).

Notice! Right at the beginning of the creation, when God initially created all mankind (Adam and Eve, our forebears), He also established the seventh-day Sabbath as a "holy" day, and sanctified it by resting upon it. In the original Hebrew calendar, the only calendar mentioned throughout the Bible -- the Word of God -- all the other days of the week have only numbers, not names. Only the seventh day was given a NAME -- the SABBATH. The very word "Sabbath" in Hebrew meant what the day was supposed to be -- a day of "rest, cessation from labor." It literally meant, "rest, to keep as a day of rest; to cease, to desist to leave off; to celebrate the sabbath; to cause to cease; cessation, a ceasing, interruption of work; a week."

Sabbath Given BEFORE Sinai

The next mention of the Sabbath in the Word of God occurs in the book of Exodus, the second book of the Bible. After the Israelites had been slaves in Egypt for several hundred years, they had lost the knowledge of the law of God. Their Egyptian overlords had compelled them to work and toil seven days a week, without any respite, to build treasure houses for Pharaoh, and cities. But Almighty God heard the cries of His people, and brought them out of Egypt by a powerful hand and many miracles (Exo.8-12). After humbling the Egyptians by mighty plagues which devastated their land, God brought His nation Israel through the Red Sea and into the wilderness of the desert (Exo.14-15; 16:1).

At this point the Israelites, who had no real faith in God or Moses, His servant, began to grumble and complain, saying, "If only we had died by the Lord's hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death" (Exo.16:3).

At this juncture God performed a tremendous series of miracles, to provide food for His people, and to show them once again by mighty proofs, which day of the week was the weekly SABBATH day! Notice! God told Moses, "I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will TEST them and see whether they will follow my instructions. On the SIXTH day they are to prepare what they bring in, and that is to be twice as much as they gather on the other days" (verses 4-5).

The next morning the Israelites found on the desert floor flakes like frost on the ground -- miraculous bread from heaven. The Israelites went out to gather it. "And when they measured it by the omer, he who gathered much did not have too much, and he who gathered little did not have too little. Each one gathered as much as he needed" (v.17-18). Some, however, even though Moses commanded them not to save it over till the next day, disobeyed; and that which

was kept over was "full of maggots and began to smell" (v.20). Moses rebuked them for their disobedience.

The account continues: "Each morning everyone gathered as much as he needed, and when the sun grew hot, it melted away. On the sixth day, they gathered TWICE as much -- two omers for each person -- and the leaders of the community came and reported this to Moses. He said to them, 'This is what the Lord commanded: "Tomorrow is to be a DAY OF REST, A HOLY SABBATH to the LORD [Yahveh]." So bake what you want to bake and boil what you want to boil. Save whatever is left and keep it until morning'" (verses 21-23).

This time, when they saved it over till the next morning, it did not breed maggots and stink! Moses then told them, "Eat it today, because TODAY IS A SABBATH to the LORD [Yahveh]. You will not find any of it on the ground today. Six days you are to gather it, but on the SEVENTH DAY, THE SABBATH, there will not be any" (vs.24-25).

Nevertheless, some of the people tried to gather it on the Sabbath as well -- and found none anywhere! "Then the Lord said to Moses, 'How long will you refuse to keep my commands and my instructions? Bear in mind that the LORD [Yahveh] has given you THE SABBATH; that is why on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days. Everyone is to stay where he is on the seventh day; no one is to go out.' So the people RESTED on the seventh day" (verses 28-30).

Notice the specific miracles God performed to re-establish in the minds of His people the correct seventh day of rest -- the Sabbath day!

1. He provided manna from heaven by a miracle six days a week.
2. If kept over a second day, He caused it to breed worms and stink.
3. On the sixth day, He provided twice as much as the other five days.
4. That kept over on the seventh day did NOT stink or breed worms!
5. On the seventh day of each week, there was NONE provided!
6. God performed these miracles for FORTY LONG YEARS, without interruption or fail!

After this series of miracles, performed for forty long years, whereby God Almighty provided FOOD for His people in the desert do you think there was any QUESTION which day was the weekly Sabbath day of rest for His people?

This miracle began on the fifteenth day of the second month (Exo.16:1). The Israelites did not reach the desert of Sinai until the third month after they left Egypt (Exo.19:1). After leaving Rephidim, where they fought the Amalekites -- the Hyksos kings who were invading Egypt at that time -- they camped in front of Mount Sinai. Moses then went up into Sinai to speak with God (Exo.19:3), and returned to deliver God's words to the elders of the people (v.7). Two days probably elapsed. Then Moses took the people's answer to God, and spoke with Him again (v.8). This would have been the third day. The next day God communicated His message to Moses, saying, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow. Have them wash their clothes and be ready by the THIRD DAY, because on that day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people" (vs.10-11). The third day from that point would

have been Sivan 6, the date of the annual festival of Pentecost! Thus Almighty God gave the Ten Commandments, including the fourth commandment concerning the Sabbath day, on the very same day on which He sent His Holy Spirit upon the New Testament Church (Acts 2:1), beginning the Church age!

Isn't it interesting that God began the Old Testament "church," and gave Israel His laws, and ratified a marriage covenant with them, on the very same day He began the NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH -- THE DAY OF PENTECOST!

And it was on that very day that God said, and wrote with His very own fingers, the TEN COMMANDMENTS (Exodus 20:1-17). And when He came to the fourth commandment He declared:

"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 [Yahveh] 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" (Exo.20:8-11).

Notice several things about this commandment. First God told them to "REMEMBER" the Sabbath. It was something ALREADY IN EXISTENCE! It did not come into being at Mount Sinai, but had been in existence FROM CREATION! It was the day God blessed at Creation, and the only day He made HOLY. No other day of the week was ever made "holy." God never made Sunday to be holy. You may search throughout the Bible, and you will find nowhere any evidence of Sunday being made "holy" by Almighty GOD!

Shouldn't these facts tell us something? Shouldn't they MEAN anything to us? Which day did God Himself "bless"? THE SABBATH! Which day did HE make "HOLY"? Answer: THE SABBATH! When did God make this day holy? AT THE CREATION OF MANKIND -- over 2,000 years before the birth of the first Jew, or Israelite! Why did God create the Sabbath day, by resting upon it, at the creation of mankind? Because this day of weekly rest and worship was designed for ALL MANKIND -- not just the Jews, as some might argue today!

Even modern Jews don't seem to understand this truth. They assume the Sabbath was made for them, and they have preserved it for over three thousand years, faithfully. But they, too, assume it was made for THEM! Why? Because they are, generally speaking, the only people on the face of the earth who observe it today, except for a few small Christian church groups!

What is the PURPOSE of the Sabbath command? God explains in Exodus 31, "You must observe my Sabbaths. This will be a SIGN BETWEEN ME AND YOU for the generations to come, so you may know that I AM THE LORD, who makes you holy. Observe the Sabbath, because it is holy to you. . . . The Israelites are to observe the Sabbath, celebrating it for the generations to come as a LASTING COVENANT. It will be a SIGN between me and the Israelites FOREVER, for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the

seventh day he abstained from work and rested" (Exo.31:14-17).

The Sabbath is a SIGN! It is often called the "test commandment." Many people think they observe the other of the ten commandments of God -- they don't lie, steal, commit adultery, murder, covet, or take God's name in vain -- at least, not that they know of. But do they rest on the seventh-day Sabbath? Do they keep THIS commandment?

This day is the *SIGN* which identifies GOD'S PEOPLE from those mired and sunk into paganism! It is an EVERLASTING SIGN and memorial. It is a sign of God's people throughout every generation -- forever -- a perpetual covenant! To break it is to disavow God as your heavenly Father, and Christ as your Redeemer and Master! To break it is to destroy the very sign God Himself instituted to identify HIS people! It was never done away with or abolished. It was ordained "FOREVER" (Exo.31:17).

The fact that the Sabbath day rest was a command from the time of Creation itself, and will be observed by ALL MANKIND after the return of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, to establish His Kingdom, is attested to by Isaiah the prophet!

God Almighty says, in the last chapter of Isaiah, "'As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me,' declares the Lord, 'so will your name and descendants endure. From one New Moon to another, and from ONE SABBATH TO ANOTHER, ALL MANKIND will come and bow down before me,' says the Lord" (Isa.66:22-23).

Did you notice that? During the Millennial reign of Jesus Christ on this earth, ALL MANKIND will observe the *Sabbath day* -- not just the Jews! Why? Because this commandment of God is an EVERLASTING LAW -- it has never been done away, and it never will, so long as human beings remain alive!

What Jesus Said about God's Law

Jesus Christ taught His disciples for three years, carefully, intimately, the truth of God. Did He ever once imply or state that the Sabbath day was "done away" or "abolished"? Did He imply that His crucifixion would "abolish" the laws of God and the Sabbath command?

What did Jesus Himself teach?

Notice the very words of the Saviour Himself!

"Do NOT think that I have come to ABOLISH THE LAW or 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" (Matt.5:17-18).

Is the earth still here, today? Can you still see the stars twinkling in beauty at night? If so, then the LAW OF GOD IS STILL IN FORCE! So said your Saviour! Jesus did not come to abolish the laws of God -- but to "fulfill" them, that is, to "fill them full," to teach their fullest

meaning and significance, to MAGNIFY them! Not even the smallest letter of God's Law is done away -- Jesus HIMSELF said so!

Whom will you believe? Ministers, clergymen, priests, or church leaders who have STRAYED from the truth? Or the very words of Christ, the Messiah, Himself? Whom do you believe -- mere men? Or the Messiah?

Isaiah foretold of the Christ, "It pleased the Lord for the sake of his righteousness to MAKE HIS LAW GREAT AND GLORIOUS" (Isa.42:21). Done away with? Not on your life! Abolished? Don't you bet on it! Rather, Christ came to MAGNIFY the law, and make it GREAT and GLORIOUS! He came to teach it IN SPIRIT, as well as in the letter! Read all of Matthew 5, and you will see how Jesus did not abolish the law of God, but STRENGTHENED it, and showed how it applies in spirit, mind, and attitude, and not just in the outward "letter"!

Did Jesus come to "loosen" the law, and make it less binding? Notice! Jesus told His disciples, "Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the Kingdom of heaven" (Matt.5:20). That sounds pretty plain, doesn't it?

Later on during Jesus' ministry a rich young ruler came to Him, asking Him, "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?" (Matt.19:16). Now here was Jesus' perfect opportunity. Why, if some modern churches are right, here was where He should have said, "Why my dear young man, don't you know there is NOTHING you must 'do' at all? You can't get eternal life by good works! The Sabbath is done away; all you have to do is just 'believe' on me!"

But is that what Jesus Christ said to this young man's direct question?

Notice! Jesus replied, "There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, OBEY THE COMMANDMENTS" (verse 17).

The young man asked, "Which ones?"

Jesus then explained which list of commandments He was referring to -- which group of commandments -- the TEN COMMANDMENTS! He listed several of them, replying, "'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and mother,' and 'love your neighbor as yourself'" (Matt.19:18-19). There can be no doubt which law, or list of commandments, Jesus was talking about!

Jesus did not need to mention the Sabbath day in particular at this time, because the Jews were all keeping it. Nor did He mention the command against idolatry, taking God's name in vain, or having any other gods before the true God. These commands the Jews were scrupulously obeying, at least in the letter of the law. Certainly the fact that Jesus did not mention the first four of the Ten Commandments, which deal with man's relationship with his Maker, did not imply that these commandments were done away with! This should be perfectly clear. Jesus Himself later told a young man that the greatest of all the laws of God is, "'Love the

Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments" (Matt.22:37-40).

Jesus clearly did NOT teach that the laws of God were abolished! He plainly said that if we hope to get eternal life, we must OBEY THE COMMANDMENTS!

What Day Did Jesus and the Apostles Keep?

Those who claim the Sabbath day is done away fail to notice the example set by both Jesus Christ the Messiah, and His apostles. Did Jesus observe the Sabbath day? Did He teach by example its observance?

In the book of Luke we read, "Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. He TAUGHT IN THEIR SYNAGOGUES, and everyone praised him" (Luke 4:14-15). To teach in the Jewish synagogues is proof positive that Jesus was WORSHIPING ON THE SABBATH DAY! The synagogues did not have regular weekly worship on the other days of the week. The Jews only met together on a weekly basis, for religious instruction, ON THE SABBATHS!

The account in Luke continues, "He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and ON THE SABBATH DAY he went into the synagogue, AS WAS HIS CUSTOM. And he stood up to read. . . ." (Luke 4.16).

Here is undeniable proof that Jesus observed the seventh-day Sabbath, and the holy Sabbaths of God! It was His "CUSTOM" -- not just something He did once in awhile! It was His EXAMPLE!

Do you follow Jesus' own example? The apostle Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, did! Notice! In the book of Acts we read: "From Paphos, Paul and his companions sailed to Perga in Pamphylia, where John left them to return to Jerusalem. From Perga they went on to Pisidian Antioch. ON THE SABBATH they entered the synagogue and sat down" (Acts 13:13-14). The account goes on to describe Paul PREACHING A SERMON in that synagogue to the assembly!

Now notice later! "As Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, the people invited them to speak further about these things ON THE NEXT SABBATH. . . . On the NEXT SABBATH almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord" (Acts 13:42-44).

Later, Paul came to the city of Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. We read: "AS HIS CUSTOM WAS, Paul went into the synagogue, and on THREE SABBATH DAYS he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead" (Acts 17:2-4).

Paul followed Christ's example. It was his custom, too, to observe the Sabbath day! Later on in his travels, Paul came to Corinth, where he stayed for a while. Luke records in the book of Acts, "EVERY SABBATH he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews AND

GREEKS" (Acts 18:4).

Paul clearly observed the Sabbath day. Nowhere in the book of Acts, however, do we find Paul observing Sunday as a day of religious meeting, or a rest day, or a day to be observed. Rather, Paul followed the example set by Christ. He, too, kept the Sabbath! And he said to the Corinthian church, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ" (I Cor. 11:1).

Paul's Letter to the Hebrews

Interestingly, this whole matter of Sabbath observance also came up in the epistle Paul wrote to the Hebrews. In chapter three he shows how much greater Jesus is than Moses, even as the builder of a house is greater than the house itself (Heb.3:1-3). Paul goes on to warn the followers of Christ not to harden their hearts against obeying God, as the Israelites did in the wilderness, when they broke the Sabbath (compare Heb.3:7-9 with Exo.16:17-30). Paul encouraged them not to be hardened by sin's deceitfulness (Heb.3:13), causing them to turn away from God (v.12). Those who sinned in the desert did not enter God's rest (v.17), because of their unbelief (v.19).

Paul goes on, then, in the fourth chapter of Hebrews, saying that the "promise of entering his rest still stands" (Heb.4:1). He then explains how that God Himself rested from His works on the seventh day after the Creation was completed (verses 3-4). Paul shows that Joshua himself did not give the people "rest," when they entered the promised land, showing that there is still a future "rest" for the people of God (vs.6-8). He concludes this passage, saying:

"There remains, then, a SABBATH-REST FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD; for anyone who enters God's rest ALSO RESTS FROM HIS OWN WORK, just as God did from his" (Heb.4:9-10).

How clear! God's people today should still be celebrating the seventh-day Sabbath, by entering into the Sabbath rest, just as God did after His work of Creation; we, too, should rest from our own work on that day, even as God did from His work! If we do this, faithfully, unlike the Israelites of old who broke the Sabbath, we have a promise that we can enter His Millennial Sabbath-Rest in the Kingdom of God!

Nowhere, in all the Scriptures, did God ever do away with His Sabbath command! It is still His SIGN, identifying His true people! It is one of the COMMANDMENTS that God ordained FOREVER!

Jesus observed the Sabbath, setting us an example. As the apostle John wrote, "Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did" (I John 2:6). Peter also wrote that Jesus Himself was, in effect "leaving you an EXAMPLE, that you should FOLLOW IN HIS STEPS" (I Peter 2:21).

Are you following in His steps on the Sabbath day? Do you worship and rest on that day, as He did?

How important is eternal life to *YOU*?

Chapter 2

The Origin of Sunday Worship

Where did Sunday worship come from? What does worship on the first day of the week signify? When did it originate? How did it come to be considered as “Christian”? Is the origin of worship on the day of the Sun a pagan custom?

No day is set aside in the Scriptures for regular weekly worship except the Sabbath, the seventh day of the week, which portrays the coming Kingdom of God. God has given mankind six one thousand-year “days” in which to govern the earth himself; but the seventh thousand year “day” is the Millennial Sabbath, when God Himself will rule the earth with the saints (see Rev.20:4; II Pet.3:8-10).

In fact, the expression “first day of the week” is only used twice in the New Testament in reference where it has been misused by ministers to support Sunday services. In Acts 20:7 Paul says their group “came together to break bread” – meaning to eat a meal – and Paul spoke to the people, “and because he intended to leave the next day, kept talking until midnight.” This hardly supports weekly Sunday services – Paul spoke from the evening meal till about midnight, because he was leaving the next morning!

The other passage is found in I Cor.16:1-2, where Paul admonishes the Corinthian church, “Now concerning the money contributed for [the relief of] the saints (God’s people): you are to do the same as I directed the churches of Galatia to do. On the first [day] of the week, let each one of you [personally] put aside something and save it up as he has prospered [in proportion to what he is given], so that no collections will need to be taken after I come” (Amplified Parallel Bible). This was a special collection for the poor saints suffering famine in Israel (Acts 11:28-29), and has no bearing on the issue of weekly Sunday meetings at all.

Sunday’s Ancient Origin

How, then, did Sunday worship become commonplace in the professing Christian church, and how did the Sabbath day become neglected and ignored by Christians? The true story is a shocking one of deception, fraud, anti-Semitism, and apostasy from the truth of God!

For hundreds of years after the time of the apostles, the true Church of God remained faithful to Sabbath observance. However, as time went on, human reason began to replace divine command, and persecution became severe on those who retained any ties to "Judaism," or the customs of the Jews. After the Jewish rebellion of 66-70 A.D., and the Bar Kochba rebellion of 132-135 A.D., anti-Semitism became strong among the Romans.

In the meantime, pagan customs from antiquity were rife throughout the Roman world. By the third century, during the time of Emperor Constantine, the mysteries of Mithraism were taking a strong hold on many Romans. Mithraism was sun-worship, and its day of worship was "Sun-day," the day of the sun god.

The historian Hutton Webster, in *Rest Days*, tells us:

"The early Christians had at first adopted the Jewish seven-day week with its numbered week days, but by the close of the THIRD CENTURY A.D. this began to give way to the [PAGAN] PLANETARY WEEK; and in the FOURTH AND FIFTH CENTURIES THE PAGAN DESIGNATIONS became generally accepted in the western half of Christendom. The use of the planetary names by Christians attests the GROWING INFLUENCE OF ASTROLOGICAL SPECULATIONS introduced by CONVERTS FROM PAGANISM."

Webster goes on:

"During these same centuries the spread of Oriental SOLAR WORSHIP, especially that of Mithra, in the Roman world, had already led to the SUBSTITUTION BY PAGANS OF DIES SOLIS [SUNDAY] FOR DIES SATURNI [SABBATH], as the first day of the planetary week ... Thus gradually a PAGAN INSTITUTION was ENGRAFTED ON CHRISTIANITY" (*Rest Days*, p.220-221).

Webster continues:

"What began, however, as a PAGAN ORDINANCE, ended as a [nominal] Christian regulation; and a long series of imperial decrees, during the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries, enjoined with INCREASING STRINGENCY ABSTINENCE FROM LABOR ON SUNDAY" (*Rest Days*, p.270).

Edward Gibbon, in his remarkable *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, tells us that the Roman Emperor Constantine was a pagan until he was forty years old. "But the devotion of Constantine was more peculiarly directed to the genius of the SUN, the Apollo of Greek and Roman mythology The sun is universally celebrated as the invincible guide and protector of Constantine" (vol.1, p.636-637). Constantine was not himself "baptized" as a Christian until he was upon his death bed in 337 A.D. (Wells, *The Outline of History*, p.451).

When Constantine was sole emperor, and because he venerated the sun as his special "god," he proclaimed the first day of the week, or Sunday, as a day of rest and of worship. Jesse Lyman Hurlbut in *Story of the Christian Church* writes:

"The first day of the week was proclaimed as a day of rest and worship, and its observance soon became general throughout the empire. In 321 A.D. Constantine forbade the courts to be held on Sunday, except for the purpose of giving freedom to slaves; and on that day soldiers were commanded to omit their daily military exercises. But the public games continued on Sunday, tending to make it more a holiday than a holy-day" (p.77).

Writes historian H. G. Wells, in *The Outline of History*,

"The observance of the Jewish Sabbath, again, transferred to the Mithraic Sun-day . . ." (p.445).

But as late as the third century, Origen, a Catholic bishop in Egypt, wrote of the seventh-day Sabbath as follows:

"But what is the feast of the Sabbath except that of which the apostle speaks, 'There remaineth, therefore, a Sabbatism' (Heb.4:9), that is, the OBSERVANCE OF THE SABBATH by the people of God? Leaving the Jewish observances of the Sabbath, LET US SEE HOW THE SABBATH [not Sunday!] ought to be observed by a CHRISTIAN. On the SABBATH DAY ALL WORDLY LABORS OUGHT TO BE ABSTAINED FROM. If, therefore, you cease from all secular works, and execute nothing worldly, but give yourselves up to spiritual exercises, repairing to church, attending to sacred reading and instruction . . . this is the observance of the CHRISTIAN SABBATH" (Origen, *Opera*, Bk.II, p.358).

It was not until 365 A.D., at the Council of Laodicea, that the Roman Catholic Church, now in supremacy in the Roman Empire, settled the Sabbath-Sunday controversy in favor of the pagan Sunday. One of its most famous canons reads:

"Christians must NOT JUDAIZE BY RESTING ON THE SABBATH, but must work on that day, rather, honouring the Lord's Day; and, if they can, resting then as Christians. But if any shall be found to be JUDAIZERS, LET THEM BE ANATHEMA FROM CHRIST" (*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 19, p. 148).

Thus the character and personality of the Church of God, founded by Christ Jesus, over the centuries became changed, twisted, warped and perverted. The seventh-day Sabbath was replaced by the pagan *Die Solis*, or "Sunday." Those who persisted in following the example of Christ and the apostles were CUT OFF from the Church! They were declared guilty of heresy, and "anathema," or condemned!

At the same time, the Roman Church began introducing Mary worship, idols, and the pagan days of Easter, named after Astarte (pronounced "Easter!"), the goddess of the pagans, and Christmas, the celebration of the birth of the sun god, Sol Invictus.

Writes H. G. Wells of this radical transformation occurring in the Church:

"He [Jesus] did not say a word about the worship of his mother Mary in the guise of Isis, the Queen of Heaven. Much that is most characteristically Christian [sic] in worship and usage, he ignored. Skeptical writers have had the temerity to deny that Jesus can be called a CHRISTIAN AT ALL" (*Outline of History*, p.445).

Since Constantine was not even nominally a "Christian" until his death bed, why did he support the universal Church of that time? Says Wells:

"It was only after he had turned to Christianity that he seems to have realized the fierce dissensions of the theologians. He made a great effort to reconcile these differences in order to have ONE UNIFORM and harmonious teaching in the community, and at his initiative a general council of the Church was held at Nicea . . . in 325. . . . He sat in the middle of the council of Nicea upon a golden throne, and, as he had little Greek, we must suppose he was reduced to watching the countenances and gestures of the debaters, and listening to their intonations. The council was a stormy one. When old Arius rose to speak, one, Nicholas of Myra, struck him in the face, and afterwards many ran out, thrusting their fingers into their ears in affected horror at the old man's heresies. One is tempted to imagine the great emperor, deeply anxious for the soul of his empire, firmly resolved to END THESE DIVISIONS, bending towards his interpreters to ask them the meaning of the uproar" (*Outline of History*, p.462).

So what had happened? The pure, simple, undefiled religion of Jesus Christ was now made the property of bickering, arguing, debating priests and prelates, presided over by an unconverted pagan Roman Emperor who sought UNITY for his huge empire! In the process, the truth brought by Jesus Christ and the original apostles was trampled underfoot and thrown away. The minority opinion was overruled; the majority opinion held sway. The truth of God, because of its Jewishness, was rejected, and buried under an avalanche of paganism!

Paganism Takes Power

Says Wells:

" It is necessary that we should recall the reader's attention to the profound differences between this fully developed Christianity of Nicea and the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. . . What is clearly apparent is that the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth was a prophetic teaching of the new type that began with the Hebrew prophets. It was not priestly, it had no consecrated temple, and no altar. It had no rites and ceremonies. . . Its only organization was an organization of preachers, and its chief function was the sermon. But the fully fledged Christianity of the fourth century . . . was mainly a priestly religion, OF A TYPE ALREADY FAMILIAR TO THE WORLD FOR THOUSANDS OF YEARS. The centre of its elaborate ritual was an altar, and the essential act of worship the sacrifice, by a consecrated priest, of the Mass" (*ibid*, p.463).

In actual reality, says Wells, "Christianity had taken on an *EXTRAORDINARY* OUTWARD RESEMBLANCE to the cults of Serapis, Ammon, or Bel-Marduk . . ."

That is, it had become distinctly *PAGAN* in worship, ritual, and practice! Only the names were changed. Paganism had become "baptized" in the name of "Jesus." Pagan holidays replaced the holy days of the Bible, the days observed by the Jews, and by the early New Testament Christian Church!

When Constantine became Emperor of Rome, he nominally at least became a "Christian." But being the head of a far-flung political Empire, he was concerned about the unity and coherence and stability of his Empire. As a sagacious politician, he sought to reconcile and blend and mesh pagan practices with "Christian" beliefs, to merge paganism with the Roman church. Constantine promulgated the "Edict of Toleration" in A.D. 313. He became emperor in A.D. 323, and "then Christianity was enthroned" (Jesse Lyman Hurlbut, *The Story of the Christian Church*, p.74).

From this time, for the next two hundred years, all persecutions of Christians of the Roman church, and its adherents, ceased. The sword of persecution was "not merely sheathed; it was buried" (*ibid.*, p.75).

But Jesse Hurlbut laments the results of Constantine's making Christianity the state religion, free from all persecution. From that time, he points out, *the church became totally subverted* by politics and self-seeking opportunists.

“. . . the establishment of Christianity as the state religion became a CURSE.

"Everybody sought membership in the church, and nearly everybody was received. Both good and bad, sincere seekers after God and hypocritical seekers after gain, rushed into the communion. Ambitious, worldly, unscrupulous men sought office in the church for social and political influence. . . .

“The services of worship increased in splendor, but were less spiritual and hearty than those of former times. *The forms and ceremonies of PAGANISM GRADUALLY CREPT INTO THE WORSHIP. Some of the OLD HEATHEN FEASTS BECAME CHURCH FESTIVALS WITH CHANGE OF NAME AND OF WORSHIP*” (Hurlbut, *The Story of the Christian Church*, p.79, emphasis mine).

How did it happen? Obviously, something strange and weird was going on!

Will Durant, renowned historian, in his massive work *The Story of Civilization*, wrote in volume III, entitled *Caesar and Christ*, that in the new "church" that developed in the Roman Empire, the Jewishness of Jesus was lost or rejected, and replaced with Greek philosophy and thought; the "Law" of the Jews was rejected, and, he writes,

". . . the god Christ was assimilated to the religious and philosophical traditions of the Hellenistic mind. *Now the PAGAN WORLD -- even the anti-Semitic world -- could accept him as its own.*

"CHRISTIANITY DID NOT DESTROY PAGANISM; IT ADOPTED IT. The Greek mind, dying, came to a transmigrated life in the theology and liturgy of the

Church . . . the *Greek mysteries* passed down into the impressive mystery of the Mass. *Other PAGAN cultures contributed to the syncretistic result.* From Egypt came the idea of a divine trinity . . . from Egypt the adoration of the Mother and Child . . . From Phrygia came the worship of the Great Mother . . . The Mithraic ritual so closely resembled the eucharistic sacrifice of the Mass that Christian fathers charged the Devil with inventing these similarities to mislead frail minds. *Christianity was the last great creation of the ancient PAGAN world" (p.595),*

These historical observations ought to make us sit up and take notice! The 'Christianity' that we see around us in the world today is but a "spin-off" of this ancient syncretism or "blending" and "merging" of PAGANISM into the professed Church of Jesus Christ, which had lapsed into political apostasy, profligacy and impurity.

The vast majority of the descendants of the once chaste and pure virgin of Christ, the New Testament Church, had seemingly become, for all intents and purposes, the religious WHORE of Babylon -- a bejeweled and bedecked and bedeviled slut and trollop, a "shady lady," a spiritual PROSTITUTE!

"Paganism" was not defeated by the Church. It invaded the church, infiltrated it, and seduced it from within! The professing Christian Church became the "new face of paganism"! Only the "names" were changed.

The role played by Constantine in the creation of a paganized form of "Christianity" was paramount. Not only was the council at Nicea presided over by a pagan emperor, but all the great councils, the two at Constantinople (in 381 and 553), Ephesus (431), and Chalcedon (451), were called together by the imperial power.

"And it is very manifest," writes H. G. Wells, "that in much of the history of Christianity at this time the spirit of Constantine the Great is as evident as, or more evident than, the spirit of Jesus. He was, we have said, a PURE AUTOCRAT. . . . THE IDEA OF STAMPING OUT ALL CONTROVERSY AND DIVISION, STAMPING OUT ALL THOUGHT, BY IMPOSING ONE DOGMATIC CREED UPON ALL BELIEVERS, is an altogether autocratic idea, it is the idea of the single-handed man who feels that to work at all he must be free from opposition and criticism. The history of the Church under his influence now becomes, therefore, a history of the violent struggles that were bound to follow upon his sudden and rough summons to unanimity. From him the Church acquired the disposition to be AUTHORITATIVE AND UNQUESTIONED, to develop a centralized organization and run parallel to the empire" (p.463).

Thus the "IMAGE OF THE BEAST" was born, and came into existence -- a Church patterned after the Imperial model, authoritarian and tyrannical, demanding unquestioning obedience and uniformity to its dogmas and creeds!

With the final fall of the Roman Empire in the West, the bishop of Rome began to make pretensions to the quasi-imperial authority. He took over the ancient title of pontifex maximus which the Roman emperors had held, and became the supreme sacrificial priest of the Roman tradition. His supremacy over the paganized churches of the West was fully recognized, though never fully accepted in the East.

Writes H. G. Wells:

"The Church was to be the ruler of the world over all nations, the divinely-led ruling power over a great league of terrestrial states. In later years these ideas developed into a definite political theory and practice. As the barbarian races settled and became Christian, the Pope began to claim an overlordship of their kings. In a few centuries the Pope had become in theory, and to a certain extent in practice, the high priest, censor, judge, and divine monarch of Christendom; his influence extended in the west far beyond the utmost range of the old empire, to Ireland, Norway and Sweden, and over all Germany. . . . The history of Europe from the fifth century onward to the fifteenth is very largely the history of the failure of this great idea of a divine world government to rule itself in practice" (p.465).

As the transfer of spiritual authority gradually went to Rome, the practices of the New Testament Church became obsolete, except for a small remnant of true believers scattered throughout and beyond the pale of the Roman Empire. By about 400 A.D. the Catholic theologian Augustine declared:

"The holy doctors of the church have decreed that all the glory of the Jewish Sabbath is transferred to it [Sunday]" ("Sabbath Laws," p.284).

The truth is that by the time of Constantine the Roman world had become distinctly anti-Jewish in sentiment and feeling. The Nicene conciliar letter of Constantine reveals a marked anti-Semitism. In writing about the repudiation of the Nisan 14th Passover, as celebrated by the Jews and early Christians, Constantine declared:

"Let us then have nothing in common with the detestable Jewish crowd . . . Strive and pray continually that the purity of your souls may not seem in anything to be sullied by fellowship with the customs of these most wicked men . . . All should UNITE in desiring that which sound reason appears to demand, and in avoiding all participation in the perjured conduct of the Jews" (Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, 3, 18-19, NPNF, I, p.524-525).

Had the world so soon forgotten that Jesus Himself was a Jew, and that all the original apostles were Jews, and that even Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, was himself also a Jew?

This marked anti-Semitism so evident by the time of the Nicean council in 325 A.D., and which prevailed in Rome, helps explain how the true Biblical Sabbath was so easily dispensed with in the Roman Catholic Church, and replaced by the popular pagan custom of Sunday observance, a day which has no sanction whatsoever in the pages of Scripture.

Catholic and Protestant Admissions

Strangely, even Catholic and Protestant theologians admit that Sunday observance has no justification in the Scriptures. Wrote Cardinal Gibbon in *Faith of Our Fathers*:

"But you may read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and you will not find a single line authorizing the sanctification of Sunday. The Scriptures enforce the religious observance of Saturday, a day which we never sanctify" (page 111).

Isaac Williams, an Anglican theologian, wrote:

"And where are we told in the Scriptures that we are to keep the first day at all? We are commanded to keep the seventh; but we are nowhere commanded to keep the first day. . . . The reasons why we keep the first day of the week holy instead of the seventh is for the same reason that we observe many other things, not because the Bible, but because the church, has enjoined it" (*Plain Sermons on the Catechism*, vol. 1, p.334, 336).

Morer, a learned clergyman of the Church of England says:

"The primitive Christians had a great veneration for the Sabbath, and spend the Day in Devotion and Sermons. And 'tis not to be doubted but they derived this Practice from the Apostles themselves" (*A Discourse in Six Dialogues on the Name, Notion, and Observation of the Lord's Day*, p.289).

The Baptist theologian Edward T. Hiscox observed:

"There was and is a commandment to keep holy the Sabbath day, but the Sabbath day was not Sunday. It will, however, be readily said . . . that the Sabbath was transferred from the Seventh to the First day of the week. . . . Where can the record of such a transaction be found? Not in the New Testament -- *absolutely not*" (paper read at Aug.20, 1893 meeting of Baptist ministers in Saratoga, New York).

Furthermore, Baptist J. J. Taylor in *The Sabbath Question* admitted:

"The Lord's Day is not sanctified by any specific command or by any inevitable inference. In all the New Testament there is NO HINT OR SUGGESTION of a legal obligation binding any man, whether saint or sinner, to observe the Day" (p.72).

British Congregationalist Dr. R. W. Dale confessed:

"The Sabbath was founded on a specific, Divine command. We can plead no such command for the obligation to observe Sunday. . . . *There is not a SINGLE SENTENCE* in the New Testament to suggest that we incur any penalty by violating the supposed sanctity of Sunday" (*The Ten Commandments*, p. 127-129).

Alexander Campbell, founder of the Disciples of Christ went even further. He asserted:

"'But,' say some, 'it was changed from the seventh to the first day.' Where? when? and by whom? No man can tell. No; it *NEVER WAS CHANGED*, nor could it be, unless creation was to be gone through again: for the reason

assigned must be changed before the observance, or respect to the reason, can be changed!! It is all OLD WIVES' FABLES to talk of the change of the sabbath from the seventh to the first day. If it be changed, it was that august personage changed it who changes times and laws ex officio -- . . . his name is DOCTOR ANTICHRIST" (*The Christian Baptist*, Feb.2, 1824, vol.1, no.7).

Dr. Augustus Neander in *The History of the Christian Religion and Church* declared very plainly and factually that:

"The festival of Sunday, like all other festivals, was always only a HUMAN ORDINANCE, and it was far from the intentions of the apostles to establish a divine command in this respect; far from them, and from the early apostolic church, to transfer the laws of the Sabbath to Sunday" (p.186).

The Whole World Deceived

Truly, as the apostle John wrote in the book of Revelation, Satan the devil has deceived the WHOLE WORLD! He has convinced millions of sincere, professing Christians, whose faith and sincerity are not even in question, that Sunday is the right day for them to observe -- even though its origins are distinctly PAGAN!

"The great dragon . . . that ancient serpent, called the devil, or Satan, who leads the WHOLE WORLD ASTRAY" (Rev.12:9). Or as the Amplified Parallel Bible has it: "And the huge dragon was cast down and out -- that age-old serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, he who is the seducer (deceiver) of all humanity the world over; he was forced out and down to the earth, and his angels were flung out along with him."

Have you also been deceived?

The apostle Jude, the brother of Jesus, wrote some two thousand years ago, "Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and URGE YOU TO CONTEND FOR THE FAITH that was once for all entrusted to the saints. For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have SECRETLY SLIPPED IN AMONG YOU. They are godless men, who CHANGE the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord" (Jude 1-4).

The destructive Sunday heresy was only one of many pernicious errors that was foisted off on an unsuspecting, unwary, sleeping church centuries ago. Along with it came such pagan festivals as Easter, celebrated by the pagans in honor of the "Queen of heaven," and "Christmas," nothing less than the winter solstice celebrated in honor of the waning sun-god. Because of these pagan customs being slipped secretly into many church congregations, Jude had to WARN the brethren to be on their collective guard, and to FIGHT for the faith once delivered -- the original TRUTH of God!

The apostle Peter also warned of this insidious danger. He warned, "But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will

SECRETLY INTRODUCE DESTRUCTIVE HERESIES, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them -- bringing swift destruction upon themselves. Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the WAY OF TRUTH into disrepute. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping" (II Pet.2:1-3).

The apostle Paul himself alluded to the great apostasy which was to befall the Church of God. He wrote, "For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to MYTHS" (II Tim.4:3-4).

What about you? Have you assumed all along that Sunday worship was "Christian"? Have you been suckered in by Satan's myths? Have you fallen for the destructive heresy of Sunday worship?

Sunday worship is PAGAN! And Almighty God thunders, "DO NOT LEARN the way of the nations . . . For the customs of the people are WORTHLESS" (Jer.10:1-3).

God thunders to His true people: "Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but KEEP THE COMMANDS of the Lord your God. . ." (Deut.4:1-2). He declares in unequivocal terms: "But you must keep my decrees and my laws. The native-born and the aliens living among you must not do any of these detestable things, for all these things were done by the people who lived in the land before you, and the land became defiled. And if you defile the land, it will VOMIT YOU OUT as it vomited out the nations that were before you" (Lev.18:26-28).

Those who keep Sunday, Christmas, Easter, or any of the pagan holidays of the world around us, calling them "Christian," are NOT FOLLOWING CHRIST! They are whether they know it or not following the way of ANTICHRIST!

This great apostasy into paganism cloaked as Christianity began even in the days of the apostle Paul, who wrote to the Galatians, "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a DIFFERENT GOSPEL -- which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to PERVERT the gospel of Christ" (Gal.1:6-7).

Daniel the prophet was inspired to predict the rise of one who would pervert and change the laws of God, by his "own" authority -- a great false religious leader. The prophet was told of this great apostate leader, "He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to CHANGE the SET TIMES AND THE LAWS" (Daniel 7:25).

By the late first century, the apostasy was already well developed. The apostle John wrote, "Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because MANY FALSE PROPHETS have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ HAS COME in the

flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the SPIRIT OF THE ANTICHRIST, which you have heard is coming and EVEN NOW IS ALREADY IN THE WORLD" (I John 4:1-3).

The apostle Paul acknowledged that Christ, through the Holy Spirit, had come into his flesh. He wrote, "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but CHRIST LIVES IN ME. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal.2:20).

Jesus Christ is the SAME, yesterday, today, and forever (Heb.13:8). He does not change. If Jesus Christ is truly living His life IN YOU, then He will be walking in the SAME COMMANDMENTS He observed 2,000 years ago -- the same LAW He taught then -- He will be observing the SAME SABBATH DAYS! Is Jesus truly living His life fully in YOU?

Those who deny that Jesus comes into true Christians, through the Holy Spirit, and will be observing the HOLY COMMANDMENTS OF GOD, including the Sabbath command, whether they know it or not, have the spirit and doctrine of the Antichrist who seeks to do away with the Laws of God, who seeks to "change the set times and laws" of God!

Are you FOR CHRIST? Or are you ANTI-CHRIST?

Ask yourself this very simple question: Do you obey the same laws He observed, setting us an example? If you are for Christ you follow Christ, and live as He lived; if you are anti-Christ, or against Christ, then you observe PAGAN days instead of the commands of Christ -- you follow the false Jesus, who is Satan the devil in disguise!

The apostle Paul warned, 'But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes to you and PREACHES A JESUS OTHER THAN THE JESUS WE PREACHED, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough" (II Cor.11:3-4). The whole professing Christian world worships a "false Christ" -- a Christ who, they claim, did away with His Father's laws! A Jesus who, they say, abolished the Sabbath!

The time has come when the TRUTH OF GOD must be restored in the earth.

Chapter 3

What Day Is the Christian SABBATH?

What day should be observed as the proper day of true Christian worship? Does it make any difference? What day did Jesus and the apostles observe? Is observance of the Sabbath required for salvation?

According to the “new” Worldwide Church of God, a Church which historically has insisted that Sabbath observance is mandatory for salvation, Sabbath keeping now is viewed by the Church administration as no longer "obligatory" for church members. In fact, the church has now rejected Sabbath observance as the law of God and has gone over to Sunday worship in the vast majority of its congregations.

Said Church spokesman Michael Snyder in a radio interview with mainstream Christian broadcasters, several years ago, the Worldwide Church of God would now agree with standard Reformation Protestant doctrine that "salvation [is] by grace through faith alone."

The questioner then asked: "OK, then, what place does Sabbath-keeping play in the theology of the WWCG?" Snyder replied: "We believe that there is an element of obedience that the Holy Spirit instills within us and an expression of that obedience is . . . observing the Sabbath."

But then the interviewer asked pointedly, directly: "Is Sabbath-keeping a PRE-REQUISITE to salvation?" Snyder declared, in answer: "*Well, no, because salvation is by grace.*" Snyder went on to declare that the Church no longer believes that "Sunday observance" is the "mark of the beast," as Herbert Armstrong powerfully and boldly taught for over fifty years of his ministry.

Since that interview, the Worldwide Church of God has embraced mainstream Christian beliefs and customs, and has rejected Sabbath worship in most of its congregations. In their minds, the “grace” of God does away with obedience to the Word of God, especially the weekly Sabbath day observance and the annual Holy Day observances.

Is Sabbath Observance Christian?

What should be a true Christian's position relative to the seventh-day Sabbath? Is its observance necessary for salvation?

Of course, men have many different opinions about this, and different churches would no doubt give you different answers. In order to know the TRUTH, we must investigate the SOLE AUTHORITY for any true Christian -- the WORD OF GOD itself.

The word of ANY man, whether he be pope or priest, prelate or preacher, is worthless, unless it agrees with the Word of the Living God, in His written instruction book for mankind -- the Bible.

The Bible clearly reveals that the Sabbath was originally created AT CREATION. God Himself rested on the seventh day (Gen.2:1-2). When asked about the Sabbath by the Jewish religious leaders of His time, Jesus Christ replied, "The Sabbath was MADE FOR MAN, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27-28).

Notice that Jesus did not say, as the religious leaders of that time seemed to believe, that the Sabbath was a harsh day of bondage. Rather, in His view, it was to be a BLESSING for man. Not just for the Jews, but for ALL MANKIND! The prophet Isaiah tells us what kind of attitude we should have toward the Sabbath. He was inspired to write, "If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a DELIGHT, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it" (Isa.58:13-14).

In the last chapter of his prophetic book, Isaiah wrote that the Sabbath will be observed by all the nations on earth during the millennial reign of Jesus Christ. Describing that wonderful time, Isaiah declared: "For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from ONE SABBATH TO ANOTHER, shall ALL FLESH COME TO WORSHIP before me, saith the LORD" (Isaiah 66:22-23).

Does this type of language sound like the Sabbath was just an old "Jewish" thing, and of no account to Christians? Nonsense! The Sabbath is not "Jewish" -- it is of DIVINE ORIGIN! It does not properly belong to the Jews -- it belongs to GOD! And those who faithfully observe it show by doing so that they belong to GOD. It is a "sign" between Him and His true worshippers, around the world, in all the earth.

God reminded the Israelites of the Sabbath, when He brought them out of Egypt. During their several hundred years in Egypt, which ended in utter slavery, they had lost much of the

knowledge of the true God, and were forbidden to observe the Sabbath. They had to work, work, work, to build store-houses for Pharaoh, and pyramids (Exodus 1:11-14), as Josephus records. So God had to show them which day was the seventh day of the week, with the miracle of the manna (Exodus 16:2-30).

He then declared that observance of the holy Sabbath was ONE of the very Ten Commandments -- the fourth commandment (Exodus 20:1-17, especially verses 8-11).

This commandment, in God's sight, therefore, was very important. It was right up there, equally important, as having no other gods before the true God, no idols, not taking His divine name in vain or cursing, honoring one's parents, as well as the commandments against murder, adultery, stealing, false witness, and coveting. On these Ten Commandments, all the rest of God's laws (613 in all, as the Jews have tabulated them), hang suspended. These Ten Commandments are crucial. They are VERY important in the sight of GOD!

It was for Sabbath breaking and idolatry that God exiled the Ten Tribes of the northern Kingdom of Israel into slavery to the Assyrian monarchs (II Kings 17:3-23; Ezek.20:13-16). Sabbath observance has always been a cornerstone of the Law of God.

Jesus Christ and the Sabbath Day

What was the attitude of Jesus Christ toward the Sabbath day? Did He teach against it? Did He say He came to abolish it and do away with it? Did He confess that it was just a vestigial and useless element which was now superseded in Himself, and that He would nail it to the cross?

Although many Sunday preachers may confess such an idea, it is ludicrous and blasphemous in the extreme. Jesus, rather, told His disciples, "THINK NOT that I am come to destroy the Law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill" (Matt.5:17). Many preachers seem to think He said, "I am not come to destroy, but to DESTROY and do away with completely"! What nonsense! To "fulfill," as the Greek here says, means to FILL UP TO THE BRIM, as in a flood, to overflow. He went on to state that heaven and earth would pass away before His Law -- the Law of God -- the Ten Commandments -- would pass away! (Matt.5:18-19).

When a young rich man asked Him the key to obtaining eternal life, Jesus told him point-blank, to his face, "IF thou wilt enter into life, KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS" (Matt.19:17). When the young man asked, "Which?" Jesus responded, "Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (verses 18-19). He summarized the last six of the TEN COMMANDMENTS! The young man obviously knew already that the first four commandments, which tell us how to worship God and please HIM, were to be observed -- for they are the commandments forbidding idolatry, cursing, breaking God's Sabbath.

Jesus Himself set us an example, also, observing the Sabbath. We read in the book of

Luke, "And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, *as his custom was*, he went into the synagogue ON THE SABBATH DAY, and stood up for to read" (Luke 4:16). It was Jesus' own custom to go to the synagogue, and worship the Father, on the Sabbath day!

What about the Apostles?

Jesus' own disciples followed His example. The apostle John wrote, "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, **EVEN AS HE WALKED**" (I John 2:6). If we walk as Jesus Himself walked, then we, too, should observe the weekly Sabbath day! The apostle Peter, in fact, said that Jesus in His life left us "**AN EXAMPLE**, that ye should **FOLLOW HIS STEPS**" (I Pet.2:21).

The apostle Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, plainly said, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever" (Heb.13:8). Jesus doesn't change. He observed the law of God perfectly when He was on earth. If He dwells **IN** us through the Holy Spirit, then He will continue observing the Law of God **IN US**, today! As Paul wrote, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but **CHRIST LIVETH IN ME**: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal.2:20).

It is summarily strange that those who denigrate Sabbath observance accuse Sabbath keepers of "works," and of trying to "earn salvation by works." But what works? The Sabbath command is a command to **REST** and do **NO WORK** on that particular day! That is the opposite of "works"! It is those who do away with the Sabbath rest command who **WORK** on that day, and do **LABOR**, and **TOIL**.

Paul the apostle, who taught the Gentiles the truth of Christ, kept the Sabbath, just as Jesus and the other apostles did. He said, in a letter to the Corinthians, "Be ye followers of me, **EVEN** as I also am of Christ" (I Cor.11:1). Paul observed the Sabbath. "But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue **ON THE SABBATH DAY**, and sat down" (Acts 13:14). "And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the **NEXT SABBATH**" (verse 42). "And the **NEXT SABBATH** *almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God*" (verse 44).

In the city of Philippi there was no synagogue, so we read Luke's account, "And **ON THE SABBATH** we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither" (Acts 16:13). In Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue, we read, "And Paul, **AS HIS MANNER WAS**, went in unto them, and *three sabbath days*, reasoned with them out of the scriptures, opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ [Messiah]" (Acts 17:2-3).

Clearly, the early, New Testament Church of God during the first century observed the Sabbath day. History itself testifies to this fact.

Early Church Sabbath History

Hugh Smith in *History of the Christian Church*, wrote:

"The first Christian Church established at Jerusalem by apostolic authority became in its doctrine and practice a model for the greater part of those founded in the first century. . . . These Judaizing Christians were first known by the outside world as 'Nazarenes.' . . . ALL CHRISTIANS AGREED IN CELEBRATING THE SEVENTH DAY OF THE WEEK in conformity to the Jewish converts" (p.50, 51, 69).

According to Giesler, in *Church History, Apostolic Age to A.D. 70*,

"While the Jewish Christians of Palestine, who kept the whole Jewish law, celebrated of course ALL THE JEWISH FESTIVALS . . ." (Sect. 29).

For hundreds of years, the true Church faithfully observed the seventh-day Sabbath. It was not until Emperor Constantine, who ruled the Roman Empire from 306 to 337 A.D., that a concerted effort was made to enforce Sunday observance in the Roman Empire among Christians, and that all Sabbath observance was condemned, by an apostate church council held at the behest of the Emperor, who sought to "unify" the church as to doctrine, and who hated the Jews and all Jewish customs and observances.

The "First Sunday Law"

The first Sunday-law prohibiting work on Sunday was enacted by the pagan emperor Constantine of the Roman Empire in 321 A.D. Breaking the Sunday worship law was punishable by imprisonment, banishment, or even death! On the 7th of March, Crispus and Constantine issued a most unusual edict, which stated:

"On the venerable day of the sun let the magistrates and people residing in cities rest, and let all workshops be closed. In the country, however, persons engaged in agriculture may freely and lawfully continue their pursuits; because it often happens that another day is not suitable for grain sowing or for vine planting; lest by neglecting the proper moment for such operations the bounty of heaven should be lost" (*Codex Justinianus*, lib.3, tit.12, 3, transl. in *History of the Christian Church*, Schaff, vol.3, p.380).

The Encyclopedia Britannica, 11th edition, calls this "the earliest recognition of the observance of Sunday as a legal duty." Says Webster in *Rest Days*,

"This legislation by Constantine probably bore no relation to Christianity; it appears, on the contrary, that the emperor, in his capacity of Pontifex Maximus (a title the popes took from the emperors), was only adding the day of the Sun, the WORSHIP OF WHICH WAS THEN FIRMLY ESTABLISHED IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE, to the other ferial days of the sacred calendar" (pp.122-123).

The force of the Roman Empire was used to confiscate the property of all who obeyed God's Passover command after the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. Later, at the Council of Laodicea, in 365 A.D., the "Sabbath Question" was settled in the minds of the Catholic Church, once and for all. The twenty ninth canon of this Council reads:

"CHRISTIANS MUST NOT JUDAIZE BY RESTING ON THE SABBATH, BUT MUST WORK ON THAT DAY, *rather, honouring the Lord's Day* [by which they meant Sunday!]; and, if they can, resting then as Christians. But if any be found to be Judaizers [that is, IF ANY OBEY GOD'S SABBATH!], let them be anathema from Christ!" (*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol.19, p.148).

True Christians Remain Faithful to Sabbath

In spite of these official pronouncements, however, the faithful, true people of God persevered in observing God's own Holy Day, and refused to paganize their religious faith. Sozomen who wrote about A.D. 460, declared:

"Likewise some meet both upon the Sabbath and upon the day after the Sabbath, as in Constantinople, and among almost all others. At Rome and Alexandria they do not. Among the Egyptians, likewise, in many cities and villages, there is also a sacred custom of meeting on that EVENING OF THE SABBATH . . ." (*Ecclesiastical History of Sozomen*, book 7, chapter 19, *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*).

Says Coleman in *Ancient Christianity Exemplified*:

"The last day of the week [SABBATH] for a long time after the overthrow of the temple and its worship, down EVEN TO THE FIFTH CENTURY, OBSERVANCE OF THE JEWISH SABBATH WAS OBSERVED, but with a rigor and solemnity gradually diminishing" (chap.26, sect.2).

Even the anti-Sabbath Church writer Sir William Domville, admitted:

"Centuries of the Christian era passed away BEFORE THE SUNDAY WAS OBSERVED by the Christian church as the Sabbath. History does not furnish us a SINGLE PROOF OR INDICATION THAT IT WAS AT ANY TIME SO OBSERVED PREVIOUS TO THE SABBATH EDICT OF CONSTANTINE IN A.D. 321" (quoted in "A Brief History of Sabbathkeeping Christians," by John Kiesz, *Sabbath Sentinel*, November 1992, p.5).

Interestingly, when the Catholic Saint Augustine visited the British Isles in about A.D. 596, he found the Christian religion already thoroughly established! The northern part of Britain was seemingly filled with Christians, and Christian institutions. These were the Culdees, whose central headquarters was on the island of Iona, off the western coast of Scotland. Their leader was the famous Columba (born circa 543 A.D.), an observer of the SABBATH DAY!

Dr. Alvan Butler, a Catholic, writes of his dying words as follows:

"Having continued his labors in Scotland thirty-four years, he clearly and openly foretold his death, and on Saturday the ninth of June he said to his disciple Diermit: 'This day is called the SABBATH, that is, the day of rest, and such it will truly be for me; for it will be an end to my labors'" (*Lives of the Fathers, Martyrs, and Principle Saints*, Art. St. Columba, A.D. 597).

Says John Kiesz in "A Brief History of Sabbathkeeping Christians,"

"Scotland was a Sabbathkeeping nation until the latter part of the eleventh century. St. Margaret, queen of Scotland, was born in Hungary in 1040. After the Norman Conquest, she was brought (1068) to Scotland. Her religion was of the newest Roman style and to her are attributed a number of reforms by which the Church of Scotland was considerably modified, among which were a change in the manner of observing Lent, and the ABOLITION OF THE PRACTICE OF OBSERVING SATURDAY (SABBATH), NOT SUNDAY, AS THE DAY OF REST FROM LABOR" (*Sabbath Sentinel, op cit.*, p.6; see also *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 9th edition, vol. XV, p.537).

Did the WALDENSIANS Observe the Sabbath?

One of the questions which has stumped many researchers is whether or not the Christians of the Middle Ages in France, led by Peter Waldo, observed the weekly Sabbath or not. Their descendants, today, observe Sunday. But what about the original Waldensians, who broke away from the Papacy, and Catholic ritual, and began preaching throughout southern France?

The Waldensians were bitterly persecuted by the Papacy and Catholic power. They were hounded, harassed, imprisoned, even tortured and martyred, for the truth of God. Peter Waldo, who translated the Scriptures into the common tongue, was considered an enemy of the "Church." He and his followers preached the simplicity of Christ, and abhorred Roman popery, indulgences, and considered the Roman Catholic Church to be the "whore" of Revelation 17.

Says Jones' *Church History*:

"Investigators made a report to Louis XII, king of France, that they had visited all the parishes where they (the Waldenses) dwelt, and had inspected their places of worship, but that they found no images, nor signs of the ornaments belonging to the mass, nor any of the ceremonies of the Roman Church: much less could they discover any traces of those crimes with which they were charged. On the contrary, they KEPT THE SABBATH DAY, observed the ordinances of baptism

according to the primitive church, instructed their children in the articles of the Christian faith and the commandments of God" (p.260).

When Martin Luther posted his 95 theses on the wall of the church at Wittenburg, in 1513, A.D., the stage was set for the "Protestant Reformation." Luther himself became very anti-Semitic and anti-Jewish, and when his friend, Melancthon, urged him to include the Bible Sabbath in his reformed teachings, he refused to do so. Carlstad, a university professor, urged him to do the same thing, but Luther would have none of it.

Says Dr. Sears in *Life of Luther*,

"Carlstad differed essentially from Luther in regard to the use made of the Old Testament. With him the law of Moses was still binding. Luther on the contrary, had a strong aversion to what he calls a legal and Judaizing religion. Carlstad held to the divine authority of the Sabbath from the Old Testament. Luther believed Christians were free to observe any day as a Sabbath, provided they be uniform in observing it" (p.402).

John Kiesz also points out in his article that Chief Rabbi Kohn of Budapest, Hungary, in a work entitled *Sabbatarians in Transylvania*, informs us that:

"Several leaders and preachers of the Puritans have transferred the rest day from Sunday to Saturday (1554)" (p.38).

He also asserted that in Bohemia Sabbatarians had sprung up as early as 1520, and similar groups had formed around 1545 in England among the Quakers. By the seventeenth century, there were eleven churches of Sabbath-keepers throughout England, with many scattered Sabbath-keepers existing in various parts of the British Kingdom.

Sabbath Keepers Among the Puritans in America

John Kiesz writes that among the Puritans or Pilgrims who landed at Plymouth Rock in 1620 A.D. were Sabbatarians, seeking freedom to worship God away from the persecution and tribulation they had encountered back in England. He mentions Hugh Sprague, editor of the *St. Joseph Gazette* in Missouri, who wrote an editorial on this subject in December 1934. He declared:

"Strange as it may seem in the early history of America, there was an attempt at suppression of the Christmas spirit. The stern Puritans at Plymouth, imbued with rigorous fervor of the Old Testament, abhorred the celebration of the orthodox holidays. THEIR WORSHIP WAS ON THE SABBATH (SATURDAY) RATHER THAN SUNDAY, and Christmas in particular they considered a PAGAN CELEBRATION. Later immigrants attempted to observe Christmas as a time of joy, but were suppressed. Governor Bradford, Elder Brewster, Miles Standish and other leaders were firm against the Yuletide spirit as we know it today."

Hugh Sprague was directly descended from the Pilgrims who came over on the Mayflower. He was thoroughly acquainted with their religious beliefs and practices. All his

grandparents and great-grandparents knew that the Pilgrims of the Mayflower days were strict Sabbath keepers, and observed the seventh day of the week instead of Sunday.

Historical records show that the first organization of Sabbath observers, other than the Pilgrims, was a church in Newport, Rhode Island, in 1671 A.D.

The Sabbath and Salvation

Today, there are scores of Sabbath observing churches, groups, and sects in the United States, and together they comprise millions of members, when you include the Seventh Day Adventist Church. But among these churches, there are wide divergences of opinion on doctrine, other than their agreement that the seventh-day Sabbath should be observed.

But is Sabbath keeping necessary for salvation? Let's put it this way. James wrote, "Therefore to him that *knoweth* to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is SIN" (Jas.4:17). To those who don't know any better, God does not judge them for what they do in ignorance of the truth. But when the knowledge of the truth comes, then obedience to the truth is required for salvation!

The Word of God has more to say on this subject.

The apostle James also wrote, "But be ye DOERS of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any man be a hearer of the word, and NOT A DOER, he is like unto a man beholding his face in a glass [mirror]: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway [immediately] forgetteth what manner of man he was. *But whoso looketh into the PERFECT LAW* of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a DOER of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed" (James 1:22-25).

James added, in chapter two, this vital point: "If ye fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself, ye do well: But if ye have respect of persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced [convicted] of the LAW as TRANSGRESSORS. *For whosoever shall keep the WHOLE LAW, and yet offend in ONE POINT, he is guilty of all.* For he that said, Thou shalt not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a TRANSGRESSOR OF THE LAW" (James 2:8-11).

What law is James talking about? Obviously, the Ten Commandments! He specifically mentioned two cardinal points of the Ten Commandments! Yet he said, if a man observes the "whole law" -- that is, NINE of the TEN commandments -- and yet offends by breaking only ONE of the Ten Commandments -- then "*HE IS GUILTY OF ALL!*" In other words, all Ten of the Ten Commandments STAND OR FALL TOGETHER. They cannot be severed, broken up, divided, or sundered. They are a WHOLE UNIT. *If you break just one point, therefore, you are guilty of breaking the ENTIRE LAW!*

To break one link in the chain is to break the entire chain! Remember the Fourth Commandment?

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: But the seventh is the Sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it" (Exodus 20:8-11).

The Sabbath day, according to the Word of God, is "HALLOWED." The word "hallowed" is the Hebrew word *qadash* which means, "make, announce or observe as clean (morally or ceremonially); consecrated, dedicated, purified; HOLY, SANCTIFIED."

The weekly Sabbath, therefore, is HOLY TIME to God. If we do not observe it as God commands in His Word, then we are TRANSGRESSORS OF THE ENTIRE LAW OF GOD! In God's sight, we become guilty before Him just as much as if we had committed murder, and adultery, and stealing, bearing false witness, coveting, ALL TOGETHER!

Does It Make Any Difference?

Some churches say it doesn't matter whether we observe the Sabbath or not. But Jesus Christ says, "IF you will enter into life, KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS" (Matt.19:17), and He Himself observed the Sabbath, setting us an example. Does it really make any difference?

In his booklet entitled "Which day is the Christian Sabbath?", copywrited in 1962, 1964, 1968, 1970, 1972, 1976, Herbert W. Armstrong wrote:

"Let me say candidly right here, that *if there is no God* -- if I were to leave GOD out of the picture -- then I could not see how it could possibly make any difference!

"There is no way I can imagine how a man could reason out in his own mind, apart from any Supreme AUTHORITY, *WHY* it could make any difference *which* day -- or *whether* we observe it.

"But the Almighty Creator GOD does exist! His existence is easily proved. God is emphatically *IN THE PICTURE*, whether a man recognizes that fact or not! That Great God has set in living, inexorable motion invisible LAWS respecting this very question. That God and those laws EXIST -- they LIVE -- they are ACTIVE! And their existence, their action, do not depend on one man -- or all mankind -- realizing their existence.

"The Almighty GOD holds the keys of life and death! By Him *your fate* is being determined! For all ETERNITY! And that is the reason why it does make all the difference -- for your well being now, and for your eternity!" (pages 10-11).

The Sabbath is very clearly part of God's spiritual, holy LAW -- from the very time of Creation. It is HOLY to God. It is the "SIGN" that identifies God's people. As God told ancient Israel:

"Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD: whosoever doeth any work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be PUT TO DEATH. Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a PERPETUAL COVENANT. *It is a SIGN between me and the children of Israel FOR EVER:* for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed" (Exodus 31:15-17).

The observance of the weekly Sabbath is a key -- a "sign" -- that identifies the people of God to God as belonging to Him. It is the sign HE established and set. If you don't have that "sign," then you DON'T belong to God -- you are NOT His!

Israel of olden times was "physical Israel." But we in the Church of God are "SPIRITUAL ISRAEL"! As the apostle Paul wrote, "And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the ISRAEL OF GOD" (Galatians 6:16). Therefore, the Sabbath "sign" is also binding upon TRUE CHRISTIANS -- THE "ISRAEL OF GOD"!

Does it really matter? Breaking the laws of God constitutes "sin," according to God's Word (I John 3:4). "Sin IS the transgression of the law," the apostle John informs us (same verse). And James writes, "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is SIN" (James 4:17). On both counts, then, failure to observe the seventh-day Sabbath is SIN in the sight of God!

Herbert Armstrong wrote in the same booklet:

"The first thing you need to get settled in your mind is this: THE LIVING GOD OF ALL POWER DOES NOT ALLOW US TO DECIDE *WHAT* IS SIN. HE DETERMINES *WHAT* IS SIN, AND COMPELS YOU TO DECIDE *WHETHER* TO SIN! And the PENALTY of sin is DEATH FOR *ETERNITY!* That penalty is *real!* It is a terrifying, *frightful* fate!"

The apostle Paul declares that the Law of God is "holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (Romans 7:12). It is "spiritual" (Rom.7:14). The Sabbath day is an integral part of that Divine Law! If we obey it, and keep it, and observe it properly, then God promises to bless us mightily (Isaiah 58:13-14). But if we transgress it, and break it, then we are guilty before Him of SIN -- and "the wages of SIN is DEATH" (Romans 6:23).

Does it make any difference?

Don't let any MAN mislead you. Don't be taken in by the specious, serpentine, reasonings of men. God's Law is plain. Of course, God will not judge those who are simply "ignorant" of His Law nearly as severely as those who KNOW the TRUTH, and then TURN FROM IT! As Paul writes, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but NOW COMMANDETH ALL MEN EVERYWHERE TO REPENT: Because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained" (Acts 17:30-31).

The Amplified Parallel Bible states, in Proverbs 14:12,

“There is a way which seems right to a man and appears straight before him, but at the end of it is the way of DEATH.”

Likewise, the Amplified Parallel Bible states, in Proverbs 16:25,

“There is a way that seems right to a man and appears straight before him, but the END of it is the WAY OF DEATH.”

God placed this warning twice in His Word. He doubly confirms this truth.

To most of the world, today, it “seems right” to observe Sunday as the proper day for worship, and the whole Christian world, except for a very small minority, goes along with this standard practice, and they consider those who maintain Sabbath worship on the seventh-day to be “Judaizers,” and “heretics,” and misled.

Yet the Scriptures are very plain.

What are *YOU* going to do about it?

Chapter 4

30 Proofs God's Sabbath *Is Not Abolished!*

Should God's Sabbath be observed today? Many argue it is abolished with the Old Covenant. One former Sabbath keeper has written a book he calls *Sabbath in Crisis*. But what is the REAL crisis? As we near the end of this age, with apostasy in exponential growth, it is time we review the *proof* that God's Sabbath Day is *still in force!*

It is truly amazing how people sometimes "change" at the drop of a hat! It seems incredible to me how people who have been Sabbath observers for decades, ostensibly having "proved" to themselves years ago that God commands Sabbath observance, suddenly jettison God's holy day, and revert to non-observance like the world around them, and have the audacity to claim their new position on the Sabbath is "new truth."

One man, who used to keep the Sabbath, changed jobs and now drives a truck on God's Sabbath every week. He no longer attends any church. Others go golfing, work, play, or do as they please, saying they have been "liberated" and "set free" from bondage to Sabbath observance!

Truly, God was right when He said to Jeremiah the prophet, "The priests said not, Where is the LORD? and *they that handle the law knew me not: the pastors also transgress against me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit.*

"Wherefore I will yet plead with you, saith the LORD, and with your children's children will I plead. For pass over the isles . . . and see . . . and consider diligently, and see if there be such a thing.

"Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have *changed*

their glory for that which doth not profit. Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and *be horribly afraid*, be ye very desolate, saith the LORD. For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jer.2:8-13).

The most amazing transformation of any church throughout history, as even Protestant churches and cult-watchers admit, has been the total "about face" of the Worldwide Church of God, which in recent years has not only changed their teachings regarding the nature of God, Bible prophecy, the Trinity, healing, and a host of smaller doctrines, but has also totally rejected the teaching that Sabbath and Holy Day observance are commandments of God which Christians are mandated to observe and obey. They claim that God's grace means Christians need not keep the Sabbath day.

The vast majority of Worldwide congregations now observe the pagan holidays of Christmas and Easter, and hold church services on Sunday. Thus what God says in His Word no longer matters to them! They are guilty of the very things Jeremiah was told -- "they that handle the law knew me not," God says, and "the pastors also transgressed against me," and "the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that *do not profit*."

Because of this flagrant apostasy, and diabolical deviation from the truth, God has sent His "curse" upon them, and they have had nothing but financial trouble ever since this plunge back into apostasy began. They have had to sell off the Ambassador College campus in Pasadena, and the Ambassador Auditorium has been taken over by a tongues-speaking Pentecostal Church which meets every Sunday. Their church income has plummeted, and soon the church itself may be "history."

Almighty God thunders, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal.6:7). Hosea prophesied, "For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind" (Hos.8:7).

Because many today are forsaking the truth of God, including the Sabbath commandment, it behooves those of us who desire to remain faithful to God, to be vigilant and watchful, and as the apostle Paul wrote, "PROVE ALL THINGS; hold fast that which is good" (I Thess.5:21).

In order not to be deceived, or led off into apostasy, following newly devised doctrines of demons, we all need to carefully re-examine our foundation and the bedrock support of our faith. Why do we keep the Sabbath? Is Sabbath observance really required for salvation? Is it still a sin, today, to break the Sabbath? What does GOD say?

In this chapter, I will give you *30 proofs* why Sabbath observance is still required of true Christians, God's people, today!

Proof # 1 -- Sabbath Began at Creation

We read in Genesis, after God finished creating the heavens and the earth: "And on the

seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. *And God blessed the seventh day, and SANCTIFIED it:* because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made" (Gen.2:2-3).

It seems perfectly plain to me, and should be to anybody with an open mind, willing to be taught, that *God blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart ["sanctified" it] from all other days!* This is a clear statement that the Sabbath is "HOLY" -- or "sanctified." No other days are holy, but God's Sabbath days! And notice! It was made "HOLY" *at CREATION* -- *not some 2,500 years later, during the time of Moses.* It was made "holy" at the creation of MANKIND -- not when God brought one nation -- Israel -- out of captivity to Egypt, 2,500 years later!

Since the Sabbath itself was "created" at the end of creation, when mankind was created, and was "blessed" and "sanctified" by God, and not any other day, this is proof #1 that we should observe it today!

Proof # 2 -- It is a LAW of God

In Exodus 20 we read: *"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy [i.e., "sanctified"]. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work [even as God did, at creation]: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God [it belongs to Him -- it is His day!]: in it thou shalt not do any work . . . For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it"* (Exo.20:8-11).

Here is a plain "thus-saith-the-LORD" to keep the Sabbath day. God commands us to remember it, and to "keep" it -- to keep it holy, sanctified, "set apart" from all other days. It is a day we are commanded to REST! We cannot "keep" anything "holy" unless it is already HOLY! God had already made the Sabbath holy at Creation -- and here He commands His people to *keep it that way!* You cannot "keep holy" a day which was never made "holy" by God. Therefore, you cannot "keep" Sunday holy -- for it simply is not and never was "holy"!

Notice also, that we are commanded to "rest" on that day, and do no work. How intriguing! Most people I know say they "hate" work. They would much rather rest and relax. They "work" all their lives, so they can "rest" and take vacations, and "relax." But when God says to "rest" on a particular day? Suddenly they all have some excuse, and want to GO TO WORK on that day! Go figure. When God says "rest," they respond, "NO! I want to WORK!" How perverse is human nature, anyway?

Proof #3 -- in Force Before Sinai

Many argue that the Sabbath was only commanded at mount Sinai, and was legislation that was part of the Old Covenant. Therefore, they say, it is now abolished, and we don't have to "rest" on that day -- we can "work" instead! So they change God's "blessing" into a "curse," and bring more work upon themselves. Did the Sabbath command begin at Sinai?

Not at all! Remember, Israel had been in bondage and slavery to the Egyptians for scores

of years, working every day of the week in hard toil and forced labor. Because of this, they had forgotten which day of the week was the Sabbath! Therefore, when God brought Israel out of Egypt, God revealed His Sabbath to them at the first opportunity -- exactly one month from the date they left Egypt, and several weeks *before* they even came to mount Sinai!

In Exodus 16, we read that Israel came to "the wilderness of Sin" on the fifteenth day of the second month (v.1). They left Egypt on the 15th day of the first month (Num.33:3). At this time, God said He would rain "bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, *that I may prove them, whether they will walk in MY LAW, or no*" (v.4). They were told to eat what they gathered every day, and not to keep it overnight. But some disobeyed, and in the morning it stank (v.18-20). God sent them twice as much "manna" on the sixth day, enough for two days, and commanded them not to go out to gather any on the seventh day -- the Sabbath. Moses told the people on the sixth day, when they had gathered double, "Tomorrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the LORD" (v.23). That which they gathered on the sixth day and kept overnight till the seventh day did not stink or spoil!

In this manner, by several miracles, God revealed to His people the true Sabbath -- the seventh day of the week! But some people went out on the seventh day, anyway, to gather. "And the LORD said unto Moses, How long *refuse ye to keep MY COMMANDMENTS AND MY LAWS? See, for that the LORD hath given you the SABBATH . . .* let no man go out of his place on the seventh day" (v.28-29).

How plain! The Sabbath was a COMMANDMENT and a LAW of God *before mount Sinai was even reached!* It was later incorporated into the Old Covenant, but it also *existed PRIOR to the Old Covenant!* That which the Old Covenant did not bring it could not take away!

Proof #4 -- The Sabbath is a "SIGN" Identifying God's People

God later told Moses, "Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is A SIGN between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you" (Exo.31:13). Notice! The Sabbath day is a "sign" between God and His people. It identifies *who they are*. As a general principle, therefore, those who do not have this "sign," *are not the people of God!* Although there may be a few exceptions down through history due to ignorance and lack of true understanding, as a rule the Sabbath is an identifying sign, a visible characteristic, of those people who truly belong to God!

God continues: "It is a SIGN between me and the children of Israel FOR EVER: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed" (v.17).

Do you still possess this identifying SIGN?

Proof # 5 -- The Sabbath Is a Law "FOREVER"

Notice another key proof that the Sabbath must be observed by God's true people, even today, in this end-time, twentieth century generation. God plainly says: "Verily my sabbaths ye

shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you *throughout your generations . . .*" (Exo.31:13).

And again, God says: "Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath *throughout their generations, FOR A PERPETUAL COVENANT*. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel *FOR EVER . . .*" (v.16-17).

That which is "perpetual" is eternal -- it is not a temporary covenant, therefore. This is not the "Old Covenant," which is passing away, according to the apostle Paul (Heb.8:13). The Sabbath itself is A PERPETUAL, ETERNAL, EVERLASTING COVENANT which identifies the true people of God!

It is a sign between God and His people "FOREVER!"

What, dear reader, can be plainer than that? Do you see why God is so angry, so furious, and so vengeful, against those ministers and pastors of His people who exchange His Sabbath, and His laws, for those things (doctrines and teachings) which do not profit?

Proof # 6 -- Abraham Kept the Sabbath

The patriarch Abraham was known as "the Friend of God" (Jas.2:23), and is the "father" of the faithful (Rom.4:1, 11-12). We who are of the faith are "blessed with faithful Abraham" (Ga.3:9). In fact, Paul declared, "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye *Abraham's seed [children], and heirs according to the promise*" (Gal.3:29).

Did Abraham obey God's Law? Did he keep the weekly Sabbath holy? The answer is yes -- undoubtedly he did! For he *must have!* How do we know this? Simple! Notice what God says of His faithful servant Abraham: "For I know him, that he will COMMAND his children and his household after him, and they shall *keep the way of the LORD*, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him" (Gen.18:19).

Did Abraham, in keeping the "way of the LORD," also observe the commandments and statutes of God, of which the Sabbath was one? Absolutely! Notice once again: God says to Isaac, the son of Abraham: "And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed: Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, MY COMMANDMENTS, MY STATUTES, AND MY LAWS" (Gen.26:4-5). Most people assume, without proof, that God had no "statutes" or "laws" in force in Abraham's time -- that the "Law" did not come till Moses' time, at mount Sinai. However, Abraham, the father of the faithful, kept all God's laws, commandments, and statutes, including the Sabbath day which was ordained and created *from the very time of Creation itself!*

Proof # 7 -- the Sabbath Belongs to GOD

Over and over God calls the Sabbath *His* day. It belongs to *Him*. No other day of the week belongs to Him. He gives them to us, to work, play, or do as we please (within reason). So

how it is, then, that people insist on rejecting His day, and worshipping Him as He commands?

"And God blessed the seventh day" (Gen.2:3), "and sanctified" it -- set it apart as holy, belonging to Him. What makes a day "holy"? God is Holy. The Sabbath is "holy" because of *God's Presence in that day!*

The Sabbath day is "a sabbath *unto the LORD*" (Exo.16:25). It belongs to *Him!* "But the seventh day is the sabbath *of the LORD thy God*" (Exo.20:10). God says of it, "Verily MY sabbaths ye shall keep" (Exo.31:13). It is the only weekday which is described in the Bible as "holy to the LORD" (Exo.31:15).

For this reason, therefore, since the Sabbath is the day which BELONGS TO GOD, which He claims ownership and rulership over, and it is HOLY to *Him*, how dare people say it is done away, abolished, no longer significant, and unimportant, and need not be observed? How dare they insult God, and trample on His *holy* time -- His *holy* day!

Proof #8 -- the Death Penalty

Lest we overlook it, I should also point out that the Sabbath is the only Holy Day of God for which the mandatory penalty for non-observance is the *death penalty!*

In Exodus we read: "Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: *every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death*" (Exo.31:14). And the very next verse states: "whosoever doeth any work in the sabbath day, that soul shall surely be PUT TO DEATH" (Exo.31:15).

Did you know that the weekly Sabbath day is the only day for which the death penalty is incurred by those who refuse to observe it? It is in that sense even more important to observe than the annual holy days. Many people consider Yom Kippur, or the Day of Atonement, to be the "holiest" day of the year. It is a day of fasting, prayer, and repentance for sins committed throughout the year -- a day of becoming "at one" with God through prayer, repentance, and purging one's life of fleshly interests. Nevertheless, violation of this holy day did not automatically incur the death penalty, but rather excommunication from Israel! We read in Leviticus 23, regarding the Day of Atonement: "For whatsoever soul it be that shall not be afflicted in that same day, he shall be cut off from among his people" (Lev.23:29).

Excommunication! Disfellowshipment! Banishment! But not the death penalty. Yet God considers the weekly observance of the Sabbath by His people *so important*, that the penalty for willful non-observance is DEATH! While Moses and the Israelites were camped in the wilderness, "they found a man that gathered sticks upon the sabbath day." The leaders put him in ward, to see what judgment God would have him face. "And the LORD said unto Moses, The man shall *surely be put to death*: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp" (Num.15:32-36).

This is serious business. Do you want to take the risk of incurring the wrath of God for refusing to obey His Sabbath commandment? I don't! As Paul wrote, "It is a fearful thing to fall

into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31).

Proof #9 -- Sabbath Breakers are under a CURSE

Those who refuse to keep God's Sabbaths, and who "pollute" them by working on them, and doing their own personal activities, are under the divine curse of God, and subject to His divine judgment. Notice what God Himself says about those who refuse and who adamantly resist obeying His Sabbath commandment:

"But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness: they walked not in my statutes, and they despised my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them; *and my sabbaths they greatly polluted*: then I said, I would pour out my FURY upon them in the wilderness, to consume them. . . . Because they despised my judgments, and walked not in my statutes, *but polluted my sabbaths: for their heart went after their idols*" (Ezek.20:13-16).

God continues: "I am the LORD your God; walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them; and *HALLOW MY SABBATHS*; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may KNOW that *I am the LORD thy God*. Notwithstanding the children of Israel *REBELLED* against me: they walked not in my statutes, neither kept my judgments to do them, which if a man do, he shall even LIVE in them; they *polluted my SABBATHS*: then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them, to accomplish my anger against them . . ." (Ezek.20:19-21).

Because ancient Israel, the northern kingdom of ten tribes, rejected God's commandments, and broke the Sabbath, and turned to worship the idols of the nations around them, and observed their pagan religious customs, "the LORD rejected the seed of Israel, and afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of spoilers, until he had cast them out of his sight" (II Kings 17:20). "For the children of Israel walked in the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they departed not from them; until the LORD removed Israel out of his sight, as he had said by all his servants the prophets. So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day" (v.22-23).

God means what He says! His punishments, and curses, for Sabbath disobedience, are clear and palpable. God forbid that we should take His Word lightly, and neglect His Sabbaths!

Proof # 10 -- God Changes NOT!

Some might object, saying, "Well, that is just Old Testament stuff. We are living in New Testament times. So those old curses don't apply to us anymore!"

Is that reasoning true? Is our God a fickle God, who changes His mind, who creates a holy day, and then says it is a "perpetual covenant," and must be observed "FOREVER" -- but then turns right around, and changes His mind, and abolishes it? Such a belief makes God out to be not only "fickle," and "changeable," but also a LIAR!

Yet, as the apostle Paul wrote: "God . . . cannot lie" (Titus 1:2). It is impossible for God to lie. Therefore, when He says something is ordained "FOREVER," then we had better believe

it -- and obey it!

Malachi makes this truth plain. God says through the prophet Malachi, in the last book of the Old Testament: "For I am the LORD, *I CHANGE NOT*; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed" (Mal.3:6).

God does not change! Therefore, when He establishes a Law, and says it is a perpetual, everlasting law, He means it -- period! Thus saith the LORD! And woe unto those who seek to change that which He says is unchangeable and everlasting!

Proof # 11 – David’s Attitude

Further proof that the Sabbath is still in force today is found in the book of Psalms, composed largely by king David. David was a man “after God’s own heart” (Acts 13:22). If we want to be “after God’s own heart,” we would do well to imitate king David’s attitude..

What was David’s attitude toward God’s Law, including the weekly Sabbath?

King David wrote under divine inspiration: "Thou hast rebuked the proud that are cursed, which do err from thy commandments" (Psalm 119:21). "So shall I keep thy law continually FOR EVER AND EVER" (v.44). "And I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved" (v.47). "Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked *that forsake thy law*" (v.53). "I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments" (v.60). David did not procrastinate, or put off, obeying God -- he "made haste" to keep God's commandments -- including, obviously, the Sabbath commandment!

David asserted, "O how *love I thy law!* it is my meditation all the day. Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies" (Psa.119:97-98). David loved God’s Law – he LOVED God’s Sabbath!

David shows that obedience to God's law is the way to SAFETY! He declared, "Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe: and I will have respect unto thy statutes continually [i.e., "forever"]. Thou hast trodden down all them that *err from thy statutes: for their deceit is falsehood*" (v.117-118).

God's Law is a "place of safety" to those who obey it faithfully. But the wicked will be trodden under foot in the wrath and fury of God, the Creator of the Sabbath day, because they "err" from His Law, and depart from observing His statutes and commandments!

David continues, "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law" (Psa.119:136). He says, "Thy righteousness is an *everlasting righteousness*, and thy law is the *truth*" v.142). Notice! "Everlasting" righteousness! And what is the "definition" of righteousness? "*All thy commandments are righteousness*" (v.172). And God's law, including the Sabbath law, are "truth." What is "truth"? "Thy word is truth," Jesus Christ declared (John 17:17). And Peter writes, "But the word of the Lord endureth for ever" (I Pet.1:25). Therefore, God's Law -- which is His "truth" -- is also His "word" -- and it ENDURES FOREVER!

Notice! David writes, "Salvation is far from the wicked: for they seek not thy statutes" (Psa.119:155). These modern false teachers, and false churches, which haughtily proclaim that the Sabbath is abolished, and who claim they teach the "gospel of salvation," may not even realize it, but they are FAR OFF FROM TRUE SALVATION! They believe in a lie. True salvation comes only through Jesus Christ, who OBEYED God's Law, which is ETERNAL!

David wrote in very plain language: "*ALL his commandments are sure. They stand fast FOR EVER AND EVER, and are done in truth and uprightness*" (Psalm 111:7-8). Tell me, those of you who insist God's Laws are abolished -- particularly the Sabbath day? Haven't you ever read these words? Are you so blind? Truly, "There is none so blind as those who will not see!" Or as another favorite expression of mine has it: "You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink!"

Are you willing to drink of the everlasting waters of God's Law, a well-spring of eternal life? God's Law and salvation go together, hand in glove. They are a perfect fit, for the righteous, who love the ways of God!

If you wish to please God, and do those things pleasing in His sight, then you will follow the example of king David who loved God's Law and meditated in it constantly -- who loved the Sabbath day rest together with ALL God's commandments!

Proof # 12 -- the Sabbath Will Be Kept in the Kingdom!

Now notice another Scripture which those who deny God's Sabbath seem to read right over, and consistently ignore. The prophet Isaiah wrote: "For as the *new heavens and the new earth*, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and *FROM ONE SABBATH TO ANOTHER, shall ALL FLESH come and worship before me*, saith the LORD" (Isa.66:22-23).

Notice! Even in the Kingdom of God, in the time of the new heavens and new earth, God says ALL NATIONS will come up to Jerusalem to worship Him, *from Sabbath day to Sabbath day!*

How plain can you get? The Sabbath will be observed by ALL NATIONS AROUND THE WORLD during the soon-coming Kingdom of God, when Christ will rule the nations! All peoples everywhere will observe God's holy, beautiful, wonderful Sabbath day, and enter into God's Sabbath "rest"!

If the Sabbath is going to be observed in the future Kingdom of God -- then how can some doggedly insist that it is done away, abolished, today?

Proof #13 -- Gentiles Should Keep the Sabbath

Interestingly, if you noticed, the preceding verses not only show that the Sabbath will be observed during the "new heavens and new earth," that is, during the Kingdom of God -- they

also show that not just the children of Israel, but ALL NATIONS -- ALL FLESH -- will observe the Sabbath day!

That means Gentile nations, as well! ALL peoples! This does not leave much room for doubt, does it? God's Sabbath is a SIGN between Him and ALL His people -- *Jews and Gentiles alike!*

Further proof of this is found in Isaiah, chapter 56. Here God addresses the sons of "strangers," that is, alien nations, or Gentiles, who join themselves to the LORD, who worship the true God. Notice!

"Thus saith the LORD, Keep ye judgment, and do justice: for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed.

"Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it; that *keepeth the sabbath from polluting it*, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil.

"Neither let the son of the stranger [foreigners], that hath joined himself to the LORD, speak, saying, The LORD hath utterly separated me from his people: neither let the eunuch say, Behold I am a dry tree. For thus saith the LORD unto the eunuchs that *keep my sabbaths . . .* Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off. Also the *sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the LORD, to serve him*, and to love the name of the LORD, to be his servants, *everyone that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it . . .* Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer . . ." (Isa.56:1-7).

How clear! The Sabbath day was made and ordained for *ALL MANKIND!*

Proof # 14 -- the Sermon on the Mount

Many so-called "Christians" believe that Jesus did away with God's Law because He taught "grace" instead. But is this true? What did Jesus Himself say about this? Even in the famous "Sermon on the Mount," where Jesus revealed the keys to the Kingdom of God, He Himself stated in no uncertain terms, plainly, for all to see, hear, and understand:

"Think NOT that I am come to *destroy [put an end to, annihilate, annul, eradicate, or abolish] the law, or the prophets*: I came not to destroy, but to fulfill [that is, fill full, up to the brim and overflowing]." Jesus went on, clarifying just what He meant: "For verily I say unto you, *Till heaven and earth pass, ONE JOT OR ONE TITTLE shall in NO WISE PASS FROM THE LAW, till ALL be fulfilled*" (Matt.5:17-18).

Let's read this in the Amplified Parallel Bible:

"Do not think that I have come to do away with or undo the Law or the Prophets; I have come not to do away with or undo but to complete and fulfill them. For truly I tell you, until the sky and earth pass away and perish, not one smallest letter nor one little hook [identifying certain Hebrew letters] will pass from the

Law until all things [it foreshadows] are accomplished. Whoever then breaks Or does away with or relaxes one of the least [important] of these commandments and teaches men so shall be called least [important] in the kingdom of heaven, but he who practices them and teaches others to do so shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt.5:17-19, Amplified).

Isn't that plain as day? Who could misunderstand those words?

Yet many professing Christians ignore and repudiate these very words of Christ!

Proof #15 -- "Keep the Commandments"

At one point during His ministry, Christ was asked by a young rich man what he must do to inherit eternal life. In response, Jesus said, "If thou wilt enter into life, *keep the commandments*" (Matt.19:17). The young rich man replied, "Which?" And Jesus answered him, listing a number of the Ten Commandments, the basis of God's Law, as examples. He said, "Thou shalt do no murder, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (v.18-19).

These were five of the Ten Commandments, showing clearly what Law Jesus had in mind -- the law of God. The Sabbath command is the fourth commandment. So when Jesus said "*keep the commandments*," He was basically using the Ten Commandments as an example, and included in them is the commandment to observe the Sabbath day and keep it holy! Therefore, if we wish to inherit eternal life, we must keep the commandments -- and that includes the Sabbath commandment!

Prove #16 -- Christ is "Lord" of the Sabbath

In the book of Mark, we read of an occasion where the disciples of Christ went through a wheat field, plucking kernels of wheat to eat. The Pharisees rebuked them for doing an act which they considered a violation of the Sabbath, since they had added many do's and don'ts to the Sabbath commandment, making it a yoke of bondage and a legalistic burden.

Jesus, in reply to their accusation, declared, point-blank, "*The Sabbath was MADE FOR MAN*" -- *that is, ALL MANKIND!* He went on, "and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore, the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27-28).

Here is plain evidence that the Sabbath is to be kept by all mankind -- it was MADE, or created, for ALL of us to observe! What could be plainer? Read it again!

Jesus went on, saying HE was the "LORD of the Sabbath" -- that He is in charge of the Sabbath, He is its Master, Lord, Ruler, and "Owner." It belongs to HIM. Since He has authority over the Sabbath day, and says it was made for "MAN," then shouldn't we out of respect for Him observe and honor and uphold His Sabbath day?

Jesus doesn't say He is "Lord" of any other day of the week -- not Sunday, not Monday,

not Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday. But He does say He is "Lord of the SABBATH!" Therefore, let us observe His Sabbath -- since He is also our Lord!

Proof #17 -- Jesus' Custom

When Jesus called His disciples, He told them, "*Follow me*" (Matt.4:19). When He encountered Philip, the next day, He said to him as well, "*Follow me*" (John 1:43). Have you ever played the children's game, "Follow the Leader"? Wherever the leader goes, those who are playing the game must follow him, imitate him, do as he does, go where he goes, climb the fence he climbs, climb the tree he climbs, go up the hill he goes up, follow the path he takes, perfectly -- or they become disqualified!

Jesus tells each one of us, "Follow me." Where does He lead us? What kind of example does He set for us? We read in the gospel of Luke: "And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, *as his custom was, he went into the synagogue ON THE SABBATH DAY*, and stood up for to read" (see Luke 4:16-21). Jesus observed the weekly Sabbath day. It was *His "custom"!* Therefore, we also ought to observe the Sabbath day, as we strive to "follow our leader," Jesus Christ!

If our Leader tells us to follow Him, and then He leads us to the Sabbath day, and He observes it, how clear it is that we also should observe the Sabbath day, as He does!

Are you following our true Leader who kept the Sabbath?

Proof #18 -- Jesus' Example

Peter puts it even more plainly. He writes: "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, *leaving us an EXAMPLE, that ye should FOLLOW HIS STEPS*: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" (I Pet.2:21-23).

Not only was Jesus' custom to keep the Sabbath day, but we as Christians are commanded to *FOLLOW HIS EXAMPLE* -- follow in His footsteps!

Are you obeying this straight-forward and simple command?

The apostle John also comments on this principle. He wrote: "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a LIAR, and the truth is not in him. . . He that saith he abideth in him *ought himself also so to WALK, even as he WALKED*" (I John 2:4-6).

If we keep His commandments, and walk as He walked, then our walk also will take us to the Sabbath day, to observe it and honor it and keep it holy -- just as He did, setting us an example that we should follow Him, imitate His steps, and even imitate His "walk."

Once again, this all points to faithful Sabbath observance!

Proof #19 -- Paul's Example

Did the apostle Paul also observe the Sabbath day? Remember, he was the "apostle to the Gentiles." If anyone had a chance to tell the Gentiles the Sabbath was abolished, Paul did -- time and time again. But did he ever do so? What kind of example did Paul set?

In the book of Acts, we read that Paul and his company with him, as they journeyed through Asia Minor and Europe, observed the Sabbath day in city after city. When they came to Antioch in Pisidia, they "went into the synagogue *on the sabbath day*, and sat down" (Acts 13:14). Paul preached a sermon showing Jesus Christ is the Messiah, quoting from the Old Testament. Afterwards, we read, "the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached unto them the next sabbath . . . And the next *sabbath day* came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God" (v.42-44).

Later, in Philippi, Paul and his company gathered at the usual sabbath gathering place, to speak to certain women there about Jesus Christ. "And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made" (Acts 16:13). Later, in Thessalonica, "Paul, *as his manner was*, went in unto them [the Jewish people] and *three sabbath days* reasoned with them out of the Scripture" (Acts 17:2). And in the cosmopolitan city of Corinth, Paul also did not deviate from his customary practice: "And he reasoned in the synagogue *every sabbath*, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks" (Acts 18:4).

Notice that observing the Sabbath was Paul's regular "customary practice." It was *customary for him* to observe the Sabbath, and to preach the true gospel of Christ at the synagogues on the sabbath day!

In four different places in the book of Acts, we discover the apostle Paul -- the apostle who was sent to the Gentiles -- observing God's holy Sabbath day! This was his regular custom.

Are you willing to follow the example of Paul?

Paul set us an example, in keeping God's Sabbath day, even as Christ set us an example. He observed the Sabbath, and he taught his listeners to observe it as well. Paul declared, in a letter to the Corinthian church, which had grown numerous over the years:

"Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (I Cor.11:1).

Are you willing to imitate Paul, and he imitated Christ? Are you willing to observe God's holy Sabbath day? Moffatt has this verse, "Copy me, as I copy Christ." The New International Version has this verse: "Follow my EXAMPLE, as I follow the EXAMPLE of Christ."

Paul's example was to keep the Sabbath. Jesus Christ, our Saviour, set the same example during His life on earth as a human being. Are you following their example? What is your example, that you are setting for others?

Proof #20 -- Doers of the Law

The apostle Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, stated in the book of Romans, "For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the DOERS of the law shall be justified" (Rom.2:13).

The Sabbath is part of the law of God. It is an eternal law. Therefore, if we merely "hear" it, but fail to observe it, we are condemned in God's sight. The apostle James puts it this way: "For whosoever shall keep the WHOLE LAW, and yet offend in one point" -- such as the point of the Sabbath -- "he is guilty of all" (Jas.2:10).

James goes on, describing what law he is talking about -- the Ten Commandments, which includes the Sabbath commandment. He says, "For he that saith, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou are become a *transgressor of the law*" (Jas.2:11). Or, to put it another way, if you do not steal, *but if you break the Sabbath day commandment*, then you have broken one point of God's Law, and you are guilty of breaking the whole thing -- the whole system of law -- and are designated as a "transgressor of the law"!

Merely talking about the Sabbath, and saying it is a good thing, is not enough. We must be DOERS of the Law! As James said, "Even so faith, if it have not works, is dead, being alone" (Jas.2:17). Faith in Christ, in other words, without obedience, is dead -- worthless, useless, of no spiritual value, meaningless, empty, and vain.

Again, James explains: ""But be ye DOERS of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any man be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and *continueth therein*, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a DOER of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed" (Jas.1:22-25).

Proof #21 -- The Law Is Holy, Just, and Good

What is the purpose of God's Law, anyway? Why did God create the Sabbath? Of course, everything God made was "good" -- and that includes the Sabbath. God's Law, too, is "good," according to the apostle Paul, who wrote: "Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (Rom.7:12).

The Sabbath, we already saw in Genesis 2:1-3, is "holy" to God. It was made holy, or "sanctified," at creation. Here Paul says the entire Law of God is "holy," "just," or fair, equitable, and "good." There is nothing evil or bad about God's Law -- or, for that matter, His Sabbath day. It is PERFECT! As David wrote, "The law of the LORD is *PERFECT, converting the soul*" (Psalm 19:7).

Since the Sabbath is good, and part of God's perfect Law, therefore it, too, must be PERFECT! And Jesus Christ says to us, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect" (Matt.5:48). God's Law is perfect, and His Sabbath is perfect, and we become perfect

by obedience to His perfect Law. How can we do this? Through the indwelling power and authority and might of God's Holy Spirit! As Paul wrote, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but *after the Spirit*. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (Rom.8:1-2). As Paul continued, "But if ye through the Spirit do mortify [put to death] the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom.8:13-14).

Since God's Law is just, and good, and holy, and perfect, including the Sabbath law -- should we break it? To do so, would mean we are NOT "just," or "good," or perfect" -- or "holy." To break it would mean we are guilty of transgression -- SIN -- "And the wages of sin is *death*" (Rom.6:23).

Proof #22 -- The Law Defines Sin

Stop and consider. James compares the law to a mirror or looking glass. Paul, also, says, "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known [or, recognized or understood what sin was] sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet" (Rom.7:7). The Law of God points out what constitutes "sin." It tells us what actions are sinful, and which are not. In other words, the law defines "sin" for us -- it tells us what is "sin."

John tells us very simply: "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for *sin IS the transgression of the law*" (I John 3:4).

This is the simple Bible definition of "SIN." Why do men run around trying to invent their own definitions, and refuse to heed and hear the simple testimony of the Word of God? "Sin IS the transgression" -- that is, the breaking and violation of -- "the law" of God!

John could not have made it plainer. Since the Law tells us what sin IS, and the Law tells us to remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, then to VIOLATE this commandment would constitute SIN -- transgression of the law -- in God's sight!

Every time people break God's Sabbath day, then, they are committing SIN! And remember: "The wages of sin is DEATH" (Rom.6:23)! Do you want to die, and be dead, for all eternity? Obey God's Law -- and His Sabbath -- and you won't have to! But how can we mortal, carnal human beings obey such a wonderful, perfect law?

Again, the answer is by accepting Jesus Christ as personal Saviour and receiving His Holy Spirit -- the Spirit of power! As Paul wrote, "And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Spirit, whom God hath given to them that obey him" (Acts 5:32). Paul also declared, "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (II Tim.1:7).

God's Spirit gives us the spiritual POWER to obey God and keep His commandments -- including the Sabbath day!

Proof #23 -- God's Law is SPIRITUAL

"For we know that *the law is SPIRITUAL*: but I am carnal, sold under sin," Paul wrote to the Romans (Rom.7:14). God Himself is Spirit. Jesus said to the Samaritan woman, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him, must worship him *in spirit and in truth*" (John 4:24). Jesus also told His disciples: "It is the *spirit* that quickeneth [makes alive!]; the flesh profiteth nothing: *the words that I speak unto you, they are SPIRIT, and they are life*" (John 6:63).

Since God's Law is spiritual, and life-giving -- life itself -- then the Sabbath Law also is spirit -- and is life-giving. Obedience to it imparts LIFE. It is the way of LIFE!

Also, Paul wrote that those things which are spiritual are eternal. God is eternal. His Word is eternal (I Pet.1:25). And God's law, being spiritual, is also eternal. As Paul explained, "While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal [temporary, transitory, evanescent, fleeting]; but *the things which are not seen [i.e., spiritual things] are ETERNAL*" (II Cor.4:18).

God's Law is spiritual; therefore, God's Sabbath day, also, is spiritual. And spiritual things are eternal. Therefore the Sabbath day is eternal.

Proof #24 -- Faith Does Not Abolish the Law

So often modern ministers attempt to teach that faith in Christ abolishes the law, and the need to keep God's commandments. This is the prevailing opinion in the world, today. So millions are deceived, and misled, and refuse to keep the Sabbath day.

But does "faith" abolish God's Law? Is faith contradictory to Law?

The apostle Paul asked the people in Rome, "Do we then *make VOID the law* through faith?" Does Christian faith make void or do away with God's Law, including the Sabbath?

What was Paul's answer to this question?

Paul replied, to his own question: "GOD FORBID! Yea, *we establish the law*" (Rom.3:31). *The word "establish" means "to make firm or stable; to institute [as a law] permanently by enactment or agreement; to bring into existence, FOUND; to bring about; to set on a firm basis; to put into a favorable position; to gain full recognition or acceptance of . . . TO PUT BEYOND DOUBT"* (Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary).;

Thus faith and law go together, hand in glove. There is no contradiction. The Christian has faith in Jesus Christ, and that faith leads him to follow Christ, and to keep His commandments, through the power of the Holy Spirit, which God gives to us. We do not achieve salvation through our own works, and struggles, alone; all our works would be useless, without the atoning sacrifice of Christ, and without His Holy Spirit to enable us to keep the Law in spirit, as we should! And faith in Christ leads us to confess our sins willingly, when we fall

short of the mark, knowing that He will forgive us (I John 1:9), and restore us to His grace, and continue working with us, helping us to be overcomers.

So through faith in Christ we don't "make void" or negate God's Law -- rather, we ESTABLISH IT -- we set it on a firm foundation! We "uphold" it, as the Moffatt translation says. The *Jewish New Testament* has it: "Does it follow that we abolish *Torah* by this trusting? Heaven forbid! On the contrary, we confirm *Torah*." As the *Jewish New Testament Commentary* states: "*On the contrary, we confirm Torah* (or 'uphold' it, 'establish' it or 'place' it 'on a firm foundation'). Why does trusting, which is the exact opposite of mechanical rule-keeping, 'confirm *Torah*'? Because trusting God is what *Torah* is all about."

Thus faith does not abolish or negate the Sabbath law! "God forbid," as Paul would say. "On the contrary, it confirms, establishes, and places on a firm footing and secure foundation the Sabbath LAW!"

Proof #25 -- Jesus Christ Does Not Change

In the book of Hebrews we read these astonishing words: "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Heb.13:8). Christ does not change. He kept His law when He walked on this earth, and "as His custom was" He celebrated the Sabbath day.

Since Christ is the same, always, and forever, this means that He would never abolish the Sabbath Law -- to the contrary, He observes it today! According to the apostle Paul, "Christ IN you [is] the hope of glory" (Col.1:27). He wrote, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be *formed in you*" (Gal.4:19). He also wrote, "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom.8:9). We are in the process of being "conformed to the *image of his Son [Christ]*" (Rom.8:29).

What are these Scriptures telling us? Since Christ is always the same, yesterday, today, and forever, this means that if He is in you, through the Holy Spirit, then He will be living the SAME LIFE IN YOU HE LIVED 2,000 YEARS AGO -- *He will be observing the same commandments today that He observed then -- He will be keeping the SAME SABBATH DAY, TODAY, AS HE KEPT THEN, "AS HIS CUSTOM WAS"!*

Yes, Christ is eternal -- and He is the same in character and obedience to the Laws of God, FOREVER! He will never deviate from or spurn or disobey God's holy, righteous, spiritual, good, and perfect LAW, including the Sabbath Law, one of the Ten Commandments!

What will it take for us to get this straight, and to really understand it?

Proof #26 -- a Sabbath Rest Remains

One of the least understood Scriptures on this whole Sabbath issue is found in Hebrews, chapter 4. Reading this chapter in context, we find that the apostle Paul exhorts us all to fear lest we come short of receiving God's "promise" and entering into God's "rest" (Heb.4:1). There is a duality through this chapter. The "rest" God is speaking of is the "rest" we will receive in His

Kingdom -- the "Millennial Sabbath-Rest." However, God is also speaking in this chapter of the weekly Sabbath rest!

In verse 2 Paul shows that the message preached to the Israelites, as they came out of Egypt, did not profit them, "not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." God gave the nation of Israel His commandments, as they came out of Egypt, but they rebelled and transgressed against Him, and that whole generation of people wandered in the desert for 40 years as a result and died in the wilderness (Num.14). One of the laws which they specifically disobeyed was the Sabbath (Exo.16).

Notice! In verse 4 Paul writes, "For he spake in a certain place of *the seventh day* on this wise, And God did *rest the seventh day* from all his works. And in this place again, *If* they shall enter into my rest" (v.4-5). He shows that the offer from God is still open -- it was open in David's day (v.7), and also today (same verse). The rest God is talking about was not the "rest" Israel received when they entered the Promised Land under Joshua (v.8).

Now notice the key verses, beginning with verse 9: Paul declares, "There remaineth therefore a REST to the people of God." The marginal rendering of this verse says "rest" is more accurately translated, "KEEPING OF A SABBATH." The Moffatt translation has it, "There is a SABBATH-REST, then, reserved still for the People of God" (v.9). The *New International Version* has the same. The *Jewish New Testament* says: "So there remains a *Shabbat-keeping for God's people.*" The *New Revised Standard Version* has: "So then, a sabbath rest still remains for the people of God."

Verse 10 goes on: "For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath *ceased from his own works, as God did from his.*" Verse 11: "Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest [that is coming, our future inheritance], lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief."

Notice the duality here! First, God's people today should be observing the Sabbath-rest day, and cease from their own works on that day, even as God ceased from His work on the seventh day of Creation. Secondly, we are to labor to enter the "rest" which is the Kingdom of God -- the "Promised Land" -- salvation and eternal life!

We are told to BEWARE lest we fail, lest we come short, like the Israelites in the wilderness, who rebelled, broke the Sabbath, disobeyed God's commandments, and were banished to die in the wilderness after wandering for forty years. How did they fail? They did not have faith, mixed with obedience to God's law! They did not have the FAITH to keep the Sabbath day! They did not have the FAITH to enter the Promised Land under Joshua. They cowered in fear before the Canaanites, and fled from before them (Num.14).

Faith in Christ coupled with obedience to God's Law is the ONLY way to salvation and eternal life! Faith alone will not do it! As James wrote, "Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith BY my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well; the demons also believe, and tremble." He then discusses the "works" of Abraham, and Rahab the harlot, and summed up the situation thus: "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and *not by faith only.* For as

the body without the spirit is dead, so *faith without works is dead* also" (James 2:18-26).

Plainly, faith, without obedience to God's Law -- including the Sabbath commandment -- is "dead." Dead as a door-nail! Dead as a dog named Rover -- dead all over. Dead, dead, dead!

Proof #27 -- The End-time Saints

In the book of Revelation, God identifies His people -- true believers in Christ -- by a very clear and visual description. He describes them in a unique way. In Revelation 12 a great "woman" is described, travailing in birth (v.1-2). She brought forth a child (v.5) who was to rule all nations -- Jesus Christ.

The picture then drops down to the last days, depicting a great battle raging in heaven, with the devil and his angels being cast out, and thrown down to the surface of the earth (v.7-13). Seeing himself cast down to the earth, the devil persecutes the woman -- a symbol for the true Christians, the true believers in Christ (compare Gal.4:22-29; Eph.5:23-27; Rev.19:7-8).

Now who are these true Christians? How are they described? Notice the key verse, describing these people, the true saints of God: "And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, *which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ*" (Rev.12:17).

Since the saints are they who KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS, this shows us that they are Sabbath-observant people, for the Sabbath day is one of God's very Ten Commandments!

Notice! This clear-cut description of God's true saints is repeated in chapter 14. Here John sees three angels descending from heaven, each with a message for mankind. The first commands people to worship God and fear Him (Rev.14:6-7). The second angel predicts and describes the destruction of modern Babylon the great, this present world civilization (v.8). The third angel warns men not to follow the Antichrist, the end-time dictator, by receiving his mark, or worshipping his image, because those who do will suffer the wrath of the fury of God (v.9-11).

Now we come to an inset verse, describing the true saints of God, once again. Notice! "Here is the patience of the SAINTS [holy ones]: here are they that *keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus*" (Rev.14:12).

The end-time saints are pictured in the book of Revelation as COMMANDMENT-KEEPERS! They are shown as keeping the commandments of God -- which include the Sabbath command -- in the very last days of this generation, before the return of Jesus Christ!

Proof # 28 -- the "FAITH of Jesus"

Notice that these saints are also said to be the ones who have "the faith of Jesus" -- that would be the very same FAITH He had. His faith led Him to obey God's laws and commandments, and to keep every one of them -- even the most minute, tiniest commandment!

Jesus showed how faith and obedience must be mixed together in our lives. Stirred together, they make a mighty powerful potion! "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that *believeth* on me, the *works* that I do shall he do also: and *greater works* than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father" (John 14:12). Notice -- this is not an "empty faith," an "empty belief." This belief is accompanied and demonstrated by *good works* -- and is attested to by even *greater works* than those Christ did, in some cases. That's what Jesus said! See? Faith without works is *nothing* -- *nothing at all!*

It is dead as a rabbit run over by an 18-wheeler on the Arizona highway!

Jesus continued: "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it. *If you love me, KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS*" (John 14:13-15).

So those who really have the "faith" of Jesus will be the ones keeping God's commandments! They will be, or should be, observing the Sabbath commandment as well!

Proof #29 -- the "Testimony"

In Rev.12:17, John reported that the true saints also are the ones who have the "testimony of Jesus." The word testimony is the Greek word *marturia* and means "evidence, record, report, witness. It is from the word *martus*, meaning "a witness" -- by analogy, a "martyr," -- "martyr, record, witness."

The testimony of Jesus -- His "record," or "report" -- His "evidence" -- is the *witness He gave, His Word -- His teachings and commandments*. The true saints therefore are those living by His every word -- and bearing witness in their lives to corroborate His witness. Like Him, they will be witnesses for the truth of God -- that is, the Word of God, which is truth (John 17:17; 10:35). And the word and truth of God are also the LAW of God (Psa.119:142,, 160).

By their witness, therefore, they will certify that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and they will live as He lived, follow His example, keep the Sabbath just as He did, and do the very works that He did when He was on earth. They will follow Him wherever He goes (Rev.14:4), for they are "the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb" (same verse).

Jesus testified that He did not come to abolish God's law, but to fill it full to the brim (Matt.5:17). He added, "Whosoever therefore shall BREAK one of these least commandments and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them shall be called GREAT in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you unless your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt.5:19-20).

In the broadest sense, the "testimony" is the word of God. As Isaiah wrote: "To the LAW and to the TESTIMONY: if they speak not according to *this word*, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa.8:20).

Part of that "testimony" is the testimony about the holy Sabbath day!

Proof #30 -- The Tree of LIFE

The final proof and "witness" that we must observe God's Sabbath day, today, is a remarkable Scripture in the very last chapter of Revelation: "And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man *according as his work shall be*. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. *Blessed are they that DO HIS COMMANDMENTS, that they may have right to the TREE OF LIFE*, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without [outside the Kingdom!] are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and *idolaters* [Sabbath breakers fall in this category, for they are idolizing some other "god" than the true Creator God, whose sign is the Sabbath!], and whosoever loveth and maketh a *lie* [any deception, distortion, twisting of the truth, heresy, false teaching, false prophecy, such as the lie that the Sabbath is abolished!]" (Rev.22:12-15).

Do you want to have part of the "tree of life"? Do you desire eternal life in the kingdom of God? Then right here in the very last book of the Bible, as if to sum it all up, God tells us that we must KEEP -- DO -- HIS COMMANDMENTS! *ONLY those who KEEP the commandments AND have the FAITH of Jesus will be REWARDED when He comes, and will be "BLESSED" -- and have permission to partake of ETERNAL LIFE -- symbolized by the "tree of life."*

These are in essence, God's "final words" on the subject, contained in His very own "Witness" -- the Bible! They constitute a final warning -- a final exhortation -- a final admonition.

Study these 30 "proofs" that God's Sabbath is still in force, today! Meditate on them, and make them part of your very inner being and heart. Unless we study and pray earnestly, so we can rightly "divide" the word of truth (II Tim.2:15), we could end up deceived, as Jesus Christ warned. There are many false prophets out there, so that if it were possible, even the "very elect" could be deceived!

May God help you to stand firm -- rock solid -- in His truth!

Chapter 5

How To Keep the Sabbath Holy!

How should we observe the weekly Sabbath day? Is it all right to light a fire on the Sabbath? To cook a meal? To go out to a restaurant? What does it mean to keep the Sabbath "holy"? What activities are permissible on this holy day, and what should be avoided? Here are vital guidelines to help you observe God's day properly, as God intends.

The Jews of Jesus' time were so focused on the technical rules they had invented to supposedly safeguard Sabbath observance, that they turned God's festive and joyous holy day into a day of bondage, a yoke of burdensome rules and nit-picking regulations.

How many categories of work does the Mishnah forbid on the Sabbath?

"The principal categories of work [which are forbidden on the Sabbath] are forty less one [39 categories]: sowing, plowing, reaping, binding sheaves, threshing, winnowing, cleansing crops, grinding, sifting, kneading, baking, shearing, washing, beating or dyeing wool, spinning, weaving, making two loops, weaving two threads, separating two threads, tying a knot, loosening a knot, sewing two stitches, ripping in order to sow two stitches, hunting a gazelle [or similar beast], slaughtering or flaying or salting it or curing its hide, scraping it or cutting it up, writing two letters [that is, two letters of the alphabet in a row!], erasing in order to write two letters, building, pulling down, putting out a fire, lighting a fire, striking with a hammer and taking anything from one domain to another [e.g. from private domain to public domain or vice versa]. These are the principal categories of work: forty less one" (Mishnah *Shabbat* 7:2).

The religious leaders among the Jews would get completely bent out of shape if they saw anyone "violate" any of these "work categories" on the Sabbath day.

The Sabbath was never intended to become a yoke of bondage, however. Notice!

God's basic Sabbath commandment is found in the 20th chapter of Exodus, where we read:

“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” (Exodus 20:8-11).

This key verse gives us the basic, underlying principle we must keep in mind concerning observation of God's Sabbath day. It is a day of rest, not work. On this day, therefore, we must not do our normal, routine, daily "work" or toil or labor which we normally do in earning a living, or any "work" for any other purpose, such as labor for a personal activity, hobby, or donated labor for some other person or enterprise. The Sabbath is to be a day of REST, as opposed to any kind of work or labor.

There are, however, some exceptions which the Word of God provides, to this overall decree of the Almighty. There are some kinds of work, and some kinds of activities, which God does permit on the Sabbath.

A Fundamental Principle

For example, one day Jesus and His disciples were going through the grain fields, and as His disciples walked they picked some heads of grain to eat. The self-righteous Pharisees noticed this, and exclaimed to Jesus, "Why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?" Jesus Christ said in response to their question,

"Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions."

Then Jesus said a fundamental principle:

"The Sabbath was MADE FOR MAN, *not man for the Sabbath*. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:23-28, NIV).

God never intended for the Sabbath to be a day of bondage or rigor, but a day of rest and refreshment -- a day of worship and praise. Thus it is all right to take walks on the Sabbath, to pluck fruit or grain to eat if you happen to go through a field where such is available (and the owner doesn't mind), to take a gentle hike through the woods or hills, to pluck wild berries to eat, and so forth. One should not engage in employment for wages in his usual occupation or job, however, on the Sabbath. He has six days of the week in which to perform his regular labor or work; the Sabbath, from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset, he must rest (Exodus 20:8-11) -- and his children, his animals, and servants under his authority or in his household, must obey the Sabbath commandment, too (verse 10).

Jesus explained further:

"Or haven't you read in the Law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple desecrate the day and yet are innocent? I tell you that one greater than the temple is here. If you had known what these words mean, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the innocent. For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath" (Matt.12:1-9).

Clearly, Jesus said there are exceptions to the Sabbath commandment. Doing no work is not a "hard and fast rule" which must NEVER be broken, under any circumstances -- as the Pharisees, in their misguided zeal, taught the people. Jesus plainly taught that it is all right to DO GOOD on the Sabbath -- including healing the sick! We read,

"Going on from that place, he went into their synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. Looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, they asked him, 'Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?'

"He said to them, 'If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable is a man than a sheep! Therefore *it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.*'

"Then he said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' So he stretched it out and it was completely restored, just as sound as the other. But the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus" (Matt.12:9-14).

Emergencies and Life-Threatening Situations

Pulling a helpless sheep or a cow out of a ravine, crevasse, or pit, is no small undertaking. It could involve hard work, sweat and labor, till the animal is rescued and free! The point Jesus was making, then, is twofold: First, it is all right to do EMERGENCY WORK on the Sabbath, the kind necessary to preserve life. Nursing an infirm patient needing care 24 hours a day, for example. Or, if a fire breaks out, or a flood occurs, on the Sabbath, it is all right to fight the fire, or the flood, and rescue any lives which may be endangered. Such activities would be "good," in the sense Jesus mentioned -- showing love for one's neighbor, or his own family or household. Secondly, it is all right to do those kinds of activities which are helpful and beneficial to others on the Sabbath -- healing, visiting the sick or infirm, taking food or clothing to the needy, being examples. Such good activities do not break the spiritual principle of the Sabbath but rather confirm it.

Seeking Your Own Pleasure

Another basic principle of the Sabbath day is revealed in Isaiah. God admonishes His people,

"If you keep your feet from BREAKING the Sabbath and from DOING AS YOU PLEASE on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a DELIGHT and the LORD's holy day HONORABLE, and if you HONOR it by not going YOUR OWN WAY and not doing as you please and SPEAKING IDLE WORDS, then you will find your joy in the Lord, and I will cause you to ride on the heights of the land and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob.' The mouth of the LORD has spoken" (Isa.58:13-14).

It is wrong to treat the Sabbath day like any other day, with disregard. It is holy. It is holy time. It must be treated with deep respect, reverence, and awe. It is God's day -- it belongs to Him! We must not take His time, and treat it as worthless, or abuse it for our own personal pleasures and "fun." Therefore, using the Sabbath to go to ball games, sports activities, or to play games, such as baseball, basketball, volleyball, or golf, would constitute an abuse of the Sabbath.

This does not mean that all physical activities are forbidden on the Sabbath day. It would not be wrong to take a walk, for a short distance, to enjoy the out-of-doors, and to appreciate the wonders of the natural world. A short hike or walk would not violate the principle of the Sabbath commandment. Of course, taking a long strenuous hike up a high mountain, exerting great effort, would clearly be a breaking of the rest commandment!

Similarly, a person would not be breaking the Sabbath if they took a bath or shower on that day, or -- if they have a jacuzzi or swimming pool at their home, it would not be wrong for them to relax in the jacuzzi or pool, or even take a "quiet" swim on the Sabbath, so long as they did not overdo it. The principle to remember is that the Sabbath is a day of rest, a day to spend glorifying God.

We used to have a swimming pool at our home in Altadena, which was shaped somewhat like a lake or lagoon, nestled in a beautiful setting with the San Gabriel mountains in the background, a beautiful pine tree nearby, and lush, beautiful vegetation. It was a lovely garden setting. Sometimes, during the summer, I would go out to the pool on the Sabbath day, and float, watching the clouds drift by in the sky, and enjoy the pastoral setting. To me, it was a wonderful blessing from God that we had a pool, at that point in our lives, and that I could relax and rest on the Sabbath by lying around the pool, or cooling off in it. It was a wonderful time for meditation, communion with God, and prayer.

Please note, however, that this was a private affair. I'm not talking about a "swimming party," or having guests over for recreational swimming, games, or racing. That would be a violation of the principle of the Sabbath.

What about Shopping on the Sabbath?

What about shopping on the Sabbath? Unless there is a real emergency, shopping -- even for food -- should not be done on the Sabbath day. Buying and selling should be avoided on

God's holy day. The Jews in the days of Nehemiah faced this problem, when Gentile neighbors brought wares to the walls of Jerusalem to sell them on the Sabbath. But the people of God, under the leadership of Nehemiah, declared, "When the neighboring peoples bring merchandise or grain to sell on the Sabbath, we will not buy from them on the Sabbath or on any holy day" (Neh.10:31).

Some of the people, however, soon began to break this agreement not to buy and sell merchandise on the Sabbath. Nehemiah records: "In those days I saw men in Judah treading winepresses on the Sabbath and bringing in grain and loading it on donkeys, together with wine, grapes, figs and all other kinds of loads. And they were bringing all this into Jerusalem on the Sabbath. Therefore I warned them against selling food on that day. Men from Tyre who lived in Jerusalem were bringing in fish and all kinds of merchandise and selling them in Jerusalem on the Sabbath to the people of Judah. I rebuked the nobles of Judah and said to them, 'What is this wicked thing you are doing -- desecrating the Sabbath day? Didn't your forefathers do the same things, so that our God brought all this calamity upon us and upon this city? Now you are stirring up more wrath against Israel by desecrating the Sabbath'" (Nem.13:15-18).

Nehemiah took action to solve this serious problem. As governor, he relates: "When evening shadows fell on the gates of Jerusalem before the Sabbath, I ordered the doors to be shut and not opened until the Sabbath was over. I stationed some of my own men at the gates so that no load could be brought in on the Sabbath day. Once or twice the merchants and sellers of all kinds of goods spent the night outside Jerusalem. But I warned them and said, 'Why do you spend the night by the wall? If you do this again, I will lay hands on you.' From that time on they no longer came on the Sabbath. Then I commanded the Levites to purify themselves and go and guard the gates in order to keep the Sabbath day holy" (Nem.13:19-22).

Obviously, buying and selling should be avoided on the Sabbath day -- it was not created to be a "shopping day." It is not a day to visit the grocery store or Mall. Grocery shopping should be done on the other six days of the week.

Avoid Extremism

The Orthodox Jews of Jesus' day, and even today, forbid all kinds of "work" on the Sabbath -- lifting, sorting, weaving, carrying, harvesting, etc. In Jerusalem in some hotels, there is "pre-torn" toilet paper, so people don't have to tear toilet paper on the Sabbath! Elevators in hotels on the Sabbath *automatically stop at every floor*, so that no one needs to "push a button" in the elevator to select a floor designation. That the Orthodox Jews consider "work"! Even today, some Orthodox Jews in Los Angeles will not ride in an automobile on the Sabbath, but walk to the synagogue instead. Not only that, but *they will not carry a Bible on the Sabbath, or any other book!* However, when in the synagogue, a person will hand them a "Haftorah," to use during the services, which they will "carry" to their seat. Technically, an Orthodox Jew also will not carry a wallet or money on his person on the Sabbath. And if they saw a wallet on the floor, or money on the ground, they would be forbidden to "pick it up" until after the Sabbath.

Are these laws of God? Are they what God intended? A "pious Jew" would say yes -- certainly! Who are we to question God?

How Yeshua Handled Similar Questions

In Yeshua's day, the Pharisees, who were Orthodox Jews of their time, forbade a man to carry his bed pallet on the Sabbath. Jesus, however, healed a man on the Sabbath, and then told him to take up his bed, carry it, and walk (John 5:8). The Jews were furious, and said to the man, "It is the sabbath day: *it is not lawful for you to carry your bed*" (v.10). They then found out that it was Jesus who had commanded him to carry his bed on the Sabbath day! The Jews then persecuted Him, and sought to slay Him, because "*he had done these things on the sabbath day*" (v.16).

Yeshua answered their complaints, "My Father worketh hitherto, *and I work*" (v.17). He did "work" to HEAL a man on the Sabbath day!

The apostle John then records, by way of explanation: "Therefore the *Jews [the Orthodox Jews of their time]* sought the more to kill him, *because he not only had BROKEN THE SABBATH*, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God" (John 5:18). Notice this verse carefully. First, it is the apostle *John*, not the Pharisees, who says Jesus had "broken the Sabbath." These were not just the words of the Jews, John was not quoting them, but *he himself* wrote that the reason they persecuted Jesus and sought to kill Him was that He had "broken the Sabbath."

Thus, technically, what Jesus had allowed the disciples to do may have been a technical "infraction of the Sabbath command"! If so, then the question is, why did He allow them to do something which was *normally forbidden* on the Sabbath?

Technically, you see, they may have been guilty of "harvesting." But in this case, was it really wrong? The Pharisees obviously thought so -- they made a huge issue over it! Let's study this passage very carefully. The word for "broken" here is *luo* in the Greek language. Notice how it is used:

"He not only had *broken* the sabbath" (John 5:18).
 "the law of Moses should not be *broken*" (John 7:23)
 "the Scripture cannot be *broken*" (John 10:35).
 "Now when the congregation was *broken up*" (Acts 13:43).
 "but the hinder part [of the ship] was *broken*" Acts 27:41).
 "and hath *broken* down the middle wall of partition that was between us" (Eph.2:14).

This word is #3089 in Strong's Concordance, *LUO*, and means, literally, "TO LOOSEN," and, "to break up, dissolve, destroy, loose, put off, melt." Says *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon*, of *luo*, "1) to loose any person (or thing) tied or fastened; prop. the bandages of the feet, the shoes . . . 2) to loose one bound, i.e., to unbind, release from bonds, set free: one bound up (swathed in bandages) . . . 3) to loosen, undo, dissolve, anything bound, tied, or compacted together . . ."

Clearly, we must be careful in interpreting the meaning of this word. In what sense was

John using it? It can mean "to break up, demolish, destroy" (Thayer's) as well, or metaphorically "to do away with, annul, overthrow." Was Jesus destroying and overthrowing the Sabbath day? Of course not! However, *He was LOOSING or LOOSENING the Sabbath commandment!* He was showing that the Jews and the Pharisees had *gone too far -- gone to extremes -- gone overboard* -- in their defense of the Sabbath, and in the "laws" they had built up to "hedge" the Sabbath and "protect it" from violations of men. They had *run amuck* with their countless do's and don'ts and taboos.

Christ came to reinstate the Sabbath as it was **ORIGINALLY INTENDED!** He did not come to make it a yoke of bondage or a burden. He came to **LOOSEN THE BONDS**, the restrains, to give us more **FREEDOM** in how we observe God's Holy Day!

Notice the proof of this! In Mark's gospel, we read: "And it came to pass, that he went through the corn fields on the sabbath day; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn. And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, *why do they on the sabbath day THAT WHICH IS UNLAWFUL?*" (Mark 2:23-24). Now the Pharisees sat in Moses' seat (Matt.23:1-2). Jesus Himself acknowledged that fact. And they **TAUGHT** the people that it was **UNLAWFUL** to pluck corn on the Sabbath day. That was considered as "harvesting" -- a type of work which was forbidden on the Sabbath!

Did Jesus tell them they were wrong? No, as a matter of fact, *He did not!* The truth is, technically, they were right. **BUT** -- and that is a very important three-letter word -- **BUT** He appealed to a **HIGHER LAW THAN THE MERE LETTER OF THE LAW!**

Notice!

Jesus did not accuse the Pharisees of misunderstanding the law. Rather, He appealed to a different type of argument. That is, He answered a technical "violation" with another technical "violation" of the Law! He said: "Have ye never read what *David did, when he had need, and was hungry*, he, and they that were with him? How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and *did eat the shewbread, WHICH IS NOT LAWFUL TO EAT but for the priests*, and gave also to them that were with him?" (Mark 2:25-26).

What David did was clearly **UNLAWFUL!** Illegal! Forbidden! Taboo! None but the priests were to eat the shewbread. *Yet he did it*, and Jesus used his example to **JUSTIFY** his disciples also *breaking the law plucking grain on the Sabbath!* He did not deny that they had "broken" the technical letter of the Law. But He said, in effect, that it was *all right for them to do so, because they were hungry and had no food with them!*

Now the Pharisees could have argued that if they were hungry, then they should have prepared in advance. They could have argued that it was their own responsibility to **PREPARE** food for the Sabbath in advance -- and so they were still guilty as charged!

The whole principle is then explained, by Christ, in the very next verse:

"The sabbath was made *FOR MAN*, and *not man for the sabbath*"
(verse 27).

"Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath" (v.28).

In other words, the Sabbath was CREATED in the first place to be a blessing to mankind -- not a yoke of bondage, or a curse. It is meant to be ENJOYED -- not a day to be hibernating and in "seclusion."

Jesus Christ, as the LOGOS, is the one who "created" the Sabbath day -- made it -- and He says He made it *for man*, that is, for man's benefit, for his good, for his spiritual enrichment, and enjoyment, as a day of rest and spiritual refreshment and a day to draw close to God, and family, spiritually! That is its INTENT AND PURPOSE! *And He, as the "LORD OF THE SABBATH," in essence DECREED that it was ALL RIGHT for the disciples to pluck the wheat, and eat it, thus "harvesting" it, on the Sabbath day -- because they were HUNGRY!*

What spiritual lesson today should we learn from this example, put in the New Testament for our admonition and instruction? Clearly -- any activity on the Sabbath which aids and abets the overriding PURPOSE of the Sabbath day, including certain "technical violations" from time to time, IS PERMITTED! To put it plainly, was Jesus showing that it is ALL RIGHT TO "EAT OUT" ON THE SABBATH, from time to time, so long as one does not make a habit of doing so?

What about going to a restaurant, and eating out in a restaurant, on God's Sabbath day? Would this really always be a violation of the Sabbath?

What about this question?

Eating Out in a Restaurant on the Sabbath

It is very possible that some people make a habit or regular practice of eating out in restaurants on the Sabbath, and tend to disregard the purpose and intent of the Sabbath.

Before we answer this question, however, we should ask ourselves several other questions:

- 1) Is it all right *occasionally* to eat out in a restaurant on the Sabbath?
- 2) Should it NEVER be done?
- 3) It is all right to do it *habitually*, regularly?
- 4) Is it all right to do it when on a *trip*, when in a strange city or town?
- 5) What about eating out on the Sabbath, while at the *Feast*, such as the Feast of Tabernacles?
- 6) And, while we are at it, what about eating out in a restaurant on an ANNUAL Holy Day, such as while at the Feast? What would God have us to do?

Obviously, there is much to consider about this question. It may not be so simple to answer as some might suppose. What are the Biblical principles that apply to this matter?

Jesus said plainly it is all right to "work" on the Sabbath, in order to do GOOD for other

people -- visit the sick, comfort the afflicted, take provisions to the needy -- just as it is all right for a farmer to free his ox if it is trapped in a thicket, or has fallen into a pit. He also shows, in the verses just quoted, that it is all right to *EAT OUT* on the Sabbath if you find yourself in such a situation where it helps you to observe the Sabbath, if you are hungry and don't have food prepared, and where it helps you keep the overall arching commandment. This would include such times as when you are on a trip of several days, staying in a motel, and it would be much more practical to eat out than to have to burden yourself with food preparation under such circumstances.

Remember, the Sabbath was *made for man* -- to be a delight. It was never intended to be a day of "bondage," a yoke of "heaviness," a day where you were hog-tied and home-bound, unable to do anything but "sit."

Eating out in a restaurant or inn does not desecrate the Sabbath. If you are staying a weekend at Yellowstone Park and staying at the lodge, you would probably want to eat in the dining room, on the Sabbath, rather than try to prepare food for eating in your room.

Now, by saying this, I do not mean that everybody should use this as an excuse to eat out in restaurants habitually, every Sabbath! That would be inappropriate. But, in my own opinion, from time to time, as a special treat on the Sabbath, one could take his family to a local restaurant for a meal.

That is my "opinion" on this matter, and I do believe that, as the apostle Paul said, that I have the spirit of the Lord guiding me in this decision (see I Cor.2:16; 7:6, 25). This is my "judgment" on the matter.

Often while at the Feast it is much more convenient and restful to eat out than trying to prepare food in a motel kitchenette, and rush back and forth to services.

Therefore, as a matter of expediency and wisdom, at times I am sure that God will allow us to judge for ourselves and "eat out" on the Sabbath while on a journey, or during the Feast, or even at home when circumstances combine in such a way that doing that would actually help us in celebrating the Sabbath with joy and rest.

Now, the Pharisees obviously forbade picking any grain on the Sabbath as a violation of the harvesting law -- yet Jesus justified His disciples plucking grains of wheat and eating them on the Sabbath, as they walked through a wheat field. I believe that this would be comparable to eating in a restaurant, or an "inn", today.

Of course, in ancient Judea, the Jewish society had "inns" along the roads and in the villages, where visitors and travelers could stay, and eat. Just like "motels," or hotels, today. There is no doubt such "inns" or "lodges" served meals to their guests, even on the Sabbath.

What is the lesson we should learn from these Scriptures, then? As a general rule, one should not go out "buying and selling" on the Sabbath day. One should not go "shopping" on God's Holy Day. Nor should a shop owner have his or her own "shop" OPEN on the Sabbath

day. In general, it is clear that buying and selling on the Sabbath should be avoided. But there are times when eating out in a restaurant on the Sabbath would not be in violation of the spirit of the Sabbath day.

I believe the example of plucking the wheat and eating it on the Sabbath is clearly similar to the situation of a modern Christian who finds himself hungry, on the Sabbath, in a strange city, in a motel room. He would not have a "wheat field" nearby to visit to take care of his hunger -- however, he would very likely have a coffee shop, or local restaurant, open, and willing to provide him food. In such a case, I believe God would say, "Go ahead -- eat and enjoy." Jesus said He came to release men from bonds and burdens -- not to create them! He declared, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and *learn of me*; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find *rest unto your souls*. For my yoke is *easy*, and my burden is *light*" (Matt.11:28-30).

Today, it is not very likely that we would ever find ourselves walking through a wheat field on the Sabbath. However, we might take a short trip and spend the Sabbath at a local mountain resort, and somewhere along the way get hungry and want to stop for a bite to eat. Would it be any more wrong to stop, and eat at that time, if you were hungry, than for the disciples to pluck and eat the wheat of the wheat field when traveling on the Sabbath? I don't think so.

Likewise, if you are visiting some beautiful National Park, such as Yosemite, or Mount Rainier, would it be wrong to go in to a lodge, or restaurant overlooking the beautiful site, with a gorgeous view of the mountains (or the ocean, or Niagara falls, as the case may be), and enjoy a delicious, wonderful meal at that restaurant or lodge? Again, I don't think that would be wrong at all -- and I do believe I have the Spirit of Christ.

The Need for Spiritual BALANCE

We should not make the mistake the Pharisees made, by "adding to" the laws of God, many little ticky tacky "do's and don'ts," which turn the Sabbath delight into a "yoke of bondage," making the Sabbath a burden, and which transform a day of supreme JOY into a day of hunger and hardship.

If you are out somewhere on the Sabbath day, with your family, and you (or your children) are *hungry*, then it would be all right to stop somewhere and *eat!* Don't make yourself, or your children, suffer, or do without, because of fearfulness. Remember, the Sabbath was made FOR man, not man for the Sabbath.

Again, though, I caution that we should be balanced, and not go overboard. We should strive for balance and fairness, and not make such activities habitual. Some might eat out occasionally, others might want to avoid doing so.

Regarding such matters, the apostle Paul said, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind" (Rom.14:5). This kind of matter is best left to the individual, then, to make the final choice for himself or herself. Where God has not legislated in plain view on a matter of

interpretation, we must each find our own "balance" and make our own decisions, but not condemn or sit in judgment of others who may decide differently from us, in a given case.

As Paul went on to say, "For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's."

"But why dost thou judge thy brother?" Paul asks (Rom.14:7-10). "Or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall ALL stand before the judgment seat of Christ" (same verse).

So in conclusion, Paul declared, "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Let us not therefore judge one another any more" (v.12-13). Rather, we should see to it that we are not responsible for causing offence, or putting a "stumblingblock" or occasion to "fall" in the way of a brother or sister (v.13, latter part).

Solomon put the essence, the essential truth of the matter, this way:

"Be not righteous over much; neither make thyself over wise: why shouldest thou destroy thyself? Be not over much wicked, neither be thou foolish: why shouldest thou die before thy time?

"It is good that thou shouldest take hold of this; yea, also from this withdraw not thine hand: for he that feareth God shall come forth *of them all*" (Ecclesiastes 7:16-18).

Sometimes it seems difficult to get a proper balance, and to achieve an "objective" overview of matters. Sometimes we get so close to a particular "tree," that we miss out on seeing the entire "forest." Or we begin to minutely inspect a small spot on a leaf, with a super-powerful microscope, all our attention focused on that one little spot -- and we fail to see the giant sequoia tree falling to the ground, or the avalanche of snow hurtling down the mountain towards us!

But as the apostle Paul wrote, "Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. *Be kindly affectioned one toward another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another; not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord*" (Rom.12:9-11).

And as Peter summed up, "And above all things have *fervent charity [love] among yourselves: for love shall cover the multitude of sins*" (I Pet.4:8).

"A Sabbath Day's Journey"

What about driving a car or taking a ride on the Sabbath? When I was a teenager, I thought that unless there was a Church of God near me, there was no way I would be able to attend Church on the Sabbath day with people of like understanding. I read in Acts, "Then they returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day's walk from the city" (Acts 1:12). The Mount of Olives lies about a quarter mile to a half mile from Jerusalem, depending from where you begin walking. If the measure is made from the east gate of

Jerusalem, the Jewish method of reckoning, to the crown of the Mount of Olives from where Bethany is visible, the distance, as the crow flies, would be about 2,250 feet; but in actual travel it would be much more. Josephus says the mountain was five or six stadia from the city. A stadia was one eighth of a Roman or English mile. Thus, a "Sabbath day's journey" was about five or six eighths of a mile (in one direction).

The origin of the regulation of the Sabbath day's journey came from the injunction not to leave the camp on the Sabbath. We read in Exodus, "Everyone is to stay where he is on the seventh day; no one is to go out. So the people rested on the seventh day" (Exodus 16:29). Yet, in Numbers we read of what belonged to each town: "Outside the town measure three thousand feet on the east side, three thousand on the south side, three thousand on the west and three thousand on the north, with the town in the center. They will have this area as pastureland for the towns" (Num.35:5). Thus the Sabbath day's journey was this distance, one way. You could walk out to the edge of the pasturelands, from the town, and back, and still be regarded as "within the camp." Three thousand feet going out, and three thousand feet coming back, adds up to a little over a mile of walking altogether. However, a person might travel within a city as far as he wished, so far as its limits allowed.

The "Sabbath day's journey" is not a plain "thus saith the Lord," but is derived from the principles of the verses mentioned. It is more or less an "estimate," but not a hard and fast rule or law of God. Again, the basic principle to remember is that the Sabbath is a day of REST, and not work, labor or toil.

In our day with automobiles, it is far less "work" to drive a car 20 or 30 miles than to walk one or two miles. Another principle we need to keep in mind is God's command, "These are my appointed feasts, the appointed feasts of the LORD, which you are to proclaim as SACRED ASSEMBLIES. There are six days when you may work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of rest, a day of SACRED ASSEMBLY. You are not to do any work; wherever you live, it is a Sabbath to the LORD" (Lev.23:2-3). The apostle Paul wrote, "And let us consider how we may spur one another on towards love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another -- and all the more as you see the Day approaching" (Heb.10:24-25).

It is not wrong, therefore, to travel further than a "Sabbath day's journey," today, if necessary in order to meet with God's people, to assemble together. This may involve a little "labor" of driving, but the priests worked on the Sabbath and were considered innocent and guiltless, when they offered sacrifices, and performed their ritualistic duties at the temple. How much more innocent and worthwhile is it to attend Sabbath with other true believers, and to worship God together -- even if it may entail a drive of some considerable distance! Such a willingness and whole hearted attitude of worship and faithfulness is very pleasing to God, who will judge all our works and "excuses" according to the spirit of His Law.

In this modern day and age of the automobile, telephone, television, and credit card, many things are possible which would have been impossible 2,000 years ago to do on the Sabbath. For example, the Word of God does not prohibit a "ride" through the country in an automobile on the Sabbath, or prohibit driving a car to Sabbath services if they are available in

your area. Technically, it might be considered "work" by some, operating an automobile -- but it could also be considered as "doing GOOD," so it would fall within the framework of Jesus' explanation of an activity permissible on the Sabbath.

What about Lighting Fires and Cooking?

What about lighting a fire, cooking, and eating on the Sabbath? In Exodus 35 we read, "For six days work is to be done, but the seventh day shall be your holy day, a Sabbath to the LORD. Whoever does any work on it must be put to death. Do not light a fire in any of your dwellings on the Sabbath day" (Exodus 35:2-3).

In the book of Numbers, we read: "While the Israelites were in the desert, a man was found gathering wood on the Sabbath day. Those who found him gathering wood brought him to Moses and Aaron and the whole assembly, and they kept him in custody, because it was not clear what should be done to him. Then the LORD said to Moses, 'The man must die. The whole assembly must stone him outside the camp.' So the assembly took him outside the camp and stoned him to death, as the LORD commanded Moses" (Num.15:32-36).

These Scriptures show us several things. First, the penalty for deliberate, premeditated Sabbath breaking was DEATH. God looks upon it as a capital offense -- not something to be taken lightly, or treated with mild disdain. The Sabbath is HOLY, and breaking it is SIN, and the wages of sin is death (Rom.6:23).

Those who deliberately trample on the Sabbath command will burn up in the lake of fire which will consume the wicked at the end of the age.

God says of the New World coming, "From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before me, says the LORD. And they will go out and look upon the dead bodies of those who REBELLED against me; their worm will not die (maggots will consume their dead bodies, until they pupate and turn into flies, thus not "dying"), nor will their fire be quenched (this is Gehenna fire, which will burn in the valley of Hinnom south of Jerusalem, as an ever-burning garbage pit, until the garbage is all consumed), and they will be loathsome to all mankind" (Isa.66:23-24).

Is it a sin, then, to "light a fire" on the Sabbath day? What about turning on a furnace, or an electrical light? What about building a "fire" for warmth on a cold evening in a fireplace? Or what about if you are camping out in the mountains? Would it be wrong to build a fire to keep warm on the Sabbath? Or to cook your food?

Adam Clarke in his Commentary points out concerning this verse, "The Jews understand this precept as forbidding the kindling of fire *only* for the purpose of *doing work* or *dressing victuals*; but to give them *light* and *heat*, they judge it lawful to light a fire on the Sabbath day . . ." In other words, if the purpose of the fire is to accomplish WORK or LABOR -- such as a blacksmith's fire to melt metal, and to make bronze or silver implements -- that would be a direct violation of the Sabbath commandment! But ordinary heating fires for warmth, or light cooking, is regarded as all right.

The *Critical Experimental Commentary* of Jamieson, Fausset and Brown explains even further. This authority states: "The Sabbath was not a fast day. The Israelites cooked their victuals on that day, for which, of course, a fire would be necessary; and this view of the institution is supported by the conduct of our Lord (Luke 14:1). But in early times the Israelites, while sojourning in the wilderness and subsisting on manna, received a double supply on the sixth day, which they cooked also on that day, so that a fire for culinary purposes was entirely unnecessary on the Sabbath day. As the kindling of a fire, therefore, could only be for SECULAR PURPOSES, the insertion of the prohibition *in connection with the work of the tabernacle* makes it highly probable that it was intended *chiefly for the mechanics* who were to be employed in that erection; and as some of them might have supposed it was allowable to *ply their trade* in the furtherance of a structure to be dedicated to religious worship, it was calculated to prevent all such ideas, by absolutely forbidding *any fire for the sharpening of tools, for the melting of metals, or any other material purpose bearing on the sanctuary*" (emphasis mine).

When we understand the background to these commandments, we see that it is NOT a sin to light a fire in your home on the Sabbath day, for light, heating, or light cooking purposes. Of course, any heavy duty cooking should be avoided on the Sabbath. Such heavy cooking should be done on Friday, the "preparation day."

End-Time Sabbath Apostasy Foretold

Herbert Armstrong wrote in the August 1979 *Good News*,

"In God's Church in our day, self-appointed 'scholars' rose up in what they called a doctrinal committee, devoting themselves, NOT to discovering any NEW TRUTH -- but trying to DISprove the TRUE DOCTRINES Jesus Christ put into His Church through His apostle, and inject false doctrines into the Church of God.

"This very thing happened in the days of the apostle Paul and the original apostles. And Satan DID BLIND AND DECEIVE THOSE WHO, WITH HONEST HEARTS, HAD ACCEPTED GOD'S TRUTH!

"Brethren, do we think we are so superior to those of the first, second and third centuries that Satan could not have tried to pervert God's TRUTH today?" (emphasis his).

After the death of Moses, God commanded Joshua, "Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to ALL THE LAW, which Moses my servant commanded thee: TURN NOT FROM IT to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. This book of the LAW shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt MEDITATE therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for THEN thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success" (Josh.1:7-8).

Soon after Joshua's death, however, the children of Israel began to go astray, following

after other gods, and violating the Sabbath commandment (see the entire book of Judges).

Likewise, in our own end-time generation, since the death of Herbert Armstrong, wolves have entered the church of God and led it back into Babylonian doctrines and customs!

God commands all His people, from priests to ministers, from elders to lay members, to observe the seventh day Sabbath and to keep it holy, and refrain from any work on it (Exo.20:8-11). This commandment was so holy that God commanded His people NOT to even work on His Tabernacle – not to light any fires – on the Sabbath day, to make silver or brass tools or implements, *even for the Tabernacle itself* (Exodus 35:3). Such work on the Sabbath day was strictly forbidden! Notice how this command is sandwiched in a chapter devoted to Tabernacle instructions (Exo.35:3-35; 36:1-4).

Yet, despite this plain commandment of God, the Worldwide Church of God leaders in 1990, four years after the death of Herbert Armstrong, gave the "okay" for Church members, and hired contractors, to work on building additional classrooms and dormitories at Ambassador College, at Big Sandy, Texas, *on the weekly Sabbath day!* They called this work "an ox in the ditch," because construction had fallen behind schedule, and they wanted to finish the buildings before the fall semester opened. A report sent to me stated:

"(Big Sandy, TX) As construction of additional classroom and dormitory facilities on the Big Sandy campus of Ambassador College continued to fall behind schedule, college officials recently approved for the general contractor responsible for construction to *BEGIN WORKING ON SATURDAYS* to meet the deadline set by the college. Until recently, the Worldwide Church of God, which owns and operates the college, had required construction to cease during each Saturday, which the church observes as the Sabbath. Ambassador College, which also has another campus in Pasadena, CA is closing that campus and relocating its students to the campus in Big Sandy. The reason for the change in policy was the need to complete the classroom and dormitory buildings in time for the start of the new fall semester in September."

Since that inauspicious beginning, the church has totally abandoned the weekly Sabbath!

Is it any wonder, with this lackadaisical attitude toward God's Sabbath, that in the end of 1994, Joseph Tkach finally did the inevitable -- and *abolished Sabbath observance as a requirement for membership in the Worldwide Church of God?*

Is it any wonder, also, that forty weeks after he announced that the "New Covenant" did away with the Sabbath and annual Holy Days, and that working on the Sabbath was all right, and even playing golf -- that God Almighty *took his life* and he died of the terrible ravages of cancer to his entire body – shortly after this dramatic change in church doctrine and practice?

It has erupted on a massive scale! It has struck like a huge avalanche!

In Leviticus God told Moses and all Israel, "Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day is the sabbath of REST, an holy convocation; ye shall do NO WORK therein: it is the sabbath of the Lord in ALL YOUR DWELLINGS" (Lev.23:3).

Ancient Israel greatly polluted God's Sabbaths, and incurred His fury and wrath (Ezek.20:13, 16, 21), so God hurled them into frightful captivity and slavery to cruel, brutal, ruthless oppressors.

God is no respecter of persons (Rom.2:11). He changes not (Mal.3:6). He will hurl modern Sabbath-breakers into horrible captivity and slavery just as He did 2,500 years ago!

Will Almighty God BLESS those who clearly and violently transgress and forsake and trample upon His eternal divine LAW? Or will He CURSE any who so flagrantly and cavalierly flout and disrespect and despise His divine commandment?

These things are very serious matters! The apostle Paul foretold that in the end times there would be "a FALLING AWAY FIRST" (II Thess.2:3). He wrote, "Evil is *already insidiously at work*" (v.7, Phillips Translation). He spoke of a great deceiver arising, even in God's Church, a "lawless man" who sets himself up, and who "will come with evil's undiluted power to deceive, for they have REFUSED TO LOVE THE TRUTH which could have saved them" (v.10). Do YOU have the "love of the Truth"? If not, you are in grave peril. Paul writes, "God sends upon THEM, therefore, the FULL FORCE of evil's delusion, so that they put their faith in an *UTTER FRAUD* and meet the inevitable judgment of all who have REFUSED to believe the TRUTH and who have made evil their playfellow" (vs.11-12, Phillips).

Sabbath-breaking is a very serious SIN in the sight of God Almighty! He ordained the Sabbath as a day of rest, and His WRATH will be revealed against those who ought to know better, but who justify in their own minds DISOBEDIENCE to God's Law! Such people are the "children of wrath," (Eph.2:3) and "children of disobedience" (Col.3:6; Eph.2:2, 5:6). The apostle Paul wrote in unmistakable terms, "The WRATH OF GOD is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who SUPPRESS THE TRUTH by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God made it plain to them" (Rom.1:18-19).

Persecution for Sabbath Obedience

Some of God's people have faced the loss of a good job because of refusal to work on the weekly Sabbath day, as God commands. One person was told by his boss that he had to work from 9 till 5:30 PM, on Friday, and that there were no exceptions. The employee told him that he couldn't work after sunset on Friday, but the boss wouldn't listen to him, and the union gave him no backing whatsoever.

We know that the Sabbath is from sunset to sunset (Lev.23:32). The day, according to God's Word, begins at sunset (Gen.1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31). We know also that God says that we are not to do our regular work or labor of earning a living on the Sabbath day.

Jesus Christ prophesied that His people would be persecuted – even put to death – for choosing to follow Him and obey His commandments. The day is coming when Sabbath keepers will be harassed, persecuted, hounded, and even killed, for their faithfulness to God (Matt.10:34-39; John 16:1-4; Rev.2:10).

Will you be able to stand strong when trials come?

The apostle Paul wrote, "In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (II Tim.3:12). God allows these trials to help us develop sterling godly character. Therefore, Paul writes, "Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong. Do everything in love" (I Cor.16:13-14). James wrote: "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything" (James 1:2-4).

Peter wrote, "Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?" (I Pet.4:12-17).

Peter also wrote that our inheritance is being preserved in heaven for us, unfading and imperishable, till the coming of Christ. He declared, "In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith -- of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire -- may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls" (I Pet.1:6-9).

Sabbath work problems are going to increase in the years ahead. Persecution is bound to increase as we near the end of this age, and Satan stirs up his world against God's people, and all Sabbath-keepers.

Certainly, a person facing a problem with being demanded to work on the Sabbath, or being "fired," has every right to seek the advice and help of an attorney familiar with work laws and regulations, as they affect religious beliefs. Seventh day Adventists, Jews, and others have faced these critical issues at the workplace. There are laws against discrimination against employees on religious grounds or for religious beliefs, including belief in the holy Sabbath. Therefore, if there are such laws which could apply, a person should consult a legal attorney in his area who is familiar with the Sabbath work laws and problems. This, however, is no guarantee that a person won't lose his job due to the Sabbath. In some cases, work on the Sabbath might be deemed "vital" to the employers due to the nature of the job.

Sometimes, no matter what we do to try to solve a problem, it still won't go away, and becomes a serious "trial." We may have to face the loss of a job in order to obey God. We may have to choose between serving "Mammon" (money) or the Messiah -- choose between obeying God's Law, and compromising -- choose between life and death.

God says, "See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you . . .

"But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed . . .

"This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now CHOOSE LIFE, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life . . ." (Deut.30:15-20).

Chapter 6

God's Sabbath – a Day Beyond Space and Time

There is much more to God's weekly Sabbath day than most people have perceived. What is its true import and meaning? What is its intrinsic value? Why do we observe it? Here is new profound insight into God's uniquely special "holy day."

Since the Jewish people have observed the seventh day Sabbath of God, which He ordained and created at "Creation" itself, the Jews have a great deal of insight into the significance of this holy day, and its meaning for mankind.

It is, first of all, very important that we understand how the Sabbath day is related to creation itself. It is no accident that God "created" the Sabbath day at the very end of "Creation week," thus identifying this day with Creation, as well as "rest."

In the book *Judaism*, by Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg, we read: "In a basic Rabbinic image, mortals are God's partners in the work of creation. God labored and then He rested; human beings labor to perform their creative tasks and they, too, must rest" (p.170).

The Big Mistake

After the days of Ezra, prior to the time of Christ, however, the Jewish rabbis added to the Torah's commandments regarding the Sabbath. The Mishnah, the code of Jewish law edited by Rabbi Judah the Prince in the second century after Christ, is the legal aspect of the Talmud, which is the record of three centuries of exegesis of the Mishnah. The added Jewish rules for the Sabbath are contained in the Mishnah, with a comment or two of interpretation found in the Talmud.

To the Jews, Sabbath observance became so important, that it became almost a religion in itself! Says the Mishnah:

"The rules about the Sabbath, Festal offering and sacrilege are like *mountains hanging by a hair*, for there is *scant* teaching about them in Scripture while *the rules are many*" (Mishnah *Hagigah* 1:8).

Why did the Jewish rabbis add so many rules and laws about the observance of the Sabbath? In a nutshell, they were very concerned about God's wrath for disobedience of His holy day. They knew that Judah was sent into captivity because of idolatry and sabbath-breaking, in the days of the Babylonian empire under king Nebuchadnezzar. Fearing lest they should be cast out and into captivity once again, they focused mightily upon the Sabbath, in an attempt to insure that they would not be "guilty" of Sabbath breaking in the future.

However, in God's sight, an exaggerated sense of the Sabbath, and a manmade added "basket" of laws regarding its observance, is just as bad as neglect and negligence in Sabbath observance! Both extremes are to be avoided like the plague!

That is why when Jesus healed the sick on the Sabbath, they were outraged. When He commanded a man whom He had healed on the Sabbath to pick up his bed and walk, they were infuriated, and accused Him of desecrating the Sabbath day by permitting "work" on it -- the work of carrying an object such as a bed roll (see John 5:6-12; Matt.9:6; Mark 2:11; Luke 5:24).

To the Jews it was a violation of the Law to reap or "harvest" on the Sabbath -- and that included ANY picking of grain from a field -- even a few kernels to eat on the spot! When Jesus' disciples went through a wheat field, plucking the ears of wheat to eat, the Pharisees and rabbis found fault with them (Mark 2:23-24). Jesus, however, rebuked them for their rigid and rigorous interpretation of the Sabbath law, pointing out that what the disciples did was indeed permitted because they were hungry -- even as it was all right for David and those with him to eat the shewbread, which technically only the priests could eat, since they were in need and hungry at the time (Mark 2:25-26; Luke 6:1-5).

To the Pharisees, "healing" or "curing" a man of an illness was considered "work," and something which must not be done on the Sabbath day. However, Jesus deliberately healed a man whose right hand was withered *on the Sabbath day*, thus performing "work" in their eyes (Luke 6:6-10). As a result of this "work," which the religious leaders considered a flagrant violation of the Sabbath command to rest, "they were filled with madness; and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus" (Luke 6:11).

The Jews had gone so far as to make an IDOL out of a day itself! They virtually *worshipped the day*, instead of the One who created the Day -- the Messiah Himself!

John tells us, "Therefore the Jews sought the more to *kill him*, because he not only had *broken the sabbath*, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God [that is, on the same plane as God]" (John 5:18).

Getting a Balanced Approach

The Jewish leaders did admit, however, that "Whenever there is doubt as to whether a life may be in danger, the *laws of the Sabbath may be suspended*" (Mishnah *Yomah* 8:6). Thus in extreme emergencies, they would admit that the Sabbath could be broken to "save life."

However, Jesus took this principle many steps further! He declared it was all right to

break the Sabbath to heal or help the sick or injured, even if life were not threatened. He declared it was all right to carry a bed on the Sabbath, if one had just been healed. By His own statement, He showed that this kind of activity was not the sort which was originally forbidden on the Sabbath. Carrying one's pallet or bed mattress was not forbidden at all.

In addition, Jesus plainly showed it was all right to harvest a little grain for eating on the Sabbath, if you were hungry and a field were near-by.

Clearly, Orthodox Judaism took the Sabbath command and made it into a strict and onerous burden. Imagine! According to Orthodox Jewry, you could not tie your shoelace on the Sabbath, or even untie it! You could not strike a match -- or blow one out! You could not pick up an object on the ground -- that would be considered "lifting"!

And on and on it went -- to the detriment of the people, who began to develop a negative attitude toward the Sabbath. The Pharisees themselves began to look down on others who did not agree with their legalistic approach.

The Jewish religious leaders made such a fetish out of the Sabbath itself, that Rabbi Levi is reputed to have said:

"If the Jewish people would observe the Sabbath properly even once, the son of David [the Messiah] would come. Why? Because *observing the Sabbath is equal to all the other commandments in importance*" (*Exodus Rabbah* 25:12).

We must strive for balance in regard to God's commandments and laws. Nowhere does the Torah, or Word of God, state that Sabbath obedience is equal to all the other commandments combined in importance. That is sheer nonsense! Rather, as the apostle James so plainly tells us, all the commandments of God are equally important, as parts of a divine chain. He wrote: "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou are become a transgressor of the law" (Jas.2:10-11).

The Rigorous and Ascetic Sabbath Cults

In the days of the Second Temple, after the time of the Maccabees, various sects and cults began to develop among the Jewish people, including the sects of the Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, and Samaritans. Some of these held the Sabbath to be a rigorous and exceedingly strict day of austerity and abstinence. Writes Hayyim Schauss in *The Jewish Festivals: History and Observance*:

"There were among the Jews certain groups and sects for whom the Sabbath had only a rigorous and ascetic character. No fire or light was allowed on the Sabbath, even when that fire or light was kindled before the Sabbath. One was scarcely allowed to stir or move on the Sabbath. During the days of the second Temple sects and groups which observed this rigorous Sabbath included *the Samaritans, the Essenes, and probably, the Sadducees*; in later times the Kairites were added to these sects. Among the Pharisees, however, and that means among the great majority of the people, the Sabbath never assumed this one-sided, rigorous character.

It is true that the *Pharisees increased the prohibitions of work on the Sabbath down to the most minute detail*, but, on the other hand, they eased, in many respects, the rigor of the Sabbath rest and preserved the character of the Sabbath as a day of delight and joy. They did more than permit the burning of lights on Friday night; they declared it a precept. They permitted walks of two thousand cubits in any one direction on the Sabbath, and, provided food had been placed at that point on the day before, the place was considered an abode and a further walk of two thousand cubits was allowed. If it was a question of succoring the sick, of saving an endangered life, breaking the law was allowed. There were many such moderations of the rigorous Sabbath rest, for the Sabbath was given to the Jews, not the Jews to the Sabbath, said the Pharisees" (p.11-12).

Although the Pharisees, as a whole, were somewhat more moderate in their Sabbath rules and requirements than the competing sects of the Essenes and Sadducees, it is obvious that they were much more strict than Jesus Christ Himself. The Messiah said they "tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them" (Matthew 23:4, NIV).

The Pharisees also were extremely legalistic and rigorous in their interpretation of the Sabbath laws. But even among the Pharisees there were disputes between the School of Shammai, which tended to be on the strict side, and the school of Hillel, which tended to be more liberal and permissive. At the time when Christ walked the streets of Jerusalem, and the neighboring regions, it was the School of Shammai which was in power and authority, and which no doubt led the censure and criticism of Christ and His disciples regarding their Sabbath observance.

"Holiness in Time"

Nevertheless, there are some vital insights and understanding imparted to us concerning the Sabbath from the Jewish people. The Jewish philosopher Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907-1973) declared of the Sabbath day:

"Judaism teaches us to be attached to *holiness in time*, to be attached to sacred events, to learn how to consecrate sanctuaries that emerge from the magnificent stream of a year. The Sabbaths are our great cathedrals

"One of the most distinguished words in the Bible is the word *qadosh*, holy; a word which more than any other is representative of the mystery and majesty of the divine. Now what was the first holy object in the history of the world? Was it a mountain? Was it an altar?

"It is, indeed, a unique occasion at which the distinguished word *qadosh* is used for the first time: in the Book of Genesis at the end of the story of creation. How extremely significant is the fact that it is applied to time: 'And God blessed the seventh *day* and made it *holy*' [Gen.2:3]. There is no reference in the record of creation to any object in space that would be endowed with the quality of holiness.

". . . 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" (*Judaism*, p.176).

Preparing for the Sabbath

To properly observe the Sabbath day, it is necessary for "preparation" to be made in advance of the day itself. That is, Friday is considered the normal "preparation day." This principle is derived from Exodus 16:5, where God says relative to the Sabbath day, "On the sixth day *they shall prepare . . .*" Says Rabbi Judah the Pious (1150-1207), one of the saintliest men of medieval German Jewry, about Sabbath preparation:

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy' [Exo.20:8]. But is one liable to forget the Sabbath day? For it does recur every seventh day. The verse means to imply that one must remember to remove those things which would make him forget to remember the Sabbath. For example, one should not be sad on the Sabbath . . . Each Sabbath, one should do those things which remind him that it is a Sabbath. . .

"On the sixth day they shall prepare' [Exo.16:5]. One must very diligently prepare for the Sabbath in advance. He must be diligent and quick in this as one who has heard that the Queen is going to lodge at his home, or as one who has heard that a bride and all her company are coming to his home. What would he do in such instances? He would greatly rejoice and say, 'They do me great honor by staying under my roof.' He would say to his servants, 'Make the house ready, set it in order, sweep it out and make the beds in honor of those who are coming. I shall go to buy as much bread, meat and fish as I can, in their honor.' What, for us, is greater than the Sabbath? The Sabbath is a bride, a Queen, the Sabbath is called a delight. Therefore, we surely must take pains to prepare for the Sabbath; each person himself must prepare, even though he has one hundred servants" (*Sepher Hasidim*, quoted in *Judaism*, p.175).

In our modern age, all too often we forget, or neglect, to *prepare in advance* for God's weekly holy day as we should! We ought to look forward with anticipation toward the Sabbath rest, from the moment the new week begins, and begin preparing for it. But the most special preparation ought to be done on Friday, the "preparation day," itself.

Prayers for the Sabbath

In Jewish liturgy, there are special prayers for the Sabbath day, and then the prayer over the wine, called the *kiddush*, the symbol of joy, with which the Friday evening meal, the Sabbath festive meal, begins. Although these prayers need not be followed literally, they are good to be aware of, and are useful. The regular Sabbath prayer is rich with symbolism and meaning, and goes like this (in English):

"Those who celebrate the Sabbath rejoice in Your kingship, hallowing the seventh day, calling it a delight. All of them truly enjoy your goodness. For it pleased You, to sanctify the seventh day, calling it the most desirable day, a reminder of Creation.

The Sabbath not only points back to Creation, and the God of Creation, but it also points like a signpost to the future, the seventh week in God's celestial Plan -- the Millennial reign of

the Messiah who is shortly to come! Thus it points both forward and backward -- to the past, and to the future.

Also, the Sabbath represents not only a reminder of the original Creation, completed long ago, but is a constant weekly reminder of the *continuing Creation* which is still going on -- that is, God is still in the process of "creating" perfect, righteous, holy character in human beings, so that they may one day join Him in His Kingdom, which is typified by the Sabbath as well. God is even today creating *His holy character* within us. Those who are separated unto Him, by observance of His holy day, are uniquely His, and show that they belong to Him by observing the Sabbath -- and in so doing, show that they are His people, whom He is fashioning and shaping into His perfect character image and likeness.

The Sabbath prayer continues:

"Our God and God of our ancestors, accept our Sabbath offering of rest. Add holiness to our lives with Your mitzvot [commandments] and let Your Torah be our portion. Fill our lives with Your goodness and gladden us with Your triumph. Cleanse our hearts and we shall serve You faithfully. Lovingly and willingly, Lord our God, grant that we inherit Your holy gift of the Sabbath forever, so that Your people Israel who hallow Your name will always find rest on this day. Praised are You, Lord who hallows the Sabbath" (Trans. from *Siddur Sim Shalom*, p.435, 437, in *Judaism*, p.177).

Another Sabbath prayer, prayed at the beginning of each Sabbath, declares:

"Praised are You, Lord our God, King of the universe whose mitzvot [commandments] add holiness to our lives, cherishing us through the gift of His holy Sabbath granted lovingly, gladly, a reminder of Creation. It is the first among our days of sacred assembly which recall the Exodus from Egypt. Thus You have chosen us, endowing us with holiness, from among all peoples by granting us Your holy Sabbath lovingly and gladly. Praised are You, Lord who hallows the Sabbath" (*Siddur Sim Shalom*, p.319).

In an ancient Jewish legend, God speaks to the children of Israel, saying, "My children, if you are willing to accept the Torah and observe its precepts [mitzvot, or commandments], I will grant you a most precious gift."

"And what is this precious gift to be?" ask the children of Israel.

"The world-to-come," is the reply.

"Tell us what the world-to-come is like," retort the children of Israel.

And God responds, "I have already given you the Sabbath. The Sabbath is a taste of the world-to-come."

The Most Important Holy Day

The weekly Sabbath day, above all things, is a day of rest and spiritual rejuvenation and

refreshing. It is the "day of joy" of the entire week. Properly observed, the Sabbath draws families together, and parents and children dine together on this great day. They laugh together, sing together, enjoy each other's company. They study the Torah, the Word of God, together. They enact the role of a united, growing, harmonious *family* of God.

The Sabbath is considered the most important day of the Jewish calendar -- even more important than Yom Kippur or any of the other annual holy days. In one sense, it is more important than the other holy days for a very obvious reason -- it is observed *52 weeks in a year*, that is, *once every seven days!* The other holy days or "Sabbaths" of God are observed only once a year!

The Sabbath is even more important than Yom Kippur, because the penalty for desecrating the Sabbath is death itself. Violation of this day was a very serious matter. We read in the Torah: "Whosoever doeth any work in the sabbath day, he shall *surely be put to death*" (Exodus 31:15); "every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death" (v.14). On the other hand, the penalty for desecrating Yom Kippur, or the Day of Atonement, is banishment or excommunication from the people of God, the assembly of His children (Lev.23:30). In essence, then, the weekly Sabbath day is the *most important day of the year!*

God "rested" on the Sabbath day, setting us an example of what He desires us to do on this day (Gen.2:1-3). Says Harold S. Kushner in his book *To Life!* concerning this "rest":

"The two words used in Biblical Hebrew to describe God resting on that first Sabbath are not the usual words for resting. The first means 'He ceased His labors,' and the second means, 'He got His soul back.' We are commanded to rest on the seventh day first to demonstrate our freedom from slavery, and second to get our souls back.

"We are commanded to rest on the seventh day, but 'rest' is defined as more than sleeping late and doing nothing strenuous. It has at least three other dimensions.

"First, Sabbath rest is defined as leaving the world alone, restraining our impulse to tinker with it. There will be six days coming up to work at fixing what is wrong with the world. For one day, let well enough alone. Sometimes the best way to solve a problem is to stop fussing with it and let it take care of itself.

"Second, Sabbath rest is defined as freedom from obligation. You don't *have* to do anything. . . My own definition of Sabbath observance would involve taking my watch off at sunset Friday and not looking at it until sunset on Saturday . . . There is perhaps no more oppressive, though necessary, taskmaster in our lives than the clock, as we rush to catch a certain train, fearful of being late, fidget nervously in traffic jams . . . A day on which I didn't know and didn't care what time it was would be a day of liberation for me.

"And finally, Sabbath rest is a time of detaching ourselves for a day from all of our problems, everything unpleasant and unfinished. . . For one day, we try to see the world as it is supposed to be, free of pain and problems, to hold on to the vision of what it could be if we could just finally manage to get it right. We needn't worry; our problems won't disappear. They will all be there waiting for us at Sabbath's end -- the unpaid bills, the family conflicts, the problems at work. But for one day we will

have had the liberating experience of not worrying about them" (p.98-99).

Truly, when properly observed, the Sabbath can and ought to be a "delight" -- a day we put our problems behind us, and just "worship" God in faith and fullness of joy.

All "work" was forbidden on the Sabbath. However, the Bible categorizes only a few activities as "work," including plowing and harvesting (Exo.34:21), and the kindling of fire (Exo.35:3). In their great zeal to uphold the law, however, the Jews went beyond the Scriptural definition of "work" and eventually evolved 39 categories that they called "work" which was forbidden on the Sabbath. The kind of activity that was called "work" was related to the building and functioning of the Tabernacle and the Temple.

Some Jews, today, will not even use electricity on the Sabbath, or turn on an electric light, or a furnace to keep warm (even in sub-zero weather), or turn on a radio or television or use any electrical appliance on the Sabbath. They take the prohibition in Exodus against kindling a "fire" to apply to electricity as well, as it is considered a form of fire.

A study of religious observance in Israel showed that 22 percent of Israeli Jews do not ride in a car on the Sabbath. However, other Jews find it acceptable to ride in a car on the Sabbath to a synagogue, if the synagogue is not within walking distance. Others believe it is all right to use a car for social purposes -- to visit friends, relatives, or a hospital patient -- but not for "work" purposes.

Music can be a very inspiring aspect of Sabbath observance. As a point of interest, some Orthodox Jews do not permit any musical instruments to be played on the Sabbath in the synagogue. According to them, although music was a vital part of Temple worship in ancient times, due to the destruction of the Temple, Jews today "mourn" for the loss of the Temple by refraining from using any musical instruments on the Sabbath! Other synagogues, however, believe that the richness and beauty that music can add to a worship service is more important and adds joy and delight to the Sabbath day, which was never intended to be a day of mourning.

The Sabbath -- The Day of FAMILY!

The ceremony of welcoming the Sabbath ought to be one of the family highlights of the week. The simple ceremony of lighting the candles, the blessing of the bread and wine (the *motzi* and the *kiddush*), and the enjoyment of the festive Sabbath meal together, ought to be a wonderful family highlight and tradition, as often as possible. Neglect of such ceremonies, I believe, is why we have so many split and sundered families, so much of a "generation gap" between parents and children. We have, sadly, never really learned the essence of what it really means to be "family"! How often do modern families even sit down together at the dinner table? Everybody is rushed in and out, like an express elevator, each going to his own destination, getting off on his own floor. So seldom it seems we have time for *each other*, in a relaxed, calm, peaceful, tranquil, pleasant environment!

But the Sabbath, as a "cathedral in time," represents just such an opportunity!

Says Harold Kushner:

"If we do nothing to make it special, Friday night is no different from Wednesday or Thursday night. We have the power and the responsibility to make it special, to sanctify it. . . the Sabbath eve rituals testify to the power we share with God, the power to take the ordinary and make it special.

"On Friday evening, the table is set more formally than on an ordinary weekday. The family will have arranged to eat together. No one drifts in late; no one runs off early. (A psychologist friend of mine tells me, to my astonishment, that the most reliable indicator of how well a student will do in high school is how often he eats dinner with his parents!). In a home where the wife and mother is present, she lights the candles and offers a blessing praising God for teaching her how to bring holiness into her home by performing the *mitzvah* of lighting Sabbath candles. There is also the lovely custom of her reciting a silent personal prayer for the well-being of her family: may all the coming week be as peaceful for all of us as this moment is" (*To Life!*, p.101-102).

Family togetherness! What a rich opportunity! Says *The Jewish Book of Why*, about the importance of the Sabbath in uniting families and sealing the familial bond:

"Families were drawn together on the Sabbath. Parents and children dined together. They prayed together. They studied together. They sang together. They were a family" (p.161).

The prophet Malachi tells us that one of the major accomplishments of the prophet Elijah, or the one who comes in his power and spirit "before the great and dreadful day of the LORD" (Mal.4:5), is that he will teach the basic truths of the laws of God, revealed through Moses, "with ALL the statutes and judgments" (Mal.4:4). One of these special statutes and holy laws is the proper reverence for the Sabbath day! As a day that powerfully reinforces family unity and cohesion, and togetherness, the Sabbath is a unifying principle of the entire Torah and Law of God! By teaching its proper observance, as a family matter, Elijah will --

". . . turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse [that is, in Hebrew, "total destruction"]" (Mal.4:6).

The Lighting of Candles

Lighting of Sabbath candles at the beginning of the Sabbath is an ancient tradition. Although it does not go back to Biblical times, as part of welcoming the Sabbath, and its not required in observing the Sabbath, it is a good practice, for those who wish to observe it.

The custom originated in the eighth century, after Christ, "in order to combat the hostility of the Jewish Karaite community, which forbade the use of *all* light on the Sabbath" (*The Jewish Book of Why*, p.168). The Karaites were a sect of Jews which developed in the eighth century, in opposition to the rabbis and descendants of the Pharisees. They followed the practices of the Sadducees, who were very strict in terms of legalistic interpretation of the laws of Moses. The Karaites not only forbade making any fire on the Sabbath, but even forbade the use of all light on the Sabbath! To counter this heterodox teaching, the rabbis adopted the custom of the lighting of candles to welcome the Sabbath.

The candles are usually lit about 18 minutes before the Sabbath begins (before sunset), about forty minutes before nightfall. One custom is to light two candles at the beginning of the Sabbath, representing the two important references to the Sabbath which state: 1) "Remember the Sabbath" (Exo.20:8); and 2) "Observe the Sabbath" (Deut.5:12). One candle represents remembering, and the other observing. However, some people light a seven-branch menorah on the Sabbath, with seven candles, one for each day of the week, or to correspond to the original seven-branch menorah which was lit in the Temple in Jerusalem, before the Holy of Holies.

The lighting of candles to begin the Sabbath seems to be a good practice, though not commanded in the Bible. Jesus Christ said, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12).

Lighting two candles on the Sabbath, one for God the Father, and one for Yeshua the Messiah, would be a very appropriate thing to do, to introduce the Sabbath and the Festive Sabbath meal. These two lights, representing the Father and the Son, are symbols, even as the sun and moon are the two great lights of the heavens, and symbolize the Father and the Son. "And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night" (Gen.1:16). "He made the stars also" (same verse). This corresponds to the people of God -- the saints! For as we read in Daniel: "And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever" (Dan.12:3).

Jesus said again, "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (John 9:5). He is the light that "shineth in darkness" (John 1:5). He was "the Light" (John 1:7-9), the "true Light." He said to His disciples, "Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have the light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light" (John 12:35-36). As He was (and is) the Light, so we too are the "light of the world" (Matt.5:14), and Jesus commands us, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (v.16).

To light Sabbath candles, in memory of the Father and the Son, the "two great lights," or even to light the seven-branched candelabra, symbolic of the "light" of the seven churches of Revelation, or the seven spirits of God (Rev.1:20; 3:1), makes the Sabbath meal much more meaningful, especially if you have guests present.

In Jewish homes, the lighting of the Sabbath candles is generally done by a woman. Rashi explains that as it was the downfall of Eve that caused the light to be diminished in the world, so a woman should be the one who lights the candles to bring the light back into the world. Interestingly, the Messiah, the "light of the world," was born of a woman, and was thus brought back into the world by a "woman." Therefore it is fitting for a woman to light the candles, but if she is unable, then a man may do it.

Challah -- Special Sabbath Bread

Jewish families eat special bread on the Sabbath day, and annual holy days, called "challah." The Hebrew word *challa* is usually translated as "a loaf" or "a cake" (Num.15:20). The children of Israel were commanded to set aside from the bread they bake a small portion of dough (taking *challah*) for the sustenance of the priests. The word *challa* was first used in the Bible (Lev.24:5) in reference to the twelve loaves of shewbread (Heb., *lechem pahanim*, literally, "bread of the face") presented before God each week in the Temple. The twelve loaves were laid out in two rows of six loaves in each row.

Two loaves of *challah* bread are customary to be placed on the table for the Sabbath meal because when Israel came out of Egypt, God showed them which day was the true Sabbath by a special miracle. He sent them a certain portion of manna six days of the week. But on the sixth day, in preparation for the Sabbath, He sent them a *double portion!* (Exo.16:22). Each person was to gather twice as much on the sixth day, as no manna would be sent on the Sabbath itself. The Hebrew word here is *lechem mishne*, which means "double allotment," or "double bread." In memory of this miracle, then, the Jewish people have two loaves of challah bread served at the Sabbath table.

Another explanation of the two loaves of challah is that the shewbread in the Temple was placed in two rows. Thus each loaf of challah represents one row of shewbread in the Temple. Each Sabbath fresh shewbreads were prepared to replace the old ones, which became the property of the priests. In order to glorify God, and to celebrate the Sabbath, the challah loaves of bread are made in a variety of shapes and styles -- rectangular, oblong, flat, braided, round, filled with raisins, sprinkled with seeds (such as sesame seeds, poppy seeds), to represent the manna in the desert.

Eating the *challah* bread, at the beginning of the Sabbath, or the Sabbath festive meal, also is preceded by the prayer over the bread. This also has special significance to those who know and worship the Messiah, Yeshua of Nazareth! For He said plainly, "I am the bread of life" (John 6:48). The *challah* -- which is the very bread that Christ and the apostles ate two nights before the Passover, before His death on the stake as our "Passover lamb" (I Cor.5:7-8) -- represents the very body and flesh of Jesus Christ! He said, "This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the BREAD that I will give IS MY FLESH, which I will give for the life of the world" (John 6:50-51).

This bread represents the body of Christ, which we partake of at the communal meal, as often as it is possible. As Paul wrote, "That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took BREAD [*artos*, regular leavened bread -- actually, *challah*]: and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: *this is [represents] MY BODY*, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me" (I Cor.11:23-24).

As the challah is broken and passed around the table so all can break off a piece, the leader recites the prayer over the bread, as follows:

"Blessed are You, O Lord our God, who provides us bread from the earth."

"Thank you, O Lord, for Yeshua who is the 'Bread of life,' and through whom we can receive eternal life, and He said that whosoever eats His flesh has eternal life. And He said, 'Take, eat, this is my body which is given for you; this do in remembrance of me.'"

For more information about this sacred fellowship meal, be sure to write for our article, "Are We Neglecting the Sacred Fellowship Meal?"

The Kiddush -- the Wine

Following the blessing over the bread, the blessing of the *Kiddush* over the wine is given. Wine represents the "joy" of life. The Sabbath is a day of special joy, it is fitting that it be introduced by the "beverage" of joy, a glass of wine, "which cheers God and man" (Judges 9:13).

According to the Talmud, the *Kiddush*, which means "sanctification," or "setting apart," was introduced between the "sixth and fourth centuries B.C.E. by the Men of the Great Assembly. It celebrated two events: the Creation and the Exodus" (*The Jewish Book of Why*, p.172).

However, in a more archaic and original form, the *Kiddush* goes back to the very time of Abraham, when he was met by Melchizedek, the high priest of God, "who brought forth bread and wine" (Gen.14:18). Notice that like Christ, Melchizedek brought forth first the bread, and then the wine! Most Jewish people have this procedure reversed, and bless the wine first, and then the bread. However, I believe the better format to follow is that used by both Melchizedek and Christ -- having the bread first, and then the wine -- as His is the right and perfect example to follow, and He commanded the bread first, and then the wine (I Pet.2:21; I John 2:6; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:19-20; Matt.26:26-29).

The wine is a symbol of the blood of the Messiah, who gave His life in love that we might be forgiven our sins (Matt.26:27-29). It is fitting that we drink of this emblem of His blood at the beginning of His day -- the Sabbath day -- which prefigures and foreshadows His Messianic Kingdom. He said He would not drink of the wine again until that day He does so in the Kingdom, at His return -- but we do "proclaim" His death and His resurrection and His coming every time we partake of the wine *Kiddush*. As the apostle Paul declared, "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, *ye do shew the Lord's death till he come*" (I Cor.11:25-26). Clearly, this is something we ought to be doing "often"!

When the wine has been distributed to all around the table, the host or leader present recites the following blessing:

"Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who gives us the fruit of the vine. It is the fruit of the vine which 'cheers God and man.'

"Thank you, Lord, for sending your Son, Yeshua, who gave His blood to pay the penalty of our sins, to cover our sins, to die for us, that we might inherit eternal life. As the wine is a symbol of life, and of the blood of Christ Himself, who died for us,

so we partake of this wine as a symbol of His blood shed for us, as He commanded, saying, "This is my blood of the new testament which is shed for many. I will drink it no more until the day I drink it new with you in the Kingdom of God."

The Blessing of the Wife

Another custom among Jewish families on the eve of the Sabbath is for the husband to read from Proverbs 31, the chapter on the "virtuous woman," and describing the godly woman. Then, upon finishing the passage, he recites the final verses which sum up the blessing on his wife, saying to her, in front of all those guests present, and before the children:

"Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good, and not evil, all the days of her life. . . .

"She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy. She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet. . .

"Her husband is known in the gates, where he sitteth among the elders of the land. . . Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come. She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue in the law of kindness. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.

"Her children arise up and *call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her.*

"Many daughters have done virtuously, *but thou excellest them all.* Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her own hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates" (Proverbs 31:10-31).

This special honor shown to the wife certainly helps bind the couple together more firmly in love and oneness, unity and mutual appreciation and respect.

The Blessing of Children

Following the *Kiddush*, and the blessing of the wife, and before the Sabbath meal, if there are children present, one of the most enjoyable activities is for the parents to "bless" their children at the Sabbath table. Imagine how unifying this is to a family, when parents literally "BLESS" their own children, *every week*, as the Sabbath day begins, or when the Sabbath festive meal is eaten!

First, a general blessing can be recited for each child, or for all together -- the blessing of the priests for Israel. It goes like this:

"The LORD bless you and keep you,

The LORD make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you,
 "The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you *Shalom* [peace]."

After this general blessing on the children, the blessing that is then recited for sons -- the male children present -- is based on the blessing that Jacob made on the two sons of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh. It goes like this, in English:

"May the LORD make you [or bless you, and make you fruitful]
 like Ephraim and Manasseh."

The blessing said for the daughters is as follows:

"May the LORD make you [or bless you, and make you fruitful]
 like Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel and Leah."

At this point, all may greet each other, around the table, "Shabat shalom," "Shabat shalom," "Shabat shalom," which means "May the peace of the Sabbath be with you," "Sabbath peace to you," "May God bless you with Sabbath peace and prosperity forever."

Harold S. Kushner, in his book *To Life! A Celebration of Jewish Being and Thinking*, describes his own feelings about the blessing of the children. He writes:

"In families where there are young children and the father is present, after the candles have been lit, the father blesses the children. He places his hands on their heads and recites the benediction 'May the Lord bless you and keep you. May He send His light into your lives and deal graciously with you. May He look favorably upon you and grant you *shalom*, peace.'

"When our children were young, this was my favorite moment of the week. There is something deeply stirring about a parent blessing a child, telling them that he loves them and wishes them well. (How many adults are emotionally wounded today because they never heard their parents tell them they loved them?) This ritual has the virtue of telling you when and how to do it, instead of asking you to find the occasion and make up the words yourself" (p.103).

Time to Study the Word of God

On the afternoon of the Sabbath, the reading of the Torah was introduced by Ezra the Scribe. He also introduced the reading of the Torah publicly on Mondays and Thursdays. Ezra felt that since many tradesmen could not come up to Jerusalem to hear the Torah read on Mondays and Thursdays, both of which were market days, days of business affairs, that the reading of the Torah on Sabbath afternoons would provide an extra opportunity for these Jews to fulfill the obligation of hearing the Torah read. In its broad sense, the Torah refers not only to the first five books of Moses, but to the entire Bible -- the Word of God.

Bible reading should be a part of every Sabbath day. Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt.4:4).

The apostle Paul declares in plain language: "STUDY to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (II Tim.2:15).

Paul pointed out, further, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect [mature], throughly furnished unto all good works" (II Tim.3:16-17).

Spending Sabbath time in Bible study, drawing close to God, learning more about Him, His truth, His way, is a very important obligation and duty of man. As Paul wrote, "For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. . . For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call upon him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" (Rom.10:11-15).

God's Word is "the word of faith" (Rom.10:8). As David declared, "For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in the heavens" (Psalm 119:89). "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (Psalm 119:103). He asserted with clarity and power, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (v.105).

Drawing close to God on the Sabbath is the *major purpose of the day!* The Sabbath should not, therefore, be so cluttered with activities and things that Sabbath Bible study becomes neglected or forsaken or despised -- or eliminated! God forbid! Although it is not necessarily wrong to watch a little television, such as the news, or some uplifting, inspirational, or educational program on the Sabbath, or to listen to the radio, to similar programs, even these things should not be allowed to intrude into the sanctity and holiness of the day, or to conflict with Bible Study and time spent drawing close to God in prayer, study, and meditation!

Also, in studying the Bible, I should point out that it is not wrong to pick up a pen, or use a pen or pencil, or some other contrivance -- even a computer with special programs -- to study and research the Word of God. However, again, all things should be in moderation and in true godly balance. As Paul so vividly declared: "Let your moderation be known to all men" (Phil.4:5). Do not go to extremes, or excess, on the Sabbath. Remember, it was created to be a useful tool for mankind to draw close to the Creator God -- and to be refreshed, and rested. Even Bible study, or Torah study, taken to excess, can become "work." But refreshing time spent in Bible study on the Sabbath can and should be a pure "delight"!

David put it well, when he declared, "O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day" (Psalm 119:97). He also put it very well when he stated, "for thy law is my delight" (Psalm 119:77). He added, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart that I might not sin against thee" (Psalm 119:11). Memorization of key Bible verses is something that can be done on the Sabbath -- and become a real blessing to the one who reviews, meditates on, and learns by heart the Scriptures of truth!

"A Holy Convocation"

Other activities that can be done on the Sabbath, helping to make it a joy and a rejoicing, are, first, sleeping in late Sabbath morning! (Ah, doesn't that make you feel like a King?! or a Queen!?) You have no "deadlines" to meet this day. It is a day of REST! So -- *rest!* Get an extra "forty winks" in the morning. Sleep in, till you feel truly refreshed.

After you get up, you may shower, or take a bath, and get ready for the day. It is not a sin to take a shower or a bath on the Sabbath!

Then, depending on the time available, and when or if you are able to go to Sabbath services, remember, the Sabbath is a day which is also "a holy convocation," as well as a "FEAST of the Lord" (Leviticus 23:2-3). A holy convocation is a day for meeting and assembling with brethren to worship the Lord!

If it is possible, one should meet with brethren of like understanding, to worship God on His Holy Day. Where this would be impossible, and no assemblies are possible because of a lack of truly converted people in an area, it is possible to fellowship with others through the vehicle of reading articles in Prophecy Flash magazine, and listening to Bible Study cassette tapes put out by Triumph Prophetic Ministries. Many people have found this a wonderful way to spend the Sabbath, and to be instructed, encouraged, uplifted and inspired.

Sometimes maybe a few families or couples can get together, and listen to tapes, and have enriching Bible studies as they study the Scriptures together. As Jesus Christ said, "For where *two or three are gathered in my name*, there am I in the *midst of them*" (Matthew 18:20).

Fellowship, as it is possible, is important, and should not be neglected. As Paul wrote, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But *exhort one another daily*, while it is called Today, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin" (Heb.3:12-13).

Paul also declared: "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And *let us consider one another to provoke unto LOVE and to GOOD WORKS: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together*, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: *and so much the more*, as you see the day approaching" (Heb.10:23-25).

Of course, the most important thing to remember is this: Even if we don't have regular Sabbath fellowship with brethren of like understanding, still, as the apostle John wrote, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly OUR FELLOWSHIP IS WITH THE FATHER, *and with his Son Jesus Christ*. And these things write we unto you, that your JOY may be full" (I John 1:3-4).

Even if we lack human fellowship at times, or even for months on end, we can have total and complete fellowship with God our Father and Jesus Christ our Saviour -- and knowing that, we can have *fullness of JOY*, brimful and running over the top! As Paul wrote, "*Rejoice evermore*. Pray without ceasing. In every thing *give thanks*: for this is the will of God in Christ

concerning you. Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. *Prove all things*; hold fast that which is good" (I Thess.5:16-21).

Other Sabbath Activities

From time to time, on the Sabbath, one may make special plans to go to a park, and enjoy the scenery and animals, and creation of God. Maybe a local lake, where ducks swim, swans go their regal way, or pigeons like to be fed.

One might go on a short nature "hike," and explore the out-of-doors, God's handiwork of Creation. One might go on a picnic to a special scenic place in the local mountains, or at a nearby lake or stream or river. One might visit the beach, or coast, if it is not far, and enjoy watching the waves roll in on the sand, curling and crashing, and foaming up the sand.

Isaiah was inspired to write:

"If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, so as not to do thy pleasure on the holy days, and shall call the sabbaths delightful, holy to God; if thou shalt not lift up thy foot to work nor speak a word in anger out of thy mouth, then shalt thou trust on the Lord; and he shall bring thee up to the good places of the land, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken this" (Isaiah 58:13-14, Septuagint Version).

Whatever activities we allow on the Sabbath should be conducive to the key elements of the Sabbath -- rest, worshiping God, spiritual rejuvenation, drawing close to God, and learning more of His ways -- things which are spiritually enriching activities.

Notice! The Septuagint version of this passage states that IF we properly observe the Sabbath, that it will *INCREASE OUR FAITH in God!* The Sabbath will help us to really learn to "TRUST ON THE LORD," as the passage states. Furthermore, it shows that if we keep the Sabbath, God Himself will additionally *bless* us, and give us the heritage and promises He gave to our forefather Jacob!

"Havdalah" -- Concluding the Sabbath

Just as they "mark" the beginning of God's Holy Day, with a special meal and special prayer and blessings, also to conclude the Sabbath day, many Jewish families conduct a special ceremony called the "Havdalah," as the sun begins to set.

The word *havdalah* literally means "separation, division." The "Havdalah" ceremony, then, is a ceremony of "separation, of saying "Good-bye" to the Sabbath, and welcoming the beginning of the new week. During the ceremony a prayer is recited, and a blessing, giving God thanks for the joyous Sabbath that is waning, and welcoming the new day, and asking His blessing to carry on the lessons learned on the Sabbath, and that its spirit may permeate the new week. The "Havdalah" separates the holy from the mundane; the holy Sabbath day from the regular work day that follows and its mundane activity.

The origin of the "Havdalah" ceremony is also attributed to the Men of the Great Assembly, of the fourth and fifth-century B.C. -- during or shortly after the time of Ezra the Scribe. This custom of ending the Sabbath day thus predates the time of Christ by about four hundred years.

At the Havdalah ceremony, a cup of wine is filled to overflowing, representing the overflowing joy and happiness of the Sabbath day. It also represents the "abundance" of the Sabbath day. As Jesus Christ so plainly declared: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it *MORE ABUNDANTLY*" (John 10:10).

At this ceremony, it is customary to recite the passage of Scripture in Isaiah 12:2-3:

"Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD YHVH [Yahveh] is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation.

"Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation."

The Havdalah ceremony is a pleasant way to end the Sabbath -- with our thoughts focused on God as our Salvation, our strength and our song -- and the thought of irrepressible JOY bubbling up out of the wells of salvation.

Originally, two lighted candles were held during the Havdalah ceremony because the prayer recited used the *plural* form for light, that is: "Blessed art Thou, who created the *lights* of fire" -- in Hebrew, *boray me-oray ha-aysh*. Today, however, in most Jewish homes two candles are replaced by one double-braided candle with a double wick, which provides a more torch-like fire. This reminds us that "the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes" (Psalm 19:8).

The candle is held high, so all can see it, and the blessing is recited: "Blessed art Thou, O God, Lord of the Universe, who created the fiery luminaries in the heavens." The one conducting the Havdalah ceremony then would pray along the following lines:

"The Sabbath has brought light into our life, and given us spiritual and physical rest. Our eyes have been focused on Yeshua, our Messiah, who is the Light of the world. Lighting the candle at the end of the Sabbath, as the first day of the new week begins, reminds us that on the first day of the week of Creation, God said: 'Let there be light.' And so the new week begins with the 'light,' which represents Messiah."

"Blessed are you, O Lord, King of the Universe, who creates the light of the fire."

Also part of the Havdalah ceremony today consists in putting spices, such as cinnamon, nutmeg, and other sweet smelling odors, into a spice box, or goblet, and passing it around for everyone to get a whiff of the fragrant smelling spices. This custom reminds us again of the joy of the holy Sabbath day, which is passing, and "fortifies" us to face the week ahead, remembering the fragrance of God's Sabbath.

After smelling the sweet spices, reminiscent of the Sabbath's sweetness, the Havdalah

prayer is recited. In English, it goes as follows:

"Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who makes a division between the holy and the secular, the sanctified and the mundane, between light and darkness, who has separated the Sabbath and set it apart from the other days of the week. Blessed are You, O Lord, our God, who makes a distinction between the sacred and the secular, the holy and the common."

At the end of the Havdalah ceremony, the lighted candle is extinguished by plunging it into the glass holding the overflowed wine. The origin of this particular custom is obscure.

As the Havdalah candle is extinguished, one may recite the following blessing and prayer, or something similar:

"May the light and joy of Shabbat be mixed together into one, reflecting the truth that Yeshua the Messiah is both the light of the world and the joy of the world. He is the Saviour of the world, who is not willing that any should perish, but desires that all come to repentance, and to the true light.

"Even as the light is mixed with the overflowing wine, and extinguished, so too the Plan of God must eventually be fulfilled, and finished -- completed, and come to an end. The day of salvation must eventually draw to a close. God is patient, not willing that any should perish, but eventually time will run out, and 'there shall be time no more.' May God help us, then, to make use of our time wisely, redeeming the time, because the days are evil (Eph.5:16).

"Blessed are You, O Lord our God, who has given us the week, and the Sabbath day of rest, picturing your Plan, and your Kingdom to come. Thank You, Lord, for calling us and sharing with us your Sabbath-Plan of salvation. Thank You for Yeshua, Jesus Christ, who makes it all possible! Amen and Amen!"

Again, of course these ceremonies are not required, nor do they need to be done every Sabbath day. They are optional, and can help us celebrate the Sabbath more fully. They have the status of traditions of the Jews, and are not Torah, or part of the Law of God. However, as they do not conflict at all with Sabbath worship, they may be done as a part of Sabbath observance if a family desires to do so. The Havdalah ceremony can be an enjoyable way to mark the conclusion of the Sabbath. The Sabbath meal to begin the Sabbath can be a great help in beginning the day's celebration in a positive family framework.

As God's people observe the Sabbath, and even follow such simple customs and ceremonies, it can reinforce in our hearts and minds the uniqueness and separateness -- the holiness -- of God's holy Sabbath day, and remind us how distinct and different it is from all other days.

However, let it be remembered that none of these "traditions" is required to observe the Sabbath. They are merely traditions. One may choose to follow them, or not, according to one's own taste and desire. These things are not mandatory or obligatory -- merely examples of some of the customs of the Jews for the Sabbath day.

The Sabbath and the Messianic Kingdom

How does the weekly day of rest, the Sabbath, relate to the Messianic Kingdom? How does it picture God's Kingdom?

Writes Rabbi Irving Greenberg in *The Jewish Way*:

"The Shabbat is the *foretaste of the messianic redemption*. But even as this enclave of perfection is carved out in the realm of time, the world goes on as usual in the realm of surrounding space" (*The Jewish Way: Living the Holidays*, by Rabbi Irving Greenberg, p.129).

The world of the Sabbath is completely different from the weekday universe, Irving Greenberg tells us. He speaks of the world of the Sabbath as "an alternate reality." In the Sabbath, there is no work to do, no deprivation. Says Greenberg,

"Since such a world does not yet exist in space, it is first created in time, on the seventh day of the week. Jews travel through time in order to enter a perfect world for a night and a day. The goal is to create a reality so complete and absorbing that these time travelers are caught up in its values and renewed" (*ibid.*).

Says Greenberg, "The Sabbath comes to an end weekly, but it creates an appetite and a satisfaction that lasts through the week until it is renewed again" (p.130). He goes on, "This periodic taste of fulfillment became the protection against the bitterness of gratification indefinitely postponed. Every seven days, the people of Israel were 'married' again to the Divine Lover and to the beloved Shabbat queen."

Greenberg continues:

"The Shabbat experience nurtures that special kind of love called *chessed*. *Chessed* embraces the world even in its grimmest reality. Because love accepts life totally, love is not discouraged by its flaws. Simultaneously, *chessed* affirms life's capacity to be perfected. By embracing all of being, *chessed* sets in motion the very process of becoming perfect. A person blessed with the wisdom of *chessed* knows that life is rooted in the infinite. Therefore, life can grow out of its fetters and flaws. Life can outgrow death by creating more life before death comes. Therefore, notwithstanding the universal power of death, life will overcome it."

In these poignant remarks, Irving Greenberg describes how the Sabbath is in reality a sanctuary in time -- and a remarkably powerful reality in itself, picturing and foreshadowing the Messianic age. It is a powerful builder of character, the character that God desires to see perfected in His people. Observing the Sabbath is the route -- the roadway -- the highway -- to the kingdom of God.

The Sabbath is the day of the week which is most thoroughly involved with Messiah. It pictures His coming Kingdom. It is a day of Rest -- and Messiah Himself said, in essence, that

He is our "Sabbath-Rest." For Jesus Christ declared, "Come unto me, all ye that are heavy laden, and *I will give you rest*" (Matt.11:28). He will provide "rest unto your souls" (v.29).

The weekly Sabbath day is a tiny microcosm of the Kingdom of God. It is a foretaste -- a predictor -- of God's Kingdom, and what it will be like. Therefore, every time we observe it, and enter into its rest, we in a sense enter into the Kingdom of God itself! It empowers us, spiritually; it recreates within us the courage, fortitude, and spirit of boldness to face life's difficulties and dilemmas. God works *His Spirit*, and in a special sense *His Sabbath day*, to strengthen and enrich and empower us, spiritually, to do His Work, and to fashion within us His very character and likeness -- His "chessed," which means "lovingkindness"!

Says Greenberg,

"The weekly encounter with messianic perfection saves one from internalizing the indignity and injustice of the status quo. The taste of salvation gives new energy to resist the counsels of despair and to press on for higher levels of dignity and justice for all. It gives the Jew and all who benefit from the Sabbath the renewed strength to affirm with renewed credibility the classic proclamation: 'I believe with perfect faith in the coming of the Messiah, and even though the Messiah tarry, I will continue to wait every day.'

"And when the final deliverance comes, there will be those who will know what to do . . . where to go" (*The Jewish Way*, p.132).

The week consists of six days in which man is told to do his work. This is followed by the seventh day Sabbath of rest. Thus for six days man is commanded to rule the earth, and subdue it -- settle it, and fulfill its potential. But on the seventh day man is commanded to stop working, and to reflect on what he has done, what he has made, during the preceding week, and to put it aside, and to enjoy the peace of the Sabbath.

Says Greenberg,

"The Shabbat rest teaches us that change is completed by peace, and action is enriched by contemplation. Since power is sometimes perfected by restraint, the overwhelming power of God is put aside to allow a truly equal partnership between God and humanity or between one human and another. Shabbat is the completion and celebration of that partnership" (p.139).

Greenberg adds,

"The movement from weekday work to Shabbat is a move from acting outward to developing inward. The Shabbat is more than a day of being, it is a day of becoming. Rest is more than leisure from work, it is a state of inner discovery, tranquility, and unfolding. The ability to accept and affirm life in its own right frees me to become more than I am -- through self-development and through intensified relationships with others. The Sabbath command is not just to stop working, it is actively to achieve *menuchah* (rest) through self-expression, transformation, and renewal. On this day humans are freed and commanded

to explore themselves and their relationships until they attain the fullness of being" (p.139-140).

God has called us to be His "partners" in the expanding Universe -- in the process of Creation of new worlds and new horizons. We are, as the Scriptures say so eloquently, "His offspring" -- His "children," made in His own image and likeness. We are to become like Him in every way! As the apostle John wrote, "Beloved, now are we the *sons of God*, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, *WE SHALL BE LIKE HIM; for we shall see him as he is*" (I John 3:2).

Paul also wrote of this incredible truth, that we are partners with God -- as His very own family, and children: "And if children, then HEIRS; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we might be glorified together." Paul added, that this calling and partnership is so great that, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the GLORY which shall be revealed in us" (Rom.8:17-18).

In the resurrection we will attain what Rabbi Greenberg calls "fullness of being." We will be TRANSFORMED, and renewed, as the sons of God! As Paul wrote to the Philippians, "For our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto HIS GLORIOUS BODY, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself" (Phil.3:20-21).

The weekly Sabbath is a *very vital part of this divine program!* To ignore it, and to trample it under foot, is to miss out on the power and salutary benefits that accrue to those who observe it faithfully, and whole-heartedly! Jesus said it plainly, but I often think we MISS the real depth of the words He spoke to us. He said:

"The Sabbath was MADE FOR MAN . . ."

The Sabbath was a Divine GIFT which God Almighty bestowed upon the human race -- a special, unique GIFT -- an island in the stream of time -- for us to be RENEWED, rejuvenated, re-empowered, resuscitated, and spiritually resurrected -- for us to be REFRESHED! The weekly Sabbath is a time of spiritual RENEWAL, refreshing, and REBIRTH!

Says Irving Greenberg of the Sabbath blessing for mankind, and the family:

"Around the table, in the presence of family, the Sabbath meals overflow with conversation and catching up on family matters. As the joy unfolds, song wells up, naturally. A whole tradition of Shabbat table songs (*zemirot*) developed to express the delight of the day. Since no one need rush off to business, the meal is extended with talk and words of Torah. The pressures of the week dissolve, and parents find time to relate to their children, exploring issues between them at leisure. Parents become the source of wisdom, the indispensable keepers of memory. Learning together becomes a major activity of Shabbat. So important are relationships and intimacy that the Rabbis permitted a married woman to use certain cosmetics on Shabbat that were prohibited to single women.

"One striking expression of this relationship enhancement is the tradition of celebrating Shabbat with sexual intercourse. It is a special Shabbat mitzvah to make love on Friday night. In biblical language, to have sexual intercourse is to *know* someone. It is the act that combines mutual understanding and physical attraction: Desire and relationship culminate in an act of union that touches the partners in body and soul. The lack of pressure and the leisure of Shabbat contribute to the possibility of a higher degree of intimacy and openness with each other. In turn, the union enriches and deepens the individual's sense of well-being and value. Thus, it strengthens the process of becoming more human on this day" (p.140-141).

God's Holy Sabbath is indeed the holiest day of the year. It is a day of procreation, renewal, rebirth, and revival. It both follows a week of creative activity and work, and it anticipates the following week of creative energy and work. It is both a "beginning" and an "end." It is, in a special "time" sense, an "Alpha" of time, and an "Omega" of time -- the "Beginning" and the "End" -- it marks the end of one week, and the beginning of another week!

Jesus Himself said: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty" (Rev.1:8). He added, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last" (Rev.22:13).

Thus Jesus is our true "Sabbath"-rest. Those who knowingly reject the Sabbath, and refuse to observe it, have no part in Jesus Christ, who said, "Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath." The Sabbath is His day. He is "Lord" of it. It pictures Him. We are commanded to rest in it, even as we "rest" in Him.

Therefore, as Paul wrote to the Hebrew Christians of his time, "There remaineth therefore a REST to the people of God" (Heb.4:9). That verse is very poorly translated in the King James. The margin of my Bible says plainly, "KEEPING OF A SABBATH"! In other words, there remains for the people of God the KEEPING OR OBSERVANCE OF THE SABBATH!

Moffatt has this verse, "There is a Sabbath-rest, then, reserved for the People of God." The Jewish New Testament makes it plain: "So there remains a *Shabbat*-keeping for God's people" (Heb.4:9).

God's Word states that the penalty for Sabbath transgression is DEATH. The violation of no other holy day of God required the *death* penalty! The Sabbath, therefore, is very important in the sight of God, who ordained and created it!

Declares a classic Sabbath prayer, in discussing the value of God's Sabbath:

"The people who sanctify the seventh day will all be satisfied and pleased by Your goodness. You wanted and sanctified the seventh [day.] You called it the most desirable of days, a remembrance of cosmic creation" (translated by Irving Greenberg from the *Daily Prayer Book* by Philip Birnbaum, p.149 of *The Jewish Way*).

The Sabbath also pictures a day of "liberation." Writes Greenberg:

"Of all the holy days, the Shabbat alone is included in the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments are recorded not once but twice in the Torah. In the book of Exodus, Shabbat is linked to the creation of the world and to the divine rest that completes it. In the book of Deuteronomy (5:12 and following), Shabbat is linked to Exodus. Here, Shabbat speaks for FREEDOM and an END OF OPPRESSION" (p.149).

Every week, then, as Sabbath draws nigh, it is like welcoming the Messiah with outstretched arms. It is like entering into freedom and rest from oppression. It is in essence a "mini-Millennium"!

The Sabbath is indeed God's wonderful Gift to mankind. We only hurt ourselves by refusing to observe it and worship God as He has commanded us to do.

Let us not neglect this wonderful spiritual treasure.

Appendix

Sabbath Observance

The following article, by Gardiner Spring, is taken from McGuffy's sixth grade reader, a well-known reading primer for American school children commonly used in previous generations.

The Sabbath lies at the foundation of all true morality. Morality flows from principle. Let the principles of moral obligation become relaxed, and the practice of morality will not long survive the overthrow. No man can preserve his own morals, no parent can preserve the morals of his children, without the impressions of religious obligation.

If you can induce a community to doubt the genuineness and authenticity of the Scriptures; to question the reality and obligations of religion; to hesitate, undecided, whether there be any such thing as virtue or vice; whether there be an eternal state of retribution beyond the grave; or whether there exists any such being as God, you have broken down the barriers of moral virtue, and hoisted the flood gates of immorality and crime. I need not say that when a people have once done this, they can no longer exist as a tranquil and happy people. Every bond that holds society together would be ruptured; fraud and treachery would take the place of confidence between man and man; the tribunals of justice would be scenes of bribery and injustice; avarice, perjury, ambition, and revenge would walk through the land, and render it more like the dwelling of savage beasts than the tranquil abode of civilized and Christianized men.

If there is an institution which opposes itself to this progress of human degeneracy, and throws a shield before the interests of moral virtue in our thoughtless and wayward world, it is the Sabbath. In the fearful struggle between virtue and vice, notwithstanding the powerful auxiliaries which wickedness finds in the bosoms of men, and in the seductions and influence of popular example, wherever the Sabbath has been suffered to live, the trembling interests of moral virtue have always been revered and sustained. One of the principal occupations of this day is to illustrate and enforce the great principles of sound morality. Where this sacred trust is preserved inviolate, you behold a nation convened one day in seven for the purpose of acquainting themselves with the best moral principles and precepts; and it can not be otherwise than that the authority of moral virtue, under such auspices, should be acknowledged and felt.

We may not, at once, perceive the effects which this weekly observance produces. Like most moral causes, weakens the power and breaks the yoke of profligacy and sin. No villain regards the Sabbath. No vicious family regards the Sabbath. No immoral community regards the Sabbath. The holy rest of this ever-memorable day is a barrier which is always broken down before men become giants in sin. Blackstone, in his Commentaries on the Laws of England, remarks that "a corruption of morals usually follows a profanation of the Sabbath." It is an observation of Lord Chief Justice Hale, (Sir Matthew Hale, 1609-1676, Chief Justice of England 1671-1676) that "of all the persons who were convicted of capital crimes, while he was on the

bench, he found a few only who would not confess that they began their career of wickedness by a neglect of the duties of the Sabbath and vicious conduct on that day. "

The prisons in our own land could probably tell us that they have scarcely a solitary tenant who had not broken over the restraints of the Sabbath before he was abandoned to crime. You may enact laws for the suppression of immorality, but the secret and silent power of the Sabbath constitutes a stronger shield to the vital interest of the community than any code of penal statutes that ever was enacted. The Sabbath is the keystone of the arch which sustains the temple of virtue, which, however defaced, will survive many a rude shock so long as the foundation remains firm.

The observance of the Sabbath is also most influential in securing national prosperity. The God of Heaven has said, "Them that honor me I will honor." You will not often find a notorious Sabbath-breaker a permanently prosperous man; and a Sabbath-breaking community is never a happy or prosperous community. There is a multitude of unobserved influences which the Sabbath exerts upon the temporal welfare of men. It promotes the spirit of good order and harmony; it elevates the poor from want; it transforms squalid wretchedness; it imparts self-respect and elevation of character; it promotes softness and civility of manners; it brings together the rich and the poor upon one common level in the house of prayer; it purifies and strengthens the social affections, and makes the family circle the center of allurements and the source of instruction, comfort and happiness. Taken from McGuffey's Sixth Reader, Copyright 1879, 1907, 1921.

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