

*THE
SABBATH
IN
SCRIPTURE*

Central Highlands Church of God

*Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavily
burdened, and I will give you rest.*

*Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, because I
am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for
your souls.*

*For My yoke is pleasant and My burden is light.
Matthew 11:28 to 30*

*If you turn your foot away from the Sabbath, from doing
your own pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath
a delight, honourable to the holiness of Jehovah, and
shall honour it, not doing your own ways, nor finding
your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words, Then
you shall delight yourself in Jehovah; and I will make
you ride on the heights of the earth, and make you eat of
the inheritance of your father Jacob. The mouth of
Jehovah has spoken. Isaiah 58:13 and 14*

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THE PRINCIPLES OF GOD'S LAW

Many Christians regard the Ten Commandments as God's spiritual ruler. The commandments show us how we measure up spiritually against the basic points of God's Law. They can reveal areas in our lives where we need God's help.

The Ten Commandments are based on the two great principles that Jesus states in the book of Matthew, chapter 22, verses 37 to 40:

‘You shall love Jehovah your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.

This is the first and great commandment. And the second *is* like it:

You shall love your neighbour as yourself.

On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.’

The first four of the Ten Commandments show us the basis for establishing a loving relationship with God, which includes His Sabbaths. (See Exodus chapter 20, verses 1 to 11 below) The fifth commandment involves our relationship with our parents and also with God as our ultimate parent (ie-family: Exodus 20:12). The final five commandments provide the basis for building good relationships with our neighbours (Exodus 20:13 to 17).

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

And God spoke all these words, saying:

- 1** I am Jehovah your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me.
- 2** You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth;
you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I,

Jehovah your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

3 You shall not take the name of Jehovah your God in vain, for Jehovah will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.

4 Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of Jehovah your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates.

For in six days Jehovah made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day.

Therefore Jehovah blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

5 Honour your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which Jehovah your God is giving you.

6 You shall not murder.

7 You shall not commit adultery.

8 You shall not steal.

9 You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.

10 You shall not covet your neighbour's house; you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbour's. Exodus 20:1 to 17

God commands everyone to keep these laws, which He literally calls His Ten Words. If we love God, we will honour only Him as God, we will know that there is nothing we can make that even begins to represent Him, we will do and say nothing that will detract from Him and we will honour and keep His Sabbaths because He made them Holy and He told us to observe them. If we love God and our physical parents we will treat them with honour and respect. If we love our neighbours we will not murder them, commit adultery with their spouses, steal from them or lie about them. The tenth commandment takes it even farther: we are to even control our thoughts about our neighbours, as inappropriate desire is the beginning of all these sins against them. Jesus says God wants even more than this from His followers who are given God's Spirit under the New Covenant, as he shows in Matthew 5:21 to 7:29.

Yet there are some who teach that we do not need to obey even the Ten Commandments. They say that they do not apply to Christians, thus destroying the basis of God's Law. Usually it is the Sabbath commandment that they reject.

But Jesus Christ says we cannot refuse to keep God's Laws and still claim to follow God:

Do not think that I came to pull down the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to pull *them* down but to fulfill *them*.

Truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, *there* is no way one letter or one dot will pass from the law until all is implemented.

Thus whoever removes one of these commandments *in* the least, and teaches men so, he shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever does and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

For I say to you, that if your righteousness does not exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees,

there is no way you will enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5:17 to 20

These false teachers claim that the Sabbath was only a temporary ritual, or that it has been changed. We will examine the meaning and history of the Sabbath and show that Scripture reveals many reasons why the Sabbath was and still is an important part of Christian worship and it has not been changed.

THE SABBATH AT THE DAWN OF TIME

God's Second Commandment forbids us to make images and worship them. Instead of idols, God gave us a form of worship that is locked into time. God's Sabbaths give us a deeper understanding of His mastery over time and matter and open up insights into His plan of salvation.

One function of the weekly Sabbath is to identify God as Creator. It also stands as a testimony to the method and timetable God used while creating.

Genesis chapter one gives God's account of how He created the heavens and the earth and all the living creatures on earth. Most of chapter 2 gives a detailed look at mankind's creation and purpose.

God clearly states that in six days He brought the entire physical universe into existence and filled the earth with living creatures of every imaginable kind. It is a feat for which God surely deserves praise. He also created our original parents on the sixth day of that week and put them in charge of caring for His Paradise. For that, too, God deserves our worship.

God made, blessed and sanctified the Sabbath Day on the seventh day of Creation Week, right at the beginning of the physical universe (Genesis 2:3). As Adam and Eve had a good relationship with God, we can be sure that they observed His Sabbath and rested with Him. And as death and sin had not yet entered the world, their Sabbaths did not involve ritual sacrifices of animals.

The fourth commandment (Exodus 20:8 to 11) makes it clear that God intends the Sabbath to be both a day of rest from our labours and a day devoted to worshipping and getting to know God.

In Genesis 26:5 God tells us that "Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws." There is no reason to doubt that the Sabbath was part of the system of Law that God revealed to Abraham.

Psalm 81:4-5 suggests that Joseph already kept God's Holy Days when he was in Egypt.

Despite these references, some people claim that the Sabbath was first given to man at Mt. Sinai. Reading Exodus shows that God used the manna to confirm the Sabbath on the way to Mt. Sinai, **before** the Sinai covenants were made. In Exodus 16:28 God asks the Israelites "*how long will you refuse to keep My laws and commandments?*". This is a very strange question if He had only just given them His Sabbath Commandment.¹ Furthermore, in the Ten Commandments He tells us to "**Remember** the Sabbath day."

Why would God allow man to trample His sacred Sabbath for thousands of years, and not make the holy day known to them? Would God show Noah which animals were clean and unclean and yet not mention His Sabbath? Would God teach Abel how to sacrifice to Him after the Fall (Gen 4:4), and not teach him to respect the Sabbath which He had already made holy?

Careful study of the Scriptures given before Mt. Sinai, when God personally spoke these Words and then engraved the Ten Commandments into stone, shows these commandments have been the foundation of God's Law ever since Adam and Eve sinned. We

¹ Those opposed to the Sabbath claim that prior to this occasion, there was no direct command for mankind to keep the Sabbath. They choose to ignore that the Sabbath is the only one of all the Ten Commandments explicitly mentioned prior to this time. In addition to this, numerous events in Genesis clearly show that the ancients knew God's Law, even though no written record of it has been preserved for us that predates the Exodus.

know this, because sin could not be counted without law (Romans 5:12 to 14). God would **not** include a temporary ritual in the very heart of His Commandments. Nor would God make a separate covenant specifically for His Sabbaths and make breaking the Sabbath a sin punished by death if it was a minor issue (Exodus 31:12 to 17, examined in more detail later in this article). The manna was used to graphically remind the Israelites of His Sabbath in a way that they could not ignore and which God repeated for them every single week for forty years. It was not a strange new imposition on their freedom, but instead an act of love from God.

SABBATH COMMAND INCLUDED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The command to keep God's Sabbath is also included in the Greek Scriptures but has been mistranslated in most English translations. Hebrews 4:9 literally says: "Therefore there remains a keeping of Sabbaths for the people of God." The Greek word used in this passage is *sabbatismos* which means 'a keeping of sabbaths'. It completes the restatement of **all** of the Ten Commandments in the New Testament.

The book of Hebrews was written many years after the resurrection of Christ and confirms that the Christian church was still keeping the Sabbath. This belief is supported by the writings of several very early 'church fathers' and by the total lack of any dispute about Sabbath-keeping in the Scriptures. The Scriptures do report a very heated argument about the relatively minor issue of circumcision. Any changes to God's Sabbaths, being part of God's Ten Commandments, would have led to far more controversy than circumcision. In fact, this dispute did finally happen, but many decades later, when most of the church was sliding deeply into paganism.

DID JESUS KEEP THE SABBATH?

So He (*Jesus*) 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 to read.

Luke 4:16

Jesus Christ had no doubts about whether the Sabbath should be kept. He loved God and always honoured His Father's Day of Rest. It was his custom to do so. Shouldn't we also honour God by keeping His Sabbath just as Jesus did (Matthew 16:24 and 1 Peter 2:21)?

Despite the clear scripture quoted above, some people say John 5:18 shows that Jesus broke the Sabbath. Comparing John 5:18 with Luke 6:1-11 shows that His offence was to the Pharisees' laws, not His Father's Law. That Jesus objected to the restrictive Sabbath practices of the Pharisees (the founders of Judaism) is beyond doubt. Jesus kept the Sabbath in accordance with God's teachings, as this example shows:

At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. And His disciples were hungry, and began to pluck ears *of grain* and to eat.

But the Pharisees saw *it, and* said to Him, "Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!"

Then He said to them, "Did you not read what David did when he, himself, was hungry, and those with him? How he went into the house of God and he ate the Presentation Loaves which were not lawful for him to eat, nor for those with him, but for the priests alone?"

"Or did you not read in the law that on the Sabbaths the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless?"

"But I say to you that there is One greater than the temple here. But if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the blameless. For the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath."

Now departing from there, He came into their synagogue.

And behold, there was a man who had a withered hand. And they asked Him, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"; that they might accuse Him.

Then He said to them, "Is there a man among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out?"

"How much more value 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." And he stretched it out, and it was restored as sound as the other.

Matthew 12:1 to 13

These passages reveal the vast difference between keeping God's Law and the Pharisees' laws. The Pharisees made their restrictions the main part of the Sabbath. They had enormous lists of what could not be done on the Sabbath, even to the point of denying hungry men food and refusing healing for the sick.

Jesus, however, accepted that there could be times when simple food preparation might be necessary on the Sabbath. And He certainly demonstrated that the Sabbath was an ideal time to heal the sick. We should follow His example and be willing to heal and care for the sick on the Sabbath. Indeed, Jesus also shows that the Sabbath is a suitable time for spiritual healing and liberation when He frees a woman from Satanic bondage in Luke 13:16.

There is something else which should be emphasised in Matthew 12:8. Jesus not only kept the Sabbath, but He is the Lord of the

Sabbath. That is, the Sabbath belongs not just to Jesus' Father, but also to Him. How can we dare to trample on Jesus' Sabbath if He is truly our Lord?

As 2 Corinthians 5:21 tells us, Jesus is He who knew no sin. If He sinned, even once, He would have died for His own sin, not ours. As sin is the breaking of God's Laws, and the Sabbath is part of God's Law, Jesus could not have broken the Sabbath. (See I John 3:4 & 5. The entire third chapter is very challenging and inspiring reading.)

Applying these principles to ourselves, it is obvious that food preparation and housework should be done before the Sabbath. If that has not been possible, such work should be kept to the minimum that makes Sabbath rest and fellowship possible and enjoyable.

We should also avoid shopping on the Sabbath, and thus encourage shopkeepers to close their doors and enjoy God's rest for themselves and their staff on the Sabbath too.

People involved in essential or emergency services such as hospitals, ambulances, fire and police may be required to work on the Sabbath. As their work involves serving others whose needs require immediate attention, they are observing an essential part of the Sabbath. However, we suggest that they inform their employers of their desire to keep a Sabbath rest. Try to be rostered off on the Sabbath whenever possible so you will be free to enter fully into God's Rest. Those working in non-essential services must decide whether they will keep God's Sabbaths or profane them.

SABBATH MADE FOR MANKIND

Some say that the Sabbath was given to the children of Israel and to them alone. Indeed, the following passage clearly identifies the Israelites as God's chosen nation during Moses' life. It also reminds us that the Sabbath identifies God as the Creator of **all**, including us:

And you, speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'Surely you shall keep My Sabbaths, for it *is* a sign between Me

and you throughout your generations, *so you* know that I am Jehovah *who* sanctifies you.'

'And you shall keep the Sabbath, for it is holy to you. The one who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for every one who does work on it, that soul shall be cut off from the midst of his people.'

'Work shall be done for six days, and on the seventh day is the Sabbath rest, holy to Jehovah. Everyone working on the Sabbath day shall surely be put to death.'

'And the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant.'

'It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever; for in six days Jehovah made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed.'

Exodus 31:13-17

This passage clearly shows that the Sabbath is not a temporary law of minor importance, but is an everlasting Law of such importance that disobedience will lead to certain death. Indeed, God says above that the Sabbath is so special that He makes it an unending covenant between us and Him.

Isaiah states that the Sabbath is for **everyone** who wishes to join themselves to the Lord. It is not restricted to the physical Israelites. This is what God says:

Thus says Jehovah: "Keep justice, and do righteousness, for My salvation is coming near, and My righteousness *is* to be revealed.

Blessed is the man who does this, and the son of man who holds on to it; keeping from defiling the Sabbath, and keeping his hand from doing every evil.

Do not let the foreigner's son who joins himself to

Jehovah speak, saying, "Surely Jehovah has separated me from His people"; and do not let the eunuch say, "Behold! I am a dried-up tree."

For thus says Jehovah: "To the eunuchs who keep My Sabbaths, and choose things I am pleased with, and take hold of My covenant, I will even give to them in My house and within My walls a hand and a name better than that of sons and daughters; an everlasting name I will give them that shall not be cut off. "

"And the sons of the foreigner who join themselves to Jehovah, to serve Him, and to love the name of Jehovah, to become His servants; everyone who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, and takes hold of My covenant; even them I will bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on My altar; for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations."

Isaiah 56:1-7

The covenant that Jehovah refers to in this passage is actually the New Covenant, as indicated by verse 1, which says His salvation is yet to come. This is proved by the promise of everlasting life in verse 5. Everlasting life was not promised under the old covenant. It only promised physical blessings and a long life on earth (See Exodus 20:12, Exodus 23:20-33 and Leviticus 26).

In Mark 2:27 Jesus does not say that the Sabbath was made solely for the Jews. Instead, he says that the Sabbath was made for **man**. God's Sabbath is given to all of humanity.

In addition to this, Genesis shows that the children of Israel are also the children (seed) of Abraham. Galatians 3:29 says if we are Christ's, then we are Abraham's seed too. Romans 11:15 to 20 reminds us that we have been 'grafted' into Israel. This makes every Christian a 'child' of Israel. Remember: keeping God's Sabbaths is a

sign of eternal fellowship between us and Jehovah God.

SABBATH IS A DAY OF JOYFUL COMMUNAL WORSHIP

In Leviticus 23:3 God says:

Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of sacred rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work on it; it is the Sabbath of Jehovah in all your dwellings.

A convocation is a special assembly. The Sabbath is a **holy** convocation, an assembly called by God so we can fellowship with Him. The Sabbath is intended to be a time when Christians can gather together to study God's Word, to pray together and to sing praises to God together. Paul reminds us (the ecclesia - the called-out ones) not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together (Hebrews 10:25).²

The restriction against working on the Sabbath was specifically given to free us from our normal duties and responsibilities so we can have time to devote to worshipping God and to be with others who share our belief in the One True God. The Sabbath was not given to us to be a burden, but to be a time of liberation and refreshment. God says:

If you turn your foot away from the Sabbath, from doing your own pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, honourable to the holiness of Jehovah, and shall honour it, not doing your own ways, nor finding

² Some people claim that Exodus 16:29 teaches that no one is allowed out of their home on the Sabbath. This idea is proved false by the simple fact that God has commanded us to gather together on the Sabbath for worship. The context reveals that the Israelites were not to leave their homes to do work (in this example for harvesting food).

your own pleasure, nor speaking *your own* words, Then you shall delight yourself in Jehovah; and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth, and make you eat *of* the inheritance of your father Jacob. The mouth of Jehovah has spoken. Isaiah 58:13 and 14

The Sabbath is also a day for compassion and equality. God insists that the benefits of the Sabbath are to be extended to all, even to one's animals. All, including Gentiles, are to freely share in God's day of rest:

Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as Jehovah your God commanded you.

Six days you shall labour and do all your work, and the seventh day is a sabbath of Jehovah your God.

You shall not do any work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your cattle, nor your foreigner who is within your gates, so your male servant and your female servant may rest as you do.

And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and Jehovah your God brought you out of there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore Jehovah your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day. Deuteronomy 5:12 to 15

Indeed, this passage also reveals another reason for the joy the Sabbath brings us. It reminds us of how the Israelites were freed from slavery to Egypt, and figuratively, how each of us was set free from slavery to sin by the actions of Jesus Christ. Now we can rest from our ceaseless, and fruitless, efforts to earn our own salvation and revel in our new-found freedom through Christ.

The Sabbath is also a blessing to busy modern families. It is one day where they can set aside their various work obligations and spend the day together, worshipping God and enjoying His Creation.

WORKS, GRACE AND LAWLESSNESS

We do not believe that anyone can be saved by keeping the Sabbath and all of the other Ten Commandments. None of us have been able to keep them faultlessly! As Romans 3:23 states: "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Even when we begin keeping the Sabbath, it does not undo our previous sins of Sabbath-breaking. Only Jesus can provide us with the salvation we need.

We have, however, tried to make it clear that breaking the Sabbath is a serious sin³ that damages our relationship with God. As one of the Ten Commandments, it is as serious as profaning God's Name, worshipping idols and murder. Sabbath-breaking, like all other sins, must be repented of. Repentance means to acknowledge that we have sinned, and to desire with all our being to turn away from our sins and our sinful nature. (Acts 2:37 to 40) It is then that God will pardon us by gracefully crediting Jesus's sacrifice to our account if we accept that Jesus has indeed paid for our sins. As Paul puts it:

But we know that what the law says, it speaks to those in the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may come under judgement to God, because by the works of the law no flesh will be justified before Him, for by the law is the full knowledge of sin.

But now the righteousness of God is revealed apart from law, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, the righteousness of God through the faith of Jesus Christ to all and on all those believing.

³ John defines sin for us in 1 John 3:4 where he says: "Everyone committing sin also commits lawlessness and sin is lawlessness."

For there is no difference; for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption in Christ Jesus,

Whom God set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to display His righteousness, because in His toleration God had passed over the sins that had occurred before, to display His righteousness at the present time, for He is being just and the justifier of the one who has the faith of Jesus.

Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.

Or is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also, since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.

Do we then make the law void through faith? It cannot be *so!* On the contrary, we establish the law.

Romans 3:19-31

Then what shall we say ? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?

It cannot be *so!* We who died to sin, how shall we live in it still?

Or do you not know that all who were immersed into Christ Jesus were immersed into His death? Then we were buried with Him through immersion into death, that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also should walk in newness of life.

For if we have been united in the likeness of His death, then we shall also be in the resurrection, knowing this, that our old man was crucified with *Him*, that the body of

sin might be deactivated, so we should no longer serve sin. Romans 6:1 to 6

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death, for the law *was* powerless in that it was weak through the flesh.

God sent His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and because of sin He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to *the* Spirit.

For those living according to the flesh concentrate on the flesh, but those living according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit; for to be fleshly minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

Because the fleshly mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor can it be.

Romans 8:2 to 7

Indeed, we are free! Free from the law of sin and death, and free from the complex rituals and sacrifices of the Levitical priesthood. But let us not despise God's Sabbaths, break His Ten Commandments and continue to walk in sin, lest these words of Christ are one day spoken to us:

Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter into the kingdom of heaven, but those who do the will of My Father in heaven.

Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, in Your name did we not prophesy, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many powerful works?'

And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you;

depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!

Matthew 7:21 to 23

SABBATH FORESHADOWS THE MILLENNIUM

The Sabbath has two time applications. One application reminds us of the Creation Week, to help us remember that God is our Creator on whom we are totally dependent. The other application reveals to us a fascinating aspect of God's plan of salvation. As Second Peter 3:8 tells us, with the Lord a day is as a thousand years. This passage explains why the Millennium⁴ is a thousand years long. Satan is being allowed to work for six days, each 'day' a thousand years long. His 'guidance' of mankind will bring life on earth to the brink of extinction. At this point the direct intervention of Jesus will be necessary to prevent the earth from becoming a lifeless wasteland. Satan shall be bound and forced to keep a thousand year Sabbath rest. Mankind will be freed from Satan's destructive influence. Under the guidance of Jesus and His resurrected and transformed disciples, the earth shall be remade into a paradise (Matthew 24:22, Hebrews 4:1-10, Revelation 19:11 to 20:6, Ezekiel 47, Amos 9:11-15).

SABBATH TO BE KEPT DURING MILLENNIUM

God's Word shows that His Sabbaths shall be kept during the Millennium, as Ezekiel 45:17 and Isaiah 66:23 tell us. If they have ceased and are no longer relevant, why will they be observed during the millennium, under Christ's guidance?

Incidentally, Hebrews 4:9 can also be applied to the Millennium, as it is the Sabbath 'day' of God's seven thousand year plan of salvation.

WHICH DAY IS THE SABBATH?

Some critics claim that we can not know which day of the week is

⁴ The Millennium is the one thousand year reign of peace following Christ's return and preceding the Great White Throne judgement.

the Biblical Sabbath.

In reality, there are several methods of determining which day of the week is the Sabbath.

The simplest method is to look at a calendar. A standard calendar has Sunday as the first day of the week and Saturday as the seventh day. This sequence has remained unchanged since the time of Christ. Even Pope Gregory's changes to the calendar did not alter this sequence. When he corrected the Julian Calendar, to bring it back into line with the seasons, he arranged the calendar so the day after Thursday, Oct. 4, 1582 was Friday, Oct. 15, 1582. He only changed the calendar date. The days of the week continued unchanged.

Another way of determining the Sabbath day is to see which day the Jews keep. It is certain that the Jews have known the correct Sabbath day ever since God confirmed the Sabbath with manna in the Sinai Desert.

The third method involves the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Mark 16:1 & 2 says in part; "Now when the Sabbath was past...very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb". It is acknowledged by all Christian denominations that they came to the tomb on Sunday morning. As Sunday is the first day of the week it is obvious that the seventh day is Saturday.

The Sabbath, like all days in God's Calendar, goes from dusk to dusk. See Leviticus 23:32 and Genesis 1:19 to confirm this. Thus the Sabbath begins at dusk Friday evening and finishes at dusk Saturday evening. Even Joshua's long day (Joshua chapter 10) only counts as a single day and does not disrupt this sequence.

There is an exception to the above. The Sabbath begins at dusk on Friday and finishes at dusk on Saturday in countries west of Israel and east of the International Date Line. Due to man's incorrect placement of the Date Line, the Sabbath begins at dusk on Saturday and finishes at dusk on Sunday in countries east of Israel and west of the International Date Line. (That is, the Sabbath begins in Israel -where the Date Line should be- and follows dusk around the world from

there. What people call Sunday in the regions east of Israel is, for most of the day, actually the seventh day Sabbath.) Please read *The International Date Line and God's Sabbaths* for more information on this. The article is available on our website. The date line problem means that the Annual Sabbaths (Holy Days) are also observed a day later in countries east of Israel and west of the International Date Line.

HAS THE SABBATH BEEN TRANSFERRED TO SUNDAY?

Some opponents of the seventh-day Sabbath claim that the requirements of the Biblical Sabbath have been transferred to Sunday. Attempts have been made to support this position with scripture. They say some scriptures show that the apostles met regularly on the first day of the week. Let us examine these claims:

Acts 20:7

One passage used to support a Sunday 'Sabbath' is Acts 20:7, which literally begins with "on the first of the week"⁵. The word "day" has been added. As stated above, the Biblical "days" begin (and finish) at dusk. Thus the first of the week actually begins at dusk on Saturday. If we assume that they met together on the Sabbath for worship, as other scriptures show them doing, all Luke is saying is that in the evening after their public Sabbath meeting they went to a disciple's home to have dinner together (as in Acts 2:46). After dinner Paul spoke to them as this was his last opportunity before he left the next morning (ie-the daylight part of that same Biblical day). The address had to be given Saturday night, not Sunday evening as that would be the second "day" of the week. It gives **no** support to a Sunday Sabbath. It does, however, show that it is good to study the Bible and praise God on every day of the week. Daniel, in chapter 6,

⁵ Interestingly, God only gives a name to the Sabbath day. All other weekdays are only referred to by their position relative to the Sabbath.

is recorded as praying to God every day, even under threat of death.

1 Corinthians 16:2

Another misunderstood passage is 1 Corinthians 16:2. It says "On the first of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no contributions when I come." They claim this is equivalent to Paul saying 'Take something to church every Sunday'. However, church is not even mentioned in this passage. He is simply asking everyone to set something aside, in their own homes, at the beginning of each week's work, thus providing for the needy first, then going on to provide for themselves the rest of the week. When Paul actually came there would be no need to ask everyone to find some essentials to give as it would already be set aside, ready to send to the needy brethren in Jerusalem.

Sunday Resurrection

A common argument is that because Jesus rose on Sunday, Sunday has become the Christian Sabbath. However, that particular Sunday was already a special day on God's calendar. It did not have to be made into the Sabbath to be a special day. It was the Wave Offering, also called the Feast of First-fruit (Leviticus 23:9-12).

The Wave Offering was fulfilled in type by the Israelites around 1500 B.C. (Joshua 5:10-12). It always falls on the Sunday during the Week of Unleavened Bread. The true fulfilment was Jesus, the first-fruit from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:20-23).

Furthermore, the Bible says that Jesus had already risen before dawn on Sunday (John 20:1). Jesus actually rose from the dead at dusk the previous evening. There is no scriptural support for Easter Sunday Sunrise worship (Ezekiel 8:15-18).⁶

⁶ See our *God's Holy Days* booklet for a more complete explanation. The booklet also explains the Christian significance of all of God's Holy Days, which reveal many details of God's plan to redeem mankind and transform this planet into a

Pentecost

The same argument is applied to the Sunday the disciples received the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. Again, this day was already a special day on God's calendar. The events that happened on this day were the true fulfilment of the Day of Pentecost.

Pentecost (Greek for fiftieth) or the Feast of Weeks is kept fifty days after the First-fruit (Leviticus 23:15-22). The First-fruit is counted as the first day, so Pentecost also falls on a Sunday. On Pentecost two loaves of wheaten bread are waved instead of the sheaf of barley waved on the Wave Offering, thus speaking of a larger harvest (Acts 2).

Both of these days were kept long before the crucifixion. They were never ordained by God as a substitute for His weekly Sabbath. There is nothing in the Bible to suggest that God has ever changed this system. The Bible shows that the disciples continued to keep these Holy Days **after** Jesus's resurrection (See Acts 20:16, 1 Corinthians 16:8).

Revelation 1:10

It is also claimed that the Lord's Day mentioned in Rev. 1:10 refers to Sunday. There is absolutely nothing in this passage to tell us which day of the week John is referring to. In fact, it probably refers to "The Day of the Lord", ie- the time of Christ's Return (Acts 2:20, 1 Thessalonians 5:2 and 2 Peter 3:10).

If "the Lord's Day" in Revelation refers to a weekday, consider Matthew 12:8 and Mark 2:28 where Jesus tells us that He is "Lord of the Sabbath". This makes His Day the Sabbath. There is no reference to any other day being specifically named as His day. As "God...created all things through Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 3:9) we must accept that Jesus had a part in sanctifying the Sabbath of

paradise. Please write or phone us for your free copy.

Creation Week and that He rested on it with His Father.

HAS THE SABBATH BEEN ABANDONED BY GOD?

Others claim that the New Testament says that keeping the Sabbath (on any day) is no longer required. We will look at the scriptures they use to support their case and see if this position is valid:

Romans chapter 14

Romans 14, read in context, does not teach that keeping the Sabbath is a 'doubtful thing', as some suggest. The Sabbath is expressly commanded by God. Romans 14 was written to chastise the Roman Christians for arguing over diet and fasting on Holy Days. It **does** teach that what we do or do not **eat** on the Sabbath (or any other day) is a personal decision. We should not judge one another on this. We must remember that scripture clearly teaches that we cannot alter God's express commandments to suit ourselves. Such an action is rebellion (sin), not obedience.

If Paul had ever suggested that the Sabbath was no longer important, the pages of scripture would be full of accounts of his confrontations with the Sabbath-keeping Jews on this issue. There is a complete lack of such accounts.

As we shall show, Paul not only observed the Sabbath, but accepted that the Gentile Christians should observe it too.

Colossians 2:14

We are told in the NKJV that Colossians 2:14 says that 'Christ blotted out the handwriting of ordinances, ...nailing it to his cross.' This is interpreted by some to mean that God's Laws have been done away with. An accurate translation of verses 13 to 17 tells us something very different:

And you, being dead in trespasses and the

uncircumcision of your flesh, he has made alive together with him, having forgiven all our trespasses, having wiped out the list of our debts to the decrees which were against us, and he has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

Having stripped principalities and powers, he made a public spectacle of it, having triumphed over them.

Therefore do not let anyone judge you in eating and drinking or in details of a feast or of a new moon or of the Sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the body of Christ.

Paul was really saying that our sins against the decrees (laws) of God were removed by the cross, not the decrees themselves. And he tells us that only the 'body of Christ' can judge us in Sabbaths, feasts, etc. The 'body of Christ' is the group of believers who "keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." (Revelation 14:12).

The word 'is' in the last phrase and the punctuation of the King James version have been added during translation and drastically alter the literal meaning of the Greek.

Note that the "Sabbaths are a shadow of things to come", ie- they give us confidence in what God has planned for us and a taste of the joy and peace that will be ours when we finally live in His Kingdom.

Galatians 4:8-11

This passage is often used to do away with all of God's Holy Days by claiming that Paul thought it was wrong for them to keep God's Sabbaths. However, as Galatians 3:7-9 & 5:2-3 makes clear, this part of Paul's letter is directed to the ex-pagans in the congregation.⁷ He

⁷A few scholars believe this passage does refer to the "Jewish" Holy Days, and Paul's criticism of the Galatians is that they have become like the Pharisees and are excessively dogmatic about how they (and others) should keep God's Sabbaths.

expresses his concern that they are returning to their old pagan holy days. Indeed, the pagan religions of that region had special days, months, seasons and years. None of the terms Paul used specifically refer to **any** of God's holy days.

Paul was not telling them to abandon God's Holy Days. This is clarified by verse 12 where Paul tells them to be as he is. We find that he kept the Sabbath (Acts 16:13, 17:2) and the annual Feast Days (Acts 18:21, 20:6). He also taught the Gentiles to keep the Sabbath. This is shown in Acts 13:42-52, where the **Gentiles** beg Paul to speak to them on the next Sabbath (verse 42). He does not tell them to come back the next day, which is what we would expect if the Sabbath had been done away with, or if the Sabbath had been changed to Sunday.

HAS GOD'S LAW BEEN CHANGED?

There are scriptures that tell us there has been a change in covenants, but people have been deceived into believing that the change involves the almost complete destruction of God's Law. Yet Jesus said in Matthew 5:17-18:

Do not think that I came to pull down the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to pull *them* down but to fulfill.

Truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, *there* is no way one letter or one dot will pass from the law until all is implemented.

As all has not come to pass, for example, the resurrection of the saints and the Millennium, we must accept that the Law still stands. And as Jesus says in Matthew 24:35 "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away."

Throughout Matthew chapter 5, Jesus compares the teachings of the scribes and Pharisees with the real intention (spirit) of the Law. He is not rewriting the Law as many people think, but teaching us

how to correctly apply the Law in our lives. We must learn to distinguish between God's eternal Law and the law that was added because of transgressions against His eternal Law (Galatians 3:10, 3:19-25). Sacrifices were not part of the Law that God originally gave to the Israelites when He brought them out of Egypt (Jeremiah 7:22-26).

The passage detailing the confirming of an earlier covenant in Hebrews 9:16-22 refers not to Exodus 24, but to Exodus 40:33. The tabernacle did not exist when the ceremony in Exodus 24 took place. This passage in Hebrews refers to the later, additional covenant made at Sinai. It was given to the Israelites after they broke the first simple covenant by worshipping the Golden Calf (Acts 7:36-44). This later covenant set up the Levitical priesthood, with its tabernacle, sacrifices and detailed rituals. All of these things were intended to constantly remind the Israelites of their sinful nature, God's holy nature, and their need for God's forgiveness. It was this covenant that was replaced by Jesus Christ. (Hebrews 9:1 to 10:25) God's eternal Law has not been destroyed. Instead of removing His Law, He writes it into our hearts. (Jeremiah 31:31 to 34; Psalm 40:6-8).

God also distinguished between these two covenants by placing one of them (the Ten Commandments written in stone) **inside** the Ark (Deuteronomy 10:3-5). The second, including the temporary aspects of the covenant - the Book of the Law - was placed **beside** the Ark. (Deuteronomy 31:24-26)⁸

GOD'S SABBATH OR MAN'S TRADITION?

There is no scriptural support for altering or removing God's

⁸ This distinction between covenants clarifies issues such as having fires on the Sabbath. The prohibition of fires is first given in Exodus 35:3, and is thus part of the now defunct covenant. However, in keeping with the principle of Sabbath rest, fires, etc should be reserved for cold weather and any work involved minimized by prior preparation.

Sabbath. Very few Christians today keep the Sabbath, even though God commanded us to do so. How has this situation arisen? Why does popular Christianity keep a Sunday "Sabbath"? Does it matter?

Pressure to abandon the Sabbath was originally placed on the Christians by the Roman Empire. After its repeated clashes with the Jews, the Romans were antagonistic towards anything that appeared Jewish. As time passed, the Roman church separated herself from her Judaic origins to gain the support of the Empire. Their efforts were rewarded by Constantine, who established their perversion of Christianity as the new state religion. As the Roman church grew more powerful, and increasingly corrupt, she replaced the Sabbath with the 'Day of the Sun', which was already a popular day of worship in Rome. She also encouraged the Roman authorities to punish the remaining Sabbath-keepers. Indeed, it is a mystery that she pretends to be Christ's Bride, when she is in truth an unfaithful whore. (Revelations 17:1-9)

These things increased her influence, but also fulfilled Paul's prophecy, recorded in Acts 20:29-30:

For I know this, that after my departure oppressive wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. And from among you yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverted things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.

The Roman church actually openly claims responsibility for changing the Sabbath. Please consider these quotes from Catholic publications:

Q. Which is the Sabbath Day?

A. Saturday is the Sabbath day.

Q. Why do we observe Sunday instead of Saturday?

A. We observe Sunday instead of Saturday because the Catholic Church transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday.

(Pg 50, *Convert's Catechism of Catholic Doctrine*, by Peter Geiermann)

"Sunday is our **mark of authority**...the church is above the Bible, and this transference of Sabbath observance is proof of that fact."

The Catholic Record (London, Ont, Canada), 1 Sept, 1923

Changing the Sabbath does matter. God gave His prophets Daniel and John visions revealing the forces behind these changes. The imagery of Daniel 7:25 presents us with the "Little Horn", which symbolizes the man at the head of the Roman church, the Pope. God identifies the "Little Horn" by telling us that he shall intend to change the appointed times⁹ and law.¹⁰ Thus his changes to the appointed times and law are important parts of his distinguishing mark. He has attempted to change both the weekly Sabbath and the Annual Sabbaths listed in Leviticus 23. These Sabbaths are part of God's

⁹ The Hebrew word translated as "appointed times" is used on numerous occasions throughout the Old Testament to refer to God's Holy Days, including both the weekly Sabbath and His annual Holy Days.

¹⁰ Our free booklet shows that the Beast from the Earth and the Great Whore mentioned in Revelation and the Little Horn of Daniel represent the Roman Catholic Church. The booklet examines its origins, its persecution of true Christians during the past eighteen hundred years and what it will do until Christ returns and destroys it. *The Beasts of Daniel and Revelation* booklet also reveals the identity of the "daughters" of the Great Whore of Revelation.

Law. The Little Horn forced other Christian fellowships to accept his authority and "holy days". He persecuted those who refused to compromise their faith. The Little Horn has also taught his followers to worship idols, and to bow before and worship the Little Horn himself as God, thus altering more of God's Law. The Apostle Peter, whom the pope pretends to represent, would not allow men to bow down and worship him (Acts 10:25-26). The Pope requires men to do so and also allows himself to be called the 'Holy Father'. In John 17:11 and Matthew 19:17, Jesus shows us that **only** God the Father is worthy of that title.

Revelation 13:16, using yet another symbol for this evil force, tells us that this beast's mark is on one's hand or forehead. God's mark (or sign) is also on our hand and between our eyes (forehead) as shown in Deuteronomy 11:18, which clearly identifies God's Word as His Mark. In both cases the mark on our forehead refers to our understanding and willingness to obey, the mark on our hands to our actions. Exodus 13, verses 9 and 16 tie God's mark to understanding and keeping the Passover, one of God's Annual Sabbaths¹¹. The Passover reveals the necessity of Jesus's sacrifice for sinful mankind (1 Cor. 5:7-8). Indeed, without trusting in the salvation that Jesus offers us through His faithfulness at Calvary, we can not be saved from certain destruction (John 3:13 to 21).

Exodus 31:13 says Sabbath-keeping is part of God's mark or sign. Deuteronomy 6:4-8 shows that knowing and keeping God's Commandments is the essence of God's mark.

Revelation 14:9-13 presents us with a choice. We can either keep the words of God **and** the faith of Jesus (God's Mark) **or** receive the mark of the beast and the plagues of Revelation.

Do not let your worship be worthless. Jesus warns us to beware of

¹¹ The Hebrew in verses 9 and 10 make it clear that the mark between our eyes refers to us remembering God's Law (literally Torah, which means instructions).

false religious teachings. In Matthew 15:8 & 9 He says:

These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honour Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.

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