

Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?



Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?

By Roderick C. Meredith

*Here is an absolutely vital subject
that is far more important than most
people even begin to realize!*

*It has everything to do with whether
or not you really know the true God—
the Creator. In fact, it directly affects
your inheriting everlasting life in
His soon-coming Kingdom.*

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Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?

Staggering events will soon jolt this world out of its normal routines. *Everything* around you is going to change in the very near future! Man has now come to the time when he can *destroy this planet* many times over. And history shows that advanced weapons of destruction, once invented, have *always* been used by warring nations.

Jesus said that—at the *end* of this age—only God’s *direct intervention* would stop man from destroying all human life from this planet. He said, “And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake those days will be shortened” (Matthew 24:22).

As we swiftly approach the *end* of this present age of man’s rule under the influence of Satan the devil, it is vitally important that we consider whether or not we are really obeying the God who gives us life and breath, for the Jesus Christ of the Bible taught time and again that “empty faith” is *not* enough! In His concluding remarks in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who *does the will* of My Father in heaven” (Matthew 7:21).

In this regard, He asked, “But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46). And, in a heated discussion with the Pharisees, Jesus quoted Isaiah’s prophecy, saying, “Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: ‘This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from

Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?

Me. And *in vain* they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men” (Mark 7:6–7). *Think about that!* Jesus clearly stated that it is possible to *worship God*—and yet worship Him *in vain* by following the teachings of men! Then Jesus said to them, “All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition” (v. 9).

Clearly, then, when the *traditions of men* conflict with the *commandments of God*, we face a *huge* problem according to Jesus Christ!

Did you know that your willingness to keep holy the *true* Sabbath day, which God made holy, *directly affects* whether or not you will be granted eternal life in the Kingdom of God? Did you know that keeping the true Sabbath is—and always has been—a special “test” commandment in God’s sight?

Which Day Is the Biblical Sabbath?

Jesus Christ taught us, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God” (Luke 4:4). Jesus also made it clear that the Bible does *not* contradict itself. He showed that the teaching of Scripture is consistent, for Jesus said that “**the Scripture cannot be broken**” (John 10:35).

The Apostle Paul expanded on this theme, saying, “**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 complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16–17).

If you are willing to *believe* these inspired statements, then you will have *no problem* understanding this vital subject. For the Bible teaches us about God’s true Sabbath day from Genesis to Revelation. In fact, it is one of the clearest and most easily understood subjects in the entire Bible—if you honestly look at the facts and are not fearful about “what other people think.” Remember that in Jesus’ day many of the religious leaders knew that He was the Christ, but would not confess Him for this very reason: “**they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God**” (John 12:43).

Do you have the faith and courage to do what God clearly commands—*regardless of what others think*?

We need to get down to clear, absolute *proof* regarding the true Sabbath of Almighty God. Assume that you were beginning your

search for the true Sabbath on the proverbial desert island and that the only written materials you had managed to preserve after a shipwreck were the Holy Bible and a calendar. If you began your search with a completely open, objective mind, and had perhaps even forgotten the day you had previously observed, *which day* would you *have* to keep after such an objective study?

“Sunday,” you say?

No way!

Why? Because the Bible never commands *anyone* to observe Sunday as a weekly day of worship! Rather, it instructs us to *work* on that day. In fact, from Genesis to Revelation, many verses in the Bible clearly show that, rather than the *first day*—Sunday—it was the *seventh-day* Sabbath (from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset) that was kept by *all* of God’s faithful servants in both Old and New Testament times. And this same seventh-day Sabbath will *continue* to be observed by Christians on this earth during Christ’s soon-coming 1,000-year rule (cf. Revelation 20:4–6)!

Notice the teaching of Jesus Christ in Mark 2:23–28. Jesus allowed His disciples to pluck heads of grain to eat as they walked through grain fields on the Sabbath. He was challenged on this point by the Pharisees, who had *added* more than 60 legalistic “dos and don’ts” to the Sabbath—of their *own human devising*. But Jesus said, **“The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath”** (vv. 27–28).

Christ did *not* say that the Sabbath was made for the Jews, but for “man.” He said the Sabbath (not *Sunday*) is the day He is “Lord of.” Jesus did not give the *slightest hint* about abrogating the Sabbath commandment. Rather, He showed both here and in the verses that follow how to *keep* the Sabbath in a more meaningful way. Again, Jesus said that the Sabbath had been “made for man”—for him to *keep—long before* the Jewish people even existed.

At this point, let us look at the inspired account of when God made mankind—and subsequently gave man the Sabbath. In Genesis 1:1 we read, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” This original creation may have been billions of years ago. The next verse shows that the earth came to a state of chaos and waste. And the succeeding verses describe how God reformed our planet about 6,000 years ago and created the progenitors of the

Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?

plant and animal life forms that presently inhabit it. Now notice verse 26: “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’” So mankind was created in God’s “image.” We were given “dominion” or *rule* over all the rest of creation. But *how* was mankind to keep in contact with his Maker? *How* were we to remind ourselves that the true God is, in fact, the *Creator of all* that is?

Genesis 2:2–3 begins to provide the answer: “And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. **Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it**, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.”

Notice that God “ended” or *completed* His work of creation by *resting* on the seventh day of the week. The word “Sabbath” is derived from the Hebrew word *Shabath*, which literally means “rest” or “cessation.” God *created* the Sabbath by resting on this day and ceasing from creating material things. And He “blessed” and “sanctified”—that is, set apart for holy use—this day *and no other!* By blessing and sanctifying the seventh-day Sabbath, God showed that *His presence is in* this day in a very special way, for of all the days of the week, this one *alone* points to Him in a unique way as the true God, the One who created and now governs the entire universe.

Sunday in the New Testament

The word “Sunday” does not even appear in literal Bible translations. We *do* find the phrase “first day of the week” in the New Testament, but this occurs just eight times. Five of those references describe Mary Magdalene and others coming to the tomb *after* Christ’s resurrection (Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:1–2; Mark 16:9; Luke 24:1; John 20:1).

As we prove elsewhere in this booklet, Jesus was resurrected Saturday evening—*not* Sunday morning. So those references have *nothing* to do with observing the day of Christ’s resurrection!

In John 20:19, we read that on “the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst and said to them, ‘Peace be

with you.” This was not a worship meeting celebrating the resurrection; Scripture tells us that *until they saw Him*, they did **not** believe that Christ was risen (Mark 16:14; Luke 24:27–41)!

The book of Acts recounts the development of doctrine and practice in the early Church, yet *only once* mentions the first day of the week, in Acts 20:7–12. “Now, on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread [i.e., eat a meal], Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight” (v. 7). Was this a regular worship service? No! It was a special, one-time farewell meeting and meal. Remember that the Hebrew calendar reckons days from sunset to sunset. A meal held on the “first day,” lasting past midnight into the morning, would have begun on Saturday evening! Then, at sunrise that morning—Sunday—Paul began the hard work of a 20-mile hike (vv. 11–14)—not what one would expect if he considered Sunday (or “the first day”) his Sabbath day of rest!

In 1 Corinthians 16:2, the Apostle Paul requested, “On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.” This is no endorsement at all of Sunday worship. Notice that the practice was meant to **stop** when Paul came to Corinth! And notice that these verses say nothing about gathering for a weekly worship service to do this collecting. This was not a collection of money, but of food to assist the poor in Jerusalem suffering from drought and famine (cf. Romans 15:25–28). Until Paul’s arrival, each individual was asked to “store up” his contributions—surely in his home. Paul knew that the collection would be bulky enough that it would take several people to transport it to Jerusalem (1 Corinthians 16:4)—not what one would expect if money were collected.

One more verse that some use to justify calling Sunday the “Lord’s Day” is Revelation 1:10. Here, the Apostle John says, “I was in the Spirit on the **Lord’s Day**, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet.” But this does not refer to worshipping on the first day of the week—or *any* day of the week, for that matter. Revelation is a “prophecy” (v. 3) of end-time events. Clearly, then, the “Lord’s Day” is synonymous with the “Day of the Lord”—a future time, mentioned more than 30 times in Bible prophecy, when God will supernaturally intervene in human affairs, executing punishment

Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?

on the nations and finally sending Jesus Christ back to this earth to bring world peace at last. John meant that he was carried in vision by God's Spirit *to that time*.

But even if this *were* talking about a day of the week, which day would it be? Remember what Jesus said: "Therefore the Son of Man is... Lord of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:28). Also, the preincarnate Christ called the Sabbath "My holy day... the holy day of the LORD" (Isaiah 58:13). And in the fourth commandment, He said that "the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God" (Exodus 20:10). Obviously, then, the seventh-day Sabbath is not *our* day. It is—without question—the *Lord's* day! Weekly *Sunday* observance, therefore, has absolutely no biblical foundation.

The Test Commandment

As all Bible students know, the patriarch Abraham was the great-grandfather of Judah—from whom came the "Jews." Did *he* keep God's true Sabbath? *Absolutely*, for God said, "**Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws**" (Genesis 26:5)!

Succeeding generations of Israelites clearly understood from these verses that Abraham kept the *seventh-day Sabbath*—the Sabbath that God had "sanctified" at the *creation* of mankind. And in the New Testament, the Apostle Paul tells us that Abraham is the "father" of the faithful (Romans 4:11, 16).

Many will argue that the Ten Commandments—including the fourth one about keeping the Sabbath holy—were just part of the "Old Covenant" that God made with Israel at Mount Sinai in the days of Moses. These people contend that, because the Old Covenant ended at Christ's death, the Ten Commandments—with the Sabbath requirement—ended also.

But it was at the *beginning of human history* that God made the seventh-day Sabbath "holy time." And roughly 2,000 years later, Abraham, the father of the faithful, set for us an *example* of faithfulness by *keeping God's commandments and statutes*—obviously including the observance of the Sabbath day. Remember, this was still *long before* there was any Old Covenant with Israel!

Hundreds of years later, we find Abraham's descendants being led out of Egyptian slavery by Moses in the Exodus. Several weeks

before the Old Covenant was proposed at Mount Sinai, God wanted to remind His people of the true Sabbath, which He had given mankind at creation. In case any of them had forgotten or become mixed up about His Sabbath—which was possible, since the Israelites had been in Egyptian slavery for several generations—God gave His people a series of signs to make clear to them *which day* He had made holy.

Now examine the account in Exodus 16:1–30. The people of Israel were complaining against God because they wanted more food. So God said, **“I will... test them, whether they will walk in My law or not”** (v. 4). This is interesting—more proof that God’s law was definitely *in effect* even *before* the giving of the Old Covenant at Mount Sinai!

God explained that He would perform the following miracle: Every day of the week except Saturday, a special food from heaven called “manna” would blanket the ground in the morning like dew. The people were to gather it up each morning and eat it that same day. They could not keep it overnight, because that would cause it to breed worms and stink.

But there would be *no* manna on the ground on Saturdays. What, then, were they to eat on *that* day? God’s answer: the *second phase* of His miracle. Every *Friday*, He would give them a *double portion* of manna—one portion for that day and another to be kept overnight and eaten on Saturday (vv. 22–23). This would require a *third phase* of the miracle: God would allow manna collected on Fridays to remain unspoiled overnight, so that it could be eaten on Saturday. From Friday to Saturday was the only time each week they were permitted to keep food overnight—for God was showing them that Friday was the *preparation day* for the Sabbath.

Thus, God was arranging things so they would not have to do the work of gathering manna on Saturday—enabling them to *rest* on the Sabbath, yet still have something to eat that day. “So they laid it up till morning, as Moses commanded; and it did not stink, nor were there any worms in it. Then Moses said, ‘Eat that today, **for today is a Sabbath to the LORD**; today you will not find it in the field’” (vv. 24–25).

Remember that this was a *test*—to see whether they would follow God’s law or not. *So what did the people do?*

Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?

As human beings so often do, they did *not* take God seriously! Some Israelites went out and tried to find manna *even on the Sabbath*. “And the LORD said to Moses, ‘**How long do you [people] refuse to keep My commandments and My laws? See! For the LORD has given you the Sabbath;** therefore He gives you on the sixth day bread for two days. Let every man remain in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day.’ So the people rested on the seventh day” (vv. 28–30).

On this occasion, several weeks *before* Israel came to Mount Sinai, God began performing a weekly *three-phase* miracle to show His people *which day* was—and *had always been*—His holy Sabbath. When some tried to work on that day anyway, the Creator thundered, “*How long* do you refuse to keep My commandments and My laws?”

Who Gave the Ten Commandments?

The Ten Commandments—including the Sabbath-day requirement—have been in existence *since mankind was created*. God was simply *reminding* the people of this important fact.

Next, we come to God’s codifying of the Ten Commandments for His nation of Israel. This was truly an *awesome occasion*. Thunder roared. Lightning flashed. The earth *shook* with the power of the Creator. Then God Himself—not Moses—*spoke* the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1)! Many think that *God the Father* gave these commands and that Jesus Christ later came along and did away with them. But Jesus told the Jews that they had “neither heard [the Father’s] voice at any time, nor seen His form” (John 5:37).

So just who *was* this God with Israel in the Sinai wilderness? He was often called the Rock of Israel (Deuteronomy 32:4, 15, 31; Psalm 18:2, 31, 46, etc.). In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul was inspired to write about Him. He says the Israelites “all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and **that Rock was Christ**” (1 Corinthians 10:4)! The Bible makes it abundantly clear that the One in the Godhead who spoke to ancient Israel was the One who later “emptied” Himself and became Jesus Christ!

During His human lifetime, Jesus told the belligerent Pharisees, “Most assuredly, I say to you, **before Abraham was, I AM**” (John 8:58). Many respected Bible commentaries acknowledge that in this

verse Jesus was clearly indicating that He was, in fact, the God of Israel *now made flesh*.

Regarding this phrase, “I AM,” the *Expositor’s Bible Commentary* states:

“I am” implies continuous existence, including existence when Abraham appeared. Jesus was, therefore, asserting that at the time of Abraham’s birth, he existed. Furthermore, I AM was recognized by the Jews as a title of deity. When God commissioned Moses to demand from Pharaoh the release of the Israelites, he said, “This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you’” (Exod. 3:14). [One scholar] states that “the phrase harbors within itself the most authentic, the most audacious, and the most profound affirmation by Jesus of who he was” (vol. 9, p. 99, 1976).

Yes, Jesus Christ was certainly the God of the Old Testament—the “Word,” as the first chapter of John’s gospel calls Him, who spoke on His Father’s behalf (To learn more about this subject, please write for our free booklet *The Real God: Proofs and Promises*). The Bible also shows that Christ was the One through whom God created all things (John 1:1–3, 14; Ephesians 3:9; Colossians 1:16–17; Hebrews 1:2–3). *This means that Jesus Christ is the One who originally created the Sabbath by resting on the seventh day!* No wonder He is *Lord* of that day, as we have seen from Mark 2:28, for He *made* the Sabbath!

We can now see that it was *Christ’s own voice* that *shook* the mountains as He set forth the great spiritual law of God. As we have noted, that law had existed *even from creation*. But the Israelites had been in slavery, and no doubt their knowledge of the law and the Great God behind that law had become foggy over the centuries. So now God—in the person of the “Word,” Jesus Christ—spoke that law and then *inscribed it* on tablets of stone (Exodus 31:18; 34:1).

Near the middle of that law—with more space devoted to it than any other commandment—is the fourth commandment, in which God reminded Israel again to keep the seventh-day Sabbath:

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the

Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?

Sabbath of the LORD 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 the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it** (Exodus 20:8–11).

Notice that God said to “remember” the Sabbath. They had *already* been instructed about the Sabbath from creation and again in Exodus 16—as we have seen. Then God said to “keep” it holy. You cannot *keep* cold water hot! Likewise, the Sabbath had to have been *made* holy or Israel could not have *kept* it that way! Only *God* can make something “holy”—in this case, a period of time. And, as we shall see, the seventh day is the *only* weekly period of time that God has ever “sanctified” or set apart as holy time.

In Exodus 20:11, God reminds us that the Sabbath points to *creation*. After God spent six days creating, He “rested” on the seventh day. “Therefore the LORD *blessed* the Sabbath day and hallowed it.” Again, no other day of the week has been blessed by God—that is, had His divine favor put upon it—in this way.

But was the Sabbath a part of the Jewish sacrificial or ceremonial law that was done away? Some theologians try to contrive arguments along these lines. But if you will just *study your own Bible*, it is easy to see through this false reasoning. Note that in Exodus 20, *nothing* is said about animal sacrifices, washings, or any ceremonial duties being connected with the Sabbath (cf. Jeremiah 7:22–23), for, as the inspired account in Deuteronomy tells us, the Ten Commandments stood *alone* as the great spiritual law of God. As Moses reminded the people, “These words the LORD spoke to all your assembly, in the mountain from the midst of the fire, the cloud, and the thick darkness, with a loud voice; and *He added no more*. And He wrote them on two tablets of stone and gave them to me” (Deuteronomy 5:22).

A Sign Between God and His People

Later, God—again, the One known as Jesus Christ—made a special covenant with Israel concerning the Sabbath. God said, “Speak also

to the children of Israel, saying: ‘Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a *sign* between Me and you throughout your generations, *that you may know* that I am the LORD who sanctifies you’” (Exodus 31:13).

The emphasis here is that we “know” the true God who sets us apart *if* we keep the “sign” of His Sabbath, which points to Him as the *Creator*.

The preincarnate Jesus continued, “Therefore 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 the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed” (vv. 16–17).

A “mark” or “brand” is something that is usually *forced* on a person or animal. But a “sign” is something *voluntarily displayed*, such as a sign that reads “Jones & Sons” outside a business establishment. In the case of the Sabbath, it points out *who* God’s faithful people are. They have *surrendered* to God and are willing to display the “sign” of the Creator by *keeping* holy the only day of the week God ever made that way. And to the faithful themselves, it is a constant reminder that they do *not* worship “gods” of wood and stone, or figments of human imagination, but the very *Creator* who *made* all the wood and stone—and even the human mind, which often tries to abandon the Creator and come up with its own concept of a “god.”

Notice especially that the Sabbath was to be kept by the Israelites as a “perpetual covenant” between them and God “forever”! Do we find *any* evidence whatever that Israelites who became Christians were to *forsake* that sacred covenant and start keeping another day? Does God have a double standard when it comes to which day to keep as the Sabbath?

No. Rather, according to Paul, Gentile Christians were to be “grafted” into Israel and become *spiritual Israelites* (cf. Romans 11:17, 24; Galatians 3:28–29). This same Apostle was inspired to state very clearly, “For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; **but he is a Jew who is one inwardly**; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God” (Romans

Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?

2:28–29). For these reasons, Paul called the New Testament Church the “Israel of God” (Galatians 6:16).

So truly converted Gentiles become part of *spiritual Israel* and must also obey the Ten Commandments—the great spiritual *law* of the Creator. Certainly they must also obey the terms of the “perpetual” Sabbath covenant that the preincarnate Jesus made with Israel. It is a sign between Jesus Christ and His people *forever!*

In Isaiah 56, we find a remarkable prophecy set right in the midst of *end-time* prophecies—many of which refer to the years *just ahead of us*. In this setting, God gives this pointed instruction to men and women of *all* nations: “Blessed is the man who does this, and the son of man who lays hold on it; **who keeps from defiling the Sabbath,** and keeps his hand from doing any evil” (v. 2).

A few verses later, God instructs the Gentiles or *foreigners* to keep His Sabbath and describes the *blessings* that will come from doing so:

Also the *sons of the foreigner* who join themselves to the LORD, to serve Him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be His servants—everyone **who keeps from defiling the Sabbath,** and holds fast 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* (vv. 6–7).

As Jesus said, the Sabbath was made for “man”—that is, for *all* mankind. Now notice how Jesus and the Apostles continually kept the seventh-day Sabbath—the *same day* that all the Jews around them were keeping.

The Example of Jesus Christ

God tells us time and again that Christ was the “light”—the *example* of how we ought to live. It is amazing how many professing Christian ministers will give lip service to this statement, yet “reason” and argue, *argue, argue* against following Christ’s perfect example in Sabbath-keeping and other acts of obedience to God’s law!

Speaking of Jesus, the gospel of John tells us, “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness,

and the darkness did not comprehend it” (John 1:4–5). Do most religionists today really comprehend that “light” any more than they did in Jesus’ own day?

Later, Christ said, “I am the light of the world. He who *follows Me* shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life” (John 8:12). What did He mean by this term—“follows Me”? Can a person *reject Jesus’* teaching, *refuse* to follow His example and the entire way of life He exemplified, and still claim to be His “follower”? In 1 Peter 2:21–22, God inspired Peter to instruct us, “For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an *example*, that you should follow His steps: ‘who committed no sin, nor was guile found in His mouth’....”

Yes, in all things Christ set us an example! The Apostle Paul echoes this theme, telling the Corinthians, “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1). So we are to “imitate” Jesus Christ—not just loosely “follow” Him according to our own human reasoning.

The Apostle John stated, near the very end of his life, that “He who says he abides in [Christ] ought himself also to walk just as He walked” (1 John 2:6). The *New English Bible* translates this verse thus: “Here is the test by which we can make sure that we are in him: whoever claims to be dwelling in him, **binds himself to live as Christ himself lived**” (vv. 5–6).

And how did Jesus Christ live? The Sermon on the Mount is usually regarded as the very *essence* of His teaching. Here, Jesus stated this:

Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill [i.e., fill to the fullest]. For assuredly, I say to you, *till heaven and earth pass away*, [And they still have not!] one jot or one tittle will *by no means* pass from the law till all is fulfilled. **Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, 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** (Matthew 5:17–19).

Jesus did not come to do away with the Ten Commandments that He had previously delivered from the Father in the Old Testament.

Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?

Rather, He came to give *full expression* to them—to show their real spiritual intent. In fact, He made them *even more binding*. For example, Jesus explained that the seventh commandment against adultery prohibited more than just having sexual relations with someone other than your spouse. It even forbade lusting after others in your mind (vv. 27–28). And as we have just seen, He also said that in order to be called “great” in His coming Kingdom, men must do and teach even the *least* of God’s commandments. How much *more* vital is it that we do and teach the very *test* commandment, which points to the true *God*—the Creator!

Many say that Christ *broke the Sabbath* Himself. But that is completely false! The Bible says that He was “without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). And “sin *is* the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4, *KJV*). So we know that Jesus never transgressed God’s law—including the fourth commandment about keeping the Sabbath holy. If Jesus *had* broken the Sabbath, He would have earned the wages of sin—death (Romans 6:23)—and could not have become our Savior. It is clear, then, that Jesus never broke even the *least* of God’s commandments—nor taught men so. On the contrary, He said, “**I have kept My Father’s commandments**” (John 15:10).

Furthermore, at the very beginning of His ministry, Jesus set the standard for what would be His lifelong example: “So 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 to read” (Luke 4:16). Again, in Luke 13:10, we read, “Now He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath.” Certainly, then, we should follow Christ’s example in keeping the *same Sabbath day He kept!* And which day was this Sabbath? Why, the very same one the Jews around Him were keeping, of course—Saturday.

Actually, God’s Sabbath—as the Jewish people even now understand—was to be observed from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset. In fact, *all* the days on God’s calendar are from sunset to sunset—nighttime followed by daytime (cf. Leviticus 23:32; Genesis 1:5–31). God did *not* have His days begin and end in the middle of the night as calculated by a man-made clock! In fact, they had no such clocks back then. But they did have God’s *big* “clock” in the sky—the sun. And they had the stars, by which *all* man-made calendars need to be adjusted, even today—for in the beginning, God said, “Let there

be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years” (Genesis 1:14). So when we *keep* holy the days that God *made* holy, we find that they are based on His very creation—with its heavenly bodies marking time—which points to Him, the *Creator* of all that is!

Incidentally, the fact that Christ kept the same Sabbath as the Jews shows that the correct day had not been lost in the remote past, as some today will argue. Remember that the preincarnate Christ had made a big deal about reminding the Israelites of the correct Sabbath day following their enslavement in Egypt. Would He not have kept it on the right day during His human life—even if the Jews had been wrong about it? Of course! *But they were not wrong.* Christ was *Lord* of the day that the Jews kept as the Sabbath (cf. Mark 2:23–28)! And from that time until now, the seven-day week has remained unaltered.

How can we be sure? The Jews *continued* to observe the Sabbath—even after they were scattered. If the weekly cycle had been lost, Jews in one area of the world would be keeping a particular day while Jews elsewhere kept *other* days. But what do we find? In every nation in which the Jews have been scattered, they are unanimous in keeping the *same day*—Saturday! Thus, Saturday is still the seventh day of the weekly cycle that began at creation.

Christ and His Disciples: Sabbath-Breakers?

We have seen that Jesus quite obviously kept God’s holy Sabbath day, though some today say otherwise. The Pharisees did accuse Him of breaking it, as in Mark 2 where Jesus’ disciples picked heads of grain to eat when they were hungry on the Sabbath. But this was *not* a transgression of the Sabbath. It was only a violation of the legalistic restrictions the scribes and Pharisees had *added* to the Sabbath.

Why had these men done this? Well, for one thing, under the Old Covenant, the penalty for Sabbath-breaking was death by stoning (Exodus 31:15; Numbers 15:32–35). It was *that* serious! Moreover, Sabbath-breaking and idolatry were singled out by God as two of the major sins for which He had caused Israel and Judah to be taken into national captivity and slavery centuries earlier—and, accord-

Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?

ing to prophecy, would do so again (cf. Nehemiah 13:17–18; Ezekiel 20:10–25; 22:6–23:47). And so, as they did with most points of God’s law, the scribes and Pharisees went into the opposite ditch and began legislating, in extremely minute detail, everything that was permissible or not permissible on the Sabbath. As noted earlier, they *added* to God’s commandment—attaching more than 60 specific requirements or restrictions. In so doing, they made God’s weekly Holy Day a great *burden*—which it was never meant to be (cf. 1 John 5:3). For instance, according to them, you could only walk so many steps at a time on the Sabbath before having to sit down and rest—yet God’s law says no such thing.

Of course, it was the responsibility of each individual to make sure that he was not exerting himself on the Sabbath to the point that his actions qualified as work. If Jesus had not been present with His disciples, it would simply have been a personal judgment call for them. But Christ *was* there as a perfect Judge—God in the flesh and *Lord of the Sabbath*. And He made it very clear that the scribes and Pharisees were wrong! Picking a few heads of grain and eating them simply does *not* violate the Sabbath command. If the disciples had been *harvesting*, that would have been a different matter—but they were not. They were just grabbing a bite to eat!

However, some will persist, “Surely the Sabbath was done away upon Jesus’ death.” But was it? Did His disciples think so? Notice that after Christ’s burial, some of His most dedicated followers decided to better prepare His body so it wouldn’t decay so quickly in the grave. “Then they returned [home] and prepared spices and fragrant oils. **And they rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment**” (Luke 23:56). Luke was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write here that these dedicated women kept the Sabbath “according to the commandment”! Even after Jesus’ death—even after *everything* that was going to be “nailed to the cross” already *had* been—God’s Sabbath commandment *still stood inviolate!*

Were Christ’s disciples substituting Sunday for the Sabbath at this time? We just saw that they *refrained* from doing work on the Sabbath. But notice the very next verses: “Now on the *first day of the week*, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb” (Luke 24:1–2).

Now, on Sunday, they had come to *do work*. Obviously, the Sabbath they had kept holy was the *previous* day—Saturday.

After His resurrection, did Jesus in some way indicate that His former teaching had been “done away” or “nailed to the cross”? No—not in *any way*! Rather, Jesus instructed His disciples to go out over the whole earth and teach *these same things*—even to the *end* of this age. “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you**; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:18–20).

Was Jesus Resurrected on Sunday?

If you visit a mainstream Christian church and ask members why the day on which they and other people attend worship services is Sunday, a typical response might be that Jesus was resurrected on that day. But how well does this idea bear up under close scrutiny?

Notice what Christ told the Pharisees, who were looking for a sign of the Messiah: “An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and *no sign* will be given to it *except* the sign of the prophet Jonah. **For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth**” (Matthew 12:39–40).

The *only* sign Jesus gave to prove He was the Messiah was that the grave would only hold Him for a limited amount of time—exactly “three days and three nights” (or 72 hours). But the Easter Sunday tradition maintains that Christ was buried just before sunset on “Good Friday” afternoon and resurrected early Sunday morning—only *two* nights and *one* day (or 36 hours)!

Some will argue the definition of “day.” But Christ clearly stated that there are twelve hours in a day, not including the night (John 11:9–10). Therefore, when Easter Sunday proponents take His remark and conclude that Christ was in the grave for three twelve-hour periods (36 hours), we can see that they are leaving out the “three nights.” There are approximately twelve hours of daytime *and* twelve hours of nighttime in one 24-hour day! So three days and three nights is definitely 72 hours. But was it *exactly* 72 hours? Jesus said He would rise “*after* three days” (Mark 8:31)—i.e., no *less* than 72 hours. But He also

Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?

said He would rise “*in three days*” (John 2:19, 21)—i.e. no *more* than 72 hours. This is absolutely clear—*72 hours exactly!* And God is always right on schedule.

Also consider that, when the women came to His tomb Sunday morning, “it was still dark” (John 20:1) and He had *already* risen. How could this be? The Sunday-resurrection proponents contend that He had risen just moments before. If they are correct, “three days and three nights” earlier would be just before sunrise on Thursday morning. Yet *no one* believes Christ was buried on Thursday morning—or *any* morning for that matter—and with good reason. When Joseph of Arimathea laid Christ’s body in the tomb, “the Sabbath drew near” (Luke 23:50–54). Biblical days, including Sabbaths, begin at sunset and end the following sunset (cf. Genesis 1:5–31; Leviticus 23:32)—a nighttime period followed by a daytime period.

Christ, then, was buried in late afternoon—before a particular Sabbath began at sunset. Three days and three nights later would be the same time of day—*late afternoon!* Now we have *another* problem. If we assume that Christ was buried on Friday afternoon, as the Good Friday tradition asserts, then His resurrection—72 hours later—would be Monday afternoon. Yet *no one* believes this either—again, with good reason. Remember that Christ had already risen before the women came to His tomb prior to daybreak Sunday morning! What, then, is the answer?

Why have so many thought that Christ was put in the grave on *Friday* afternoon? Mark 15:42 states that “it was the Preparation Day, that is, the day before the Sabbath....” Since the weekly Sabbath always occurred on the seventh day of the week (now called Saturday), the “Preparation Day” was normally on Friday. However, we have already seen the problem with this. The answer to the apparent dilemma is that the weekly Sabbath is not the only Sabbath mentioned in the Bible. Leviticus 23 lists seven *annual* Holy Days that occur in God’s Festivals. Each of these days was considered a Sabbath (or a “rest” from normal labor). All annual Sabbaths or “High Days”—except the Day of Pentecost—fell on particular calendar dates rather than set days of the week.

Now the mystery can be solved by reading John 19:31. The Jews wanted to remove the crucifixion victims “because it was the Preparation Day, that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the

Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a *high day*)....” Christ kept the Passover with His disciples the night before His death (Luke 22:15). He died on the cross the next afternoon, which was still Passover (the fourteenth of Abib or Nisan, according to the Hebrew calendar—Leviticus 23:5). Leviticus 23:6–7 reports that the next day, beginning the evening after His crucifixion, was not a *weekly* Sabbath, but an *annual* Sabbath—the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Now put together the facts. It is clear from the Bible that Christ died and was buried on Passover afternoon—and that the following day was an annual Sabbath. It is also clear that he was resurrected at the same time of day—late afternoon. But *which* afternoon? Since the women found Him already gone Sunday morning, it would be sensible to conclude that He had been resurrected the *previous* afternoon on Saturday! This would mean He had been buried three days and three nights earlier—Wednesday afternoon. It would also mean that Passover, Nisan 14, fell on a Wednesday that year. And, indeed, that is what happened in 31 AD, a year that fits the time frame the Bible demands.

Scripture also provides further proof that there were *two* Sabbaths that week—an annual one and a weekly one. In Mark 15:47, Mary Magdalene and her companion watched Joseph of Arimathea lay Jesus in the tomb near the end of the Passover. The next verse, Mark 16:1, tells us that *after* the “Sabbath,” Mary Magdalene and her companions bought spices with which to anoint Christ’s dead body. However, Luke 23:56 shows that they *prepared* the spices *before* the Sabbath. Naturally, they could not have prepared spices before they were even bought! The only explanation that makes sense is that they bought the spices on *Friday* and prepared them the same day—*after* the annual Sabbath on Thursday and *before* the weekly Sabbath on Saturday! Then they rested on the weekly Sabbath—at the end of which Jesus was resurrected. The next morning, Sunday, they came to the tomb before sunrise and found him already gone.

But some will point out Mark 16:9, which says, “Now when He rose early on the first day of the week....” Yet how can this be? To understand, we should read the verse in the *King James Version* and continue further in the sentence: “Now when Jesus *was risen* [the perfect tense is correct here—He was *already* risen] early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene....” He was

Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?

not “rising” on Sunday morning. As we have seen, He rose Saturday afternoon. So early Sunday morning, He was already “risen.” Also realize that in the original Greek there was no punctuation. Had the *King James Version* translators simply put a comma after the word “risen” and not after “week,” this would make complete sense. The *Montgomery New Testament* renders it this way: “Now after his resurrection, early on the first day of the week he appeared first to Mary Magdalene....”

To conclude, a Sunday-morning resurrection could not be the reason for changing the weekly day of worship from Saturday to Sunday. But even if Christ *were* resurrected on Sunday, why would His disciples—who had kept the seventh-day Sabbath *with* Him—have abandoned His example of keeping the Ten Commandments and switched to Sunday-keeping? And why would they have picked Sunday, a day already associated with pagan *sun* worship? But the Bible is very clear that Christ was *not* resurrected on Sunday morning. So this pitiful attempt to *change* God’s law does not hold water!

The Practice of the Original Apostles

Throughout the book of Acts, we find that the Apostles continued to observe the Sabbath regularly. They did this with Jews *as well as with Gentiles*, and—guided by the Holy Spirit—the entire early New Testament Church continued to meet on the seventh-day Sabbath for decades after Jesus’ death. Even mainline Protestant historians acknowledge this fact. In *The Story of the Christian Church*, Jesse Lyman Hurlbut states, “**As long as the church was mainly Jewish, the Hebrew sabbath was kept; but as it became increasingly Gentile the first day gradually took the place of the seventh day**” (p. 36, 1970, emphasis added).

Notice that Hurlbut says the first day “gradually” replaced the seventh-day Sabbath. Did God *gradually* do away with His law? Ridiculous! As we shall see later, *conniving* men “gradually” *deceived* millions of professing Christians into doing away with not only the Sabbath, but the *entire concept of obedience to God’s law!*

However, *no such change* took place during the lifetime of Christ’s original Apostles. Even the Apostle Paul—the *apostle to the Gentiles*—kept the Sabbath regularly. And he was not even converted to Christianity until *well after* Christ’s resurrection. Notice the account of Paul

and Barnabas in Acts 13:14: “But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and sat down.”

“But,” some might argue, “Paul was just meeting with the Jews on Saturday since that was *their* Sabbath!” However, the same chapter tells us that “when the Jews went out of the synagogue, the Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them the *next* Sabbath” (v. 42). Here was Paul’s grand opportunity to inform the Gentiles that they would now meet on Sunday! But did he? On the contrary, “**On the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God**” (v. 44)!

The truth of the matter is that neither Paul nor *any* of the Apostles uttered *one single word* about changing God’s holy Sabbath or any part of the Ten Commandments. Rather, as they had been taught by Christ Himself, they kept, and always assembled on, the seventh day.

What about when Paul traveled through predominately Gentile areas? God’s word tells us, “Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. Then Paul, **as his custom was**, went in to them, and *for three Sabbaths* reasoned with them from the Scriptures” (Acts 17:1–2).

It was clearly Paul’s “custom” to meet on the Sabbath. Acts 18:4 tells us that “**he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks.**” In example after example in the book of Acts, when Paul or the other Apostles met to worship, there is not a *single, solitary hint* that they ever regularly met on any other day of the week to worship *except Saturday*—the seventh-day Sabbath that they had always observed and that the Jewish community was still observing.

In fact, if they had started teaching some other weekly day of worship, it would have caused a literal *riot* among the Jewish Christians! The only major ministerial conference mentioned in the New Testament is described in Acts 15. It was occasioned by a bitter controversy over whether Gentile Christians should be compelled to be circumcised. The book of Acts notes the incident that sparked this conference: “And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, ‘Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Mo-

Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?

ses, you cannot be saved.’ Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question” (vv. 1–2).

At the conference in Jerusalem, after there had been “much dispute,” Peter rose up and carefully explained how God had called the Gentile Christians through him *apart from* any command to be physically circumcised (vv. 7–11). Afterward, Paul and Barnabas described the fruits of their Work among the Gentiles, without circumcision being involved. Then James, the presiding apostle at Jerusalem, summarized the matter and stated, “Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God, but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood” (vv. 19–20). Finally, a letter was drafted, outlining this landmark decision and the reasons for it (vv. 22–29). Paul took a copy of this letter with its decrees and read it to all of the Churches under his jurisdiction (Acts 16:1–5).

Some will argue that the four prohibitions mentioned here are the only laws from the Old Testament still binding on Christians. But notice that *murder* is not listed. Are we, then, free to commit murder? Obviously not! So why are these points specifically mentioned? Because the four things Christians are to abstain from here are practices that were common to pagan religion. In sacrificing to their idols, many pagans would strangle animals rather than slitting their throats and letting the blood drain from them. Then they would eat these offerings and commit gross sexual immorality as religious ritual. The prohibitions in Acts 15 were originally part of God’s statutory law. But they were also listed later with the ceremonies and rituals of the Levitical worship system to keep the Israelites from adopting these wrong practices (cf. Leviticus 17:7, 10; Numbers 25:1–3). The Apostles wanted it understood that, although the ceremonial and ritual parts of the Old Testament law—including physical circumcision—were no longer necessary, these four points that were given in the ceremonial section of the law were still binding. And why were they still binding? Because they were part of God’s *original* law—**which was still in force!**

Bear in mind that this great controversy and subsequent Apostolic conference took place over the *ordinance* of physical cir-

cumcision. How much *more* of a debate would have raged if the apostles had tried to change or do away with one of the *Ten Commandments*—especially the one about God’s weekly Sabbath, the very identifying “sign” of God’s people? There would have been an absolute *uproar*. But do we find even the slightest hint of a dispute over any such change?

We do *not*!

As the expression goes, “The silence on the subject is *deafening*.” There was *no such change* until scores or even hundreds of years after the death of the original Apostles! So neither Jesus nor the Apostolic Church *ever* attempted to change the Sabbath. They *never* attempted to do away with obedience to *any* of the Ten Commandments!

Later Apostolic Teaching

Many Protestant theologians have been schooled in the theory of “progressive revelation.” But we will see that this theory is nothing less than a complete perversion of the truth. It conveys the idea that the ancient prophets were simply Hebrew philosophers trying to devise their own concept of a divine being. Then along comes Jesus, a Jewish carpenter—heavily influenced by the religion and morals of His time—living and teaching under the Old Covenant. Jesus’ original Apostles, according to this theory, were likewise unsophisticated and backward—did not really “understand.”

Then comes the Apostle Paul—the “liberator,” as the theory goes—and things begin to “get better,” for Paul is said to be willing to “break out” of the Jewish mold and introduce *modern, Gentile* Christianity, which would be more acceptable to the world at large.

The trouble with the above theory is that it is *grossly inaccurate*, for it attempts to completely negate Jesus’ own command—“**Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God**” (Luke 4:4)! And we must remember that aside from the life and teaching of Jesus Himself, the *only* word of God available to humanity when He made this pronouncement was the Old Testament. This fact poses a major problem for these progressive theologians, for both the Old Testament prophets *and* Jesus Christ very clearly taught *obedience* to the Ten Commandments—including seventh-day Sabbath observance. Even many Protestant theologians acknowledge that Jesus taught and kept the Sabbath day.

Text from *The Faith of Our Fathers* by James Cardinal Gibbons, first published in 1876 (p. 86, 1904 edition). This well-known American Catholic leader stated quite clearly that there is no Scriptural authority for changing the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday.

The Faith of Our Fathers

Third—A rule of faith, or a competent guide to heaven, must be able to instruct in all the truths necessary for salvation. Now the Scriptures alone do not contain all the truths which a Christian is bound to believe, nor do they explicitly enjoin all the duties which he is obliged to practice. Not to mention other examples, is not every Christian obliged to sanctify Sunday and to abstain on that day from unnecessary servile work? Is not the observance of this law among the most prominent of our sacred duties? 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.

The Catholic Church correctly teaches that our Lord and His Apostles inculcated certain important duties of religion which are not recorded by the inspired writers. ¹For instance, most Christians pray to the Holy Ghost, a practice which is nowhere found in the Bible.

We must, therefore, conclude that the Scriptures *alone* cannot be a sufficient guide and rule of faith because they cannot, at any time, be within the reach of every inquirer; because they are not of themselves clear and intelligible even in matters of the highest importance, and because they do not contain all the truths necessary for salvation.

¹See John xxi. 25; II. Thess. ii. 14.

And what the “progressive revelation” teachers also cannot explain is that the original Apostolic writings very directly and very powerfully uphold the concept of obeying the Ten Commandments as the Christian *way of life*—once again, including keeping God’s Sabbath.

James, the brother of Jesus Christ who became the presiding apostle at Jerusalem, wrote, “For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. For He who said, ‘Do not commit adultery,’ also said, ‘Do not murder.’ Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty” (James 2:10–12). So true Christians are to keep the “whole law.” It is a law with “points”—including the commands against murder and adultery. Clearly, this law is the Ten Commandments. And James said that if we “stumble” in failing to keep even *one point* of this law—*obviously including the Sabbath*—we are guilty of *all!*

John, the Apostle “Jesus loved” (John 13:23), also wrote about God’s law—near the *end* of the Apostolic age. If *anyone* were to give us a new “progressive” teaching, it would be him. So what “progressive revelation,” then, did John give us? He was inspired by God to write, “**Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him**” (1 John 2:3–4).

A person may know *about* God by coming to understand only part of the truth. But to genuinely and personally “know” Him, John says that we must *experience God’s way of life* by *keeping* His commandments! For God’s kind of love—His very *nature* and *character*—is revealed in the Ten Commandments. Again, as John wrote, God’s very *love* is expressed in the Ten Commandments: “**For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome**” (1 John 5:3). And anyone who fails to literally keep the Ten Commandments—not *perfectly*, of course, but as a way of life—is *disobeying* his Creator and in fact *does not really “know” God!*

What about Paul? Did *he* dismiss God’s law? By no means! In Romans 2:13, he wrote that “not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but **the doers of the law will be justified....**” And in 1

Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?

Corinthians 7:19, he stated, “Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but **keeping the commandments of God is what matters.**” Again, this certainly includes the *fourth* commandment concerning the Sabbath!

Furthermore, the Apostle Paul is traditionally understood to have written the book of Hebrews—and there is strong evidence to support that tradition. Because of his rabbinic training in the technical intricacies of the Mosaic law, he was undoubtedly the most qualified of all the Apostles to thoroughly explain the New Covenant that God is making with all humanity—the very theme of Hebrews. After this book describes how God spoke of the “seventh day” as the day of rest (Hebrews 4:4), it goes on to state, “**there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God**” (v. 9, *NASB*).

This is a very interesting passage. Chapters 3 and 4 of Hebrews talk about God’s people entering into “rest.” The Israelites in the wilderness wanted to enter God’s “rest”—meaning to finally cease from wandering and settle in the Promised Land. And that did happen in the days of Moses’ successor, Joshua. Yet also mentioned here is the fact that the Eternal God later inspired King David to write of entering God’s rest as something still future. Hebrews 4:8 states, “For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day.” This is obviously speaking of the coming Millennium, the 1,000-year period of Christ’s rule on earth—since the future Kingdom of God is the “Promised Land” for true Christians.

It is in this context that Hebrews talks about a Sabbath rest remaining for God’s people. In almost every case in chapters 3 and 4, the Greek word for physical rest—*katapausin*—is used for God’s rest. But in Hebrews 4:9, God inspired a different word to be used—*sabbatismos*. Many translations render it simply as “rest,” just like they do *katapausin*. But that is confusing, since it is, in fact, a different word. The *New American Standard Bible*, quoted above, uses “Sabbath rest.” But does this mean literal, weekly Sabbath-keeping? The *Anchor Bible Dictionary* says yes, assuring us that *sabbatismos* refers to “**seventh day Sabbath celebration**” (vol. 5, p. 855, 1992, emphasis added). Thus, the New Testament states very clearly that seventh-day Sabbath-keeping is to *continue* for true Christians.

However, some argue that this means we should just rest from our sinful works in our new life in Jesus. But notice what is added

in the next verse: “For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works **as God did from His.**” Did God “rest” from His work of *sin*? Of course not. He rested from *creating*—His occupational work as the Creator. And on what *day* did God “rest”—setting us the *example*? “God rested on the *seventh day* from all His works” (v. 4). And so must we.

However, the context of these verses does show that the Sabbath is more than just a memorial of creation. It is indeed a physical *type* of something else—and we should observe it as such. But that something is *not* primarily the Christian life in this age. It is, rather, our life in the *future* millennial rest of *tomorrow’s world*—when Jesus Christ sets up the Kingdom of God over the entire earth.

Notice what *A Commentary, Critical and Explanatory, on the Old and New Testaments* by Robert Jamieson, Andrew Fausset, and David Brown has to say about Hebrews 4:9: “**This verse indirectly establishes the obligation of the Sabbath still**; for the type continues until the antitype supersedes it....” As the coming millennial Sabbath “will not be till Christ comes... the typical earthly Sabbath must continue till then” (vol. 2, p. 449, 1878, emphasis added). Yet, as we will later see, even in tomorrow’s world human beings will continue to keep God’s weekly Sabbath holy.

How clear! Here in the book of Hebrews we find a *direct New Testament command* for Christians to “rest” on the seventh-day Sabbath! It was probably given, interestingly enough, through the apostle to the Gentiles—the very apostle whom so many Protestant theologians insist “did away” with God’s law!

This section in Hebrews 4 concludes thus: “Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience” of those in ancient Israel (v. 11). The phrase “the same example of disobedience” should resonate deeply with students of the Bible, for just as Sabbath-breaking and idolatry factored heavily in the Israelites’ national captivity and slavery, these two sins were also major reasons that most of their forefathers died during the 40 years of wandering before inheriting the Promised Land.

You should read God’s indictment of ancient Israel in Ezekiel 20:10–24. Notice here verses 12–13: “**Moreover I also gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between them and Me, that they might know that I am the LORD who sanctifies them.** Yet the house of Israel re-

Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?

belled against Me in the wilderness; they did not walk in My statutes; they despised My judgments, ‘which, if a man does, he shall live by them’; **and they greatly defiled My Sabbaths.** Then I said I would pour out My fury on them in the wilderness, to consume them.”

Therefore, repeating the inspired instruction from the book of Hebrews, let *all* true Christians be careful to *not* follow that “same example of disobedience” by failing to keep holy the only day of the week God *made* holy—the *seventh-day Sabbath!*

The Diabolical Transfer

The New Testament very clearly indicates that God’s true Church will be small and *persecuted*. Jesus instructed His disciples, “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it” (Matthew 7:13–14).

Jesus called His Church the “little flock” (Luke 12:32). And in His Olivet Prophecy, He warned, “Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake” (Matthew 24:9). Frankly, “mainstream” Christians are *not* the ones who are going to be “hated by all nations.” Why? Because they fit into the world pretty well, going along with its customs and traditions—and, all too often, with its *sins*.

But *was* there an obedient Church such as Jesus described still in existence after Apostolic times—which still faithfully kept God’s true Sabbath day? Yes indeed. In fact, virtually all church historians acknowledge that many thousands of early Christians continued to observe the seventh-day Sabbath for many generations!

We have already seen Jesse Lyman Hurlbut’s statement: “**As long as the church was mainly Jewish, the Hebrew sabbath was kept....**” But was any biblical writer ever inspired to tell us that the Sabbath was later to be *changed*?

Of course not.

For the active, living Head of God’s true Church is Jesus Christ. “And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence” (Colossians 1:18; cf. Ephesians 1:22). The book of Hebrews tells us, “Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the

word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct. **Jesus Christ is the *same* yesterday, today, and forever**” (Hebrews 13:7–8).

Indeed, throughout the entire Bible, only one day is set apart as the Sabbath—the *seventh* day. And that day is Saturday! Here is a quote from James Cardinal Gibbons, who was Archbishop of Baltimore and probably the most well-known American Catholic leader of his time. Observe what this highest-ranking Catholic in America wrote about God’s Sabbath in his famous book, *The Faith of Our Fathers*: **“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”** (p. 86, 1904, emphasis added).

And notice this from *The Catholic Mirror*—the official newspaper of Gibbons’ archdiocese, under his direction: “In the Old Testament, reference is made one hundred and twenty-six times to the Sabbath, and all these texts conspire harmoniously in voicing the will of God commanding the seventh day to be kept” (September 9, 1893). It then states, “Nor can we imagine any one foolhardy enough to question the identity of Saturday with the Sabbath or seventh day, seeing that the people of Israel have been keeping the Saturday from the giving of the Law....”

And look at this from a later article under Cardinal Gibbons’ direction: **“God’s written word enjoins His worship to be observed on *Saturday* absolutely, repeatedly, and most emphatically, with a most positive threat of death to him who disobeys”** (September 23, 1893, emphasis added).

How *clear* can you get? *Of course* the commandment-keeping, *true* Church of God would have persisted in keeping His seventh-day Sabbath—from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset!

George Park Fisher, who was a respected professor of ecclesiastical history at Yale University, concurs with Hurlbut in that the early Christians observed the seventh-day Sabbath. Professor Fisher writes, “The Jewish Christians at first frequented the synagogues. They continued to observe the festivals appointed in the law, and only by degrees connected with them Christian ideas and facts. **They kept the Sabbath on Saturday, according to the Mosaic commandment**” (*History of the Christian Church*, p. 40, 1887, emphasis added).

Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?

So if God's Sabbath is so clearly established in His word—and was certainly kept by His Bible-believing Church—where did Sunday come in? Renowned historian Will Durant writes, “**The serious temper of the Jewish Sabbath was transferred to the Christian Sunday that replaced it in the second century**” (*The Story of Civilization*, vol. 3, p. 599, 1972, emphasis added).

How did this happen? A Roman Catholic study course tells us that “**The [Catholic] Church simply transferred the obligation from Saturday to Sunday**” (“Session 19,” *Father Smith Instructs Jackson*, emphasis added). *The Catholic Mirror* agrees: “**The Catholic Church... by virtue of her Divine mission, changed the day from Saturday to Sunday**” (September 23, 1893, emphasis added). In fact, the Catholic Church's Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome publishes a book by Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi, a non-Catholic scholar, which proves this very fact! Its preface is written by Vincenzo Monachino, chairman of the university's Church History department. He writes, “We [the Roman Catholic Church] *gladly mention* the thesis that Bacchiocchi defends regarding the birthplace of Sunday worship: for him this arose most probably **not in the primitive Church of Jerusalem**, wellknown for its profound attachment to Jewish religious traditions, **but rather in the Church of Rome**. The abandonment of the Sabbath and the adoption of Sunday as the Lord's Day, are the result of **an interplay of Christian, Jewish and pagan-religious factors**” (*From Sabbath to Sunday: A Historical Investigation of the Rise of Sunday Observance in Early Christianity*, pp. 5–6, 1999, emphasis added).

Esteeming One Day Above Another?

Some cite Romans 14:5–6 as proof that it does not matter which day we keep as the Sabbath or whether we keep any day at all. In this passage, the Apostle Paul states, “One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it.” But is this really talking about Sabbath-keeping?

Notice the rest of verse 6: “He who *eats*, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who *does not eat*, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks.” What is this about? Romans 14 begins with

Paul telling the Christians in Rome to receive those who are “weak in the faith, but not to [enter into] disputes over doubtful things” (v. 1)—i.e., things some were not sure about. In verse 2, Paul mentions some who would eat only vegetables for various religious reasons—even though the Bible shows in many places that it is acceptable to eat clean meat. For instance, the parable of the prodigal son pictures a righteous father preparing a “fatted calf” to be eaten (Luke 15:23).

In another of Paul’s letters, he explains one particular reason that a number of Christians had become vegetarians. Most of the available meat in the marketplace had been offered to idols. Of this Paul says, “Therefore concerning the eating of things offered to idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no other God but one.... However, there is not in everyone that knowledge; for some, with consciousness of the idol, until now eat it as a thing offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled” (1 Corinthians 8:4, 7).

Some new converts thought that eating such meat was participating in idol worship, but went along with other Christians and did it anyway. That is the worst thing they could have done, for Paul states in Romans 14 that “he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin” (v. 23). Whether something is inherently wrong or not, if you think it *might be* and do it anyway, you are sinning!

So to those who thought it was acceptable to eat meat, Paul said, “Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat” (v. 3). But continuing in the same verse, he said, “Let... not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him.” Yet Paul told those who ate meat not to flaunt that in front of those who did not (vv. 15–22).

So why did Paul break from his dissertation on eating or not eating meat by mentioning the esteeming of days? Because it involved the same principle! There were *some* weak new converts who thought certain days were better than others for fasting, eating, or abstaining from particular foods. Others thought all days were the same in regard to what could be eaten.

Christ said that when we fast, it should be to God and without others knowing unnecessarily (Matthew 6:16–18). But Jews and Gentiles both practiced “semi-fasts” on particular days of the week

Saturday vs. Sunday Statements from Various Churches

Jesus Christ said of the Pharisees, “‘And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’ For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men.... All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition” (Mark 7:7–9). Yet notice what other churches admit regarding their observance of Sunday instead of Saturday:

ROMAN CATHOLIC

**Stephen Keenan, *A Doctrinal Catechism*,
pp. 174, 352, 1899, emphasis added:**

“[Question:] Have you any other way of proving that the Church has power to institute festivals of precept?”

*“[Answer:] Had she not such power, she could not have done that in which all modern religionists agree with her;—she could not have substituted the observance of Sunday the first day of the week, for the observance of Saturday the seventh day, a **change for which there is no scriptural authority....***

“Q. When Protestants do profane work upon Saturday... do they follow the Scripture as their only rule of faith... ?

*“A. On the contrary, they have only the authority of tradition for this practice. **In profaning Saturday, they violate one of God’s commandments, which he has never clearly abrogated... ‘Remember thou keep holy the Sabbath day.’”***

Peter Geierman, *The Convert’s Catechism of Catholic Doctrine*, p. 50, 1946:

“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 [in the Council of Laodicea, c. 363] transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday.”

***The Catholic Press*, p. 2, August 25, 1900:**

“Sunday is a Catholic institution, and... can be defended only on Catholic principles.... From beginning to end of Scripture there is not a single passage that warrants the transfer of weekly public worship from the last day of the week to the first.”

METHODIST

Charles Buck, *A Theological Dictionary*, p. 403, 1830:

“SABBATH, in the Hebrew language, signifies rest, and is the seventh day of the week... and it must be confessed that there is no law in the New Testament concerning the first day.”

Clovis Chappell, *Ten Rules for Living*, p. 61, 1938:

“The reason we observe the first day instead of the seventh is based on no positive command. One will search the Scriptures in vain for authority for changing from the seventh day to the first.”

PRESBYTERIAN

***Christian at Work*, April 19, 1883, quoted by E.J. Waggoner in *Fathers of the Catholic Church*, p. 294, 1888, emphasis added:**

“... some have tried to build the observance of Sunday upon apostolic command, whereas the apostles gave no command on the matter at all.... The truth is, so soon as we appeal to the *litera scripta* [literal writing] of the Bible, **the Sabbatarians have the best of the argument.**”

ANGLICAN

Isaac Williams, D.D., *Plain Sermons, by Contributors to the Tracts for the Times*, vol. IX, Sermon CCCIV, pp. 267, 269, 1847, emphasis added:

“... where are we told in Scripture that we are to keep the first day at all? We are commanded to keep the seventh; but we are no where commanded to keep the first day.... The reason 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.**”

EPISCOPAL

Philip Carrington, *Toronto Daily Star*, October 26, 1949:

“The Bible commandment says on the seventh day thou shalt rest. That is Saturday. Nowhere in the Bible is it laid down that worship should be done on Sunday.”

BAPTIST

“Consider the Case for Quiet Saturdays,” *Christianity Today*, November 5, 1976:

“... there is nothing in Scripture that requires us to keep Sunday rather than Saturday as a holy day.”

Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?

or month. The Pharisees fasted, according to custom, “twice a week” (Luke 18:12). And the Jews as a people fasted during certain months (Zechariah 7:4–7). However, the Jewish religious authorities were divided on some of these matters. The Gentiles, too, were divided over when and if to abstain from certain foods.

The only way the Sabbath could have been a factor here is if some thought it could be used as a fast day and others did not. However, that is not stated, and if Paul had been talking about the Sabbath, he probably would have mentioned it by name—just like he did in Colossians 2:16, where Gentile converts to Christianity were being criticized for how they were *keeping* God’s Sabbath and other Festivals. Whatever the case, the controversy in Romans 14 about esteeming particular days had practically *nothing* to do with God’s Sabbath or His other Holy Days!

No, whether or not to keep the days that *God* made holy was not even at issue. This was all about *man*-made traditions—some of which were okay to follow but *not* okay to impose on others. In God’s eyes, it does not matter *when* we fast—except for the Day of Atonement, on which God *commands* us to fast. What matters to Him is that we do it with a right attitude—and that we do not judge each other according to our personal ideas.

The Right to Change the Day?

Little by little, gradually and stealthily, Satan was able to influence misguided Catholic theologians to begin introducing the ancient “venerable day of the Sun” in place of the weekly Sabbath. After all, millions of pagans had always observed that day—Sunday—as part of their worship of the sun itself and of other heavenly bodies. These deceived theologians thought that a change to Sunday worship would make it easier for the heathen to “convert” to Christianity!

But *what kind* of “Christianity” is it when you change God’s Ten Commandments and then go on to water down the *entire way of life* taught by Christ and the original Apostolic Church? Is it still *true* Christianity? Again, we must listen to Jesus’ own words: “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who *does the will* of My Father in heaven” (Matthew 7:21).

Under Satan’s deceptive influence, the Protestant churches have followed “mother Rome” in rejecting God’s true Sabbath. Though

they repudiated a number of Catholic teachings, the pagan practice of Sunday worship was not one of them. However, *many* of the early Protestant scholars of the Reformation era were better informed. They, in fact, *knew* what the Bible actually teaches! Notice what Martin Luther, the very *father* of the Reformation from whom the Lutheran Church is named, wrote: “Indeed, if Karlstadt [one of the few who argued against Sunday observance] were to write further about the Sabbath, **Sunday would have to give way, and the Sabbath—that is to say, Saturday—must be kept holy**” (“Treatise Against the Heavenly Prophets,” 1525, quoted in Gustav König, *The Life of Martin Luther, the German Reformer, in Fifty Pictures*, p. 147, 1853, emphasis added). But Luther would not change back to the right day. He wrote in his Larger Catechism that “to avoid the unnecessary disturbance which an innovation would occasion, it [the worship day] should continue to be Sunday” (*The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, vol. 11, p. 146, 1911).

This is why the Catholic Church will “gladly mention” that it changed the day! For it shows that the Protestants are not relying on the Bible as their only rule of faith—as they claim—but are instead acknowledging the “authority” of the Roman Church to change God’s law. Here is how *The Catholic Mirror* explains it:

The Protestant world at its birth found the Christian Sabbath [Sunday] too strongly entrenched to run counter to its existence; it was therefore placed under the necessity of acquiescing in the arrangement, **thus implying the Church’s right to change the day**, for over three hundred years. **The Christian Sabbath [Sunday] is therefore to this day, the acknowledged offspring of the Catholic Church... without a word of remonstrance [protest] from the Protestant world** (September 23, 1893, emphasis added).

Incredible? Yes! Of course, the Catholics had no such “right” to change the day. Nevertheless, that is just what they did. And the Protestant churches have followed suit. Meanwhile, the *true* Church has continued in keeping the *true* Sabbath—just as it did in Apostolic times. Take one more look at that period. Respected scholar W.D. Davies writes:

Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?

Everywhere, especially in the East of the Roman Empire, there would be Jewish Christians whose outward way of life would not be markedly different from that of Jews. They took for granted that the gospel was continuous with [the religion of Moses]; for them the new covenant, which Jesus had set up at the Last Supper with His disciples... did not mean that the covenant made between God and Israel was no longer in force. They still observed the feasts of Pass-over, Pentecost and Tabernacles; they also continued to be circumcised, **to keep the weekly Sabbath** and the Mosaic regulations concerning food. According to some scholars, **they must have been so strong that right up to the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 they were the dominant element in the Christian movement** (“Paul and Jewish Christianity,” *Recherches de Science Religieuse: Judéo-Christianisme*, pp. 71-72, 1972, emphasis added).

If the Sabbath-keepers were the “dominant element” of Christianity for some *40 years* after the death of Christ and the coming of the Holy Spirit, *surely that should tell us something!* Is it not obvious that if Jesus Himself, Peter, James, Paul, and *most* of the Christian Church of that time observed the seventh-day Sabbath, *that is the day we all ought to be keeping? That is the day the original Apostles of Jesus Christ kept until they died.* How *dare* these later theologians of the Dark Ages place the name of Christ on a day He *never kept—never sanctified!* How *dare* they replace God’s holy Sabbath with the pagan “day of the Sun”—Sunday! How *dare* they pervert the very “sign” that identifies the *Creator* and those who worship Him!

But, under the powerful influence of Satan the devil, “who deceives the whole world” (Revelation 12:9), *they have done it!* (To learn more about the change from God’s holy Sabbath to the pagan Sunday, please write for our free booklet *The Beast of Revelation: Myth, Metaphor, or Soon-Coming Reality?*)

Obviously, then, to really follow what the *Bible* teaches, you *must* observe the seventh-day Sabbath—from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset. But if you are willing to *compromise* on the very commandment that points out the true God, then you might very well end up observing the “day of the Sun” right along with the vaunted major-

ity—the countless millions that prophecy shows will soon be subjected to the greatest *tribulation* in human history because of their *rebellion* against the true God (cf. Matthew 24:21–22)!

How to Keep the Sabbath

Just how are we to keep the Sabbath? As we have seen, the scribes and Pharisees tried to legislate, in minute detail, all that was acceptable or unacceptable on the Sabbath. In doing so, they made the Sabbath a great *burden*—something God never intended (cf. 1 John 5:3). He gave the Sabbath and *magnified* it in other places in His word with *some* specifics, but mainly by expounding broad, spiritual principles.

What does God tell us? In the fourth commandment itself, God says, “**Six days you shall labor and do all your work**” (Exodus 20:9). Many would be surprised to know that this is actually part of the commandment. God ordained the first six days of the week for our business and work. Our Creator intended that we be busy and productive—*earning* our daily bread. In Proverbs 19:15, He tells us, “Laziness casts one into a deep sleep, and an idle person will suffer hunger.” The person who shirks his responsibilities during the first six days of the week is just as guilty of breaking God’s law as he who works on the seventh!

That brings us to the next injunction in this great law: “**but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD 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**” (Exodus 20:10). So you are not to do any kind of real *work* on the Sabbath—be it your occupation, personal business, housework, or any strenuous activity. And neither are those in the environment over which you have control. Of course, preparing—or cleaning up after—a light meal would not be wrong, for we find a number of occasions when Jesus enjoyed a Sabbath meal with others. And He *never* condemned the practice of hospitality on the Sabbath (cf. Luke 14:1–6).

But cessation of labor is not the only requirement God makes. He also gives *positive* instruction. In Moses’ recounting of the Ten Commandments, the fourth one begins by instructing us to “*Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy*” (Deuteronomy 5:12). We must look

Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?

to God to tell us how to do that. Leviticus 23 lists “**the feasts of the LORD [not the Jews], which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations....**” God says that “**these are My feasts**” (v. 2). The first one mentioned is the weekly Sabbath: “Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, **a holy convocation**. You shall do no work on it; it is the Sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings” (v. 3). God then lists His seven other Feasts or Festivals, which contain seven *annual* Sabbaths. These days are also embraced by the spirit of the Sabbath commandment.

God’s Sabbaths—weekly *and* annual—are to be holy “convocations” and are, therefore, days commanded for worship services. When we fellowship with other people in whom God dwells, we are, in fact, also fellowshiping with Him (cf. 1 John 1:3, 7). The New Testament states that we must make sure we are “**not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together**, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as [we] see the [millennial Sabbath] Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:25). We must not forsake assembling on the days God has appointed for that purpose.

Finally, to really understand how God intended the Sabbath to be used, look at what He said in Isaiah 58: “**If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight... not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words, then you shall delight yourself in the LORD; and I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth**” (vv. 13–14).

So we are not to be doing our own pleasure on God’s Holy Day. That means we are not to be pursuing our hobbies or leisure activities. That does not preclude doing any enjoyable things on the Sabbath whatsoever, for we are to find *delight* in it. The point is that whatever we do, God must be an intrinsic part of it. A family walk through a natural setting, for example, is a wonderful way to get in touch with the great God who made the beautiful creation we see.

When the seventh day arrives, we must stop pursuing our “own ways” (the things we normally do), seeking our “own pleasure” (just trying to have fun), and speaking our “own words” (the everyday things we talk about that do not involve God). This last one is often *very hard* to follow because “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks” (Matthew 12:34). To truly keep the Sabbath in spirit,

we must focus our *minds* on God and those things He wants us to be concerned with during His holy time. Then, as God promises, we will be truly blessed.

Furthermore, in addition to worshiping with God's Church on His weekly Holy Day, we should remember Christ's approach that "it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath" (Matthew 12:12). So this is a day we can use for making encouraging phone calls or writing letters to the sick, the "shut-ins," or fellow Christians who are lonely. It may also be possible to *visit* the sick or others in need on the Sabbath—or to have them over for a Friday-evening meal (cf. Matthew 25:34–36; James 1:27).

So we should not think of the Sabbath as the day we "can't do" this or that! Rather, we should approach this very special day as a period when we *can* and *should* really *take time* to deeply *study* and thoughtfully *analyze* the Bible. It is a time when we can sit quietly, meditating over and *thinking through* the truly big issues of life: Why were we born? What is the *purpose* of life? What is the *way* to achieve that purpose? How are we personally doing in moving toward that objective? In addition, the Sabbath is the perfect time for unhurried, thoughtful, heartfelt *prayer* to our Father in heaven—to "commune" with our Creator, to *worship* Him, to get to *know* Him intimately. This, then, is how to *keep* God's Sabbath holy.

Of the Ten Commandments, the fourth one—concerning the Sabbath day—is and always has been the real "test" commandment (cf. Exodus 16:4). Many can accept the other nine—do not worship other gods, honor your parents, do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not lie, etc. But the fourth commandment is different. To keep it means visibly living quite differently from the society around you—perhaps even being looked upon as odd or weird. Yet Jesus said, "Those who come to me cannot be my disciples unless they love me more than they love father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and themselves as well. Those who do not carry their own cross and come after me cannot be my disciples" (Luke 14:26-27, *GNT*).

Do *you* love the "praise of men" more than the praise of God? Or do you have the *faith* and the *courage* to obey God's commandments—even if you were to lose your job, your friends, and perhaps some of your relatives?

True Christians Obey the Fourth Commandment

Throughout the Bible, God shows that His true followers *keep* His commandments. In Revelation 12, God describes the true Church—the little flock—that had to *escape* the bonds of the Roman Empire during the Dark Ages (v. 6). Then, He foretells how this will happen again—*in our day* (v. 14). Finally, God describes Satan’s *rage* against the Church: “And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, **who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ**” (v. 17).

In Revelation 14:12, God describes the character of His saints, saying, “Here is the patience of the saints; here are those **who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.**” Notice that the saints do not merely observe some “new” commandments of Jesus. They observe *God’s* commandments through the faith *of* Jesus Christ, not merely their faith *in* Him (cf. Galatians 2:20, *KJV*), for, through the Holy Spirit, they have Christ *living His life* in them and empowering them to overcome themselves, the world, and Satan—and are therefore able to *obey* God’s spiritual law!

And Revelation 22:14 describes those who will live with God the Father and Christ throughout *eternity* in the New Jerusalem: “**Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.**”

In His famous Olivet Prophecy recorded in Matthew 24, Jesus describes the time when true Christians will, once again, have to *flee* for their lives. This time is *just a few years ahead of us*—for it is placed in this prophecy just *before* the Great Tribulation, in which *all* humanity would be exterminated were it not for God’s supernatural intervention. Warning His true servants as to *what we should do* when that tribulation approaches, Jesus said, “**And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath**” (v. 20). Obviously, Jesus *knew* that His true disciples at the time of the end would still be *keeping* the true Sabbath day!

In another inspired *end-time* prophecy, God’s word shows that His true servants will be keeping the Sabbath day holy even during the 1,000-year reign of Christ here on this earth: “For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain

before Me,' says the LORD, 'So shall your descendants and your name remain. And it shall come to pass that from one New Moon to another, and **from one Sabbath to another, all flesh shall come to worship before Me,**' says the LORD" (Isaiah 66:22–23). So obedience to the fourth commandment is not "old fashioned." It is instead the "wave of the future," for *all humanity* will learn to obey God's commandments—and *keep* holy the days God *made* holy—in the soon-coming Millennium, when the Kingdom of God is set up on this earth!

We who are willing to heed and *obey* our Creator now—through Jesus Christ living His life within us—will be given the awesome opportunity to serve under Him in ruling the cities and nations of the world at that time. For we are the *true pioneers* preparing for tomorrow's world. We are *overcoming*—standing up against the prevailing forces and trends of this materialistic, Satan-influenced society. Jesus said that "he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations—'He shall rule them with a rod of iron; they shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels'—as I also have received from My Father" (Revelation 2:26–27).

Yet, even now, in this carnal society, you are not completely alone by any means. For when you include the Orthodox Jews, the Seventh-Day Adventists, the Seventh-Day Baptists, and many from the various Churches of God, there are *millions* of people who observe the seventh-day Sabbath. They have found, and you will find, that it *is* possible to keep this "test" commandment and still be blessed and made prosperous in many ways. You may even find in our diverse society a number of people who will admire your courage and dedication, even though God may not be "calling" them to full spiritual understanding at this time.

Remember, there are millions of people who sincerely want to do the right thing. Yet Jesus said, "*No one* can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:44). But if God is calling *you* and is now opening your mind to His *full truth*, you have a *responsibility to act* upon that truth, for, as James 4:17 states, "to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin."

If you, then, are sincerely interested in truly obeying God and being one of the "firstfruits" of His salvation in this age, you may wish

Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?

to contact Christ's "little flock," which He has preserved even in this mixed-up generation. This booklet has been produced by a body of believers doing the Work of God. This Church sponsors the *Tomorrow's World* television program and publishes the *Tomorrow's World* magazine, which goes into many nations. We are called the *Living Church of God*, and you will find our regional addresses and phone numbers at the end of this booklet. We have representatives in many major cities around the globe, so if you would like to ask questions about how to properly observe the Sabbath or about meeting with others in your area—or if you have other questions about true Christianity—just drop us a line or give us a call. *No one* will be sent to call on you unless you request it. Our representatives will simply talk to you on the phone or answer in writing. We will *not* use any "high-pressure" tactics to get you to join or support us, for we want to be sure that God is truly "calling" you.

Do you want the opportunity to observe the true Sabbath, to enjoy warm, loving *fellowship* with others of similar beliefs, and to *learn more fully* the plan and *purpose* of the great *God*? Do you want to participate with others in this *crusade* to prepare the way for the return of Jesus Christ to this earth? We hope so, because all of this is so enormously helpful in assisting your spiritual growth. Unless you meet with others of the true faith of Jesus Christ and are nourished with *His word* rather than the traditions of men, *you may easily "die" spiritually*. The book of Hebrews, in a passage quoted elsewhere in this booklet, says, "And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, **not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together**, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching" (Hebrews 10:24–25).

Will you, personally, exercise the *faith* and the *courage* to obey the God who gives you life and breath? Or will you follow the deceptions of this world under Satan's powerful influence? You now *know* that the God of the Bible commands *you* to observe His holy Sabbath. And the ultimate penalty for *disobeying* God's law is *death* in the Lake of Fire. "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23; cf. Revelation 21:8).

As God spoke to ancient Israel, so now—through His inspired word—He speaks to you: "I call heaven and earth as witnesses today

against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore *choose life*, that both you and your descendants may live” (Deuteronomy 30:19).

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