

Sunday as a First-Day Sabbath

by PHILLIP KAYSER, Ph.D.



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The "First Day Sabbath" Concept

It is often alleged that the New Testament nowhere makes mention of Sunday as the Sabbath. However, many Greek scholars have pointed out that the concept of Sabbath has simply been translated away. We will later be demonstrating that this is clearly shown in the Greek of Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:1-2; Luke 24:1; John 20:1; Acts 20:7 and 1 Corinthians 16:2 all of which speak of a "first day Sabbath." Indeed, the last passage commands the observance of a "first day Sabbath."¹ It says, "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: on the first day Sabbath let each one of you lay something aside..."

Notice the three imperatives: 1) "as I have given orders," 2) "so you must do also," and 3) "let each lay aside."

There is clearly a day-keeping which is commanded, and which is quite at odds with Jewish day-keeping. Further evidence is hinted at in Acts 13. Paul preached to the Jews on two consecutive Sabbaths (mentioned in 13:14 and 13:44). In Acts 13:42 the Gentiles begged Paul to preach to them on "the Sabbath in between."² What is the Sabbath that is "in between" these two consecutive Jewish Sabbaths? This paper will seek to demonstrate that it was not the seventh day Sabbath (which Paul treats as no longer binding on the Christian – see Colossians 2:16), but was instead the "first day Sabbath," a day which all "churches" were commanded to keep (1 Cor. 16:1-2).

To those who object that the concept of a "first day Sabbath" would have been confusing, it should be pointed out that exactly the same language is repeatedly used in the Old Testament. The phrase "first day

¹ The Greek word σαββατων does not mean "week." It means Sabbath. If the Jews wanted to say week, they used the word εβδομας. This would have been particularly confusing to the Gentiles in Corinth who would have understood the meaning of Sabbath as "rest" or "rest day." If the apostle had meant the first day of the "week" he would have used the term εβδομας.

² There is a Greek word that could have expressed "the next Sabbath," and it is used in verse 44. However, in verse 42, an entirely different word is used that is nowhere else translated as "next." The word in verse 42 is "between" (μεταξυ), and is elsewhere used to speak of Peter "bound with two chains between two soldiers" (Acts 12:6) and is used in Acts 15:9 to say that God made "no distinction between us and them." The Sabbath "in between" the two Jewish Sabbaths would be Sunday.

Sabbath” as well as “eighth day Sabbath” occur in the Hebrew of Leviticus 23:39. The Septuagint translation of the Old Testament makes provision for the midweek Sabbaths by providing titles to some of the psalms such as “A Psalm of David on a first day Sabbath”³ (Greek LXX title for Psalm 24 [23 in LXX]), “A song of praise for the sons of Core on a second day Sabbath” (Psalm 48 [47 in LXX]), “A Psalm of David on a fourth day Sabbath” (Psalm 94 [93 in LXX]). David intended these psalms to be sung on midweek Sabbaths (i.e. intended for festival days, not for the regular Sabbath). But certainly a glance at the following Jewish calendar will show that there were not only 1st day Sabbaths, 2nd day Sabbaths, 3rd day Sabbaths and 4th day Sabbaths, there were Sabbaths for every day of the week. Thus Luke 6:1 (Majority Text) can speak of the “second-first Sabbath,” a possible reference to the fact that the 15th and the 22nd of Nisan occurred on Sunday in that year, and Luke is referring to the 22nd, which would be the second first day Sabbath on that festival.⁴

³These could also be translated as “first day since the Sabbath” and have reference to the eight days of worship that occurred in the temple on the Feast of Tabernacles, with day 1, day 2, day 3, etc having other activities (Numb. 29:7-40).

⁴This seems to be the most natural interpretation. For other possible interpretations, see a standard Bible Encyclopedia under “Second-first Sabbath.”

1988-1999 Calendar

(Jewish year starts Nisan 1 which in 1988 was March 19)

0	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
2 Nisan	3 Nisan	4 Nisan	5 Nisan	6 Nisan	7 Nisan	8 Nisan
9 Nisan	10 Nisan	11 Nisan	12 Nisan	13 Nisan	14 Nisan	15 Nisan ⁶
16 Nisan ⁷	17 Nisan	18 Nisan	19 Nisan	20 Nisan	21 Nisan	22 Nisan ⁸
23 Nisan	24 Nisan	25 Nisan	26 Nisan	27 Nisan	28 Nisan	29 Nisan
30 Nisan	1 Iyar	2 Iyar	3 Iyar	4 Iyar	5 Iyar	6 Iyar
7 Iyar	8 Iyar	9 Iyar	10 Iyar	11 Iyar	12 Iyar	13 Iyar
14 Iyar	15 Iyar	16 Iyar	17 Iyar	18 Iyar	19 Iyar	20 Iyar
21 Iyar	22 Iyar	23 Iyar	24 Iyar	25 Iyar	26 Iyar	27 Iyar
28 Iyar	29 Iyar	1 Sivan	2 Sivan	3 Sivan	4 Sivan	5 Sivan
6 Sivan ⁹	7 Sivan	8 Sivan	9 Sivan	10 Sivan	11 Sivan	12 Sivan
13 Sivan	14 Sivan	15 Sivan	16 Sivan	17 Sivan	18 Sivan	19 Sivan
20 Sivan	21 Sivan	22 Sivan	23 Sivan	24 Sivan	25 Sivan	26 Sivan
27 Sivan	28 Sivan	29 Sivan	30 Sivan	1 Tammuz	2 Tammuz	3 Tammuz
4 Tammuz	5 Tammuz	6 Tammuz	7 Tammuz	8 Tammuz	9 Tammuz	10 Tammuz
11 Tammuz	12 Tammuz	13 Tammuz	14 Tammuz	15 Tammuz	16 Tammuz	17 Tammuz
18 Tammuz	19 Tammuz	20 Tammuz	21 Tammuz	22 Tammuz	23 Tammuz	24 Tammuz
25 Tammuz	26 Tammuz	27 Tammuz	28 Tammuz	29 Tammuz	1 Av	2 Av
3 Av	4 Av	5 Av	6 Av	7 Av	8 Av	9 Av
10 Av	11 Av	12 Av	13 Av	14 Av	15 Av	16 Av
17 Av	18 Av	19 Av	20 Av	21 Av	22 Av	23 Av
24 Av	25 Av	26 Av	27 Av	28 Av	29 Av	30 Av
1 Elul	2 Elul	3 Elul	4 Elul	5 Elul	6 Elul	7 Elul

This column gives some examples of "first day Sabbaths" that occurred in the Jewish Calendar. It should be remembered that the Feast of First Fruits (resurrection day) was never a Sabbath day in its own right. God created something new when He called resurrection day a "first day Sabbath."

⁵The first of every month was a new moon Sabbath with the Seventh New Moon being a special Sabbath called the Feast of Trumpets (see below). (Numb. 28:11-15; 29:1-6; Lev. 23:23-25).

⁶The 15th of Nisan was a Sabbath whether or not it fell on the seventh day.

⁷Nisan 16th was the feast of firstfruits but it was not a Sabbath until the New Testament declared it to be so at Christ's resurrection. When the Gospels, Acts and Corinthians refer to a "first day Sabbath" they are not referring to a Jewish "first day Sabbath," although those did occur in connection with other holidays. (Lev. 23:10ff). All the Jewish Sabbaths have been abolished (Col. 2:16) to make room for the new day that the Lord has made.

⁸Nisan 22 was the seventh day of the feast of unleavened bread and it was a Sabbath (Numb. 28:17-25).

⁹Pentecost was a Sabbath regardless of which day it fell upon. In this year (as in the year of Christ's crucifixion) it falls on Sunday (Lev. 23:15-22).

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0	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
8 Elul	9 Elul	10 Elul	11 Elul	12 Elul	13 Elul	14 Elul
15 Elul	16 Elul	17 Elul	18 Elul	19 Elul	20 Elul	21 Elul
22 Elul	23 Elul	24 Elul	25 Elul	26 Elul	27 Elul	28 Elul
29 Elul	1 Tishri ¹⁰	2 Tishri	3 Tishri	4 Tishri	5 Tishri	6 Tishri
7 Tishri	8 Tishri ¹¹	9 Tishri	10 Tishri ¹²	11 Tishri	12 Tishri	13 Tishri
14 Tishri	15 Tishri ¹³	16 Tishri	17 Tishri	18 Tishri	19 Tishri	20 Tishri
21 Tishri ¹⁴	22 Tishri	23 Tishri	24 Tishri	25 Tishri	26 Tishri	27 Tishri
28 Tishri	29 Tishri	30 Tishri	1 Heshvan	2 Heshvan	3 Heshvan	4 Heshvan
5 Heshvan	6 Heshvan	7 Heshvan	8 Heshvan	9 Heshvan	10 Heshvan	11 Heshvan
12 Heshvan	13 Heshvan	14 Heshvan	15 Heshvan	16 Heshvan	17 Heshvan	18 Heshvan
19 Heshvan	20 Heshvan	21 Heshvan	22 Heshvan	23 Heshvan	24 Heshvan	25 Heshvan
26 Heshvan	27 Heshvan	28 Heshvan	29 Heshvan	1 Kislev	2 Kislev	3 Kislev
4 Kislev	5 Kislev	6 Kislev	7 Kislev	8 Kislev	9 Kislev	10 Kislev
11 Kislev	12 Kislev	13 Kislev	14 Kislev	15 Kislev	16 Kislev	17 Kislev
18 Kislev	19 Kislev	20 Kislev	21 Kislev	22 Kislev	23 Kislev	24 Kislev
25 Kislev	26 Kislev	27 Kislev	28 Kislev	29 Kislev	30 Kislev	1 Tevet
2 Tevet	3 Tevet	4 Tevet	5 Tevet	6 Tevet	7 Tevet	8 Tevet
9 Tevet	10 Tevet	11 Tevet	12 Tevet	13 Tevet	14 Tevet	15 Tevet
16 Tevet	17 Tevet	18 Tevet	19 Tevet	20 Tevet	21 Tevet	22 Tevet
23 Tevet	24 Tevet	25 Tevet	26 Tevet	27 Tevet	28 Tevet	29 Tevet
1 Shevat	2 Shevat	3 Shevat	4 Shevat	5 Shevat	6 Shevat	7 Shevat
8 Shevat	9 Shevat	10 Shevat	11 Shevat	12 Shevat	13 Shevat	14 Shevat
15 Shevat	16 Shevat	17 Shevat	18 Shevat	19 Shevat	20 Shevat	21 Shevat
22 Shevat	23 Shevat	24 Shevat	25 Shevat	26 Shevat	27 Shevat	28 Shevat
29 Shevat	30 Shevat	1 Adar	2 Adar	3 Adar	4 Adar	5 Adar
6 Adar	7 Adar	8 Adar	9 Adar	10 Adar	11 Adar	12 Adar
13 Adar	14 Adar	15 Adar	16 Adar	17 Adar	18 Adar	19 Adar
20 Adar	21 Adar	22 Adar	23 Adar	24 Adar	25 Adar	26 Adar
27 Adar	28 Adar	29 Adar				

This sample calendar illustrates numerous Sabbaths in the Hebrew Calendar. (The highlighted dates are dates that would be Sabbaths even if they occurred midweek.)

What is of great significance for the New Testament however is that a *new Sabbath* was created in the Gospels. For the first time in history, the third day of the Passover festival (sometimes called Firstfruits¹⁵) was referred to as a Sabbath day in each Gospel (Matt 28:1; Mark 16:2; Luke 24:1; John 20:1). Never before had this been done because work was previously mandated on that day – threshing the green firstfruits harvest. To the Jews, the obvious creation of a new Sabbath day could not have been avoided. In each Gospel account there was a bold declaration that

¹⁰Tishri 1 is the Feast of Trumpets and is a Sabbath irrespective of which day it falls on (Lev. 23:24; Numb. 29:1).

¹¹Tishri 8 is the last day of the Feast of Trumpets and is also a Sabbath (Lev. 23:36,39). Leviticus 23:39 actually uses the phrases “first day Sabbath” and “eighth day Sabbath.”

¹²10th of Tishri is the Day of Atonement (see Lev. 23:27-32).

¹³Tishri 15 is the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles and was a Sabbath (Lev. 23:34-38).

¹⁴The 7th day of tabernacles (Tishri 21) is also a Sabbath (Lev. 23:34-38).

¹⁵To be distinguished from the firstfruits 50 days later at Pentecost.

something new had come – indeed, that all things were beginning to be made new. No doubt this is why there was no controversy surrounding the church's worship being on Sunday. If God had not authorized Sunday as a Sabbath day, the Christian Jews would have strenuously objected to substituting the days of worship. Later in the paper we will examine how this change of days was anticipated in the Old Testament, and why a "Berean" who searched the Old Testament would have been able to see that these things were so. This change from seventh day to first day was no surprise. It was the natural result of the coming of the Messiah.

The Sabbath Principle Shown to be an Abiding Principle

The Sabbath is a creation ordinance (Genesis 2:3)

Since the other creation ordinances of labor (Gen. 2:15), marriage (Gen. 2:24,25) and fruitfulness (Gen. 1:28) have abiding significance for all mankind, one would expect the same of the Sabbath. This appears to be Christ's interpretation when He declares that the Sabbath was made for mankind (Mark 2:27). Set in the context of creation (man not being made for the Sabbath, but the Sabbath being made for man), Christ seems to agree that the Sabbath was observed as a creation ordinance when mankind was made. If this is true, then all attempts to treat the Sabbath as an institution unique to Israel are eliminated.

Gentiles are repeatedly commanded to keep the Sabbath

(Exodus 20:10; Deut. 5:14; Numb. 15:30—36; Neh. 13:16 in context of 15-22; Isaiah 56:1-8; 66:23). Evidence of Sabbath observance prior to the formation of Israel can be seen in the fact that Cain and Abel offered their sacrifices at the end of the week (literal Hebrew of Gen. 4:3 is “at the end of the days”). Likewise, time was divided up into “weeks” (Gen. 29:27,28) or periods of “seven days” (Gen. 7:10; 8:10,12) long before Israel came on the scene. This is why Israel observed the Sabbath before the Ten Commandments were written on stone (see Ex. 16:23,25,26,29). The evidence for this being a moral precept binding on all men is strong.

It is one of the “Ten Commandments” (Exodus 20)

These commandments were written by the very finger of God to show their importance and they were written on stone to show their abiding validity. God's law is always summarized as “Ten Commandments” (Ex. 34:28; Deut. 4:13; 10:4), not as nine. It is arbitrary to chisel one of the commandments out of the stone on which they were written.

Explicitly called an everlasting or perpetual statute (Exodus 31:16-17)

This is because it is a sign of the everlasting covenant (Ezek. 20:12,20; Is. 55:3 with 56:1-8; Ex. 31:16-17).

We are commanded to worship God on the Sabbath

Lev. 23:3; cf. e.g. 2Kings 4:23; and Christ's habit of meeting on the seventh day with God's people - Mark 6:2; Luke 4:16 - which habit we will see was transferred to the first day of the week after the resurrection.

Sabbath command to labor for six days

If the fourth commandment has been thrown out as some allege, how can the Ten Commandments summarize all the law? (cf. 2Thes. 3:6-15, etc. for this side of the commandment)

New Testament continuation

"There remains therefore a Sabbath observance¹⁶ for the people of God" (Heb. 4:9). Far from being abolished, the Bible says it "remains."

Old Testament prophesy

The Old Testament prophesied that in New Testament times Gentiles would honor the Sabbath (Isa. 56:1-8) and that eventually "from one Sabbath to another, *all flesh* shall come to worship before Me," says the Lord." (Isaiah 66:23 – emphasis mine). There is no time period prior to the resurrection of Jesus Christ that this statement could have been fulfilled. It applies to Gentiles in our era.

Christ taught proper observance of the Sabbath

(Matt. 12:1-14; Mark 2:23-3:6; Luke 13:10-17; 14:1-6; John 7:22-24). In these passages Christ does not overturn the Old Testament. Instead, He uses the Old Testament to justify His actions and to

¹⁶Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich in *A Greek English Lexicon of The New Testament* define this word as a "Sabbath observance."

overturn the false interpretations and additions imposed by the Pharisees.

Christ's prophecy for the Great Tribulation

He said that there would still be a Sabbath that true Christians ought to be concerned about (Matt 24:20). Whatever interpretation of prophecy one might have, this is clearly in the New Covenant era.

Revelation 1:10

This verse indicates that there is still a day of the week that is set apart as belonging to the Lord and is called "the Lord's day."

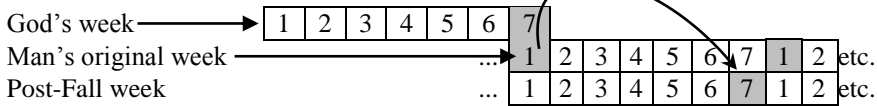
If Scripture teaches that the Sabbath is a permanent moral law, it would require specific information from the Lord to authorize any change in the day. It is to that subject that we now turn.

Historical Changes In the Sabbath

Historical Changes Described

Summary:

Before the Fall of Adam and Eve into sin, mankind was supposed to *start* his week with a Sabbath. After the Fall, God commanded man to *end* His week with a Sabbath. This is charted out below.



The Paradise rest which God provided and which was symbolized in the Sabbath was forfeited by man's disobedience and would only be restored again by the second Adam's future obedience. In Christ, the day for the Sabbath is restored to its creation place and man can once again rest in God's finished work of re-creation and redemption before He goes forth in obedience to the Lord.

Detailed analysis:

According to Exodus 20:11 all seven days of God's creation week were to be a model for man's dominion and rest. The order of activities on each of the days is instructive for our own dominion activities. In this booklet however, we will only focus on days six and seven.

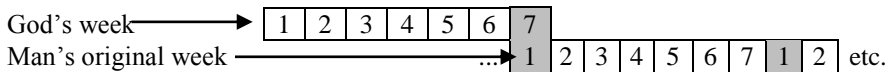
Day six of creation (the day of preparation)

One facet of dominion that was commanded on day six was to prepare for the Sabbath (Ex. 16:22-30). This day was called "the day of Preparation" (Matt. 27:62), "Preparation Day" (Mark 15:42; John 19:14,31,42) or simply "the Preparation" (Luke 23:54). On this day all necessary work was done ahead of time to enable worship on the Sabbath. In the original creation week God's preparations included preparing a home (Eden) and a community (Eve) in which to worship. God deliberately created Adam (as the head of the home) prior to those two preparations, perhaps as a form of teaching.

Day Seven of God’s Week is Day One of Man’s Week

The days of creation are all counted from evening to evening. By our Western method of counting, day six started on Friday night and finished Saturday night at 6pm. But the exact wording for each day is interesting. It says, “the evening and the morning were the first day” (1:5), etc. Adam had not experienced the evening of day six, and maybe not even the morning. Certainly Eve did not experience anything but a short period at the end of day six. This conclusion is reached from the following information. The order of events on day six were a) creation of land creatures (1:24-25), b) creation of Adam (2:7), c) creation of the garden (2:8), d) instructions to man (2:15-17), e) bringing animals before Adam to be named, but also to create a desire for him to have his own mate (2:18-20), f) creation of Eve (2:21-25), g) instructions (1:28-30) and h) ending the day with the declaration that it was “very good” (1:31). If Genesis 1:29-31 is compared with the time span of 2:7-22, it becomes evident that Eve was created toward the end of day six, just in time to hear God’s blessings and commands in 1:28-31 and the ushering in of the Sabbath.

Thus mankind’s first full day was God’s Sabbath day. Day seven of God’s week (as defined by “evening and morning”) was mankind’s first day (as defined by “evening and morning”). This can be diagrammed as follows:



Why did God have mankind start their week with a rest rather than end it with a rest as God did? Because God intended man on every level to demonstrate a commitment to the Creator/creature distinction. Man must not play God by taking dominion in his own wisdom. Instead, God intended man to start his week by bowing to God and listening to God on the Sabbath. It is only as man rests in God’s finished work of creation that he will be in a position to take godly, dependent and humble dominion of his own.

Adam’s Rebellion Against God’s Sabbath Rest

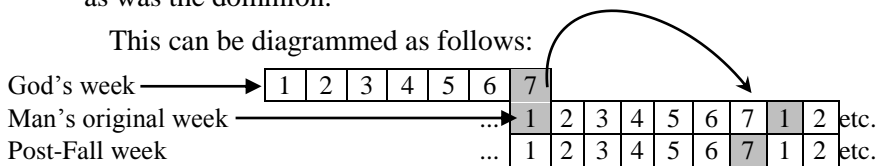
Adam rebelled against God’s design. He sought to start his week independent of God rather than dependent in worship. When God came to meet with His people in a visible form “walking in the garden in the cool of the day” (3:8), He found that they rebelled against His purpose

for both Sabbath and dominion. They had bought into Satan’s lie that “you will be like God” (3:5). They had submitted to a wisdom alien to God’s, had sought to take dominion independently of Him and had worshipped and served the creation rather than the Creator. Adam by his decision had destroyed the whole purpose and character of the Sabbath and in doing so had made dominion into a demonic activity.

God Shows Mercy, But Rubs Adam’s Face in the Sabbath he Disdained

But praise the Lord! God did not make all rest and dominion impossible for Adam and Eve by throwing them into hell. It’s true, there was cursing of both Adam’s dominion and his rest. But there was also redemption and blessing found along with the curse. Genesis 3:15 prophesies of the coming of Jesus who would destroy the works of the devil. Apart from the coming of Jesus, the promise of rest in the Sabbath would have been false, and the Sabbath would have ceased to be a meaningful command. So what God did was to place the time for worship at the end of the week. In effect God told Adam, “So you want to be like God!? So you want to start your week with dominion rather than rest!?? I will let you do so. In fact, to show how miserable all dominion can be apart from grace I will *command* you to do as I did. From this point on you must begin your week with dominion and only after long and hard striving will I give you rest. The fact that there still is rest is a promise that one day at the end of this age, the promised Messiah will bring true rest. He as the Second Adam will accomplish what you failed to.” And so the Sabbath was no longer celebrated at the beginning of the week, but at the end of the week. The rest was cursed¹⁷ as was the dominion.

This can be diagrammed as follows:



¹⁷ This helps to explain why the Old Covenant Sabbath (along with all the law) is seen as a curse in Colossians 2. As long as men are in the Old Adam, the covenant becomes a burden which is impossible to bear, which is “against us” and “contrary to us” (Col. 2:14). The Old Covenant Sabbath was simply “a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ” (v. 16-17). This helps to explain the heightened form of punishment given for Sabbath breaking in the Old Covenant (Exodus 35:2). The Sabbath was a sign of the broken covenant. Until Christ kept the covenant fully, God’s people were continually reminded of their need for Him to bear the curse.

Until the time of Jesus, mankind is commanded to imitate God to show how impossible it is for us to play God. From this point on, worship was at the end of the week. This is the literal meaning of Genesis 4:2. When Cain and Abel bring their sacrifices before God, it is said to be at the end of the week, or as the margin says literally, "at the end of the days." We have hints in Noah of this same pattern. Again we have hints in the patriarchs that they kept a seventh day Sabbath. In Exodus 16, before Israel even gets to Sinai and before the law is given, they observe the Sabbath on the seventh day. The law at Sinai condemns, but it also gives hope in a future Messiah. And the New Testament uses this Sabbath imagery not only to speak of the bondage symbolized in pre-resurrection Sabbath observance, but also the liberty and grace in the change of the day.

Failure to Observe a First Day Sabbath Ignores Christ's Finished Work

In the Old Covenant, while the seventh day Sabbath was a reminder of man's inability, it was also a gracious promise of what Christ would do. It symbolized that what is impossible for those in the First Adam, the Second Adam accomplishes. Because Jesus is both God and man, He can satisfy the demand of the law. Christ kept all the demands of the previous covenants and was also punished for "the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance" (Heb. 9:15). By His redemption He made a new creation (2Cor. 5:17-19; Rom. 8:19-25) and entered His rest (Heb. 4:10). He again gave us the pledge of the first day Sabbath (see below) which held out the promise of our consummation state as we labor for Christ's kingdom and seek to "subdue all things" (Heb. 2:5-8). Since we are sinners, this would also be an impossible request, so Christ not only enters His rest as God, but as our representative Second Adam He labors to subdue all things to Himself on our behalf (Heb. 1:13; 2:8-18). Before we can subdue the world to King Jesus, we must first rest in His finished work of redemption.

To fail to start our week with rest (on Sunday) is to make the same mistake that Adam made. When Adam broke the first Sabbath by taking his own dominion and looking to another source for wisdom, he forgot that God had already provided everything that he needed for life and godliness. It is true that after the fall, men had to look forward to a new provision that had not yet come (Jesus). But once Jesus has come, it is an insult to His grace to continue to celebrate a seventh day Sabbath as if

He has not come. Colossians 2:11-17 tells us that to continue to observe Jewish days (all of which looked forward to Jesus) is to submit to bondage and frustration in the same way that religious observance of circumcision does. Circumcision was a blessing in the Old Covenant because it pointed to Jesus, but once Jesus has come, to get circumcised insults Christ's finished work. In the same way, Paul says "Let no one judge you ... [with respect to] sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ." (vv. 16-17). The rest of this paper proves that there truly is a "first day Sabbath" which has been restored to God's people. Because of Christ's resurrection on Easter Sunday we have been given new power to take dominion as we are supposed to. To ignore or violate the Sabbath is to try to take dominion in our own strength and in our own way.

The Change to "First Day Sabbath" Hinted at in the Old Testament

Isaiah 65-66 anticipates the time when all things will be made new as a result of Christ's incarnation (66:7-9). This includes ultimately a new heavens and earth (65:17). But prior to that time there will be changes in God's people (65:18-19) changes in the extent of Deuteronomy 28 type blessings (65:20-25), and even changes in worship (66:1-4) and church government (66:18-21). If priests and Levites in the new covenant will no longer be from the tribe of Levi but will be from the Gentiles (66:21), then it should be no surprise to us that the Sabbath is included in the "new" things when "from one Sabbath to another, all flesh shall come to worship before" God (66:23). Both chapters anticipate radical changes in Christ's making all things new.

This new covenant creation was anticipated in the Old Testament feast days by the "eighth day Sabbath" which pointed figuratively to Christ (cf. e.g. Lev. 23:39). What is the eighth day? Sunday. This "eighth day" concept occurs repeatedly in the festivals (Lev. 23:5,10ff, 15ff, 34,35,36,39).

This new creation was anticipated by the Jubilee year which was the year after the seventh seven. Christ declared Himself to be the fulfillment of the Jubilee (Luke 4:19). Every Sunday is the day after the seventh – a miniature jubilee if you will.

This new creation is recognized to be a new "day which the LORD has made" (Psalm 118:24); namely the resurrection day when Christ entered

His rest. This resurrection "day" fulfills in the new creation the function that the old day "made" by God had: it is set apart as His day (Rev. 1:10). This is why Hebrews 4:8 indicates that when Psalm 95 is referring to "another day" (namely the resurrection) it signifies that "there remains therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God." (Heb. 4:10).

In light of Peter's exposition of Psalm 118 in Acts 4:10-12, it appears reasonable that when Psalm 118:24 says, "this is the day that the LORD has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it," it is a reference not just to Christ's resurrection, but the making of a new day of our weekly celebration. It does apply at least to the resurrection of Christ, but it appears to be an ongoing day of celebration.

Christ's Resurrection Establishes a New First Day Sabbath

After the resurrection, and only after the resurrection is worship performed corporately on a weekly basis on the first day of the week. The Gospels authorize the change by indicating in their accounts of the Sabbath that there was now a "first day Sabbath." Since the English translations tend to obscure this point that has been made by Sabbatarian commentators, I will place the Greek in sequence with the English and then under the English give a literal translation and two other possible translations offered by Greek scholars. Note especially the form of the word "Sabbath," and compare that form with the Jewish Sabbath of Exodus 20; Colossians 2:16 and Matthew 28:1.

The Greek form of the fourth commandment.

Μνησθητι την ημέραν τῶν σαββάτων ἁγιαζειν αὐτην

Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

Jewish Sabbath abolished along with all other Old Testament and Old World days.

"So do not let anyone judge you in meat or in drink [food laws abolished] or in respect to a feast day, or a new moon, or the Sabbath (σαββάτων)" (Col. 2:16).

Resurrection accounts that bring in a new Sabbath.

Matthew 28:1

Ἦψε δε σαββάτων τη ἐπιφωσκουση εἰς μιαν σαββάτων,

Note: The same word in the same context using the same grammar should have the same translation.

NKJV: Now after the Sabbath, as the first [day] of the week began to dawn

Literal: Now after the Sabbath, as the first [day] Sabbath began to dawn

Translation of Johns D. Parker, Cranmer and some other Greek scholars: Now after the Sabbath; towards one of the Sabbaths.¹⁸ (same for verses given below.)

Youngs: And on the eve of the sabbaths, at the dawn, toward the first of the sabbaths. (similar for other Gospel accounts)¹⁹

Mark 16:1-2, 9

Και διαγενομένου τοῦ σαββάτου, Μαρία, ... και; λίαν πρωῒ τῆς μιᾶς σαββάτων ἔρχονται ἐπι; το; μνημεῖον, ἀναπέλαντος τοῦ ἡλίου... Ἀναστάς δε πρῶ πρωτῆ σαββάτου

Notice that this second form of the word "Sabbath" is also used for both Saturday and Sunday

NKJV: Now when the [Jewish] Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome brought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen.

Literal: Now when the Sabbath was past²⁰ ... Very early in the morning, on the first day Sabbath, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen... And rising early on the first day Sabbath.

¹⁸For those who think that the genitive should be translated with an "of," it should be noted that the *usual* case for Sabbath is the genitive since its original meaning was "of rest," (i.e. a day of rest). Thus τῶν σαββάτων in Exodus 20 is simply "the Sabbath" and Ὁψε δε σαββάτων is simply "and after the Sabbath." Likewise, the singular day "Sabbath" is *usually* in the plural. This can be seen by even a casual glance through a Greek concordance. Why does the translation have to change when the form is the same for both words in Matthew 28:1? While it is possible to paraphrase σαββάτων as "week," there is only one Biblical text where such a paraphrase would be helpful (Luke 18:12) and that is simply because "I fast twice since the Sabbath" would be too wooden for an English translation. Interestingly, only one extra Biblical citation is given by BAGD as warranting such a paraphrase. The usual term for "week" is ἑβδομας. But just for the sake of argument, if indeed it is an extremely rare form for "week," it would seem curious to me that such a rare form would find its way into all four Gospel accounts, be used by Greek speaking Luke, and by Paul when ἑβδομας would have been the expected form for "week." The Sunday Sabbatarian translation is really to be preferred.

¹⁹Robert Young, *The Holy Bible consisting of the Old and New Covenants translated according to the letter and idioms of the original languages.*"

²⁰Parker comments: "In these words the evangelist says the (Jewish) Sabbath "was past," and he uses the verb διαγινομαι in the Second Aorist, signifying that the action was complete. The preposition δια in composition gives intensity to the verb to show that the transition of time was entirely finished through to the very end, that the (Jewish) Sabbath had transpired before the Sabbath commenced which is mentioned in the second verse.

Luke 24:1

Τῇ δε μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων, ὄρθρου βαθεος, ἦλθον ἐπι το μνήμα

NKJV: Now on the first day of the week, very early the morning, they came to the tomb.

Literal: Now on the first day Sabbath, at early dawn, they came to the tomb.

John 20:1

Τη δε μια τον σαββάτων, Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνη; ἐρχεται πρωί σκοτίας ἐτι οὔσης εἰς το μνεῖον

NKJV: Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark.

Literal: Now on the first day Sabbath Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark.

Early Church celebration

We find Luke and Paul distinguishing between the Sabbath and the first day Sabbath so that there would be no confusion when relating history that occurred where both Sabbaths were being practiced; the seventh day Sabbath by unbelieving Jews and the first day Sabbath by the church.²¹ For the first reference, let me quote the exposition of the Rev. Johns D. Parker, Ph.D.:

Acts 13:42ff

When Paul and Barnabas were at Antioch in Pisidia, on their first missionary tour, we have the most indisputable evidence of the transfer of the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday. Paul first preached to the Jews in their synagogue on the (Jewish) Sabbath, and "when the Jews were gone out of their synagogue [Acts 13:42], the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath" (εἰς το μεταξυ σαββατον in the Sabbath in between), that is, the Sabbath between the (Jewish) Sabbaths. And the narrative

In Mark 16:9 the evangelist tells us Jesus rose very early on the first day of the week (ἀναστασας δε πρωι σαββάτου) which gives us divine authority for observing the Sabbath on Sunday, the first day of the week." p. 43.. *The Sabbath Transferred*.

²¹See below on 1Corinthians 16:1 where Paul commanded the "first day Sabbath" collection and said that this order was to all the churches, not just to Corinth.

continues (Acts 13:44), and the next Sabbath day (τό δε; ἔχομενω σαββατω σχεδον on the following Sabbath just at hand), came almost the whole city together to hear the Word of God. When the participle ἔχομενος is used in reference to place it designates a place that is near or next, as in Mark 1:38 where Christ said "let us go into the next towns" (ἀγωμεν εἰς τας ἔχομενας κομπολεις). When the participle is used in reference to time it designates the next day, as in Acts 21:26, where "Paul took the men, and the next day [τη ἔξομενη ἡμερα] purifying himself with them entered into the temple." The evangelist here says the following Sabbath, (on which the Gentiles would naturally hold religious service), was between the (Jewish) Sabbaths, and near at hand, that is, on Sunday. Can language be framed that would prove the transfer of the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday more clearly and indisputably than this language of the inspired evangelist?²²

While I believe that Parker is much too dogmatic, his interpretation is at least possible and is included for completeness.

Acts 20:7

(See comments under Revelation 1:10 on the significance of this verse)

Ἐν δε τῇ μια των σαββάτων, συνηγμενων των μαθητων του κλασσαι ἄρτον, ὁ Παυλος διελεγετο αὐτοις

NKJV: Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul spoke to them.

Literal: Now on the first day Sabbath, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul spoke to them.

1 Corinthians 16:2

κατα μιαν σαββάτων ἕκαστος ὑμων ...

NKJV: On the first day of the week, let each of you ...

Literal: On the first day Sabbath, let each of you ...

The context of this verse is also significant:

“Now concerning the collection for the saints, *as I have given orders* to the churches of Galatia, so *you must do also*: On the first day of

²² *Ibid.*, pp 45-46.

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 the present active imperative. Imperative shows it to be a command. Present shows it to be continuous.

This is one of several passages which shows that the New Testament is not against “day keeping.” Notice that Paul wanted the offerings taken on a certain day: the first day Sabbath. The establishment of this day is a command, something the Corinthians must do, and something that was universally mandated for all churches. Many people will use Romans 14, Galatians 4:9-10 and Colossians 2:16-17 to teach that there is no distinction in days in the New Covenant and that day-keeping is not necessary. Not only does such an interpretation contradict this passage, but it does violence to the context of each of those passages. Each of those passages are clearly dealing with the issue of whether the Jewish Sabbath days continue. To make way for the New Covenant Sabbath, the Jewish Sabbaths had to pass away. But those passages do not make every New Covenant day alike.

Seventh Day Adventists have tried to say that this passage is only talking about setting aside some money in the home on each pay day, and that the first day of each week was probably pay day. As Gordon Fee notes, "Deissmann, LAE, p. 361, put forth this suggestion but acknowledged that it had no known support. It seems altogether too modern to have merit."²³ Not only does it not have support, but there is much evidence that laborers were paid on a daily basis (see for example Lev. 19:13 where employers were not allowed to wait till the next day to make payment; see also Matt. 20:1-16). So there is no getting around the religious significance of "the first day" no matter how you translate the Greek. Notice too that the context indicates that this is an "order to the churches" (v. 1). This is church practice in other nations as well (v. 1) that is being addressed, not private charity. Charles Hodge commenting on the phrase "Every one was to lay by himself" says,

"To this interpretation [that it means individuals should store up in their houses] it may be objected that the whole expression is thus obscure and awkward. . . . The words do not mean to lay by at home, but to lay by himself. . . . What he has to do with it, or where he was to deposit it, is not expressed. The word $\theta\eta\sigma\alpha\upsilon\omicron\rho\iota\zeta\omega\nu$ means *putting*

²³Gordon Fee. *The First Epistle To The Corinthians*, p. 813, footnote 26.

into the treasury, or *hoarding up*, and is perfectly consistent with the assumption that the place of deposit was some common treasury, and not every man's house. 2. If Paul directed this money to be laid up at home, why was the first day of the week selected? It is evident that the first day must have offered some special facility for doing what is here enjoined. The only reason that can be assigned for requiring the thing to be done on the first day of the week, is, that on that day the Christians were accustomed to meet, and what each one had laid aside from his weekly gains could be treasured up, i.e. put into the common treasury of the church. 3. The end which the apostle desired to accomplish could not otherwise have been effected. He wished that there might be no collections when he came. But if every man had his money laid by at home, the collection would be still to be made. The probability is, therefore, Paul intended to direct the Corinthians to make a collection every Lord's day for the poor, when they met for worship."²⁴

Certainly on the other occasions when Paul spoke of this particular offering for Jerusalem it was described in the language of worship and fellowship, not of private charity: "fellowship" (2Cor. 8:4; 9:13; Rom. 15:26), "service" (2Cor. 8:4; 9:1,12,13; Rom. 15:31; cf. v. 25), "grace" (2Cor. 8:4,6,7,9,19), "blessing" (2Cor. 9:5), and "divine service" (the Greek word is *λειτουργία* from which we get our word "liturgy." cf. 2Cor. 9:12; Rom. 15:27). This was clearly an act of worship in the community of believers.

Therefore, even if the translation given is not accepted, it is still clear that corporate worship was on Sunday rather than on Saturday, and therefore God's authorized stated worship services are on Sunday and not Saturday. Sunday is the day "sanctified" to Him.

Revelation 1:10

"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day."

Just as the "Lord's Supper" is a meal that is set aside for the Lord in a way that makes it unique, so too, "Lord's day" is a day which is set aside for the Lord in a way that makes it special. It is a day that is "sanctified to the Lord."

²⁴ Charles Hodge, *I & II Corinthians*, Banner of Truth, 1978; pp. 363-364.

This is exactly the same Greek syntax as is used to describe the "Lord's Supper" (1Cor. 11:20). The Lord set aside one supper as belonging to Him in a special way, and since He is "Lord of the Sabbath" (Matt. 12:8), He "made" the day (cf. Ps. 118:24) on which Christ arose to be a day that is set aside as belonging to Him in a special way.

Though it had always been Christ's habit to meet corporately on Saturday (Luke 4:16), He changed that habit so that now the only records we have of His meeting corporately (at least that are dated) are on Sunday.²⁵ Since Sunday is the Lord's day, it was the day for meeting with Jesus in worship (Mark 16:9,12,14; Luke 24:13-35 compared with John 20:14-17 and 19-23; Luke 24:36-49 compared with John 20:26-29). Pentecost was on a Sunday (compare Lev. 23:15-16 with Acts 2:1ff) and therefore the disciples were "all with one accord in one place" (Acts 2:1). Paul, arriving in Troas on Monday (Acts 20:6) delayed his hurried trip²⁶ till the following Monday so that he could worship with the church on Sunday (Acts 20:7). If, as Seventh Day Adventists assert there was no significance to his meeting on this day, then why does the passage not mention any other meetings in the previous seven days? It was clearly Sunday, not Saturday on which the "disciples came together to break bread" (v. 7). And he was clearly delaying his rushed trip for a purpose. A conclusion that can be drawn from all of the above is that the Old Testament anticipated another day (Heb. 4:8)²⁷ and that this resurrection

²⁵Francis Nigel Lee says that the sequence and number of meetings recorded indicate a meeting for each Sunday of the 40 days He was with the disciples.

²⁶He was rushing to try to make it to Jerusalem by Pentecost (Acts 20:16). This being so, if the Seventh Day Adventists are correct, it is strange that Paul delayed his trip till Monday unless he wanted to worship once with them, and Sunday was the worship day.

²⁷Verse 8 says, "For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day." And David was speaking of the day of salvation that Christ brought in by His resurrection. That day was not the end of History. Resurrection day was the first time that anyone entered into the kingdom of heaven, because it was then that Christ was given all authority in heaven and on earth. Christ said, "among those born of women there has not arisen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" (Matt. 11:11). So verse 8 says that Psalm 95 anticipated that there must be another day besides the day when Israel crossed the Jordan to enter the land. And that "other day" was none other than Easter Sunday when Christ led the way into the kingdom. He led the way over the Jordan like Joshua. And Jesus Christ stands not only as the Joshua who leads the way into possessing the land for the kingdom, but He also stands as the High priest in verses 14-16, who parted the waters the moment their feet touched the Jordan. In the same way, Jesus opened the way into the kingdom of heaven and enabled us not only to enter the kingdom by faith, but to conquer the land in such a way that multitudes of others would enter the kingdom (Heb. 4:14).

day logically implies that "there remains therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God" (Heb. 4:9). This Sabbath will not be taken away until eternity when we are done with our labors and cease from our dominion as God did from His (Heb. 4:10). The Sabbath, as an everlasting statute (Exodus 31:16-17), will not pass away until heaven and earth pass away. It is a sign of the everlasting covenant (Ezek. 20:12,20; Isa. 55:3 with 56:1-8; Ex. 31:16-17). But like the other two signs of the covenant (which are also "forever") they change into New Covenant forms: circumcision into baptism, Passover into Lord's Supper and seventh day Sabbath into first day Sabbath. The day that belonged to the Lord in the Old Covenant was Saturday (Ex. 20:10) and the day which belongs to the Lord in the New Covenant is Sunday, "the Lord's day," commemorating on a weekly basis Easter Sunday (Rev. 1:10).

Verse 9 says that it is because we are in the entering stage that there remains a Sabbath observance, or a Sabbatism for the people of God. That is the sign of the everlasting covenant. That is the promise that one day the new heavens and the new earth will be brought in and we will cease from our labors and our works will follow us. Verse 10 reinforces that thought by explaining that when we have (past tense) entered the rest as a finished fact, that we have completely ceased from our works as God did from His. Verse 10 defines the rest as when we cease from our labors. "For he who has entered His [that is, God's] rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His." Now notice that phrase, "as God did from His." Commentators point out how this cannot be referring to our initial salvation experience, but must be referring to heaven. If we say that we are ceasing from evil works or from self-righteous works (which we do when we are justified by faith alone); if that is what it is referring to, then the analogy breaks down because the works that God ceased from were called very good. He was satisfied with them and the Joshua generation which was seeking to enter its rest (Joshua 1:13-15) was clearly the believing generation, not the unbelieving wilderness generation. Just as God's works leading up to His rest were good works that He was satisfied with, and the Joshua generation's works (that is, their 15 year period of warfare in which they were entering into their rest) were good works that they finally ceased from; was an obedience motivated by faith, so too the works which we will cease from are good works done as believers while here on earth. Turn to Revelation 14:13 as an example of this type of language: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.'" So this rest is heaven. We are not in heaven yet, nor is it the end of the world, and that is why verse 9 says, "There remains therefore a Sabbath observance; a Sabbath rest for the people of God." The Sabbath has always been a pledge of God's rest or of the kingdom of heaven held out to us. We aren't in the rest yet because we are in the period where we are entering it; where there is warfare. Where we are conquering the land for Jesus in terms of the Great Commission.

The Early Church Saw Sunday as the Christian Sabbath

Seventh Day Adventists sometimes claim that Sunday observance started with Constantine. Others say that the Pope instituted Sunday in place of Saturday worship. Others more cautiously have suggested that though the church may have worshipped on Sunday, it rested on Saturday and never called Sunday a “rest day.”

This is so clearly wrong that it amazes me how entrenched this mythology has become.

- In AD 74, Barnabas spoke of Sunday as “the Sabbath” which God had made.
- In AD 200, Tertullian said that the church solemnizes Sunday just as Jews solemnize Saturday.
- In AD 300, Eusebius called Sunday “*the one and only truly holy day.*”
- In AD 220, Origen insisted that on Sundays we must abstain from all work and devote the entire day to worship, readings and private devotions.

Indeed, from AD 74 and on, there are so many references to Sunday being treated as a rest day, a “commandment,” a holy day and as a replacement for Saturday Sabbaths that to continue claims to the contrary is either dishonest or ignorant. It is clear that (with the exception of a small heretical Jewish group known as the Ebionites) the universal practice of the church was to treat Sunday as the authorized holy day of the week. It is clear that they saw Saturday Sabbaths as discontinued and Sunday Sabbath worship as obligatory. The following quotes should help to establish that fact. (I have summarized the significance of each quote in bold-letter headlines before each quote that is given.)

AD 74 - Epistle of Barnabas

- Christians keep the eighth day.²⁸
- This day is the day Christ rose from the grave (Sunday) and is a “Sabbath.”
- God has rejected the seventh day Sabbath.

“Moreover God says to the Jews, ‘Your new moons and Sabbaths I cannot endure.’ You see how he says, ‘The present Sabbaths are not acceptable to me, but *the Sabbath which I have made in which, when I have rested from all things, I will make the beginning of the eighth day* which is the beginning of another world.’ Wherefore we *Christians keep the eighth day* [Sunday] for joy, on which also Jesus arose from the dead and when he appeared ascended into heaven. (15:8f, The Epistle of Barnabas, Ante-Nicene Fathers , vol. 1, pg. 147).

AD 90 - Didache

- The Lord’s Day (earlier said to be Sunday) is the day for public worship and communion.

“But *every Lord’s day*, do ye gather yourselves together, and break bread, and give thanksgiving after having confessed your transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure. But let no one that is at variance with his fellow come together with you, until they be reconciled, that your sacrifice may not be profaned. For this is that which was spoken by the Lord...” [Matt. 5:23-24] (The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, Chap. 14:1, Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol. 7, page 381).

AD 107 - Ignatius

- The Jewish Sabbath has been replaced by the Lord’s Day.
- It is sin to continue to celebrate Saturday as the Sabbath in preference to Sunday, since Sunday alone is the Lord’s Day.
- Jews (“those who were brought up in the ancient order of things) who convert to Christianity must observe the Lord’s Day, not the Jewish Sabbath.
- Every Christian is obligated to “keep” the Lord’s Day.
- Sunday is the chief day of the week.

“Be not deceived with strange doctrines, nor with old fables, which are unprofitable. For if we still live according to the Jewish law, we acknowledge that we have not received grace... If, therefore, those who were brought up in the ancient order of

²⁸ Since the OT uses “eighth day” language in connection with festival Sabbaths, and since he uses the Sabbatarian language of keeping a day, this is very significant. The day-keeping on Sunday parallels the keeping of the Sabbath.

things have come to the possession of a new hope, *no longer observing the Sabbath, but living in the observance of the Lord's Day*, on which also our life has sprung up again by Him and by His death (which some deny), through which mystery we received faith, and on account of which we suffer in order that we may be found disciples of Jesus Christ our only teacher, how shall we be able to live apart from him for whom even the prophets were looking as their teacher since they were his disciples in the spirit?... *let every friend of Christ keep the Lord's Day as a festival*, the resurrection-day, the queen and chief of all the days of the week. It is absurd to speak of Jesus Christ with the tongue, and to cherish in the mind a Judaism which has now come to an end. for where there is Christianity there cannot be Judaism.... These things I address to you, my beloved, not that I know any of you to be in such a state; but, as less than any of you, I desire to guard you beforehand, that ye fall not upon the hooks of vain doctrine, but that you may rather attain to a full assurance in Christ..." (Ignatius, Epistle to the Magnesians, ch 9. Ante-Nicene Fathers , vol. 1, pg. 62-63.).

AD 110 - Pliny the Younger

- Christians meet “on a fixed day.”
- This day is measured not by Jewish reckoning of evening to evening (i.e., Saturday Sabbath), but from morning worship to evening worship. This is indirect evidence of a Sunday gathering from a pagan.

“they were in the habit of meeting *on a certain fixed day* before it was light, when they sang in alternate verses a hymn to Christ, as to a god, and bound themselves by a solemn oath not to (do) any wicked deeds, never to commit any fraud, theft, or adultery, never to falsify their word, nor deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up; after which it was *their custom to separate, and then reassemble* to partake of good food—but food of an ordinary and innocent kind” (Pliny, Letters to Trajan, Book X, in *The Loeb Classical Library*, eds E. Capps., T.E. Page, W.H.D. Rouse, *Pliny Letters II*, translated by William Melmoth. [London: William Heinemann, MCMXV], p. 403.)

AD 150 - Epistle of the Apostles

- The day belonging to the Lord is said to be the eighth day.
“I [Christ] have come into being on the *eighth day which is the day of the Lord.*” (18)¹

AD 150 - Justin Martyr

Quote #1

- Though we would disagree with Justin’s exegesis to support why the church has rejected the Jewish Sabbath, it is clear that he

believes the seventh day Sabbath of the Jews is no longer binding. (He will shortly say that keeping Sunday as a holy day is binding.)

“...those who have persecuted and do persecute Christ, if they do not repent, shall not inherit anything on the holy mountain. But the Gentiles, who have believed on Him, and have repented of the sins which they have committed, they shall receive the inheritance along with the patriarchs and the prophets, and the just men who are descended from Jacob, even although they neither keep the Sabbath, nor are circumcised, nor observe the feasts. Assuredly they shall receive the holy inheritance of God” (Dialogue With Trypho the Jew, Ante-Nicene Fathers , vol. 1, page 207).

“But if we do not admit this, we shall be liable to fall into foolish opinion, as if it were not the same God who existed in the times of Enoch and all the rest, who neither were circumcised after the flesh, nor observed Sabbaths, nor any other rites, seeing that Moses enjoined such observances... For if there was no need of circumcision before Abraham, or of the observance of Sabbaths, of feasts and sacrifices, before Moses; no more need is there of them now, after that, according to the will of God, Jesus Christ the Son of God has been born without sin, of a virgin sprung from the stock of Abraham.”(Dialogue With Trypho the Jew, Ante-Nicene Fathers , vol. 1, page 206).

“There is no other thing for which you blame us, my friends, is there than this? That we do not live according to the Law, nor, are we circumcised in the flesh as your forefathers, nor do we observe the Sabbath as you do.” (Dialogue with Trypho 10:1. In verse 3 the Jew Trypho acknowledges that Christians ‘do not keep the Sabbath.’)

Quote #2

- Public worship is held on Sunday

“But Sunday is the day on which we hold our common assembly, because it is the first day of the week and Jesus our saviour on the same day rose from the dead.” (First apology of Justin, Ch 68).

Quote #3

- Uses Old Testament “eighth day” language to speak of the first day of the week.
- Sunday is the “first of all days.” If (as many Seventh Day Adventists claim), the early church kept a Saturday Sabbath, there is no way that Justin would call Sunday the first of all days.” That implies that it is more holy than and supercedes all other days of the week.

“The commandment of circumcision, requiring them always to circumcise the children on the eighth day, was a type of the true circumcision by which we are circumcised from error and evil through the resurrection from the dead on the first day of the week of Jesus Christ our Lord. For the *first day of the week*, although it is the *first of all days*, yet according to the number of the days in a cycle is *called the eighth* (while still remaining the first)” (Dialogue 41:4).

Quote #4

- Full worship service was held on Sunday
- Christ taught his apostles to worship on Sunday after His resurrection

“We are always together with one another. And for all the things with which we are supplied we bless the Maker of all through his Son Jesus Christ and through his Holy Spirit. And on the day called Sunday there is a gathering together in the same place of all who live in a city or a rural district. (There follows an account of a Christian worship service, which is quoted in VII.2.) We all make our assembly in common on the day of the Sun, since it is the first day, on which God changed the darkness and matter and made the world, and Jesus Christ our Savior arose from the dead on the same day. For they crucified him on the day before Saturn's day, and on the day after (which is the day of the Sun) he appeared to his apostles and taught his disciples these things.” (Apology, 1, 67:1-3, 7; First Apology, Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 1, pg. 186).

AD 180 - Acts of Peter

Quote #1

- Jewish Sabbath abolished

“Paul had often contended with the Jewish teachers and had confuted them, saying ‘it is Christ on whom your fathers laid hands. He abolished their Sabbath and fasts and festivals and circumcision.’” (1: 1-2).

Quote #2

- Sunday is a Sabbath
- Sunday is the Lord’s Day

“Early in the morning *when the Sabbath dawned*, a multitude from Jerusalem and the surrounding country came to see the scaled sepulchre. In the night in which the Lord's day dawned, while the soldiers in pairs for each watch were keeping guard, a great voice came from heaven.... *Early in the morning of the Lord's day* Mary Magdalene, a disciple of the Lord came to the sepulchre” (9:34f.; 12:50f.).

AD 190 - Clement Of Alexandria

- The Gospel way of keeping the fourth commandment is on the Lord’s Day
- The Lord’s Day is the day Christ rose from the dead (Sunday)

“He does the commandment according to the Gospel and *keeps the Lord's day*, whenever he puts away an evil mind . . . *glorifying the Lord's resurrection* in himself.” (Ibid. Vii.xii.76.4).

AD 200 - Bardesanes

- Assemble on the first day of the week.
- The first day is the only day mandated for assembly (“on *one* day”) “Wherever we are, we are all called after the one name of Christ Christians. On one day, *the first of the week*, we assemble ourselves together” (On Fate, 5).

AD 200 - Tertullian

Quote #1

- Sunday is compared with the Jewish Sabbath
- Sunday is set apart as a solemn day, whereas Jews solemnize Saturday.

"*We solemnize the day after Saturday* in contradistinction to those who call this day their Sabbath" (Tertullian's Apology, Ch 16).

Quote #2

- Saturday Sabbath days were temporary and abolished

"It follows, accordingly, that, in so far as the abolition of carnal circumcision and of the old law is demonstrated as having been consummated at its specific times, so also the observance of the Sabbath is demonstrated to have been temporary. (An Answer to the Jews 4:1, Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol. 3, page 155).

Quote #3

- Don't confuse Sunday worship with worship of sun-god.
- Sunday is our day of joy

"Others . . . suppose that the sun is the god of the Christians, because *it is well-known that we regard Sunday as a day of joy*. (To the Nations 1: 133).

AD 220 - Origen

Quote #1

- Sunday observed by abstaining from all work and devoting the whole day to worship, readings and private devotions

"On Sunday none of the actions of the world should be done. If then, you abstain from all the works of this world and keep yourselves free for spiritual things, go to church, listen to the readings and divine homilies, meditate on heavenly things. (Homil. 23 in Numeros 4, PG 12:749).

Quote #2

- Sunday is called a rest day

- It was authorized as a rest day by Christ Himself

"Hence it is not possible that *the [day of] rest after the sabbath* should have come into existence from the seventh [day] of our God. On the contrary, it is our Savior who, after the pattern of his own rest, caused us to be made in the likeness of his death, and hence also of his resurrection" (Commentary on John 2:28).

AD 225 - Didascalia Apostolorum

- Public worship commanded on first day of the week
- This obligation arises by apostolic appointment & by Christ's meeting on the first day of the week

"The apostles further appointed: *On the first day of the week let there be service, and the reading of the Holy Scriptures, and the oblation*, because on the first day of the week our Lord rose from the place of the dead, and on the first day of the week he arose upon the world, and on the first day of the week he ascended up to heaven, and on the first day of the week he will appear at last with the angels of heaven" (Didascalia 2).

AD 250 - Cyprian

- The first day = what is called the "eighth day"
- This day is the Lord's Day

"*The eight day*, that is, the first day after the Sabbath, and *the Lord's Day*." (Epistle 58, Sec 4).

AD 300 - Victorinus

- Christ abolished the seventh day Sabbath
- Far from observing the seventh day as a Sabbath, it is proper to make it into a rigorous fast day.

"The sixth day is called *parasceve*, that is to say, the preparation of the kingdom. . . . On this day also, on account of the passion of the Lord Jesus Christ, we make either a station to God or a fast. On the seventh day he rested from all his works, and blessed it, and sanctified it. On the former day we are accustomed to fast rigorously, that on the Lord's day we may go forth to our bread with giving of thanks. And let the *parasceve* become a rigorous fast, lest we should appear to observe any sabbath with the Jews . . . which sabbath he [Christ] in his body abolished" (The Creation of the World).

AD 300 - Eusebius of Caesarea

Quote #1

- Jewish Sabbath not observed. It does not belong to Christians

"They did not, therefore, regard circumcision, nor observe the Sabbath neither do we; ... because such things as these do not belong to Christians" (Ecc. Hist., Book 1, Ch. 4).

Quote #2

- The Ebionites (a heretical Jewish group) were an exception, though they also observed Sunday for worship.

[The Ebionites] were accustomed to observe the Sabbath and other Jewish customs *but on the Lord's days to celebrate the same practices as we in remembrance of the resurrection of the Savior* (Church History III.xxvii.5).

Quote #3

- Sunday is the only true holy day to be observed
- It is the Lord's day.
- It is better than any other day.
- The Jewish days all passed away with their fulfillment in Christ.

"[T]he day of his [Christ's] light . . . was the *day of his resurrection* from the dead, which they say, as being *the one and only truly holy day and the Lord's day*, is better than any number of days as we ordinarily understand them, and better than the days set apart by the Mosaic Law for feasts, new moons, and sabbaths, which the Apostle [Paul] teaches are the shadow of days and not days in reality" (Proof of the Gospel 4:16:186).

AD 345 - Athanasius

- Lord's Day is to new creation what Sabbath was to old creation
- We must honor the Lord's day in the same way as the Jews honored the Seventh day Sabbath in the Old Testament.
- The Lord's Day is a memorial of the new creation.

"The sabbath was the end of the first creation, *the Lord's day* was the beginning of the second, in which he renewed and restored the old in the same way as he prescribed that they should formerly observe the sabbath as a memorial of the end of the first things, *so we honor the Lord's day* as being the memorial of the new creation" (On Sabbath and Circumcision 3).

AD 350 - Cyril of Jerusalem

- Warned against Jewish Sabbath

"Fall not away either into the sect of the Samaritans or into Judaism, for Jesus Christ has henceforth ransomed you. Stand aloof from all observance of sabbaths and from calling any indifferent meats common or unclean" (Catechetical Lectures 4:37).

AD 360 - Council of Laodicea

- Must not be idle on Saturday
- Must reverence the Lord's day
- If possible, must avoid working on the Lord's day

"Christians should not Judaize and should not be idle on the sabbath, but should work on that day; they should, however, *particularly reverence the Lord's day and, if possible, not work on it*, because they were Christians" (canon 29).

AD 387 - John Chrysostom

- Do not keep the Jewish Sabbath; it has passed away

"You have put on Christ, you have become a member of the Lord and been enrolled in the heavenly city, and you still grovel in the Law [of Moses]? How is it possible for you to obtain the kingdom? Listen to Paul's words, that the observance of the Law overthrows the gospel, and learn, if you will, how this comes to pass, and tremble, and shun this pitfall. Why do you keep the sabbath and fast with the Jews?" (Homilies on Galatians 2:17).

"The rite of circumcision was venerable in the Jews' account, forasmuch as the Law itself gave way thereto, and the sabbath was less esteemed than circumcision. For that circumcision might be performed, the sabbath was broken; but that the sabbath might be kept, circumcision was never broken; and mark, I pray, the dispensation of God. This is found to be even more solemn than the sabbath, as not being omitted at certain times. When then it is done away, much more is the sabbath" (Homilies on Philipians 10).

AD 400 - Apostolic Constitutions

Quote #1

- The weekly day of resurrection belongs to God as His day
- Furthermore, it is the day authorized for public church assembly
- We must diligently meet on this day
- Failure to do so is so serious that the writer questions what kind of apology could be made to God.
- It is the day to hear preaching

"*And on the day of our Lord's resurrection, which is the Lord's day, meet more diligently, sending praise to God that made the universe by Jesus, and sent Him to us, and condescended to let Him suffer, and raised Him from the dead. Otherwise what apology will he make to God who does not assemble on that day to hear the saving word concerning the resurrection...?"* (Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol. 7, pg. 423).

Quote #2

- There continues to be a weekly day that belongs to God as His day²⁹
- This day is interpreted as being the day Christ rose (Sunday)
- Furthermore, worship must be done on this day
- Furthermore, disregard for it by fasting is sin. (I.e., this is a Scriptural imperative):

“...every Lord's day, hold your solemn assemblies, and rejoice: *for he will be guilty of sin who fasts on the Lord's day, being the day of the resurrection...* (Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol. 7, pg. 449).

Quote #3

- Lord's day interpreted again as the day Christ rose (Sunday)
- Gathering on this day is not an option (“without fail”)

“On the *day of the resurrection of the Lord, that is, the Lord's day*, assemble yourselves together, *without fail*, giving thanks to God, and praising Him for those mercies God has bestowed upon you through Christ, and has delivered you from ignorance, error, and bondage, that your sacrifice may be unspotted, and acceptable to God, who has said concerning His universal Church: "In every place shall incense and a pure sacrifice be offered unto me; for I am a great King, saith the Lord Almighty, and my name is wonderful among the heathen, [Malachi 1:11, 14]" (Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol. 7, pg. 471).

²⁹ How else can this be interpreted other than in a Sabbatarian fashion? In the Old Covenant the seventh day belonged to God. Here the Lord's Day is interpreted as Sunday.

Scriptural Guidelines on How to Observe the Sabbath

God anticipated a time when people from all over the world would keep His Sabbath. ““And it shall come to pass that ... from one Sabbath to another, all flesh shall come to worship before Me,” says the Lord” (Isa. 66:23). The “sons of the foreigner who join themselves to the LORD” will keep “from defiling the Sabbath” and will hold fast to God’s covenant (Is. 56:6). As a result, “Even them I will bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer” (v. 7). God’s goal is that on every Sabbath day “My house shall be called a house of prayer for *all nations*” (v. 7).

If you aspire to enter fully into God’s blessings spelled out in that chapter, you need to know *how* to keep the Sabbath. Faithfulness in Sabbath keeping ushers in the greatest blessings known to man. The God who cannot lie promises, “If you turn away your foot [i.e., dominion, of which the “foot” is a symbol] from the Sabbath, from doing your own pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of the LORD honorable, and shall honor Him, 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, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the LORD has spoken.” (Isa. 58:13-14). The remainder of this booklet is devoted to giving you practical guidelines for what Sabbath observance means. These guidelines are taken from two sermons I preached, so they have a more informal character. Point A is the outline of a sermon series and Point B is the transcript of a sermon. May God bless you as you seek to honor Him on this best of all days.

Guidelines from Jeremiah 17:19-23

How To Sanctify or Set Aside the Sabbath

- A. God Commands The People: “hallow the Sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers.” (v. 22,24,27). How do we hallow or sanctify the day?
1. By reverencing God’s house (Lev. 19:30; 26:2).
 - a. A time when God’s people gather together (Ex. 12:16; Lev. 23:3; 2 Kings 4:23; Neh. 8; Is. 56:6-8; Heb. 10:25).
 - b. Worship (Neh. 8:6; Is. 66:23; Ezek. 46:1-3).
 - c. Teaching (Neh. 8:1-12; Acts 15:21; Mark 6:2; Luke 4:16,31; Luke 6:6; 13:10; Acts 13:14ff; 13:44; 17:2; 18:4).
 - d. Prayer (Isa. 56:6-7; Acts 16:13).
 - e. Bringing in the offerings (Mal. Lev. 23:38; 2Chron. 8:13; Deut. 12:4-6,11-12,17-19; Mal. 3:8-12; 1Cor. 16:1-3).
 - f. Praise (Jer. 17:26), etc.
 2. By relinquishing our own personal preferences in the activities, pleasures and conversation to be engaged in (Isa. 58:13) and taking delight in ministering to God and others (Isa. 58:13-14; Matt. 12:10-13; Luke 13:10-17).
 3. By making the Sabbath a sheer delight (“sacrifices of praise” v. 26; Neh. 8:8-12; Is. 58:13; Psa. 118:24; Lam. 1:7; Hos. 2:11).
 - a. Every Sabbath is to be a feast day (Lev. 23:2-3).
 - (1). Therefore mourning and sadness were inappropriate and ruined the Sabbath (Neh. 8:8-12).
 - (2). The people had to make a promise before the Lord that they had not eaten the sacrament while in mourning (Deut. 26:14).
 - (3). They were commanded to rejoice (Deut. 12:7,12; 16:11,14,15).
 - b. Spend time rejoicing over food with God’s people (Neh. 8:8-12) To “delight in God,” you must spend time with

- Him. To delight in God’s people, you must spend quality time with them as well.
- c. Look for ways in which your family can look forward to Sunday as the best day of the week.
 4. By treating it differently from other days (“sanctify”).
 5. By thinking ahead in our planning (Ex. 16:22-30). The day before the Sabbath was known as “Preparation Day.” (Matt. 27:62; Mark 15:42; Luke 23:54; John 19:31).
 6. By sanctifying the whole day (24 hours - Lev. 23:32)
 7. By attending church services (Isa. 56-108; 66:23; Ezek. 46:1-3; 2Chron. 31:3; Ps. 5:3; Mark 6:2; Luke 4:16,31; Luke 6:6; 13:10; Acts 13:14)
 8. By seeking out opportunities to help others enjoy the Sabbath (Matt. 12:9-13; Luke 13:10-16; Neh. 13:15-22; Ex) (Healing, pulling out of a ditch, giving food, inviting to your house, etc.)
 9. By resting from our work.
 - a. Don’t carry or transport a burden (Jer. 17:21) or do any dominion work (Gen. 1:26-28 with Gen. 2:1-3; Ex. 20:8-11; 35:1-3; Deut. 5:12-15; Neh. 13:15-22; Jer. 17:21-27).
 - (1). Exception: if necessary work arises on the Sabbath (John 5:8-12).
 - (2). Exception: any work mandated by God which was not intended to be postponed to the next day should be done (John 7:23).
 - (3). Exception: unavoidable emergencies (Matt. 12:11-12; Luke 13:15).
 - (4). Exception: works of necessity and mercy (Matt. 12:9-13; Luke 13:10-16).
 - (5). Exception: because of the importance that food plays in making the Sabbath special, cooking was allowed³⁰ (Ex. 12:16; 16:23;³¹ Lev. 24:7-9; Neh.

³⁰It is often assumed that Exodus 35:3 rules out every fire. However, Paul kept many lamps burning on the Sabbath (Acts 20:7-12). The Feast day Sabbaths had both burnt sacrifices and cooked feasts. Likewise the 13 passages listed clearly show that cooking was allowed on the Sabbath. The context for the forbidden fire (v. 3) is the forbidden

5:18; 8:9-12; Matt. 12:1-5; Luke 6:1-4; 14:1; 24:29-30;³² and refs. to the “love feast” that accompanied the Lord’s Supper - 1Cor. 11:17-34; Acts 20:6-12; Jude 12; 2Pet. 2:13).

- b. Don’t engage in unnecessary travel (Ex. 16:29; Acts 1:12 with John 11:18).
 - (1). Exception: if travel is for the purpose of fellowship, worship and other Sabbath activities, it is appropriate (Matt. 12:1; Neh. 8:10,12; John 5:9).
 - c. Don’t sell on the Sabbath (Neh. 13:15-22).
 - d. Don’t buy groceries or goods on the Sabbath (Neh. 10:31; 13:15-22).
 - e. Rest even with the time pressure of plowing and harvest (Ex. 34:21).
 - f. Don’t even do mental planning for the coming workweek (Amos 8:5). Instead, devote the day to God with your heart, soul, strength and mind.
10. What should employees (and children) do if their bosses (parents) won’t let them keep Sunday as a Sabbath?
- a. God holds the one in authority responsible for making his employees (children) break the Sabbath (Ex. 20:10; Deut. 5:14). A child’s position would be similar to a slave’s (Gal. 4:1-3).
 - b. However this unwilling breaking of the Sabbath should still trouble the servant (child). The one under authority should cry out to God for justice and for a Sabbath

work (v. 2). As Jamiesson Faussett and Brown say, “As the kindling of a fire, therefore, could only be for secular purposes, the insertion of the prohibition in connection with the work of the tabernacle makes it highly probable that it was intended chiefly for the mechanics who were employed in that erection; as some of them might have supposed it was allowable to ply their trade in the furtherance of a structure to be dedicated to religious worship, it was calculated to prevent all such ideas, by absolutely forbidding any fire for the sharpening of tools, for the melting of metals, or any other material purpose bearing on the sanctuary.” This is reinforced when it is realized that the Piel (intensified) form of the Hebrew is used and indicates a roaring fire.

³¹Note that there is nothing miraculous about cooked manna not spoiling. They cooked what they could eat on Friday and God preserved the rest till Saturday.

³²Verse 21 establishes this as occurring on Sunday.

deliverance much like the unwilling slaves in Egypt did (Exodus 3:7,18; 23:9-13; Deut. 5:14; cf. Job 31:13-15).

- c. If a person is able to get part or all of Sunday off from his employer, then he is responsible to do so. Paul said, “Were you called while a slave? Do not be concerned about it; but if you can be made free, rather use it.” (1Cor. 7:21) One reason God freed Israel from Egypt was so that Israel could keep the Sabbath (Ex. 3:18; 4:23; 5:1,3; 7:16,25; 8:1; 10:8,9; 12:16,17; 23:9-13; Deut. 5:14-15; Hos. 2:10-14; Ex. 15:23-27; 16:1ff; 19:1,11; 12:18).

B. All Levels of Society Are Required To Sanctify the Day (Jer. 17:19-27).

1. Civil government (“kings” “princes” - Jer. 17:20,25,26).
2. Business (vv. 19-24; cf. Neh. 13:15-22).
3. Believers (“all Judah”; Neh. 10:31; Isa. 56:1-8).
4. Everyone (“all inhabitants of Jerusalem, who enter by these gates.” cf. Exodus 20:10; Deut. 5:14).

Laying Claim to the Promises of the Sabbath

C. Blessings upon the Nation (v. 25)

1. Kings, Princes will find God’s blessings and protection.
2. Men of Judah will be blessed.
3. This City will be blessed.

D. Blessings upon the Church (v. 26).

1. Evangelism – Others attracted to God’s People.
2. Prosperity of the church.

Avoiding the Curses of Breaking the Sabbath

E. Covenant Judgments (v. 27; cf. Ezek. 20:21,24-26).

F. To break the Sabbath was to repudiate God’s covenant since the Sabbath was the sign of covenant loyalty (Ex. 32:13; 31:16-17; Ezek. 20:12,20; Isa. 56:5,6). Thus all Sabbath breaking was serious.

Guidelines from Genesis 2:1-3: The Day God Blessed

(Transcript of a Sermon Preached at Dominion Covenant Church)

God Rested on a Literal Day

I hope you have come to a new appreciation for chapter 1 of Genesis. It is a passage that has stood against all of the attacks of unbelievers as well as compromising Christians. And far from being opposed to true science, we have seen that it has been the foundation from which awesome discoveries are being made in the Creationist community. We are living in exciting times as experiment after experiment has illustrated the total trustworthiness of the Biblical account.

One last argument that compromisers have often taken on the Creation Account comes from this passage. And this is how the argument goes: First, they say that the word “rest” has to be defined by what was rested from. Verse 1 makes clear that the work was the creation of the heavens and the earth and everything in those two things. God did not rest by way of providence, but only by way of creation.

But then they go on to say that this is the only day where there is no concluding remark that the evening and the morning were the seventh day. It just mentions God’s rest and goes on. They claim that this obviously means that the day itself has had no end. The Sabbath being referred to is God’s eternal rest from creation which will never end, it wasn’t a literal day on earth. And that is why there is no mention of “the evening and the morning were the seventh day.” Ergo, the word “day” can mean an age, or it can just be symbolic. Do you see the significance of their argument? If they can prove that the seventh day is not a literal day, then all of the first six days can be symbolic of ages as well. And you can fit 15 billions years of history into chapter 1. Now we have already seen that there is no need to fit that kind of time into the passage, and its impossible to fit that kind of time into the passage. But this is perhaps the best argument that the day-agers, and the framework hypothesizers can produce, so we better deal with it. To respond to these issues, let me give you seven reasons why the seventh day is a literal day and to say otherwise is twisting the Scriptures.

First of all, for the argument to have much force, the seventh day needs to be parallel to the first six days. But verse 3 contradicts that when it says God sanctified or set this day apart from the others. It is a different

day, and is therefore discussed differently. God doesn't use parallel language because the seventh day is not part of the six days of creation; it is His rest day.

Second, this argument can only work by assuming what they are trying to disprove: that the first six days were literal. If "evening and morning" is metaphorical (as they say it is), then the presence or absence of the term is meaningless to the length of the seventh day. If it is not metaphorical, then the days are all literal. Their argument starts with a logical fallacy. It's a huge logical flaw.

Third, even if it was not a fallacious argument, it would prove too much. If the absence of the phrase "evening and morning" proves that the day has not ended, then it also proves that the day never began. (It is not just the "morning" which is missing, but also the "evening" which began each day.) So again, it proves too much and defeats their argument. If the absence of the phrase "evening and morning" proves that the day never ended, then it proves that the day never began. And of course nobody believes that. So that is another logical flaw.

But there are major exegetical flaws as well. Here is the fourth point. Look at the middle of verse 2. Notice that the text does not say "and He *is resting* [present tense] on the seventh day" but that He "*rested* on the seventh day." And you see the same past tense used in verse 3. The Hebrew is the Qal, perfect tense, third, masculine singular indicating a *completed* action. In other words, God rested and He is back at work again. And that's exactly how the rest of the Bible portrays God's work. Every time there is a baby conceived in the womb, Scripture indicates that a new spirit is created, "This will be written for the generation to come, that a people yet to be created may praise the LORD (Psa. 102:18). He says, "Yet to be created." God is not in His Sabbath rest right now. The Hebrew word used there is *bara*, which means to create out of nothing. Isaiah 42:5 compares God's creation of the world to the giving of a new spirit to a man. Isaiah 42:5 says,

"Thus says God the LORD, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread forth the earth and that which comes from it, who gives breath to the people on it, and spirit to those who walk on it."

Just as God created the heavens and earth, Isaiah says God gives man a spirit. And there are several passages related to the creation of man's spirit. Jeremiah 31:22 says about the incarnation of Christ, "For the Lord

has created a new thing in the earth – a woman shall encompass a man.” And that is why during the Sabbath controversy with Jesus, Christ said, “My Father has been working until now, and I have been working.” (John 5:17). They knew He was claiming to be God. They tried to kill Him. God rested on a literal seventh day, and when that day was over He not only blessed the day for others, but He also started creating things again. God alone can create a new heart (Psa. 51:10), and because of that new heart, 2Corinthians 5:17 says we are a new creation. Christ created wine in John 2. It is simply not true to say that God’s seventh day was an eternal Sabbath rest. The text says that God rested (past, finished tense) implying that He is back at work again.

Fifth, God blessed and sanctified the Sabbath day *after* He rested in verse 2. Verses 2-3 state,

“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* [When? After He had finished resting. "Then"] God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, *because* in it He *rested* [past tense] from all His works which God had created and made.”

Exodus 20:10-11 (the fourth commandment) shows the same sequence: “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy...For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested [past tense] the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.” He blessed it because of having rested on it. So not only the lexical terms, but also the syntax makes it clear that this is not a never ending day.

Sixth, Exodus 20:10-11 and Exodus 31:17 make clear that the Sabbath day God blessed and sanctified in Genesis 2:3 is of the same order of Sabbath day that we observe, and we work six days because God set that pattern for us. Those two passages make clear that God’s work days were the same kind of days that we have and that His Sabbath day was the same kind of day that we have.

Seventh, it distorts the meaning of the word “blessed” if it refers to the whole age of sin that we live in. In what sense would the thousands of years of history subsequent to Adam be “blessed” when God speaks of the curse that came upon history in chapter 3 and speaks of warfare in the heavenlies in later chapters. You could not get a more stark contrast than the blessing of the Sabbath day and the cursing of history in chapter 3.

Therefore I do not think that this objection has a leg to stand on. But it's not enough to know what the passage does not mean. Let's look at its true significance. We can understand the value and blessing of the Sabbath if we look at what it meant to God.

The Significance of God's Sabbath

To God the Sabbath meant a completion of His Work

To God, the Sabbath meant first, a completion of His work. Verses 1-2a say, "Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. And on the seventh day God ended His work He had done..."

God didn't stretch His work-week beyond six days to six and a half. God completed His work within the previous six literal 24 hour days, and we ought to imitate Him.

Secondly, the Sabbath points not only to the value of rest, but also to the value placed upon the work that was done on the other six days. The last verse of chapter 1 shows that all God's work was very good. And this chapter shows that the Sabbath was blessed. We find the most significance and goodness in our work when we honor God's Sabbath. But the less we enter into the blessings of the Sabbath, the less good and attractive will our work-week be. I think there is an obvious correlation between the goodness of the work in the previous chapter and the blessing of the Sabbath. Non-Sabbatarians are very frequently not dominion oriented. Many will say that we should treat every day as holy rather than just the one. But I think the minister was right who said that "an attempt to equalize all seven days never results in the elevation of the other six. Only of the degradation of the seventh." Your view of Sabbath will affect your view of work, and vice versa.

Third, Adam and Eve didn't *end* their week with a Sabbath. They *began* their week with a Sabbath. Isn't that interesting? They were supposed to rest first in God's instructions, the things God had modeled, and only after resting were they to go out and take dominion as He had. Though Adam named the animals on day 6, and though he got Eve just before day six ended, mankind's first full day on earth – their first evening and morning sequence, was the Sabbath. That is the ideal. But the fall distorted that, and put off rest to the future. And so they began their week with rest here, after the fall the constant reference is to rest only at the end of the week. In chapter 4:3 it says, "at the end of the days" Cain and Abel came to worship. And that was the pattern until

Christ came and made all things new. Christ restored the pattern. He finished His work of redemption and we rest in His grace and then go out to take dominion.

To God the Sabbath meant a Rest

But what does it mean to rest? Some people don't want to observe the Sabbath because they say they don't need rest. They aren't tired. But neither was God, and we are to imitate God. Verse 2a says, "and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done." It cannot mean that God had grown tired. Isa. 40:8 says, "the Everlasting God, the LORD, the creator of the ends of the earth does not become weary or tired." His rest was his setting aside one activity to spend time with His people, as we will see.

We have a hint of what it means in Exodus 31:17 which says, "for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day He ceased from labor, and was refreshed." This refreshment can mean nothing less than the delight and satisfaction that God had in His creation and especially the creatures that He had made. This was a time when the angels and man himself fellowshiped together in worship. Job 38:7 says that "the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." When Psalm 104 looks at this time of creation it says, "let the LORD be glad in His creation" (v. 31).

You see, the Sabbath is not just a time for us to rejoice in God, but it is a time in which God delights in us. We bring God pleasure by our Sabbath observance, and our worship times. Zephaniah 3:17 says, "The LORD your God is in your midst, a victorious warrior. He will exult over you with joy, He will be quiet in His love, He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy." That's incredible to think about: that God exults and rejoices over us with shouts of joy. So don't think only of what you can get out of the Sabbath, but think of what you can give to God. We need to cultivate time with him, and He declares in Isaiah 58 that that the Sabbath should not be only for our pleasure, but for God's pleasure as well. This resting of God was God's satisfaction and delight in His creatures. God shared the Sabbath with man – that's what Christ was getting at when He said that Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. He indicated that the Sabbath was intended to bring delight to man and to benefit man. But the flip side is true as well - man shared the Sabbath with God. God refreshes Himself in us as we refresh ourselves in Him.

The significance of Man's Sabbath

Before the Fall

But there is more that is said about the Sabbath in verse 3. Verse 3 says, “Then God blessed the seventh day...” Point after point you can see the pleasure that God has in the Sabbath. It means a lot to Him. “Then God blessed the seventh day.” In chapter 1:22 God had blessed the animals and it had its desired effect. In chapter 1:28 God blessed man, and it had its desired affect. But here God blesses the day. The dictionary says, “God’s blessing is accompanied with that virtue which renders his blessing effectual.” This is true of any blessing God gives. Let me read that again. “God’s blessing is accompanied with that virtue which renders his blessing effectual.” When God blesses the day, it guarantees that from that time forward, the Sabbath will *be* an instrument of blessing. This means that right from the beginning God guaranteed that the virtue of blessing would flow from this day so that those who honored it would find blessing and those who didn’t would be to that degree deprived. Let me just read you a few of the blessings that God associates with this day. Isaiah 58 says,

“If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of the LORD honorable, and shall honor Him, 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, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

That speaks of spiritual delight; spiritual growth; advancement; satisfaction. Other passages tie in victory, joy, and other blessings with the Sabbath. Is it any wonder that the period in history that has had the most disregard for the Sabbath is the period in which the church looks most like the world, and is weak, ineffectual, joyless and lacks dominion victory? God guaranteed right from the beginning that to honor the Sabbath would bring blessing. It is a blessed day, and those who lay hold of it find blessing in abundance.

But he not only blessed the day. Verse 3 says, “and sanctified it...” The word for sanctified means to be set apart to God. The blessing only comes as we devote the day to God. As the passage from Isaiah 58 says,

“If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of the LORD honorable, and shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words...”

That’s what it means to have the day sanctified or set apart to God. And that’s when the blessings flow. In previous sermons I have shown the blessings of the day on animals' work productivity and health, on man’s health, on cultures. It truly is the day that God blessed and God’s blessings continue to flow.

But you know, there will always be some like Esau who despise their blessing; who despise their birthright. He was willing to give up the blessing for a mere bowl of food. Then later he cries about it. But because of his lack of value for God’s blessing, other things came first. The degree to which we desire God’s blessing will be the degree to which we lay hold of the Sabbath. And if we allow little things to make us break the Sabbath it shows how much we despise the day. I think the words of Hebrews 12:16-17 are so sad. It speaks of

“Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.”

It is my prayer that the American Church would not be rejected by God because it has disdained the day God has blessed. Let’s pray for the evangelical church world wide to enter into its covenant blessings by laying hold of its covenant day. Amen.

Resources Available from the Publisher

- Cummings, Tim. *Ministerial Training: The Bible's Normative Pattern*.
- Davis, Andrew. *Written on Your Heart: An Approach to Extended Memorization of Scripture*.
- Elliot, Michael (Ed.). *Bible Acrostic: An Aid to Memorizing the Content of Every Chapter of the Bible*.
- Kayser, Phillip. *Biblical Romance: What Does the Bible Say About Courtship & Betrothal?*
- Kayser, Phillip. *The Canon of Scripture, Volume 1: Biblical Presuppositions*.
- Kayser, Phillip. *Church Membership: Is It Biblical?*
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Sunday as a First-Day Sabbath

Phillip Kayser, Ph.D.

The Sabbath is a great gift of God to the Church. It was intended for man's blessing and refreshment. Legalism destroys the blessing by adding man-made rules and regulations designed to make the Sabbath a burden. But lawlessness has destroyed the blessing by making the Sabbath a day just as common as any other. It is our hope to encourage men, women and children to once again find this day to be a true delight to the soul. Read this paper and seek God's guidance to know the proper day for its observance and how you might "call the Sabbath a delight" (Isa. 58:13).

Founder and President of Biblical Blueprints, **Phillip Kayser** has degrees in education, theology, and philosophy. Ordained in 1987, he currently serves as Senior Pastor of Dominion Covenant Church, a conservative Presbyterian (CPC) church in Omaha, NE. He also serves as Professor of Ethics at Whitefield Theological Seminary and President of the Providential History Festival. He and his wife Kathy have 5 children and 9 grandchildren.



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