

SUNDAY:
The
Sabbath

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Sunday: The Sabbath
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Introduction

The Historical Background

Throughout New Testament history, Sunday has been an important day for the Christians. Ever since Jesus arose from the grave on Sunday morning, Christians have regarded Sunday as a special day. This was in evidence even before the Bible was completed, as indicated by the Acts 20:7 account, in which it is recorded that the church in Troas gathered together on the first day of the week and Paul preached to the congregation.

The historical evidence indicates that the early church had a fairly accurate understanding of Sunday as the Sabbath Day. For example, a writer of church history records that Origen, who was pastor of the church in Alexandria during the third century after Christ, wrote:

Therefore relinquishing judicial observations of the Sabbath, let us see of what sort the observance of the Sabbath ought to be to the Christian. On the day of the Sabbath it behoves that nothing of all worldly works should be done. If therefore you cease from all secular employment and carry on nothing worldly and are at leisure for spiritual occupations and go to church, giving ear to the reading and treating of the Divine Word and think of heavenly things and are solicitous about the future hope and have before your eyes the coming judgment and have not respect to present and visible things, but to the unseen and future, this is the observance of the Christian Sabbath. (Quoted from H. J. W. Legerton, F.C. A., "The Sabbath Day," The Lord's Day Observance Society, Inc., London, page 4.)

In this study, we will learn that the church of Origen's day had ample biblical support for this conclusion. However, through the centuries that followed Origen, the church became increasingly unclear concerning the Biblical understanding of Sunday as the Sabbath.

Nonetheless, prior to the Second World War, it was generally practiced among Christians that Sunday was a day when only work of necessity or mercy was to be performed. In thousands of communities all places of business were closed on Sunday so that even the non-Christians were forced to recognize it as a special day. It was a day when a high percentage of the churches held worship services both in the morning and in the afternoons or evenings, thus emphasizing that the whole day was to be considered a Holy Day.

However, during the last 50 years, and even before that, the observance of Sunday as a special day has come increasingly under attack. The Biblical basis for observing Sunday as a special day appeared weak. While nine commandments of the Decalogue are reiterated in the New Testament to be of valid force in our day, the fourth commandment could not rightly be Biblically enforced because the fourth commandment was an Old Testament law that called for the seventh day of the week, Saturday, to be a day of total rest, but the observance of a day of total rest was not commanded after our Lord returned to heaven. Therefore, the church, particularly during the latter part of the New Testament era, has been in a quandary.

The congregations understood clearly that under no circumstance was Saturday to be the special day. With few exceptions the church correctly understood that in some way the Saturday Sabbath of the Old Testament was pointing to the coming of the Messiah. After He came and shed His blood the Christian was no longer to observe Saturday as a holy day. Because Christ rose on Sunday morning and because the church in Troas apparently gathered together to break bread on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7), and because offerings were to be gathered apparently on the first day of the week (I Corinthians 16:1), the New Testament church did observe Sunday as a special day of worship.

In the matter of how to observe Sunday as a special holy day, there were no solid answers available. Generally speaking there was considerable agreement that it was to be a day in which there should be a cessation of all normal weekday work. Some even observed it like the Old Testament believers observed the seventh day Sabbath. That is, they would do no cooking on Sunday, the children were forbidden to play with toys, etc.

Based on the New Testament accounts of the disciples picking corn on the Sabbath, and the fact the Jesus repeatedly healed on the Sabbath, there was considerable agreement the God was indicating that work of necessity and work of mercy could be done on Sunday. Thus, doctors and nurses could work, and the town pharmacy was open for business a few hours, but work that could wait until Monday was not done.

During the last 50 years, the observance of Sunday as a special holy day has gone into decay. Sunday has become a day for shopping, for the pursuit of pleasure, for ball games, and for accomplishing anything not finished on the other six days.

The Contemporary Outlook

To assist in this decay many churches began to offer an early morning worship service and ceased to have an evening service. Many who continued to have their doors open in the evening began to offer musical entertainment or motion picture films instead of the customary time of worship.

Unfortunately, it was difficult to arrest this decay because there were apparently no answers available concerning the correct Biblical observance of Sunday. Increasingly one would hear the argument that we are no longer under law, but we are under grace. Therefore, since the observance of the seventh day Sabbath was part of the Old Testament law, we need no longer pay attention to it and for that matter we need not observe any law concerning the observance of Sunday.

Unfortunately, too, theologians and Bible students did not continue to search the Bible even more carefully than they already had done in an effort to resolve some of their unclear understanding of this Biblical doctrine. Had they done so they would have become aware that the problems concerning the observance of Sunday were not caused by apparent ambiguities in the Bible, but rather, they all stem from the fact of poor translation of the word "Sabbath" as it occurs both in the Greek-received text (Textus Receptus-TR) language of the New Testament as well as in the English Revised-NT (1881-82), which is also called the Westcott-Hort, as in the Eberhard Nestle Text (1898, 1963).

In this study, therefore, we will attempt to correct this matter by carefully examining how God uses the word “Sabbath.” By this means we will come to a clear understanding of what kind of holy day Sunday really is. Because we are going to find fault with the translation of the Bible we should first reassert that the Bible is infallible and therefore not subject to correction in the original manuscripts.

Sunday: The Sabbath

The Bible Is Without Error

In its original autographs, or manuscripts, the Bible is the infallible Word of God. It is completely inerrant. It has no errors of any kind whatsoever. This is so because the original manuscripts were God-breathed. Holy men of old spoke as God the Holy Spirit moved them. Thus, God is the author and we may never question what He has written.

However, we must always remember that a translation is not the original language and, therefore, is not as trustworthy as the original language. The translators were not inspired. They were fallible men who performed the awesome task of translating the original God-breathed writings into another language. Because they were not inspired by God and because of grammatical differences between languages, they are not able to produce a perfect translation. However, in spite of these difficulties, the translation identified as the “Authorized King James Version” was produced with such accuracy that we can ordinarily trust the translation to be the Word of God.

It is true that some translators did their work more faithfully than others, nevertheless, of all the translations that are available today, I have no doubt that the King James translation is the best and the most accurate translation. If I had to trust in any English Bible, I would trust far more quickly in the King James Bible than in any other. This is particularly true because it can be shown that the Greek manuscripts (Textus-Receptus Text) that were used in the translation of the King James Bible were more consistent with the original writings than the manuscript copies used in almost all other translations of the Bible.

We must remember that even the King James Bible is a translation, and now and then, the translators did not do quite as good work as they could have done. We do not know why God has allowed it to be this way, but it is a fact. However, by God’s mercy, we are able to check the translators’ work. We can go back to the Greek manuscripts of the New Testament and the Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament. That is why concordances and Interlinear He-

brew/English Old Testaments and Greek/English Interlinear New Testaments are so important and helpful.

The original manuscripts of the Bible were almost entirely written in the Hebrew and Greek languages. We do not have the original manuscripts, but we have reason to believe that the Hebrew and the Greek manuscripts from which the King James Bible is translated are so accurate that for all intents and purposes we must set the presumption they are infallible.

Occasionally a writer in a commentary struggles to understand a verse. He looks at the original Hebrew, and he may conclude that the scribe may have made an error in connection with a word that is part of a verse because it is difficult to understand. He may then suggest that if one letter of one word in the original Hebrew is changed very slightly it will become a different letter and, therefore, the word will be a different word. This in turn will give a different sense to the verse, and we can understand the verse much better.

Such a suggestion must never be countenanced. When looking at the original language manuscripts, we never question a single letter of a word. God insists on this principle in Galatians 3:16, where He speaks of a verse in the Bible in which the word “seed” appears. He emphasizes that the word “seed” is singular, not the plural word “seeds.” Thus, God is pointing out that in the original manuscripts every word and every letter of every word is infallible.

The Puzzle of the Word “Sabbath”

In this study we will carefully examine one word that greatly confounded the translators. Amazingly, this problem is found not only in the King James Bible but in every other English translation, and not only in the English translations but also in the German, the Dutch, the Spanish, and in virtually all translations. It is not only found in those Bibles that were translated from the Textus Receptus text but also in those that used the Nestle or Westcott-Hort text.

The problem has to do with the translation of the Greek word “Sabbath.” Somehow the translators were puzzled when they came to this New Testament word, and because of a lack of understanding, they hid an important and beautiful teaching of the Bible.

Most surprisingly, any student of the Bible can use a concordance together with a Greek copy of the New Testament and quickly discover the existence of this problem. Thus, one wonders why the translators had not long ago made necessary corrections in their translations. We can speculate that possibly they were tremendously concerned that the ceremonial laws recorded in the Old Testament that looked toward the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ were completed in Christ. Thus, they wanted to make sure there would be no misunderstanding about the fact that we are now in the era of the New Testament, and the Old Testament ordinances like the Sabbath are no longer to be observed. Later we will suggest other possible reasons for the inadequate translation of the word “Sabbath.”

Let us examine this problem and learn the important truth lost to a high degree to the church because of the faulty translation of the word “Sabbath.”

Singular and Plural Words

We must begin by examining the usage of the word “Sabbath” in the New Testament. In the New Testament, the word “Sabbath” in the original manuscripts is sometimes a singular word and sometimes it is a plural word. Is it permissible to take a singular word of the original manuscript and translate it as a plural word? The answer is, “No. Absolutely not.” If God had wanted it in the plural, He would have written it in the plural. As we saw earlier, God insists on this principle in Galatians 3:16 where God speaks of a verse in the Bible where the singular word “seed” appears. He makes the emphasis that it is the singular word “seed,” not the plural word “seeds.”

Likewise, is it permissible to translate a plural word to make it singular in the translation? The answer is, “No.” If God had wanted it to be a singular word, He would have made it singular in the original. But that is precisely what the translators frequently have done with the word “Sabbath.” We can readily find verses in which the word “Sabbath” in the original was singular but was translated as a plural word, and we can find verses in which the word “Sabbath” in the original was plural but was translated as a singular word.

An example of this is found in Matthew 12:1 where we read, “At that time Jesus went on the Sabbath day through the corn; and

His disciples were an hungered, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat.”

The translators have indicated that the word “Sabbath” is singular, but the Greek text uses the word “Sabbath” in the plural. How could the translators have committed this error?

Moreover, the Greek text does not have the word “day.” It simply says “Sabbaths.” While the addition of the word “day” in the English may not be as serious as the substitution of the singular for the plural, it is still a curious and unwarranted addition to the original text. There are instances in the Bible where the Greek speaks of “the day of the Sabbath,” but how can it be that the translators dared to introduce the word “day” in this verse when it is not in the original?

When we correct these two errors of the translators, we will find that the King James Bible should read, “And at that time Jesus went on the Sabbaths through the corn; and His disciples were an hungered.” Thus, we learn that it was an habitual practice of Jesus and the disciples, on the Sabbath, the seventh day Sabbath since it is still the Old Testament side of the cross, to go through the corn and pluck the ears.

In Matthew 12:2 we read, “But when the pharisees saw it, they said unto Him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the Sabbath day.”

Here the translation has the correct gender and number, the word “Sabbath” is a singular word, but again the translators added the word “day,” which is not in the original. The word “day” is not found in this verse. As we continue our study we will discover many other examples of this puzzling kind of translation. However, the first verse we wish to examine is Matthew 28:1, for this verse, together with other similar verses, will help us get to the root of the problem raised because of the faulty translation of the word “Sabbath.”

This study is not intended to denigrate the King James Bible. The King James Bible is the Bible, and we better listen to it. It is the Word of God. Ordinarily, it is very trustworthy, but in this very narrow window of the word “Sabbath” there are problems. When correction is made in the use of the word “Sabbath,” we discover that it is a beautiful word that gives us aid, and comfort, and security. It is

designed by God to identify with the first day of the week so that we might have maximum blessing in our lives.

“Week” or “Sabbaths”?

Matthew 28:1 is translated, “In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week [*the translators italicized the word day to indicate it was not in the original*], came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.”

The translators correctly translated the Greek word “opse” as “end.” It is a word also translated as “even” as in Mark 11:19, “And when even was come, he went out of the city.” Since the seventh-day Sabbath ended at sundown, on Saturday, when it became dark, the Sabbath Day was past. Therefore, the first few words in Matthew 28:1 are correctly translated “in the end.”

The translators also correctly translated the Greek word “mia” as “first.” The Greek word “mia” is translated as “one” more than 50 times in the New Testament. It was also translated as “first” eight times in the New Testament. For example “mia” is used in Titus 3:10 to say, “A man that is an heretick after the first [*Greek “mia”*] and second admonition reject.”

As we go on in our study, we will see that both the translation “first” and the translation “one” apply to the Greek word “mia” used in Matthew 28:1.

But it is the Greek word “Sabbaths” that is found in Matthew 28:1 that surprises us. Amazingly, the Greek shows that the verse really says, “In the end of Sabbaths [*plural*], at the dawning on toward the first of the Sabbaths [*not “week”*].” The second word “Sabbaths” in this verse is identical to the first word “Sabbaths.” Why did the translators change the second “Sabbaths” to “week”?

First of all, the word “week” is singular whereas “Sabbaths” is plural. As we have seen, the Bible specifically prohibits a change of this kind. Moreover, God very carefully used precisely the same word “Sabbaths” both in the phrase “the end of the Sabbaths” and in the phrase “the first of the Sabbaths.” Why did they change the plural word “Sabbaths” in the phrase “the end of the Sabbaths” to a singular word “Sabbath,” and why did they change the word “Sabbaths” in the phrase “the first of the Sabbaths” to the phrase “to the first of the week”?

We can speculate why the translators might have been tempted to change the second word “Sabbaths” to “week.” Christ went to the cross on Friday and was in the tomb on the Old Testament Sabbath, the seventh day of the week. But Sunday morning? How can this Sunday be a Sabbath when the Sabbath is past? And so the translators guessed or decided not to translate that second use of the word “Sabbaths” as “Sabbaths.” They concluded that it must mean the word “week.” They had no Biblical validation for this. If God had wanted to use another word to avoid the use of the word “Sabbaths” in connection with Sunday, He would have used another word. But God used the word “Sabbaths.” We wonder why?

The Self-Righteous Pharisee

Before we answer that question, we should look at Luke 18:9-12, where Jesus is commenting about a self-righteous Pharisee. Verses 11-12 declare, “The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.”

This is not a correct translation of what the Pharisee said. The word “week” in this statement is the word “Sabbath” (singular genitive of the second declension, in this instance). It is indeed curious that the translators translated the plural word “Sabbaths” found in Matthew 28:1 as “week.” Yet in Luke 18, they translated the singular word “Sabbath” also as “week.” Thus, they are not at all consistent in their translation. In the Luke account the word “week” is singular as is the word “Sabbath,” but we can find no Biblical justification for translating the Greek word “Sabbath” as “week.”

An argument is made that the use of the plural “Sabbaths” as it is found in Matthew 28:1 somehow means “between the Sabbaths,” which then allows a change from “Sabbaths” to “week.” But there are only six days between the Sabbaths. Therefore, “week” and “between the Sabbaths” could not be synonymous. There is no Biblical warrant for this. Moreover, in Luke 18:12 the word in the original is “Sabbath” (singular). Yet the translators dared to translate this also as “week.” We, therefore, have additional evidence of their confusion in dealing with the word “Sabbath.” Luke 18:12 should be translated, “I fast twice in the Sabbath.”

With this corrected translation, we can understand what the self-righteous Pharisee is saying. The seventh-day Sabbath was a holy day to Old Testament Israel. God did not provide manna on the Sabbath; they had to gather a double portion the day before. They were to do no work of any kind on the Sabbath, they were not to cook, they were not to make a fire. Thus, it was a logical day to try to prove “how holy I am,” as did the Pharisee. While others ate the food that was prepared the day before, he said, “I’m going to fast,” and everyone will say of me, “Isn’t he holy. He’s fasting.” Fasting was very important to ancient Israel. For instance, we read in Isaiah 58, “Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not?” The Pharisee skipped not one but two meals on the Sabbath. He fasted for two meals, and there is a possibility that the Jews ate only two meals on the Sabbath. Therefore, it appeared that he was a very holy man in that he ate neither of these meals. He was showing how super holy he was because he observed the Sabbath day in a super holy way. In any case, the phrase, “I fast twice in the week” is not a faithful translation of the Greek. It should be translated, “I fast twice in the Sabbath.”

Is the Hebrew Word for Sabbath Also the Word for Week?

An additional possible rationale might be suggested as to why the translators of the King James Bible substituted the word “week” for “Sabbaths.” Theologians have held that the Hebrew word for “Sabbath” also may be translated as “seven” or as “week.” Furthermore, because the New Testament Greek uses a transliteration of the Hebrew word “Sabbath” to describe a Sabbath, it would seem to logically follow that even as the Hebrew word for “Sabbath” also means “week,” then the Greek word for “Sabbath” also may be translated “week.”

This rationale can be shown to be faulty for two major reasons. The first reason is that the Hebrew word for “Sabbath” is a different word than the Hebrew word for “seven” or for “week.” The Hebrew word for Sabbath is **שַׁבָּת** shab-bawth with the Hebrew letters Schin, Beth, He). The Hebrew word for “seven” or “week” is **שִׁבְעַ** (shaw-boo-ah with the Hebrew letters Schin, Beth, Ain). These two words are not interchangeable. They are different words. There-

fore, in the Hebrew language of the Old Testament the word “seven” or “week” is never used in place of the word for “Sabbath.”

This truth is further emphasized when we realize that the first day of the seventh month as well as the day of atonement, which was the tenth day of the seventh month, were called Sabbaths in Leviticus 23. In the same chapter, both the first day and the eighth day of the Feast of Tabernacles are called Sabbaths. The emphasis in these cases is not on seven.

Secondly, it must be noted that while the Greek word for “Sabbath” is a transliteration of the Hebrew word “Sabbath,” it became a Greek word when it was used in the New Testament, and the grammatical rules for Hebrew cannot be used in trying to understand the Greek. Even if it were true (and it is not true), that the Hebrew word for “Sabbath” could be translated as the word “week” in the Old Testament, it would not follow at all that the Greek word for “Sabbath” could also be translated as the word “week” in the New Testament.

The Old Testament Sabbaths End

Returning to Matthew 28:1, let us carefully examine the phrase that has the first use of the word “Sabbaths.” It says, “In the end of the Sabbaths.” How long had the seventh-day Sabbath been observed? All through the Old Testament era, and it had been particularly articulated on Mount Sinai, and spelled out in the ten commandments. God’s command was that man should work for six days and rest on the seventh day. It is the Sabbath.

God gave a reason why they were to do this. It was a picture of the coming of the Lord Jesus. A man rested from physical work on the Sabbath even as he is to rest in the Lord Jesus and cease from trying to become saved by spiritual work. He was to trust entirely on the saving work of the coming Messiah.

God declares in Ezekiel 20:12, “Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them.”

God is instructing us that the Old Testament Sabbaths were signs pointing to the fact that salvation is entirely of Jehovah. This explains why Deuteronomy 5:15 declares, “And remember that thou

wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day.”

When God brought Israel out of Egypt, from the house of bondage, He was pointing to the spiritual reality that salvation is of God. Egypt is used in the Bible as a figure or type of being in bondage to sin and to Satan. Even as ancient Israel was brought out of Egypt only by God’s almighty power, so we who are saved are freed from bondage to sin and Satan by God’s power. Even as ancient Israel could take no credit whatsoever for their escape from Egypt, so we who have become saved can take no credit whatsoever for our salvation.

Thus, the Hebrew word “Sabbath” is also a Hebrew word for “rest.” It ordinarily is used to focus our attention on the spiritual rest we receive in salvation.

The law of the Sabbath rest was to be so rigorously adhered to that, as we read in Numbers 15, when a man picked up a few sticks, Moses went to God and asked what to do to the man. God said he was to be stoned to death, for picking up a few sticks! And he was stoned to death. Through this God illustrates the dynamic principle that the only way to be saved is to trust in the coming Messiah, who was typified by the seventh-day Sabbath. We are to look only to Him, and the moment we trust our work in the slightest degree as a basis for salvation (even though we believe we are saved by God’s grace), we are still under the wrath of God. This is the same principle that is taught in Galatians 5 where God instructs us that if an individual trusts in his physical circumcision as a basis for having become right with God, he has fallen from grace, that is, he is either saved solely by the grace of God or he is not saved at all. Indeed, the seventh-day Sabbath of the Old Testament typified Jesus Christ as our Savior.

On the last Sabbath of the Old Testament era, Christ, who is our Sabbath, had in one sense completed the work God had assigned to Him in bearing the wrath of God on behalf of all who were to be saved. Late Friday afternoon, He uttered the dramatic words, “It is finished.” And on that last Sabbath, His body rested in the tomb.

Amazingly, even as God rested on the seventh day from His work of creating this universe, so Christ in a real sense rested on the seventh day from His work of creating the kingdom of God through His shed blood.

In another sense, His work would not be finished until He arose from the grave on Sunday morning for He was to be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth and three days and three nights included that last Sabbath.

The point, however, of Matthew 28:1 is that this Sabbath during which Christ rested in the tomb was the last Sabbath of the Old Testament era. The phrase “In the end of the Sabbaths” could be expanded to read, “Now that the era of the Old Testament Sabbaths has come to an end inasmuch as Jesus Who was typified by those Sabbaths had finished His work and was now resting from His labors.” The last seventh day Sabbath like all the previous seventh day Sabbaths pointed directly to the cross where Christ alone did all the work that was necessary to save those who believe on Him.

Christ rose from the grave on a Sunday morning and the era of the Old Testament Sabbaths came to an end. The Old Testament ordinance commanding the keeping of seventh-day Sabbaths ended.

God is instructing us that never again are we to observe the Sabbath on the seventh day of the week. Never again is man to observe a Sabbath day that has the same meaning that it had in the Old Testament. It is the end of the Sabbaths. All the Sabbaths that had come before have now come to an end. The burnt offerings, the blood sacrifices, the Passover, and all the other ceremonial laws were no longer to be observed because they were completed in Christ, and the seventh-day Sabbath had been completed in Christ and was never again to be observed. This is why we read in Colossians 2:16, “Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days.”

The new moons, the feast days, and the Old Testament Sabbaths, of which the seventh-day Sabbath was the most prominent, were a shadow of Christ, who was to come.

A New Era of Sabbaths Begins

Notice what follows and how beautiful the language is, “In the end of the Sabbaths, as it began to dawn toward the first of the

Sabbaths” (Matthew 28:1). What does that mean? It means that God has a new era of Sabbaths. It is Sunday morning; it is the dawning of a new era of Sabbaths. “As it began to dawn toward the first of the Sabbaths.” It is not just one Sabbath that is beginning. God is teaching that there is a whole series of Sabbaths to come. God is saying, by His own definition, that these new Sabbaths are each and every Sunday.

As we learned earlier, the third-century church had grasped this principle fairly well. But theological writings from three or four hundred years ago or thereabouts showed that the church through the years had lost much of this understanding. Occasional references to Sunday as the Sabbath day were made, for example, the Westminster Confession refers to the Sunday Sabbath but invalid reasons are given. They indicate that in the New Testament it is called the Lord’s Day. They also missed the point of the true nature of the Sunday Sabbath even though they came very close to truth. As we once again examine the original Greek manuscripts a little more carefully we can discover the truth God has given to us. God is saying that the Saturday during which Christ was in the tomb was the end of the Old Testament era of Sabbaths. The next day, which was Sunday, is the first Sabbath day of a new era of Sabbaths. From now on, each and every Sunday is the Sabbath.

The Sunday Sabbath is Thoroughly Documented

One might conclude that we are building a very great principle on the teaching of one verse, Matthew 28:1. But when we continue to investigate this truth we find that it is thoroughly documented in the Bible. Mark 16:1-2 records, “And when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had brought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint Him. And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun.”

Again we must look carefully at the Greek and then we discover that this verse is actually saying, “And when the Sabbath was past . . . very early in the morning the first of the Sabbaths.” The teaching of this verse is identical to that of Matthew 28:1. The last Old Testament Sabbath is past because it is Sunday, the day Christ

rose from the dead. This Sunday is the first of a new era of Sabbaths. For the second time God insists on a new era, it is the first of the Sabbaths.

Now remember, this is Sunday, this is not Saturday. This is not the seventh day of the week, this is the first day of the week, and God insists this is the first of the Sabbaths. In Mark 16:9 we read, "Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils."

In this verse the word translated "first" is the Greek word "protos," which more than a hundred times is translated "first." The word translated "week" is the Greek word "Sabbath." A correct translation of this verse is, "And rising early on the first sabbath, he appeared." God is clearly indicating that the Sunday on which Christ arose is called the first Sabbath. Thus, we have complete assurance that in Matthew 28:1 and in Mark 16:1, where the Greek word "mia" is translated "first," that the word "first" is a correct translation. Because that first Sunday Sabbath was one of the many Sunday Sabbaths that would follow, it was one of the Sabbaths as well as being the first of the Sabbaths.

We very clearly see, therefore, that not only in Matthew 28:1 but also in Mark 16:1 and in Mark 16:9 God is emphasizing this new era of Sabbaths.

Furthermore, in Luke 23:56 we read, "They returned [*that is, from where Christ had been buried*], and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the Sabbath [*not the Sabbath Day*], according to the commandment."

Six days they were to work, and the seventh day they were to rest. They wanted to anoint the body of Jesus but they had to wait until the seventh-day Sabbath was past. They had to stay in their homes and rest on this day.

Then in Luke 24:1 we read from the Greek manuscripts: "Now upon the first of the Sabbaths [*not "week"*], very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre." This is exactly the same language we found in Matthew 28 and Mark 16. For the fourth time, God insists that the Sunday morning after the cross begins a new era of Sabbaths. It is the first of a whole series of Sabbaths that is going to come. It is amazing how God has locked this principle in and that we have overlooked it for so many years.

In John 19:42, God again speaks of the death of Christ, "There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand." This was Friday, when preparation was made for the Sabbath that was to come. Then in John 20:1 God records, "The first of the Sabbaths [*not "week"*] cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre." Do you see that? - the first of the Sabbaths - this is the way the original manuscripts were written.

What is God teaching us? He is teaching that the Old Testament Sabbaths ended after the cross when Jesus was in the tomb. He is teaching that a new era of Sabbath days began when Christ rose that Sunday morning. In Colossians 2 we read that the Old Testament Sabbath was a sign, a shadow. Colossians 2:16-17, "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbaths: which are a shadow of things to come."

These verses are speaking of the Old Testament signs or ceremonies that were conducted in anticipation of the coming of Christ; they were a shadow of what was to come. These signs or shadows include the seventh-day Sabbath. But as we are learning, this shadow or sign of the Sabbath continues into the New Testament until Christ, who was typified by that Sabbath, is placed in the tomb. With that action, the sign of the seventh-day Sabbath is completely fulfilled in Christ and the sign is no longer to be observed.

The Passover Ends, The Lord's Supper Begins

In the Bible the ending of the sign of the seventh-day Sabbath is parallel to the disposition of other signs that were completed in Christ. For example, another important shadow of the Old Testament that pointed to the Lord Jesus Christ and the atonement is the Passover. When did Jesus end the era of the Passover? In the Upper Room. He ate the Passover. At the same meal, He instituted the Lord's Supper. The last Passover and the institution of the Lord's Supper are as close together as language can make them. So, too, we find in all four Gospels, the movement from the Old Testament Sabbath to the New Testament Sabbath is in very close proximity.

The Passover and the Lord's Supper have a lot of things in common. They both have to do with eating; they both have to do with the atonement, and yet, they are vastly different. The Old Testament Passover was eaten by the whole family, whether the people were saved or not, whether they were elect or non-elect. All of the congregation were to eat of the Passover, which was a sign that indicated that in the coming Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ, they could find salvation. They had to kill a lamb, and its blood had to be shed. They had to physically eat of the lamb.

In the Lord's Supper, before the end of the church age, the whole family did not partake, only the believers did. If anyone who was not a true believer partook of the Lord's Supper, he brought judgment upon himself. There was no blood shed, as was in the Old Testament when they killed the lamb and ate of it. In the Lord's Supper, we ate and drank bread and wine or grape juice in a memorial service that looked back on the cross. We remembered the Lord's death until He comes. It looked back and it also looked forward to the marriage feast of the bride and the Lamb when our salvation will be completed.

Thus, we have two signs, an Old Testament sign and a New Testament sign, and they are intimately related, and yet, they are quite different. At the cross, the atonement was accomplished and something dramatically changed, and we related to that by a change in the character of the sign.

Circumcision Ends, Baptism Begins

The same is true of the sign of circumcision. In the Old Testament, in a family in which the father believed, all the males were to be circumcised. It involved cutting off the skin of the reproductive organ, which pointed to the seed who would come. It pointed to the fact that the blood of this seed who is the Lord Jesus had to be shed. It pointed to the fact that their sins had to be cut off. To become saved required the circumcision of the foreskin of the believers' hearts.

In the New Testament, we were not to use circumcision in any way as a religious sign because it involved the shedding of blood. It would have been a denial that the seed had come. So, God intro-

duced another sign to replace the sign of circumcision. The New Testament sign that was to be put on the family of believers was water baptism. So, when Lydia was saved, all her house was baptized.

Again we discover that there were great similarities and great differences between the before-the-cross sign of circumcision and the after-the-cross sign of water baptism. One was an Old Testament sign that pointed to the coming of Christ and the other was a New Testament sign that looked back on the fact that Christ had come.

Saturday Sabbath Ends, Sunday Sabbath Begins

Likewise God teaches us, and this is a huge principle, that there was an Old Testament Sabbath day that was rigorously kept in a certain way as a sign or shadow pointing to the Christ who was to come. It was a sign that was to be observed by all believers. But now God has introduced a New Testament sign, a New Testament Sabbath day, that is to be observed by all New Testament believers. It is closely linked to the Old Testament Sabbath day, and yet, in many ways it has different principles.

Christ Himself Observed the Last Saturday Sabbath

Let us try to discover the change in the keeping of the Sunday Sabbath compared with the keeping of the Saturday Sabbath. On the last of the Old Testament Sabbath days, Christ was lying in the tomb. In His spirit essence, He was in heaven. We do not understand all the implications of this, but there was nothing active going on that day, it was the Sabbath day, it was a day of rest. God is rigorously applying that principle as Christ was resting in the tomb.

We read in Acts 2:26-27, "Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope: Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption."

In His work of redemption He strictly observes the seventh-day Sabbath as He rests in the grave. In all likelihood, this sheds light on the fact that His body did not decay in the tomb. Notice how Acts 2:26 relates to verse 27, which indicates Christ's body did not become corrupt in the tomb.

If His body had decayed in the tomb, it would have indicated that in His identification with believers, whom He had come to save, there was still some active work going on by Christ. But the Bible says “He rested,” His body did not become corrupt.

The importance of the Old Testament Sabbath is also seen dramatically as God the Creator rests from His labors of creation on the seventh-day Sabbath.

It is obvious that the Saturday Sabbath of the Old Testament must have been tremendously important. After all, God Himself, both in creation and in the atonement, observed that sign by resting from these activities on the seventh day. If it was so dramatically important to Almighty God, it certainly must become dramatically important to all of mankind who were expressly commanded to rest on the seventh-day Sabbath.

God Observed the Sunday Sabbath

On Sunday morning, the first of the Sunday Sabbaths, God observed that day as He did the work that is to be featured on that day. It is on that day that Christ rose from the grave. God Himself did the work of raising Christ from the grave on that Sabbath day. Thus, Christ completed the work required for our salvation on the New Testament Sabbath day. As we examine this work of Jesus of rising from the dead on this first Sabbath of the new era of Sabbaths, we obtain an indication of what we are to focus upon each Sunday. The focus should be on the work of raising people from the dead, that is, we are to be concerned with the preaching of the Gospel so that people might become saved.

Those who trust in Christ will experience the resurrection, which we experience when we become saved. How are we to experience salvation? Romans 10:13-17 instructs us.

For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach

the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!
But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith,
Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh
by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.

In this instructive passage, we find that God links salvation to the preaching of the Gospel. Where and when is this Gospel to be preached? We can find our answer as we study the activity of the New Testament church.

The Sunday Sabbath, The Time for the Congregation to Worship

In Acts 20:6-7, we read of the church at Troas gathering together on the first of the week to break bread. It was at that time that Paul preached to them, and he left the city the next day to continue his travels. The phrase “first of the week” is the same in the Greek as that which we have been examining in Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, and John 20:1. The Greek word that was incorrectly translated as the word “week” is “Sabbaths.” Thus, we could translate this phrase “first of the Sabbaths.” However, as we learned earlier, the Greek word “mia” that translates as the word “first” also can be correctly translated as “one.” [NOTE: “mia” is used in lieu of the cardinal “protei.” For comparison, see Mark 16:9, “protei.” In more than 50 New Testament verses “mia” is translated “one.”] In the four Gospels, as we have seen, the Sunday that Christ arose was one of the Sabbaths but more importantly it was the first of the Sabbaths. This was so because that Sunday was the first Sunday of the New Testament era of Sabbaths.

The Sunday upon which the church of Troas was meeting was not the first of the Sabbaths; it was one of the Sabbaths. Therefore Acts 20:7 should be translated “And upon one of the sabbaths.”

In the New Testament, God organized the external body called the church. He gave us rules for the church; the church was not appointed by man, it was not a man-made organization. It was a divine organization, created by Christ going to the cross. He laid out the qualifications for elders and deacons and instructed them on the overseeing of the congregation.

He gave rules concerning the New Testament church, and in Acts 20 told us when that church was to come together to worship. When? On one of the Sabbaths. What Sabbath is this? The seventh day Sabbath? No. We read in Matthew 28 that it was the end of the Sabbaths, so what other Sabbath is there? The new era of Sabbaths, which calls for Sunday to be the Sabbath. This is why the church met together, since before the Bible was completed, on Sunday. Very correctly, they followed the edict of the Bible. God gave us the New Testament Sabbath day so that we can worship him and “break bread.”

Significantly, God instructs us that on this Sabbath Paul preached until midnight. This strongly implies that even as the seventh day Sabbath was to be observed as a 24-hour period, so is the Sunday Sabbath to be a 24-hour period.

Our first awareness of this Sunday Sabbath is in the four Gospels. In John 20 we discover that Jesus had risen while it was still dark. Since God’s work of resurrection is entirely involved with the new Sunday Sabbath, we can see that the Sunday Sabbath is to begin while it is still dark, thus reinforcing the 24-hour nature of the Sunday Sabbath.

The Work of the New Sabbath, Picking, Rubbing, and Eating Corn

Now that we have learned this tremendously important principle that God has declared Sunday to be the New Testament Sabbath, we can begin to understand some of the seemingly strange things that Jesus did and said in connection with the Sabbath. We will learn that these happenings point to the Sunday Sabbath.

In Matthew 12, we read of Jesus violating the seventh day Sabbath. God says in verse 1, “At that time Jesus went on the Sabbaths through the corn; and His disciples were an hungered, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat.” The same event is recorded in Luke 6, where it adds that they plucked the ears of corn, rubbed the corn, and then ate of the corn. Returning to Matthew 12:2, “But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto Him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the Sabbath.” Were they correct? They were absolutely correct insofar as the Old Testament Sabbath day was concerned. According to the Old Testa-

ment Sabbath, the disciples should have gone through the cornfield on Friday, the day before the seventh day Sabbath, and gathered the ears of corn. On Friday they should have rubbed them so that all they had to do was eat the corn on the Sabbath. According to the ten commandments, they had no business going through the cornfield and picking that corn on the Sabbath. The Pharisees were correct. God had specifically commanded that in the wilderness, Israel was to gather twice as much manna on Friday so that there would be no gathering on the Saturday Sabbath.

The concern of the Pharisees appears to be legitimate for another reason. If I can pick and rub an ear of corn on the Sabbath, why not do it also for a friend, and as long as I'm doing it, why not do it for a whole village? Why not bring a threshing machine and thresh all the corn or grain and harvest it on the Sabbath day? What is Jesus teaching by this strange action on the Sabbath?

We know that something dynamic is happening here. The shadow of the cross is becoming very brilliant. It is almost time for the new era, and Jesus is beginning to give the rules for the new Sabbath that He will institute because He is going to the cross. Even as Jesus introduced the Communion Supper before He went to the cross, so Jesus is beginning to teach rules concerning the New Testament Sabbath before He went to the cross. We know these rules relate to the new Sabbath because they are a distinct change from the Old Testament Sabbath rules.

We read in Matthew 12, verse 8, "For the Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath day." Christ has a right to change things and these changes relate entirely to the cross. As Lord of the Sabbath, He has the right to make changes concerning the Sabbath.

Interestingly, in the account of this event recorded in Luke 6:1 we read: "And it came to pass on the second sabbath after the first, that he went through the corn fields; and his disciples plucked the ears of corn, and did eat, rubbing them in their hands."

The phrase "the second sabbath after the first" has greatly puzzled theologians. Nothing in the context explains what is meant by this. But when we realize that Jesus is beginning to give us rules concerning the Sunday Sabbath, this phrase is easily understood. It is a warning instructing us that a Sabbath other than the first Sab-

bath should be kept in mind in understanding the spiritual meaning of Luke 6. The first Sabbath is the Old Testament seventh day Sabbath. The second Sabbath is the New Testament Sunday Sabbath. In this account of the picking of the corn our Lord is teaching us concerning the focus of the Sunday Sabbath.

We will discover that even though Jesus had not yet gone to the cross, He is already giving instructions for the keeping of the Sunday Sabbath, which would become the Sabbath when Jesus arose from the grave. As we have already emphasized, that this was Jesus' plan of teaching is seen, for example, in the fact that Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper before He went to the cross.

We will carefully study the accounts of this corn harvesting event so that we can understand how they apply to the new Sabbath that is to be observed each Sunday.

Harvesting and Eating Corn Equals Hearing and Studying God's Word

First of all we know that picking and eating corn has nothing to do with the Gospel. We also know that everything in the Bible does relate to the Gospel. Therefore, the phrases that appear to have no relationship to the Gospel must be understood as parabolic or allegorical phrases. Simply stated, they are earthly stories with heavenly meanings.

What does corn or bread or anything that is eaten have to do with the Gospel? What is the spiritual meaning? Christ is the bread of life. When we see the word "corn," or "wheat," or grain or bread, it has to do with Christ or His Word, and we eat of that. To pick and eat corn means to have one's spiritual hunger satisfied; spiritually we should have a hunger for Christ and His Word. Where do we find that bread? In the Word of God. How are we to work to get that corn or that bread of life out of the Word of God? We are going to research the Scriptures; we are going to sit under the hearing of the Word.

Wonderfully, God has established His plan for picking, rubbing, and eating ears of corn: That is, His plan for us to hear and study the Word of God. God established the congregation, and we learned from Acts 20:6-7 that the congregation met together on one

of the Sabbaths to break bread. That is, the congregation was to meet together on Sunday to hear the Word of God. Significantly, we find in the language of Acts 20:6-7 both the coming together of the congregation to break bread and the activity of Paul preaching. In the feeding of the 5,000 (Mark 6:35-44), the bread that was broken typified the Word of God that is given to those who spiritually hunger after righteousness. The breaking of the bread by the church of Troas, as recorded in Acts 20:7, identifies with the preaching of the Word by Paul. Therefore, one of the chief activities of the believer on Sunday, the New Testament Sabbath, is to study the Word of God. Thus, God ties the picking, rubbing, and eating of corn on the Sabbath with the breaking of bread or the sharing of the Gospel on the Sabbath.

We have learned that the first activity identified with Sunday, the New Testament Sabbath, is that of sharing the Word so that the believer might experience the resurrection, even as Christ arose on the first of the Sabbaths of the New Testament era. It is also the day that should be especially set apart for the study of the Word of God.

The Work of the New Sabbath: Healing the Sick

In Luke 6:6-10 our Lord is establishing further principles to be observed in connection with the New Testament Sabbath. There we read:

And it came to pass also on another sabbath, that he entered into the synagogue and taught: and there was a man whose right hand was withered. And the scribes and Pharisees watched Him, whether He would heal on the sabbath day; that they might find an accusation against Him. But He knew their thoughts, and said to the man which had the withered hand, Rise up, and stand forth in the midst. And he arose and stood forth. Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing; Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it? And looking round about upon them all, He said unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he did so: and his hand was restored whole as the other.

The picking of corn by the disciples as recorded in Matthew 12 was a distinct violation of Old Testament Sabbath law, but Christ introduced this activity on the Sabbath because He was introducing a new Sabbath that would become effective immediately after the cross.

Let us recall what we saw in connection with the picking of corn on the Sabbath. It was called the second Sabbath after the first. We saw that this was a veiled reference to a new era of Sabbaths. Likewise, in connection with the healing of the man with the withered hand, God uses the phrase in Luke 6:6 “on another sabbath.” The word “another,” too, is surely a clue that points to another era of Sabbaths, and these new Sabbaths would have rules that are different from the Old Testament Sabbath rules.

Furthermore, since the record of the healing of the man with the withered hand follows the record of the picking of corn on the Sabbath, we can be quite certain that it, too, has to do with the new Sabbath. This will become clearer as we discover the spiritual meaning of the healing.

Healing the Sick Equals Sending forth the Gospel

Physical healing in itself has nothing to do with the Gospel. But we know that God used the physical conditions of disease, leprosy, blindness, and death to illustrate man’s spiritual condition of being spiritually dead, a leper, blind, etc. Thus, the act of healing a man with a withered hand is a picture of or represents the act of someone becoming saved. So, too, Jesus on the Sabbath healed the blind man (John 9:1-14), the impotent man by the pool of Bethesda (John 5:1-16), the woman with the 18-year spirit of infirmity (Luke 13:11-16), and the man with the dropsy (Luke 14:1-4). Who spiritually has any of these afflictions? Anyone who is unsaved. Every unsaved person is lame, is spiritually dead, is blind, is a leper.

Luke 6 and these other records of healing on the Sabbath teach that the work of the believer on the New Testament Sabbath is to spread the Gospel so that the spiritually lame might be healed. In other words, the purpose of Sunday, the New Testament Sabbath, is first of all to make sure of our own salvation; second, to grow in sanctification as we study the Word; and third, to get on with the

task of sharing the Gospel with others. When we study and worship, we should be preparing to go out and share the Gospel with others.

God Anticipated the New Sabbath on the First Day of Creation

God anticipated the work of the New Testament Sabbath in Genesis 1. On what day of the week did creation begin? The first day of creation was Sunday. What did God do on the first day of the week? What did He say? “Let there be light.” On the first Sunday, God worked to bring light into existence. Spiritually, to what does light refer? It can refer only to the Gospel. Jesus is the light of the world and the sending forth of the Gospel is the sending forth of that light into the world.

Whenever we share the Gospel, we bring the light into the world. In Genesis 1 God had already established this for the New Testament Sabbath when He said on the first day, “Let there be light.”

We have already discussed the fact that Christ arose from the grave on Sunday, the first of the New Testament Sabbaths. Thus, God is demonstrating by His actions the activities He expects for Sunday, the New Testament Sabbath. The activities include both the work of becoming raised from the dead (accomplished by the hearing of the Word), and the sending forth of the Gospel (let there be light). Amazingly, as we learned earlier in connection with the seventh day Sabbath, God Himself rigorously observed this day both in His work of creation as well as in His work of redemption. He rested on the seventh day Sabbath from His work of creation. He rested in connection with His work of redemption when His body rested in the tomb. God established the character of the New Testament Sabbath as He did the work of creating light on the first Sunday of creation and as He arose from the dead on the first Sunday after the cross.

The Bible has more to say about God’s actions on Sunday, by which He instructs the New Testament believers concerning their conduct on Sunday.

God Pours Out the Holy Spirit on the New Sabbath

We are all acquainted with the pouring out of the Holy Spirit as this event is recorded in Acts 2. While it is not the purpose of this

study to show this, the fact is that the pouring out of the Holy Spirit is entirely related to God's program of evangelizing the world. The evidence of this is clearly seen in that 3,000 people from many different nations were saved that afternoon.

What day was this when the Holy Spirit was poured out? It was Pentecost, and Pentecost was the eighth Sunday after the cross. On the first Sunday, Jesus was resurrected. On the eighth Sunday, God began His work of resurrecting (saving) the peoples of the world. Thus, God in a third dramatic way points to the purpose of Sunday as a day to share the Gospel so that others might become saved.

In an interesting and significant way, God definitely focuses on the words "first" and "one." Creation began not only on the first day of the week, it began on the first of the first days. Likewise, Christ not only arose on the first day of the week, but on the first Sunday of the New Testament era. Pentecost was not only on Sunday, it was the eighth Sunday. Because seven connotes completeness or perfection, the number eight becomes like the number one in that it is the first of another seven.

We learn from God's examples in creation and redemption that Sunday is the Sabbath, when we are to make sure of our own salvation and to go into all the world with the Gospel. But the Bible has more to say about the Sunday Sabbath.

The New Sabbath: A Time for Ministering to Others

Jesus gives us another illustration of New Testament Sabbath activity in Matthew 12:11, where He records: "And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out?"

To what could a sheep in a pit refer? Sheep refers to those who are God's elect. To be in a pit refers to being threatened by hell, and we are threatened by hell when we are still unsaved. Undoubtedly Jesus is admonishing believers to encourage and pray for others who are sheep.

We who remain faithful are to spiritually bring others out of the pit, so to speak, by patiently witnessing to them and being con-

cerned with their salvation. The program of the Sunday Sabbath day not only concerns me and my salvation but also the salvation of others who might not be saved and those who are weak Christians and are troubled by their sins.

The New Sabbath: We Bring Our Offerings

During the Church Age, God gave us instruction concerning the Sunday Sabbath in I Corinthians 16:1-2: “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.”

The phrase “upon the first day of the week” must be corrected to be more faithful to the context. The word “week” is the Greek word that can only be translated “Sabbaths.” The Greek word “mia” that has been translated “first” must be translated “one” rather than “first” for the same reason that it should have been translated “one” in Acts 20:7. The Greek word that has been translated “upon” (Greek “kata”) followed by a word of the accusative case, should be translated as a preposition of succession (throughout). [See Greek lexicon-about-Smith, page 232.] The phrase makes abundant sense and is altogether faithful to the immediate context as well as to the whole Bible if it is translated “throughout/every* one of the Sabbaths, let every one lay by him in store, as God has prospered him.” [* See John 21:25, Acts 5:42, Acts 8:3, Acts 14:23, etc., where “kata” is translated “every”.]

Thus, God set forth the principle that on each and every Sunday we were to bring our offerings. This is why throughout New Testament history the churches received offerings at each Sunday worship service. Do you know of any church services that were held on Sunday where they did not pass the offering plate? They did it because it is commanded here. The church did that right. The congregation met together and an offering was collected.

The focus of the seventh day Sabbath was on rest. No work of any kind was to be done because it was pointing to the spiritual rest we have in Christ in that He did all the work required to save us. But the focus of the New Testament Sabbath is not on a cessation of

physical labor; rather, the focus is on intense spiritual activity: worship, preaching, and teaching the Word of God, Christian fellowship, spiritual assistance to others, and sending the Gospel into the world.

By God's mercy, He has given us a day with the command to use it for these spiritual activities. What a blessing this is! In our culture, we can work three days and have enough money to have food on the table for the week. We can work a couple more days and begin to save for a television or a new suit of clothes or a new pair of shoes. However, throughout history, in most cultures and certainly in many cultures today, a man had to work six days a week from sunup to sundown to scratch out enough money to put food on the table. But when the Sabbath day rolls around on Sunday, the Christian has a change of activity, an entire change. He forgets about his God-given responsibility to earn a living for his family, and he concentrates all day on the spiritual, which God knows we all need so badly.

One might easily say, "In our day we listen to Family Radio six or seven days a week. Daily we are blessed by spiritual activity. In a real sense we are worshipping every day, so we do not have to pay much attention to the first day as the Sabbath." This thinking is reasonable but it is not Biblical.

Who established the first day as the Sabbath day? God did. He has His own purposes and reasons for it. We must not think that because we go to a prayer meeting on a Wednesday night, and we have something else on Friday night, and we have a Bible study on Tuesday morning, and so on, and we listen to the "Open Forum," that we do not have to worship and observe Sunday as the Sabbath. Christ has ordained it as the Sabbath. And what a blessing it is. It means that on Sunday, I do not mow my lawn. Even if it is too long, and the neighbors are uncomfortable about the way I keep my yard, I will wait until tomorrow. Sunday is a day set aside that God wants me to use for spiritual activity. Isn't it wonderful that I do not have to paint my house or listen to a ball game. I am comfortable. I can visit and fellowship and look around for someone that I may be able to assist spiritually. I can invite a few people over whom I would like to encourage, and we can have a cup of coffee together. Or maybe it has been a long time since I went to the nursing home. There are

many lonely people there, and this is the day that I can go and visit them. God has given me Sunday for these activities. I haven't written to 'Aunt Sue' for a long time. Maybe it's been a long time since I've written to someone who has been struggling, someone who needs a word of encouragement. I can sit down and write to that person and also to many others.

Can you see what God has done for us? God has given us a tremendous day. Now the moment that I start using that day to listen to the ball game or go on a picnic or paint my house, am I engaging in the kind of activity that God has ordained for that day? The answer is No. Absolutely Not.

You might say, "Wait a minute. I can paint my house, and at the same time I can meditate on the Scriptures." Well, I can't. I don't know what kind of painter you are, but when I am painting, I am concerned that there are no runs and no holidays, no this or that. And I don't want paint all over my shirt. And that's where my mind is. Maybe you are a better painter than I am, but the fact is that I have no business engaging in a task or a job like that. Now it is true that if I have a flat tire, well, I am going to change my tire, of course. I have to get home. But while my wheel is off, I'm not going to get any ideas that now I can put a new set of brakes on. Do you see the difference?

In the measure that we steal from the Sabbath that God has given all of us, in that measure we deplete ourselves spiritually because we are going contrary to God's rules. We will never have God's blessings when we go contrary to God's rules. Show me a family where they are watching the ball game every Sunday afternoon and you cannot show me that that family is a real spiritual family. The family that is desecrating the Sabbath in this way will be a family that is trying to live like the world just as much as they can and yet claim to be a Christian family. It does not compute; it will not work. God has ordained the first day as the Sabbath whether we like it or not. If we recognize this and observe it as the Sabbath, as God has ordained it to be observed, there can be nothing but spiritual blessing in our lives. Can we see how our family will be when we make that day, the whole day, from midnight to midnight, the Sabbath? Can we see that as the family plans spiritual activities in accordance with what the Bible teaches that they will experience rich spiritual blessings? Can

we see what a powerful impact that this can have on our families? If we cannot see it, it is still a fact, because God has so declared it.

Sabbath and Rest Re-Examined

When we examined God's usage of the word "Sabbath" in the Hebrew of the Old Testament, we discovered it also could be and indeed is translated "rest." This is very understandable because the seventh day Sabbath focused entirely on rest. The rest God had in view was that of trusting in the Lord Jesus to do all the work of saving us. "Rest" and "Sabbath" were synonymous.

It is quite a different situation when we examine the word "Sabbath" as it is used in the New Testament. As we have indicated, the Greek words "Sabbaton" (the singular Greek ending, "omicron nu") and "Sabbata" (the plural Greek ending "omega nu" or "alpha") are transliterations of the Old Testament Hebrew word "Sabbath." "Sabbaton" and "Sabbata" by God's careful design are Greek words and not Hebrew words. Therefore, while the Hebrew word for "Sabbath" is identical to a word for "rest," the Greek words "Sabbaton" and "Sabbata" are never translated "rest." The Greek words that are translated "rest" are always different words. Therefore, the idea of rest has nothing to do with the Sunday Sabbath. As we have seen, Sunday is a day for work to be done, intense spiritual work.

A Sabbath Rest

There is another Greek word that comes from a transliteration of the Hebrew "Sabbath" that distinctly conveys the idea of "rest." It is the Greek word "Sabbatismos" that is found only in Hebrews 4:9, where we read, "There remaineth, therefore, a rest [Greek sabbatismos] to the people of God." The word is entirely different from "Sabbaton" or "Sabbata" inasmuch as they are in the neuter gender while "Sabbatismos" is in the masculine gender. "Sabbatismos" is properly translated "rest" because of the immediate context in which it is found.

We can easily see why in this context God introduced the word "Sabbatismos," a transliteration of the Hebrew word "Sabbath" that definitely means "rest." The Book of Hebrews, more than any

other New Testament book, shows that the Old Testament ceremonial laws were types and figures pointing to Christ and salvation in Him. In Hebrews 4 God is using the word “rest” as synonymous with salvation in Christ. This was precisely what was in view in connection with the Old Testament sign of the seventh day Sabbath.

Thus, the fourth commandment of the decalogue still applies dynamically to us, but it does not apply in the sense of how we are to physically observe one day a week. That sign was completed at the cross. Rather, we are to see only the spiritual dimension; we are to remember that we are not to trust in any work we have done as a means of obtaining salvation. We are to trust in our Sabbath, our Rest, Who is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the “Sabbatismos,” the Rest that is available to all who trust in Him.

This “rest” is not typified by the Sunday Sabbath. The Sunday Sabbath is a day of intense work - not physical to satisfy our material needs - but spiritual as we worship, as we feed on the Word, as we evangelize, as we engage in all manner of spiritual activity. How wonderful it is that our Savior has given us the Holy Day of the Sunday Sabbath.

One of the difficulties that has plagued the church in its understanding of the Sunday Sabbath is a continuing attempt to introduce the seventh day Sabbath idea of “rest” into the Sunday Sabbath. This multiplies the confusion. As we have learned, the concept of “rest” has everything to do with the seventh day Sabbath, but it has nothing to do with the Sunday Sabbath. On the Sunday Sabbath we are simply to substitute intense spiritual work for the secular work we had been doing the other six days.

The Between Sabbath

In Acts 13 God records an interesting experience of the Apostle Paul in Antioch of Pisidia. Because he had been commanded to bring the Gospel first to the Jews, he came into their synagogue on the Sabbath Day (verse 14). He would have preached to them on the Saturday Sabbath because this was the day on which the Jews gathered together to worship. But verse 42 reads: “And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath.”

The Gentiles of the city obviously also wanted to hear the Gospel that Paul was preaching. Why did they ask him to preach to them the next Sabbath? At least the translators give us the phrase “next sabbath.” In the original Greek, however, the phrase is not “next Sabbath.” Rather it is the phrase “the between sabbath.” The Greek word that is translated “next” is the very same word that is found for example in Acts 12:6 where we read that Peter was sleeping “between” two soldiers. In fact, it is a word that is always translated “between.”

When the translators found this word in Acts 13:42, they were puzzled. What is a “between” Sabbath? When they came to verse 44, they found that God did use a Greek word that should be translated “next.” Acts 13:44, “And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God.” Therefore, they assumed that the “between sabbath” of verse 42 could somehow also be translated “next sabbath.”

If the translators had realized that God had named Sunday as the Sabbath, they would have understood what was being declared in verse 42. The Jews were still rigorously observing the seventh day Saturday Sabbaths. Between these Sabbaths there was another Sabbath on which the Jews were not worshipping. It was the Sabbath that immediately followed the Jewish Sabbath. It was the Sunday Sabbath. And so on Saturday, Paul preached to the Jews in their synagogue, but on the next day, the Sunday Sabbath that was between the Jewish Sabbaths, Paul preached to almost the whole city. Note again how God joins the preaching of the Word with the Sunday Sabbath.

Note, too, verse 48, “And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.” In this verse we again see the working of God on the Sunday Sabbath as He saves people by the preaching of the Word.

Further Instructions Concerning the Sunday Sabbath

When we carefully read the Scriptures, we cannot help but be struck by the activity going on during the first Sunday Sabbath. Surely God has recorded this for a number of reasons, one of which is to teach us how we are to be busy on this day.

For example, in Matthew 28, we read in verse 7, Jesus' words to the women, "Go quickly, and tell His disciples." In verse 8, God declares, "They departed quickly . . . and did run to bring His disciples word." Then in verse 9 we read that Jesus met some of the disciples and they "worshipped Him." Verse 10 declares, "Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me." Verse 11 completes this action as the Bible declares, "Now when they were going."

We must be impressed by the language of these verses which describes the worship of Christ, His commands to go to others with His Word, and the immediate obedience of the women and the disciples who ran to carry out His commands.

So, too, each Sabbath we are to worship our Lord, and we are to go forth with the precious Gospel of salvation.

More than a Sabbath Day's Journey

In Luke 24, God impresses upon us the kind of activity in which the true believers are to be engaged on the Sunday Sabbath. In His encounter with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, God assures us it took place on this first Sunday Sabbath. Verse 13 records: "And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs."

The phrase "the same day" leaves no doubt that this incident took place the day Jesus arose from the grave. The threescore furlongs, which was a distance of more than seven miles, assures us that great physical energy was being expended in walking. It is a much longer distance than a Sabbath Day's journey, which was under two miles (Acts 1:12). Verses 15 to 27 of Luke 24 record the preaching of Jesus to them. Verse 33 records that they "rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem." We are assured that on this first Sunday Sabbath, these two disciples traveled very extensively to bring the Word of Christ to others and that Christ was busy ministering the Word of God to His disciples. Again our Lord has given us superb instruction concerning the activity the believers should be engaged in on the Sunday Sabbath.

We Are Not Under the Law, We Are Under Grace

It is interesting that many people who object to this teaching of the Sunday Sabbath try to be very, very moral. And so they understand that “thou shalt not commit adultery” and “thou shalt not steal.” In other words, they follow many of the ten commandments.

But the moment that the idea is presented that there is a Sunday Sabbath that must be kept, immediately, the thought is expressed, “Oh, I see, you’re under the law. I see, you don’t realize we’re under grace.” Unfortunately, these dear souls never ask the question, “How is it that when God says, ‘Thou shalt not commit adultery,’ and I rigorously try to obey that, I am not under the law,” yet, when the Bible talks about a Sabbath, suddenly, I am under the law.

The real problem is, I believe, that adultery is offensive. To steal is offensive. Even unsaved man intuitively knows that these things are offensive. Even without realizing that the Bible commands these things, many obey the Biblical command concerning adultery and stealing. Unfortunately, many seem to think, “But on the other hand, Sunday is such a wonderful day for me! It is my day! It is the day that I have for me! Oh, yes, it’s nice that I can worship and study the Bible on Sunday morning, and fellowship with my friends, but then I have the rest of the day for me! I can spend the afternoon watching a ball game or engaging in a ball game. It’s a wonderful day to catch up on the hobby that I have been working on, to catch up on my chores that I didn’t get done the rest of the week. It is my day! And so don’t you trample upon my toes insofar as Sunday is concerned, making it the Sabbath, because you’re putting us under the law.”

These dear people have a total misunderstanding of what it means to be under the law. To be under the law means that we’re still unsaved. Every human being that is unsaved is under the law. The law is looking at them, and declaring: “The wages of sin is death.” And the death that God has in view is eternal damnation. Every time an unsaved person lifts a finger to do something that is slightly contrary to the Word of God, anything, anything at all, like telling a ‘white’ lie, or thinking an evil thought, or doing anything that is not

entirely to the glory of God, whatever it may be, the law says he is guilty. And the law is going to have its due. The law is going to bring this unsaved individual to the judgment throne on the last day, and he is going to be found guilty. What is the penalty demanded by the law? Eternal damnation. Away with him, into Hell. That is the condition of the unsaved; they are under the law.

If we have come under grace, the law cannot find us guilty, because to be under grace means that every sin that I have ever committed, past, present, future, has already been carried by the Lord Jesus on my behalf. He was found guilty on my behalf. He fully met the demands of the law. He endured Hell for me. He, as it were, spent an eternity in Hell in my place, so that the penalty has been fully paid. The law can no longer make demands upon me. Any true child of God automatically is never again under the law. They are under the grace of God, which is a gift of salvation, which God has given.

Some might think, "Well, then, why do I say that I should not commit adultery? The Bible, the law of God, says thou shalt not commit adultery. I'm under grace. Why don't I go out and commit adultery? The Bible says thou shalt not steal? Why shouldn't I go out and steal? After all, I'm saved, all of my sins are paid for, now I can go and steal all I want. Certainly I don't have to keep any Sunday Sabbath: that's the law of God. I don't have to keep that at all. I'm not under the law."

Wait a minute. When I became saved, something happened to me. I was taken out of the dominion of Satan and I was transferred into the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. Because I am in the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, Christ is now my King, He is my master. He is the one I want to obey. How do I know how He wants me to live? Well, He has given us the rule book of the kingdom. It is the law of God, which is called the Bible. I am going to read it very carefully. How does Jesus want me to live as His subject in view of the fact that He is my King? Oh, I see. I am not to commit adultery. I am to do everything to the glory of God. Now if I don't, if I think adulterously for a moment or if I do something that is not quite to the glory of God, the law has no hold on me to threaten me with hell. I am not under the law, I am under grace. On the other hand, because I have become a child of God, and I have a tremen-

dous desire in my life to do the will of God, I am going to be very uncomfortable when I start thinking wrongly. I am going to be very unhappy when I start going my own way. I will find as I go along that I am always happiest when I am doing it God's way.

As I obey God's laws concerning the Sunday Sabbath, I'm no more under the law than when I try to live a holy life insofar as sexual purity or anything else is concerned, because God has given commands concerning the Sunday Sabbath. It is simply that because of my love for Christ I want to do it God's way, and I find as I do it God's way, I experience blessing in my life.

My Holy Day

One of the most incisive statements of the Bible concerning the observance of the Sunday Sabbath is found in the Old Testament. Isaiah 58:13 declares, "If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words."

We know that this verse is speaking of the Sunday Sabbath because the whole chapter in which it is found is speaking of the New Testament activity of bringing the Gospel. Verse 6 for example declares, "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke."

When we look at this language in the light of the rest of the Bible, we realize that all the phrases in this verse identify with bringing the Gospel so that men might be saved. It is the Gospel that frees people from the bondage of wickedness, that takes away from them the heavy burden of sin and guilt, that sets them free from the oppression of sin and Satan.

Likewise verse 7 also relates entirely to the bringing of the Gospel. It reads, "Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?"

The hungry with whom the Bible is concerned are the spiritually hungry, and the bread that is to be given to them is the bread

which is Christ, the bread of life. The poor are the spiritually impoverished who are to be brought into our house, the house being both the body of believers and, in a real sense, into God Himself (Psalm 91:9). To cover the naked is to bring the Gospel to them so that their spiritual nakedness might be covered by the robe of Christ's righteousness.

All this activity identifies with God's plan to evangelize the world, a plan that became operational when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). It is a plan that identifies with the Sunday Sabbath because the day of Pentecost was Sunday.

Verse 12 of Isaiah 58 speaks of the building of the old waste places, and raising up the foundations. This is the same kind of language used in Acts 15:16 where God declares: "After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up."

The setting of this verse is that the Gospel is being preached to the Gentiles and they are being saved. The tabernacle that is being built is none other than the body of believers who are the temple of God (II Corinthians 6:16).

It is in this setting that God placed Isaiah 58:13. It is noteworthy that there is no expression of rest in this verse. "Rest" is the great emphasis of the seventh day Sabbath as it pointed to the salvation that would be provided by Jesus our Savior. In Exodus 20:9-11, God emphasizes that we are to rest from our physical labors as God rested from the work of creation on the seventh day Sabbath.

In Deuteronomy 5:12-15 God says that no work is to be done on the seventh day Sabbath because we have been brought out of Egypt by a mighty hand, which is a portrait of salvation. Before we were saved, we were spiritually in bondage to sin and Satan; we were brought into the blessedness of salvation, and no longer in bondage to sin and Satan, solely by the activity of Christ. We are not to think for a moment that any spiritual work of ours contributed one smidgen to our salvation.

The emphasis on the work of salvation is further made in Ezekiel 20:12 where God declares, "Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them."

Note that this verse, too, emphasizes His work of salvation to which the seventh day Sabbath pointed.

When we read Isaiah 58:13 God does not at all use language that points to “rest” or the idea that God sanctifies or saves us. Rather, the emphasis is doing it God’s way and finding and doing His pleasure. The language is negative, not doing thy own ways, but the focal point is without question on doing the way of the Lord, on doing His pleasure and His will. The Sabbath is a holy day set apart for His service. Only by doing His way will it be a Sabbath that is a delight.

The language of this verse is remarkable as it relates to the problem of today’s Sabbath observance. Never in the history of the New Testament church has Sunday been used for man’s pleasure, to serve man’s will, to satisfy man’s ways, as it is today. Sunday is a day when the restaurants are overrun with “Christians” who seek the pleasure of fine food (thus causing many others to violate this day as they prepare and serve food). It is a day for paying homage to professional sports as so many “Christians” watch their favorite and not-so-favorite teams play. It is a day for hobbies and for picnics. It is a day when very few seriously ask the question: What is God’s good pleasure for this day? It is a day that has become my day, with the emphasis on me and mine. Unfortunately, few people regard Sunday as God’s holy day, which has been beautifully set apart so that we can earnestly, zealously, sincerely, and faithfully serve our Savior.

