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# Before you turn this page . . .

No doubt you have picked up this book because deep within your heart, you desire to discover the truth of God's Word. Millions of people just like you are rediscovering the truth about an almost forgotten commandment. A simple reading of the Ten Commandments reveals that the fourth commandment declares, " 'Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all of your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God' " (Exodus 20:8–10).

But the majority of the Christian world observes Sunday, the first day of the week, as the Bible Sabbath. Why? Does it make any difference? How did the change of the Sabbath from the seventh to the first day take place? Who changed the Sabbath? Did God give the early church the authority to change His memorial of Creation?

In an age of growing skepticism and disbelief in the Bible, does the seventh-day Sabbath have any significance today? Has the twenty-first century outgrown the need for the Sabbath? Is a day of rest and worship relevant any longer?

As you read these pages, be prepared for some shocking surprises and straightforward answers. Reading this book can be dangerous if you want to maintain the *status quo*. It can be dangerous if you do not want your traditional beliefs challenged. It can be dangerous if the traditions of the church are more important than the truths of God's Word.

But I am confident that you are reading these pages because you long for truth. You do not want to be misled by falsehoods. Deep within, you sense the need of finding rest and peace in the Creator God who made you. As you carefully study the biblical and historical facts in each chapter, you will find rock-solid evidence regarding the truthfulness of the Bible Sabbath. But more than evidence, you will find a God who loves you more than you

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can possibly imagine. You will encounter a loving Creator who values you immensely. The Sabbath will become an island of peace in the storms of life. It will become an oasis to satisfy the inner thirst of your soul. In the Sabbath, you will experience God's grace in incredibly amazing ways. You will hear the voice of the One who said, " 'Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest' " (Matthew 11:28). In the Sabbath experience, you will uncover a rest of mind, body, and spirit, which will renew and refresh your entire life.

Read on and be prepared to experience a relationship with God in new, exciting ways.

# Chapter 1

## Rest for the Rushed

Do you ever feel like there is just too much to do and not enough time to do it? You feel rushed, pressured, and stressed out. However hard you try, you never get caught up on all the things you need to do. There is always one more task, one more assignment, one more item to check off your to-do list.

The tyranny of the urgent consumes your life. You rush from one task to another. And sometimes you wonder, *Is it really worth it all? Will what I am doing make a lasting difference?* Do you ever wonder how life fits together? Do the most important things seem to get pushed out of your life by the things that are the most immediately demanding? Is it the small, urgent things that fill up your days?

### A society on overload

A while back, I came across an interesting article from a special insert in the *Los Angeles Times*. Syndicated columnist Arianna Huffington wrote about *multitasking*. That's a word that refers to working on several tasks at the same time. More and more, we find ourselves multitasking in our everyday, personal lives. We try to do two or three things at once. We open our mail and talk to the kids at the same time. We try to carry on a conversation at supper, while watching the evening news on CNN. We download our latest e-mail, while talking on the phone with a friend, while we are keeping track of our favorite sports team's progress. We eat breakfast in

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the car on the way to work, while listening to the radio and trying to phone our spouse.

Some people even get hooked on multitasking. Arianna writes, “Some of my most beloved friends feel alive only when they are living life on the brink, dealing with half a dozen crises, wallowing in the drama of it all, and having to drug themselves before they can go back to sleep.”<sup>1</sup> Add to this frantic pace the stress many people feel from their jobs, and you have a heart attack in the making. In a 1985 study by the National Center for Health Statistics, half of forty thousand workers surveyed reported a lot to moderate amounts of stress during the last two weeks. A survey by the reputed firm D’Arcy, Masius, Benton & Bowles reveals three-quarters of American workers indicate their jobs cause stress. The toll of all this stress is enormous. This year, more than 1.2 million people will have heart attacks or severe angina in the United States, and more than 450,000 will die. Heart disease is still this country’s number one killer. One of the leading causes of death from coronary heart disease is emotional stress. People who are constantly in a hurry, impatient, uptight, and highly competitive are likely heart attack victims. Ray H. Rosenman, MD, and Meyer Friedman, MD, developed what they termed the Type A personality. This individual tends to be driven by ambition, obsessed with the urgency of time, always under the gun to get things done, highly competitive, never satisfied, and continually under stress. Rosenman and Feidman’s published studies indicate that 90 percent of heart attacks for men under sixty are in the Type A behavior category.

In a special medical report on MSNBC on January 7, 2008, researchers reported that “chronic anxiety can significantly increase the risk of heart attacks, at least in men.” “‘There is a connection between the heart and the head,’ ” Dr. Nieca Goldbery, of the New York University School of Medicine, said. She then added these insightful words, “Doctors ‘need to be more aggressive about not only taking care of the traditional risk factors . . .



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but also really getting into their patients' heads.' ” Dr. Biing-Jiun Shen, of the University of Southern California, said in a report on aging and heart health that “chronically anxious [men] were 30 percent to 40 percent more likely to have had a heart attack than their more easygoing counterparts.”<sup>2</sup>

### Escaping the tyranny of the urgent

Is there a way to escape the tyranny of the urgent and move the important things back to the center of our lives? Is there a way to recapture the vitally crucial things in life? How do we put up boundaries when the world keeps going faster? Do you ever feel one day flows into the next, one week flows into the next, and one year flows into the next? How do we stop the rush and find rest for our weary minds and bodies?

I'd like to suggest that God Himself has given us a good starting point. He has shown us a meaningful boundary—it is really a place in time. It is a divine space—a timeless symbol of eternity into which He invites us to find renewed peace and rest. We discover this island of peace in the Garden of Eden at Creation.

At the end of the six days of Creation week, God instituted the Sabbath. The book of Genesis describes it this way: “Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made” (Genesis 2:1–3). God created “rest” on the seventh day. The Sabbath is a holy boundary placed in the weekly cycle. It stops the flow of endless time. It places a pause in the routine of our daily grind. It calls a halt to the rush of our daily work. The Sabbath is God's sacred escape in a frantic world. It is a day set apart from all other days of the week. It is special. It is quality time. It is a time we can reflect on life's most important relationships—

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our relationship with God and our relationship with our loved ones. And yes, it is a time we can say No to all other demands, all the other things which clutter up our lives.

Human beings desperately need this sacred space, this divine boundary. We need it more than ever before. The world is busier and noisier and more intense and more demanding than any time in history. And the Sabbath can keep us from being consumed by it. Rabbi David Wolpe notes, “The modern world never whispers. Our cities are like arcades without exits. Urgent voices, flashing signs, and an endless stream of media images surround us.”<sup>3</sup> Our overcrowded, overstressed, oversaturated, overstimulated lives need a rest! We need relief from the constant bombardment of things to find joy in the timelessness of a meaningful relationship with God.

The Sabbath is unique in the whole history of religion. There are many holy things in the religions of the world. People have ascribed holiness to everything from cows to the bones of the saints. Men have worshiped idols of every conceivable kind.

And there are many holy places in the history of the world. Hindus travel thousands of miles to bathe in the sacred waters of the Ganges River. Muslims make long pilgrimages to the holy city of Mecca. Buddhists honor the site where Buddha received the “enlightenment.” Some Christians travel to Rome or Jerusalem to experience “sacred presence.”

But in the Bible, we find the unique idea of holiness in time. God “blessed the seventh day and sanctified” it. God created a holy setting—the Sabbath, where human beings could be specially blessed. But He did not restrict it to a certain location. We don’t have to make a long pilgrimage to arrive at God’s sacred site. Each Sabbath, heaven touches earth. God’s eternal place in time descends from heaven. He has placed His holy setting in time, equally accessible to all humanity. It is a time to find rest in Him. It is sacred space in a busy world. It is a divine invitation from the King of the universe to leave the rat race of life to enter the palace of the King.

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We are freed from the slavery of our daily work. We are released from the bondage of the earthly to enter into the realm of the heavenly. The Sabbath calls us to rejoice in His presence. With the psalmist we sing, “This is the day the LORD has made; / We will rejoice and be glad in it” (Psalm 118:24).

“In thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore” (Psalm 16:11, KJV). Sabbath is heaven’s divine invitation to find rest, peace, and abundant joy in our loving Creator’s presence. It is an invitation to stop rushing and to rest. It is heaven’s appeal to place priority on what really matters. It is a weekly reminder that God created us and we belong to Him. The Sabbath calls us back to our roots. It reminds us of who we are. It beckons us to a new, meaningful relationship of trust and rest in Him.

### Spirituality and health

This Sabbath rest renews our relationship with God and our families. It also restores our minds and bodies. God promises,

“Blessed is the man who does this,  
And the son of man who lays hold on it;  
Who keeps from defiling the Sabbath,  
And keeps his hand from doing any evil” (Isaiah  
56:2).

God offers a special blessing to those who set aside time to worship Him. Recent scientific studies on religion and health confirm the authenticity of God’s promise. The *International Journal of Psychiatry in Medicine* makes this fascinating observation: “The relationship between religious activities and blood pressure was examined in a 6-year perspective study of 4,000 older adults. Among subjects who attended religious services once a week or more, and prayed or studied the Bible once a day or more, the likelihood of diastolic hypertension was 40 percent lower than among those who attended services and prayed less often.”<sup>4</sup>

In other words, worship has a positive effect on health. Other studies reveal a positive worship experience reduces blood pressure,

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decreases the pain of arthritis, and lowers the risk of heart disease. The Sabbath is not a legalistic requirement. It is not some cumbersome burden which weighs us down. Throughout the Old and New Testaments, the Sabbath is a gift from a loving Creator. As we worship the Creator on the Creator's day we are revived, refreshed, and revitalized.

### Sabbath blessings

The Sabbath is a day of abundant blessings. This is why the Old Testament prophets kept calling people back to God the Creator, to God the Lawgiver, and to God the Deliverer. Here is something these Old Testament prophets repeatedly emphasized: “ ‘Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the Sabbath day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem; . . . nor do any work, but hallow the Sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers’ ” (Jeremiah 17:21, 22).

The prophet Jeremiah speaks about a danger we all face. He discusses a problem for his time, but it speaks with relevance to our time. It is not simply a problem for people who lived then—it is a twenty-first century problem. Here it is: Constant work can squeeze our spirituality. The pursuit of money can eat up all of our time. Seeking the material can crowd out the eternal. It happened in Jeremiah's day in Jerusalem and it is happening in our time in our homes, our work places, and our cities. And God is saying, “Let the Sabbath draw you back to what is really important. Don't let the pursuit of material security overwhelm the pursuit of the things that matter most.”

The prophet Isaiah echoes the same theme. Israel was neglecting the Bible Sabbath. Their association with a pagan culture led them to disregard God's special day. In Isaiah 58, God is calling them back to rebuild their faith. He is calling them back to spiritual values. And this is what He says,

“You shall raise up the foundations of many generations;

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And you shall be called the Repairer of the Breach,  
The Restorer of Streets to Dwell In.  
If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath,  
From doing your pleasure [business] on My holy day,  
And call the Sabbath a delight,  
The holy day of the LORD, honorable . . .  
I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth”  
(verses 12–14).

Note that those who rebuild the faith are called “the Repairers of the Breach.” Obviously, there was a breach in the protective wall that surrounded God’s people. The Sabbath is a boundary—a wall of protection. It is a place of safety and security. It is part of God’s circle of care around us. The Sabbath is a special way for us to experience God’s loving, protective care each week.

On Sabbath, we pause to reflect on the goodness of our Creator. We spend time in His presence. We meditate on life’s true meaning and focus on its real purpose. And what’s more, Isaiah the prophet declares that God promises that if we honor the Sabbath, the Creator of the universe will cause us to “ride on the high hills of the earth.” There is richness in Sabbath keeping, which leads God’s people to prosper physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually.

### **Sabbath: A time for healing**

Throughout the New Testament, Jesus performed more miracles of healing on the Sabbath than on any other day. He healed a woman afflicted for eighteen years on Sabbath (Luke 13:10–12). He restored sight to a blind man on Sabbath (John 9:1–12). He healed withered arms, palsied bodies, and dying children on Sabbath. One of His most spectacular miracles, the healing of the diseased body of the man who had lain at the pool of Bethesda for thirty-eight years, was performed on the Sabbath.

What do these Sabbath miracles tell us about Jesus and the Sabbath? They speak of a Christ who longs to give each of His

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children life in all of its abundance. The Creator re-creates our lives each Sabbath. He restores life in all its fullness each seventh day. The One who made us desires us to be whole physically, mentally, and spiritually.

For Jesus, the Sabbath was a time for healing. It was time when people could find relief and rest in Him. Jesus wanted to free human beings from the oppressive burdens which crushed out their joy. His attitude toward the Sabbath can be summed up in a simple but profound statement He made in response to His critics: “ ‘The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is also the Lord of the Sabbath’ ” (Mark 2:27, 28).

Jesus sidestepped ceremony and regulation and showed us a better way to the kingdom. But He did proclaim Himself Lord of the Sabbath. This is extremely significant. To those who think the Sabbath is part of some Old Testament ritual and is a sign of legalism, remember that Jesus declared Himself Lord of the Sabbath. He says, “The Sabbath was made for man.” The Sabbath was meant to bless us. The Sabbath was made to benefit us. It is not just another religious obligation. It is not some burdensome requirement. The New Testament Sabbath is a place of grace and rest. It is a place where we renew our covenant, our relationship with God. It is a place where we find our true center in Him.

In Hebrews 4, the Bible writer quotes from the fourth commandment, the one that commands us to keep the seventh day holy. He reminds his readers that “ ‘God rested on the seventh day from all his works’ ” (verse 4). Then a few verses later, he says, “There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His” (verses 9, 10).

What is this passage of scripture telling us? It declares we too can rest from our labors. We can rest from the oppressive burden of trying to get more and more. We can rest in our Creator’s care. The One who made us loves us with an everlasting love. He will

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care for all our needs. We rest in God's completed work of creation and redemption. We did not evolve. God created us at a point in time. The Sabbath reminds us that since He made us and fashioned us individually, we are special to God. He not only created us, He redeemed us. God worked out our salvation by giving up His Son on the cross. This great act of grace and acceptance is finished, completed. We don't have to earn it or try to pay God back for it through our good works. We simply accept it and rest in His love. Each week as we keep the Sabbath, it is a symbol that we are safe in the One who created us and in the One who redeemed us.

The Sabbath is a divine invitation to find our true worth in the One who created us. The Sabbath is God's appeal for us to find our roots in Him. We are valuable in His sight because He created us. We are more than skin covering bones. We are not a biological accident produced by blind chance. We are children of God, brought into existence by a loving heavenly Father. Each week, the Sabbath is a perpetual reminder of who we are, where we came from, and why we exist. In Sabbath worship, we discover life's true purpose in praising the One who created us.

Sabbath also reminds us of the rest we have in Jesus Christ. Each Sabbath, we rest from our labors in the supreme acknowledgment that just as we had no part in creation, we have no part in earning our salvation. We rest in the grace of the Christ who died for us. Sabbath is a symbol of rest, not work. In Sabbath rest, we rejoice in the One who provides salvation for our guilt-ridden souls.

Sabbath is God's rest for the rushed in a fast-paced world.

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1. Arianna Huffington, "My New New Thing: Single Tasking," *Olam*, Winter 2000, <http://www.olam.org/treasure.php?issue=3&id=114>.

2. The Associated Press, "Don't Stress: Anxiety Can Hurt Your Heart," *MSNBC*, January 7, 2008, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/22544210/> (accessed February 19, 2009).

3. David Wolpe, "Eternity Utters a Day," *Olam*, Winter 2000, <http://www.olam>

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4. H. G. Koenig et al., "The Relationship Between Religious Activities and Blood Pressure in Older Adults," *International Journal of Psychiatry in Medicine* 28 (1998):189–213.



# Chapter 2

## Set Free to Obey

Years ago, the “home” was a place of refuge and security. Down through the centuries, it has been a haven of stability. The home was a place people could flee from the trials, troubles, and difficulties of life. Enter the doors of your home, and you feel secure. Warm, loving embraces and hugs produce a sense of well-being. Home has been the traditional place of family togetherness.

The home has changed in the last thirty years. Twenty-first century homes are often a battlefield. Words such as *abuse*, *conflict*, *anger*, and *hostility* are commonplace when describing the home. We read about families who spend very little time at home. Children often eat on the run. Many families no longer enjoy a family meal together.

At best, they rush home for a meal before they leave again. The home has become simply a place to eat and sleep. With both parents working, thousands of children are left to raise themselves.

We read about fragmented families. The number of single parents is growing in our society. The home is changing.

The structure of the home is different today. Those who study the future are predicting another change will take place in our homes in the next few years.

First, they are forecasting more and more people will work at home. Already, the number of people working at home is growing by

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the thousands. Millions will do most of their shopping online. The real question is, How will family values survive in the twenty-first century?

What will life be like in your home? How will things be different? What will remain the same? How will this affect your ability to make the home a healthy, nurturing place for your family? Many parents are seriously concerned about what is coming into their home via the Internet.

The home used to be a safe sanctuary, but today all that has changed. Through television and the Internet, excessive violence, sex, and programming with a total lack of decency and morals have invaded our homes. What's happening to our society? Why is there an escalating amount of violence, immorality, and greed throughout our nation?

What's behind the collapse of our morals? How do you explain corporate executives' dishonesty, leading their companies into bankruptcy to achieve their own gains? Why is it that school violence has exploded?

It seems more people are being motivated by hate. Hate groups are publishing their distorted propaganda publicly on their bizarre Web pages. A high-tech, media savvy society that offers sex, violence, and greed as its prime-time viewing content is in serious trouble.

Hollywood images penetrate the home. And so does the content. What about the messages that hit us so forcefully? Listen to what one newlywed Generation Xer said: "If you flip on the TV, you don't see families anymore. Family life is not part of the canon. It takes a lot of faith to reinstate marriage into your vision of life."

There are many young people today who say that there are a variety of options for long-term relationships, and maybe marriage isn't the one for them. They are saying, "Living together outside of marriage may be the best option for me." Without moral standards, without a moral compass, we are thrown into a state of confusion. This is a time of social chaos.

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### Needed: A moral compass

A distortion of values can occur right in the home. Things are changing dramatically. There is cause for concern in the twenty-first century. Is there a North Star to guide us? Who shapes our moral values? Where are we headed? Is there anything left to hang on to? Are all moral standards crumbling beneath our feet?

Is morality a matter of personal definition? Is there anything that is secure? Dr. Shervert Frazier served as director of the National Institute of Mental Health. He expressed concerns in his book *Psychotrends*. Frazier described what he called “a co-violent society, one that celebrates mayhem while simultaneously condemning it.”<sup>1</sup> He says that on one hand, we condemn violence, and on the other hand, we feed it to our kids on television.

On the one hand, we condemn murder, but on the other, we popularize it in our movies. On the one hand, we condemn immorality, but on the other hand, we pack our movie theaters to watch it. Hollywood producers know sex and violence sells. Something is fundamentally wrong with our society. Our children are exposed to various versions of right and wrong. They are often told that there is no absolute right or wrong. They are led to believe that everyone must decide what is right or wrong for them.

There are competing values for the minds of our children. A *Time* magazine feature article described our nation as “America the Violent.” The article describes a nation which feeds on violence and delights in murder in the mass media.

Another article stated that 23,700 people were murdered in our country in one year. Consider this fact about brutality on television. The average eighteen-year-old has witnessed two hundred thousand violent acts on television and movies, including forty thousand murders.

You might be wondering whether the form of entertainment we watch makes any difference in our thinking process. I am convinced what we see becomes part of the fabric of our personality.

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Research reveals the reality of the biblical truth, “By beholding we become changed” (see 2 Corinthians 3:18).

When you watch forty thousand murders, your mind becomes anesthetized toward violence. When you see two hundred thousand violent acts on television, the message you receive is that violence is an acceptable form of behavior. But, we might ask, acceptable by whose standards?

When you fill your mind with immorality, the message is that immorality is a perfectly legitimate activity. Again we might ask, Legitimate by whose standards? Our society’s motto seems to be, “If it feels good, do it. And if it brings you joy, do it.” Are there any moral standards in our society? Why is it that we have such high rates of crime? Why is violence so commonplace? Why are marriages breaking up in alarming numbers? The Bible provides some concrete answers. The Word of God penetrates the very reason why moral standards and basic traditional values are rapidly being eroded.

Here is precisely the problem: Our society has turned its back on God’s moral standards. It has cast off God’s guidelines.

This society says, “Your own mind is the standard.” It shouts, “There is nobody who can tell you what you ought to do!” Solomon emphasizes the foolishness of trusting our own mind, “He who trusts in his own heart is a fool” (Proverbs 28:26 ). On their own, our minds can easily deceive us. The Old Testament prophet Isaiah states an eternal truth when he declares, “All we like sheep have gone astray, / We have turned, every one to his own way” (Isaiah 53:6).

You can justify almost anything if you depend on your own thought processes. In fact, Hosea 8:7 puts it this way: “‘They sow the wind, / And reap the whirlwind.’ ” If you sow the wind, you will reap the whirlwind.

We’ve been sowing the wind of violence in the media, and we are reaping the whirlwind of crime. We’ve been sowing the wind of immorality, and we’ve been reaping the whirlwind of divorce.

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We've been sowing the wind of explicit sexual content on television, and we've been reaping the whirlwind of men with twisted minds preying on our children. There is a cause-and-effect relationship. How do you protect moral values in an immoral world?

We have sown the wind, and we are reaping the whirlwind. How can you protect your mind? How can you protect the minds of your children—your grandchildren?

How can you be moral in an immoral world? The book of Revelation provides some clear-cut answers. The book of Revelation is the Revelation of Jesus! It is God's end-time message at the close of this earth's history. This last book of the Bible has a message for the last generation of men and women living on a planet called Earth.

The book of Revelation has a message for you and me. It calls us to morality. It calls us back to the standards of God. This message is as important for us to understand in our day as Noah's message was in his day.

It is a final message for all humanity: "Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth—to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people" (Revelation 14:6).

Here is an urgent message. Here is a universal message. Here is a message that leaps across geographical boundaries. Here is a message that penetrates language groups. It is a message that races from north to south, east to west. It goes to the ends of the earth. What does this message say? Verse 7, "Fear God and give glory to Him, *for the hour of His judgment has come*" (emphasis supplied).

"Fear God" does not mean to be afraid of God. It means reverence; respect and obey God. But did you notice in this Bible passage the urgency of it all? Let's look at it again: "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come."

This passage in Revelation answers the question of moral

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responsibility. Why is there so much crime and violence in society? Why is there so much immorality? Why is there so much lawlessness? It revolves around the issue of moral responsibility. The judgment calls us to accountability for our actions. The judgment says we are responsible for the choices we make.

If I am not responsible for what I do, how can God's judgment hold me accountable for those actions? If I am simply the product of pure chance and am no more than an enlarged protein molecule, I am not really responsible for my actions. If I am an alcoholic because my father was an alcoholic and my grandfather was an alcoholic, then maybe I am not responsible. If I am a drug addict because I was abused as a child, then I'm not responsible. If I'm a criminal because my genetics made me that way, I'm not responsible. If maybe I have no choice over my actions, then someone else is to blame. The society we live in is a society that largely says you are not responsible. You do what you do because of the way the forces of life shaped you.

It also declares right and wrong is something every person determines in their own mind. The idea is, I am responsible only to myself. I'm not responsible to anything higher than my mind. For millions, accountability to God is nowhere in the picture.

When you take the position that you are not responsible to any higher power and that there is no final judgment, there are, in reality, no certain moral standards to guide your life. Judgment implies responsibility and moral choices.

In the last days of earth's history, God is calling men and women to judgment. Does God have a standard of morality as a basis for His final judgment? He does. God's law is the basis of morality and the standard of judgment.

The book of Revelation says that you *are* responsible for your actions, "For the hour of His judgment has come." The Bible calls us back to the law of God, which is God's eternal moral standard. The apostle James, the brother of Jesus, puts it this way: "So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty" (James 2:12).

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The entire law of God is a law of liberty. Here are a few examples: The sixth commandment, “Thou shalt not kill” (Exodus 20:13, KJV), is liberating. It preserves the sanctity of life. The seventh commandment, “Thou shalt not commit adultery” (verse 14, KJV), preserves the sanctity of the family. It protects the institution of marriage. The eighth commandment, “Thou shalt not steal” (verse 15, KJV), is part of this law of liberty. It protects our possessions and our property.

This is especially true of the Sabbath commandment. The fourth commandment, “Remember the Sabbath,” liberates us from the bondage of work and toil that keeps us enslaved to the world’s value system. The Sabbath, more than any other day, provides parents an opportunity to transmit moral values to their children. It creates an atmosphere for families and friends to recapture spirituality in an age of secularism.

The Sabbath is distinctly designed by God to re-create the Eden experience. God longs for fellowship with His children, and as a loving parent anxiously awaits a phone call, a card, or an e-mail from one of their treasured children, so God Himself longs for fellowship with us in a taste of eternity each Sabbath.

Did you notice that God’s last-day message for humanity, described as being carried by three angels in midheaven, cries with a loud voice, “ ‘Fear God and give glory to Him for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water’ ” (Revelation 14:7)? The Sabbath speaks to us of our loving Creator. Each week, we are reminded that we did not evolve. We are sons and daughters of the King of the universe. We are not products of chance. Our lives are not a haphazard collection of events over which we have no control. Our personality and character is not solely the product of our heredity and environment. There is a power greater than all of the ugly experiences that have scarred our minds. It is the power of the Creator. The God of Creation can re-create our thought patterns. He can transform our behavior. He can heal us from within. And

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this is what the Sabbath is all about. The One who spoke and dry land appeared; the One who spoke and sun, moon, and stars were created; this living God can change your life.

The Sabbath speaks of hope. We may be powerless, but He is all-powerful. We may be weak, but He is strong. We may be frail, but He is almighty. The Sabbath speaks of a God who wants to write His law on our hearts and minds, just like He did for our first parents in the beginning.

The Sabbath invites us, as the well-known song says, to

Turn your eyes upon Jesus,  
Look full in His wonderful face,  
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,  
In the light of his glory and grace.<sup>2</sup>

The law of God sets us free to live an abundant life. Obedience to God's law is heaven's prescription for joy. Think of the outright chaos in society if the principles of God's law were openly disregarded. If we turn our back on God's law, our whole society would be turned into mob violence, rampant immorality, pirating, looting, and national disaster.

God's law is the foundation of His throne. It is the basis of all law. But, someone says, "I thought we were saved by grace and we didn't need to keep God's law" (see Ephesians 2:8).

When Christ was crucified on the cross, He was judged as a sinner assuming the guilt of our sins. He was condemned for our sins, of which He was not guilty, so we could be pardoned for those very sins, of which we are guilty.

If God could have changed His law, Jesus would not have had to die. The Bible says, "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Why would God send His Son to suffer that cruel death, if all He had to do—with some stroke of magic—was to change His law?

### God's moral standard

Law and judgment are all part of the gospel of Christ. "Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness"



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(1 John 3:4). I may not think it is sin to steal something, but sin is lawlessness. Sin is more than what I think in my own mind. Here is the Bible's definition of sin: sin is breaking God's law.

A man says, "Look, I'm not satisfied in my marriage. So if I go out for a weekend with my secretary, that's OK because we're two consenting adults."

The Bible says, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." God's law is His eternal moral standard, which defines sin and establishes our accountability to God.

And what our children need today is not a diet of murder, violence, and immorality on television. Our children need to be taught the moral principles God has given us. The moral law of God protects us. God's law is not some arbitrary regulation to restrict our happiness. God's law is the pathway to freedom and genuine happiness.

God's law protects us from a lifestyle which would destroy us. Some Christians have even said, "We don't preach on the law in our church. We preach about His love," as if they are two different things.

Love always leads to obedience. Love doesn't lead to disobedience. It leads committed Christians to keep God's commandments. Jesus said, "If you love Me, keep My Commandments" (John 14:15).

Does Jesus say, "If you love Me, you *don't* have to keep My commandments"? No! Love's response is to keep God's commandments.

The reason we obey is not because we are trying to earn God's favor. It's the response of our love for Him. I do not obey God in order to be saved, but because I am saved. All my obedience does not earn salvation. Christ wrought that out on the cross.

But after I come to the cross, my obedience is evidence that I'm saved. First John 2:3, states it clearly: "Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments." John says here is the evidence that we know God. Here is the evidence that we are

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born-again believers. Here is the evidence that we are truly Christ's. "He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in Him" (verse 4).

When we are committed to Christ, when we genuinely know Him, when our hearts are surrendered to Him, the natural response is to obey Him. Grace and law are not contradictory ideas. When you are saved by grace, you are not saved to disobey. You are saved to obey.

All salvation is by grace. Old Testament believers looked forward to a Christ who was to come. In the New Testament, we look to a Christ who has come. They were saved by a grace to come. We are saved by a grace that has come.

### The role of God's law

But if it's all by grace, then what's the role of God's law? The apostle Paul makes it plain: "By the law is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20). If you do away with the law, you do away with sin. If there is no law, there is no sin. If there is no sin, there is no need of grace for salvation.

God reveals sin through His law. Paul says, "I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, 'You shall not covet' " (Romans 7:7).

If you break God's law, it is sin. The role of the law is to define sin. The law says, "This is right and this is wrong." The law defines the moral standard of God's judgment. The law defines the foundation of all society.

The judgment calls men and women everywhere back to law keeping. It calls Christians that are saved by grace to live obedient, righteous, holy lives.

### The role of God's grace

What is the role of grace? "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not

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of works, lest anyone should boast” (Ephesians 2:8, 9). Grace is God’s mercy, God’s pardon, and God’s forgiveness. Grace is God’s power. Grace is God’s love reaching out to sinners. Does grace do away with God’s law? If I am saved by grace, does that lead me to break God’s law?

“Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law” (Romans 3:31). Paul says, “Don’t think we do away with the law by faith through grace.” We establish it. We keep it. People who are saved by grace desire to live obedient lives in harmony with God’s will. Here is a classic example of how grace leads us to keep God’s law, not break it.

Many years ago, I was presenting a series of Bible prophecy lectures on the East Coast of the United States. One evening, after the presentation, I was in a hurry to get to my next appointment. I was driving way too fast. The speed limit was 60. I was probably going about 70. A policeman stopped me and asked for my driver’s license. I handed the officer my ministerial license. The officer smiled.

We talked a little while. Then I said something like this: “Honestly, I was just down at the civic auditorium and I was preaching on the law. I was telling the audience that they should keep the law, so can’t you give me grace this one time? Officer, you and I are on the same team. You catch them after they break the law, and I tell them to keep the law. I make your work less, so please, can’t you give me grace this one time?”

With a wry smile, the policeman said, “All right preacher, go on, but keep the law!”

Now, when I broke the law, what did I deserve? A speeding ticket . . . that’s right. When I received the pardon, did that release me from the condemnation of the law? Yes. Did it release me from the jurisdiction of the law? Certainly not. Did I get back in the car and say to my wife, “Honey, I’m not under the law, I’m under grace, and we can go as fast as we want”? Did I go 90 miles per hour because I was under the policeman’s grace? Certainly not.

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What happened? I was now under grace, so I was extremely careful not to break the law. Since Jesus saved me by His grace, I do not want to break His law. I am not going to turn my back on His commandments.

When you are saved by grace, you are not under the condemnation to the law. Jesus said, “ ‘Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill’ ” (Matthew 5:17).

Jesus didn't come to do away with the law. Jesus did not come to do away with the fifth commandment which says, “ ‘Honor your father and your mother’ ” (Exodus 20:12). Jesus came to model how a loving Son related to His parents. Jesus did not come to do away with the sixth commandment, “Thou shalt not kill” (verse 13, KJV). He came to reveal kindness and compassion to everyone He came in contact with. Jesus did not come to do away with the seventh commandment, “Thou shalt not commit adultery” (verse 14, KJV). He came to model purity.

Neither did He come to do away with the fourth commandment, “ ‘Remember the Sabbath day’ ” (verse 8). This is why the Bible says, “And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day” (Luke 4:16).

Just as Jesus did not come to abolish the Ten Commandments, He did not come to abolish the Sabbath. The opposite is true. Jesus came to live a life of loving obedience to uphold God's law. The Sabbath commandment is in the heart of the Ten Commandments for a reason. The first four commandments describe our relationship to God. The last six commandments describe our relationship to our fellow man. The Sabbath commandment, calling us to worship our Creator, is the basis for all obedience.

Since He alone is our Creator, we worship Him exclusively with no other gods, without images and by not taking His name in vain. Since He is our Creator, we respect every other human being as outlined in the last six commands. The Sabbath commandment explains to us the basis of God's moral authority in

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giving us the Ten Commandments. He created us. As our Creator, He knows what's best. The Ten Commandments are guidelines for living from a caring Creator and honoring Him on the Sabbath as Creator is the foundation for that obedience.

According to the apostle Paul, "God . . . created all things through Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 3:9). As Creator, Jesus kept the Sabbath in honor of the Father's plan and as a model of true Sabbath worship.

### Confusion over law and grace

Most Christians are confused on the relationship of law and grace. The apostle Paul declared, "For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace" (Romans 6:14). When does sin have dominion over you? When you follow your way, rather than God's way. When you break God's law, sin enslaves you.

What does it mean to be under the law? To be under the law means to be under the law as a means of salvation. Attempting to keep the law in our own strength is like attempting to swim across the Atlantic Ocean. You may be an Olympic or world-class swimmer, but the distance is just too far. No matter how hard we try, it is impossible to keep God's law on our own. If we look to our law-keeping as a means of salvation, we will be constantly frustrated in our futile attempts to obey. We will feel continually condemned. But if Jesus is our Source of salvation, everything changes.

To be under grace means that I accept Christ's pardon, receive Christ's forgiveness, and am filled with His power. Christ writes His law in my heart and in my mind. I desire to obey Him.

The Bible is very clear on this subject. When we come to Jesus Christ and cast ourselves upon His mercy, He says, "My child, no matter what you have done in the past, no matter how sinful your life has been, My child, I will forgive you. You can begin again." The law reveals our need.

When I look at God's law, I see who I am. I don't measure up

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to God's moral standards. I see times when I have been impatient. I see times when I haven't been as kind as I should have been. My failure to keep God's law leads me to seek God's grace. This is what the psalmist David meant when he declared, "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul" (Psalm 19:7). The Ten Commandment law drives me to Jesus and I say, "Oh Jesus, my heart is broken. I am crushed because of my sin. Jesus, forgive me. Take away my guilt. Lead me, dear Jesus, to keep Your law. Help me to be obedient."

There was a time when a lawyer came to Jesus and asked, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" Jesus said to him, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:36-39).

What was Jesus doing? He was summarizing the Ten Commandments. Jesus further explained it this way: "On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets" (verse 40).

The entire law can be summarized in one word—*love*. Jesus summarized the first four commandments with *love* to God and the last six commandments with *love* to our fellow man. Jesus was saying that if you love fully, you will love God. If you love fully, you will love your fellow man.

Love always leads to obedience. Keeping God's law doesn't put you in bondage; it takes you out of bondage. The Ten Commandments were not given to restrict our freedom. They were given so we could be truly free. They were given by God Himself. Listen to how they are introduced: "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (Exodus 20:2). It is the Lord God, the Lord of heaven and earth, who wrote these commandments with His own finger on tables of stone as moral principles for all time.

Let's review the Ten Commandments—God's moral guidelines for living.

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*“Thou shalt have no other gods before me”* (verse 3, KJV). God is saying, “I must be supreme in your life.” No other gods, not your house, not money, not tobacco, not materialism, nothing else will satisfy.

The second commandment states, *“Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image”* (verse 4, KJV). In other words, worship God supremely. God says, “Don’t come to Me through images. Come to Me directly.”

The third commandment declares, *“Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain”* (verse 7, KJV). God is saying, “Love Me enough to respect My name.” Think of the name of Jesus—the name at which angels veil their faces, the name at which angels sing, “Holy, Holy, Holy”—being dragged through the dust with vile curses. The Ten Commandment law speaks with relevance to our time, urging us to use Jesus’ name reverently, only in ways which bring honor to Him.

The fourth commandment regarding the Sabbath is in the heart of God’s law. God commanded all mankind to remember, but it seems that most have forgotten. *“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God”* (verses 8–10, KJV). In an age of godless evolution, God calls us to worship the Creator of heaven and earth. The Sabbath command liberates us from the tyranny of the earthly and puts us in touch with eternal values each week. It frees us from our mind-numbing attachment to things and puts us in contact with divine realities.

The fifth commandment, *“Honour thy father and thy mother”* (verse 12, KJV), has a promise to go along with it, “That thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee” (verse 12, KJV). What a promise! There is a relationship between health, long life, happiness, and positive relationships between parents and their children.

The sixth commandment speaks with relevance: *“Thou shalt not kill”* (verse 13, KJV). At a time when military arsenals are

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being built to kill millions; at a time when abortion is available on demand; at a time when snipers destroy innocent lives, there is still a commandment that says life is sacred: “Thou shalt not kill.” The sixth commandment liberates all people to be free from killing, murder, and war. It calls upon all to recognize that life is a gift that comes from God.

The seventh commandment shouts to this generation, “*Thou shalt not commit adultery*” (verse 14, KJV). At a time of immorality, at a time when there is a lack of moral purity, God’s law speaks to this generation. When a society turns its back on God’s law, when it is openly immoral, that society is on its way to disaster. The seventh commandment is a call to moral purity. It frees us from the sexually transmitted diseases that are devastating entire countries. It calls us from the physical, mental, and emotional brokenness of disregarding the laws of purity written in the fabric of our being. It frees us from the horrible guilt resulting from breaking this basic law of morality.

The eighth commandment, “*Thou shalt not steal*” (verse 15, KJV), protects the possessions God has graciously given us. It’s still wrong to steal. It’s still wrong to shoplift. It’s still wrong to take something that does not belong to you. The eighth commandment frees us to be secure in what we have, without the fear of someone else selfishly taking it away.

The ninth commandment, “*Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour*” (verse 16, KJV), protects our reputations. Lying is still wrong. Gossiping is still wrong. Dragging someone’s good name through the mud is still wrong. Our reputations and good names are protected by God.

The tenth commandment is God’s appeal for us to be content. It is heaven’s call for us to rest in His goodness. The final command, “*Thou shalt not covet*” (verse 17), focuses on minds praising God for the good things He gives us rather than complaining about what we do not have.

The Ten Commandment law speaks to this generation. The



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Ten Commandment law speaks with meaning to our society today. The psalmist reveals that His commands are forever. Psalm 111:7–9 says,

The works of His hands are verity and justice;  
All His precepts are sure.  
They stand fast forever and ever, . . .  
He has commanded His covenant forever.

Satan lost heaven because of disobedience. Adam and Eve lost Eden because of disobedience. God is calling His people back to His Ten Commandment law. He gives us this promise: “For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people’ ” (Hebrews 8:10).

God says, “I am going to put My law in your mind.” What does this mean? If God’s law is in our minds, we know it. If God’s law is in our hearts, we love it. God will have a last-day people whose commandments are written in their hearts and minds. They love Him enough to obey Him. Through God’s grace, they are set free to obey. They are liberated through the power of Christ from evil’s grasp. They are delivered from its bondage. In Jesus, they are free—free to live godly, obedient lives. Notice the following description of this last-day people: “Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus” (Revelation 14:12).

Here are the faithful ones—those who keep the commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus. The last chapter in Revelation describes the redeemed this way: “Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city” (Revelation 22:14).

Jesus Christ pardons us. Jesus says, “Come to Me, My child.” He gives us mercy. Christ looks into our eyes and says, “I have something special I want to do for you. I want to change your life. I would like to make you a new man or a new woman.”

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Would you like to say, “Jesus, come into my life. Jesus, do for me what it is impossible for me to do for myself”?

Many years ago, a mother took her young son to hear the renowned preacher, Dwight Moody. After the sermon, she stood in line for one reason. She wanted her son to shake hands with Evangelist Moody. When the boy’s turn came, he clenched his fist and refused to shake hands. His mother was totally embarrassed. She urged; she coaxed. She took the boy’s hand and attempted to place it in the preacher’s hand. The boy would not open his fingers. When he finally did, there were a few beautifully colored marbles there. He thought the preacher was going to take all of his marbles!

What are you clinging to, my friend? What are you holding on to? There is nothing worth holding on to when Jesus reaches out to take your hand. Why not—right now—commit yourself to Jesus to live an obedient, godly life? You will be truly set free to obey!

Is there anything more important to you than reaching out and taking Jesus’ hand right now? His grace will pardon your past. His grace will transform your life. His grace will make you a new man or a new woman. I love that old hymn, “Grace Greater Than Our Sin,” that says,

Marvelous grace of our loving Lord,  
Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt!  
Yonder on Calvary’s mount outpoured,  
There where the blood of the Lamb was spilled.

Grace, grace, God’s grace,  
Grace that will pardon and cleanse within;  
Grace, grace, God’s grace,  
Grace that is greater than all our sin.

Marvelous, infinite, matchless grace,  
Freely bestowed on all who believe!<sup>3</sup>

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His grace flows from His throne to your heart right now. Why not commit your life to Him right now? Why not open your heart to His grace, which will pardon you from your past guilt and lead you to live an obedient life.

Why not tell Him in the quietness of your soul that you want to humbly obey Him? Why not thank Him that His way is truly best—that obeying Him is truly your delight?

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1. Shervert Frazier, *Psychotrends: What Kind of People Are We Becoming?* (n.p.: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 15.

2. Helen H. Lemmel, "Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus," 1922.

3. Julia H. Johnston, "Grace Greater Than Our Sin," 1911.

# Chapter 3

## A Day to Remember

In 1992, the COBE satellite produced what some scientist's called the " 'discovery of the century.' " Those letters, COBE, represented the Cosmic Background Explorer. You may remember reading about the amazing launch of the COBE satellite. Astronomers, astrophysicists, and the cosmologists were astounded.

When it comes to the question of the origin of life, there are only two possible positions. Either matter always existed, or God always existed. The evolutionist says that matter always existed. The COBE satellite indicated from the data regarding the universe that the universe had a definite beginning.

When the COBE satellite measured the illimitable realms of space studying the great origins of life, its measurements sent shock waves through the scientific world. They indicated that matter did not always exist.

Hugh Ross, PhD, wrote about this unusual discovery in his book, *The Creator and the Cosmos*. He asserts that one of the greatest discoveries of the century reveals that there is a God. "The measured proportion exactly fit the proportion you would expect—if the universe had a beginning." "That's what the COBE satellite told us."

Previously when scientists considered the universe, they believed matter was infinite—that it never had a beginning—but the evidence from COBE challenged this assumption. Could it be

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that if there was a beginning, then there was a *Beginner*; if there was a creation, then there was a *Creator*? Certainly!

Science is taking another look. A Berkley astronomer, speaking about the COBE satellite said, “ ‘What we have found is evidence of the birth of the universe . . . It’s like looking at God.’ ”

In the marvels of creation, God has left His fingerprints throughout the universe. There are scientists who, observing God’s creation, see His handiwork. They see evidence for His existence. They see evidence for a Creator God—One who fashioned the world.

### An all-powerful Creator

The Bible’s last book, Revelation, describes a clarion call for men and women living in earth’s last hour to return to this Creator God. In prophetic vision, the apostle John saw the throne room of the universe. His angelic visitor invited him into the presence of God. The angel said, “ ‘Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this’ ” (Revelation 4:1).

In prophetic vision, John traveled to the throne room of the universe. He saw heavenly beings singing songs of praise:

“Holy, holy, holy,  
Lord God Almighty,  
Who was and is and is to come!” (verse 8).

“You are worthy, O Lord,  
To receive glory and honor and power;  
For You created all things,  
And by Your will they exist and were created” (verse 11).

All of heaven sings. Some scientists may question. Some intellectuals may doubt. Some academics may wonder. Yet all of heaven sings, “You are worthy, O Lord to receive glory and honor and power.” Why? Because “You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created.” We do not exist by mere chance. We

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are not some accidental combination of molecules. We are not some random combination of genes and chromosomes.

We were created by a loving God. Before you existed in the womb of your mother, you existed in the mind of God. God fashioned you. God shaped you. God created you. The book of Revelation calls humanity back to worshiping the Creator.

The book of Revelation declares,

“Thanksgiving and honor and power and might,  
Be to our God forever and ever.  
Amen” (7:12).

It calls us to worship “Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that are in it, the earth and the things that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it” (10:6). In Revelation 10, an angel comes down from heaven. He puts one foot on the land and one foot on the sea, indicating a universal message for all people, and cries out, “Worship the Creator.”

Why is it that God is worthy of worship? God is worthy of our praise because He made us. He fashioned us. He created us. We did not evolve. God is worthy of worship because He has given us life. And we respond to this marvelous gift of life by giving Him worship and praise and honor.

How did we lose this concept of God as our Creator? What events led up to modern science’s dismissal of the concept of God as Maker of the heavens and the earth?

Was there a “tipping point”—a point in time when things began to change?

### Evolution’s challenge

In 1831, a young naturalist, Charles Darwin, made an epic journey to the Galapagos Islands on the British ship, the HMS *Beagle*. There, Darwin studied what seemed to be the almost endless variety of birds, reptiles, and sea life. He was fascinated with the countless species of flora and fauna found on the island. He noted, for example, that turtles and lizards and finches showed a

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great variety within the same species. Since the popular teaching of the church at this time was that God created every species we currently see, and he observed evolution within the species, Darwin cast off what he believed was the archaic, unscientific notion of the church and accepted a radically different view.

He believed that the variety he saw in nature was an indication that the species evolved. Although Darwin saw gaps between kinds of plants and animals, he assumed future generations of scientists would discover the link between these kinds. Darwin's major assumption, that links between the kinds existed, was flawed.

He correctly observed adaptation and development within the original Genesis kinds. The medieval church, of course, was mistaken that God created every kind of dog, cat, or flower. We recognize today that dogs can be interbred producing new species. This is true within the types of all animals, fruits, and flowers.

Following his line of reasoning to its ultimate conclusion, Darwin soon ruled out the existence of God. The Creator no longer seemed necessary.

Darwin taught that natural law explained the reason for our existence. He ruled an all-powerful Creator out of the picture. Darwin's book, *The Origin of the Species*, transformed the way millions looked at the world. His new world had no place for a Creator. In Darwin's view, human beings evolved over millions of years from the lower to the higher forms of life. And to think that millions of minds were changed based on an assumption—an unproven idea—that there are clear links between species.

Now people around the world have accepted this teaching of evolution. Although there is evidence in the natural world of infinite variety between the species, Darwin's theory of evolution did not answer all the questions about the origin of life. There are still huge gaps. Even after more than one hundred and seventy five years, big questions remain. Here are just a few of them:

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1. If evolution is true, where are the gaps between the species? How do we fill in the missing links? What is the missing link between a variety of animal species? Between humans and animals? Between sea creatures and land creatures, etc.?
2. It is a law of biology that says life produces life. Darwin says that given enough time, nonliving things will produce living things, yet there is no substantial evidence of this in the scientific world. Why?
3. It is a law of biology that says like produces like; randomness tends to break down, not restore. Evolution says things which are not alike can ultimately be produced from things which are alike. In other words, one species can produce another species totally distinct from the first species. Where is the clear, indisputable evidence of this in the natural world?

But God has an answer to the problem of evolution. It is part of His final message for all people. Revelation calls us to, “Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water’ ” (14:7).

This is a message for all of us. It’s not a message of one religious group or another. It’s not a message of one denomination or another. It’s not a message of one church or another. It is God’s final call to all of His people. It is a call to worship the Creator. How do we worship the Creator of heaven and earth?

How does He remind us of His creative power? At Creation, did He leave us a symbol of His creative authority? Revelation is the book of endings. We can only understand the book of endings if we understand the book of beginnings. We will only understand the significance of the monumental issues in today’s world if we understand the events at Creation. Revelation’s final call for the entire human race to worship the Creator has its origin in Genesis—the book of beginnings.



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This theme of true worship—remembering the Creator—is a common thread throughout the Bible. It is one of the most important themes of Scripture.

The heart of Revelation's final crisis is over true and false worship. Worshiping the Creator is at the center of it all. Let's return to our origin so we can understand our destiny. Let's return to the book of beginnings, Genesis, so we can understand the book of endings, Revelation. The amazingly intricate world as we know it today was created in six literal days.

God spoke this dark, shapeless mass into existence. He dazzled it with light, enveloped it with atmosphere, brightened it with babbling brooks and flowing rivers, colored it with beautiful flowers and plants, enlivened it with an incredible variety of living things, and looked upon His handiwork and said, "It is good!"

And then came the crowning act of Creation. The Creator declared, " 'Let Us make man in Our image.' . . . In the image of God He created him; male and female He created them " (Genesis 1:26, 27).

Human beings could receive no greater honor! God could have shown no greater love! The human race is God's masterpiece of creation—the object of His supreme love! And this love was meant to be shared, for God said, " 'Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over . . . every living thing that moves on the earth' " (verse 28). After the creation of Adam and Eve on the sixth day, the Bible says, "Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished" (2:1).

Just six days of work and creation was done. Such a short time! But not for God! The Bible says, "For He spoke, and it was done; / He commanded, and it stood fast" (Psalm 33:9).

Adam and Eve must have gazed in wide-eyed wonder as the blazing sun, in all its glory, began to slip over the western horizon ending the sixth day of Creation. But the Genesis account of Creation does not end there. The Bible record continues: "And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done,

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and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done” (Genesis 2:2).

God rested! Why? Not because He was weary. The prophet Isaiah tells us that God never gets weary (Isaiah 40:28). The Creator of the universe permitted Himself the satisfaction of enjoying His completed creation.

God was pleased with His accomplishments over earth’s first six days. Then God did something especially significant. “Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made” (Genesis 2:3). The seventh-day Sabbath given at Creation was to be God’s perpetual reminder of our roots.

The Bible says, “God blessed the seventh day.” He made the seventh day an endless fountain of spiritual refreshing for His people, for all time to come.

Next, He sanctified the seventh day! He set it apart as a holy day, a special time every seven days to continually remind us of our beginnings—our origin! Here are three specific things God did on the seventh day.

1. God blessed it.
2. God sanctified it.
3. God rested on it.

The Bible does *not* say that God blessed the first day or the third day or the fifth day or any other day except the seventh.

And what God blesses, according to 1 Chronicles 17:27, He blesses forever. To bless is to infuse something with God’s very presence. God blessed the seventh day by making it an eternal sign of His powerful creation and infinite love. Each Sabbath as we worship the Creator of the universe, we too will receive God’s special blessing—the blessing of His peace, the blessing of His presence, the blessing of His renewed strength, and the blessing of His eternal perspective of life’s true meaning. The blessing of Sabbath is the blessing of a joy-filled heart worshiping the God who made us.

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He rested on the seventh day not because *He* was tired, but because He knew *we* would be tired. God sanctified the seventh day. He set it apart for holy use. The word *sanctified* is the word used by God for the marriage ceremony when one woman is set apart or sanctified for one man.

Let's suppose a man gets married. The woman he marries has six sisters. After the ceremony, he's waiting in the car, getting ready to go on the honeymoon. One of her sisters slips in beside him and says, "Let's go." He looks at her amazed and responds, "I didn't marry you; I married your sister." Her reply is, "What difference does it make? I'm one in seven." Does it make any difference? To the married couple, it certainly does. There was one who was sanctified, set apart, for him.

All women are not the same and all days are not the same. The Sabbath was created by God 2,300 years before the existence of the Jewish race. The nation of Israel traces its origin back to Abraham. Abraham's son Isaac, through Sarah in their old age, became the child of promise. Isaac's son Jacob had twelve sons whose families were the origin of the twelve tribes of Israel. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob lived well over two millenniums after Creation. More than one hundred thousand Sabbaths were already kept by the people of God before the existence of the Jewish nation. The Sabbath was given at Creation for all people as a day to worship the Creator and praise Him for the gift of life itself.

This is precisely why Jesus said, " 'The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath' " (Mark 2:27). God created the Sabbath to be a blessing to all humanity. This is why He blessed it at Creation. This is why He set it aside and sanctified it at Creation. This is why He left us the gift of His rest at Creation.

### **The Sabbath: An eternal sign**

The Sabbath was given to our parents, Adam and Eve, in the Garden of Eden. The Sabbath was set aside at Creation as an eternal symbol of God's creative power for His people in every age.

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When Adam and Eve left the Garden, the Sabbath remained as a reminder of God's eternal love. Throughout both the Old and New Testaments, the Sabbath is a sign between God and His people. Before He gave the Israelites the Ten Commandment law on Mount Sinai, they were keeping the Sabbath of Creation. In Exodus 16, we read the remarkable story of the falling of the manna.

Moses said, " 'Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, the Sabbath, there will be none' " (Exodus 16:26). God worked a miracle for Israel. He met their needs by raining bread down from heaven. This bread, or manna, fell every day except on Sabbath.

If the Israelites gathered more than they could eat, the left-over portion spoiled. In addition, twice as much manna fell on Friday. The Israelites then gathered a double portion, which God miraculously preserved over the Sabbath. This Sabbath miracle during the years of wilderness wandering kept the Israelites constantly aware of the fact that they belonged to God. When some Israelites went out to gather manna on the Sabbath, God said to Moses, " 'How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My laws?' " (verse 28).

Even before God gave the Ten Commandments in written form on Mount Sinai, His people knew His commands. It was wrong for Cain to kill Abel even before the Ten Commandments were given at Sinai. Abraham kept God's Ten Commandment law before Sinai (Genesis 26:5). The Israelites wandering in the wilderness kept the Sabbath before Mount Sinai.

When God created Adam and Eve, He wrote His commandments in their hearts and minds. For example, Cain knew it was wrong to murder Abel. The Israelites knew it was wrong to break the Sabbath. The Ten Commandments were given on Mount Sinai not because God's people did not know right from wrong from the beginning, but because in their sinfulness and rebellion, they needed God's law restored.

On Mount Sinai, God wrote the Ten Commandments on

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tables of stone. He didn't write these commandments on the sand to be washed away. He did not write them on parchment to be consumed by fire. God did not write the Sabbath command on a little piece of paper hidden in a corner. God wrote on tables of stone. God wrote the law to endure forever. God didn't even entrust Moses to write it. God didn't entrust one of the prophets to write it. If in the Bible there is only one set of laws written with God's own finger, if God wrote them on tables of stone, can we turn our backs on the eternal law of God lightly? The Bible says, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8).

We can keep holy only what God has made holy. Human beings can't make something holy. God made the Sabbath holy. He blessed it at Creation. He said, "Remember." Why did God say "Remember"? He knew we would forget. He knew in this secular, materialistic age, men and women would forget the Sabbath. So God said, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." God is calling us back to His eternal sign of creation. It unites us with Him. "Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work" (verses 9, 10a).

Does the Sabbath command say, "It's the Sabbath of the Jew"? No, it says, "It's the Sabbath of the Lord your God." Why is the seventh-day Sabbath the Sabbath of the Lord your God? The origin of the Sabbath is not some bishop or priest or pastor. It is not some church council. The origin of the Sabbath is the Creator Himself. It is His sign. It is His memorial. It is His emblem. It is His command. As a bulwark against evolution, He fashioned it to call us to worship Him as Creator of heaven and earth. In keeping the Sabbath, we acknowledge that every heartbeat comes from Him. We declare that every breath comes from Him.

As we rest and worship Him on the Sabbath, we are declaring our allegiance to Him as our Creator. We declare, "God, we did not create our own life. You are the Giver of life." He does not say, "A seventh-day is the Sabbath." He says, "*The* seventh day is the

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Sabbath.” And just as all the celebrations of the day before your birthday or the day after your birthday do not establish those days as your birthday, so all the celebrations the day before or the day after do not make those days the true Bible Sabbath. You can have a birthday party the day before or the day after your birthday, but that does not change the day you were born. Celebrating the Sabbath on the sixth day or the first day does not change the reality of the fact that God set aside the seventh-day Sabbath. He commanded, “Remember the Sabbath day.” But millions have forgotten to remember. For them, the Sabbath is no more than a common, ordinary day. What day did God bless? The seventh day. What day did God sanctify? The seventh day. What day did God rest on? The seventh day.

In the heart of the Ten Commandment law, God tells us why we are to worship on the Sabbath. “ ‘For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it’ ” (verse 11).

The Ten Commandment law quotes Genesis and leads us back to the time God created the earth. The Sabbath was never an exclusively Jewish institution. It was given for all of us. The Ten Commandments are God’s unchangeable laws for all humanity. The commandment “Thou shalt not commit adultery” (verse 14, KJV) is not only for the Jews. The commandment “Thou shalt not kill” (verse 13, KJV) is not only for the Jews. The commandment “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image” (verse 4, KJV) is not only for the Jews. The Sabbath is not exclusively a Jewish Sabbath. These commands reveal the best way to live. They are the foundation for a happy, productive, meaningful life.

The Sabbath command is not for some of us; it is for all of us. The prophet Isaiah affirms this truth in these words:

“Everyone who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, . . .  
I will bring to My holy mountain,

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And make them joyful in My house of prayer. . . .  
For My house shall be called a house of prayer for all  
nations” (Isaiah 56:6, 7).

God says, “All nations will one day worship around My throne in the New Jerusalem each Sabbath.” This is the vision of God’s house of prayer that we saw in the book of Revelation. It’s the New Jerusalem. It’s there at God’s throne where all of God’s people are singing praise to the Creator. The seventh-day Sabbath—the day God rested upon, the day God sanctified, the day God blessed—is the golden link that links the creation in Genesis with the new creation in the book of Revelation.

The eternal principles of God’s law are universal and so is the Sabbath. It was never done away with. It was never changed. It was written on tables of stone with God’s own finger. Throughout the Old Testament, the Sabbath was God’s everlasting sign for all of His people. The prophet Ezekiel clarifies the eternal nature of the Sabbath in these words: “ ‘Moreover I also gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between them and Me, that they might know that I am the LORD who sanctifies them’ ” (Ezekiel 20:12).

The Sabbath is not only a sign that God created us, it is a sign that He can re-create our hearts. The Sabbath is a symbol of sanctification. The word *sanctification* simply means “to be made holy.” Just as we did not create ourselves, we cannot re-create ourselves. We cannot make ourselves holy. Only God can make us holy through His Holy Spirit. The Sabbath is a symbol of the God whose power made the world and the God whose power can remake our hearts.

When we come to worship Him on the Sabbath, we declare, “God, You are the all-powerful Creator. You can re-create my heart.” God gave the Sabbath to Adam and Eve at Creation. God gave the Sabbath to Moses in the Ten Commandment law at Sinai.

### Jesus, the disciples and the Sabbath

He gave the Sabbath as a sign of His creative authority, eternal

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power and everlasting love throughout the Old Testament. Questions are often raised, What about the New Testament? What about Jesus Christ? Did Jesus come to do away with the Sabbath? Did the disciples change the Sabbath? Did they worship on another day? Let's look at the New Testament. What did Jesus teach about the Bible Sabbath?

“So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read” (Luke 4:16). Jesus had a custom, or practice. Each Sabbath, the Savior found joy in worship.

If Jesus wanted to leave another sign or symbol of worship, wouldn't we expect Him to leave us a positive example in His life? Isn't it true that a person's will and testament is sealed by their death? You cannot change a person's will after they die. And Christ's will and testament was sealed at His death. The legacy of His life was a positive example of Sabbath keeping. Christ kept the Bible Sabbath. He said Himself, “ ‘The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath’ ” (Mark 2:27).

Was the Sabbath made for the Jew? Yes. The Jew is a man. It was made for all humanity. The Sabbath was made for Jews and Gentiles alike as a sign of true worship. It is a sign that we worship Him exclusively. It is a sign that we love Him supremely.

We were not made for the Sabbath. The Sabbath was made as God's gift to us. Adam and Eve were made first. The Sabbath is God's love gift to the human race. Every Sabbath we flee from the stresses of life to His palace in time. The tensions of life evaporate in His presence. The Sabbath is an eternal sign that He created us. We rest in a completed creation. And we rest in a completed redemption.

In life and in death, Jesus rested on the Bible Sabbath. The Sabbath was written on tables of stone never to be changed, never to be altered.

Jesus never placed any doubt regarding what day the Sabbath was. He did question all the legalistic requirements the



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Jews piled up upon the Sabbath. That's why Jesus said, " 'It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath' " (Matthew 12:12). For Christ, the Sabbath was a day for works of mercy, a wonderful day of worship and praise, and a day of fellowship, blessing, and healing. Jesus performed more miracles on the Sabbath than on any other day. Although He was severely criticized as a Sabbath breaker, Jesus established the Sabbath as a day of blessing and doing good to others.

The Sabbath was not some legalistic, narrow-minded requirement. Even in death, Jesus Christ kept the Sabbath. Jesus' closest followers rested according to the commandment on the seventh-day Sabbath. They wouldn't even embalm His body on Sabbath. Jesus rested on Sabbath before He was resurrected on the first day of the week. Jesus kept the Sabbath in life and Jesus kept the Sabbath in death. Jesus said, " 'If you love Me, keep My commandments' " (John 14:15).

Love leads us to obedience. Love leads us to keep His commandments. When I kneel at the foot of the cross and I see those nails driven through His hands, I long to obey Him. At the cross, there is mercy. At the cross, there is forgiveness. At the cross, our hearts are changed. We kneel there in wonder and amazement that He could love us so. We hear Him say, "If you love Me, keep My commandments." Obedience is not duty; it is a delight. Love prompts us to worship Him every Sabbath. We are not motivated by some legalistic requirement. We are motivated by love to obey Him.

We give our lives back to the One who gave His life for us. Jesus did not view the Sabbath as a Jewish custom to be kept temporarily until His death on the cross. He did not teach that the Sabbath was limited to Hebrews in the first century. For Jesus, the Sabbath was an eternal symbol of His creative power; keeping the Sabbath revealed an inner sense of loyalty to Him

On one occasion, Jesus met with His closest followers and revealed that even after His crucifixion, death, and resurrection, the

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Sabbath would be kept. In a carefully crafted sermon, He discussed the coming destruction of Jerusalem. He instructed His disciples, “ ‘And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath’ ” (Matthew 24:20).

What sense would it make for Jesus to say to His disciples, “Pray that your flight not be on the Sabbath,” if they were not going to be keeping the Sabbath? It wouldn’t have made any sense at all.

If Christians were all worshipping on the Sabbath, together in one place, and the Roman armies attacked the city, what would have happened? It would have been much easier for the Roman armies to destroy them all. The historian Josephus tells us that the Roman armies actually approached the city on the Sabbath.

Jesus said, “Pray that your flight may not be on the Sabbath.” These first-century Christians did pray. Miraculously, the Roman armies pulled back for apparently no reason. This gave the Christians a brief moment of time to escape from the city. As a result, there is not a single record of any Christians being destroyed during the destruction of Jerusalem.

### The Sabbath and lost time

Jesus clearly instructed His disciples regarding Sabbath worship long after His death. Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70—years after Jesus had already ascended to heaven. Some people ask, “Has time ever been lost?” “How can we really know which day the Sabbath is?” “Is the seventh day of the week today, the same as the seventh day of Bible times?” “Hasn’t the calendar been changed?”

There are at least three ways you can know. You can know from the Bible; you can know from language; and you can know from astronomy. You will recall that the Sabbath was stated at Creation and it was restated in the Ten Commandments given to Moses. It is clear there was no time lost between Adam and Moses. Adam kept the seventh-day Sabbath and so did Moses. All through the Old Testament from Moses to Jesus, God’s people kept the Sabbath, so there was no time lost there. The Crucifixion

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story clearly reveals that the weekly cycle as we know it has not changed from Jesus' time until today.

Let's look at this sequence of days from the Bible. We begin with the day Jesus died. The Bible describes it this way: "That day was the Preparation, and the Sabbath drew near. And the women who had come with Him from Galilee followed after, and they observed the tomb and how His body was laid. Then they returned and prepared spices and fragrant oils. And they rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment" (Luke 23:54-56).

Were the closest followers of Jesus keeping the Sabbath after He died? What does Luke's account say? "They rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment" (verse 56). They did not believe that His death changed the commandment in any way.

Here we have three days listed in succession. First, the day He died. Second, the day He rested in the tomb. Third, the first day of the week, the day He rose from the dead. Then the Bible says, "Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared" (24:1).

Let's consider carefully the order of events occurring on these three days. The Preparation day, the day Christ died, is commonly celebrated as Good Friday. This is followed by the seventh-day Sabbath. On Sabbath, Christ's closest followers rested according to the commandment. Jesus, the Divine Son of God, also rested in the tomb on Sabbath.

Jesus was resurrected from the dead on the first day of the week, the day millions of Christians celebrate as Easter Sunday. The identity of the seventh day Sabbath is clear. It is the day between the day Jesus died (Friday) and the day He arose (Sunday), or the day we call Saturday. It may seem a bit surprising to discover Saturday is the true Bible Sabbath.

There are eight texts in the New Testament that mention the first day of the week and not one of them tells us to worship on Sunday in honor of the Resurrection. Christ has given us a symbol

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of the Resurrection. How do we celebrate the Resurrection? Let's let the Bible speak for itself. "Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:3, 4).

Baptism is the New Testament symbol of the Resurrection. As new believers enter into the watery grave, they are fully immersed, signifying death to the old life. Coming up out of the water, they are resurrected to live a new life in Jesus.

Just as Jesus entered the grave and arose to new life, so baptism symbolizes the new life given to each born-again Christian through the power of the Holy Spirit. Baptism is the symbol of resurrection power, not Sunday observance.

The Bible says, "Remember the Sabbath day." We honor Him as Creator by keeping the Bible Sabbath. In more than one hundred and forty languages of the world, the word for the seventh day of the week is *Sabbath*.

In Russian, Ukrainian, and Bulgarian, it is *Sabbota*. In Arabic, it is *As-Sabat*. In Hebrew, it is *Shabbat*. The languages of the world make it very plain: the day we call Saturday in English is called Sabbath.

According to such trustworthy sources as the Royal Greenwich Observatory in Greenwich, England, and the United States Naval Observatory, the weekly cycle has never changed. History does tell us that in A.D. 1582, Pope Gregory XIII changed the date to adjust for the calendar drifting from the actual seasons. He decreed that the day following Thursday, October 4, 1582, would be Friday, October 15, 1582. But note that this change did not disturb the weekly cycle. Friday still followed Thursday and Saturday followed Friday. And Sunday was still the first day of the week.

Decades ago in 1976, I wrote to the Astronomer Royal at the Royal Greenwich Observatory for information regarding the un-

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broken sequence of the weekly cycle. I wanted to be absolutely sure there was no evidence of any change. Here is my letter, and please notice carefully the information officer's reply:

Dear Sir,

I am currently doing research regarding the unbroken sequence of the weekly cycle. Various European astronomers state that the weekly cycle has come down to us unbroken from ancient times. In other words, that the seventh day of our present week, for example, is identical with the seventh day of the week of Bible times. My question is threefold. (1) What does your investigation show regarding the unbroken antiquity of the weekly cycle from ancient times? (2) Have other changes in the calendar in past centuries (Julian to Gregorian, etc.) affected, in any way, the cycle of the week? (3) Is the Saturday of our present time the lineal descent in unbroken cycles of seven from that Saturday mentioned in the Bible record of the Crucifixion? I greatly appreciate your time in answering these questions and look forward to your soon reply.

Sincerely,

Mark Finley

The reply from R. H. Tucker, Information Officer, Royal Greenwich Observatory, 1974:

Dear Sir,

Your letter to the Astronomer Royal at Greenwich has been sent on to us here and the Director has asked me to reply. The continuity of the seven-day week has been maintained since the earliest days of the Jewish religion. The astronomer may be concerned in the decisions relating to the time, the calendar date, and the year number. But since the week is a civil, social, and religious cycle, there should be no reason why it should be disturbed by any adjustment to the calendar. Any

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attempt to disturb the seven-day cycle has always aroused the most determined opposition of the Jewish authorities, and we are quite certain that no such disturbance has ever been put into effect. The change from the Julian to Gregorian calendar (1582–1927) has always been made to leave the weekday sequence undisturbed.

Yours faithfully,

R. H. Tucker

Information Officer

If you still have any doubt, simply consult *Webster's International Dictionary* for "Saturday." You will read, "Saturday is the seventh day of the week."

Adam kept the Sabbath. Moses kept the Sabbath. Isaiah kept the Sabbath. Jeremiah kept the Sabbath. *Jesus* kept the Sabbath. Peter, James, John, and Paul kept the Sabbath. The New Testament makes the Sabbath practices of the disciples plain. "They came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures" (Acts 17:2).

### The Sabbath and New Testament converts

Paul preached about Christ. It was the Sabbath. The interesting thing is that Gentiles regularly attended these Sabbath meetings as well. Luke records in Acts 13:42, "The Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath." The apostle Paul did not encourage them to return on the first day to keep Sunday. The scripture says, "On the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God" (verse 44).

The whole city was coming! Praise God! What if everyone in your city came to worship the Creator every Sabbath? The Sabbath reveals a oneness, or unity, between all peoples. In Christ, we are part of a common creation forged together as one human race. And on the Sabbath, we celebrate our oneness.

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When we come to worship Him on Sabbath, He bonds us together as one human family. The disciples kept the Sabbath both in public and when there was no common gathering of believers, keeping the Sabbath with a small group privately. “And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there” (16:13).

In this city, there was no Sabbath-keeping group or church. So the apostle Paul met with a group of believers by a quiet river to worship on the Sabbath.

The New Testament evidence is plain. He told His disciples that after the Cross, they would keep the Sabbath. Peter and Paul kept the Sabbath. The book of Revelation calls us back to worshipping the Creator each Sabbath.

In these last days of earth’s history, the Revelation of Jesus Christ calls us back to true worship. Many Christians are confused over the expression in Revelation 1:10 regarding the “Lord’s Day.” John declares, “And I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day.” What is the Lord’s Day? Is there a difference between the “Lord’s Day” and the Bible Sabbath? Are these two different days—one for the Old Testament and the other for the New Testament—or are they the same day?

We may attempt to give our twist to the meaning of the “Lord’s Day,” but Jesus knows what He meant by His expression “Lord’s Day” better than we do. Let’s let Jesus define the “Lord’s Day.” “‘For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath’ ” (Matthew 12:8). “‘Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath’ ” (Mark 2:28). “‘The Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath’ ” (Luke 6:5).

Why do you think the Bible includes the same thing three times? There is only one reason. It is of vital importance. And if “the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath,” then the Sabbath must be the Lord’s Day. The Sabbath of the Creator God in Genesis is the Lord’s Day of Revelation.

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He's the same Creator in Revelation as He was in Genesis. Just as He declared to the first inhabitants of the earth, "I blessed, sanctified, and rested upon the Sabbath," He calls all humanity to worship Him as Creator in the end time. He does not change. Revelation describes God's last-day people in these words: "Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (Revelation 14:12).

God's people awaiting His soon return will be keeping His commandments, including the seventh-day Sabbath. They will lovingly obey Him. The Sabbath will be a symbol of true worship in the end time.

The Sabbath will be the symbol of true worship throughout all eternity. Throughout the endless ages of eternity, we will worship Him as our all-powerful, loving Creator.

"For as the new heavens and the new earth  
Which I will make shall remain before Me," says the  
LORD,

"So shall your descendants and your name remain.  
And it shall come to pass

That from one New Moon to another,  
And from one Sabbath to another,

All flesh shall come to worship before Me," says the  
LORD (Isaiah 66:22, 23).

From around the world they will come and together as one common humanity, together as brothers and sisters as one family, will give Him praise, honor, and glory. Together, we will come to praise the Christ who created heaven and earth. We will unite to praise the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We will come together to worship the Christ who died for us.

Maybe you are thinking, *This is new to me*. But I know you have only one desire. You long to follow Jesus and do His will. When we learn that God wrote the Ten Commandments with His own finger on tables of stone and one of the commandments—only one—has the word "*Remember*," we dare not forget what



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God said to remember. To forget to “Remember” what God Himself says is of uttermost importance, is to miss the enormous blessings of the Sabbath command. It is to miss experiencing the peace, rest, and joy the Sabbath brings.

Throughout the Bible, the Sabbath command is plain. The Sabbath is a sign between God and His people. All of the Old Testament believers kept the Sabbath. Peter, James, and John kept the Sabbath. Paul taught a whole city to keep the Sabbath. All of the New Testament believers kept the Sabbath.

Jesus Himself worshiped the Father every Sabbath. Jesus said, “If you love Me, keep My Commandments.” When we discover the marvelous beauty of the Sabbath, our hearts are broken with love for Christ. We cry from the depths of our being, “I will follow You, my Savior.” Even if it’s different from popular opinion, even if it’s different from what conventional religion teaches, my heart wants only one thing: Bible truth. My heart wants only one thing: Jesus.

Just now, would you like to bow your head and say, “Jesus, teach me Your truth. Wherever it leads me, I will follow”? Would you like to say, “Dear Jesus, I want to follow You, no matter what others teach, I want to worship You as Creator and Lord. And every week discover Your Sabbath rest”?

For me, the most important thing in life is to follow Jesus. Is this your desire? Is this your commitment? Is Jesus’ will more important to you than anything else in this life? Would you like me to pray that Jesus will guide you into doing His will today and always?

Would you like to open your heart right now and say, “Yes, Jesus, I will do Your will”?

# Chapter 4

## History's Greatest Hoax

Have you ever noticed that things aren't always what they appear to be? For centuries, scientists believed that the earth was the stationary center of the universe and everything, including the sun and stars, orbited around it. It was a freethinking Polish man, Copernicus, who determined that the earth was itself in motion and revolved around the sun. He compared how sailors in a ship on a calm sea might experience the illusions of being perfectly still and everything else around them moving.

"In the same way," Copernicus wrote, "the motion of the earth can unquestionably produce the impression that the entire universe is rotating."

Simply because it appeared that the sun and stars were moving around the earth, didn't mean that they were. Merely because you believe something, doesn't make it true. Just because everyone else believes it, doesn't mean it's so. Consider the story of the spider. Aristotle classified the spider as an insect. Insects, it was known, have six legs.

For centuries, no one questioned the great Aristotle and it was just commonly assumed that spiders were insects and therefore had six legs. It was Jean-Baptiste Lamarck who presented the classification of the spider as an arachnid having eight legs. Merely because something is believed for centuries, doesn't make it true. Could it be that a tradition like one of these long-held ideas has slipped into the Christian church?

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Is it possible that millions have accepted falsehood in the place of truth, and very few question it? Do you think it's possible that most churches have set aside a commandment of God to follow human tradition instead? Could it be that this tradition has been around so long that it is accepted as truth, when it is solely of human origin? This is all part of Satan's plan to deceive God's people in the last days.

### **Satan: The great deceiver**

The book of Revelation predicts that Satan will attempt to mislead the Christian church. Consider this amazing statement in Revelation: "So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world" (Revelation 12:9a). He's a serpent. He deceived Eve in the Garden of Eden. He's deceived men and women down through the ages. His deceptions are so cunning, so powerful, that he attempts to thrust them upon the entire world. The Bible says, "He was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him" (verse 9b).

Satan is a deceiver. Wouldn't it be logical for Satan to try to palm off a religious counterfeit? The value of a counterfeit is that it looks as much like the genuine as possible. No counterfeiter in the world would seriously make a counterfeit three- or thirteen-dollar bill. Why not? Simply because there is no genuine. Satan's strategy is to counterfeit divine truth and especially attack God's commandments. Now isn't it logical that Satan the great deceiver would attack God's law?

God's law represents God's authority. If Satan can do away with God's law, he can do away with God's authority. God's law is the foundation of His government. God's law defines what's right and what's wrong. And if Satan can deceive God's people over the subject of the law, he can undermine the entire foundation of God's throne. He can undermine God's power, God's credibility, and God's authority. But right in the heart of God's

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law is the Sabbath. Now, isn't it logical that Satan the great deceiver would attack the Creator by challenging the symbol of Creation, the Sabbath? Have you begun to wonder how the Bible Sabbath was changed from the seventh day (Saturday) to the first day (Sunday)?

If the Bible is so clear on this topic, why are so many people confused? Who changed the Sabbath? When was it changed? And why was it changed? There are certainly good answers to these questions. The answers come from both the Bible and history.

One thing is for certain: God did not change the Sabbath. The prophet Malachi quotes God's words this way: " 'For I am the LORD, I do not change' " (Malachi 3:6).

There are honest-hearted, sincere people who read the Genesis account of Creation and discover God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it. They also find He rested on the seventh day Sabbath. They read that God established the Sabbath in the days of Adam, 2,300 years before the existence of the Jewish race.

These truth-seeking Christians read the Ten Commandments written with God's own finger and come across the fourth commandment, " 'Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God' " (Exodus 20:8-10).

They're confused; the church that they're attending keeps Sunday. They are perplexed because they read the Sabbath commandment and it is so clear. They read in Ezekiel 20:12, " 'I also gave them my Sabbaths, to be a sign between them and Me.' " They see that the Sabbath is a sign between God and His people. These sincere Christians read in Luke 4:16 that Jesus, as His custom was, went to church on the Sabbath.

They read that Christ affirmed in Matthew 24:20 that His disciples would be keeping the Sabbath forty years after the Cross. They read in Acts 13:42-44 that the apostle Paul taught a whole city to keep the Sabbath. They read in Revelation 1:10 that the Lord has a day. And they read in Luke 6:5 that the Sab-

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bath is the Lord's Day. They read the same thing in Mark 2:27, 28 and Matthew 12:8.

These Christians ask, "Who changed the Sabbath?" They see that God didn't change it. For He declares, "For I am the Lord and I change not." Then they look at the Bible and they discover Jesus didn't change the Sabbath, for "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8).

The teachings of Jesus are timeless. The doctrines He taught are eternal. Jesus certainly would not tamper with His Father's law, and He certainly did not give His disciples the authority to change it either.

Listen to Peter's comments to the Roman authorities: "But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: 'We ought to obey God rather than men' " (Acts 5:29). So the question then is, If God didn't change the Sabbath, if Jesus wouldn't change the Sabbath, if the disciples couldn't change the Sabbath, who did?

In the book of Revelation, chapter 13, we read about a beast that rises up out of the sea. The entire world follows the beast's deceptions. In Revelation 13, there is fascinating imagery. "Then I stood on the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads a blasphemous name" (Revelation 13:1).

A beast in the Bible is a king or a kingdom (Daniel 7:17, 23). It can be a political or a religious power or kingdom. This beast rose up out of the sea. The sea represents peoples or nations (Revelation 17:15). This power that arises is a blasphemous power. In the Bible, blasphemy occurs when an earthly power or human being assumes the privileges and prerogatives of God.

One aspect of blasphemy is claiming to have the authority to change the very law written with God's own finger. Here's why. If an earthly power has the authority to change God's law, it must be greater than the One who gave the law in the first place. If God's law is the eternal foundation of His government, an attempt to

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change the law is an attack on the Lawgiver. Any attempt to change God's law exalts the one making the change above God, and that is blasphemy. And then there is this imagery in Revelation 13:2: "Now the beast which I saw was like a leopard, his feet were like the feet of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power, his throne, and great authority."

To understand what's coming in the future, it becomes imperative to understand these symbols of the lion, the bear, the leopard, and the dragon. It also becomes necessary to understand that the battle in the universe between good and evil is a battle over worship. It centers on God's law. The Sabbath is at the heart of this controversy.

### Revelation's beasts explained

To understand Revelation, it is first necessary to understand Daniel. The prophecies of Daniel are linked to the prophecies of Revelation. Let's go back to Daniel, the seventh chapter. We have the same imagery as Revelation 13: the lion, the bear, the leopard, and the dragon. Here in Daniel 7, we have a description of a power that would rise in the early centuries. It would unite church and state.

This religious power would usurp God's authority. It claimed that it had the power to change God's law. Let's discover who this power is, where this power arose, and what this power did.

Let's survey the prophecies in the Bible that predict this power would attempt to change God's law. Let's open up the pages of history and read its own claims that it has great enough authority to change God's Sabbath.

As you continue to read, you will understand, possibly for the first time in your life, the central issues in this conflict over worship and why the Sabbath is so important to God. You will also understand how Sunday came into the Christian church. It's an absolutely amazing journey as we compare Bible prophecy with history.

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One night as the prophet Daniel fell asleep, he had a dream. The Bible describes his dream in Daniel 7:2, 3: "Daniel spoke, saying, 'I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the Great Sea. And four great beasts came up from the sea, each different from the other.'"

Four beasts arise from the sea. They are different from each other. What does a beast represent in Bible prophecy? " "Those great beasts, which are four, are four kings which arise out of the earth" ' " (verse 17). " "Thus he said: "The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom on earth" ' " (verse 23). These four beasts represent four kingdoms. These four world-ruling kingdoms, which begin in Daniel's day, take us down the stream of time.

In Daniel 7, these four great world ruling empires are pictured or described as wild beasts. In Daniel 2, these same world-ruling empires are portrayed as metals of varied worth and strength.

In Daniel 2, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon dreamed of a great image. The image had a head of gold, chest and arms of silver, thighs of bronze, legs of iron, and feet of iron and clay. We do not have to guess at the meaning of this giant statue composed of four metals. Speaking of the golden head, Daniel declares, " 'You [Nebuchadnezzar] are this head of gold. But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours; then another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron' " (verses 38–40).

Babylon, the first of these four kingdoms, was named directly by Daniel. He also names the empire which overthrew Babylon—Media Persia (5:28–30)—and the nation which overthrew Media Persia was Greece (8:20, 21).

The four metals in the image represented four world-ruling powers: Babylon, Media Persia, Greece, and Rome.

The image had feet of iron mixed with clay, which represented divided Europe, and a rock cut out without human hands smashes the image. This rock represents Jesus, the Rock of Ages, who will

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one day destroy the kingdoms of this world and establish His eternal, everlasting kingdom.

Let's look at it carefully and see how these animal figures of Daniel 7 represent these ancient nations. And then let's come to the days of Christ and early Christianity and see how a power emerged that attempted to change God's Sabbath. Let's look at how the Bible predicts what would happen and see clearly how history confirms what actually happened. As these prophetic beasts stride across the landscape of time, we see the unfolding of history. "The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings. I watched till its wings were plucked off; and it was lifted up from the earth and made to stand on two feet like a man, and a man's heart was given to it" (verse 4).

The first beast was like a lion with eagle's wings. Babylon is in the modern country of Iraq. It's about sixty miles south of Baghdad. When the archaeologists were digging in Iraq, they found the winged-lion symbol clearly depicted on Babylon's mud-bricked, glazed walls.

The lion with eagle's wings was a common, well-known symbol of Babylon. In fact, the prophet Jeremiah, speaking of Babylon, says in Jeremiah 4:7, "The lion has come up from his thicket, / And the destroyer of nations is on his way." Verse 13 adds, " 'And his chariots like a whirlwind. / His horses are swifter than eagles.' "

Jeremiah says the destroyer of nations, Babylon, is coming to Jerusalem to destroy it. A lion with eagle's wings was a common symbol of Babylon in the ancient world. In Daniel's day Babylon was a mighty, world-dominating power.

Then another nation was to rise. Babylon wouldn't rule the world forever. " 'And suddenly another beast, a second, like a bear. It was raised up on one side, and had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth. And they said thus to it: "Arise, devour much flesh!" ' " (Daniel 7:5). Now notice that the second empire is like a bear that raises itself up to one side. Media Persia overthrew Babylon.



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The bear of Media Persia, raising itself up on one side, represented the Persians overthrowing first Babylon then dominating the Medes. What does the bear have in its mouth? Three ribs. When Media Persia conquered the world, it first conquered Babylon, and then it went northward and conquered Lydia, then southward and conquered Egypt. These three nations, Babylon, Lydia, and Egypt, represent the three ribs. Bible prophecy is extremely accurate. It is absolutely fantastic. A third empire rises: " 'After this I looked, and there was another, like a leopard, which had on its back four wings of a bird. The beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it' " (verse 6). The Greeks overthrew the Medes and the Persians.

Alexander the Great and his Greek armies conquered the world quickly. If you wanted to describe rapid conquest, what animal would you choose that can really move fast? A leopard. But if you wanted to describe rapid, rapid, rapid conquest, what would you do with your leopard? You would put wings upon him.

God put wings on His leopard to describe the rapid conquest of Alexander the Great. Why the four heads? Notice once again how accurate Bible prophecy is. Alexander the Great died very young at thirty-three years old. The four heads of the leopard represent Alexander's four generals, Cassander, Ptolemy, Seleucis, and Antigonus, who divided up the empire. Alexander the Great's four generals ruled exactly as Bible prophecy predicted.

The Bible describes a fourth empire: " 'After this I was in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong. It had huge iron teeth; it was devouring, breaking in pieces, and trampling the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns' " (verse 7).

It is very clear that this fourth beast represents the Roman Empire. This period takes us to the time of Christ. It was a Roman decree that brought Joseph to the town of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem. It was Pontius Pilate, a Roman, who tried Jesus. It was a Roman soldier who nailed Jesus to the cross. Rome ruled

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the world in the days of Jesus. Christianity grew up in this Roman Empire. The Bible describes the collapse of the Roman Empire clearly in the symbolism of the toes of the image and the horns of the fourth beast.

The image of Daniel 2 had feet and toes of iron and clay, representing divided Europe. The fourth beast here has ten horns. Rome was divided into ten main divisions. The barbarian tribes swept across the empire pillaging and plundering, destroying villages and occupying cities. The Roman Empire was divided. These barbarian tribes carved up the Roman Empire into little kingdoms. The Anglo-Saxons settled in England. The Franks settled in the area of France. The Alamanni settled in the area of Germany. And the other tribes from the north spread out throughout the empire, dividing up the territory as we see it today. These divisions are revealed in the ten horns of this beast. Then God reveals how apostasy would enter the church at the time the Roman Empire was being overrun by the barbarian tribes from the north.

### The mysterious little horn

This prophecy in Daniel 7 clearly reveals the conflict over worship and precisely how the Sabbath was changed. As Daniel, in vision, viewed these ten horns, he saw something else remarkable arise. “ ‘I was considering the horns, and there was another horn, a little one, coming up among them, before whom three of the first horns were plucked out by the roots. And there, in this horn, were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words’ ” (verse 8).

The Bible says this little horn arose and was different from all the rest. Who is this little horn rising up among the ten horns? Let's try to find out some things the Bible says about this mysterious little horn. First, this little horn comes up among the first ten. If the ten horns are divisions of Rome, this little horn has to come up in Western Europe. This little horn doesn't come up in Asia, Africa, or North or South America. Its roots are in European soil.

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Secondly, the Bible says this little horn would arise after the ten horns. It doesn't come up in the days of Babylon, Media Persia, Greece, or Rome. It comes up after the fall of the Roman Empire. It's a power that rises out of Rome in the early centuries. As we shall see, this power would think to change the very law of God. Thirdly, the Bible also says that this little horn has eyes like the eyes of a man. What does this represent?

Do you know what a prophet is called in the Bible? In the Bible, a prophet is called a "seer" because a prophet sees with God's eyes. The eyes of a man represent not divine wisdom but human wisdom. It is a human, religious system based on man's teachings which would rise out of Rome.

Notice the Bible says in verse 24 that it is diverse, or different, than all the rest. This is the fourth clue to understanding this little horn. " "He shall be different from the first ones" " (verse 24). All the other powers before it—Babylon, Media Persia, Greece, and Rome—were political powers. This one is different. It is not primarily a political power; it is a religious power—a religiopolitical power.

What would this power do? It would attempt to change the very law of God. Notice what the Bible says in verse 25, "And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws" (KJV). Can you think of any greater way of speaking "great words against the most High" than an attempt to change God's law, especially His Sabbath?

This power would attempt to change the very law of God. This is obviously speaking about divine laws. It's not speaking about something insignificant like tax laws or political laws. When one nation follows another, it nearly always changes human laws. But this little-horn power would speak great words against the Most High by assuming God's prerogative and attempting to change divine laws.

Now notice the Bible doesn't say it could change those laws;

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it would only “*think*” to change them. It would make it appear it had changed them. No earthly power, however mighty it claims to be, could ever change God’s law. This power would think it had the authority to change God’s law.

This power would attempt to change the very law of God. How could this possibly take place? Daniel 8:12 tells us that this little-horn power would “cast truth down to the ground. He did all this and prospered.”

Daniel’s prophecy predicts a powerful religious power would rise out of the old Roman Empire. This power would be small at first but would become extremely powerful. It would claim that it had the authority to change the very law of God. How did the change from Sabbath to Sunday actually occur?

What happened historically? The little horn which arises out of the Roman Empire arises with a man as its leader in the early centuries of the Christian church. In an attempt to appease the pagans entering the church in large numbers and make Christianity more acceptable in the empire, this Roman power would attempt to change God’s law. The change of the Sabbath occurred gradually over a period of time. It resulted in a variety of social and religious factors.

Dr. John Eadie helps us to understand the roots of this change in his Bible encyclopedia. He says, “Sabbath . . . A Hebrew word signifying rest . . . Sunday was a name given by the heathens to the first day of the week, because it was the day on which they worshipped the sun.”<sup>1</sup> Sun worship was common in Egypt, Babylon, Persia, and Rome.

In the fourth century, the Roman emperor Constantine was also influenced by sun worship. Constantine desired to unite his empire. How could the emperor unite his empire? Constantine passed a decree to provide a common day of rest and recreation throughout the empire. His clear intent was to promote unity among the pagans and Christians throughout his realm.

Here is the emperor’s decree from A.D. 321. It commands,

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“On the venerable Day of the Sun let the magistrates and people residing in cities rest, and let all workshops be closed.” Constantine calls Sunday “the venerable day of the Sun.” He declares that “all workshops be closed.”

In the days of Constantine, church and state united in an attempt to Christianize the pagans and unite the empire. The Roman government and the Roman Church united. Here's an amazing statement, published in March 1894 in *The Catholic World*: “The sun was a foremost god with heathendom. . . . There is, in truth, something royal, kingly about the sun, making it a fit emblem of Jesus, the Sun of Justice. Hence the church in these countries would seem to have said, ‘Keep that old pagan name. It shall remain consecrated, sanctified.’ And thus the pagan Sunday, dedicated to Balder, because the Christian Sunday, sacred to Jesus.”<sup>2</sup>

Do you see how it happened? Do you see how Sunday came into the church? Constantine wanted to unite his empire and Roman Church leaders wanted to convert the pagans. Sunday became the vehicle to accomplish both, so the biblical Sabbath was changed by the Roman Church and state. There was another issue at play here. The Roman Church wanted to distance itself from Judaism. There was an anti-Jewish sentiment in the Roman Empire. God didn't change the Sabbath. Jesus didn't change it. The disciples didn't change it.

The Roman Church Council of Laodicea records the first prohibition of keeping the Bible Sabbath. The Roman Catholic bishops met at Laodicea and decreed, “Christians shall not Judaize” (that is, they shall not keep the Sabbath) “and be idle on Saturday.”<sup>3</sup>

Here the church council is saying, “We're forbidding Christians to rest on Sabbath. They shall work on that day.” But the Lord's day they shall especially honor, and as being Christians, shall, if possible, do no work on that day. “If however they are found Judaizing (keeping the Sabbath) they shall be shut out from Christ.”<sup>4</sup>

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Here is a church council that unites with the Roman government under Constantine and attempts to shift the authority of Sabbath to Sunday. The change of the Sabbath took place gradually as Christians distanced themselves from the Jews and church and state leaders joined hands to unite the empire.

### Rome acknowledges changing the Sabbath

Daniel 7:25 says that an earthly power growing up out of Rome would attempt to change God's law. God says beware! There are numerous statements from Roman Catholic sources which acknowledge that the church changed the Sabbath. *The Converts Catechism of Catholic Doctrine* puts it this way:

Question: What is the third commandment?

Answer: The third commandment is: Remember that thou keep Holy the Sabbath day.

Question: Which is the Sabbath day?

Answer: Saturday is the Sabbath day.

Question: Why do we observe Sunday instead of Saturday?

Answer: We observe Sunday instead of Saturday because the Catholic Church transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday.<sup>5</sup>

You may wonder why these statements from the Catholic catechism refer to the Sabbath commandment as the third commandment rather than the fourth. This is simply because the Roman Church dropped the second commandment on graven images and divided the tenth commandment, "Thou shalt not covet" (Exodus 20:17, KJV), into two commands: "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife" and "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods." This way, they still have ten commandments.

The law of God was changed by the Roman Catholic Church in the fourth and fifth centuries. This is no secret. The church openly acknowledges it. The September 23, 1893, issue of *The Catholic Mirror* states, "The Catholic church for over one thou-

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sand years before the existence of a Protestant, by virtue of her divine mission, changed the day from Saturday to Sunday.”<sup>6</sup>

*The Catholic Encyclopedia* adds, “The Church, on the other hand, after changing the day of rest from the Jewish Sabbath, or seventh-day of the week, to the first, made the Third Commandment refer to Sunday as the day to be kept holy as the Lord’s Day.”<sup>7</sup>

Here the church openly acknowledges changing the Sabbath. The Sabbath, of course, was never an exclusively Jewish institution. It was always the Sabbath of the Lord.

The Saint Catherine Catholic Church in Algonac, Michigan, published this statement in its May 21, 1995, newsletter: “Perhaps the boldest thing, the most revolutionary thing the Church ever did happened in the first century. The holy day, the Sabbath, was changed from Saturday to Sunday. . . . Not from any directions noted in the Scriptures, but from the Church’s sense of its own power.”<sup>8</sup>

Karl Keating, a prominent Catholic writer in the United States, penned this challenge to Protestants. “Fundamentalists meet for worship on Sunday, yet there is no evidence in the Bible that corporate worship was to be made on Sundays. The Jewish Sabbath, or day of rest, was, of course, Saturday. It was the Catholic Church that decided Sunday should be the day of worship for Christians, in honor of the Resurrection.”<sup>9</sup>

This Catholic author is reasoning with Protestants. He says if you want to follow the Bible, you should keep the Bible Sabbath. He then argues that the Bible alone is not a sufficient guide without church authority and interpretation. The pastor of Saint Catherine in Michigan reasoned the same way and says, “People who think that the scriptures should be the sole authority should logically become 7th Adventists, and keep Saturday holy.”<sup>10</sup>

The central issue regarding the change of the Sabbath is, Does the church have the authority to change God’s law?

If you accept Sunday, you are accepting a day based on the

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authority of the church. The argument of the Catholic Church is this: to accept Sunday is to accept the authority of the Catholic Church. If you accept the authority of the Catholic Church in changing the Sabbath, in all honesty, you should be a Catholic.

Here is another quote from Cardinal James Gibbons in the book *Faith of our Fathers*. Gibbons was the foremost Catholic scholar in America in the nineteenth century. Writing in the late nineteenth century, the cardinal declared, "You may read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and you will not find a single line authorizing the sanctification of Sunday. The scriptures enforce the religious observance of Saturday."<sup>11</sup>

Monsignor Segur illuminates the issue clearly when he writes, "It was the Catholic Church which, by the authority of JESUS CHRIST, has transferred this rest to Sunday in remembrance of the resurrection of our Lord. Thus the observance of Sunday by the Protestants is an homage they pay, inspired of themselves, to the authority of the Church."<sup>12</sup>

The issues are much more than a matter of days. The issue is, What is our guide? Is it the Bible or is it tradition? The issue is, Does any human church or human religious leader, for whatever reason or motive, have the authority to change God's law that was written with His finger on those tables of stone? Has God given any church, any human being, the authority to change His law? Has He done that?

Not at all! And so the issue is one of authority. God says, "My covenant I will not break, / Nor alter the word that has gone out of My lips" (Psalm 89:34). There are godly spiritual people in every church and religious denomination. The issue is not to judge another's motives or commitment to God. The central issue here is to discover God's truth for ourselves and follow it.

In the *Toronto Daily Star*, October 26, 1949, a Protestant Anglican bishop shocked the entire Protestant world. "Reverend Philip Carrington, Anglican Archbishop of Quebec, sent local clergymen into a huddle today by saying outright that there was



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nothing to support Sunday being kept holy. Carrington definitely told a church meeting in this city of straight-laced Protestantism that tradition, not the Bible, made Sunday the day of worship.”<sup>13</sup>

You see what the issue is? It's not a matter of days. It's a matter of authority. The issue is a matter of, Who is your master? Is it Jesus or the leaders of the church? What is the foundation of your faith? Is it the Bible or is it what man says? In the 1500s, in the days of the Reformation, Martin Luther argued before the priests and prelates of Europe that the Bible and the Bible only was the Christians' rule of faith and practice. He affirmed, “My conscience is bound by the Word of God.” Dr. Melvin Eck was the brilliant Catholic scholar enlisted by the church to debate Luther.

One of the arguments Dr. Eck used against Martin Luther revolved around the Sabbath. He suggested that “The authority of the Church could therefore not be bound to the authority of the Scriptures, because the church had changed Sabbath into Sunday, not by the command of Christ, but by its own authority.”<sup>14</sup> The issue surrounding the Sabbath is one of authority. Dr. Eck's argument against Luther's famous declaration of the Bible and the Bible only, *sola scriptura*, was simple. Tradition supersedes the Bible and the fact that Luther accepted Sunday was proof enough for Eck that Luther did not fully accept the entire Bible, but in accepting Sunday accepted the authority of the Roman Catholic Church.

When you really love Christ, He is your final Authority. His Word is your guide. Some things are matters of personal opinion—a change in God's law is not. To give up the Bible Sabbath, given by God as a sign of His creative authority, does matter, my friend. A change in God's law matters a great deal.

I would much rather follow what God gave to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden! What about you? I would much rather follow what God gave to Moses in the Ten Commandments. I'd much rather follow the example of Jesus Christ Himself.

God says the Sabbath is His great sign. It is a sign of our loyalty to Christ. It is a sign we believe He created our world. It

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is the sign that we want to follow all of His Word. In the last days of earth's history, God's Word says, "Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (Revelation 14:12).

In those days, God will have a group of people who love Jesus. They love Him so much that they obey Him. It's more than a matter of days. In the Garden of Eden, Satan said to Eve, "What difference does a tree make? All trees are alike." And Eve lost Eden because she bought into that lie.

And many Christians today are buying into a deception. People say, "What difference does a day make? All days are alike." With God, all days are not alike. One day was blessed by God, the seventh. One day was sanctified by God, set aside—the seventh day. And God rested on only one day: the Sabbath.

The issues that we are dealing with are issues of authority—issues of obedience. Our choices are:

- The Bible or tradition
- Jesus or religious leaders
- God's law or man's dogmas
- God's instruction or human teaching
- God's way or man's way

And God says to you and to me right now, " 'Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve. . . . But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD' " (Joshua 24:15).

Will you say, "Yes, I choose Jesus. I choose His way. I choose to lovingly obey His law"?

Now the question is sometimes asked, "Are you suggesting that everybody who keeps Sunday is lost?"

Let me make it plain. Everybody who keeps Sunday is NOT lost. There are many Sunday-keeping Christians who love Jesus Christ. They are living up to all the light they know. When they learn more, they are willing to follow it. All over the world, tens of thousands are hearing God's call and stepping out for His truth.

Would you like to respond by saying, "Yes, Lord, You have

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revealed Your truth and like Joshua, I choose to follow You. I want to follow Jesus today”?

Jesus is calling you today. He is calling you to step out of the crowd. He is calling you to follow Him. He is calling you to obey Him. He is appealing to you to accept His Word and His Word alone as the basis of your faith.

Why not say in your heart, “Jesus, yes, I will follow You all the way”? Why not bow your head and make your commitment to follow Him right now?

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3. “Canon 29,” Council of Laodicea, A.D. 337.

4. *Ibid.*

5. Peter Geiermann, *The Converts Catchism of Catholic Doctrine* (1957), 50.

6. James Cardinal Gibbons, *Catholic Mirror*, September 23, 1893.

7. *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 4, ed. Charles G. Herbermann, et al. (New York: The Universal Knowledge Foundation, Inc., 1908, 1913), s.v. “Commandments of God,” 153.

8. Leo Broderick, “Pastor’s Page,” *Sentinel* (Algonac, Mich.: Saint Catherine Catholic Church newsletter, May 21, 1995).

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# Chapter 5

## Bible Answers to Your Sabbath Questions

John was a committed Christian. He and his wife were faithful believers. They wanted to do God's will. As they attended a series of meetings I conducted on Bible prophecy, they were challenged with new truths they had never heard before. Questions loomed large in their minds. The Bible Sabbath particularly troubled them. They were convicted it was truth from the Bible, but their pastor raised some serious questions in their minds. They began to doubt. They seemed confused and needed their questions answered. As we studied the Bible together, their understanding of truth deepened. They found solid answers for their questions. Their doubts disappeared and they discovered the true joy and blessing of Sabbath keeping.

Possibly, you too have some questions regarding the Bible Sabbath. There may be some Bible passages which are difficult for you to understand. The Bible provides clear answers to our questions. In fact, throughout the Bible, our Lord invites us to ask questions, and He provides solid answers in His Word.

Jesus declared, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17, KJV). Peter adds, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15).

The apostle Paul counsels Timothy to be someone who is "Rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). Isaiah, the Old Testament prophet, asks,

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“Whom will he teach knowledge? . . .

For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept,

Line upon line, line upon line” (Isaiah 28:9, 10).

In other words, be sure to see the scope of the Bible’s teaching on a particular topic. Do not build your understanding on one obscure text. If you want to truly understand what the Bible says on a particular topic, study that topic from Genesis to Revelation. Let the Holy Spirit speak to your mind throughout the teachings of Scripture.

Ask yourself, *Where is the weight of evidence on this topic? What do the majority of passages teach?* Never let something which is not as clear to you, overshadow what is clear. If there is a text you do not understand, let the plain passages in the Bible explain it. Do not disregard texts and passages of Scripture which are abundantly plain in order to cling to something that is not as clear, simply to defend a doctrine you have previously been taught.

Here are four principles in discovering truth:

1. Approach the Bible with an open mind, willing to do whatever Christ asks you (John 7:17).
2. Ask God to send His Holy Spirit to your mind to reveal truth (Matthew 7:7; John 16:13).
3. Compare each relevant passage of Scripture on a given topic (1 Corinthians 2:13).
4. Act on the truth God reveals, and He will reveal more truth. Do not wait for all the truth to act on the truth you know (John 12:35).

As we approach His Word with sincere hearts, He will reveal His truth. He will enlighten our minds. He will impress us by His Holy Spirit. You may have questions, but God has answers. As you read through some of the most commonly asked questions in the next few pages, and the biblical answers I have provided, pray God will give you wisdom and understanding.

## When God Said Remember

You are not alone in your search for truth. Tens of thousands of others have asked similar questions and found solid answers in God's Word. So read on.

Commonly asked questions regarding the law of God

**Didn't Jesus come to do away with the Ten Commandments and establish a new commandment of love? What about Matthew 22:37-40, " 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, . . . [and] your neighbor as yourself' " ? Isn't love to God and our neighbors all Jesus requires? These are the new commandments.**

It may surprise you to discover the Jesus was summarizing the law as given in the Old Testament. Deuteronomy 6:5 declares " 'Love the LORD your God with all your heart.' " Leviticus 19:18 adds, " 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' " The God of the Old Testament is a God of everlasting love (Jeremiah 31:3). In Matthew 22:40, Jesus declared, " 'On these two commandments [love to God and our fellow man] hang all the Law and the Prophets.' " The first four commandments reveal how human beings tangibly demonstrate their love to God. The last six commandments show how they demonstrate their love to their fellow man. Jesus did not come to " 'destroy the Law . . . but to fulfill' " it (Matthew 5:17). He revealed how to lovingly keep the law. He came to magnify the meaning of the law (Isaiah 42:21). Jesus reveals how love is the fulfilling of the law (Romans 13:10). He adds, " 'If you love Me, keep My commandments' " (John 14:15).

**Does Paul teach that Christians saved by faith do not have to keep the law?**

Paul teaches that Christians are saved not by faith, but by grace through faith. Faith is the hand that takes the salvation freely offered by Jesus. Faith does not lead to disobedience but to obedience. Paul states in no uncertain terms, "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid" (Romans 3:31,

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KJV). Romans 6:1, 14, 15 adds, “Shall we continue in sin [breaking the law], that grace may abound? . . . God forbid” (KJV).

**Is it true that in the Old Testament people were saved by keeping the law, while in the New Testament salvation is by grace?**

In both the Old and New Testaments, salvation is by grace through faith. God does not have two methods of salvation. Titus 2:11 affirms, “For the grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men” (KJV). In the Old Testament, men and women were saved by the Christ that was to come. Each lamb sacrificed pointed forward to the coming of the Messiah (Genesis 3:21; 22:9–13). In the New Testament, men and women are saved by the Christ who has come. Jesus is the only means of salvation (Acts 4:12).

**Since we are under the new covenant, is it really necessary to keep God’s law?**

The new covenant is actually older than the old covenant. It was given by God Himself in the Garden of Eden when He promised that the Messiah would come to break the deadly hold of Satan upon the human race. The new covenant contains the promise of redemption from sin through Jesus Christ. He saves us! He writes the principles of the law in our hearts. Love becomes the motivation for obedience. There is a new power in the life (Hebrews 8:10; Ezekiel 36:26; Psalm 40:8). Under the old covenant, Israel promised to obey God’s commandments in their own strength. They declared, “All that God says, we will do” (see Exodus 19:8; 24:3, 7). All attempts at external conformity to God’s law lead to frustrated defeat. The law which we cannot keep in our own strength condemns us (Romans 3:23; 6:23). Under the new covenant, we belong to a new Master—Jesus Christ. We have a new heart and a new standing before God (John 1:12; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 8:1).

**Since Paul declares, “Let no one judge you regarding the**

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### **Bible Sabbath,” isn’t Sabbath keeping unnecessary (see Colossians 2:16, 17)?**

This passage, Colossians 2:16, 17, is one of the most misunderstood passages in the Bible. One principle of Bible interpretation is that you do not allow what may be somewhat unclear to keep you from doing what you understand. The Bible teaching on the Sabbath is plain. It was given at Creation (Genesis 2:1–3). Jesus observed it (Luke 4:16). Paul observed it (Acts 13:42–44), and it will be observed in heaven (Isaiah 66:22, 23). The Bible mentions two kinds of sabbaths: the seventh-day Sabbath and the yearly sabbaths. The seventh-day Sabbath, instituted at Creation and part of the Ten Commandment law, is a weekly reminder of the loving, all-powerful Creator. The yearly sabbath relates specifically to the history of Israel. Colossians 2:16, 17 specifically states, “Let no one judge you . . . regarding . . . sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come.” Hebrews 10:1 connects the law of shadows with animal sacrifice. Ezekiel 45:17 uses the exact same expressions in the exact same order as Colossians 2:16, 17, and connects it all with the ceremonial systems of feasts and sacrifices (meat offerings, drink offerings, feasts, new moons, and sabbaths, to make reconciliation for the house of Israel. Leviticus 23:5–32 discusses the ceremonial sabbaths (Passover, verse 5; unleavened bread, verse 6; sheaf of first fruits, verse 10; first fruits, verse 17; trumpets, verse 24; tabernacles, verse 24; and the Day of Atonement, verses 27–32; these are all specifically called sabbaths.) These annual sabbaths were intimately connected to events foreshadowing Christ’s death and His second coming. They were designed by God to be shadows or pointers to the coming Messiah. Leviticus 23:37 uses the language of Colossians 2:16, 17 to describe these ceremonial sabbaths. Leviticus 23:38 distinguishes the ceremonial sabbaths from the seventh-day Sabbaths by using the expression, “ ‘Beside the sabbaths of the LORD.’ ” Since Christ has come, the shadowy sabbaths of the ceremonial law have found their fulfillment in



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Him. The seventh-day Sabbath continues to lead us back to the Creator God who made us. God's people will keep it as a distinguishing sign of their relationship to Him (Revelation 14:12; Ezekiel 20:12, 20).

**What about Romans 14:5? "One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind" (KJV). Really, what difference does a day make?**

Sometimes it's helpful to carefully notice what a Bible text does not say, as well as what it does say. Verses 5 and 6 say nothing about the worship of the Sabbath. They simply talk about regarding a day. To say this particular day is the Sabbath, is an unwarranted assumption. Romans 14:1 sets the tone for the entire passage, indicating that the discussion focuses on "doubtful disputations" (KJV), or disputes on doubtful matters. Is the seventh-day Sabbath set apart by God at Creation (Genesis 2:1-3), placed within the heart of the moral law (Exodus 20:8-11), a doubtful matter? Certainly not! The key to our passage is found in Romans 14:6, which states, "He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks" (KJV). The issue revolved around fast days, not Sabbath days. Some Jewish Christians believed there was particular merit in fasting on certain days. They judged others by their own standards. The Pharisees fasted at least twice a week and boasted about it (Luke 18:12). In Romans 14, Paul is pointing out that to fast or not to fast on a certain day is a matter of individual conscience, not a matter of God's command.

**Didn't the disciples meet on the first day of the week? See Acts 20:7.**

The reason this meeting is mentioned in the narrative is because Paul was leaving the next day and worked a mighty miracle in raising Eutychus from the dead. It is clear that the meeting is

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a night meeting. It is the dark part of the first day of the week (verse 8). In Bible times, the dark part of the day preceded the light part (Genesis 1:5). The Sabbath was observed from Friday night at sunset to Saturday night at sunset (Leviticus 23:32; Mark 1:32). If this meeting is on the dark part of the first day of the week, it is in fact a Saturday night meeting. Paul has met with the believers all Sabbath. He will depart the next day, Sunday, so the meeting continues late into Saturday night. The next day, Sunday, Paul traveled by foot to Assos, then sailed to Mitylene. *The New English Bible* reading of Acts 20:7 also confirms this as a Saturday night meeting, with Paul traveling on Sunday. If Paul considered Sunday sacred in honor of the Resurrection, why would he spend the entire day traveling and not worshipping? The record indicates that Paul was a Sabbath keeper (Acts 13:42–44; 16:12, 13; 17:2; 18:4).

### **Can we really tell which day the seventh day is?**

There are at least four ways which we can tell for certain that Saturday is the seventh day.

- 1. The Bible:** It clearly reveals that Jesus was crucified on the Preparation day (Luke 23:54). His closest followers rested as commanded on the Sabbath day (Luke 23:56; Mark 16:1). Most Christians recognize Jesus died on Friday, the Preparation day; He rested the next day, and rose the first day, Sunday. The Sabbath is the day between Friday and Sunday, or the seventh day—Saturday.
- 2. Language:** In more than one hundred and forty languages in the world, the word for the seventh day, which we call Saturday, is the word *Sabbath*. Language testifies to the Sabbath's preservation through the centuries.
- 3. Astronomy:** The leading astronomers in the world testify to the fact that the weekly cycle has never changed. Centers such as the Royal Naval Observatory in the U.S. and The Royal Greenwich Observatory in England affirm the fact of a constant weekly cycle.

## Bible Answers to Your Sabbath Questions

- 4. History:** The Jewish people have kept an accurate record of the Sabbath. For more than four thousand years, they have preserved the true Sabbath on Saturday.

**I keep Sunday in honor of the Resurrection. What's wrong with that? Didn't Jesus rise from the dead on Sunday?**

Yes, Jesus certainly rose on Sunday! But He never commanded us to worship in honor of the Resurrection. Just as the Communion service symbolizes His death (1 Corinthians 11:24, 26), baptism symbolizes His resurrection (Romans 6:1–6). The symbol of Jesus' resurrection is not worship on the day of the sun, which was adopted into Christianity from pagan Rome's sun worship, but a beautiful ceremony of baptism as a symbol of a new life transformed by the wonder-working power of the Holy Spirit. In the watery grave of baptism, the old person symbolically dies and is buried, while a new life is resurrected with Christ.

**Isn't one day in seven good enough? Why do you put so much emphasis on the Sabbath?**

The issue is more than a matter of days. It is a matter of masters. Through a master stroke of deception, Satan has worked through apostate religion to change God's law (Daniel 7:25). He has cast the truth to the ground (8:12). He has made a break in God's wall of truth. God calls us to repair the breach by keeping His Sabbath (Isaiah 58:12, 13). We ought to obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29). To worship on the seventh day, is to accept the authority of your Creator Lord, who commanded the day be kept (Exodus 20:8–11). To knowingly accept a counterfeit day of worship, is to accept an institution initiated and established solely by man in the apostasy. The real question, then, is, Whose servants are we—God's or man's? (Romans 6:16). All the celebrations the day before or the day after my birthday do not make these days my birthday. The world's birthday is the Bible Sabbath, the seventh day. It is a memorial to our loving Creator. No other day will do.

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**Was Peter the first pope? What did Jesus mean when He said to Peter, “Upon this rock I will build my church” (Matthew 16:18, KJV)?**

Cesarea Philippi was a center of Greek philosophy, Roman logic, and Jewish traditional religion. Jesus set Himself against the back-drop of the world’s great religious and philosophical systems asking, “Who do men say that I . . . am?” (verse 13). After they answered, “John the Baptist, . . . Elijah, . . . Jeremiah’ ” (verse 14), He asks, “Who do you say that I am?” (verse 15). Jesus longed to deepen their faith. He desired to draw out a Messianic confession. Peter instantly responds, “You are Christ, the Son of the living God’ ” (verse 16). This thought could be inspired only by the Holy Spirit. Jesus affirms Peter’s faith by declaring, “Thou art [Petros, a moveable stone], and upon this rock [this immovable foundation—that I am the Christ] I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (verse 18, KJV). The church is built upon Jesus Christ. He is the Cornerstone rejected by the builders (1 Peter 2:4–8). Peter clearly understood that the Rock was Jesus. Paul clarifies the issue in 1 Corinthians 10:4 by proclaiming, “That Rock was Christ.” David declares, “Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from him cometh my salvation. He only is my rock and salvation” (Psalm 62:1, 2, KJV). There is no other foundation (1 Corinthians 3:11) except Jesus. The gates of hell will never triumph over His church. Peter misunderstood Jesus’ mission. Jesus said, “Get thee behind me Satan” (Matthew 16:23, KJV), meaning Satan was influencing him. No, the church was not built upon Peter’s weakness, but upon Jesus’ strengths. Peter discovered the marvelous truth for himself. Jesus became the Source of his strength, the Center of his life, and the Foundation upon which he stood.

**What are the “keys of the kingdom” that Jesus gave Peter and the rest of the disciples (Matthew 16:19)?**

Keys open and shut doors. Jesus said, “I am the way, . . . no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6, KJV).

## Bible Answers to Your Sabbath Questions

“There is none other name under heaven . . . whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12, KJV). All the Scriptures testify of Jesus (John 5:39). The scribes and Pharisees took away the “key of knowledge,” regarding the Messiah (Luke 11:52). They shut up heaven. The “keys” Jesus gave to Peter were His words, His teachings, regarding how men and women could have forgiveness for sin, freedom from condemnation, and peace through His shed blood and death on Calvary’s cross. A knowledge of Jesus, the promised Messiah, opens heaven (Isaiah 22:22).

# Chapter 6

## Keeping the Sabbath Wholly

Jonathan was perplexed. His final exam was scheduled for Sabbath. To take the exam would be a violation of his conscience. He made an appointment with his professor, explained his situation, and asked for the opportunity to take the exam on another date. His professor flatly refused. He explained that there were no exceptions. If he allowed Jonathan to take the exam at another time, he might be opening the door for others who may offer any excuse. Jonathan only had two options: either take the exam and pass the class, or miss it and fail.

Certainly, Jonathan did not want to waste the whole semester. He did not relish retaking the course in summer school. He earnestly prayed that God would open the door for him to take the exam some other day besides the Sabbath.

As the day of the exam dawned, Jonathan calmly walked to church that Sabbath morning, believing God would honor his trust. There are times when God acts powerfully and miraculously to demonstrate His greatness. After the exam, as the professor was walking home from class with the students' exams securely in his briefcase, he was robbed. The only thing that was taken was his exam-filled briefcase. The professor was not harmed, but his briefcase with all of the exams was gone forever.

Since graduation was only a few days away, the principal of the school made a surprising announcement. Each student in the class would get passing marks on the exam. Their total score for

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the class would be their test averages up until the time of the exam. Jonathan was overwhelmed with gratitude to the God who heard his prayer and honored his faith.

### God blesses faithfulness

God's promise to His faithful followers in Bible times is just as true today. Our Lord declares, " "For those who honor me I will honor, and those who despise Me shall be lightly esteemed" " (1 Samuel 2:30). The words of Scripture echo down through the centuries. They speak to us with just as much force today. They are no less true than when they were written millennia ago. " 'And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the LORD your God' " (Deuteronomy 28:2). God promises His richest blessings to those who obey Him. This is especially true of those who are committed to keep His seventh-day Sabbath each week. At Creation, God "blessed the seventh day" (Genesis 2:3). Whatever God blesses is blessed forever (1 Chronicles 17:27). Since God's eternal blessing is in the seventh-day Sabbath, we are richly blessed as we keep it (Isaiah 56:2).

This leads us to some specific questions. How do we keep the Sabbath? Are there some activities that are incompatible with the Sabbath? Are there some things that will destroy our Sabbath blessing? What is God's purpose for the Sabbath?

God does not give us a to-do and not-to-do list of activities for the Sabbath. He does not define each minute detail of Sabbath keeping. He does give us principles of proper Sabbath observance. These principles guide us. They shape our Sabbath experience. As we seek God in prayer, committing our will to Him, the Holy Spirit will guide us into a rich experience in Sabbath keeping. Let's examine three biblical principles, which will guide us in our Sabbath keeping.

***Principle 1: The Sabbath is a day dedicated to worshiping our Creator.*** The essence of Sabbath keeping is worship. On Sabbath, with all of heaven's host, we joyously proclaim,

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“You are worthy, O Lord,  
To receive glory and honor and power;  
For You created all things,  
And by Your will they exist and were created” (Revelation 4:11).

We were created by a loving God. Each Sabbath, we thank Him by worshiping Him as Creator. According to Leviticus 23:3, “ ‘ “Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation.” ’ ” The Sabbath is a “holy convocation”—a sacred gathering of God’s people for worship and praise.

Throughout the centuries, God’s chosen people, the Jews, worshiped Him each Sabbath. In the New Testament, Jesus gives us a positive example of Sabbath keeping. The Gospel writer Luke records Jesus’ Sabbath practices this way: “So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read” (Luke 4:16). For Jesus, the Sabbath was a day of fellowship with God in worship. When the people of God meet together to sing praises to His name, study His Word, seek Him in prayer, and fellowship with one another, they are richly blessed. Jesus left His tools in Joseph’s carpenter shop in Nazareth each Sabbath to attend worship in the synagogue. Sabbath worship was important to Jesus. His custom, or practice, was to praise His heavenly Father, absorb His Word, and fellowship with His people each Sabbath.

New Testament Christians met each Sabbath to renew their spiritual strength. They met together to encourage one another. They followed the counsel of the apostle Paul to the Hebrews, when he said, “And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:24, 25). Each Sabbath, God invites us to find our deepest satisfaction in worship. Sabbath is a slice of heaven. In heaven’s plan,



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God allows us to experience eternity each week as we enter the joy of Sabbath worship. On Sabbath, we place priority on worship, not work. The Sabbath liberates us from the grind of daily toil. On Sabbath, we are free from the burden of earning a living to experience life at its best.

The fourth commandment is too plain to be misunderstood. God knew that if He simply gave us good advice, many of us would ignore it, so He gave us a command: “ ‘Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work’ ” (Exodus 20:8–10a). God says, “Remember,” but most of the world has forgotten. We can only keep holy what God has made holy. No other day can substitute for the Sabbath because the Sabbath is the only day God made holy. To place priority on work rather than worship, defiles the day God made holy and dishonors God.

Jesus said, “ ‘And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free’ ” (John 8:32). The truth about Sabbath worship liberates us from the unceasing burden of continued work. Every Sabbath, we are reminded by an all-powerful God and loving Creator that our intrinsic worth does not depend on how much we accomplish. We are called from work to worship.

Millions of people find their identity in what they do. Their work defines them. The Sabbath invites us to find our true worth, not in what we do, but in who we are. The Sabbath is a weekly reminder pointing us to learn of our eternal value in God’s sight.

### The French Revolution

During the godless French Revolution, with the dawning of the so-called Age of Reason, the French adopted what they termed the French “Republican Calendar,” or “Revolutionary Calendar.” This calendar was used by the French for twelve years, from 1793 to 1805. It eradicated the seven-day week cycle,

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abolished the day of worship, and created a ten-day week. All workers worked nine days and on the tenth had a day of rest and merriment.

Napoleon Bonaparte abolished this Revolutionary Calendar with its ten-day week and demanded France return to the seven-day week cycle. French workers were not faring well at all under this new calendar with nine days of work and one day of rest.<sup>1</sup> There is a natural rhythm in the seven-day week cycle that leads us to worship our Creator. To ignore Eden's weekly cycle, given at Creation, simply makes us vulnerable to physical, mental, and emotional breakdowns. God created us for Himself. A commitment to keep the Sabbath holy makes an enormous difference in our lives.

As I have traveled to more than seventy countries sharing Jesus and the truths of His Word, I have seen thousands take a stand to follow Him and keep His Sabbath holy. Some of these people have experienced real tests to keep the Sabbath. Many have been threatened with the loss of their jobs. Their employers have bluntly told them that if they failed to show up for work on Sabbath, they would be fired. Time after time, I have seen God work miracles.

### **Sabbath-keeping experiences**

Sandra was a postal worker in Illinois. Although she had seniority, her supervisor threatened her with the loss of her job if she did not work on Sabbath. We entered into earnest prayer for Sandra. We claimed Christ's promise in Matthew 6:33, 34a, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow." Miraculously, Sandra's supervisor reversed his initial decision. She kept her job and got Sabbath's off.

Rodger shut down his retail store on Sabbath. Since he did nearly 30 percent of his business on that day, his friends felt he was crazy. They really thought he had lost his mind. He placed a

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sign in the store window that read, "Closed for the Bible Sabbath." The first few weeks were rough. Sales were down, but surprisingly, they gradually climbed. Rodger claimed God's promise, "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory" (Philippians 4:19). He found God to be faithful. The issue regarding Sabbath work is one of trust. Do we trust God enough to put our lives fully in His hands? Do we believe He will care for us if we are faithful to Him?

The decision not to work on the Sabbath is extremely difficult for many people. We have our house mortgage or monthly rent, car payments, credit card bills, and a host of other expenses that need to be paid. God does not always get us a better, higher paying job, but when we decide to be faithful to Him, He always meets our needs. He always fills us with an inner sense of contentment when we do what is right. The honor of His throne is behind the promises He has made. Since "it is impossible for God to lie" (Hebrews 6:18), we can be absolutely certain He will take the responsibility to provide us with the necessities of life if we are faithful to Him.

Sabbath worship is essential for a healthy spiritual life. If we are going to grow in Christ, weekly Sabbath worship is vital.

***Principle 2: The Sabbath is a day exclusively set apart for physical, mental, and spiritual renewal.*** The Israelites drifted away from God when they defiled the Sabbath. In the days of Nehemiah the prophet, the common activities of life crowded out the sacredness of the Sabbath. The Israelites were influenced by their heathen neighbors. Nehemiah describes the scene this way: "In those days I saw people in Judah treading wine presses on the Sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and loading donkeys with wine, grapes, figs and all kinds of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. And I warned them about the day on which they were selling provisions" (Nehemiah 13:15).

Nehemiah was concerned. God's Sabbath became a common, ordinary day. The day our Creator set aside for spiritual, physical,

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and mental renewal became a day of exhausting toil. The day of liberation from the bondage of buying and selling, working and earning, had deteriorated into a business-as-usual day. Nehemiah could not keep silent. His words echoed like thunder through the streets of Jerusalem. "Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said to them, 'What evil thing is this that you do, by which you profane the Sabbath day?' " (verse 17). The principle is plain. When we become so absorbed in the earthly that we forget the eternal, we defile the Sabbath. The book of Isaiah adds this insight:

"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" (58:13, 14).

In other words, we will be abundantly blessed.

### **A personal testimony**

When I became a Christian, I was playing basketball on a YMCA high school sports team in Norwich, Connecticut. Our team qualified for the New England championship. This was an exciting thing for a group of teenage boys from a small town. The tournament was scheduled Thursday through Sunday in Springfield, Massachusetts, which meant playing basketball all day Sabbath and, of course, missing worship. I had recently begun to understand the significance of the Bible Sabbath and attend church on Sabbath. For me to break the Sabbath was to be disobedient to Christ. The Sabbath was a symbol of my allegiance to the God I served. I faced an extremely difficult decision. Should

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I stay home and keep the Sabbath, or travel with the basketball team and do what I naturally wanted to do? My mind began to rationalize. *What's wrong with playing just this one time?* But deep within the fabric of my being, I knew that traveling to the basketball tournament and disregarding the Sabbath as the Lord's Day would be a violation of my conscience.

I wanted to go badly, but one question continued to echo in my mind: *What is more important, basketball or Jesus?* In my anguish, I called a godly Christian woman who had become sort of a spiritual mentor. When I asked her for her counsel, she put it in very simple terms: "Mark, be faithful to Jesus." Based on her advice and my inner conviction, I made a decision not to go to the tournament. It seemed that I had just ruined my chances to travel, sleep in a hotel, eat in restaurants, and see the world.

As I look back on this experience, I have to smile. Today I have had the opportunity to travel to countries around the world sharing God's love and truth. I have had the indescribable thrill of seeing people come to Christ from Montreal to Moscow, from Russia to Rwanda, from Chile to China. God has immeasurably enriched my life since I made that initial commitment. Giving up my dreams enabled me to follow God's dreams for my life. We may think that we are making great sacrifices to follow God, but He gives us much more in return.

The apostle Peter said to Jesus, "See, we have left all and followed You" (Mark 10:28). You can almost hear Peter wondering aloud, "What will we receive in return?" Jesus gives Peter a remarkable response: "Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life" (Mark 10:29, 30). In other words, Jesus says, "Yes, there will be challenges if you commit your life to Me, but whatever you give up, I will give you one

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hundred times more in blessings.” When we make a decision to follow Jesus, He pledges to meet our needs and to fill our lives with joy, peace, satisfaction, and purpose. I can certainly testify that God faithfully fulfills His Word.

One of the great blessings God gives us is Sabbath rest. How can we put a price on the renewed physical, mental, and spiritual rest Jesus gives us as we keep His Sabbath? I cannot put a value on the blessing of God’s Sabbath to me. Believe me, this time of spiritual rest is an essential part of my life. It keeps me going in my hectic schedule. It has helped to strengthen my bond with my family. This leads to the third great biblical principle regarding the Sabbath.

***Principle 3: The Sabbath is a day of building closer relationships with our family and friends and blessing those around us in service.*** Let your mind drift back over the millennia to the beauty and magnificence of Eden. On the sixth day, God created Adam and Eve. The Bible records, “Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good” (Genesis 1:31). There was no sin, sickness, suffering, or death in the splendor of that Garden. Since God is love and we are created to love, God gave our first parents a gift of love—the Sabbath (1 John 4:8; Genesis 2:1–3). The first complete day Adam and Eve spent together was the Sabbath. Their first intimate moments of sharing and communicating were on the Sabbath. Sabbath is a day for strengthening relationships. It gives us time for our loving heavenly Father and for one another. It is a day to give time to strengthening our relationship with God and those we love.

Do you ever feel the week just rushes by and time for family is crowded out? Some studies indicate that fathers spend less than two hours a week one-on-one with their children. The Sabbath reminds us every week of what is really important.

Herman Wouk, the Jewish playwright, would not be without the Sabbath in his life. He describes how the Sabbath is an island of peace in the chaos of Broadway society. At sundown Friday

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night, he leaves the stress of the littered theater with the frenzy of opening night just hours away. As he arrives home to the warm embrace of his wife and the smiles of his children, he is encircled in loving relationships. The candles are lit. The table is set. The family eats and shares together. The children ask questions and the world of show business is forgotten. When Wouk returns to the theater Saturday evening after sunset, nothing much has changed there, but he has changed. His relaxing, restorative Sabbath has drawn him closer to his God and his family.<sup>2</sup>

A colleague remarked to Wouk after he came back to the theater one Saturday night, “ ‘I don’t envy you your religion, but I envy you your Sabbath.’ ”<sup>3</sup> Who would not want to spend a day building better relationships with those you love?

For Jesus, Sabbath was about loving relationships. It was about service. This is precisely why Jesus performed numerous miracles on the Sabbath. On Sabbath, Jesus revealed the Father’s compassion to suffering humanity. When the Jewish religious leaders criticized Jesus for performing acts of healing on the Sabbath, He commented, “ ‘It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath’ ” (Matthew 12:12). The Sabbath is a day for doing good. Is a neighbor sick? Bring her a hot bowl of delicious homemade soup. Have you heard about a friend who is discouraged? Call them on the phone to lift their spirits. Do you sense the widower down the street is lonely? Invite him over for lunch.

On Sabbath, we remember our Creator. There is no better place to do that than out in nature. For years, my wife and I spent many Sabbath afternoons hiking when our children were growing up. Even now, although our children are now grown and married, my wife and I often spend Sabbaths in nature. We enjoy sharing together in the beauties of nature. Walking the trails near our home, listening to the birdsongs, seeing an occasional deer, and smelling the fragrant aroma of the wildflowers relaxes our tired bodies and lifts our spirits for another week.

The Sabbath is not drudgery. It is life-giving. The Sabbath is

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not a burden. It is a blessing. The Sabbath is much more than a duty. It is a delight.

If you have not experienced the exhilarating joy of Sabbath worship, why not begin this week? If you have not entered into the peace of Sabbath rest, why not start now? If you would like a closer relationship with your loved ones and friends, the Sabbath experience awaits you. The Sabbath is not simply something to be debated—it is a joy to be experienced. Why not experience the blessings of Sabbath for yourself? With arms wide open, Jesus says, “Come unto Me all you who are burdened, and I will give you rest.”

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1. Wikipedia contributors, “French Republican Calendar,” Wikipedia.com, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French\\_Republican\\_Calendar](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_Republican_Calendar) (accessed March 11, 2009).

2. Herman Wouk, *This Is My God* (New York: Back Bay Books, 1992), 45, 46.

3. *Ibid.*, 46.



# Chapter 7

## Exposing the Devil's Deceptive Delusions

A few weeks ago, I was scanning the channels on our television just before catching the evening news on CNN. A documentary titled *Magic's Biggest Secrets Finally Revealed* captured my attention. Magicians base their tricks on illusions. What you see is not reality. You may think it is reality, but it is actually sleight of hand. The magician may appear to saw the beautiful woman in half, but, of course, it is merely an illusion. One of the oldest tricks in the book is to pretend to take a sword and thrust it through the stomach of the magician's assistant. The sword appears real. To prove its genuineness, the magician bends the blade, then cuts an apple in half, and fingers the razor-edged blade. As the lights dim, the music heightens. The drama intensifies. The audience is absolutely silent. The magician thrusts the sword through the gorgeous model's body.

The documentary clearly revealed what actually happens. When the eyes of the audience shift from the magician to the model as the lights dim, a second assistant swiftly slips him a second sword. This second sword has a very flexible blade. As the magician appears to thrust the sword into his assistant's stomach, it does not pass through her body at all. The flexible blade travels around the body via a specially designed tubelike belt and then comes out of her back, giving the impression it has gone through her body. The whole act is an illusion. The magician pretends to thrust the sword through the model's body. She

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pretends to grimace in pain. But it is all make-believe.

David Copperfield is one of the greatest illusionists of all time. He performs more than five hundred shows around the world each year. "His illusions have included making the Statue of Liberty disappear, flying, levitating over the Grand Canyon, and walking through the Great Wall of China."<sup>1</sup> *Forbes* magazine reported that from 2003-2005 he made more than 150 million dollars.<sup>2</sup> Evidently, millions of people will pay a whole lot of money to be deceived.

But David Copperfield does not hold a candle to the universe's greatest deceiver. Satan is the master illusionist. " 'He is a liar and the father of [lies]' " (John 8:44). In heaven's perfect environment, the evil one was so cunning that he deceived one-third of all of the angels (Revelation 12:4). In Eden, his sleight-of-hand deception of Eve and Adam soon followed. Throughout the millennia, the evil one has used his deceptive delusions to lead millions astray. His greatest delusion is illusion. He uses deception, falsehood, and treachery to make things appear to be true that are not.

His greatest deceptions are religious ones. The devil takes falsehood and clothes it in the garb of truth. He makes his lies appear as truth. He confuses the mind by cleverly disguising pagan practices in religious garments. The closer he can make error appear as truth, the more powerful his deceptions become.

The Bible's last book, Revelation, unmasks the plans of the devil. It exposes his lies. It strips away the mask of illusion. Revelation allows us to see clearly.

### Truth and falsehood revealed

This is especially true in the symbolism of Revelation's two women: the woman in white (clothed in the sun) described in Revelation 12, and the woman in scarlet portrayed in Revelation 17. Nowhere in Revelation is truth and error brought into such sharp contrast as in these two chapters. In the symbols of the

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woman in white and the woman in scarlet, John graphically portrays two systems of religion—truth and falsehood. The woman in white “keep[s] the commandments of God” (12:17). The woman in scarlet has “a golden cup in her hand” (17:4, KJV). The cup, which appears so magnificent, is filled with “abominations” (17:4). *Abomination* is another way of expressing rebellion or lawlessness. While the woman in white of Revelation 12 leads her followers to obedience to God’s commandments, the woman in scarlet passes around an illusion of truth in a cup of falsehood, leading to disobedience.

The fundamental issue is God’s way or man’s way, and as we shall see in this chapter, the Sabbath is at the very heart of this end-time controversy.

The book of Revelation describes the church as a pure woman. Christ is her Husband—the church is His bride. Christ, the Head of the church, gives guidance and direction to His bride. The false church is represented in the Bible by a harlot, or an adulteress, who has left her true Lover, Jesus Christ, and united with the world.<sup>3</sup>

In a moving drama, John the revelator describes one of the most significant moments in human history: “A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a garland of twelve stars. Then being with child, she cried out in labor and in pain to give birth” (12:1, 2).

According to Scripture, this Child was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. Ultimately, He “was caught up to God and His throne” (verse 5). Obviously, this is a description of Jesus.

The Bible says this woman stands on the moon. As the moon reflects the glory of the sun, so the Old Testament church reflects the glory of the gospel that blazed forth in Jesus. As the Old Testament dispensation faded away, the New Testament church, clothed with the glory of Christ, arose in splendor. The garland of twelve stars on the woman’s head signifies that the New Testament

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church would be guided by divinely inspired apostles. This is a picture of God's true church, clothed with the righteousness of Christ, guided by spiritual administrators, and anchored in Scripture. What a beautiful symbol of the pure, true church, unadulterated by human traditions, untouched by human doctrines, and based on the Word of God. Yet the picture dramatically changes in Revelation 17. John's vision in this chapter stands in sharp contrast to the one in chapter 12.

He carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. And on her forehead a name was written:

MYSTERY,  
BABYLON THE GREAT,  
THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE  
ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH (17:3-5).

This jeweled woman passes around the wine cup of her false doctrines and the world becomes drunk. This apostate, corrupted woman is the "mother of harlots." In other words, she has many daughters, or churches, that have become drunk with the wine of her false doctrine and have also been led astray.

The story of these two women—one dressed in white and the other in purple and scarlet—is the amazing saga of the controversy between good and evil, truth and error, God's Word and human tradition.

In the book of Revelation, the Bible describes a great war that took place thousands of years ago in heaven:

War broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought with the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found

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for them in heaven any longer. So the great dragon was cast out, that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was cast to the earth, and his angels were cast out with him (12:7–9).

In this great war in heaven, Satan deceived one-third of the angels. Revelation declares, “His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth” (verse 4). Satan is a deceiver. After he was cast out into the earth, he lied to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. In effect, he said, “Eve, you can eat of that tree, and you won’t surely die. All the trees in the Garden are the same. It doesn’t make any difference whether you eat of this tree or not.” Jesus stated it clearly when He said of Satan, “ ‘When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it’ ” (John 8:44).

The Bible teaches that there are two great systems of religion. One is centered in Jesus, who is “ ‘the way, the truth, and the life’ ” (John 14:6). It is based solidly on the teachings of Scripture. Consequently, in Revelation 12, the true church is pictured as a woman in white. Her doctrines are pure; she is loyal to her true Master: she has not compromised the truth. Truth and error, as water and oil, cannot and do not mix. God is looking for a church that does not mingle truth and error. He is looking for a people who live in harmony with the truth of His Word. The woman in white of Revelation 12 represents God’s true, visible church on earth—His faithful people through the ages who have not compromised Bible doctrine.

The Bible also describes a woman in scarlet with a cup of wine in her hand, representing false doctrine. She is the great apostate mother church, and many churches have drunk of her wine. The Bible says that she rides upon a scarlet-colored beast. In the Bible, a beast represents a political system (Daniel 7:17, 23).

This false church, adorned in scarlet and purple colors, has placed human traditions and the decrees of church councils above the Word of God. She is an adulteress in the sense that she has

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betrayed scriptural teachings. She is the great mother church, and along with her are other churches who also have left the true biblical doctrines.

### **Mystery, Babylon the great**

Notice Revelation 17:5, “On her forehead a name was written: MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT.” To understand Revelation 17, we must first understand the expression, “Mystery, Babylon the Great.” The fallen church system of Revelation 17 has teachings and doctrines that are very similar to the pagan teachings of Old Testament Babylon. As amazing as this may seem, it is true.

In the Old Testament, the people of God, Israel, were in constant conflict with the opposing forces of Babylon. God’s true church was the nation of Israel. In New Testament times, the Christian church became the spiritual Israel. Through the apostle Paul, the Lord said, “If you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:29). The woman in white represents the true, spiritual Israel, Christ’s true followers. Again the Lord said, “He is not a Jew who is one outwardly, . . . but he is a Jew who is one inwardly” (Romans 2:28, 29). Individuals of every nationality who accept Jesus and His doctrines become His true followers.

In the Old Testament, the kingdom of Babylon established a counterfeit system of worship. In the same way, spiritual Babylon represents counterfeit worship in the book of Revelation. Spiritual Babylon continues the principles of the Old Testament literal Babylon in its religious observances.

### **Characteristics of spiritual Babylon**

Who is this woman in scarlet? What are these Old Testament Babylonian principles she duplicates? Revelation 17:2 describes her as committing fornication with the kings of the earth. Fornication is an illicit union. “The inhabitants of the earth were

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made drunk with the wine of her fornication' ” (verse 2). Therefore, Revelation's picture of a woman on a scarlet-colored beast represents a union of church and state. The emphasis here is the dominance of the church over the state powers. The scarlet woman (the fallen church system) rides or dominates the beast (state powers). The Bible predicted that this false church would lead multitudes to drink of its false doctrines, depicting the acceptance of error in the place of truth.

The Bible shows that there are two basic systems of religion: the true system, outlined in Revelation 12, and the false system, outlined in Revelation 17. It is true that not everyone in the true church will be saved. There are some in it who do not have a heart experience with Jesus. A denominational label does not save any individual. The Bible also says that there are many in the false church who know Jesus and love Him, but do not know all the truth for earth's last hour. God is attempting to lead every man, woman, and child from the false system to the true system.

Notice carefully what is written on the forehead of the woman in scarlet: “MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT” (17:5). After the Flood, wicked people defied God; they disobeyed His word, established their own religion, and erected the Tower of Babel. It was here that God confused their languages. The city of Babylon was later built on the site of the Tower of Babel.

Commenting on the symbolic woman, Babylon, who rides on the scarlet beast, Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown say in their commentary, “State and Church are precious gifts of God. But the State being desecrated . . . becomes *beast-like*; the Church apostatizing becomes the *harlot*.”<sup>24</sup>

### Babylon: A human system

Let's go back to the Old Testament and look at five identifying features of Babylon there. In Genesis 10:8–10, the Bible describes the origin of the city of Babylon. “Cush begot Nimrod; he began to be a mighty one on the earth. He was a mighty hunter

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before the LORD. . . . And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel.” The founder of Babel (later called Babylon) was a rebel against God who led out in establishing a system contrary to God.

In the days of Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar boastfully claimed, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?” (Daniel 4:30). As Lucifer before him, Nebuchadnezzar had *I* trouble. Spiritual Babylon is a man-made system of religion with an earthly, human leader substituting his headship for the headship of Christ.

The true church of God directs men and women to Jesus Christ as its only Head. The false system directs men and women to human spiritual leaders rather than to Jesus alone as our great High Priest. Speaking of Jesus, the Bible says, “He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence” (Colossians 1:18).

The Bible says that the true church of God does not have an earthly head, but rather, a heavenly one. Someone has said, “The true church of God is the only organization so big that its body is upon earth, but its Head is in heaven.” The true church of God points men and women to Jesus, who can forgive their sins and release them from the bondage of sin. Revelation’s spiritual Babylon is an earthly system of religion based on human tradition with a human leader. Let’s summarize. The first two characteristics of the false religious system of Babylon are (1) accepting tradition above the truths of God’s Word, and (2) having a human, earthly head of the church rather than Christ.

### **Babylon: A system centered in image worship**

Let’s notice a third characteristic of ancient Babylon: Babylon is the source of idolatry. It is only as we understand ancient Babylon in the Old Testament that we can understand what spiritual



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Babylon is and God's call to come out of her. Dr. Alexander Hislop states, "Babylon was the primal source from which all these systems of idolatry flowed."<sup>5</sup> In the Old Testament, Babylon was a center of image worship. The great temples of Babylon were filled with images of the Babylonian gods before which pagan worshippers bowed in reverence. God's sanctuary at Jerusalem had no such images. In the New Testament Christian church, individuals were instructed to worship Christ directly. There was to be no worship through images.

The Bible plainly states, " 'You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them' " (Exodus 20:4, 5).

The Scripture instruction is plain. If images are introduced into worship, it is highly likely that the image will be considered sacred and will receive the homage due to God alone. History testifies that this has happened repeatedly. Images have been revered and kissed, relics have been considered holy, and statues are embraced as gods.

God intended that the true system of religion should lead men and women to worship Him directly, without the use of images, allowing His Holy Spirit to impress their minds. Babylon would lead men and women to follow traditions of men, to put preeminence in an earthly leader, to incorporate images in its worship.

### **Babylon: Ancestor worship**

There is a fourth identifying feature of ancient Babylon that also applies to spiritual Babylon: the concept of an immortal soul that lives on after death. In Ezekiel 8:13, the Bible says, "He said to me, 'Turn again, and you will see greater abominations that they are doing' "; that is, greater abominations than worshiping idols. Verse 14 adds, "So He brought me to the door of the north

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gate of the LORD's house; and to my dismay, women were sitting there weeping for Tammuz."

Who was Tammuz and why were the women weeping?

Tammuz was the Babylonian god of vegetation. The Babylonians believed that when spring gave way to summer and the summer heat scorched the crops, Tammuz died. Therefore, they wept and prayed that he might return from the underworld. The concept of the immortal soul does not come from the Bible. It slipped into the Christian church through Babylonian beliefs. Its roots are in Babylon, yet the doctrine was fully developed in Greek philosophy. The following quotations clearly describe the origin of the pagan doctrine of immortality. The first is from Amos Phelps, a Methodist Congregational minister, who lived from 1805 to 1874:

This doctrine can be traced through the muddy channels of a corrupted Christianity, a perverted Judaism, a pagan philosophy, and a superstitious idolatry, to the great instigator of mischief in the garden of Eden. The Protestants borrowed it from the Catholics, the Catholics from the Pharisees, the Pharisees from the Pagans, and the Pagans from the old Serpent, who first preached the doctrine amid the lowly bowers of Paradise to an audience all too willing to hear and heed the new and fascinat[ing] theology—"Ye shall not surely die."<sup>6</sup>

Listen to this statement from Justin Martyr, an early church leader, who died in A.D. 165:

If you have fallen in with some who are called Christians, but who do not admit this [the truth of the resurrection], and venture to blaspheme the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; who say there is no resurrection of the dead, and that their souls, when they die, are taken to heaven; do not imagine that they are Christians.<sup>7</sup>

The Bible is very plain about what happens to people when

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they die: "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23). "His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish" (Psalm 146:4, KJV). "The living know that they will die; / But the dead know nothing" (Ecclesiastes 9:5).

The King James Version of the Bible uses the word *soul* approximately sixteen hundred times, but it never once uses the expression *immortal soul*. Repeatedly, Scripture affirms that only God has immortality (1 Timothy 6:15, 16). It was the Babylonians who held the concept that an immortal soul left the body at death. Therefore, the Babylonians established a system of gods and goddesses, worshipping the spirits of those who supposedly lived on. God's people, the Israelites, had a totally different belief. They taught that when people died, their breath went forth, they returned to the earth, and in that very day, their thoughts perished. The Bible is a very reliable source regarding the state of humans in death. Psalm 115:17 says, "The dead do not praise the LORD, / Nor any who go down into silence." Any voice that purports to break death's silence is out of harmony with the Bible.

Friend, Revelation describes two great systems of religion. The true system, referred to in Revelation 12, is based on the Word of God, with the pure doctrines of His Word leading men and women to trust Jesus alone. It leads them to understand that they are to come to Christ and worship Him directly, without images. It leads them to understand that when people die, they sleep until the resurrection. It affirms the biblical truth that the soul is not some conscious entity that lives on endlessly in the spirit world after death.

Revelation 17 describes a false religious system; it refers to Babylon the great, the apostate mother church. This church is based, not on the Word of God, but on tradition. It has an earthly head that claims to take the place of Christ. Its colors are scarlet and purple. It utilizes images in its worship service. In the place of gods and goddesses, it incorporates saints in its worship services. It teaches that when people die, they do not sleep until the

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resurrection, but rather have immortal souls that live on after death. It passes its false wine cup around so that other churches drink the wine of false doctrine of this mother church. They, too, accept the false idea that the soul lives on after death—outside of and independent of the body.

### **Babylon: The center of sun worship**

A fifth characteristic of Babylon, both in the Old Testament and in the New, is mentioned in Ezekiel 8:16. This is, in fact, the key principle defining Babylon:

He brought me into the inner court of the LORD's house; and there, at the door of the temple of the LORD, between the porch and the altar, were about twenty-five men with their backs toward the temple of the LORD and their faces toward the east, and they were worshipping the sun toward the east.

The prophet Ezekiel saw these men following the Babylonian practice of sun worship. Turning their faces toward the east, they knelt and worshiped the sun as a god, as the sun rose in the eastern sky. Ancient Babylonian calendars, with the sun at the center, reveal the importance the Babylonians placed on sun worship. The Babylonians did not believe that they were fashioned by the hands of a loving Creator. They believed the sun, the largest luminous body in the heavens, was the source of life. In adoration, they bowed to worship it. "In ancient Babylonia the Sun was worshipped from immemorial antiquity."<sup>8</sup>

Down through the millennia, false worship was often rooted in sun worship. Satan exalted the objects of Creation above the Creator. The Assyrians worshiped the sun-god Shamash. The Egyptians worshiped the sun-god Ra. The Hittites worshiped Arinna the sun-goddess. The Konark sun wheel is famous throughout India. The Nordic Trundholm sun chariot symbolized the sun worship of the Vikings. Helios of Greece and Mithra of Persia and Rome were worshiped as sun-gods by multitudes. The Sabbath

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called God's people to worship their Creator. Sun worship beckoned them to worship an object of creation.

The first and second century Christian church in Rome was largely composed of Gentile Christians. This is quite different from the church in Jerusalem and the Middle East, which was largely a Jewish/Christian church. Gentile Christians coming from a pagan background in Rome would likely have been influenced by sun worship. *The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* makes this startling observation: "In the first Christian century there were organized at Rome associations of the followers of Mithra."<sup>9</sup> Among the Romans, the sun-god Mithra was known by the masses as "*Sol Invictus*" ("the Invisible Sun"). The Emperor Aurelian's mother was a priestess of the sun. The emperor himself was especially devoted to sun worship. His biographer, Flavius Vopiscus, states that the emperor officially proclaimed the solar deity as "*Sol dominus imperii Romani*" ("The Sun, Lord of the Roman Empire").

Well-known historian Arthur Weigall in his book, *The Paganism in Our Christianity*, states, "As a solar festival, Sunday was the sacred day of Mithra; and it is interesting to notice that since Mithra was addressed as Dominus, 'Lord,' Sunday must have been 'the Lord's Day' long before Christian times."<sup>10</sup> The historian makes a telling point here. Since Sunday was the day dedicated to the pagan god Mithra, and Mithra was considered to be lord, Sunday was considered the Lord's day, not of Christ originally, but of a pagan god. This is further confirmed with the discovery of the el-Amarna letters, which abound with such phrases as the following: "the King my Lord, the Sun from heaven"; "my Lord the Sun"; "the Sun God. My Lord."<sup>11</sup>

*The Catholic Encyclopedia* adds this insight: "Sunday was kept holy in honour of Mithra."<sup>12</sup> Scholar Franz Cumont adds, "The dies Solis [Sunday] was evidently the most sacred of the week for the faithful of Mithra and, like the Christians, they had to keep the Sunday holy and not the Sabbath."<sup>13</sup>

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Professor Agostinho de Almeida Paiva, in his outstanding book on Mithraism, rounds out the story this way: “ ‘The first day of each week, Sunday, was consecrated to Mithra since times remote, as several authors affirm. Because the Sun was god, the Lord par excellence, Sunday came to be called the Lord’s day, as later was done by Christianity.’ ”<sup>14</sup>

Gentiles converting to Christianity in Rome were influenced by Mithraism—sun worship. They already had a sense that Sunday was the Lord’s day, since they believed Mithra or Helios (the sun) was the lord. It would not be difficult for these Gentile Christians to shift their allegiance to Jesus rather than Mithra on the sun’s day.

When Constantine became the emperor of the Roman Empire, he chose as his family god Apollo—the sun god—identified with the old Roman Sol since the time of the Caesars. “The Sun was universally celebrated as the invincible guide and protector of Constantine.”<sup>15</sup>

With anti-Jewish sentiment rising in the empire, social and political discord flourishing, and corrupt church leaders grasping for power, Sunday became the vehicle to unite the empire. The pagan Roman emperor, recently converted to Christianity, was urged by church leaders to promote a common day of worship on Sunday, to advance the power and glory of the church.

Constantine himself, in a letter addressed to Alexander, bishop of Alexandria (A.D. 313–325), clearly states his religious policy for the Roman Empire in these words, “ ‘My design then was, first, to bring the diverse judgments formed by all nations respecting the Deity to a condition, as it were, of settled uniformity.’ ”<sup>16</sup>

In passing his six civil Sunday laws, Constantine hoped to unite his empire. He wisely realized that one way to do this was a common day of rest, festivity, and worship throughout the empire, a day that both pagans and Christians could agree upon. Arthur P. Stanley, in his *History of the Eastern Church*, writes,

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The retention of the old Pagan name of “Dies Solis,” or “Sunday” for the weekly Christian festival, is, in great measure, owing to the union of Pagan and Christian sentiment with which the first day of the week was recommended by Constantine to his subjects, Pagan and Christian alike, as the “venerable day of the Sun.” His decree, regulating its observance, has been justly called “a new era in the history of the Lord’s day.” It was his mode of harmoni[z]ing the discordant religions of the Empire under one common institution.<sup>17</sup>

History and prophecy are plain on the change of the Bible Sabbath. God did not change the seventh-day Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday. Jesus did not change it, and the first-century disciples would not think of changing the Sabbath. The Sabbath was gradually changed over the centuries as pagan sun worship infiltrated the church through a union of church and state in the early centuries.

The Israelites worshiped the Creator on the seventh day of the week, the Bible Sabbath. God’s true church in Revelation 12 keeps all His commandments, including the Sabbath command. The false church revives the Babylonian day of the sun and passes around its cup of false doctrines. Many churches, drinking from that cup, worship on the first day of the week, Sunday.

God has a sign: “I also gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between them and Me, that they might know that I am the LORD who sanctifies them’ ” (Ezekiel 20:12). All through the Old Testament, on into the New Testament, and until the end of time, God’s Sabbath is a sign—an everlasting symbol of allegiance to our Creator.

The Babylonian teaching of sun worship—that pagan principle passed down from one pagan religion to the next—slipped into the Christian church, not by a commandment of God, but rather through compromise.

Arthur P. Stanley further states, “[Constantine’s] coins bore on the one side the letters of the name of Christ; on the other the

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figure of the Sun-god, . . . as if he could not bear to relinquish the patronage of the bright luminary.”<sup>18</sup> A wedding took place between Christianity and paganism, between the church and the emperor of Rome. Constantine was actually a Christian only in name. As a result, the Christian church was flooded with many practices that do not find their place in Scripture. Bible history bears this out. Dr. Alexander Hislop says, “To conciliate the Pagans to nominal Christianity, Rome, pursuing its usual policy, took measures to get the Christian and Pagan festivals amalgamated, and . . . to get Paganism and Christianity—now far sunk in idolatry—in this as in so many other things, *to shake hands*.”<sup>19</sup> In other words, Rome was attempting to conciliate, to compromise, to bring the crumbling empire together.

What is the origin of Sunday worship? Where does it come from? How did it enter the church? Dr. Edward T. Hiscox, author of *The Baptist Manual*, stated in a paper before a Baptist convention of ministers on November 13, 1893,

“There was and is a commandment to keep holy the Sabbath day, but that Sabbath day was not Sunday. It will be said, however, and with some show of triumph, that the Sabbath was transferred from the seventh to the first day of the week. . . . Where can the record of such a transaction be found? Not in the New Testament, absolutely not! There is no Scriptural evidence of the change of the Sabbath institution from the seventh to the first day of the week. . . .

“To me it seems unaccountable that Jesus, during three years’ intercourse with His disciples, often conversing with them on the Sabbath question, . . . never alluded to any transference of the day; also, that during forty days of His resurrection life, no such thing was intimated. . . .

“But what a pity that it [Sunday] comes branded with the mark of paganism, and christened with the



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name of the sun god, when adopted and sanctioned by the papal apostasy, and bequeathed as a sacred legacy to Protestantism!"<sup>20</sup>

The door was opened, as Babylonian practices flooded into the church. The Church of Rome says, "Christendom is indebted to the Catholic Church for the institution of Sunday as the Sabbath day. But there is no precedent in Scripture, nor commandment in Scripture, to observe the Sunday as the Sabbath day."<sup>21</sup>

In the fourth century, in an attempt to convert the pagans and save the empire, church leaders opened that door. The Roman emperor Constantine walked through that door, and church and state united. Babylonian sun worship entered the Christian church as this union between paganism and Christianity took place.

F. G. Lentz says, "In keeping Sunday, non-Catholics are simply following the practice of the Catholic Church for 1,800 years, a tradition, and not a Bible ordinance."<sup>22</sup>

You remember, we read in Ezekiel 8:16 about the twenty-five priests of Israel who adopted the practice of sun worship. These priests turned their backs on the true God and disobeyed His direct command to observe the seventh-day Sabbath. Ezekiel described the real issue in this drama between good and evil:

"Her priests have violated My law and profaned My holy things; they have not distinguished between the holy and unholy, nor have they made known the difference between the unclean and the clean; and they have hidden their eyes from My Sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them" (22:26).

God said that in ancient Israel, the priests hid their eyes from His Sabbaths, and He was profaned among them. In the last days, the Babylonian principle of sun worship will be adopted. Again, people will hide their eyes from the true Sabbath. Men and women will say, "It doesn't really make any difference." Oh my friend, it *does* make a difference. James Wharey says,

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At the end of the second century, . . . it is obvious to remark the changes already introduced into the Christian church. Christianity began already to wear the garb of heathenism. The seeds of most of those errors that afterwards so entirely overran the church, marred it[s] beauty, and tarnished its glory, were already beginning to take root.<sup>23</sup>

Yes, the wedding took place and the seeds of human tradition grew and developed. Dr. Alexander Hislop adds,

This tendency . . . to meet Paganism half-way was very developed. . . . Upright men strove to stem the tide, but . . . the apostasy went on, till the Church, with the exception of a small remnant, was submerged under Pagan superstition.<sup>24</sup>

After Christ died and the apostles passed from the scene, the church drifted from its original teachings. Nevertheless, there was a small remnant who remained loyal to God.

### God's final appeal

Down through the ages, God has always had those who have said, "We will not compromise; we must stand for truth, no matter what the popular masses are doing. We have submitted our lives to Christ. He has said, 'If you love Me, keep My commandments'" [John 14:15]. We will take the Word of God as our guide. We will stand loyally for Jesus."

At times, that small remnant was oppressed and persecuted. Still, they would not accept the Babylonian principle of human decrees above the Scriptures. They would not accept the Babylonian principle of an earthly head of the church rather than Christ. They would not accept the Babylonian principle of images. They worshiped Jesus directly. They would not accept the Babylonian principle that there is an immortal soul that lives on, outside the body. They would not accept the Babylonian principle of sun worship.

Friends, an understanding of what the Bible teaches leads us

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to see that the woman in scarlet pictured in Revelation 17 is the Roman Church. Her daughters are the Protestant churches that have been sipping from her wine cup and accepting her errors. But even in the Roman Church, God has a people. In their commentary, Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown put it this way: "Even in the Romish Church God has a people: but they are in great danger: their only safety is in coming out of her at once."<sup>25</sup>

I've had people say to me, "Pastor, can't I stay in my church and reform it?" God says that you are to come out of Babylon. "In every apostate or world-conforming Church there are some of God's invisible and true Church, who, if they would be safe, must come out."<sup>26</sup>

You may be wondering, *Can I believe the truth and remain just where I am?* Friend, "in every apostate or world-conforming church," there are members of God's invisible, true church, "who, if they would be safe, must come out." God calls you to come out, because Babylon is fallen.

The noted Catholic author, Cardinal Gibbons, said, "Reason and common sense demand the acceptance of one or the other of these alternatives. Either Protestantism and the keeping of holy Saturday, or Catholicity and the keeping holy of Sunday. *Compromise is impossible.*"<sup>27</sup> I agree with Cardinal Gibbons completely on this point. The Catholic cardinal was right when he said that compromise is impossible! These issues are too clear. This evidence demands a verdict. God is calling men and women to take a stand.

Listen to the words of Scripture: "He cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, 'Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen'" (Revelation 18:2). The mother church is fallen. Her traditions are fallen. This church, with vestments of scarlet and purple, is fallen. Her system of images is fallen. All systems that teach error regarding the state of people in death and the Sabbath are fallen. They have drifted away from Scripture as the only rule of faith and practice.

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“I heard another voice from heaven saying, ‘Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues’ ” (verse 4). There is no way to stay in Babylon without sharing in her sins. Babylon is fallen! There is no way that you can change her. Your mission, your business, is to come out.

God is calling honest-hearted men and women out of those churches that have drunk the cup of Babylon. Soon, time is going to run out. Soon, every human being is going to make his or her final choice, fully for Christ or fully for tradition, either on the side of truth or on the side of error, standing with the Scriptures or standing with human beings and human substitutes.

Our only safety is in coming out of every church that is based on tradition, that uses images in its worship, and is still practicing Sunday worship. God’s appeal is to come out. Jesus said, “ ‘My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me’ ” (John 10:27). He says, “My child, I am appealing to you. I have My sheep, My followers, in every church. I am appealing to people of all denominations to lay aside their preconceived opinions and follow the Bible. I am speaking to hearts everywhere to come out of those churches based on tradition.”

Oh, I appeal to you, my friends. I appeal to you in Jesus’ name to surrender your will to Him and to determine to do His will. With your Bible in your hand, tell Jesus, “I can do no other; I must come out. I hear Your call to my heart. I see how paganism and Christianity united in those early centuries. I see the issue very clearly now. I see that for more than eighteen hundred years, compromise has taken place. I see that God has been calling His little remnant out, and I have decided to take my stand for You, Lord Jesus. I decide to stand on the Word of God; I decide to stand with Christ. I am willing to come out, even if it means standing alone.”

Oh, friend of mine, will you not settle it in your heart right now? Will you not seal it in your mind? Will you not tell Jesus, “Lord, I hear Your call that Babylon the great is fallen. I hear You urging, ‘Come out of her, My people’ ”?

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Tenderly, in tones of love, Jesus, by His Spirit, speaks to your heart. With loving-kindness He says, "I love you, My child. I do not want you to be afflicted when the plagues fall. My child, I am appealing to you right now!"

Some of Jesus' people are still in Babylon. Do you hear His call right now? Do you hear Him speaking to your heart? I know that right now, you are willing to say, "Jesus, I love You, and I choose to follow You. Because I love You, I desire to be part of Your commandment-keeping people. I hear Your voice gently appealing, 'If you love Me, keep My commandments.' Yes, Lord, I will follow."

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2. Ibid.

3. From this paragraph on (with allowance for additions and minor revisions), the rest of this chapter first appeared in Mark Finley with Steven Mosley, *Why so Many Denominations? Revelation's Four Horsemen Provide an Answer* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Publishing Association, 1994), 43–61.

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# Chapter 8

## Whose Flag Will Fly?

Have you ever stopped to wonder that if this world is going to end with a bang, who will do the banging? Does anybody win? In other words, what flag will be flying in the ruins? Does God have a flag? Can we make sure we're giving Him our allegiance in a world filled with so many competing claims for the one-and-only truth?

The stakes are higher today. The voices are louder. The clash of cultures and religions is more intense. We thought we'd left "holy" wars behind in the Middle Ages. They're back with a vengeance.

There are people out there quite willing to bring your world crashing down if they can't have the world their way. They're willing to go up in smoke and to take others down with them. And they proclaim a fierce loyalty to their God and to their faith. They passionately believe that their flag will be the one standing in the end.

How do we know what will remain standing in a time such as this? How do we know what really expresses allegiance to God? How do we know what issue will divide humanity in the end time?

I'd like to try to answer those questions in this chapter. I think the Bible gives us some important clues, and they are clues that cut across the dividing lines of culture and religion.

One of the most enlightening examples of allegiance comes

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to us from the Old Testament book of Daniel. There's a conflict documented there that speaks powerfully to our conflicts today.

The third chapter of Daniel presents us with a remarkable scene on the plain of Dura, near ancient Babylon. An enormous gold statue of King Nebuchadnezzar had been set up. Thousands of representatives from his empire had been invited to pay homage to it in a splendid ceremony. The king was making a statement. He was saying, "I will be left standing when other kings and empires have fallen." Babylon, he was saying, would last forever.

But just as the vast assembly bowed to the ground toward the image, something interrupted the proceedings. Three young men remained standing. They were three young Jewish princes: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They'd been brought as captives to Babylon and were being trained to help govern its great empire.

And now, they stuck out like sore thumbs. Babylonian officials quickly brought Nebuchadnezzar the news. This wasn't just a diplomatic error. This was treason. It was treason because the king's herald had made an announcement a few moments before, in a loud voice that rang over the plain. His words are recorded in Daniel:

"To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations and languages, that at the time you hear the sound of the horn . . . you shall fall down and worship the gold image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up; and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace" (3:4-6).

The king had made this act of worship a test of loyalty. Nebuchadnezzar wanted total allegiance. Well, that put the three Hebrews in a terrible bind. They'd been taught since childhood that there was only one Being worthy of worship. Bowing down to an idol was a betrayal of their faith. And yet, if they didn't bow down, they'd be burned to death!



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Pretty tough choice! What would you do in a situation like that? How important are these gestures of allegiance? That's a vital question for us today, when suicide bombers are willing to blow up themselves and innocent bystanders to declare their allegiance to a cause.

Interestingly enough, Nebuchadnezzar's decree has a striking parallel in the Bible. It's echoed by a decree found in the book of Revelation. Revelation 13 talks about a challenge God's people will face at the end of time. The antichrist sets up an image to his representative, the beast:

He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed. He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name (verses 15–17).

This decree will test our allegiance in the end times. Now, notice the parallels between Nebuchadnezzar's decree and the decree in Revelation:

- In both, a world leader attempts to compel worship of an image.
- In both, there is something that contradicts God's specific commandment to worship Him alone.
- In both, all who do not submit are condemned to death.

Whom are we going to bow down to? That's the ultimate question. At some point, believers are going to be confronted by a great power, a religious and political power that demands our ultimate allegiance. And the issue is worship. That's the flag. There's good worship and bad worship. There's true worship and false worship. Just because people are raising their voices in the

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name of God, doesn't mean they have the right kind of allegiance. They could be waving assault rifles right along with their praises.

You know, the theme of worship runs all through the book of Revelation:

- In Revelation 4, living creatures bow before the throne of God, surrounded by an emerald rainbow. They declare day and night, “ ‘Holy, holy, holy, / Lord God Almighty’ ” (verse 8).
- In Revelation 5, thousands and thousands of angels lift up their voices: “ ‘Worthy is the Lamb who was slain’ ” (verse 12).
- In Revelation 7, a great multitude from every nation on earth lifts up palm branches before the God of their salvation (verses 9, 10).

Scenes like this are repeated until we come to joyous worship in the New Jerusalem as the nations walk in God's light. But let's look at how this theme comes into sharp focus in the very heart of the book. Revelation 12 and 13 introduce us to symbolic creatures who represent evil forces in the world—the beast, the dragon, and the false prophet. They are trying to get everyone to bow down to that image of the beast.

And then, in Revelation 14, we find God's dramatic response to this great challenge—His response to false worship. It is, in fact, the Almighty's final message of warning to the world. It's given by three angels flying in the sky, who have an eternal gospel to proclaim. This is what they say, “ ‘Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water’ ” (verse 7).

Who is it that we are called to worship? The Creator of heaven and earth, the One who breathes life into every creature. Only our Creator has the right to judge us; we are responsible to Him and Him alone. True worship focuses on the God who stands above us

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as Creator and Judge. It's to Him that we need to give our allegiance.

The angels of Revelation 14 go on to warn about the terrible fate of those who worship the beast: " 'If anyone worships the beast and his image, . . . he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God' " (verses 9, 10).

Notice that here we see the counterpoint to the first angel's message. We are *not* to worship the beast; we *are* to worship the Creator. These two choices stand in opposition. The one calls us into a false allegiance to something man-made. The other calls us to give God glory, to worship Him as Creator.

Worshiping the beast is deadly. So how do we stand against it when pressured to conform? How do we keep from worshiping its image? By fixing an unconditional faith on our Creator. His authority must supersede all others.

God has given us a way to express our unconditional allegiance to the Creator regularly, every week. It is evidence of our commitment to Him as our Creator and Lord. It reveals our loyalty. It demonstrates our faithfulness. It's found in the fourth commandment. This is something many Christians have overlooked:

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. . . . For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it" (Exodus 20:8–11).

Why are we urged to observe the seventh day, Saturday? Because it's a memorial of Creation. It ties us to our Creator. It's a rest in God's finished work. The fourth commandment asks us to remember the One who made the heavens and the earth.

The Sabbath, then, is a symbol of our love and loyalty to our Creator. The Sabbath protects us from the wrong kind of allegiance.

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Think again of that decree of the antichrist in Revelation, the decree that demands everyone bow down to the image of the beast—on pain of death.

The Bible's last book, Revelation, teaches that a fiery trial is coming to our world, a time of trouble greater than any that we've experienced in history. God's followers are going to be brought to a crisis over the issue of the commandments of God, and over tyranny, over enforced worship.

So we need to make sure we're worshiping the right God in the right way. That's the issue. Those three young Hebrews, standing on the plain of Dura, understood that well. Let's return to their story.

King Nebuchadnezzar was outraged, of course, that anyone would interrupt his moment of glory. He had the three brought before him. He pointed to the blazing furnaces. He asked, very pointedly, "Who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?" (Daniel 3:15).

The answer these Hebrew youth gave is justly famous. Fearlessly, they replied to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. . . . Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace. . . . But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up" (verses 16–18).

These men answered the proud king's challenge without hesitation. They did so by testifying of their faith in the God of heaven and earth. They were committed to worshiping Him alone, even if He did not deliver them from death.

And what was the result? Well, an enraged Nebuchadnezzar had his furnace fired up to the maximum. Then he had the Hebrews thrown into the flames! Apparently, their God wasn't going to save them.

But He did. In fact, He made a wonderful appearance, right in the midst of that fiery furnace. Nebuchadnezzar was astonished

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to observe another figure in the furnace, standing beside the three men he had thrown into the fire. He cried out, “ I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God’ ” (verse 25).

Three men had been thrown in. But four were alive and well in that furnace! Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were walking in the flames with the Son of God at their side!

You know, the book of Daniel teaches us something important—the final crisis outlined in the book of Revelation need not terrify us. It can be an opportunity for us to see our Lord, very close and very powerful. These young Hebrews had their eyes fixed on a great God. And in their hour of trial, they found that a great God had come to be with them. That’s what an unconditional faith, a committed faith, can do for us. It will bring God close in the worst of times.

Let me tell you about a remarkable man who exhibited this kind of faith. His story comes to us through the great evangelist of India—Sundar Singh. In one of his many journeys through the Himalayas, he discovered a Tibetan preacher whom the people treated with great reverence. This man could proclaim Christ without fear of reprisal, even though other preachers were violently persecuted. This is why:

At one time, he’d served as secretary to a lama. But a visiting Christian from Punjab told him about the gospel. Eventually, he declared himself a follower of Jesus. The first who heard about it was his own master, the Buddhist lama, who happened to be an ignorant fanatic.

Within a few days, the preacher was sentenced to death. Strong men bound a wet yak skin around him and sewed it up tight. They left him in front of the lamasery walls—in the scorching sunshine. There, the contracting skin would crush him to death.

The preacher, however, didn’t die. So they thrust red-hot skewers through the yak skin into his body. Later, they tore off

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the yak skin and dragged the man through the streets to a refuse dump outside of town. After further abuse, the preacher was dropped on a dunghill. His body showed no signs of life. The crowds left. The vultures gathered.

But this mutilated victim had not died. Somehow, he managed to crawl away and recover. And then, instead of fleeing for his life, he marched right back into the village and began preaching about Christ. He could still testify about his faith. He could speak of a great God who had come close. And now, people listened in awe.

Those three Hebrews in the fiery furnace made quite an impression too. King Nebuchadnezzar rushed up to the edge of the furnace and called to them to come out. As they emerged, a large crowd gathered around. They noticed that their hair wasn't even singed! Their clothes didn't even smell of smoke!

Ultimately, that fiery trial the Hebrews went through burned only one thing—the ropes that bound them. It freed them from their bonds. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out of the furnace as conquerors.

For the first time, King Nebuchadnezzar realized that there might be a God in heaven far bigger than he could ever be. He acknowledged that these three Hebrews were “ ‘servants of the Most High God’ ” (Daniel 3:26). Up to this point, the king had tried to be the Most High himself, with his massive golden statue.

But now, he made a remarkable confession. We find it in Daniel 3:

“Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego, who sent His Angel and delivered His servants who trusted in Him, and they have frustrated the king’s word, and yielded their bodies, that they should not serve nor worship any god except their own God!” (verse 28).

Nebuchadnezzar’s rage had turned to reverence. He realized that another kind of allegiance was important. He realized that

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he needed to worship the right God in the right way. He needed to bow before the God who comes close in times of trouble.

That's the God who deserves our allegiance today.

My friend, history is headed toward a climax. Two kinds of allegiances are battling for supremacy on this planet, two kinds of worship. We will either worship the Creator or we will worship something man-made. We will either worship the Lord of heaven and earth, or we will worship someone who promises us heaven on earth. We will either place our faith in the invisible, Holy God, or we will be captured by the dazzle of an image. We'll either stand for His truth, or we will be swept up by the crowd. The words of the Bible prophets echo down the corridors of time. They speak to us in trumpet tones today:

“I also gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between them and Me, that they might know that I am the LORD who sanctifies them” (Ezekiel 20:12).

“Blessed is the man who does this,  
And the son of man who lays hold on it;  
Who keeps from defiling the Sabbath,  
And keeps his hand from doing any evil” (Isaiah 56:2).  
Blessed are those who do His commandments, that  
they might have the right to the tree of life, and may  
enter through the gates into the city (Revelation  
22:14).

In small ways and in big ways, the battle lines are being drawn. Hate is disguised as religious fervor. Fanatical allegiance claims to be the one true faith. “My side” and “my tradition” replace the law of God. Battle lines are being drawn right now between the empire of Satan and the empire of Christ. And the bad guys don't always wear black hats. We can't just condemn this or that group or write off this or that culture.

As Jesus said, the wheat and the weeds are growing close together. The good and the bad are intertwined. But the dividing line is not blurred. It runs right through each individual heart.

## When God Said Remember

There's a clear distinction. Where's our allegiance? Do we bow before Someone greater and grander than us? Or do we bow before an image we make—an image that suits our prejudice, our tradition, and our private truth?

I want to stand with those three brave Hebrews on the plain of Dura. I want to stand with them now. I want to stand with them in the time of the end. And I believe their kind of faith is available to each and every one of us, a faith that will stand tall when times get rough. It's really a matter of perspective. What do we choose to place at the center of our lives? Who gets first place? Whose truth gets top priority?

Please make sure you remember the Creator each Sabbath. Take time now before the clash of allegiances makes it too late. Sabbath worship will transform your life. It will build up your faith before the crisis breaks.

The Creator, the Lord, the Judge, the Lawgiver, the Redeemer, the One who loves us to the utmost—He alone deserves our worship. The Sabbath is His flag. It stands over our lives as a great symbol of our inner commitment to our Creator. There are many counterfeits, but only one Creator God and Sabbath call all humanity back to Him. Fly His flag and He will stand with you today, tomorrow, and forever. He will walk with you even in the fire.

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*Father, we acknowledge You as our Creator and as our Redeemer. Thank You that, no matter how overwhelming the conflict might seem, You are able to deliver. We know that times are coming when our allegiance will be tested. But we know that You can make us loyal, courageous, and true. We place our trust in You as that kind of God. Teach us to develop that trust in the midst of conflicts day by day. Come close to us in the fire. In Jesus' name, Amen.*