

## The Fourth Commandment: Annulled or Sustained?

By Carl E. Erickson

### FOREWORD

The author of this paper is the Rev. Carl Erickson, Pastor of New Covenant Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) of South San Francisco. This year marks his 49th year of faithful ministry to the New Covenant congregation. Rev. Erickson joined the OPC in 1966 and, while under care of the Presbytery of Southern California, submitted this paper to the Credentials Committee as part of his licensure requirements.

This paper is significant to peruse for three reasons. First, it offers instruction concerning the Sabbath and dispensational theology and shows that many anti-Sabbatarian interpretations of Scripture are rooted in dispensational thinking. In God's providence, Pastor Erickson was exposed to dispensational theology on two different fronts. First, during the latter part of the twentieth century, the era in which he first pastored, dispensationalism was at its height. Secondly, he studied many Jewish Christian authors who were dispensational in their thinking. This gave Pastor Erickson an opportunity to sharpen his doctrinal thinking, arguing against dispensational theology.

This paper shows the incompatibility of dispensational theology with the Scriptures and firmly grounds the teaching of the Sabbath in the context of a confessional covenant theology. Furthermore, the paper examines the Scripture's use of Sabbath terms in both Greek and Hebrew, and demonstrates how the New

Testament sustains the Fourth Commandment in the Christian Sabbath rather than annulling it.

It is also of historical note that Pastor Erickson's paper instructed not only his congregation but also his presbytery and denomination. In 1964, Pastor Erickson was under care in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (formerly the Bible Presbyterian Church, Columbus Synod) when he was hired by Manhattan Beach OPC as an assistant to the pastor. There he witnessed a laxity in regard to the Christian Sabbath and was motivated to research and write on this topic, being convinced that the Fourth Commandment presented a crucial rule for the Christian life. He was subsequently moved to preach a five-part sermon series on the Sabbath observance to the people of Manhattan Beach OPC. He discouraged the Sunday practice of playing on the beach under the California sun and instead encouraged the ancient Christian practice of observing a "holy rest, all the day, from their own works, words, and thoughts about their worldly employments, and recreations," being instead occupied "the whole time in the public and private exercises" of Christ's worship.

In 1973, the OPC General Assembly (GA) received a report from the Committee on Sabbath Matters. The majority report held up the same principles as this paper. However, the minority report held up a very different banner, proclaiming positions that this paper refutes. Interestingly, the author of the minority report was the Rev. Richard M. Lewis, who as chairman of the Credentials Committee reviewed this paper when it was submitted to the West Coast Presbytery in 1967 for ordination requirements. That was the second time that this paper was submitted to the OPC. This leads us to the last point.

Finally, this paper may have the effect of recovering a confessional view of the Sabbath. Pastor Erickson became good friends with the Richard Lewis. He

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THE AUTHOR AND EDITOR: The Rev. Carl E. Erickson (M.Div.) is the pastor of New Covenant Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) of South San Francisco, where he has served for nearly fifty years. U.S. Army Captain Christopher W. Myers is licensed to preach the gospel in the RPCNA and is currently undergoing trials to receive a call. Captain Myers has edited and updated Pastor Erickson's original typescript text, reviewed the Greek and Hebrew citations, and corrected the text and formatting where necessary with approval of the author.

used this very paper and the arguments therein to try to convince his friend of the confessional view of the Sabbath. When the Rev. Lewis would not change his mind and when he publicized his view in the minority report of the Committee on Sabbath Matters, this called for gentle and loving discipline for a minister of Christ. With a heavy heart, Pastor Erickson called for it, but only a minority listened. It took nearly 30 years before a majority of ministers were convinced of the seriousness of the matter and dealt lovingly with Pastor Lewis' departure from the Confession of Faith. A charge against him was brought before the OPC's Presbytery of Northern California on September 12, 2002.

The Presbytery confessed in the minutes of that meeting that "as a Presbytery we have failed to follow this rule by not confronting our brother, the Rev. Richard M. Lewis, and calling him to repentance as to his views concerning the fourth commandment... we as individuals and as a Presbytery confess our sinful neglect and repent before our Lord for failing to deal with this matter properly as a presbytery." The Presbytery confronted Pastor Lewis to repent concerning his views in the minority report and to conform to his second ordination vow that requires faith in the Scriptures as taught in the Confession of Faith. The Presbytery requested for him to respond in the 2003 Spring Stated Meeting. However, the Rev. Lewis' health rapidly declined shortly after the charge and his health did not allow for him to ever respond to the Presbytery. Richard Lewis died November 8, 2008 at the age of 82. He served as the special lecturer in Systematic Theology at Westminster Seminary; he was Pastor of Covenant OPC, Berkeley, CA from 1956–2001.

The Rev. Erickson's "The Fourth Commandment: Annulled or Sustained?" is presented here with the hope that it will help a new generation adhere to the Scripture's teaching concerning the Christian Sabbath as taught in the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms.

CHRISTOPHER W. MYERS

#### INTRODUCTION

The Fourth Commandment is one of two positive commandments in God's holy law. It is significant to observe, however, that down through the ages the Sabbath commandment has been looked upon as a negative law of bondage and restriction by those who oppose it. But those who have rejoiced in all the law of God have rejoiced in the Fourth Commandment, to the glory and

praise of its Author. For example, the English Puritans of the seventeenth century particularly emphasized the keeping of the Sabbath as "a day of rest and worship." Anything that desecrated this day was considered an affront to God Himself.

In 1618, King James of England decreed that Sunday, the Christian Sabbath, would be a day of sports and issued the so-called "Sports Book," which provided for "dancing, May games, athletics, and May poles." In reality, this decree attacked the very core of the Puritans' practical faith and life, mainly because God had blessed and sanctified this day for holy purposes such as worship and the preaching of the Word. The king's new law became such a stumbling block to these, the faithful, that it became a chief factor in motivating their exodus from the British Isles.

The question now is, "Is the Fourth Commandment still applicable in the twentieth century?" The answer is yes, because God's law is eternal and applicable for every period of man's history. To illustrate this principle, please note the compromise in the modern church regarding the lack of proper Sabbath observance in the following newspaper articles:<sup>1</sup>

#### TV CASUALTY

Thurgarton, England, September 14 (UPI): Sunday vesper services at the village church are being rescheduled from 6:30 pm to 6 pm so that parishioners can get home in time for a popular television program.

#### CHURCH CAN'T COMPETE WITH BOAT LOVERS

Tulsa, Okla. (AP): St. Andrews Presbyterian Church here is giving up trying to compete with boat lovers on the weekend. It is changing its 'Sunday School classes' to Wednesday nights. The pastor, Rev. William Neff, Jr., explains that Tulsa has become a city of boat lovers, and with every new lake, more Tulsans are spending weekends out of the city with their boats.

These are but two examples of a general apathy toward a specific commandment of God's statutes and judgments. In addition to apathy, there also exists direct opposition from those within the church itself: the antinomians. They regard the Ten Commandments as having been annulled in "the church age." Together with the apathetic, antinomians create a point of controversy for the twentieth century church concerning the Sabbath Day.

It is the purpose of this paper to illustrate this

1. Clarence Macartney, *Macartney's Illustrations* (Abingdon Press, New York), 317; Kenneth S. Latourette, *A History of Christianity* (Harper & Brothers, New York, 1953), 817.

controversy and, in turn, to present a proper biblical answer. The subject at hand properly falls in the category of “The Law” under the general rubric of Soteriology in the realm of Systematic Theology.

## I. The Fourth Commandment in the Scriptures

### A. THE STATEMENT OF THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

For the sake of precision, the Westminster Confession of Faith is quoted to represent the traditional Reformed position concerning the Fourth Commandment. It reads as follows:

As it is the law of nature that, in general, a due proportion of time be set apart for the worship of God; so, in His Word, by a positive, moral, and perpetual commandment, binding all men, in all ages, He hath particularly appointed one day in seven, for a Sabbath, to be kept holy unto Him: (Chapter XXI, Sec. 7).

This creedal statement is only valid if it is supported by the Scriptures, and only through the Scriptures do we find authority for any theological or creedal statement. Therefore, this paper will list some of the biblical statements in turn:

1. Genesis 2:1–3: Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.

2. Exodus 20:8–11: 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: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

3. Deuteronomy 5: 12–15: Keep the sabbath day to sanctify it, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee. Six days thou shalt labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates;

that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou. And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day.

4. Matthew 12:8; Mark 2:27: For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day... And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath:

5. Hebrews 4:9: There remaineth therefore a rest (“sabbatizing”—the keeping of the Sabbath) to the people of God. Since it is the purpose of this paper to present biblical answers concerning the Sabbath question, it is only fitting that the terms employed be examined in their Scriptural context.

### B. THE TERMS EMPLOYED IN CONNECTION WITH THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

When the Sabbath day was first instituted on the seventh day of creation, the noun שַׁבָּתוֹן (shabbaton) was not employed. However, the verb שָׁבַת was used in relation to God “resting” on the seventh day. With this in view, the phrase וַיִּשְׁבֹּת בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי (“and He rested the seventh day” Genesis 2:2) is equivalent to the meaning of שַׁבָּתוֹן as it is used in Exodus 31:15. The Israelites, in the context of Exodus 31:15, were to keep the “Sabbath day” or “rest on the seventh day” as God did at the finish of creation.

In order to have a clear picture of this, the following divisions are presented to demonstrate the various uses of the general term “rest.”

#### 1. Hebrew Use of שָׁבַת in the Old Testament

The verb שָׁבַת basically means “to rest” or “to sit down and rest” from one’s labors. In other words, it is a rest from (מִן) normal standing or moving about in some particular activity. It also has the denotation of ceasing or desisting from a particular activity. For example, the Lord desisted (or ceased) from creating the heavens and the earth on the seventh day (Genesis 2:2). Another example is found in Exodus 5:5 when “Pharaoh said, ‘Behold, the people [the Israelites] of the land are many and you make them rest from their burdens.’”

In its cognitive relationship, the root שָׁבַת is akin to the root יָשַׁב meaning “to sit.” “To sit” or “to dwell” implies a resting place. This term is used in places such as I Kings 10:19 as the noun שָׁבַת. In summary, the verb שָׁבַת itself represents a ceasing from work activity in order to rest from it.

## 2. Hebrew Usage of נָּה in the Old Testament.

The verb נָּה has the same basic meaning as שָׁבַת and is in fact used with שָׁבַת as a synonymous term. For examples, see Exodus 20:11 and Deuteronomy 5:14. Each of these texts is involved with the Fourth Commandment. Therefore, in these contexts, it designates a holy and blessed rest.

## 3. Greek Usage of σάββατον in the Old Testament

The noun σάββατον is merely the transliteration of the Hebrew noun שָׁבַת which signifies the “Sabbath day” as it is used in Exodus 31:15 in the form of σάββατα, the accusative plural, but having a singular meaning.

## 4. Greek Usage of the Root παύω in the Old Testament.

The verb παύω has essentially the same designation and usage as the Hebrew verb נָּה has to the term שָׁבַת. Παύω means to make, to cease, or desist (see Exodus 31:15; 35:2; Leviticus 23:3; 24:4). In the Hebrew, the phrase שָׁבַת־נָּה (“Sabbath of rest”), is translated into the Greek as σάββατα, ἀνάπαυσις ἁγία τῷ Κυρίῳ, “Sabbath, a holy rest to the Lord.” This construction generally is similar throughout the passages just cited. The point is that the general usage of the base root παύω is used in these contexts to signify this “special rest.”

The Hebrew verb נָּה is actually translated with the Greek verb καταπαύω in Exodus 20:11, and ἀναπαύω in Deuteronomy 5:14; both are used in the context of the special Sabbath day.

## 5. Greek Usage of σάββατον in the New Testament

The word σάββατον has the same meaning and usage as the σάββατον of the LXX. However, there are other interesting designations of the term. It can designate a “sabbath day’s journey” (σαββάτου ἔχου ὁδόν in Acts 1:12); or it can designate time or the seven-day week (πρώτη σαββάτου in Mark 16:9, and εἰς μίαν σαββάτων in Matthew 28:1, etc.).

The verb σαββατίζω means “to keep rest,” as does the verb שָׁבַת. However, the verb σαββατίζω in this form is not to be found in the New Testament, except in the noun form of σαββατισμὸς in Hebrews 4:9. In this noun, the ending μὸς is used to express action as in the verb form.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the term means “Sabbath keeping” or “Sabbathizing.”

In conclusion, the various terms used within the context of the Sabbath doctrine found in the Bible all point to a special day that God has set apart to be holy and blessed. Terms besides שָׁבַת, such as נָּה and παύω, are used differently in other contexts to designate something other than the “special rest” denotation. But when

these words are used in the context of the Sabbath institution, as in the Fourth Commandment, or the special sabbatical feasts, their meaning is restricted to the “special day rest” doctrine.

## C. THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT AND THE “ANTINOMIAN” (CLASSICAL DISPENSATIONALISM)

“Antinomian” generally conveys the meaning of being against law. We must, however, be very diligent when assigning this term to any particular group without first discussing certain qualifications. For example, if a group of Christians believes that the Ten Commandments are no longer binding following the death and resurrection of Christ, we may erroneously assume that they do not have any type of rule or moral regulation within their Christian life and practice.<sup>3</sup>

The “classical dispensationalist” (this title is used to designate the general school of thought propounded by such men as John Nelson Darby and Dr. C. I. Scofield) has been categorized as an antinomian, not because he has no rule or guiding principles to regulate his Christian life, but because he maintains and teaches that “the Christian is not under the conditional Mosaic Covenant of Works, the law, but under the unconditional New Covenant of Grace.”<sup>4</sup> On the surface, the implication here is that there are two soteriologies by which God has ordained to save men. The one is conditional upon obedience to the Law of Moses, whereas the other is unconditional upon obedience to Christ. In other words, dispensationalists teach that the law is not involved in the Christian life. Obedience to the Ten Commandments is no longer necessary; therefore in this sense, the dispensationalist is “anti-law.”

Concerning the purpose of the Law of Moses, Dr. C. I. Scofield, founder of the Philadelphia College of the Bible and popularizer of classical dispensationalism, stated, “It is evident ... that God’s purpose in giving the law ... was to bring to guilty man the knowledge of sin first, and then of his utter helplessness in view of God’s just requirements. It is purely and only a ministration of condemnation and death” (*Scofield Bible*, 38). And yet, when we read the footnotes of the Scofield Reference Bible, we have such statements as, “Law blesses the good,” and “law demands that blessings be earned.” Grace is contrasted with law in this manner, “Grace

2. A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Harper’s, New York, 1923), 151–152.

3. C. I. Scofield, *Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth* (Fleming H. Revell Co., Westwood, New Jersey, 1986), 36.

4. *The Scofield Reference Bible*, 95, n1. Hereafter *Scofield Bible*.

saves the bad,” and “grace is a free gift” (Scofield, 1115, n1). To state this contrast once more in a different way, the Scofield Reference Bible points out that, “The righteous man under the law became righteous by doing righteously; under grace he does righteously because he has been made righteous” (Ibid., 1323, n1).

Whatever way one may approach this contrast between law and grace, the conclusion is the same. Dispensationalists teach that Christians are not obligated to keep the Law of Moses. And if this be the case, then the Fourth Commandment, which is a definite part of the Law of Moses, is no longer binding on the Christian in “the age of grace.” Dr. Charles L. Feinberg states this dogmatically when he says,

The Sabbath [is] not for the believer. A study of the period from the death of Christ and descent of the Spirit on Pentecost till the rapture of the Church reveals most unmistakably that the Sabbath has been abolished. It is not incumbent upon any believer to keep the Sabbath, because it is part of the legal system, and ‘Since law and grace are opposed to each other at every point, it is impossible for them to co-exist, either as the ground of acceptance before God or as the rule of life;’ because this is definitely the age of grace, the law ‘is not in force in the present age in any sense whatsoever.’<sup>5</sup>

Dispensationalists do not merely make a dogmatic statement, *ex cathedra*, and expect everyone to accept it on blind faith. In fact, they have taken great pains to try to prove that the Sabbath has been abolished. When examining the general popular works by dispensationalists on the Sabbath question, one will find, on average, twenty-six basic arguments to support the annulment of the Fourth Commandment. But, for the sake of convenience, these arguments will be summarized in the following section of this paper.

## II. The Fourth Commandment Abrogated

The presupposition of Dispensationalists is that the Sabbath institution has been annulled or made void in the Christian “age of grace.” It is no longer binding on

5. Charles L. Feinberg, *The Sabbath and the Lord’s Day* (Van Kampen Press, Whaton, Ill., 1952), 21–22 (quotation by L.S. Chafer, *Grace*, 215).

6. Charles L. Feinberg, *Should Christians Keep the Sabbath?* (American Board of Mission to the Jews, New York, N.D.), 3.

7. Feinberg, *The Sabbath and the Lord’s Day*, 15.

8. Louis T. Talbot, *Seventh-Day Adventism and the Bible* (Dunham Pub. Co., Grand Rapids, 1964), 48.

the Christian because its abrogation was issued at the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. To support this presupposition, the dispensationalist’s argument is presented through the means of a historical survey of the Sabbath institution itself.

### A. THE SABBATH INSTITUTION UNDER THE PATRIARCHAL ECONOMY

The first basic tenet concerning the Sabbath institution is that it was not instituted for man at the end of the creation (Genesis 2:1–3). Dr. Feinberg states that:

Careful study reveals there is no hint that God gave this Sabbath to man. He alone rested. Considered as a day of rest, the original creation Sabbath could not logically have been given to man, because as yet he had not labored.<sup>6</sup>

The second tenet is that there is no mention in the Scriptures of Sabbath-keeping from the time of Adam to Moses. In other words, there is no record of the Patriarchs observing a special day of the week as a religious rite. This would be supported by the first assumption or tenet that the original Sabbath was not instituted for man. The second tenet continues to purport that:

If the Sabbath did exist, then it is more than passing strange that, although we find accounts of the religious life and worship of the Patriarchs, in which accounts mentioned are specially made to the rite of circumcision, the sacrifices, the offering of the tithe, and the institution of marriage, we should find no mention of the great institution of the Sabbath.<sup>7</sup>

To give credence to this assumption, Deuteronomy 5:23 is often quoted, “The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day.” The implication is that the Mosaic Covenant, which included the moral law, especially the Sabbath commandment, was not made with the Patriarchs. Therefore, the Patriarchs had no Sabbath institution; the institution was only intended for the Israelites.<sup>8</sup>

### B. THE SABBATH INSTITUTION UNDER THE MOSAIC ECONOMY

It has been stated that the Sabbath was only for the Israelites under the Mosaic Covenant. With this in mind, what was the nature of this day for the Israelites?

According to John R. Rice, the Sabbath for Jewish people was a day “for physical rest alone.”<sup>9</sup> He states that the Sabbath “was never given as a day of worship ... worship went on in the tabernacle and in the temple seven days a week just the same except for national religious holidays when the program was somewhat varied” (Rice, *Ibid.*).

The reason Dr. Rice makes a special mention of the Sabbath day as not being a day of worship is his attempt to reprove Christians who believe in a Christian Sabbath as a day of worship. Dr. Rice therefore states that, “New Testament Christians have no command from God to abstain from labor on any certain day, nor even to meet for worship on a given day of the week. This is, for a Christian, a matter of grace and should be voluntary” (Rice, *Ibid.*).

This same particular Jewish Sabbath day of rest was not intended for Gentiles to keep, basically for the reason that the Covenant of Moses was not given to them. “That at the time ye were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without Christ in the world” (Ephesians 2:12). But when Gentiles became Christians, even though they were once aliens to the covenants, they were not now to be obligated to them especially in any obligation to Sabbath-keeping. In fact, it was predicted, according to dispensational assumption, that the Sabbath would be abolished. “I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feasts, her new moons, and her sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts” (Hosea 2:11). In summary, Dr. William E. Biederwolf, in his polemic against “Seventh Day Adventism,” appeals to Colossians 2:16–17 in order to prove that the Sabbath of the Jews has been abolished in the Christian age as a fulfillment of Hosea 2:11. “Let no man therefore judge you ... in respect of a holy day, or of a new moon, or of the sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come.”<sup>10</sup>

### C. THE SABBATH INSTITUTION UNDER THE MESSIANIC ECONOMY

The dispensationalist’s claim is that there can be no Sabbath institution in the “church age.” This does not mean that it was abolished during the ministry of Christ. But it does mean that after Christ fulfilled the Law, there was no need for the believer to keep the Law, because now the Christian was to obey the “law of Christ” (*Scotfield Bible*, 1000, n1).

If the sacred Sabbath of the Jews was going to be annulled, then it was assumed that Christ never taught anyone to keep the Sabbath. The dispensationalist would

go so far as to misrepresent Christ concerning His own keeping of the Sabbath. Dr. Rice states that Jews hated Jesus because He Himself did not keep the Sabbath. However, in the Lord’s response to this unjust accusation, He referred to Hosea 6:6, “I desired mercy not sacrifice.” Thus, if the accusers “had understood that Scripture, they would have not condemned the guiltless Jesus who clearly meant that the Sabbath was part of the ceremonial law, like the sacrifices, which was fulfilled in Jesus. Jesus did not teach anybody to keep the Sabbath. This fact cannot be denied” (Rice, 4).

Since Dispensationalists claim that Christ did not teach anyone to keep the Sabbath, it is to be expected that His disciples also did not teach its observance. The New Testament beyond the Gospels is silent about the Christian church observing the Sabbath day. Dispensationalists believe that the fourth commandment does not apply any more to Christians because “Every moral principle of the Ten Commandments is reiterated under grace by the Spirit in the form of an exhortation—with the single exception ... of the commandment to keep the Sabbath.”<sup>11</sup> It may be noted in the above statement that the other nine commandments are not considered commandments, but listed as “exhortations.”

The conclusion, then, is that the Sabbath no longer applies to the believer, even in the form of an “exhortation.” Dr. Rice adds to Dr. Feinberg’s argument in stating that, “of all the sins mentioned in the New Testament, Sabbath breaking is never once mentioned as a sin!” (Rice, 4).

The precepts of the Law, then, are referred to in the New Testament epistles as merely “exhortations” because the “commandments of stone” have been abolished or annulled. It was mentioned earlier by Dr. Scofield that the sole purpose of the Law was for a “ministration of death.” Dr. Biederwolf appeals to II Corinthians 3:7–11 to prove this very position. Accordingly, he believes that this “ministration of death, written and engraven in stones” (verse 7) was actually annulled, as verse 11 is supposed to designate. “For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious” (Biederwolf, 37–38). This is the basic reason why dispensationalists will not refer to the moral precepts derived from the Ten Commandments as law. The word “exhortation” is supposed to keep them from “mingling law with grace.” Therefore, since a Sabbath “exhortation”

9. John R. Rice, *Sunday or Sabbath, Which Should Christians Observe?* (Sword of the Lord Pub., Wheaton, Ill., 1943), 8–9.

10. William E. Biederwolf, *Seventh Day Adventism* (Eerdmans Pub. Co., Grand Rapids, N.D.), 38–39.

11. Feinberg, *Should Christians Keep the Sabbath?*, 8–9.

is not mentioned in the New Testament, the Christian is in no wise obligated to it in the “Messianic Age.”

“But suppose a Christian says there is an ‘exhortation’ to keep the Sabbath day,” Dispensationalists question. Dr. J. Vernon McGee answers that if this were the case, then we would have to enforce the death penalty to Christians who do not observe the Sabbath (Exodus 35:1–3). He gives a very interesting illustration to clarify his argument in the following:

Now if you were one who keep the Sabbath, and you drove down to your church on the Sabbath, the minute you turned the switch on your car and put your foot on the starter, while you did not see it, you kindled a fire in every one of the cylinders—so in this you broke the Sabbath (Exodus 35:3).<sup>12</sup>

Even though Dispensationalists do not believe in a Sabbath day for Christians, or a specific day commanded in the New Testament set aside for worship, they consider that the “Lord’s Day,” the first day of the week, should be set aside for voluntary worship (Rice, 9). Victor Buksbazen, a converted Jew, states that,

The keeping of the Lord’s Day dedicated to divine worship and witness is a godly, wholesome, and altogether commendable practice, refreshing for the body ... it is based on example and practice of the first Christians according to Scripture and post-Scripture testimony.<sup>13</sup>

The Lord’s Day then is to be commanded and observed not by law or command, but by example. Since the “church age” is the sixth of the seven dispensations, it naturally precedes the seventh dispensation, called the “Kingdom Age.” The Sabbath institution was abolished in the “Church Age,” but it will be re-instituted in the last dispensation.

#### D. THE SABBATH INSTITUTION IN THE “KINGDOM AGE”

The “Kingdom Age” is the last of the seven dispensations within the scheme of classical dispensationalism. Remarkably, this “dispensation of the fullness of times” (Ephesians 1:10) will be “identical with the kingdom covenanted to David” (II Samuel 7:8–17).<sup>14</sup> It is even believed that the temple and its sacrifices will

be re-instituted along with the re-institution of “a more stringent law than that of Moses” and according to Isaiah 56:2–7, 66:23; Hebrews 4:4–9, the Jewish Sabbath is re-established (Feinberg, 24–25). Here, as under the Mosaic Economy, the Sabbath will be observed and kept by all, during a literal thousand-year personal reign of Jesus Christ upon this earth, called the Kingdom Age. Meanwhile, during the Church Age, “the Christian first day perpetuates in the dispensation of grace the principle that one-seventh of the time is especially sacred, but in all other respects, is in contrast with the Sabbath. One is the seventh day, the other the first” (*Scofield Bible*, 1011, n3).

#### III. The Fourth Commandment Sustained

Dispensationalist have emphatically stated that the Fourth Commandment was annulled in the Christian era. If this statement were to be tested before the law court of Holy Scripture, would it be upheld? It is true that the Scripture are appealed to for evidence to support the case of annulment. But what about the other point of view? The Reformed Christian believes that all of God’s Law has been sustained in the Christian age. He does not create artificial systems wherein God used different “dispensations” of time to save mankind by different methods. The Reformed Christian believes that God has one (and the same) total plan of salvation administered within different “economies” of God’s comprehensive Covenant of Grace. The Westminster Confession of Faith states that, “The justification of believers under the old testament was ... one and the same with the justification of believers under the New Testament” (Chap. XI, Sec. 6). This is another way of saying, “Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is no other name under Heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). That Name is none other than Jesus Christ. The saints in the Old Testament were saved by the blood of Jesus Christ as were the saints in the New Testament. There was no other way to be saved. If there were, then the “shedding of blood” in the Old Testament sacrifices would have no significance (Heb. 9:22). If a believer could be justified by keeping the law, then the whole sacrificial system was unnecessary for the people of Israel.

The temple sacrifices have been fulfilled in Christ, therefore they are no longer needed. But this does not imply that God’s law, found in the Ten Commandments, is no longer needed. God’s law is eternal and changeless. It is therefore the burden of this section to present biblical evidence for the unchanging nature of the Fourth

12. J. Vernon McGee, *The Sabbath Day or the Lord’s Day, Which?* (Church of the Open Door, Los Angeles, N.D.), 8–9.

13. Victor Buksbazen, *The Gospel in the Feasts of Israel* (The Friends of Israel Missionary & Relief Society, Inc., Philadelphia, 1954), 79.

14. *Scofield Bible*, 1250, n3.

Commandment in all ages. The Reformed Christian believes that the whole moral law of God has always been in operation from the time of the creation and will be to the “end of the ages.”

#### A. THE SABBATH INSTITUTION UNDER THE PATRIARCHAL ECONOMY (ADAM TO MOSES)

In the creation account of Genesis one and two, there was no specific command for man to observe the Sabbath day. The evidence of the institution of the Sabbath is found in Genesis 2:1–3. In this text, it seems that only God rested at the end of His creative days. On the surface, there is no succinct evidence to support the basic premise of the Sabbath applying to man as well as to God. But if the text of Genesis chapters one and two are considered as a whole, evidence can be offered for the basic premise.

The first line of evidence is to be found in the relationship between the labor ordinance and the Sabbath ordinance at creation. God gave to man an ordinance of labor and dominion over the earth. He was commanded by God to subdue the earth, which implied work as well as having dominion in the earth (Genesis 1:28; 2:21–25). After the Garden of Eden was planted, God took man and placed him there to fulfill the labor ordinance. His purpose was to “work it and keep it” (Genesis 1:28; 2:15). There is no doubt that man was to labor before his fall. It was to be good labor patterned after the goodness of God’s work in creation (Genesis 1:4). God worked the work of creation in six days. Does it not then follow that if a man works for six days, then a Sabbath rest is significant to man as well as to God? Is man to go beyond the duration of labor in contradiction to God’s time of labor as exemplified in the six days of creation? Man was created in the image of God. God, therefore, is the divine example for man to follow. God created the earth for man to subdue and have dominion over as His vice-regent. It was only natural that man, being created in the image of God, would follow God’s pattern of laboring for six days and resting for one.

The second line of evidence is to be found in the Sabbath day’s relationship to its own uniqueness. The institution itself was blessed and sanctified by God. God set it apart as a special and unique day. It would be very strange indeed if man did not regard this day as God regarded it. It would be unusual for man to work seven days in succession and ignore the seventh day that God blessed and sanctified. Even though there was no specific commandment for man to observe the

Sabbath day, the context suggests sufficient reasons for man to observe the day that God set apart. In a very real way, the seventh day was a memorial day to the finished creation-work of God. It was a day of ceasing and resting from the particular labors of creating life. Therefore, if it is accepted that the Sabbath institution was one of the creation ordinances for man, as was the labor ordinance, it then follows that the Sabbath was established universally for all mankind, even as all men were created in the image of God.

The third line of evidence is found in the relationship of the image of God to the law of God. Paul stated in his epistles that man was originally created in holiness, righteousness, and knowledge (Ephesians 4:24; Colossians 3:10). The image given to man was a reflection of God’s own attributes of holiness, righteousness, and knowledge. Even though these attributes were finite in man they were still to be considered perfect in man’s original state of innocence. The attribute of knowledge in man made him aware of God’s existence; and to know God was to know His righteousness. The attribute of righteousness in man was none other than this righteousness of God. And the righteousness of God was expressed and manifested in His Law.

From this reasoning, it is concluded that the law of God was written upon the heart of man (Romans 2:12–16). The will and righteousness of God were in operation in the Garden of Eden, just as they were at Mt. Sinai. So, in reality, when Adam disobeyed God’s command, “You shall not eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil—for in the day that you eat of it, you shall surely die” (Genesis 2:17), he was breaking the First Commandment.

After breaking the First Commandment, Adam and Eve also broke the Ninth Commandment by accepting the lie of the serpent (Genesis 3:1–6). Other commandments were broken in the early chapters of Genesis, such as the murder of Abel by Cain, although none of the commandments is specifically mentioned. This being the situation, does the Fourth Commandment have to be specifically mentioned in Genesis in order to make the institution of Sabbath-keeping binding upon all men? Did mankind have to wait for Moses to receive the Decalogue in order to know the will of God? Was not the will of God already manifested in the hearts of our first parents? To insist on a specific and stated commandment in this context is poor hermeneutics.

The dispensational argument implies that there was a need of labor to make the Sabbath meaningful to man. Since man had done no work when the Sabbath

was instituted it “could not logically have been given to man.”<sup>15</sup> Dispensationalists press the need for a specific commandment where none is needed. The fact that man did not labor before the Sabbath was given does not free man from observing it. Whether the Sabbath institution was given before or after man began to labor does not change the obligation of man to observe it. The basic reason for observance, however, was that God Himself has blessed and sanctified the day. That is reason enough for man to regard it. To disregard the Fourth Commandment is to disregard all the commandments (James 2:10). The Ten Commandments stand together as the summary of God’s revealed righteous will (Deuteronomy 29:29). To add or subtract from it results in being “called least in the Kingdom of Heaven” (Matthew 5:19).

Now the question may be asked, “Did mankind, after the institution was given, observe it?” It may be argued from the above observations that there is still no evidence that man actually kept the Sabbath day after Genesis 2:1–3 and the fall of Adam. This evidence is, of course, based upon an *argumentum ex silentio*.

However, the Sabbath institution does not stand or fall upon man’s ability to keep it. Because there is no exact reference to Sabbath-keeping until Exodus 16 does not mean that there was no Sabbath. Professor John Murray answers this “argument from silence” by stating, “It is precarious to base too much on silence. But even if silence indicates declension, ignorance and non-observance of the Sabbath, this does not remove the creation ordinance nor does it disestablish its binding and obligation.”<sup>16</sup>

To further illustrate this, Daniel Wilson observes,

No mention is made of sacrifices from the time of Adam till the deluge ... nor from the arrival of Jacob at Beersheba till the deliverance from Egypt ... but does that prove that sacrifices were not offered? ... No mention of the Sabbath occurs in the histories of the books of Joshua, Ruth, First and Second Samuel, and First Kings, which are so much more detailed than those of Genesis; and yet this was during the Mosaic law, when the institution was confessedly in fullest vigor.<sup>17</sup>

In other words, the argument from silence in this case does not prove the lack of Sabbath-keeping for man;

15. Feinberg, *Should Christians Keep the Sabbath?*, 3.

16. John Murray, *Principles of Conduct* (The Tyndale Press, London, 1957), 35.

17. Daniel Wilson, *The Divine Authority and Perpetual Obligation of the Lord’s Day* (Lord’s Day Observance Society, London, 1956), 16.

neither does it prove that man did not know of it. Even though there are no definite references to the observance of the Sabbath during the Patriarchal age, there are inferences to the existence and knowledge of the institution. The purpose here is not to try to prove by inference that man actually kept the Sabbath during the Patriarchal period. The only purpose here is to demonstrate the possibility of Sabbath-keeping from Adam to Moses.

There are two prominent examples from which inference can be drawn for the possibility of Sabbath knowledge and keeping by the Patriarchs. The first example is of Cain bringing an offering to the Lord (Genesis 4:3–5). The original and literal Hebrew text of this account is, “and it came to pass at the end of the days (וַיְהִי בְּעֵצְמוֹת הַיּוֹם) an offering was brought to the Lord by Cain.” The division of time had already been established in the first two chapters of Genesis as counting a week of seven days. Of course the seventh day would fall at the end of the week. This being the case, the application can be made that the “end of the days” represented “the end of the week,” which was the seventh day, or the Sabbath day. It would then be proper to infer that this last day of the week was known to Cain as the blessed and sanctified day of the Sabbath. It would be a logical day for Cain and Abel to honor God by offering the fruits of each one’s labor from the preceding six days of labor on this special day. As Wilson states, “There you have the priest, altar, matter of sacrifice, motive, atonement made and accepted, an appointed time ... [these are] consistent with the supposition of a previous sabbatical institution” (Wilson, 17–18). The only difficulty with this interpretation is in the exact designation of the phrase of Genesis 4:3. It could simply mean, as the Authorized Version renders it, “and in the process of time it came to pass.” Or it can be rendered, “as time went on” (Modern King James Version). Therefore, no conclusive evidence can be acquired from the phrase itself. But it can be said that the actions of Cain and Abel in their offerings imply a time set apart for such activities which could properly be the Sabbath day.

The second example is the reckoning of time before and after the deluge. As God told Noah that there was to be a great flood, He said, “Yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth” (Genesis 7:4). This by itself does not say that there was a seven day week. On the surface it could mean just any seven days. However, after Noah sent out a dove from the ark, it “found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned.... Then [Noah] put out his hand and took her ... and he waited yet another seven days. And again he sent forth the dove out of the ark” (Genesis 8:9–12). Here is an example of a division of time into seven-day weeks. This reckoning

of time is consistent with the early chapters of Genesis. Wilson would go so far as to say that, "Nothing can be more certain than that the return of seven days brought something peculiar with it; and we judge it probable, from the institution of the Sabbath, that that peculiarity was a day of sacred rest" (Wilson, 18).

We have no direct statement that the Sabbath was observed in the age of the Patriarchs. However, it may be concluded that the effects of original sin brought Sabbath-keeping by man to a place of "declension and ignorance," as Professor Murray suggested earlier. But this fact does not destroy the institution itself. Doubtless, as time rolled on, and particularly during centuries of bondage in Egypt, the memory of this primeval ordinance became faint, and the observation of it by the enslaved people almost impractical. But it does not appear to have been even then wholly forgotten (Wilson, 21).

There is one more example to be considered for Sabbath-keeping during the Patriarchal period. It is difficult to conceive of the People having the opportunity to observe a Sabbath during the bondage of Israel in heathen Egypt, as Wilson has already suggested. This period of slavery marks the transitional period between the Patriarchal and Mosaic periods. It was the time just before the giving of the formal codified Decalogue. When God delivered His People out of Egypt through His servant Moses, a reference was made to the Sabbath.

Before God's people ever came to Mt. Sinai to receive the Decalogue, God commanded the Israelites to keep a "holy Sabbath unto the LORD" (Exodus 16:23). This command was given in the context of God providing daily manna for the People's needs. God required that for five days the People were to gather enough manna, "each man according to his eating" (Exodus 16:21). But "on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread" because, "Six days [they] shall gather it, but on the seventh day is the Sabbath. In it there shall be none" (Exodus 16:22, 26). Throughout the whole context of Exodus 16, one gets the impression that the Sabbath institution was not a new precept or a new law. Nothing is said in the context about the institution of the Sabbath being established at that time. God simply commanded that the seventh day "is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord" as if it were understood to be an already-existing institution (Exodus 16:23). There was no giving of a formal precept in this command. The people who disobeyed and went out on the seventh day to find manna were disappointed in that "they did not find any. And the LORD said to Moses, 'How long do you refuse to keep my commandments and my laws?'" (Exodus 16:27, 28). Here the Lord spoke of commandments and laws before the actual giving of the

Decalogue. What were these laws and commandments? They were the same laws and commandments Abraham obeyed (Genesis 26:5). These laws were summed up in what was called "the way of the LORD." God said this of Abraham, "For I know him, that he will command his children after, and they shall keep, the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment" (Genesis 18:9).

Abraham had no codified formal written Decalogue before him, yet God said of him that he was "to do justice and judgment." The only answer to this is the fact that God's law was written upon his heart. God saved Abraham by grace through his faith in order that he might keep the statutes of the Lord (Romans 4:2-5). If the righteousness of God was in operation in the life of Abraham, there is no doubt that the moral law of the Decalogue was in operation in the Patriarchal age. Therefore, the Decalogue was in operation even in its unwritten form for the People coming out of Egypt. This would make the reference in Exodus 16:28 concerning God's commandments and law meaningful. Even though the People may have forgotten the statutes of the Lord, the Lord in Exodus 16 was reminding His People to keep the Sabbath.

#### B. THE SABBATH INSTITUTION UNDER THE MOSAIC ECONOMY (MOSES TO CHRIST)

Under the Mosaic economy of God's grace, the Ten Commandments were specifically given in written form. There was a definite reason for God's revelation to be written down in words. Oral tradition was subject to corruption, and God desired "the better preserving and propagating of the truth" (Westminster Confession of Faith, Chap. 1, Sec. 1; Luke 1:3-4; Romans 15:4; Matthew 4:4, 7:10; Isaiah 8:20). The moral law was therefore like the written form of God's revelation, written on tablets of stone for all men to know their contents. In other words, it was given so that men may have a "knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20). It was also given as a "schoolmaster" to lead one to Christ, the Fulfiller of the Law. But the positive aspect of the Law was given so that God's redeemed people might know His will and righteousness (Psalm 119:9, 62-64). This of course applied to the Fourth Commandment. Man now would know for certain the will of God concerning the Sabbath institution.

Under the Patriarchal period man was universally to keep the Sabbath. But when Deuteronomy 5:1-3 states, "The Lord our God made a covenant with us at Mount Sinai. The Lord did not make this covenant with our ancestors, but with all of us who are alive today" does that mean there are two different covenants? Dr. Talbot

quotes this very text to support his view that the Fourth Commandment was not given to the Patriarchs. The implication of this view denies any universal application and obligation of the Sabbath to all mankind. Dr. Talbot's argument at first glance may give the impression that this view is plausible. But what did Moses mean when he said that the Covenant God gave to the Israelites was not the same Covenant given to the Patriarchs?

Deuteronomy 5:3 states that, "The LORD did not make this covenant with our fathers." The key phrase here is, "this covenant." The covenant being spoken of here was not merely the Decalogue but the whole Mosaic economy. It was in a real sense the whole theocratic covenant making provisions for ceremonial and civic laws. The Letter to the Hebrews attests to the fact that the ceremonial law applied to the Israelites until Christ came and fulfilled its meaning in His death. The civil law expired together with the nation of Israel and does not oblige any one today any further than the general equity requires. In these terms the Mosaic Covenant was different from the Covenant of Promise given to the Patriarchs. Abraham received no covenant of ceremonial and civil law such as Moses received. One thing, however, must be kept in view: the Mosaic Covenant did not contradict the Abrahamic Covenant (Galatians 3:21–24). The Mosaic Covenant was instead an *enlargement* of the Abrahamic Covenant under the general Covenant of Grace which included all the Covenants God gave to man from Genesis 3:15. The Mosaic Covenant was another step in bringing the Seed of the Woman, the Messiah, to the world. The moral law therefore was not different in essence during the Patriarchal period. The only real difference was the addition of the civil and ceremonial laws. The major difference was to be found in the specific establishment of a nation wherein the Mosaic Economy had its application.

Again the continuity of the eternal moral law of God is established and sustained. The moral law always applied to all men universally, even when only Israel had received it in written form. The only exceptions to this are the certain specific attachments written in the "ten words" themselves. For example, in the Fifth Commandment there was a promise of long life in the land that God will give to those who honor father and mother, and the

deliverance from Egypt is given as an additional reason to rest in the fourth commandment as given in Deuteronomy 5. The specifics of these "figurative helps" or 'ceremonial' addendum attached to the Mosaic economy.<sup>18</sup>

Besides the attachments within the context of the formal Decalogue there are differences that should be noted between the Israelites and the Gentiles. There are specific applications to the various sections of the moral code which were enforced by ceremonial and civil law. For example, an Israelite could be executed for breaking either the Fourth or Fifth Commandment (Exodus 31:12–17; Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22–24). This of course, was enforced by the Theocratic state of Israel under the civil law section of the Mosaic Covenant. The Covenant as a whole could not apply to all men universally because not all men were in the land of Israel or within its Theocratic boundaries. But this does not take away man's responsibility to be universally and morally bound to the Ten Commandments (Ephesians 2:11–16; I John 3:4).<sup>19</sup>

When the actual commandment of the Sabbath is considered, there is a designation of universal observance. Exodus 20:8 states, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." The word זָכוֹר may mean "to recollect and look back to some event" or "to remember and keep in mind," at the present time as well as in the future. In this particular case it represents both meanings. "Remember" (זָכוֹר) is an imperative injunction which derives its force and designation from the final clause of the Fourth Commandment. The command is to keep the day holy. The reason the day was to be kept holy is because God at its original inception made it "holy." After the stipulations of this law were given, reference was made to the original Sabbath institution at creation. Man was to work six days even as God created the heavens and the earth in six days (Exodus 20:9, 11). The "seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God" (Exodus 20:10). This phrase states the same principle of Genesis 2:1–3 that God rested, it was His day, and He blessed and sanctified it. Therefore, man was to follow the Divine example; otherwise the force of the Fourth Commandment is meaningless. It has its roots in the original creation ordinance of Sabbath-keeping.

The final clause of this law, therefore, establishes the basis of authority for keeping the Sabbath. It is stated, "Therefore (wherefore) the LORD blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it" (Exodus 20:11b). The "therefore" (עַל-כֵּן) is an assertion or solemn declaration pronouncing the authority for Sabbath-keeping. In this case "therefore" means "on the account of" or "because of." In other words, this assertion states that God's blessing and consecrating of the original Sabbath day are

18. While it may be common to speak of ceremonial additions to the commandments as in the examples, the tie to redemption out of Egypt no more makes the fourth commandment a partly ceremonial law, than the tie to the land makes the fifth ceremonial. In this regard the Puritans were apt to call these in a manner ceremonial addendum or figurative helps. See Nicholas Bownd, *Sabbatum Veteris et Novi Testamenti: The True Doctrine of the Sabbath* (2015), cvi.

19. For a general outline of this concept please refer to *the Covenant of Grace* by Calvin Cummings (Great Commission Publications, N.D.)

sufficient and authoritative reasons for its observance. Because the Fourth Commandment refers to the original Sabbath of creation, the authority for its observance applies to all men as well as to the Israelites who received the formal written Decalogue. God's own observance of the Sabbath implies that all men are to observe it. To state it simply, the intent of the Fourth Commandment can be expressed in the following manner: "You are to remember and keep the Sabbath day holy because I the Lord your God blessed and sanctified that day originally. For these reasons you are to keep My Sabbath day." If God refers to the original Sabbath day, man universally must be included. As far as the figurative addendum or help previously noted, the man outside of the theocratic nation of Israel cannot be expected to be obligated, just as he cannot be obligated to the civil laws beyond the general equity of them.

The Sabbath day is a day of rest, and was, no doubt, firmly established in the Mosaic Economy. But was it only a day of rest, or was there another feature to its observance? Dispensationalists purport that the Sabbath was merely a day of physical rest; however, by principle at least, the Sabbath day involved a certain sacrifice at the Tabernacle. Even though there were sacrifices on other days of the week, the Sabbath day was singled out for a special sacrifice, as Number 28:9–10 indicates. For on the Sabbath there was to be a special sacrifice of two rams as burnt offerings. Thus, the Sabbath day was more than a physical rest, for it included the element of worship.

If anything, the ceremonial feasts indicated by principle that the Sabbath day was considered a special day of worship. For example, the Day of Atonement was considered a Sabbath feast even though it did not always fall on the seventh day of the week (Leviticus 16:31). The Day of Atonement was a unique day of worship as well as a day of rest. The principle in force, then, is this: if the feast-Sabbaths were days of worship, then we may not conclude that the regular Sabbath day also had the aspect of worship by virtue of its being a day God blessed and consecrated (Leviticus 23:1–8)? It would seem odd for the People to merely "rest" without praising and worshipping God for His creation and His redemption from the bondage of Egypt. It would be strange indeed if the Israelite people associated only specific feast-Sabbaths, and not the regular weekly Sabbaths, with worship.

When the Mosaic Covenant was restated in Deuteronomy, the Fourth Commandment had one interesting detail which the Decalogue of Exodus 20 did not have. After the stipulation of doing work for six days, God reminded the people of their slavery and work in Egypt:

"And remember that you were a servant in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and with a stretched-out arm" (Deuteronomy 5:5). Although the allusion was being made to their slave labor, that was not all that was being said. The reference also involved a labor and bondage within the "land of sin." The people were not only redeemed from physical slave labor, but also from the heathen surroundings of Egypt. They were, in other words, redeemed spiritually as well as physically. They were redeemed spiritually to be a people for God's own possession (Exodus 6:7–8). With this in mind, the Sabbath institution at the exodus was given by God with the meaning of redemption and life. The Sabbath day was to remind the people of the spiritual rest in Canaan which God would bring to His people when He redeemed them from slavery. This is what the Psalmist was referring to in Psalm 95:28 when God said, "unto whom I swore in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest" if they harden their hearts.

The life motif associated with the Creation Sabbath was also associated with the giving of the formal commandment of Sabbath-keeping under the Mosaic Economy. The life motif was now associated with the redemptive-life motif; in other words, the "re-creation of life" from the bondage and death of sin found in Egypt.

Both the Decalogue of Exodus 20 and its restatement in Deuteronomy 5 share one common feature in respect to the Fourth Commandment. The life and redemptive motifs have been discussed above, but one other feature is the memorial motif of the two accounts in the Decalogue. Exodus 20 states, "Remember the Sabbath day," and Deuteronomy 5:15 states, "[remember that] the LORD your God brought you from [Egypt] ... therefore the LORD God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day." The First Commandment added this same type of memorial motif when God said, "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (Exodus 20:2; Deuteronomy 5:6). In these passages, God made constant and consistent reference to His work of redemption. Therefore He demanded that His people remember who He was and what He had done, lest they should forget Him, go after false gods, and break all His commandments.

God had spoken to the Patriarchs in a similar way. To Moses He said, "The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.... This is my Name forever, and this is my memorial unto all generations" (Exodus 3:15). In using this similar formula, God shows His people that He is the same God who had spoken to the Patriarchs. Thus, the

moral law was as authoritative for the people as His injunctions to the Patriarchs had been.

Men outside of the Mosaic Covenant and economy may not have kept the Fourth Commandment, or any of the others, but that did not excuse them from the moral law (Romans 2:14–16). The moral law judges all men and all nations. Therefore, it may be concluded from the above evidence and discussion that the moral law (including the Fourth Commandment) was not limited to the Nation of Israel, but applied to all men. Again, it must be kept in mind, that neither the ceremonial nor the civil laws (except for the general equity of the latter) applied outside the Theocratic Kingdom of Israel.

From the promise God gave to our first parents in the *proto-evangelium* (Genesis 3:15), the Righteous Seed line was carried through Jacob as God's plan to select a People unto Himself. It was definitely particularistic in order to bring about a universalistic goal (I Kings 8:41–43). The universalistic goal uncovered itself when the promised Messiah came, at the close of the Mosaic economy, to establish the Messianic Economy. When He came, He came not only to set man free from the curse of the law, but also to recover the proper interpretation of that same law (Galatians 3:13–14). Therefore, it is important to examine the teaching of Christ and His disciples on the moral law, specifically the Fourth Commandment, under the Messianic Economy.

### C. THE SABBATH INSTITUTION UNDER THE MESSIANIC AGE

There is no need to re-establish the existence of the Sabbath Institution during the ministry of Christ. The whole history of Israel testifies to its observance. It was indeed a sign and seal between God and His People which signified their redemption as well as a memorial to God's work of creation (Exodus 31:13; Deuteronomy 5:15). In fact, throughout the gospel narratives the Sabbath is referred to as a vital institution. Luke reports that Jesus in His early ministry "came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And, as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day" (Luke 4:16). The phrase *κατὰ τὸ εἶωθός αὐτοῦ* has the meaning of "practice." The word "custom" can be misleading in the sense that "custom" usually signifies the habits or traits of society that are in most cases developed over a period of time. On the other hand, the term "practice" (*εἶωθός*) signifies, in the context of Luke 4 and other passages, a "practice" based on the observation of God's law. Thus God's law was at the basis of Christ's practice of observing the Sabbath. It was more

than a mere custom of society; it was a commandment of God that Jesus obeyed faithfully.

Christ not only observed the Sabbath, but also taught men the true meaning and interpretation of the Fourth Commandment. Nowhere among the words of Jesus is there an indication that the Fourth Commandment was to be abolished or annulled as dispensationalists claim. The indication is rather of a confirmation and sustaining of the Fourth Commandment along with the rest of God's moral and eternal law.

When Jesus said that He did not come "to destroy the law and the prophets . . . but to fulfill [them]" (Matthew 5:17), He was speaking about the Mosaic Economy, including the civil and ceremonial law. He fulfilled the ceremonial law in respect to His sacrificial death. Thus there was no longer a need for the Temple sacrifices; they came to fulfillment and conclusion in Christ (Hebrews 9:1–28). When the gospel was universalized, the Truth was no longer invested in one particular people or nation. The Truth was to gather all peoples and nations.

The phrase "the law and the prophets" involved not only the civil and ceremonial law, but also the Messianic predictions incorporated throughout the Old Testament. These were generally fulfilled in Christ's first advent. But some parts of these predictions will not be completely fulfilled until His second advent. "For verily I say unto you, Till Heaven and earth pass away, not one jot or one tittle shall in any way pass from the law until *all* be fulfilled" (Matthew 5:18).

Last, Christ fulfilled the moral law in two respects. First, Jesus fulfilled the keeping of the moral law by His own righteousness and perfect obedience (Hebrews 1:9; Philippians 2:8; Romans 5:19). Second, Christ fulfilled the moral law by interpreting it properly from God's point of view in contrast to the misapplications of the Pharisees and others. The whole discussion of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7) is an excellent example of the Lord's exposition of the moral law. Therefore, the ceremonial and civil laws are not really "destroyed," but are fulfilled as to their usefulness. But the moral law is eternal and is not done away with as to its usefulness. Otherwise, Jesus' statement, "Therefore whosoever shall break one of these least commandments and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew 5:19), would be nonsense if the moral law itself was abolished in the Messianic Economy.

The "commandments" referred to in verse 19 can be no less than the Ten Commandments, which are

interpreted and applied within the Lord's discourse of Matthew 5–7. These commandments are binding in the Kingdom of Heaven as to their moral obligations, just as they were under the Old Testament Economy. The Kingdom of Heaven was proclaimed by Christ to be "at hand" in the ushering in of the Messianic Economy. The commandments of this economy were sustained and reaffirmed by Christ in no uncertain terms (Matthew 3:2, 4:17, 23; John 15:10).

It has been contested by Dr. Rice that the Sabbath was merely "part of the ceremonial law, like the sacrifices, which was fulfilled in Jesus. Jesus did not teach anybody to keep the Sabbath. This fact cannot be denied" (Rice, 4). Dr. Rice oversteps himself when he believes that the Sabbath was merely a ceremonial law. In this case he creates a confusion between the moral law and the ceremonial law. In fact, he fails to recognize that the Sabbath is a part of the written Decalogue that was sustained and reaffirmed by Christ. The Fourth Commandment cannot be "chiseled out" of the two tablets of stone and be called a ceremonial law. The major distinction Dr. Rice has overlooked, either knowingly or unknowingly, the fact that the Fourth Commandment has ceremonial attachments which applied only to the feasts under the Mosaic Economy. It has already been established that these ceremonial feasts (which involved Sabbath rests) were fulfilled by Christ as to their usefulness. But the Fourth Commandment remains, without any ceremonial attachments, within the structures of the Messianic Economy.

Dr. Rice also contended that Jesus never taught anyone to observe the Sabbath day. If this were true, why did Jesus teach men to keep the Ten Commandments? (Mark 10:17–20). It is true that Jesus only mentioned the last six of the Ten Commandments to the rich young ruler in Mark 10. But this was not meant to exclude the first four. The ones which were mentioned came under the general heading of man's duty to man, which is to be found in the second table of the Decalogue. However, when a lawyer asks Jesus, "Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:36–40; Deuteronomy 6:15; Leviticus 19:18b). In this text, the first table of the Decalogue was mentioned as well as the second table. Jesus definitely taught man's responsibility to God for the whole Decalogue. Jesus did not make any attempt

to exclude the Sabbath commandment from this reference. Rather, the Fourth Commandment was understood as being an integral part of the Decalogue.

Jesus interpreted the majority of the commandments in the Sermon on the Mount, but made no mention of the Fourth Commandment. Its absence, however, does not deny the fact that Jesus interpreted the Sabbath law and taught men how to observe it. Elsewhere the Scriptures reveal that the Lord's interpretation clashes with the Pharisees concerning the Sabbath. This supports the fact that Jesus taught the proper observance of the Fourth Commandment that teaches that acts of necessity, piety, and mercy were proper on the Sabbath day. This was in sharp contrast to the man-made, rigid rules of the Pharisees (Matthew 12:1–13).

The Pharisees accused Jesus of not keeping the Sabbath. But this accusation was false since it was based on the unbiblical authority of their own traditions. Jesus responded to these accusations by saying that "the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath day" (Matthew 12:8). Christ was teaching the Pharisees that He had absolute sovereignty over the Sabbath day and its institution. The Son with the Father established this day as a day of blessing and consecration at the end of creation. Jesus was really telling His accusers that He was the Author of the Sabbath; therefore what He said about it was authoritative and true. His accusers had misrepresented God's law and stood condemned before its Originator.

In the parallel passage of Mark 2:27, Jesus said that, "The Sabbath is made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." The force of this text is that Sabbath-keeping was not to be laden with man-made regulations, making it a day of tedious duty. The original purpose of the Sabbath was that man would honor God and receive the blessing of sacred rest from his labors. The Pharisees had made the Sabbath Day a day of bondage instead of a day of gladness and blessing.

There is a second aspect of Mark 2:27 which should not be overlooked. The original language of this text reads, "Τὸ σάββατον διὰ τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἐγένετο," i.e., literally, "The Sabbath came into being [was established] for man." The question may be asked, "When did the Sabbath come into being?" Was it at the creation, or was it at the giving of the Decalogue on Mt. Sinai. The grammar of the text points to the fact that the institution of the Sabbath had its origin at Creation (Genesis 2:1–3). The evidence supporting this is to be found in the construction of "διὰ τὸν ἄνθρωπον," i.e., "for the man." The noun ἄνθρωπον used with the definite article τὸν in this context has a generic designation. Therefore,

the noun would refer to “mankind” in general.<sup>20</sup> No one man is singled out in the context, nor is any nation. The reference is to all men universally. The institution, then, was given at creation to all mankind, and all men are responsible to obey its stipulations.

There is no doubt from these above references that Jesus truly taught men to keep the Fourth Commandment. There is not even a hint of abolishing the Sabbath law in the words of the Lord. If Christ taught Sabbath-keeping, there is no reason for His church *not* to keep it. The risen Savior told His disciples to “go and teach *all* nations . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19a, 20). The teaching of the apostles was the same as their Lord’s. Whatever the Lord taught about the Law of God the disciples were to teach. It is therefore presupposed that the apostles taught and kept the Fourth Commandment as they taught the other nine. Nevertheless, dispensationalists persist in saying that since there was no specific mention of the Fourth Commandment in the epistles, it was no longer in force.

It is true that in the New Testament, outside of the Four Gospels, there is no explicit reference to observing and keeping the Sabbath Day, although the other nine commandments are referred to throughout the epistles (I Timothy 2:5; I Corinthians 10:7; James 5:15; Ephesians 6:2; I John 3:15; Hebrews 13:4; Ephesians 4:28; Colossians 3:9; Ephesians 5:3). In considering this fact, is one to judge on the basis of silence that the Fourth Commandment was abolished? Dispensationalists would argue that the whole legal system of Moses has been abolished. They call the Ten Commandments “exhortations,” not “laws.” They say that “the ministry of death, in letters cut into stones . . . has been done away . . . but . . . the ministry of the Spirit . . . remains” (II Corinthians 3:7, 10, 11). This is taken to mean that “the commandments as such written on tables of stone are ‘done away’ and annulled” (Biederwolf, 37, 38). The “letters cut into stones” are, of course, the Ten Commandments. But does this passage prove the annulment of these letters cut into stones? Paul was not saying that the Decalogue itself was being done away with; his emphasis is the doing away with the ministry of death that the law carried with it. The Decalogue is held up before man as the standard of God’s righteousness, and man has fallen far short of this righteousness (Romans 6:23). The preaching of Paul about sin would be nonsense if there were no righteous standard of God. But

God has provided a way of salvation from the curse of the law, not from its positive application. Paul spoke of his love of the law, in its positive application (Romans 6:14; 7:6–11, 22). To Paul, as a Christian, “the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good” (Romans 7:12–22). The Jews had misused the law of God in thinking that by keeping it they could be justified by it. But it was always the grace of God that saved men through faith, and the “law of faith” would be “counted as righteousness” (Romans 4:5). But “Do we then make the Law void through faith? God forbid, Yea, we establish the law” (Romans 3:31). Paul therefore taught no differently than Christ in respect to the law. It cannot be denied that the law is the supreme guide for knowing the will of God for Christian righteousness and living (James 2:8–13; 4:11, 12).

The law of God has been made especially significant to the Christian by the promise that God gave to Jeremiah and Ezekiel, later fulfilled in the New Testament. The author of the letter to the Hebrews reminds his readers that God said of His New Covenant, “I will put my laws into their minds and write them in their hearts and I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Jeremiah 31:33; Hebrews 8:10; 10:16; Ezekiel 11:19; 36:26, 27). There is no mention here of abolishing the Decalogue. To the contrary, the facts lead one to conclude that the establishment and confirmation of God’s law is a prominent and salient doctrine found throughout the whole of the New Testament.

The laws of the Decalogue found in the New Testament are more than “exhortations” or “strong urgings.” An exhortation implies a voluntary response, whereas “law” calls for definite and faithful obedience. The law of God must be taken as seriously in the New Testament as it was in the Old Testament. Arguing from silence that there was no specific reference to the Fourth Commandment in the New Testament is foolishness. The Fourth Commandment is part of the whole moral law of the Decalogue. To obey the Decalogue is to obey the entire law of God (James 2:10–13). But dispensationalists persist in saying that there is evidence in both the Old and New Testaments for the abolishing of the Fourth Commandment.

Hosea 2:11 records the words of God to the people of Israel and Judah concerning their judgment, saying, “I will also cause all her joy to cease, her feast days, her new moons, and her sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts.” Dispensationalists cite this as evidence to support their view that the Fourth Commandment ceases to exist. The major problem with this view is their insistence that the plural “sabbaths” refers exclusively to the weekly Sabbath

20. J. Harold Greenlee, *A Concise Exegetical Grammar of the New Testament Greek* (W. B. Eerdmans Publ, Grand Rapids, 1953), 22 (cf. John 3:16).

of the Fourth Commandment. It must be remembered, however, that there were other sabbath days besides the weekly Sabbath. These other sabbaths were connected to the ceremonial high holy feasts such as Yom Kippur and other, similar feasts (Leviticus 23). When the plural, “sabbaths,” is used along with references to “feast day,” “new moons,” and “solemn feasts, it finds itself in the category of “sabbath feasts” and cannot be constrained to mean the weekly Sabbath. There is no evidence of God abolishing the Fourth Commandment.

The New Testament parallel passage concerning the abolishing of “sabbath-feasts” is found in Colossians 2:16–17. The Authorized Version translates σαββάτων as “of the sabbath *days*” (“days” is in italics because it is not found in the Greek). The Williams Translation of the New Testament renders the text of verse 16 in the following manner, “Stop letting anyone pass judgment on you in matters of eating and drinking, or in the matter of annual or monthly feasts or sabbaths.” Paul desired to inform the church at Colossae not to be anxious about the Judaizers who made it necessary to follow the old ceremonial laws under the New Messianic Economy. These ceremonial laws were shadows or types which had their essence and reality in Christ. “These were but a shadow of what was coming; the reality belongs to Christ.”<sup>21</sup> Only feast-sabbaths passed away. The “sabbath” alluded to in Colossians 2:16 is in the same category as the “sabbaths” of Hosea 2:11; a category that also includes a “holyday” and “new moon”. To make the feast-sabbaths refer specifically and only to the Fourth Commandment of the Decalogue is forcing upon the text something that is not there.

Any attempt to show that the Fourth Commandment was abolished in the New Testament is fruitless. The Fourth Commandment was by necessity in operation in the Apostolic Church. How it was kept is difficult to determine. However, there are certain incidents in the early church which point to the observance of one day in seven in contrast to the other six days of the week.

The first evidence supporting Sabbath-keeping in the New Testament church stems from the practice of the early Christians assembling for worship on a specific day, namely, the first day of the week instead of the last day of the week. The practice had its roots in the Resurrection day of Christ. It is recorded that all the disciples were assembled in the upper room on the first day of the week when the risen Christ appeared to them. There is no hint that the disciples came to worship God and observe a Sabbath day at that time. The only reason for their assembly was “for fear of the Jews” (John 20:19–23). They had just observed the Sabbath

the previous day; why, then, would they observe another Sabbath the next day? But “after eight days the disciples were inside again [in the upper room] and Thomas with them. Jesus came ... and stood in the midst [of them]” (John 20:26). The short phrase “after eight days” was another way of saying that Jesus again appeared to the disciples on the first day of the week. This action on Jesus’ part represented no mere coincidence of appearance. He could have appeared on any other day. But before His crucifixion Jesus foretold that He would rise on the third day after His death, which was the first day of the week. It was the plan of God that this would come to pass.

With this analysis in mind, it would be most natural for the disciples to consider the Lord’s Resurrection Day with special significance. Taking these appearance narratives by themselves does not prove that the disciples regarded the first day of the week as a sacred Sabbath. Further evidence of New Testament practice and example must be observed to support this concept.

The most striking example in the New Testament to indicate the observance of a new weekly Sabbath Day is found in Acts 20. Paul and his companions visited the church at Troy and remained there for seven days, from Saturday to Saturday. There is no indication that they kept the Jewish Sabbath on the last day of the week. Instead, Paul broke bread (no doubt the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, cf. Acts 2:46, in contrast to the refreshment taken after the restoration of Eutychus in Acts 21:11) and preached a sermon on the first day of the week (Acts 20:6–7). These two actions suggest a worship service, or a special time when the followers of Christ at the church in Troy assembled for the specific purpose of celebrating the Lord’s Supper and hearing the preaching of the Gospel.

It is significant that the first day of the week was chosen for these purposes. No doubt the early Christians knew that Christ’s resurrection occurred on the first day of the week. There is no reason not to believe that these early Christians made it a practice to commemorate the Lord’s resurrection. If the first day of the week had no meaning behind it, why did Paul not break bread and preach on the seventh day? That Christ’s resurrection occurred on the first day of the week was warrant enough for a special observance of that day.

A second example of the uniqueness of the first day is that Paul instructed the Corinthians to bring their collection for the saints on that day: “Upon the first day of the week, let everyone of you lay by him in store, as

21. Charles B. Williams, *The New Testament* (Moody Press, Chicago, 1957), 446 (cf. Col. 2:17).

God has prospered him, so that there may be no gatherings when I come" (I Corinthians 16:1–2). This incident, coupled with the attitude and actions at Troy, would seem to suggest that the first day had been established by the apostles as a day of worship and Sabbath-keeping.

John, the beloved apostle, stated that he was "in the Spirit on the Lord's Day" (Revelation 1:10). In other words, John had an experience with the Divine Inspiration of the Holy Spirit on a day which was called "the day of the Lord." This day, "the Lord's Day," should not be confused with the judgment day. John's experience involved seeing his Savior on His Heavenly Throne. The natural question is, "What was this 'Lord's Day' which John experienced?" Extra-biblical data helps to identify this day.

Justin Martyr (100–165 A.D.), one of the very early church fathers and the first apologist, said this about the first day of the week, "On the day called Sunday, is an assembly of all who live in the city or country, and the memoirs of the apostles and writings of the prophets are read ... it was the day the world began, and on which Christ arose from the dead." Justin does not call this first day of the week "the Lord's Day," but he does identify it as a day of assembly to hear the Scriptures read. This would fall in line with the incident at Troy in Acts 20.

On the other hand, Irenaeus (120–192 A.D.) stated, "On the Lord's Day every one of us Christians keeps the Sabbath, meditating on the law and rejoicing in the works of God." This interpretation of the phrase "the Lord's Day" by Irenaeus can be considered accurate since he was a disciple of Polycarp, who in turn was a disciple of the Apostle John who first used the phrase "the Lord's Day" (Wilson, 124, 125). Therefore there is a link between the Sabbath and the Lord's Day, which Justin identifies as "Sunday."

Ignatius, another of John's disciples, wrote in a letter to the Magnesians (circa 101 A.D.) that "the Lord's Day [was] the queen and prince of all days."<sup>22</sup> It can be safely deduced that "the Lord's Day" and "the first day of the week," Sunday, were one and the same day.

Augustine (354–430 A.D.) made the identification clear when he stated that "the Lord's Day was by the resurrection of Christ declared to Christians" Athanasius (296–373 A.D.) added that, "The Lord transferred the Sabbath to the Lord's Day." Athanasius' words confirm that the observance of the Fourth Commandment was transferred to the first day of the week. The *law* of the Sabbath had not been changed, only the *day* of

observance. This is similar to the change of circumcision to baptism (Colossians 2:11–12) and the Passover to the Lord's Supper. In fact, the Council of Laodicea (363 A.D.) testified to the existence of the Fourth Commandment by decreeing that "Christians ought not to rest on the Sabbath, this is the seventh day (Saturday), but preferring the Lord's Day to rest as Christians..." (Wilson, *Ibid.*). Yet the most succinct statement of Sabbath-keeping in the early church was made by Leo (496 A.D.). Leo had behind him at least four hundred years of testimony and practice concerning the Christian Sabbath or Lord's Day, and expressed his view:

If the Jews did so much reverence their sabbaths, which were but a shadow of ours, are not we which inhabit the light and truth of grace, bound to honour that day which the Lord Himself hath honoured, and hath therein delivered us from dishonour and from death? Are we not bound to keep it singular and inviolable, well contenting ourselves with so liberal a grant of the rest and not encroaching upon that one day which God hath chosen to His own honour? Were it not reckless neglect of religion to make that very day common, and to think we may do with it as with the rest? (Wilson, 126).

The elements of Sabbath-keeping in the early church that are found in the biblical and historical testimonies can be summarized in the special assembling of God's people, preaching the Word of God, worshiping God in praise (I Corinthians 14:26), and fellowship around the Lord's Table. The principle of assembly by God's people was well rooted within the Old Testament structure and practice. Christ's own practice of going to the synagogue on the Sabbath was based on the law of "holy convocations." Further, the author of the Hebrews wrote that Christians should not be "forsaking the assembly of [themselves] together as the manner of some is" (Hebrews 10:25). These principles find their place and practice in the convocation of Christians on the "first day of the week," which was identified as the "Lord's Day."

If the early Christians truly believed and obeyed the Fourth Commandment, they would keep the Sabbath Day. However, the New Testament does not mention that they kept the last day of the week. The marks of Sabbath-keeping were evident on the "first day of the week." The only conclusion one can reach is that there was a change of the Sabbath from the last day of the week to the first day of the week. How and when the day actually changed is difficult to determine from

22. Albert Barnes, *Barnes Notes on the New Testament* (Kregel Pub., Grand Rapids, 1962), 1547 (cf. Rev. 1:10).

Scripture. There were incidents when Paul preached to the Jews in the synagogue on the Sabbath (seventh) day. Paul, it must be understood, preached to the Jews on the Jewish Sabbath because this was their sole day of assembly. He, too, was living in the transition period when the Christian church was beginning to have its complete break with Judaism because of its refusal to accept the Messiah. The Gospel was now being preached to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews. The ceremonial law had been fulfilled by Christ's death. The temple and all of its sacrifices were about to be destroyed in 70 A.D., making the break complete. However, although the sacrifices were done away, they were continued symbolically in the celebration of the Lord's Supper. The sabbath-feasts and holy convocations also passed away, but continued symbolically in the one holy day of the week, the Christian Sabbath. True, there was no explicit command for this change mentioned in the New Testament. But there was no need for an explicit command for change, just as there was no need for a specific command for the change of circumcision to baptism. If there had been a great controversy over the change, why was there no mention of it at the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15)?

In addition to the Lord's teaching about the Sabbath and the practice of the early church, there is one remaining feature that makes Sabbath-keeping among Christians most necessary and highly symbolic. This is none other than the relationship between the present Sabbath and the eternal Sabbath.

#### D. THE SABBATH IN ETERNITY

The New Testament passage which teaches about the Sabbath of Eternity is Hebrews 4:1–11. This passage by itself may not seem to support the present Sabbath or the Sabbath to come. But when all the data of this paper are considered together, the words of the text stand out in confirmation of Christian Sabbath-keeping.

The burden of the writer to the Hebrews was to inform his readers that faith in God brought one into God's Rest. "Rest" in this context means a rest from the bondage of sin. The author of Hebrews illustrates how men must not provoke God by unbelief as the Israelites did when they were led out of Egypt. Because of their unbelief some did not enter into the promised spiritual rest of God (Hebrews 3:7–11, 16). But those who did believe would enter into the promised spiritual rest from the bondage of sin (Hebrews 4:3a).

How was this spiritual rest to be symbolized for the Christian? The answer is simple. The Christian Sabbath

symbolizes the spiritual rest from the bondage of sin. That is why Hebrews 4:4 refers to God's resting on the seventh day after His work of Creation. The reference was made in order to identify the Sabbath institution and its relationship and symbolism as spiritual rest. The Israelites were commanded to "remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day" (Deuteronomy 5:15). God promised His people the land of Canaan, which was the type of spiritual rest. Being redeemed out of Egypt was being redeemed out of a land of toil and heathenism. But being brought into the promised land meant spiritual rest as well as physical rest to the people who did not provoke God to wrath (Hebrews 3:7–11). Only then would remembering the Sabbath have meaning and import to those who believed God.

In like manner the Christian has found meaning in the Christian Sabbath because it signifies to him redemption from the bondage of sin as it did to the Israelites. However, the Israelites did not receive the ultimate and entire rest under Joshua. For David, under the inspiration of the Spirit, said, "Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. For if [Joshua] had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day" (Hebrews 4:7–8). From this text it is evident that there was a "pointing to" for a specific spiritual rest day for God's people. The conclusion is then made that "there remains a rest to the people of God" (Hebrews 4:9). The word for "remains" in the Greek, ἀπολείπεται, means that something is still to come. In other words, it can only mean in this context that a "Sabbathizing" is yet to come for God's people. This "rest" in verse 9 in the original is σαββατισμὸς, and refers to the Sabbath institution. If it did not, it would be strange for the author of this Epistle, since he was writing to Hebrew Christians who knew the terminology of the Old Testament, to use such a term to mean anything but the Sabbath. He had already used another word (κατάραυσιν) for "rest" in this same context. If he merely meant "rest" in general, why did he switch from κατάραυσιν to σαββατισμὸς? The answer is obvious: because he desired to speak of the Sabbath institution and its symbolic meaning in relationship to the spiritual rest for the people of God. The rendering of this text must be, "Therefore there is yet to come for the people of God a Sabbath observance," which will

symbolize the present rest from the bondage of sin, and the eternal and ultimate rest in the new heavens and new earth.

This concept of symbolism is the basic theme throughout the Epistle to the Hebrews. The letter speaks of types and shadows from the Mosaic Economy. Comparison of spiritual truths with other spiritual truths is the key to the epistle. This is illustrated in Hebrews 4:10 where it is said, "For he who has entered into his rest he also has ceased from his own works, as God did from His."

The person spoken of in this verse is usually identified as the believer "who has ceased from his works" of sin. The difficulty with this interpretation is in the comparative theme of the verse. What is the comparison really portraying? The comparison relates the person doing, as John Owen says, work similar to God's. But in fact, the phrase, "ἀπὸ τῶν ἰδίων" or "from his own," was used to refer to "the rest of Christ from his works which is compared with the rest of God from his at the foundation of the world."<sup>23</sup> John Owen continues to state:

The rest which he is said to enter into is called 'his rest' absolutely. As God, speaking of the former rest, calls it 'my rest,' so this is the 'my rest' of another,—'his rest,' namely, the rest of Christ. When the entering of believers into rest is mentioned, it is called ... 'God's rest' ... not 'their rest,' or 'our rest' (Owen, *ibid.*).

This cannot be the believer resting from his work because his works are not to be compared to the works of God. "To compare the sins or the suffering (works) of men with the works of God, our apostle did not intend" (Owen, 41).

The basis for a remaining Sabbath is that Christ rested from His redemptive work. This same principle was expressed using the wording of the Fourth Commandment. The principle is that since God worked six days and rested on the seventh, man should do the same. When it comes to Christ's redemptive work, the comparison is between His Father's work and His own. As His Father rested from His creative labors, so the Son rests from His "re-creative" redemptive labors. This gives the foundation for Christian Sabbath-keeping. "Therefore let us labor to enter that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief" (Hebrews 4:11). The plea was no less than asking Christians to

23. John Owen, *Hebrews* (Sovereign Grace Pub., Indiana, 1960), pp. 332–333.

24. Barnes, 1254.

follow the perfect example of Christ's own rest as the Israelites were to follow the perfect example of God's rest from Creation. Christ's own rest came when He arose from the dead on the first day of the week. This gives sufficient reason to observe the Sabbath on the Lord's Day.

In this present Messianic Age the Christian does not receive the ultimate and entire Sabbath "spiritual rest," even as the Israelites did not. But the present Sabbath represents the redemption of Christ even as redemption was represented in the Fourth Commandment under the Mosaic Economy. Therefore there is a definite eschatological principle to the whole Sabbath institution. The end and goal is to honor God. God blessed and sanctified this day for His glory. It is a day wherein the believer is to remember the creative and redemptive works of God. It is a day for all honor and praise to go to Him. It is the Lord's Day, for it is the Sabbath unto the Lord. The creation of the new heavens and the new earth will incorporate within it the eternal Sabbath rest for the people of God. This is the goal of time and history. This will be the day God will be eternally glorified by His people (Revelation 21:1–7, 22–26).

If there is no Sabbath institution in the present Messianic Age, then there is no meaning in the Eternal Sabbath for the Christian. How can Christians look for something to enjoy in the future if it is not here now to enjoy, albeit in an incomplete and imperfect form. Sabbath-keeping in the Messianic Age is the preparation for the eternal Sabbath. The present Sabbath is, then, a "little bit of heaven on earth." Albert Barnes has expressed this thought in the following manner,

One day in seven at least should remind us of what heaven is to be; and that day may be, and should be, the most happy of the seven. They who do not love the Sabbath on earth are not prepared for heaven. If it is to them a day of tediousness; if its hours move heavily; if they have no delight in its sacred employments, what would an eternity of such a day be? How would they be passed? Nothing can be clearer than that if we have no such happiness in a season of holy rest, and in holy employments here, we are wholly unprepared for heaven. To the Christian it is the subject of the highest joy in anticipation that heaven is to be one long unbroken Sabbath—an eternity of successive Sabbath hours.<sup>24</sup>

Jesus said, "Come unto me all you who labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest ... and you shall find rest unto your souls" (Matthew 11:28, 29b).

*Continued on Page 294.*

**The Fourth Commandment: Annulled or Sustained? Continued from Page 224.**

Jesus meant none other than spiritual rest for those who come to trust Him and His redemptive work. This rest is symbolized in the Fourth Commandment Christian Sabbath.

When the early Christians partook of the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week they were remembering Christ's atoning work of redemption as well as His resurrection. The Supper is to be observed until Christ returns to complete the whole process of redemption when Christians will enter into the new heavens and the new earth. This will usher in the eternal Sabbath rest. This will be the Sabbath of all sabbaths. God's people will finally rest in the glory of their Redeemer. Then there will be the complete fulfillment of the Lord's words, "and you shall find rest unto your souls."■

**Psallo. Continued from Page 239.**

prayer, opening his inner most trouble and sighing to God in confident expectation of a hearing, and of an answer.

The next portion (v.4–6) moves to David's identification of his cause with God, and reveals by implication the subject of his prayer and groaning in the former section. David pleads God's own moral excellence, His disapproval of all evil, His hatred and despising of wicked men, and their final judgment at His hands. This portion is introduced with the consequential adverb *כי* (*chi*), indicating that the Psalmist places the unspoken request of the former section upon the foundation of the Lord's moral excellence and hatred of evil. A good inference would be that David's groanings are for deliverance from and vindication before his enemies, and he pleads God's own holiness in justification of this request. In this we see the foundation for all imprecation in the Psalter—it is the moral excellence of God Himself, and His vindication of His own holiness.

In the next section (v.7–8), David affirms the Lord's Covenant mercies and faithfulness as the foundation of his communion with God and confidence in His deliverance and mercy. However, this is especially seen in the public worship, as the Psalmist bows down, or worships before the presence of the Lord in His Holy Temple. He craves the Lord's guidance in righteousness, that in the face of his enemies he might remain steadfast in the way of the Lord. Here the Church militant may take instruction from the warrior-king, in watchfulness and straightness of duty because the enemies of our souls ever lie in wait to snare and catch those who wander from the paths of righteousness, and positively, who are beaten back as we follow the advance of our Great King, the Lord Jesus Christ, straying not from His paths of righteousness.

Verses 9–10 reinforce the reasoning placed before the Lord

previously, in the destruction of the Psalmist's enemies, for they have rebelled against the Lord. We have not here a plea for personal vengeance; but as with all the imprecatory portions of the Psalter, we have a plea for the Lord to vindicate His own holiness, and His own people, who seek as the objects of His mercies to follow Him. Note of the enemies: They are wicked to their core, in the inner most part. It is from this stock and store that they issue forth their lies, flatteries, and other enticements to the grave. This same doctrine is echoed one millennia later, by our Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 15.19–20). Because of this "soul murder," the Psalmist prays for their casting out, and their destruction. We ought to learn a valuable lesson from David here—the wicked among us do not seek the status quo, they rather seek to advance their wicked designs to the harm of the people of God, either wittingly or unwittingly. In advancing the cause of lies and rebellion against God, they spread harm and spiritual destruction wherever they go. It is right that the King, who is tasked with the protection of his subjects, to pray for their casting out and destruction. Truly, our Lord Jesus Christ, as the Great King and Head of His Church, follows this same strategy.<sup>4</sup>

David brings this Psalm to a close with a request for the covenant people—identified as those who put their trust in God, those that love His Name, those who follow after righteousness—that the Lord would grant them great rejoicing. And this is in contrast to the temptation to fear and trembling in the face of their enemies, because of the Lord's covenant faithfulness in defending them. Surely the Lord is a shield, a protection to all those that love His Name. As we sing this Psalm, let us by the Lord's good grace upon us, partake of that same Davidic Spirit: calling upon the Name of the Lord for protection and vindication as we stand in a dark day, that we will not be moved from the path of righteousness. Let us pray that the Lord would vindicate His holiness and righteousness in the face of a world gone mad with sin, and that He would compass His people as a shield as they seek His face, and love His name. Let us rise diligently and early, to dedicate ourselves once again to the exercises of private and public worship, bowing before and consecrating ourselves to the Lord afresh, renewed in the knowledge of His steadfast covenant mercies. May the Lord bless our praise as we seek to glorify Him.

Todd L. RUDELL ■

4. See Psalm 101.1-8, and hear the righteous commitment of the Messianic King to purge His kingdom from all that defiles.