

Bible Study: The Sabbath Day

The purpose of this Bible study is:

1. To examine and to comment on every Bible verse dealing with the Sabbath Day,
 2. To determine whether or not the keeping of the Sabbath Day is required for New Testament Christians.
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Old Testament

Genesis 2:2: And on the seventh day God finished his work which he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done.

- A. Notice that God rested on the seventh day of creation.

The word "rested" here comes from the Hebrew word "shabath" (Strong's 07673) which can mean "to keep or to observe the Sabbath". This word is the root for the word "shabbath" (Strong's 07676) which is translated as "Sabbath" throughout the Old Testament.

- B. Why did God rest upon or keep the Sabbath on this first seventh day?

Was He physically tired after all His creation work? No, of course He wasn't. It is quite obvious that He rested on the seventh day as an example for Adam, Eve, and all humanity after them to do the same.

- C. Some say that only that very first seventh day was made a day of rest by God and not all of the other seventh days since.

Moses refutes this in Exodus 20:11 by commanding the Israelites to keep the Sabbath, not because they were Israelites, but because God had rested upon and sanctified the seventh day at Creation.

- D. Was the evening of the sixth day of creation the end of God's work?

Every human being had better hope that it was not!

Jesus said (in John 5:17) that both He and His Father continue to work. Just one part of their "work" is the sustaining and maintaining of the operation of the universe. If they withdrew that "work", the whole physical universe would come to a sudden and complete end! (See notes on Hebrews 4:10).

Genesis 2:3: So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all his work which he had done in creation.

- A. This is an extremely important verse!
- B. What did God do on and to this seventh day of the creation week?
- He rested on it
 - He blessed it (made it special)
 - He sanctified it (set it apart as holy)
- C. Most agree that He did these three things with the Sabbath, but some claim that He did not necessarily do them for man.

Is it reasonable that God did such special things on and to the Sabbath Day (immediately after He created mankind) but did them for Himself, for His own benefit?

We know that He did not, because Jesus clearly said (Mark 2:27) that the Sabbath was made for man.... He rested on it, blessed it, and sanctified it... for man.

- D. Some say that God did all these things on and with the Sabbath and yet did not tell his people how to keep and use the day.

Although the details are not recorded, there can be little doubt that God would have instructed Adam and Eve - His first human children - in how to keep His Sabbaths holy.

Those simple instructions were later repeated by Moses, Isaiah and, of course, by Jesus Christ!

Moses - under God's direction - stated that we are to rest on the Sabbath Day because God did. God's people are to follow His example in how He kept it.

- E. If God blessed and sanctified the seventh day at creation and made a special point of making it very clear to His people that He had done these things, is it not unreasonable to believe that He would secretly remove His blessing and sanctification from the day (i.e. without clearly and plainly telling all of His people)?

Exodus 5:5: and Pharaoh said, "Behold, the people of the land are now many and you make them rest from their burdens!"

Notice that the word "rest" here is translated from the Hebrew "Shabath".

Through Moses, God was demanding that the Israelites be given time off for special worship (likely one of God's Feasts which are special Sabbaths).

Exodus 16:23: He said to them, "This is what the Lord has commanded: 'Tomorrow is a day of solemn rest, a holy Sabbath to the Lord; bake what you will bake and boil what you will boil, and all that is left over lay by to be kept till the morning.'"

A. This is the first use of the English word "Sabbath" in the Bible.

This usage comes from the Hebrew word "shabbath" (Strong's 07676).

The word "shabbath" comes from a primitive root word "shabath" (Strong's 07673) which is translated in various places as "cease", "rest", "away", "fail", "celebrate", and miscellaneous other words, some of which precede this Exodus 16.23 usage of the word "shabbath." For example:

- Cease: see Genesis 8:22
- Rest: see Genesis 2:2-3 and Exodus 5:5

B. The English word "rest" in this verse is translated from the Hebrew "shabbathown" (Strong's 07677) which stems from the word "Shabbath".

C. Moses was here transmitting to the Israelites a Sabbath commandment from God... before their arrival at Sinai where the tablets of stone were given.

D. There is no indication that this Sabbath commandment was something that was newly initiated by God at this time. In fact, other verses state that the Sabbath Day of rest was initiated at creation (See Genesis 2:2-3 & Exodus 20:11). God said through Moses "Tomorrow is a day of solemn rest, etc.". He did not say "this is a new command: from now on, every seventh day is to be a solemn rest, etc.".

E. This appears to be a reminder to the Israelites of God's Sabbath requirements, and specifically with regard to the collection and preparation of manna. It must be remembered that the Israelites had been in captivity for hundreds of years, and that they had not, during those years, enjoyed the freedom to obey God's Sabbath commands (See Ex 5:1-5). Now that they were free from Egypt and the restrictions of slavery, they needed to be reminded of their obligations as the children of God.

F. Was the Sabbath time holy?

Yes. It was. Although many now ridicule the idea that a specific period of time can be set apart as holy, this verse of God's Word says that the seventh day was holy time!

G. What were the Israelites to do on the Sabbath Day?

This verse of God's Word says that they were to rest solemnly. This doesn't mean that they were to be miserable, but rather that they were to be strict in their keeping of this rest period.

H. How were they to prepare for the Sabbath Day rest (as regards the manna)?

Other associated verses show that they were to collect twice as much on the previous day. This verse states that they were to do any preparation and cooking of the manna on the previous day. Any leftover, unprepared manna could be left unconsumed until the Sabbath Day without fear of it rotting (as it did on the other six days of the week). This was a miracle, which proved to the Israelites on a weekly basis that God continued to put His blessing on the Sabbath Day. It also clearly revealed to them, after hundreds of years of slavery, which day was God's Sabbath.

Exodus 16:25: Moses said, "eat it today, for today is a Sabbath to the Lord; today you will not find it in the field."

- A. This day was a Sabbath Day. But nowhere is there any indication that this was the first Sabbath Day that the Israelites or mankind in general were bound to keep.
- B. Moses was here telling the Israelites that it was quite safe for them to eat the manna collected on the previous day.
- C. He was also reminding them that, because this was God's special day and He wanted them to rest rather than to work at manna collection, there would be no manna in the fields that day.
- D. Note that, as in verse 23, this verse states that the Sabbath was "to the Lord." This means that, although the Sabbath was made for man, it is still God's day - "the Lord's Day" - and man is to keep it in recognition, acceptance, honour and obedience to Him.

Exodus 16:26: Six days you shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is a Sabbath, there will be none."

Moses is repeating himself here, perhaps for emphasis. He had already told the Israelites that:

- They should gather manna for six days
- The seventh day is a Sabbath - a day of rest
- There would be none for them to gather on the Sabbath Day.

Exodus 16:27: On the seventh day some of the people went out to gather, and they found none.

- A. After all that God had done through Moses, it is amazing that some of the Israelites continued to disbelieve and test God's (and Moses') patience in this way, especially when their disbelief concerned a miracle of God!
- B. It is interesting that the Hebrew word for "seventh" is "shebiyy" (Strong's 07637) which has some etymological similarity and relationship to the words "shabath" and "shabbath". Perhaps "seventh things" are to be set apart for rest or for special use.
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Exodus 16:29: See! The Lord has given you the Sabbath, therefore on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days; remain every man of you in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day."

- A. God finds it necessary to repeat himself yet again on this point which He considered to be so important:
- God had given the Sabbath Day of rest as a blessing for His children.
 - God gave them twice as much manna on the sixth day.
 - They were not to go out to attempt to collect manna on the seventh day.
- B. Some have misconstrued the latter part of this verse as meaning that Sabbath-keepers should not even venture out of their homes on the Sabbath Day. This is not what is being said at all. God was here chastising the disobedient Israelites who had just blatantly broken His Sabbath instructions. He was telling them not to go out of their homes on the Sabbath for the purpose of collecting manna. If we wish to extrapolate this concept for New Testament Sabbath-keepers, it should be in this sense only: that we should not venture from our homes on the Sabbath for the purpose of doing any kind of work.
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Exodus 16:30: So the people rested on the seventh day.

- A. Finally, the Israelites got the point, realized that God was serious about what they did with His Sabbaths, and they began to obey.
- B. The Israelites began to "shabath" every seventh day!
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Exodus 20:8: remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy.

- A. This is the fourth of the Ten Commandments and is the last of the four commandments which show love towards God.
- B. It is quite a simple statement and yet is the cause of so much controversy.

- C. Some say that the Ten Commandments were given to and meant only for the Israelites - not for the rest of mankind - and that they were part of the Old Covenant between God and Israel which was nailed to the cross of Jesus Christ.

God answers this opinion through Jesus Christ in Mark 2:27, through the prophet Ezekiel in Ezekiel 20:11-21, and through the prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 56:2.

- D. Some say that, although the Ten Commandments were nailed to the cross and therefore abolished at Christ's death, all of the other commandments except for this fourth one were repeated in the New Testament scriptures and were, therefore, restored for the New Testament Church.

- E. The original giving of God's Sabbath commandment to Adam and Eve at Eden (and from them to all the nations to whom that first couple gave birth) preceded the giving of the Sabbath commandment to the Israelites at Sinai.

At that time (man's beginning), God made the Sabbath for man (not for the Israelites who did not yet exist as a nation) and it was therefore to be kept by all nations (See Genesis 2:2-3 and Mark 2:27).

The Sabbath command was here repeated and included in the Ten Commandments.

If it were true that the Old Covenant with Israel was nailed to Jesus' cross and abolished, the original sanctification of the Sabbath Day, made holy for all mankind at creation, still remains!

There is absolutely no scripture in the entire Bible, which tells of God "de-sanctifying" his Sabbath Day!

In fact, both Isaiah and Ezekiel give very strong indications that the Sabbath will be kept in the World Tomorrow (See Isaiah 66:22-23 and Ezekiel 44:24 & 45:17 & 46:1-12).

- F. Some say that the Sabbath was changed from the seventh day of the week to the first.

Most Bible experts and scholars agree that there is no biblical support for this idea at all and that such changes were made much later by (human) church leaders.

- G. What does it mean to "remember the Sabbath Day"?

The Hebrew word translated into the English "remember" is "zakar" (Strong's 02142).

As well as "to remember" and "to recall", the word "zakar" can mean "to think about", "to bring to mind", "to mention", "to record", and "to make a memorial of." These meanings show how special the status of the Sabbath should be to a Sabbath-keeper.

H. How should one keep it holy?

- i) Many scriptures show that the Sabbath Day should be a day of rest from work:

(See Genesis 2:2-3 & Exodus 16:23 & 20:10-11 & 31:15 & 35:2 & Leviticus 23:3 & Deuteronomy 5:14 & Luke 23:56 & Hebrews 4:9)

- ii) Isaiah tells us that we should not do our own pleasure on the Sabbath, but rather that we should do God's pleasure (See Isaiah 58:13)

In the gospel accounts, Jesus shows us (by word and example) that:

- iii) The Sabbath Day of rest should be a pleasure, and not a day of bondage to a list of pharisaical "do's and don'ts":

(See Matthew 12:1-12 & Mark 2:23-28 & 3:2-4 & Luke 6:1-9 & 13:10-16 & 14:1-5 & John 5:9-18 & 7:22-23 & 9:14-16)

- iv) The Sabbath is a day on which we should, if possible, attend church services. Jesus attended synagogue services, as he was a practicing Jew: (See Matthew 4:23 & 9:35 & 12:9 & 13:54 & Mark 1:21 & 6:2 & Luke 4:16 & 31 & 13:10 & John 6:59 & 18:20)

Exodus 20:9: Six days you shall labour, and do all your work.

- A. The majority of people, even many retired folks, have at least some kind of work to do on a daily basis.
- B. All of our work should be done in the six days beginning at the Saturday sunset and ending at the Friday sunset that begins the following Sabbath Day.
- C. As well as giving further instructions regarding how we should properly observe God's Sabbath Day, this verse also indicates the work ethic which God's people should possess.

Exodus 20:10: But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your manservant, or your maidservant, or your cattle, or the sojourner who is within your gates;

- A. God tells the Israelites (and Christians today) through Moses that:
 - i. The seventh day is a special rest day in honour of God,
 - ii. We should not do any work on it,
 - iii. This restriction from work should be extended to all the residents of:
 - Nationally: our nations
 - Individually: our homes

Exodus 20:11: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath Day and hallowed it.

- A. This verse tells us why the Sabbath should be kept holy and as a day of rest. Note the opening word "for" and the later word "therefore."

Is it to be kept holy and as a day of rest because these people were Israelites? No, it is to be kept holy and as a day of rest because God made it so (for man) at creation... before Israel existed as a nation! (See Genesis 2:1-3)

- B. Some say that it is possible that only the very first seventh day was blessed and hallowed by God.

This very verse disproves that idea! This verse says that man is commanded to keep each seventh day holy because God rested on the (first) seventh day, and he blessed and sanctified that and all succeeding seventh days.

It was still considered holy by the time the prophets Nehemiah, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel came on the scene:

(See Nehemiah 9:14 & 13:22 & Isaiah 58.13 & Jeremiah 17:22 & 24 & 27 & Ezekiel 22:26 & 44:24)

Exodus 23:12: Six days you shall do your work, but on the seventh day you shall rest; that your ox and your ass may have rest, and the son of your bondmaid, and the alien, may be refreshed.

- A. God's instructions for the Israelites here are:

- a) Complete all your work in six days (Sunday to Friday),
- b) Rest on the seventh day,
- c) Also allow your beasts of burden, your servants, and any guests staying with you to rest on the Sabbath.

- B. One minister, quoting this scripture, implied that the inclusion of the word "that" (which he accented) shows that the primary purpose of the Sabbath Day was to give physical rest to farm animals and servants!

However, it doesn't take much of a search to discover that this verse does not include the Hebrew word for "that" and that the translators inserted the English word. Without the word "that", the verse might read something like this:

"Six days you shall do your work, and on the seventh day you shall rest; your ox and your donkey may rest, and the son of your handmaid, and the stranger, may be refreshed."

- C. Notice the different Hebrew words for "rest": the Hebrew word for "rest" for the people is "shabath" (Strong's 07673) whereas the word for "rest" for the animals is "nuwach" (Strong's 05117).

Exodus 31:13: "Say to the people of Israel, 'You shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you.'

- A. God's Sabbaths were to be a sign... a sign forever between God and Israel, to reassure the people of Israel that they were (like the Sabbath Day itself) sanctified by Him.
- B. The Sabbath is not necessarily a specific sign of the Sinai covenant, which is not even mentioned in this chapter. Verse 16 suggests that the Sabbath covenant is a separate covenant.
- C. Note plural of words "Sabbaths"! This might mean that God's Holy Days are also to be included here. In other places, the Holy Days are referred to as "Sabbaths".
- D. The phrase "throughout your generations" means "as long as the nation of Israel exists"... even if the greater part of that nation is lost and scattered throughout the earth!
- E. The Sabbath covenant was given to the people of Israel:
 - i. Although the idea has been rejected by many in recent years, we must not forget God's revelation that the lost tribes of Israel are to be found in the United States, British Commonwealth and the western European nations.
 - ii. We must also remember that the New Testament church is "the Israel of God. To become a Christian is to become a spiritual Israelite, and through faith like that of Abraham, to be grafted into the nation of Israel (See Romans 4:16 & 11:14-25 & Galatians 3:7-9 & Ephesians 2:11-13).

Exodus 31:14: You shall keep the Sabbath, because it is holy for you; every one who profanes it shall be put to death; whoever does any work on it, that soul shall be cut off from among his people.

- A. God had made the seventh day holy at creation (See Genesis 2:2-3 and Exodus 20:11). Here, many years later, He repeated that the Sabbath Day was still holy time for His people.
- B. Profaning the Sabbath in any way was punishable by death. This included working on God's holy rest day. Here, to be cut off from Israel is to be executed (see verse 15).
- C. Some might misread the words "holy for you" as meaning the Sabbath was only meant to be holy for the Israelites. Yes, the Sabbath certainly was holy for the Israelites, His Old Testament church. But Jesus Christ (who created the Sabbath Day before Israel existed as a nation) said that the Sabbath was made for man, not just for the Israelites (see Mark 2:27).

Exodus 31:15: Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the Lord; whoever does any work on the Sabbath Day shall be put to death.

- A. God reminded the Israelites that they had six days to do their work, but that His Sabbath (Strong's 07676: shabbath) was to be kept strictly as a rest (07677: shabbathown) day.
 - B. He repeated that the seventh day was still holy time, as He had made it at creation!
 - C. He warned them again that anyone caught working on His Sabbath was to be executed! Sabbath-breaking was a serious crime!
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Exodus 31:16: Therefore the people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout their generations, as a perpetual covenant.

- A. Note the opening word "therefore": God was telling the Israelites, "You must keep the Sabbath... for these reasons I have just mentioned:
 - i. Because it is holy time,
 - ii. Because you will be executed if you don't,
 - iii. Because you have six other days to do other things."
 - B. God repeats that they were to keep the Sabbath holy as a "perpetual covenant":
 - i. The Sabbath Day observance, then, was to be a covenant in itself.
 - ii. The verse does not say that Sabbath observance was to be a sign of the Sinai covenant.
 - iii. Here is the Funk & Wagnall's dictionary definition of the word "perpetual": Continuing or lasting forever or for an unlimited time, incessant. eternal, endless, interminable.
 - iv. Strong's (05769) gives the Hebrew word as "owlam" with the following translations: ever, everlasting, old, perpetual, evermore, never, time, ancient, world, always, alway, long, more, long duration, antiquity, futurity, for ever, ancient time, long time, continuous existence, perpetual, indefinite or unending future, eternity
 - v. See above note on Exodus 31:13.
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Exodus 31:17: It is a sign for ever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.

God closed this set of Sabbath instructions by telling His people that:

- i. His Sabbath Day of rest was to be a sign forever between Himself and His people,
 - ii. He had made it a rest day at creation (see Genesis 2:2-3).
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Exodus 34:21: "Six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall rest; in plowing time and in harvest you shall rest.

Here is another reminder from God regarding the keeping of His holy Sabbath:

- i. To complete all work in the six days between Sunday and Friday,
 - ii. To rest every seventh day,
 - iii. Even in the busy seasons such as ploughing-time and harvest-time, to rest on the Sabbath Days.
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Exodus 35:2: Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day you shall have a holy Sabbath of solemn rest to the Lord; whoever does any work on it shall be put to death;

When Moses came down from talking to God on mount Sinai, the very first item he conveyed to the Israelites was that of the Sabbath:

- i. They were to complete all of their work in six days,
 - ii. The seventh day was to be kept as a Sabbath Day of solemn rest,
 - iii. Anyone caught working on God's Sabbath was to be executed.
 - iv. This warning is first recorded in Exodus 31:14-15.
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Exodus 35:3: You shall kindle no fire in all your habitations on the Sabbath day."

- A. Through Moses, God told the Israelites that they should not kindle fires in their homes on the Sabbath days.
- B. Does this mean that Sabbath-keeping Christians today should refrain from lighting a fire or a wood-stove on a cold Sabbath Day?

- C. Other scriptures indicate that the simple act of fire-lighting was not the problem activity that would break the Sabbath; but rather the collection of firewood and the cooking of food over the fire, and the other preparation necessary to cook the food.
 - D. The key for proper Sabbath-keeping is preparation.
 - E. We should prepare our stock of firewood before sunset on a Friday evening in the winter.
 - F. We should prepare our food before Friday sunset so that no laborious preparation or clean-up will be required on the Sabbath Day (see Exodus 16:23).
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Leviticus 16:31: It is a Sabbath of solemn rest to you, and you shall afflict yourselves; it is a statute for ever.

- A. The Day of Atonement here is referred to as "a Sabbath of solemn rest" (see also Leviticus 23:32).
 - B. This is the first time one of God's Holy Days is individually referred to as a Sabbath.
 - C. Notice that it is to be kept forever!
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Leviticus 19:3: Every one of you shall revere his mother and his father, and you shall keep my Sabbaths: I am the Lord your God.

- A. This is the first mention in the book of Leviticus of the weekly Sabbath Day.
 - B. This verse seems to be part of a brief summary of six of the Ten Commandments, mixed in with some other laws (see Leviticus 19:3-4 & 11-12).
 - C. The Zondervan RSV gives this section from verse 1 to 16 a heading entitled "Holiness and personal conduct".
 - D. Notice:
 - i. That God calls them "my Sabbaths"... His Sabbaths!
 - ii. The plural "Sabbaths" which might indicate that the Holy Days are to be included with the weekly Sabbath. The first mention of the word "Sabbath" in the book of Leviticus tells us that the Day of Atonement was to be considered a Sabbath Day (see Leviticus 16:31)
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Leviticus 19:30: You shall keep my Sabbaths and reverence my sanctuary: I am the Lord.

- A. God repeats his requirement that the Israelites were to keep His Sabbaths.
- B. He had only just recently made this same statement back in verse 3.

It appears that the purpose of this repetition of the requirement to keep God's Sabbaths is for emphasis.

- C. God slots this repetition in between a list of miscellaneous laws including those regarding witchcraft, respect for the elderly, hospitality toward visitors, etc. Can the Sabbath command be singled out from these as being unnecessary in the New Testament?
- D. The Zondervan RSV gives this section (Leviticus 19:17-35) the heading "The law of love".

Leviticus 23:3: Six days shall work be done; but on the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation; you shall do no work; it is a Sabbath to the Lord in all your dwellings.

- A. Here God refers to the weekly Sabbath Day as one of His Feast days. The first of His Feast days. A weekly Feast day!
- B. Notice in verses 2 and 4 that God calls these feasts:
 - a) "The feasts of the Lord",
 - b) "My appointed feasts", and
 - c) "The appointed feasts of the Lord".

Also that the weekly Sabbath is to kept "to the Lord".

So whose feasts are they? Whose day is the Sabbath Day? Are these feasts of the Jews? Of the Israelites? Of Old Covenant man?

No! These are the feasts of the Lord! These feasts, including the weekly Sabbath Days, are God's feasts!

- C. How was this Sabbath Day to be kept?
 - a) It was to be a day of solemn rest.

Again, the word "solemn" does not mean that God's people have to be miserable on the Sabbath Day. Rather, it means that they are to be strict about the keeping of God's Sabbaths.
 - b) A holy convocation was to be held.

A convocation is a convoking or gathering of people.

A holy convocation is a gathering of people that is sanctified by God.

Leviticus 23:11: And he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, that you may find acceptance; on the morrow after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it.

The wave sheaf offering ceremony was to be held on the day (Sunday) after the weekly Sabbath Day that fell within the Days of Unleavened Bread.

Leviticus 23:15: And you shall count from the morrow after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven full weeks shall they be,

To determine the Feast of Pentecost, seven full weeks were to be counted from the Sunday on which the wave sheaf offering ceremony took place.

Leviticus 23:16: Counting fifty days to the morrow after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall present a cereal offering of new grain to the Lord.

- A. Again, in the calculation required to determine the proper time for the Feast of Pentecost, seven seven day weeks adds up to 49 days from the wave sheaf Sunday; making 50 days inclusive to be counted from the Sunday on which the wave sheaf offering took place.
 - B. This 50th day, "the morrow after the seventh Sabbath," falls on a Sunday. The wave sheaf offering Sunday is included as Day One of the count.
 - C. This fiftieth day was called the Feast of:
 - i) Weeks (Hebrew: shabuwa... Strongs 07620... modern version: shevuot).
 - ii) Firstfruits (Hebrew: bikkuwr... Strongs 01061 or reshiyth... Strongs 07225).
 - D. The early New Testament era Jews and Christians took the words "counting fifty" from this verse, and gave the day the name "Pentecost."
 - E. An offering of new grain (firstfruits) was to be offered on this day.
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Leviticus 23:24: Say to the people of Israel, in the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe a day of solemn rest, a memorial proclaimed with blast of trumpets, a holy convocation.

- A. The KJV calls the Feast of Trumpets a "Sabbath" day.
 - B. The RSV calls it a "day of solemn rest".
 - C. The Hebrew word is "shabbathown" (see Strongs Hebrew # 07677) and can have either meaning. Actually, both terms mean the same thing.
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Leviticus 23:32: It shall be to you a Sabbath of solemn rest, and you shall afflict yourselves; on the ninth day of the month beginning at evening, from evening to evening shall you keep your Sabbath.

A. Here we see that the Day of Atonement was to be an extra-special day of rest on which not even any food preparation at all was permitted. See also Leviticus 16:31.

B. "Sabbath words" are used four times in this one short verse! If we use the Hebrew "Sabbath words", here's how it reads:

It shall be to you a shabbath of shabbathown, and you shall afflict yourselves; on the ninth day of the month beginning at evening, from evening to evening shall you shabath your shabbath.

Leviticus 23:38: Besides the Sabbaths of the Lord, and besides your gifts, and besides all your votive offerings, and besides all your freewill offerings, which you give to the Lord.

These annual feasts of the Lord and their associated offerings were required in addition to the weekly Sabbaths of the Lord and their associated offerings.

Leviticus 23:39: On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the produce of the land, you shall keep the feast of the Lord seven days; on the first day shall be a solemn rest, and on the eighth day shall be a solemn rest.

A. The first day of the Feast of Tabernacles was to be set aside as a "shabbathown" (or solemn rest) day.

B. The Feast of Tabernacles was to be kept for seven days.

C. Then the eighth day, the day we call "the Last Great Day", was also to be set aside as another "shabbathown" (solemn rest) day. See also John 7:37.

Leviticus 24:8: Every Sabbath Day Aaron shall set it in order before the Lord continually on behalf of the people of Israel as a covenant for ever.

A. Every Sabbath Day forever (as long as the tabernacle or temple existed), Aaron (or the high priests who succeeded him) were to set this gold table in order with its "memorial portion" offering of twelve cakes made with fine flour.

B. This was to be another everlasting covenant between God and the people of Israel. (Remember that the church is the New Testament "Israel of God.")

Leviticus 25:2: Say to the people of Israel, when you come into the land which I give you, the land shall keep a Sabbath to the Lord.

- A. Here, God introduces the concept of the "land Sabbath" to His people.
 - B. It was to begin when they arrived and settled in the promised land.
 - C. If we use the Hebrew "Sabbath words" in the latter part of this verse, it might read: "The land shall shabath a shabbath to the Eternal".
-

Leviticus 25:4: But in the seventh year there shall be a Sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a Sabbath to the Lord; you shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard.

- A. There was to be a seven-year agricultural cycle.
 - B. The land would be worked for six years, and it would be strictly and completely rested on the seventh year.
 - C. Like the weekly Sabbaths, this land Sabbath was also a Sabbath to the Lord (not of the Israelites).
-

Leviticus 25:5: What grows of itself in your harvest you shall not reap, and the grapes of your undressed vine you shall not gather; it shall be a year of solemn rest for the land.

- A. Even if grain or fruit grew of itself during this seventh year, the Israelites were not to reap the produce.
 - B. This seventh year was to be a year of shabbathown... a year of solemn rest!
-

Leviticus 25:6: The Sabbath of the land shall provide food for you, for yourself and for your male and female slaves and for your hired servant and the sojourner who lives with you;

- A. What does this verse mean? What does it mean, "the Sabbath of the land shall provide food for you"? How would food be provided?
- B. The previous verse tells us that the Israelites were not to gather any food which grew of itself despite the lack of sowing or pruning.
- C. The Sabbath lessons taught by God providing the Israelites with manna show that twice as much food would be provided to faithful Sabbath-keepers on the sixth day so that the seventh day could be devoted to rest (see Exodus 16:4-5 & 23-30).

- D. Perhaps God would give a similar blessing to those who faithfully kept the seventh year land Sabbath. Perhaps God would provide enough food in the harvest of the sixth year to last the farmer through the seventh year.
 - E. Also, this cyclical rest period is good for the land and will make it more productive, efficient and economical over the long term.
-

Leviticus 25:8: And you shall count seven weeks of years, seven times seven years, so that the time of the seven weeks of years shall be to you forty-nine years.

- A. The KJV uses the English word "Sabbaths" rather than "weeks". The Hebrew word is "shabbath".
 - B. God commanded the Israelites to keep a fifty-year cycle consisting of seven groups of seven years each (totaling forty-nine years) plus a special fiftieth year after which a new cycle would begin.
-

Leviticus 26:2: You shall keep my Sabbaths and reverence my sanctuary: I am the Lord.

- A. Verse 3 shows that God was here advising the Israelites of the blessings He would pour out upon them if they would keep His commandments and statutes.
 - B. In verses 1 and 2, He gave examples of three of the Commandments and statutes he was referring to. They were:
 - a) No graven images
 - b) Keep God's Sabbaths
 - c) Reverence God's sanctuary (tabernacle/temple).
-

Leviticus 26:34: Then the land shall enjoy its Sabbaths as long as it lies desolate, while you are in your enemies' land; then the land shall rest, and enjoy its Sabbaths.

- A. If the Israelites continued to sin (their sins included the breaking of God's weekly, annual and land Sabbaths), they would be taken into captivity in a foreign country.
 - B. While they were in captivity in that foreign country, the agricultural land of their homeland would not be worked, and would therefore catch up on its land Sabbath rests which the Israelites had refused to give it whilst they possessed it.
-

Leviticus 26:35: As long as it lies desolate it shall have rest, the rest which it had not in your Sabbaths when you dwelt upon it.

- A. This appears to be a repetition for the purpose of emphasis.
 - B. The land would lie desolate because the farm workers would be in captivity in a foreign land.
 - C. While the land was lying desolate it would enjoy the land Sabbath rest periods the farmers refused to give it when it was still in their possession.
-

Leviticus 26:43: But the land shall be left by them, and enjoy its Sabbaths while it lies desolate without them; and they shall make amends for their iniquity, because they spurned my ordinances, and their soul abhorred my statutes.

For the third time, God is warning the Israelites that, if they continued to sin, their farmers would be taken into captivity away from Israel's precious agricultural land, and the land would enjoy its land Sabbaths which they had greedily and foolishly refused to give it when it had been in their own possession.

Numbers 15:32: While the people of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering sticks on the Sabbath Day.

- A. As the following verses of this chapter show, God clearly forbids such laborious work on His Sabbath Day.
 - B. We can make all kinds of arguments about why this rule is unworkable, but all such arguments hang on the lack of preparation for the Sabbath.
-

Numbers 28:9: On the Sabbath Day two male lambs a year old without blemish, and two tenths of an ephah of fine flour for a cereal offering, mixed with oil, and its drink offering:

During the tabernacle and temple times, this was the offering required by God every weekly Sabbath Day:

- a) Two unblemished yearling male lambs,
 - b) 0.2 ephahs (0.12 bushels) of fine flour mixed with oil,
 - c) A drink offering.
-

Numbers 28:10: This is the burnt offering of every Sabbath, besides the continual burnt offering and its drink offering.

This was to be a special burnt offering to be offered every Sabbath Day in addition to the "continual burnt offering" which was to be offered every day of the week including the Sabbath (See Exodus 29:38-42 & Numbers 28:3).

Deuteronomy 5:12: Observe the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you.

- A. This repetition of the Ten Commandments (including the Sabbath commandment) by Moses to the children of Israel took place before they crossed the River Jordan to enter Canaan.
 - B. This was approximately 1406 BC, forty years after the Ten Commandments were first given at Mount Sinai (circa 1446 B.C. See Exodus 20:8).
-

Deuteronomy 5:14: But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, or your manservant, or your maidservant, or your ox, or your ass, or any of your cattle, or the sojourner who is within your gates, that your manservant and your maidservant may rest as well as you.

- A. This verse adds (in addition to the Exodus 20 version): "that your manservant and your maidservant may rest as well as you".
It seems that this was added in, not to state that the purpose of the Sabbath Day is to give rest to servants, but rather to explain why the "servants clause" was included in the Sabbath Commandment.
 - B. See Exodus 20:10.
-

Deuteronomy 5:15: You shall remember that you were a servant in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out thence with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath Day.

- A. Here, Moses deviates from the Exodus 20 version of the Sabbath Commandment.
- B. Exodus 20:11 explains the reason and purpose why God originally created the Sabbath Day at the beginning.
- C. This verse explains why the Israelites (specifically) were to keep the Sabbath: for the purpose of remembering that they had been "servants" in the land of Egypt, and that God had, with great power, brought them out of that captivity and slavery.

Spiritual Israelites should likewise keep the Sabbath remembering that God has brought us out of slavery and captivity in the symbolic "Egypt" of sin.

- D. This verse does not state that the Israelites were the only ones who were to keep the Sabbath Day. Exodus 20:12 tells us that the Sabbath was created before Israel existed as a separate nation.
- E. This is the last mention of the word "Sabbath" until II Kings 4:23, the time frame of which is 554 years later. The time setting of Deuteronomy 5 is circa 1406 BC

II Kings 4:23: And he said, "Why will you go to him today? It is neither new moon nor Sabbath." she said, "it will be well."

- A. This is the first mention of the Sabbath since Deuteronomy 5:15, the action of which, according to the Modern Language Version of the Bible, took place 554 years prior to this date. The time setting of the fourth chapter of II Kings is circa 852 BC.
- B. After 554 years with no mention at all, the Sabbath is mentioned five times in the second book of Kings.
- C. This is significant because some have said that, in the 64 years between Christ's death and the writing of the book of Revelation, there is no direct command that the Sabbath Day be kept; therefore (say they) the Sabbath is not required for New Testament Christians. Here we have 554 years with not even a mention of the Sabbath Day, and when it is finally mentioned again here in this verse, it is not mentioned in a way that would indicate that it was being reinstated after being forgotten for all of those years, but rather in a way that it had been generally acknowledged and kept (when Israel and Judah were under righteous, God-fearing rulers) throughout that time.
- D. "The man was asking his wife, Why are you going to see Elisha today? It isn't a new moon or Sabbath or any other special day!"

II Kings 11:5: And he commanded them, "this is the thing that you shall do: one third of you, those who come off duty on the Sabbath and guard the king's house.

Apparently, the temple and palace guards were changed each Sabbath Day.

II Kings 11:7: And the two divisions of you, which come on duty in force on the Sabbath and guard the house of the Lord,

Perhaps the guards were changed each Sabbath Day. Perhaps, because of the higher likelihood of attack on the Sabbath, the size of the guard was increased by overlapping the two shifts for part of the day.

II Kings 11:9: The captains did according to all that Jehoiada the priest commanded, and each brought his men who were to go off duty on the Sabbath, with those who were to come on duty on the Sabbath, and came to Jehoiada the priest.

Again, the indication is that the palace and temple guards were changed each Sabbath Day.

II Kings 16:18: And the covered way for the Sabbath which had been built inside the palace, and the outer entrance for the king he removed from the house of the Lord, because of the king of Assyria.

- A. It is not known for sure what this "covered way for the Sabbath" was. Perhaps it was a covered walkway between the king's palace and the temple which protected the king and his court from sun or rain as they walked to the temple on the Sabbath Day.
- B. Whatever it was, King Ahaz had it removed "because of the king of Assyria". The "covered way" was probably made from some valuable material and Ahaz had it removed and given to the king of Assyria in part-payment for his assistance in Judah's war against Syria and Israel.

I Chronicles 9:32: Also some of their kinsmen of the Kohathites had charge of the showbread, to prepare it every Sabbath.

- A. Certain Levitical sub-clans had been given specific temple responsibilities. It was one of the responsibilities of the Kohathite clan to prepare the showbread for Sabbath use.
- B. Verses 1 and 2 of this chapter show that this book was written after Judah's return from exile in Babylon. It appears that the Jewish leaders were re-establishing the duties of the various families.

I Chronicles 23:31: And whenever burnt offerings are offered to the Lord on Sabbaths, new moons, and feast days, according to the number required of them, continually before the Lord.

Before his death, David ensured that the Levites would continue to be set apart for God's service when the temple was built by his son. Part of this service was the preparation of burnt offerings on Sabbath Days, holy days and new moons.

II Chronicles 2:4: Behold, I am about to build a house for the name of the Lord my God and dedicate it to Him for the burning of incense of sweet spices before Him, and for the continual offering of the showbread, and for burnt offerings morning and evening, on the Sabbaths and the new moons and the appointed feasts of the Lord our God, as ordained for ever for Israel.

- A. The purpose of the new temple was for the proper worship of God (including the various offerings) on the Sabbath Days, Holy Days, new moons and regular days.
- B. Note that God's Sabbaths, new moons and feasts were appointed forever for Israel.

It is important then for us not to forget whom the modern day descendants of Israel are and, more importantly, that God's church is the New Testament "Israel of God."

II Chronicles 8:13: As the duty of each day required, offering according to the commandment of Moses for the Sabbaths, the new moons, and the three annual feasts -- the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Tabernacles.

Solomon ordered that the Sabbath, Holy Day and new moon offerings, as originally commanded by God to Moses, be continued in the new temple.

II Chronicles 23:4: This is the thing that you shall do: of you priests and Levites who come off duty on the Sabbath, one third shall be gatekeepers,

There are two possibilities here:

- a) That the guards were changed daily and Jehoiada the priest was referring here to those who came off duty on a particular Sabbath Day.
- b) That the guards were changed (perhaps by divisions) weekly each Sabbath Day.

The second seems to be the more likely of the two possibilities (see II Chronicles 23:8; II Kings 11:5, 7, 9).

II Chronicles 23:8: The Levites and all Judah did according to all that Jehoiada the priest commanded. They each brought his men, who were to go off duty on the Sabbath, with those who were to come on duty on the Sabbath; for Jehoiada the priest did not dismiss the divisions.

This verse seems to verify that the temple and palace guards were changed by division each Sabbath Day.

In the same way as these Old Testament Levites were permitted to perform certain functions in God's service on the Sabbath Day, so New Testament ministers and deacons are permitted to do the same.

II Chronicles 31:3: The contribution of the king from his own possessions was for the burnt offerings: the burnt offerings of morning and evening, and the burnt offerings for the Sabbaths, the new moons, and the appointed feasts, as it is written in the law of the Lord.

After having the heathen idols destroyed, king Hezekiah arranged for the daily, Sabbath, Holy Day and new moon offerings (to which he contributed) to be reinstated.

II Chronicles 36:21: To fulfil the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed its Sabbaths. All the days that it lay desolate it kept Sabbath, to fulfil seventy years.

Judah had continually broken God's Sabbaths: the weekly Sabbaths, the annual Holy Days, and the land Sabbaths every seventh year.

The overworked arable land of Judah would now enjoy proper rest for seventy years while the people of Judah would be in captivity in Babylon.

Nehemiah 9:14: And thou didst make known to them thy holy Sabbath and command them commandments and statutes and a law by Moses thy servant.

- A. Ezra was here reviewing, in a public prayer to God, all that God had done for the Israelites since Abraham.
 - B. Notice that Ezra does not say that, at Sinai: "thou didst create and initiate thy holy Sabbath"... but rather that "thou didst make known to them thy holy Sabbath".
 - C. The weekly Sabbath Day was already God's and was already holy! It had been from creation (See Genesis 2.2-3 & Exodus 20:11).
 - D. God had to remind the Israelites about his Sabbath requirements because they had been in Egyptian captivity for 400 years. Likewise, God through Ezra was reminding these Jews, who had just returned from exile in Babylon, about His Sabbaths and Holy Days.
 - E. The Sabbath law was one of God's "good commandments" spoken of in the previous verse (Nehemiah 9.13).
-

Nehemiah 10:31: And if the peoples of the land bring in wares or any grain on the Sabbath Day to sell, we will not buy from them on the Sabbath or on a Holy Day; and we will forego the crops of the seventh year and the exaction of every debt.

- A. Ezra was here declaring a renewal of the Israelites' covenant with God.
- B. Part of this covenant was the Israelites' separation from the world as a special people.
- C. Part of this separation was the keeping of the weekly Sabbaths, the annual Sabbaths or Holy Days, and the land Sabbath every seventh year.
- D. Ezra, for the people, declared that they would once again keep all of these Sabbaths.

Nehemiah 10:33: For the showbread, the continual cereal offering, the continual burnt offering, the Sabbaths, the new moons, the appointed feasts, the holy things, and the sin offerings to make atonement for Israel, and for all the work of the house of our God.

The people of Judah were to give one third of a shekel every year to contribute towards the cost of offerings and other temple expenses (including those required for Sabbath and Holy Day services).

Nehemiah 13:15: In those days I saw in Judah men treading wine presses on the Sabbath, and bringing in heaps of grain and loading them on asses; and also wine, grapes, figs, and all kinds of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath Day; and I warned them on the day when they sold food.

- A. "In those days" refers to the time when Nehemiah first returned to Jerusalem from Babylon.
- B. The restoration of God's way of life was supposed to have been initiated after the books of the law had been found and read.
- C. But some infractions were evident, and correction was necessary.
- D. One of these infractions was public Sabbath-breaking: commercial winemaking, transportation of grain, wine, grapes, figs, etc., and food sales.
- E. Nehemiah had warned those who were doing this public Sabbath-breaking.

Nehemiah 13:16: Men of Tyre also, who lived in the city, brought in fish and all kinds of wares and sold them on the Sabbath to the people of Judah, and in Jerusalem.

Part of the public Sabbath-breaking mentioned in the previous verse was that fishmongers and other merchants from the seaside city of Tyre were being allowed (by the Jewish rulers) to bring their wares into Jerusalem on the Sabbath Day and to sell them.

Nehemiah 13:17: Then I remonstrated with the nobles of Judah and said to them, "what is this evil thing which you are doing, profaning the Sabbath Day?"

- A. Notice that, rather than going after the merchants themselves, Nehemiah went after the current rulers of Judah.
- B. He says that it was the rulers, not the merchants, who were guilty of "this evil thing... profaning the Sabbath Day" by allowing the business to go on.
- C. Likewise today, it is the leaders of the churches, rather than the general church membership, who carry the main burden of guilt for causing the members to profane the Sabbaths.
- D. Nevertheless, like the Jewish people of Nehemiah's day, the church members should be obtaining the final word on their instruction from the Word of God rather from other fallible human beings.

Nehemiah 13:18: Did not your fathers act in this way, and did not our God bring all this evil on us and on this city? Yet you bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the Sabbath."

- A. Nehemiah reminded the Jewish rulers that the sin of Sabbath-breaking was one of the reasons that God had caused the people of Judah and Jerusalem to be taken into captivity in Babylon.
- B. Nehemiah warned them that they were repeating the error, and causing God to be angry with them once more.

Nehemiah 13:19: When it began to be dark at the gates of Jerusalem before the Sabbath, I commanded that the doors should be shut and gave orders that they should not be opened until after the Sabbath. And I set some of my servants over the gates, that no burden might be brought in on the Sabbath Day.

Nehemiah took action to put a stop to this Sabbath-breaking. He arranged for:

- a) The Jerusalem city gates to be closed shortly before sunset at the beginning of each Sabbath Day.
- b) The gates to be re-opened after sunset at the close of each Sabbath Day.
- c) Some of his own servants to be stationed on the city walls at each gate to prevent any commercial burden to be brought in on the Sabbath.

Nehemiah 13:21: But I warned them and said to them, "Why do you lodge before the wall? If you do so again I will lay hands on you." From that time on they did not come on the Sabbath.

- A. Nehemiah warned the merchants from Tyre that if they continued to hang around outside the Jerusalem city gates waiting for the end of the Sabbath Day, he would have them arrested and imprisoned.
- B. The merchants heeded his firm warning, and stayed away on the Sabbath.
- C. There are some lessons we can learn from this episode:
 - a) That we should discourage our children (and ourselves!) from yearning for the end of the Sabbath so that they (or we!) are able to get on with some physical pursuit.
 - b) That we should discourage our children from arranging to meet "non-church" friends after and/or outside church services.

Nehemiah 13:22: And I commanded the Levites that they should purify themselves and come and guard the gates, to keep the Sabbath Day holy. Remember this also in my favor, o my God, and spare me according to the greatness of thy steadfast love.

- A. Nehemiah instructed the Levites to set apart a group of men for the purpose of guarding the city gates in order to keep the Sabbath Day holy.
- B. It is interesting to note that the Levites were to purify themselves before coming on this Sabbath "guard duty".
- C. Perhaps this was because this "job" was classed as an official Levitical function, and, for a Levite to do necessary "work" on the Sabbath Day for the purposes of serving God and his people, he was to be specially set apart and recognized as "temporarily exempt" from punishment for "working" on the Sabbath. The New Testament equivalent of this exemption would be that of the service of ministers and deacons in their Sabbath Day service to God and His people.

Psalms 92:1: A psalm. A song for the Sabbath. It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to thy name, o Most High;

- A. Here is a psalm specially written for the Sabbath Day.
- B. It is thought that this psalm was written shortly before the end of the Jewish captivity in Babylon.

- C. It is likely that the Jews would not be able to keep the Sabbath properly while living as slaves.
 - D. Many probably yearned for that weekly day of rest which was no longer available to them.
 - E. Sabbath-breaking was one of the reasons God allowed the Jews to be taken into captivity.
-

Isaiah 1:13: Bring no more vain offerings; incense is an abomination to me. New moon and Sabbath and the calling of assemblies. I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly.

- A. Talking to the people of Judah, and comparing them with Sodom and Gomorrah (which are believed to have been situated at the south end of the Dead Sea), God tells them that He is sick of their religious facade.
 - B. When mixed with continual, unrepented-of iniquity, even the holy things such as the Sabbath, the Holy Days, the new month observances, and the offerings became abominations to God.
 - C. Some may misread this verse and use it out of context in order to try to prove that, by this time, God had changed His feelings and laws concerning His Sabbaths.
 - D. But many other verses mentioning the Sabbath in the book of Isaiah disprove this by strongly upholding the sanctity and necessity of the Sabbath (see Isaiah 56:2 & 4 & 6 & 58:13 & 66:23).
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Isaiah 56:2: Blessed is the man who does this, and the son of man who holds it fast, who keeps the Sabbath, not profaning it, and keeps his hand from doing any evil.

- A. God here equates Sabbath-keeping with avoidance of evil, also with keeping of justice and righteousness as mentioned in verse 1.
 - B. God says that He will bless the man who keeps His Sabbath and does not profane it.
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Isaiah 56:4: For thus says the Lord: "To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant,

- A. In His writings regarding eunuchs and Gentiles, God (through Isaiah) deals first with the eunuchs.
- B. From the New Compact Bible Dictionary:

The Mosaic law forbade those blemished by castration to enter the congregation: See Deuteronomy 23:1. But Isaiah prophesied of a day when this disability would be removed and their loss compensated (See Isaiah 56.3-5).

This would mean that, at a time after the termination of the Mosaic law, these eunuchs who had turned from their heathen practices to the keeping of God's Sabbaths and His covenant, would then be blessed for doing so.

This might be interpreted in two ways:

- a) The eunuchs who kept God's Sabbaths in "Old Testament" times will be blessed and rewarded when they are resurrected.
- b) The eunuchs who keep the Sabbath during the time of the fulfillment of this prophecy (either the "New Testament" era or the time after Christ's return) will be blessed at that time for so doing.

Isaiah 56:6: And the foreigners who join themselves to the Lord, to minister to Him, to love the name of the Lord, and to be His servants, every one who keeps the Sabbath, and does not profane it, and holds fast my covenant--

- A. God then speaks to the Gentiles who were willing to live His way.
- B. Although it was necessary for them to be separated in some physical ways (e.g. from entering into certain areas of the temple) from native Israelites, God enabled them to join themselves to Him, to serve Him, to love His name, to keep His Sabbaths, and to keep His covenant.
- C. They were not completely cut off from God! God, in His mercy, gave them access to Himself... even in Old Testament times!

Isaiah 58:13: If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day of the Lord honorable; if you honor it, not going your own ways, or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly;

- A. This is a very important verse.
- B. God made the seventh day holy at creation (See Genesis 2:2-3).
- C. Some claim that the Genesis account does not say that each seventh day subsequent to the first one was also to be holy. But Isaiah here states that every Sabbath was still holy in His lifetime.
- D. Some claim that, because the Genesis account does not tell us how to keep the seventh day holy, we are free to make our own rules up in this regard.
- E. Isaiah strongly disagrees! He says here that:

- i) We are to keep our dirty boots from walking all over God's holy Sabbaths,
 - ii) We are not to do or seek our own pleasure on them; rather, we should be seeking and doing God's pleasure,
 - iii) We are not to talk idly on them; rather, we should be talking about the things of God,
 - iv) We are to honour them,
 - v) We are to call them a delight and honorable.
- D. The plural "Sabbaths" and the dual use of the words "holy day" gives the possibility that this verse refers both to the weekly Sabbath and to the annual Holy Days.
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Isaiah 66:23: From new moon to new moon, and from Sabbath to Sabbath, all flesh shall come to worship before me, says the Lord.

- A. This verse strongly indicates that the Sabbath will be kept in the World Tomorrow! The adjacent verses both before and after verse 23 give the time setting.
 - B. Some say that the reference to the Sabbath here refers to a week's space of time in the same way that the reference to the new moon refers to a month's space of time.
 - C. If this is so, why didn't Isaiah use "shebua" (Strongs 07620) the common Hebrew word for "week" instead of "shabbath" (Strongs 07676) which was the common Hebrew word for "Sabbath"?
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Jeremiah 17:21: Thus says the Lord: take heed for the sake of your lives, and do not bear a burden on the Sabbath Day or bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem.

- A. God's proclamation continued by strongly warning:
 - i) The kings and the inhabitants...
 - ii) Not to carry any cargo of significant size or weight on God's Sabbath Days,
 - iii) Not to bring any such load into Jerusalem.
 - B. It is, of course, doubtful that any king would himself carry such a burden, but he would have the authority to allow or command such transport.
-

Jeremiah 17:22: And do not carry a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath or do any work, but keep the Sabbath Day holy, as I commanded your fathers.

Jeremiah repeated here that the people of Judah should:

- a) Not even carry any significant cargo from their homes on the Sabbath,
- b) Keep the Sabbath Day holy as had been commanded to their descendants (note that the Sabbath was still considered as holy time during Jeremiah's lifetime... 3,300 or so years after creation and 800 or so years after Sinai!)

Jeremiah 17:24: But if you listen to me, says the Lord, and bring in no burden by the gates of this city on the Sabbath Day, but keep the Sabbath Day holy and do no work on it,

- A. God, through Jeremiah, here uses repetition as a form of emphasis. He repeats what He had just told His audience back in verses 21 and 22.
- B. The people were to:
 - i) Listen to God,
 - ii) Transport no significant sized cargo in or out of their city on God's Sabbaths,
 - iii) Keep God's Sabbaths holy,
 - iv) Refrain from work on God's Sabbath.

Jeremiah 17:27: But if you do not listen to me, to keep the Sabbath Day holy, and not to bear a burden and enter by the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath Day, then I will kindle a fire in its gates, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem and shall not be quenched."

- A. Here, God forewarns the people how He would punish them if they:
 - i) Would not listen to Him,
 - ii) Would not keep His Sabbath Day holy,
 - iii) Continue to transport cargo in and out of their city on His Sabbaths.
- B. Notice that He repeats the list of infractions for the third time!
- C. The punishment was to be by a great fire which would be started in those very gates which passed those forbidden cargoes, and would destroy the palaces of the kings who allowed this Sabbath transportation.
- D. The fire would be unquenchable in the sense that it would be so great that the fire-fighting resources of that day would not be able to put it out. The word "unquenchable" does not mean or imply that the fire would burn forever.
- E. Such fires did occur in the invasions of Jerusalem:

- i) In (circa) 586 BC by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon,
- ii) In 70 AD by Titus of Rome.

Lamentations 1:7 (KJV): Jerusalem remembered in the days of her affliction and of her miseries all her pleasant things that she had in the days of old, when her people fell into the hand of the enemy, and none helped her: the adversaries saw her, and mocked at her Sabbaths.

Lamentations 1:7 (RSV): Jerusalem remembers in the days of her affliction and bitterness all the precious things that were hers from days of old. When her people fell into the hand of the foe, and there was none to help her, the foe gloated over her, mocking at her downfall.

- A. The Hebrew word translated here as "Sabbaths" in the KJV is "Mishbath" (Strong's #04868), and may be translated as "cessation" or "annihilation". The translators of most modern translations render the word as "downfall" or "destruction."
- B. What did the Jews' enemies gloat at? Their Sabbaths? Or their cessation, annihilation, and downfall?
- C. Perhaps both... but the latter seems more probable.

Lamentations 2:6: He has broken down His booth like that of a garden, laid in ruins the place of His appointed feasts; the Lord has brought to an end in Zion appointed feast and Sabbath, and in His fierce indignation has spurned king and priest.

- A. Is this verse saying that God had, in Jeremiah's time, put a permanent end to the requirement to keep his Sabbaths and Holy Days?
- B. By no means! The keeping of God's Sabbaths and Holy Days was temporarily taken away from the land of Judah during the time of the Jews' captivity in Babylon.
- C. It is fitting that one of the major sins that caused the captivity was that of Sabbath-breaking.

Ezekiel 20:12: Moreover I gave them my Sabbaths, as a sign between me and them, that they might know that I the Lord sanctify them.

- A. God tells us that He re-revealed His Sabbaths to the Israelites after they came out of Egypt.
- B. But He did not say that his Sabbaths originated at that time.

- C. God gave his Sabbaths to be a sign between God and His people so that it would be evident to them that God sets them apart from the rest of the people of the world.

Ezekiel 20:13: But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness; they did not walk in my statutes but rejected my ordinances, by whose observance man shall live; and my Sabbaths they greatly profaned. Then I thought I would pour out my wrath upon them in the wilderness, to make a full end of them.

- A. So soon after the miracles of the exodus from Egypt, even while they were still in the wilderness, the Israelites refused to walk according to God's statutes, they rejected His ordinances, and they profaned His Sabbaths.
- B. Notice that it is man whom should live by God's statutes and ordinances, not just the Old Testament Israelites.
- C. Jesus repeats this concept (specifically with regards to the Sabbath, in Mark 2:27).
- D. Because of these sins, God was ready to destroy the Israelites completely and start again with Moses and his family.

Ezekiel 20:16: Because they rejected my ordinances and did not walk in my statutes, and profaned my Sabbaths; for their heart went after their idols.

- A. God prevented the first generation of Israelites who had come out of Egypt from entering the Promised Land because:
- i) They had rejected His ordinances,
 - ii) They did not walk in His statutes
 - iii) They profaned His Sabbaths.
- B. All of these sins were results of their preference for their physical idols.
- C. History appears to be repeating itself today as the leaders and members of the world's churches reject God's Ten Commandments and profane his Sabbaths.
- D. The reasons many of them give are not biblical proofs, but are declarations that "it is easier" or that "there is less stress and effort required". With others, it is obvious that they have taken the easy way out. They may be financially better off due to being able to work on the Sabbath Day and with not having to tithe. But those benefits will be short lived. They have forgotten the blessings God gives to the willing tithe-payers and Sabbath-keepers.
- E. We must beware of the same pulls of Satan... toward physical things!

Ezekiel 20:20: And hallow my Sabbaths that they may be a sign between me and you, that you may know that I the Lord am your God.

- A. God did not completely do away with the children of Israel in the wilderness, but gave them another chance, and another warning of how they should live.
 - B. One of the instructions, repeated yet again, was for the Israelites to keep God's Sabbaths.
 - C. What were the reasons for them to keep His Sabbaths?
 - D. To serve as a sign between God and His people, and so that they would know that He was the Eternal, their God.
-

Ezekiel 20:21: But the children rebelled against me; they did not walk in my statutes, and were not careful to observe my ordinances, by whose observance man shall live; they profaned my Sabbaths. Then I thought I would pour out my wrath upon them and spend my anger against them in the wilderness.

- A. While still in the wilderness, the Israelites did not heed. They rebelled against God, they would not walk in His statutes, they were not careful to observe His ordinances, they profaned His Sabbaths.
 - B. God was justifiably angry at the Israelites, and He was about to pour out His anger upon them.
 - C. Notice again that it is "man" who should live by God's statutes and ordinances (including those concerning the Sabbath), not just the Old Testament Israelites!
-

Ezekiel 20:24: Because they had not executed my ordinances, but had rejected my statutes and profaned my Sabbaths, and their eyes were set on their fathers' idols.

- A. In His mercy and love for His people, God withheld His anger yet again!
- B. But He warned them again how He would punish them if they continued to do these things:
 - i) Refusing to execute His ordinances,
 - ii) Rejecting His statutes,
 - iii) Profaning His Sabbaths,
 - iv) Having their eyes set on their fathers' idols.
- C. Notice that their eyes were set on their fathers' idols, the worship of which God had revealed to them as being sinful. Perhaps their fathers had lapsed into the worship of pagan idols during their 400 years in Egyptian captivity.

- D. Now we see history repeating itself yet again as the leaders and members of the world's churches, who were once aware of the pagan origin of these things, turn back to idolatry and pagan practices... such as Christmas (Brumalia/Saturnalia), Easter (the spring festival of Ishtar/Astarte), and Sunday (the day of sun worship).
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Ezekiel 22:8: You have despised my holy things, and profaned my Sabbaths.

- A. God was judging the people of Jerusalem for despising His holy things, and for profaning His Sabbaths.
- B. We may include God's Sabbaths among His "holy things" because He had made them holy at creation (See Genesis 2:2-3).
- C. Nowhere in the Bible is there any record of God having removed His holiness from them.
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Ezekiel 22:26: Her priests have done violence to my law and have profaned my holy things; they have made no distinction between the holy and the common, neither have they taught the difference between the unclean and the clean, and they have disregarded my Sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them.

- A. This verse could have a dual application: the first to the priests of Old Testament Israel, the second to the ministers of the so-called Christian churches in the New Testament end-time era.
- B. Here are the sins for which God is judging the priests and ministers:
- i) For doing violence to God's law,
 - ii) For profaning God's holy things,
 - iii) For making no distinction between the holy and the common,
 - iv) For failing to teach their congregations the difference between the unclean and the clean,
 - v) For disregarding God's Sabbaths, resulting in the people profaning God.
-

Ezekiel 23:38: Moreover this they have done to me: they have defiled my sanctuary on the same day and profaned my Sabbaths.

- A. The identities of Oholah and Oholibah (to whom this is referring) are revealed in Ezekiel 23:4: They are Samaria (representing the northern ten tribes of Israel) and Jerusalem (representing the tribes of Judah).
- B. The name "Oholah" means "her own tent". The name "Ohilibah" means "woman of the tent" or "the tent is in her".

- C. What had Samaria and Jerusalem - these two immoral "ex-wives" of God - done against Him?
 - D. They, whose very names meant that they represented God's tent, tabernacle or temple, had defiled His sanctuary and had profaned His Sabbaths.
-

Ezekiel 44:24: In a controversy they shall act as judges, and they shall judge it according to my judgments. They shall keep my laws and my statutes in all my appointed feasts, and they shall keep my Sabbaths holy.

- A. Who are "they"? The answer is given in Ezekiel 44.15.
 - B. "They" are the Levitical priests, the sons of Zadok, who were looking after God's sanctuary at the time Israel went astray.
 - C. But what is the time frame of this verse?
 - D. Halley's Bible Handbook states this regarding Ezekiel chapters 40 to 48: "This vision was not fulfilled in the return from Babylon. Very evidently it is a prediction of the Messianic Age".
 - E. If this is true, then in the Messianic Age - the World Tomorrow - there will be the requirement for Levitical priests (or their antitypes), sacrificial offerings, judging according to God's judgments, and the keeping of God's laws, statutes, feasts and Sabbaths!
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Ezekiel 45:17: It shall be the prince's duty to furnish the burnt offerings, cereal offerings, and drink offerings, at the feasts, the new moons, and the Sabbaths, all the appointed feasts of the house of Israel: he shall provide the sin offerings, cereal offerings, burnt offerings, and peace offerings, to make atonement for the house of Israel.

- A. Again, it is important for us to remember the time frame here.
Halley's Bible Handbook (page 306) states that chapters 40 to 48 of the book of Ezekiel are set in the "Messianic Age"... the World Tomorrow.
 - B. So again, we take a look into the future time of the Millenium, and we see that there will be the requirement for burnt offerings, cereal offerings, drink offerings, and for the observance of God's Feasts, new moons and Sabbaths!
 - C. There will be a prince whose duty it will be to collect all of the offerings from the people and have them delivered to the temple.
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Ezekiel 46:1: Thus says the Lord God: The gate of the inner court that faces east shall be shut on the six working days; but on the Sabbath Day it shall be opened and on the day of the new moon it shall be opened.

- A. The time frame of chapters 40 to 48 of the book of Ezekiel is in the World Tomorrow (see Halley's Bible Handbook, page 306).
 - B. We see that, at this time, God's Sabbaths and new moons will still be regarded as special.
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Ezekiel 46:3: The people of the land shall worship at the entrance of that gate before the Lord on the Sabbaths and on the new moons.

- A. We know that the time frame under discussion is that of the World Tomorrow.
 - B. In the World Tomorrow, on God's Sabbaths and on the new moons (month beginnings), God's people will come to this gate of the inner court of the temple (see verse 1) to worship Him.
-

Ezekiel 46:4: The burnt offering that the prince offers to the Lord on the Sabbath Day shall be six lambs without blemish and a ram without blemish;

- A. Here we see that, in the World Tomorrow, God will require man to:
 - i) Give burnt offerings,
 - ii) Keep His Sabbaths,
 - B. Mainstream Christianity has rejected this and is confused by it because it has been deceived into believing that the "Messianic Age" will be in heaven.
-

Ezekiel 46:12: When the prince provides a freewill offering, either a burnt offering or peace offerings as a freewill offering to the Lord, the gate facing east shall be opened for him; and he shall offer his burnt offering or his peace offerings as he does on the Sabbath Day. Then he shall go out, and after he has gone out the gate shall be shut.

Again we see that God's Sabbaths and offerings will be required in the World Tomorrow.

Hosea 2:11: And I will put an end to all her mirth, her feasts, her new moons, her Sabbaths, and all her appointed feasts.

- A. The person referred to here as "her" is Gomer, the "wife of whoredoms," whom God commanded Hosea to marry (See chapter 1, verse 2).
- B. She was a symbol for the kingdom of Israel which was (and is in its modern physical and spiritual [church] forms) continually unfaithful to God (chapter 1, verse 2).

- C. The pure and righteous joy and happiness they received from the keeping of God's Sabbaths and feasts (yes, and new moons) was to be taken away from them because of their continuing sin and rebellion.
 - D. This verse is not saying that God's Sabbaths and feasts were to be permanently done away.
 - E. Other scriptures clearly show us that they were faithfully kept by Jesus Christ and his New Testament apostles and Church, and that they will required to be kept in the World Tomorrow.
 - F. God's Sabbaths and feasts are a rich blessing to God's children. But He will take them away from those who are unfaithful to Him and who commit spiritual adultery.
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Amos 8:5: Saying, "When will the new moon be over, that we may sell grain? And the Sabbath, that we may offer wheat for sale, that we may make the ephah small and the shekel great, and deal deceitfully with false balances,"

- A. Here we see dishonest people pretending to be people of God.
 - B. They pretend to keep His Sabbaths, but in their hearts they yearn for sunset to end the Sabbaths and the new moon observances, so that they may return to their businesses (which on the surface may appear quite legal and upright, but in reality are crooked, dishonest and immoral).
 - C. This is the last Old Testament mention of the Sabbath.
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New Testament

Matthew 12:1: At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath; His disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat.

- A. This is the first New Testament mention of the Sabbath Day.
 - B. We can imagine Jesus and His disciples taking a short-cut through some grain fields as they travelled from one village or town to another.
 - C. Perhaps it was a sunny late summer Sabbath morning (as the grain was ripe) and the group had not had breakfast yet.
 - D. If any one of us were walking through a field full of ripe grain, even if we weren't hungry, we would probably strip off a couple of grains, rub them between our hands to remove the outer husks, and chew on the edible kernels.
 - E. Is there anything wrong with this activity? Do the scriptures speak against it? Not at all.
-

Matthew 12:2: But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Him, "Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath."

- A. The verse implies that these Pharisees must have been spying on Jesus and His disciples with the aim of catching them in the act of some sin.
- B. The Pharisee spies accused Jesus and His disciples of doing an unlawful act by stripping a few stalks of grain on the Sabbath Day.
- C. Were the spies right? Were Jesus and the disciples breaking the Law of Moses or the Law of God?
- D. Although true work was (and is) forbidden on the Sabbath Day, there is no Old Testament scripture which makes clear the boundary of what should be construed as work.
- E. There certainly is no scripture which forbids man to abstain from stripping a few stalks of grain on the Sabbath to satisfy hunger.
- F. Regardless of the Sabbath part of the question, the laws given to Moses allowed for such minor grain picking from the field of another so that it could not be classed as stealing (See Deuteronomy 23:25)
- G. When the Jews had returned to Judea after their Babylonian captivity, they wished to strictly avoid any future occurrences of the sins which had brought that captivity upon them.
- H. One of the sins which God had considered to be the worst and most flagrant was that of Sabbath-breaking.
- I. But instead of making national and individual efforts to adhere to God's original laws, the Jews went overboard, and made up a long list of "Sabbath do's and don'ts".

- J. By Jesus' physical lifetime, this man-made list had come to be part of the Jewish national laws, and had come to be considered as important as, or more important than, the laws originally given by God to the Israelites.
 - K. This man-made list was the so-called "law" which the Pharisee spies accused Jesus and His disciples of breaking.
-

Matthew 12:5: Or have you not read in the law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are guiltless?

- A. Were Jesus and the Pharisee spies both talking about the same law?
 - B. The Pharisees took their rule about the stripping of grain from a stalk from the vast multitude of "toldoth" rules which had been derived by the Pharisees from their thirty-nine principal "Abboth" rules of the "tradition of the elders".
 - C. Jesus took the law He quoted directly from the holy scriptures.
 - D. With animal sacrifices, other temple duties, and circumcisions of baby boys, the Sabbath Day was not a day of physical rest for the Levitical priests. The law of Moses allowed for such labour.
 - E. Likewise today, with sermon preparation and delivery, with counselling and anointing, the Sabbath can be a somewhat busy day for a Christian church minister.
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Matthew 12:8: For the Son of man is Lord of the Sabbath.

- A. The Son of man was Jesus Christ, and He was and is the Lord of the Sabbath.
 - B. The Greek word for "Lord" is "kurios".
 - C. If we look the word up we will discover that by being the Lord of the Sabbath Day:
 - i) Jesus owns the Sabbath... it belongs to Him,
 - ii) Jesus has the power of deciding what should be done with it,
 - iii) Jesus is the master of it,
 - iv) Jesus possesses it and only he has the power dispose of it!
 - v) Jesus has control over it.
-

Matthew 12:10: And behold, there was a man with a withered hand. And they asked Him, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" so that they might accuse Him.

- A. Again, the Pharisee spies were trying to catch Jesus and His disciples in the act of Sabbath-breaking.
- B. We 20th century Christians might ask ourselves the same question: Would it be breaking God's law to heal on the Sabbath?

C. We can split this question into three additional questions:

- i) Would it be considered Sabbath-breaking to seek miraculous healing of God (by anointing, laying on of hands and prayer) for ourselves or for a loved one on the Sabbath?
- ii) Would it be considered Sabbath-breaking to give first-aid, medicine, or other medical assistance to one who needed it on the Sabbath?
- iii) Would it be considered Sabbath-breaking to heal by working in a job as a doctor, nurse, paramedic, or some other health profession?

There are "yes" and "no" answers to all three questions:

- i) "Yes" in the case of a major, labour-intensive "faith-healing" crusade. However, this is not really applicable because the modern day Churches of God do not hold such crusades.

"No" in the case of a small number of anointings before or after Sabbath services, or even on an emergency call-out. Jesus' situation fell into this category of miraculous healing, even though it was Jesus Himself who was performing the healing.

- ii) "Yes" if the patient had a chronic illness and he or another (non-Sabbath-keeping) family member was able to self-administer his own medical needs.

"No" in the usual cases where a child, relative or close friend were suffering from an acute (or chronic) illness and was unable to look after himself. Also, in the case of giving first aid to a family member, friend or stranger on the Sabbath.

- iii) "Yes" if the person were to voluntarily schedule himself or herself on shift during the Sabbath hours. There are enough non-Christians in these professions in this day and age who have no knowledge or belief in God's requirement for Sabbath-keeping. A Sabbath-keeping Christian should not take any job which they know will require work on the Sabbath, and should refuse any voluntary overtime requiring work during the Sabbath hours

"No" if a Sabbath-keeping Christian who is employed in the health profession comes across a medical emergency at any time during the Sabbath hours.

The following verses verify this.

Matthew 12:11: He said to them, "What man of you, if he has one sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out?"

Jesus put it to these Pharisees that not one of them would hesitate to expend the effort to pull a sheep of theirs out of a pit during the Sabbath hours.

Matthew 12:12: Of how much more value is a man than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."

- A. Jesus compared the value of a man to that of a sheep.
 - B. His point was that, if it was lawful to save a dumb animal from further injury or from death on the Sabbath Day, then it is also lawful to make some effort - if necessary - to save a human being from injury, sickness or death during the Sabbath hours.
 - C. Jesus gave a direct answer to the Pharisees: He told them that it is lawful to do good deeds such as healing on the Sabbath Day.
 - D. It is lawful for Christians today to do good and to bring happiness to others in various ways.
 - E. But we must ensure that, if at all possible, such activities involve little or no physical work.
 - F. Jesus was not saying that it was from then on permissible for God's people employed in health and service professions to work at their jobs on the Sabbath Day!
 - G. Neither in this healing nor in the previous "grain stalks" incident did Jesus do anything in the way of true physical work.
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Matthew 24:20: Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath.

- A. It is obvious why the people of Judea would not wish to flee (to the mountains at the fulfillment of the prophecy in Daniel 11:31 and 12:11) during winter months, but if the Sabbath Day was not recognized as being commanded and/or holy time at the time setting of this flight, then what would be the problem with fleeing on a Sabbath Day?
- B. Who was the "your" that Jesus was referring to here?
- C. Verse 3 shows that Jesus was talking to the disciples.
- D. Although there was a first and partial fulfillment of this prophecy in 70 AD, the second and main fulfillment will not take place until the end times (see verses 3-6 & 13-14).
- E. Jesus certainly knew that His disciples would not be alive to flee from the violence at the time immediately preceding His second coming.
- F. Verse 16 shows that it is those who are to be situated in Judea who will be fleeing to the mountains:
- G. The time setting and the identity of the people Jesus was referring to here is important because some scholars try to get around this reference to the sanctity of the Sabbath by saying that these people should avoid fleeing on the Sabbath Day only because:

- i) The gates of Jerusalem would be closed, and they would not be able to leave,
- ii) Their attempted flight would be obvious and conspicuous amongst Sabbath-keeping Jewish residents who would not be travelling very far on the Sabbath.

In response to i):

- a) Jesus is referring to His believers throughout all Judea in the end time, not just to the residents of Jerusalem in the first century.
- b) All of Judea's smaller villages and towns were not walled and gated even at that time, they certainly are not today, and probably will not be at the end time. Even Jerusalem is not walled and gated today.

In response to ii):

- a) Many if not most Jewish residents of first century Judea may have been strict Sabbath-keepers. But, under the Roman occupation, there were many gentiles (Greeks, Romans, Samaritans, etc.) also living there. These people did not keep the Sabbath and would have had no qualms about travelling any significant distance on the Sabbath Day.
- b) In the end time, to which Jesus was referring, Jerusalem will be an even more cosmopolitan city than it was in the first century, housing even more people who are unconcerned about God's Sabbaths.
- c) Also, even many Jews today and at the end time are and will be negligent of the Sabbath (see Revelation 11:8).
- d) People wishing to flee on the Sabbath Day would not be conspicuous among so many other "Sabbath-breakers".

Matthew 28:1: Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the sepulchre.

- A. We can be sure that the Sabbath mentioned here was the weekly seventh day Sabbath because of the mention that it was over and that the morning of the first day of the week was dawning.
- B. But why did the two Mary's wait until after the Sabbath Day to come to the tomb? Luke's gospel account gives us the answer: They had rested according to the Sabbath commandment (See Luke 23:56).
- C. Here they were at the very beginning of the "new covenant" period. Surely, if Jesus had taught His followers that the Sabbath Day rest commandment was to be nailed to His cross, they would have followed his instructions. Obviously, He had not taught them such a thing.

Mark 1:21: And they went into Capernaum; and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and taught.

- A. Concerning the town of Capernaum, the New Compact Bible Dictionary says that the meaning of its name is "the village of Nahum", that it was a town on the north west shore of the Sea of Galilee where Jesus made His headquarters during his ministry in Galilee.
- B. Why is the word "immediately" used here?
- C. Did Jesus arrive in Capernaum on or shortly before the Sabbath Day, and proceed straight to the synagogue?
- D. The word gives a sense of urgency and priority for going to the synagogue and teaching on the Sabbath.
- E. Jesus' example for how (at least some of) the time of a son of God should be spent on the Sabbath was to attend the synagogue service. The 20th century Christian equivalent would be attendance at Church services.
- F. There was nothing Jesus loved more than to discuss the scriptures, as is shown in Luke's brief account of his young life (See Luke 2:41-52).
- G. Perhaps there were Sabbaths when the adult Jesus spent the whole Sabbath Day in the synagogue engrossed in such discussions.
- H. In the first century it was common for the Jewish men to stand up during the Sabbath service to read and discuss the meaning of a certain passage of scripture.

Mark 2:23: One Sabbath He was going through the grainfields; and as they made their way His disciples began to pluck heads of grain.

- A. This is the beginning of the second account of the "Sabbath/grain-field incident".
- B. The first account can be found in Matthew 12:1-8.
- C. Jesus and the disciples happened to be passing through some grain-fields and they stripped off a couple of ears of grain in order to chew them to satisfy their hunger until their next meal.

Mark 2:24: And the Pharisees said to Him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?"

- A. Beginning to pick a few heads of grain as they walked through a field could only be judged as unlawfully "working" or "gathering food" on the Sabbath by Pharisees who were sent to spy on and to find fault with Jesus.
- B. Such minor effort may have broken the minor, picky, man-made laws of the Pharisees' "tradition of the elders", but it certainly did not break God's original and true Sabbath law.

Mark 2:27: And He said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath;

- A. This is a tremendously important statement.
- B. The Sabbath Day was made for man! Jesus Christ - He who made it - said so!
- C. It was not made exclusively for the Jews or the Israelites! It was not made exclusively for Old Covenant man!
- D. If it had been made for one of these small divisions of mankind, Jesus would have clearly said so.
- E. Because Jesus' statement here lacks any such specific application of which men the Sabbath was made for, and because we are told in Genesis and Exodus that the Sabbath Day was made at creation (before the nation of Israel existed), we must believe that it was made for all men! All men of all ages... in the pre-Sinai era, under the Old Covenant, under the New Covenant, and in the World Tomorrow!
- F. God made the Sabbath at creation (Genesis 2:2-3 & Exodus 20:11) for the benefit of all human beings who would obey His commandment to keep it.
- G. If the Sabbath was made for man as Jesus says it was, then we can also assume that the Sabbath will be a requirement for man's benefit as long as man exists in human form.
- H. Notice something else that Jesus does not say here in this discussion of the Sabbath Day: He does not say (to the Pharisees nor privately, later to His disciples) that God's requirement for mankind to keep the Sabbath Day holy was to be abolished at His death, resurrection or ascension.
- I. If God was about to bring such a huge change into effect, this is one of the opportunities which would have been perfect for the announcement.
- J. But again, no such announcement can be found here nor anywhere else in the Bible.
- K. Jesus also said that man was not made for the Sabbath.
- L. God made the Sabbath Day to be a wonderful benefit for all of mankind if they would only keep it.
- M. But to make the Sabbath Day a burden by imposing long, ridiculous lists of what one can and cannot do on the Sabbath Day (as the Pharisees did) is somewhat like making the tail to wag the dog!
- N. God's scriptural "lists" of what can and cannot be done on the Sabbath are adequate.
- O. We should do our utmost to adhere to God's "lists" to the best of our ability.

- P. But we should not judge other Sabbath-keepers if they do not maintain the sanctity of the Sabbath hours in exactly the same way as we do. This is what Paul was writing about in Colossians 2:16.
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Mark 2:28: So the Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

- A. Jesus starts off this statement with the word "so" or "therefore" (Greek: *hoste*) which ties it to the previous verse/statement about the Sabbath being made for man.
- B. Jesus is saying that, because the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath, it follows that He, the Son, Servant and Lord of man, is Lord also of and over the Sabbath Day.
- C. See the parallel scriptures and notes in Matthew 12:8 and Luke 6:5.
- D. If Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath Day and has authority over it, then He can do what He wants with it. He can change it if He wants to; but nowhere in the scriptures do we find any such change!
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Mark 3:2: And they watched Him, to see whether He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him.

- A. We know who the word "they" is referring to here: the Pharisees who had been sent to spy on Jesus (See Mark 2:24).
- B. They were watching Him to see whether or not He would heal the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath Day.
- C. Perhaps they even had the man planted there in the synagogue as a trap for Jesus.
- D. The Pharisees' accusations could only be according to the "tradition of the elders" and not to the true, inspired laws of the Old Testament scriptures.
-

Mark 3:4: And He said to them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?" But they were silent.

- A. As Jesus prepared to heal the man with the withered hand, He asked the Pharisee spies their opinion on their so-called "laws" of the Sabbath (which were, in reality, sections of the "tradition of the elders").
- B. He asked them whether:
- i) It is lawful to do good or harm on the Sabbath Day,
 - ii) It is lawful to save or to take life on the Sabbath Day.
- C. The proper answers to Jesus' questions were obvious.
- D. But the Pharisees did not answer him.

- E. In attempting to trap Jesus into convicting Himself, they trapped and convicted themselves.

Mark 6:2: And on the Sabbath He began to teach in the synagogue; and many who heard Him were astonished, saying, "Where did this man get all this? What is the wisdom given to Him? What mighty works are wrought by His hands!"

- A. What was Jesus' example of what to do on the Sabbath Day?
- B. He went to the local Sabbath services at the Nazareth synagogue.
- C. Jesus taught in the synagogue.
- D. It was common for mature Jewish men to stand up before the congregation, to read a timely passage of scripture, and to expound upon it.
- E. Today's equivalent in the church of God is, perhaps, the sermonette.
- F. The members of the Nazareth congregation, many of whom knew Jesus, were amazed at His speaking.
- G. They wondered:
- i) Where did He get His wealth of knowledge?
We know that He received it from God the Father, because He was the Son of God.
 - ii) What was the special "brand" of wisdom which had been granted Him?
We know that it was the brand of wisdom that comes from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and from total obedience to and fellowship with God.
 - iii) About the mighty works He had performed... other than His words!
How did they know about the mighty works of His hands? There is no mention of them having seen any of His works yet. Did Jesus tell them about his works in His "sermonette"? Or had they heard about His works from other areas?

Mark 15:42: And when evening had come, since it was the day of preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath,

- A. Jesus died on the late Wednesday afternoon of Abib 14, 31 AD.
- B. This Wednesday was the daylight portion of Abib 14 - Passover Day.
- C. It was also the preparation day for the First Day of Unleavened Bread, which was the "Sabbath" that Mark mentions here.
- D. Various Holy Days [including the Feast of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement] are referred to as Sabbaths in the Old Testament.

- E. Why does Mark make this statement?
- F. All that God wanted to be nailed to the cross had now been nailed to the cross.
- G. But here we find certain necessary physical activities being hastily performed by Jesus' followers (see verse 43) because (or "since" as the word is translated here) the "Sabbath" (the Holy Day of the First Day of Unleavened Bread) was rapidly drawing in.
- H. Scholars believe that Mark's gospel was written between 65 and 70 AD, over three decades after "the nailing to the cross", and Mark makes no comment that such haste was not really necessary due to the supposed abolition of the Holy Days.

Mark 16:1: And when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices, so that they might go and anoint Him.

- A. Again we are told that Jesus' followers had waited until the Sabbath (which was, in fact, the First Day of Unleavened Bread) was past before going out to buy the anointing spices.
- B. There is no comment from the author that such a wait was unnecessary as the Holy Days were now supposedly nailed to Jesus' cross.
- C. We can gather from this, and from the fact that we nowhere else read of such a statement, that Jesus had never told His disciples that the Sabbaths and Holy Days were to be abolished at His death!
- D. The timing gets very interesting here.
- E. The three women had bought spices after "the Sabbath was past". Did the stores open on a Saturday evening after the Sabbath Day was over?
- F. No! Here is the way the timing works out:
 - i) Jesus died late Wednesday afternoon (Nisan 14), and was laid in the grave shortly before sunset that same day,
 - ii) The "Sabbath" of the First Day of Unleavened Bread was kept from Wednesday sunset (beginning Nisan 15) to Thursday sunset (beginning Nisan 16),
 - iii) The women went and bought their spices in the daytime portion of the Friday (Nisan 16), then continued with their preparation for the weekly Sabbath,
 - iv) They kept the weekly Sabbath Day from Friday sunset (beginning Nisan 17) to Saturday sunset (beginning Nisan 18),
 - v) Jesus rose from the dead shortly before sunset on this weekly Sabbath (exactly three days and nights after He was laid in the tomb - Matthew 12:40, Jonah 1:17),

- vi) The women returned to the tomb with their spices very early on the Sunday morning (Nisan 18),
- G. Notice that Salome is mentioned again (see Mark 15:40).
-

Luke 4:16: And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and He went to the synagogue, as His custom was, on the Sabbath Day. And He stood up to read;

- A. What did Jesus Christ normally do on the Sabbath Day? What was His example for us?
- B. Did He go to work? Did He go to a dance? Did He go to the beach? Did He stay in bed all day? Did He do His own pleasure? Did He "keep it in his heart"?
- C. No. It was His custom to attend the synagogue (the equivalent to our church services) on the Sabbath Day.
- D. Like many mature men of that time and place, He was permitted and encouraged to stand up before the synagogue congregation, to read from the scriptures (Old Testament!), and to talk about what He had read.
-

Luke 4:31: And He went down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee. And He was teaching them on the Sabbath;

- A. Jesus travelled to Capernaum which is situated on the north west coast of the Sea of Galilee.
- B. Again, what was Jesus' example of how the Sabbath should be kept?
- C. Was He working or fishing on these Sabbath Days?
- D. No. He was in the synagogue (see verse 33), teaching.
- E. Who were the "them" who he was teaching?
- F. Verse 33 indicates that this refers to the synagogue congregation.
-

Luke 6:1: On a Sabbath, while He was going through the grainfields, His disciples plucked and ate some heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands.

- A. It was the Sabbath Day.
- B. Jesus and His disciples were walking through a grain-field.
- C. They plucked some heads of grain, stripped them, rubbed them between their hands, and ate them to partially satisfy their hunger until their next meal.
-

Luke 6:2: But some of the Pharisees said, "Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?"

- A. It is obvious that these Pharisees must have been sent to spy on Jesus, for the purpose of catching Him in some sin.
- B. Satan must have inspired such a mission.
- C. The Pharisee spies claimed that Jesus and His disciples were doing something which was not lawful to do on the Sabbath Day.
- D. But it is important to determine what "law" they were supposed to have been breaking.
- E. Would Jesus Christ, the Son of God, have His Israelite disciples break either the Sabbath commandment of the true law of God or of the law of Moses (which they were still subject to)?
- F. Of course not!
- G. The so called "law" they were being accused of breaking was one of the picky, man-made rules of the "tradition of the elders" which the Pharisees had caused to appear to be as important and as binding as the true and scriptural laws of God.
- H. Jesus did not deny that He and His disciples were breaking this invalid, man-made rule.
- I. It is obvious that He felt that they were not subject to the "tradition of the elders".
- J. The tradition of the elders was a creation of the Jewish leaders and, although the Pharisees (who vehemently upheld this tradition) may have been the most powerful Jewish faction of that day, there were other Jewish sects (such as the Sadducees, the Zealots and the Essenes) who disagreed with some of the Pharisees' teachings and disregarded some of the rules which were based on their doctrines and traditions.

Luke 6:5: And He said to them, "The Son of man is Lord of the Sabbath."

- A. Jesus was and is the Son of man!
- B. Jesus was and is the Lord of the Sabbath!
- C. Being the Lord of the Sabbath Days, only Jesus has the power to do with them as He pleases.
- D. How then can a person say that he now will keep the Sabbath "because he wants to" and not because he is commanded to?
- E. Has not such a person claimed to have taken the lordship over the Sabbath to himself, and away from the Son of man?
- F. Rather, we must do with the Sabbath as the Lord of the Sabbath has commanded!
- G. When the Lord of the Sabbath clearly commands a change to made in its keeping, then we will obey that command.

H. Such a command has not been made!

Luke 6:6: On another Sabbath, when He entered the synagogue and taught, a man was there whose right hand was withered.

- A. Here again is an example of how Jesus used His time on the Sabbath Day
 - B. He attended "Sabbath services" at the synagogue (See also Luke 4:16 & 31-33 & 13:10).
 - C. As was commonly permitted and encouraged for most mature Jewish men, Jesus read from the scriptures and taught their meanings to the rest of the congregation.
 - D. On this particular Sabbath Day there was in the congregation a man with a withered right hand.
 - E. Assuming that this man was right handed, this impediment would have prevented him from earning a decent living in any kind of manual or clerical work.
-

Luke 6:7: And the scribes and the Pharisees watched Him, to see whether He would heal on the Sabbath, so that they might find an accusation against Him.

- A. The scribes and Pharisees were spying on Jesus with critical and judgmental eyes.
 - B. They knew, by this time, how compassionate Jesus was, and that, if He came in contact with a sick or injured person, He would heal him.
 - C. But they were watching Jesus to find some excuse to have Him condemned.
 - D. It is surprising that, if these scribes and Pharisees were aware of Jesus' power to heal, they were not afraid of that same power being used against them.
 - E. Perhaps they knew that Jesus only used His power in non-violent ways. Even when He overturned the moneychangers' tables in the temple courtyard He did not (as far as we know) physically harm any person.
 - F. Despite His policy of non-violence during His physical lifetime, the time will come when Jesus, at His second coming, will find it necessary to use physical violence once again to grab the attention of the rebellious nations of the world.
-

Luke 6:9: And Jesus said to them, "I ask you, is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to destroy it?"

- A. In this account, there is no mention of anyone verbally accusing Jesus of breaking any laws.
- B. But in verse 8 we read of Jesus knowing the thoughts of the Pharisees.
- C. Such accusations of Jesus' law-breaking must have been in their thoughts.

- D. Jesus' idea of law was somewhat different to that of the Pharisees.
 - E. Jesus knew that all of God's true laws were clearly and completely written in the (Old Testament) scriptures.
 - F. But the Pharisees upheld the numerous, picky, man-made laws of their "tradition of the elders".
 - G. Jesus asked His accusers whether the true Sabbath law (that was originated by and supported by God) would permit the doing of good or harm, the saving or destruction of life, on the Sabbath Day.
-

Luke 13:10: Now He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath.

- A. For the fourth time in Luke's gospel account, we find Jesus spending some of his Sabbath time at "Sabbath services" in a synagogue (See also Luke 4:16 & 31-33 & 6:6).
 - B. We can take this as an example for Jesus' followers, ancient and modern.
 - C. Not being Jews, we Christians would not perhaps be welcomed at synagogue services on a regular basis. Nor would we be fed there with New Testament Christian teachings.
 - D. But, to adequately follow Jesus' example, we should attend services with a congregation of the Christian Sabbath-keeping church of God, which, to the best of our knowledge, is endeavouring to follow the commands and examples of Jesus and his original church.
-

Luke 13:14: But the ruler of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, said to the people, "There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be healed, and not on the Sabbath Day."

- A. Using the power of God and not human effort or work of any kind, Jesus had mercifully and lovingly healed a woman who was suffering from some type of curvature of the spine.
 - B. Then this synagogue ruler makes an announcement to the general congregation (apparently he didn't have the courage to speak to and accuse Jesus directly) that, if they required healing, they should request it on any day but the Sabbath.
 - C. He also erroneously suggested that Jesus' healing involved some type of work.
-

Luke 13:15: Then the Lord answered him, "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his ass from the manger, and lead it away to water it?"

- A. Jesus was answering the announcement of the synagogue ruler, but His word "hypocrites" is plural.

- B. Probably He was referring to the other synagogue authorities: the colleagues of the ruler.
 - C. Or perhaps he was referring to some members of the congregation who may have nodded in approval of the announcement.
 - D. Jesus was able to read all of their minds... simultaneously!
 - E. Jesus implied that His listeners' efforts to move their animals from their feeding troughs to their water sources expended more physical energy than any regular efforts to heal (e.g. bandaging, giving medicine, etc.), and certainly expended more energy than His healing which was performed by the power of God and not by the physical efforts of man.
-

Luke 13:16: And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath Day?"

- A. Why did Jesus refer to the woman whom he had healed as "a daughter of Abraham"?
- B. It is probable that she was either a Jew or - somewhat less probable - that she belonged to one of the other tribes of Israel.
- C. Perhaps He was suggesting that she was a practicing, Sabbath-keeping Israelite.
- D. Jesus told the congregation that Satan the devil had bound this woman to this affliction for eighteen years.
- E. Perhaps God had allowed Satan to cause this infirmity specifically so that Jesus could perform this healing at that time and in that place, and so that He could inspire the event to be recorded in the scriptures.
- F. By telling them that Satan had caused this infirmity, Jesus implied that the healing was brought about, not by physical bandages or medicine, but by God commanding Satan to release the woman from what he had been doing to her all those years.
- G. Referring to His words in verse 15, Jesus asked His audience, if they regularly and without any guilt of law-breaking, felt free to expend a certain amount of physical effort to move their animals from their food source to their water source every Sabbath Day, why they then considered that it was wrong for this woman, without any physical effort on her own or anyone else's part, to be released from her infirmity on one Sabbath Day.
- H. Again, it should be noted here that, although this example of Jesus gives a Christian the permission to administer medicine or first-aid to a family member, a friend or even to a stranger as such activity becomes necessary on any Sabbath Day, it should not be misconstrued as giving permission to a person employed in the health-care field to work at his or her job during the Sabbath hours.

- I. In this age, there are plenty of non-Christian doctors and nurses who make themselves available for work on the Sabbath Days (which they, of course, do not recognize).
 - J. In the World Tomorrow, in the unlikely event of all healing not being miraculously performed by Jesus Christ, and in the unlikely event that hospitals, doctors and nurses may be required for the care of ill patients and child-bearing mothers, Jesus Himself will be available to make the decisions as to what care should be given on the Sabbath Days and by whom.
-

Luke 14:1: One Sabbath when He went to dine at the house of a ruler who belonged to the Pharisees, they were watching Him.

- A. Here is another example of what Jesus shows us is proper to do on the Sabbath Day.
 - B. It is permissible to go to dine at another's home.
 - C. We are not told whom this Pharisee ruler was.
 - D. Was it one of those who opposed Jesus?
 - E. Or was it one of those (such as Joseph of Arimathea or Nicodemus) who secretly supported Jesus?
 - F. Who were the "they" who were watching Jesus?
 - G. Probably other Pharisees who were out to note and record reasons to accuse and condemn Him.
-

Luke 14:3: And Jesus spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?"

- A. Jesus' intention was, of course, to heal the man, mentioned in verse 2, who was suffering from dropsy (an abnormal accumulation of serous fluid in body cavities).
 - B. This is the fifth Sabbath-related confrontation Jesus had been through with the Pharisees.
 - C. But note that in none of these confrontations did Jesus ever even imply that God's true Sabbath requirements were or would be relaxed or done away.
 - D. This time, Jesus led the conversation on the subject. He was asking them the question, rather than the other way around.
 - E. We must remember that, when Jesus made mention of the law here, that He had a different idea than the Pharisees of what laws were binding and what were not.
-

Luke 14:5: And He said to them, "Which of you, having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well, will not immediately pull him out on a Sabbath Day?"

- A. Being able to read their judgmental thoughts, Jesus asked the dinner guests whether or not they would not expend the effort on the Sabbath Day to rescue one of their children or even one of their animals that had fallen down a well.
 - B. By healing this man by the power of God, Jesus had expended less physical energy.
 - C. It is amazing that these people could criticize and judge Jesus after seeing Him perform such miraculous healings so frequently.
-

Luke 23:54: It was the day of preparation, and the Sabbath was beginning.

- A. This was late on Wednesday afternoon, Nisan 14, the preparation day for the fast approaching Feast Day (Sabbath) of the First Day of Unleavened Bread.
 - B. In the Old Testament, Holy Days are sometimes referred to as "Sabbaths".
 - C. Virtually every other Jew in the country would have been either in their homes or at the temple at that moment, preparing either for the Passover or for the Night to be Much Observed, depending on their persuasion as to whether the Passover was to be kept at the beginning or end of Nisan 14.
-

Luke 23:56: Then they returned, and prepared spices and ointments. On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

- A. Who does "they" refer to here? The women? Joseph and Nicodemus? Or both?
- B. Luke is probably referring to the women.
- C. Luke did not mention Nicodemus here; thus Joseph would be referred to as the singular "he".
- D. There is a possibility that Joseph and the women left the area together, but the wording of verses 49 and 55 indicates that the women kept their distance from him.
- E. Whoever "they" refers to, they returned, probably to their homes.
- F. They prepared spices and ointments, but not that Wednesday evening or the daylight portion of the following day (Thursday), as that was Nisan 15, the First Day of Unleavened Bread, and this same verse tells us that these devoted followers of Jesus still kept God's Sabbaths and Holy Days.
- G. They probably bought and prepared the spices and ointments on the Friday, Nisan 16.
- H. Here is a very important statement!
- I. Jesus was now dead. The Old Covenant period was now over. The New Testament period had just begun.

- J. But these women still kept and rested on the Sabbath Day "according to the commandment"!
 - K. Which commandment?
 - L. The well-known fourth commandment, of course. The commandment that had been commanded in Exodus 20:8-11.
 - M. Surely, if Jesus had wanted His disciples (including the women) to understand that His Sabbaths were not required after His death, He would have given them (and us) clear instructions to that effect. In His teaching regarding the keeping of the Sabbath He had many opportunities to do so, but we don't read of it.
 - N. But if He had made such a statement, these women would have not rested on the Sabbath "according to the commandment", because they would have remembered His clear instructions regarding this huge and vastly important change!
 - O. Also, the gospel of Luke was written some time between 58 and 60 AD, by which time the New Covenant had been in effect for almost thirty years. If the keeping of the Sabbath was no longer necessary, why did Luke make this statement, or why did he not make some explanatory comment or modification in parentheses?
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John 5:9: And at once the man was healed, and he took up his pallet and walked. Now that day was the Sabbath.

- A. The man was healed immediately.
 - B. He picked up his portable bed and was able to walk.
 - C. The day on which Jesus healed this crippled man was a Sabbath and, as it was during a feast season (see John 5:1), it may have been a high Holy Day.
-

John 5:10: So the Jews said to the man who was cured, "It is the Sabbath, it is not lawful for you to carry your pallet."

- A. Apparently, the Jewish leaders were afraid to confront Jesus Himself, so they harassed those whom he healed. (See also Luke 13:14)
- B. It was petty for the Jews to accuse the healed man of law-breaking by picking up and carrying his portable bed on the Sabbath, especially after such a wonderful and miraculous healing.
- C. Of course, Jesus was the one who had told him to take up his pallet and walk, so they were indirectly accusing Him of this law-breaking.
- D. It is obvious that God would not have listened to Jesus' request to heal this man if in so doing He would have been helping the man to break His (God's) own Sabbath laws.

- E. Again, the Jewish authorities made an accusation of law breaking. But this carrying of a minor burden such as a portable bed in no way broke God's true Sabbath laws, but rather broke the Pharisees' man-made laws of their "tradition of the elders".
-

John 5:16: And this was why the Jews persecuted Jesus, because He did this on the Sabbath.

- A. What had Jesus done on the Sabbath (or Holy Day) to cause the Jewish leaders to persecute Him?
- B. See the previous verse (John 5:15) for the answer.
- C. He had healed a crippled man and had told him to take up his temporary bed and to walk.
- D. Only in the eyes of the Jewish leaders had Jesus broken the Sabbath (or Holy Day).
- E. He had not, of course, broken His own true Sabbath/Holy Day instructions which He had given to Adam, Moses and the Israelites thousands of years previously, but rather had broken the Pharisees' picky, man-made additions of the "tradition of the elders".
- F. The words "and sought to slay him" are omitted from the RSV and from other recognized translations.
-

John 5:18: This was why the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath but also called God His Father, making Himself equal with God.

- A. The Jewish authorities had previously sought to silence Jesus by having Him killed, but now even more so.
- B. Why? For two reasons:
- i) Because, in their judgement, he had broken the Sabbath laws. Jesus had not, in fact, broken the true scriptural Sabbath laws, but only the man-made "laws" of the Pharisees' "tradition of the elders".
 - ii) He had referred to God as His Father, and by so doing he had implied that he was equal to God.
- Jesus gave us the example that true children of God also may call His Father "our Father".
-

John 7:22: Moses gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man upon the Sabbath.

- A. Jesus reminded His accusers that the rite of circumcision was commanded in Moses' writings (See Exodus 4:26 & 12:44, 48 & Leviticus 12:3).
- B. A parenthetical statement is made that it was not Moses who originated circumcision, but God's instruction to "the fathers".
- C. In fact, we first read of God's command for circumcision as a requirement for His covenant with Abraham and his family (See Genesis 17:10-27).
- D. As well as the requirement for physical circumcision, God also gave Moses the requirement for spiritual circumcision of the heart... while still under the Old Covenant (See Deuteronomy 10:16 & 30:6).
- E. God repeated it to the prophet Jeremiah (Jeremiah 4:4) and, in the New Testament, to the apostle Paul (Romans 2:29).
- F. Jesus also reminded His accusers that they frequently expended the effort required to perform the "operation" of circumcision on baby boys who attained the age of eight days, even if that day was a Sabbath Day (See Leviticus 12:3).
- G. Note that it was Jesus who brought up the subject of Sabbath-breaking in this address. It had not been mentioned previously.
- H. But Jesus had the ability to read the minds of His accusers, and He knew that they perceived their main case against Him to be that of Sabbath-breaking.

John 7:23: If on the Sabbath a man receives circumcision, so that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because on the Sabbath I made a man's whole body well?

- A. There appear to be two possible meanings to the first phrase of this verse:
 - i) A boy child is circumcised on the Sabbath Day so that the circumcision requirement of the law of Moses is not violated... with the priority on 8th day circumcision.
 - ii) A boy child is circumcised on the Sabbath Day without violating the Sabbath requirements... with the priority on proper Sabbath-keeping.

Either one is valid to back up Jesus' point. Perhaps the second is more appropriate, as the violation of the Sabbath is the point in question, not the violation of the circumcision commands.

- B. Some questions come to mind:
 - i) In the eyes of the Pharisees, which rule should have been relaxed in such a case?
 - ii) Should the 8th day circumcision have been advanced or delayed by an hour so that the Sabbath could have been strictly maintained?
 - iii) Or should a few minutes of the Sabbath have been used for the circumcision ceremony so that the 8th day circumcision rule could have been maintained?"

- iv) Was the Sabbath command as well as the circumcision command part of the law of Moses?
 - v) Which rule (if either) was the most important in Jesus' time: the Sabbath or circumcision?
- C. Jesus asked His accusers, if it was permissible for the physical effort of circumcision to be frequently expended on Sabbath Days, why were they angry with Him for infrequently healing people on certain previous Sabbath Days, and without any physical effort (i.e. rather through God's power).
- D. There is an implication here that, although the circumcision process was initiated by God, it removed a part of the body and caused some minor and temporary pain, whereas Jesus' healings restored human bodies to wholeness and removed pain.

John 9:14: Now it was a Sabbath Day when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes.

- A. Jesus performed some very minor "work" on this Sabbath Day by making clay with dust and spittle.
- B. The healing of the man's eyesight did not depend on this clay. Jesus could have healed the man without it.
- C. It may be thought that the purpose of the clay was to ease the shock of suddenly gaining one's eyesight after being blind from birth.
- D. But Jesus could have easily returned the man's eyesight gradually without the clay.
- E. It seems that Jesus made the clay to purposely do something physical, which was meant to appear as if the clay was a significant factor in the man's healing.
- F. Again, it appears that Jesus purposely did some very minor physical "work".
- G. Perhaps the purpose behind this clay-making was to show Jesus' followers and His accusers that it was considered acceptable by God for His people to expend the effort to perform first aid or to administer medicine (but only as necessary) on His Sabbaths.
- H. Again, this cannot by any stretch of the imagination be considered the green light for every Christian employed in the health services field to go to work on the Sabbath Day.

John 9:16: Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for He does not keep the Sabbath." But others said, "how can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" There was a division among them.

The Pharisees were divided in their opinion:

- i. Some thought that Jesus' Sabbath activities violated the Sabbath laws. The Pharisees had confused God's true, scriptural Sabbath instructions with their own "tradition of the elders".
 - ii. Others, using more sound logic quite rightly considered that God would not support and perform healing miracles for a law-breaker.
-

John 19:31: Since it was the day of preparation, in order to prevent the bodies from remaining on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.

- A. This was the late afternoon of Wednesday Abib 14, 31 AD: the daylight portion of Passover Day and also the day of preparation for the Holy Day of the First Day of Unleavened Bread.
 - B. In the Old Testament, the Holy Days are sometimes referred to as "Sabbaths".
 - C. Here in the New Testament, John clearly states that this Abib 15 Sabbath was not a regular weekly Sabbath, but was a high day: the First Day of Unleavened Bread.
 - D. The Jews must have had a law (probably not a scriptural law but rather part of their "tradition of the elders") which instructed them to dispose of the bodies of executed criminals before the beginning of any Sabbath or Holy Day.
 - E. In their cruelty, the Jewish leaders asked Pilate to arrange for the legs of the three crucified men to be broken in order to hasten their death.
-

Acts 1:12: Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath Day's journey away;

- A. This is the first mention of the Sabbath after the ascension of Jesus Christ to heaven.
- B. Everything that was fulfilled in Jesus' physical life, suffering, death, resurrection and ascension was now complete.
- C. Everything that God had planned to have nailed to Jesus' cross had now been nailed to the cross.
- D. The New Compact Bible Dictionary states that the book of Acts was probably written around 61 or 62 AD. Halley's Bible Handbook states that it was written about 63 AD.
- E. So, here we have a mention of "a Sabbath Day's journey" being referred to over thirty years after Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension. Although the event itself took place at the time of Jesus' ascension, it was written about thirty years later.

- F. Is it reasonable that Luke would use this phrase thirty years after the crucifixion if the requirement to keep God's Sabbaths was nailed to the cross and if he and the church of God were no longer keeping the Sabbath?
- G. The verse does not state that the ascension took place on a Sabbath Day. Counting forty days (Acts 1:3) inclusively from the first day [Sunday] that the disciples were with Jesus after His resurrection indicates that Jesus ascended to heaven on a Thursday. Here in verse 12, Luke merely uses the phrase "Sabbath Day's journey" to describe the distance between Jerusalem and the place of Jesus' ascension.
- H. The allowable distance for a Sabbath Day's journey is not defined in the scriptures, but rather in the "tradition of the elders".
- I. Although Jesus rejected some (probably most) of the tradition of the elders, it does seem reasonable to have some approximation of how far a Sabbath keeper could walk (for purposes other than relaxation and pleasure) on the Sabbath without his journey becoming an act of labour.

Acts 13:14: But they passed on from Perga and came to Antioch of Pisidia. And on the Sabbath Day they went into the synagogue and sat down.

- A. Antioch of Pisidia (or rather "near Pisidia") was an inland town in southern Asia Minor. At various times it appears to have been within the borders of all three provinces of Phrygia, Pisidia and Galatia.
- B. Notice that the apostles were still keeping the Sabbath Day in 47 AD... sixteen years after Jesus' resurrection!
- C. But how were they keeping the Sabbath?
- D. They were following the example of Jesus, whose custom it was to attend the synagogue every Sabbath Day (See Luke 4:16).
- E. Were they keeping the Sabbath and attending Sabbath services (in the synagogue) just because they were Jews, and/or because they were expected to by other Jews?
- F. Asia Minor was not a Jewish area. It was a gentile area with some Jewish population. As far as we know, Paul and Barnabas were strangers in this area.
If they would have chosen to do some physical work, to preach to the gentile residents, or to participate in some non-Jewish activities on the Sabbath, no-one would have known them well enough to criticize them for it.
- G. But they did not. They went to "Sabbath services" in the synagogue, they listened to the reading of the law and prophets, and they preached Christ to the Jewish population.

Acts 13:27: For those who live in Jerusalem and their rulers, because they did not recognize Him nor understand the utterances of the prophets which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled these by condemning Him.

- A. Paul here boldly tells the Antioch Jews and proselytes that their Jerusalem brethren and leaders:
 - i) Had not recognized who Jesus really was,
 - ii) Had not understood the prophecies which they preached every Sabbath,
 - iii) Had fulfilled some of these prophecies by condemning Jesus,
 - B. The mention of the Sabbath in this verse neither supports nor opposes the requirement for Christians to keep the Sabbath Day.
 - C. It merely makes the statement that prophecies from the (Old Testament) scriptures were read (in the temple and the synagogues) every Sabbath. But it does imply that the Old Testament scriptures are still valid and useful in the New Testament era.
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Acts 13:42: As they went out, the people begged that these things might be told them the next Sabbath.

- A. The congregation, which was composed of Jews and proselytes (or "devout converts to Judaism" as the RSV of verse 43 describes them) were impressed and excited by this news of fulfilled major prophecies.
 - B. They wanted Paul and Barnabas to return the following Sabbath to tell them more.
 - C. If Paul and Barnabas wanted to take the opportunity to preach Christ's gospel to the Jews and proselytes, their best opportunity was at the synagogue on the Sabbath Day.
 - D. Notice that Paul and Barnabas did not suggest that they meet again the following day (Sunday) or at some other time during the following week.
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Acts 13:44: The next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered together to hear the Word of God.

- A. Word must have spread around the community during the week, and attendance was way up the following Sabbath.
- B. When this scripture says, "almost the whole city gathered together", we may assume that the Jews were a minority, and that many of those who gathered at the synagogue were gentiles!
- C. Notice that the gathering was still on the Sabbath and that nowhere do Paul and Barnabas tell the people that it is not necessary for their meetings and/or worship services to be held on the Sabbath.

- D. Seeing the excitement of the synagogue congregation on the previous Sabbath, Paul and Barnabas could very well have arranged a meeting the following day (Sunday) or another day during the week. But they did not; they waited until the next Sabbath.
 - E. The Sabbath was the "norm"; nowhere do we find any authority for it to be changed or done away.
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Acts 15:21: For from early generations Moses has had in every city those who preach him, for he is read every Sabbath in the synagogues."

- A. James mentioned that the teachings of Moses were widely known around the Mediterranean world of that day and that for God's New Testament people to be continuing in ungodly practices would be a terribly bad example.
 - B. The mention of the Sabbath here neither supports nor opposes the requirement for Christians to keep the Sabbath... except for the fact that there is no supplementary statement that it is not necessary for it to be kept in the New Testament era.
 - C. The verse merely states that the teachings of Moses had for many years been preached regularly every Sabbath in the synagogues.
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Acts 16:13: And on the Sabbath Day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together.

- A. The date was approximately 50 AD... almost twenty years since Jesus' crucifixion.
- B. Here we read of Paul, Silas and Timothy in the gentile Roman city of Philippi in Macedonia, keeping the Sabbath Day by seeking a peaceful place to gather with other believers, and to pray.
- C. There was a gathering of women, presumably all gentiles.
- D. At least one was a believer in the true God.
- E. What was the apostles' example regarding Sabbath-keeping to these (probably gentile) women?
- F. Their example was to keep the Sabbath Day by praying, by seeking a peaceful place to gather with other believers, to teach and to be taught.
- G. Paul and his companions were strangers in Philippi. We may assume that Philippi was mainly gentile and that few Jews were resident there.
- H. If there was no requirement for these New Testament children of God to keep the Sabbath Day, then why did they keep it in this city where they were strangers and where there were apparently few or no Jews to judge them in this regard?

Acts 18:4: And he argued in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded Jews and Greeks.

- A. Here we see Paul in Corinth in 51 AD, twenty years after the crucifixion of Jesus, still putting the Sabbath Day to special use.
 - B. The previous verses indicate that he and his hosts worked at tent-making for the other six days of the week, but these Christians still put the Sabbath Day aside for special use as God Himself had done in Genesis 2:2-3.
 - C. Neither here nor anywhere else in the New Testament can we find an example of any Christian working at his job on the Sabbath Day. Nor can we find any permission to do so.
 - D. Paul followed Jesus' example by attending the synagogue every Sabbath Day and by preaching Christ's gospel there to the Jews and to the proselytes.
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Colossians 2:16: Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath.

- A. Does the apostle Paul in this verse actually state or imply that God's laws regarding unclean foods, His feasts and His Sabbath Days were nailed to Jesus' cross (verse 14) and are therefore done away?
- B. If so, where does Paul get his authority to say such a thing?
- C. Jesus Christ nowhere made such a statement or implication!
- D. Paul is actually saying that Christians should not be judging each other in the details of how we individually might obey these laws (as the Pharisees had empowered themselves to do).
- E. What Paul is really saying here is that:
 - i) One Christian should not be judging another in what type (e.g. meat or vegetables) and what quantity of food or drink he consumes. But this doesn't give him or us permission to eat unclean foods, to be gluttons, or to get drunk.
 - ii) One Christian should not be judging another in how he keeps the Sabbath or Holy Days.

But this does not give him or us permission to work or to do our own pleasure on God's Sabbaths or feast days.

- F. See Mark 2:27 and the associated notes above.
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Colossians 2:17: These are only a shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.

- A. The apostle Paul states here that the things mentioned in the previous verse (i.e. the laws concerning food, drink, Holy Days and Sabbath Days) **are** (now, in this present New Testament era) "shadows" of things that are to come in the future.
 - B. Paul says that these "shadows" exist now. He did not say that they are done away.
 - C. Jesus Christ is the Body (the substance or reality), the "sun of righteousness" (Malachi 4:2) that casts these "shadows".
 - D. He cast the shadows in the Old Covenant era, He casts them now, and He will continue to cast them until He clearly declares that they are no longer necessary. He has not yet made such a declaration!
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Hebrews 4:4: For He has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way, "And God rested on the seventh day from all His works."

- A. The opening word "for" links this verse with verse 3.
 - B. The context is linked by:
 - i) The verse 4 mention of God resting on the first Sabbath Day after His creation work,
 - ii) The verse 3 mention of God's works being finished at the foundation of the world.
 - C. Paul is here quoting a scripture out of the Old Testament. The "somewhere" that he writes of is, of course, Genesis 2:2.
 - D. The "He" refers to God, who is speaking through Moses in the book of Genesis.
 - E. The inference here is that, in the same way that God rested on the seventh day of that creation week, after man's time of toil on earth (perhaps six thousand year days) is through, he will enjoy a one thousand year "day" of rest.
(See Revelation 20:2-7 & II Peter 3:8).
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Hebrews 4:9: So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God;

- A. The comparison of the weekly seventh day Sabbath rest with God's rest is a continuation of the context of verses 4 and 8.
- B. If, in Paul's day (the book of Hebrews was written in approximately 68 AD... 31 years after Jesus Christ's death and resurrection), there remained a Sabbath rest for the people of God, this means that the promised rest of God was, at that time, still in the future!
- C. Let us look at the grammatical logic of this:
 Example 1: If my wife were to make a batch of cookies and my daughters were to eat them all but one, leaving that one for me to eat when I come home from work, then that one cookie remains for me to enjoy when I come home. At the time when my wife tells the girls to leave one for their Dad, that cookie remains for my future enjoyment!
 Example 2: If one of my daughters, upon her graduation from high school, qualifies for a place at university, and when she applies, the university officials tell her that there is just one place remaining for her, my daughter as good as has the position, but her actual entry into the university is still in the future! Her university position remains!
 Like my cookie and my daughter's university place, the rest is as good as ours because it has been promised by our God whose promises never fail. But its actual fulfillment is not here yet; it is still to come in the future!
- D. If the rest was still to come in the future in 68 AD, then it is still to come now at the beginning of the 21st Century, because we are still in the same age and under the same type of Church authority, rules and administration as they were.
- E. If this spiritual Sabbath rest is still to come in the future, then the physical Sabbath symbol and "shadow" (Colossians 2:16-17) cannot yet have been totally fulfilled and is therefore still required.
- F. This is the final usage of the word "Sabbath" in the Bible.

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