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# GOD'S ETERNAL SIGN

*Hope*  
AWAKENS



# GOD'S ETERNAL SIGN

For many years, marine charts and world maps showed a small island named Sandy Island off the northeast coast of Australia, west of New Caledonia in the Coral Sea. But when scientists from the University of Sydney traveled to the area, they were surprised to discover that Sandy Island wasn't there. Instead of an island, there was nothing but ocean. Sandy Island had apparently disappeared!

How did an island simply vanish into the ether? It seems most likely Sandy Island first appeared on maps due to human error, with the error becoming entrenched as it was repeated over time. Without anyone checking to see if Sandy Island was really there, its existence was assumed by anyone who saw it shown on a map. But Sandy Island didn't exist, and never had. So one day it was on maps and charts, and the next day—after the error was fixed—it was gone. The island just “disappeared.”

What would happen if something God made suddenly disappeared from sight? And what if

it was something God had said should always be kept in view?

The Bible begins with perhaps the most famous line in the history of literature: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). The rest of the creation story follows. God created light, the atmosphere, land, seas, and more until on the sixth day God created the human family. Each day of the creation week God announced that what He had created was "good," and after six days of creation He declared His created works to be "very good."

But God wasn't done yet.

Genesis 2:2, 3 says, "And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made."

On the seventh day of the creation week God created the Sabbath day, a day for humanity to rest from work and commune with God as on no other day of the week. Just as the ground before the burning bush was holy, so the Sabbath day was made holy by God.

The sanctity of the Sabbath was so important to God that it was enshrined in the Ten Commandments. “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God” (Exodus 20:8-10).

Isaiah wrote that those who kept the Sabbath day holy would delight in the Lord and “ride upon the high hills of the earth” (Isaiah 58:14), and that even those who converted from paganism to honor and follow God would observe the Bible Sabbath (Isaiah 56:6, 7).

Throughout the Old Testament, God's people kept the Sabbath day. In fact, disrespect for the Sabbath and its sacredness was said by the prophet Nehemiah to be responsible for bringing “added wrath upon Israel” (Nehemiah 13:18). Jesus kept the Sabbath (Luke 4:16), as did the early Christian church (Matthew 24:20; Acts 13:44; Acts 16:13). And the last chapter of the Bible states clearly that those who “do His commandments that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city” (Revelation 22:14).

But as important as the Bible declares the seventh day Sabbath to be, humanity has arrived at a place where a day “made for man”

(Mark 2:27) has all but disappeared from the Christian landscape. Once written with the finger of God, the biblical Sabbath has gone the way of Sandy Island. How has the Sabbath day simply disappeared?

Today, most people of faith who claim the Bible as their guide observe Sunday as the weekly day of rest, or holy day. The reason for the change from the biblical Sabbath to Sunday is rarely said to rest upon Scripture, simply because the change is rooted in tradition, and not the Bible.

It would be expected that such a colossal change—the change from the Bible Sabbath to Sunday observance, essentially an amendment to the constitution of heaven—would be recorded in the Bible. The New Testament mentions Sunday, the first day of the week, eight times total. Five of those times are in passing with nothing suggesting it to be anything other than an ordinary day of the week (Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:1, 2; Mark 16:9; Luke 24:1; John 20:1).

So do the remaining three instances where Sunday is mentioned in the New Testament identify Sunday as the new Sabbath day? Let's look at each passage in question.

John 20:19 says, “Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’”

Clearly, this passage doesn't suggest that God changed the Sabbath from the seventh day of the week—Saturday—to Sunday, the first day of the week. In this instance, the disciples were gathered together on the first day of the week not to worship, but for the sake of their safety. Jesus had just been executed, and they feared their own lives were in grave danger. On that particular Sunday the disciples were not celebrating a modified Sabbath in any way.

The Bible says in Acts 20:7, 8, “Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight. There were many lamps in the upper room where they were gathered together.”

This should be looked at closely. According to the Bible, a day begins and ends at sunset (see Leviticus 23:32 and Mark 1:32). From a biblical perspective, when the sun sets on one day,

the next day of the week begins. Even though it might only be 6:30 in the evening, *biblically* speaking a new day has begun if sunset has taken place. Therefore, in Acts 20 Paul was actually preaching on *Saturday night*. It was the dark part of the first day of the week. Sunday night after sunset would have been the *second* day of the week. On Saturday night—on the first day of the week—Paul preached a long sermon, knowing it would be the last time he would see his friends in Troas. Then the next day—Sunday—Paul hikes 14 miles to Assos to board a ship bound for Mitylene (Acts 20:13, 14). Obviously Paul didn't consider Sunday to be a holy day set aside for worship, and this passage doesn't suggest that the biblical Sabbath had been altered.

This brings us to 1 Corinthians 16. Some years ago I was driving and listening to a Christian radio station when the announcer asked the following quiz question. "In what chapter of the Bible do we find Christians taking up an offering in church?" My heart sank because I knew the "correct" answer to his question. And I knew the "correct" answer was entirely incorrect.

Sure enough, someone called in and said the answer was 1 Corinthians 16, where the following words are written. "Now concerning the



collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collection when I come” (1 Corinthians 16:1, 2).

Owing to a famine causing significant problems for believers in Jerusalem, Paul counseled church members in Corinth to put money aside every first day of the week (Sunday). He explains the reason for his counsel. “That there be no collection when I come.” Someone would come to Corinth and collect, for the welfare of the saints, money that had already been put aside for that very purpose. The passage makes no mention of a worship service or an offering in church. Paul was encouraging the Corinthian believers to be charitable towards fellow believers in great need.

None of the verses in the New Testament discussing the first day of the week suggest even remotely that the Sabbath day was changed from the seventh day of the week to the first. For believers who wish to take their faith from the Bible, this is a real challenge. The Bible simply does not say that the Sabbath was changed to Sunday.

This begs the question: why was Sabbath observance transferred from Saturday to Sunday? Bible justification for such a change is clearly lacking.

There are always good reasons for what God does, and in the creation of the Sabbath day God was thinking of the very best for His children. He gave humanity a day where a person could pull back from the stresses and demands of the world, and connect with God and family. He reserved a time for worship, where individuals who followed God seven days a week could have a special oasis in time in which they could commune with God as on no other day. And from a purely scientific point of view, the establishment of a weekly seventh-day Sabbath was an act of creative genius. Human beings are literally created to thrive on Sabbath rest.

It is well known that humans, animals, and even plants are strongly affected by built-in patterns that follow a 24-hour cycle. These *circadian rhythms* are produced by the body itself, and influence not only a person's sleep patterns but also mental and emotional health. The jet lag a person experiences when crossing multiple time zones in a short period of time is an example of disrupted circadian rhythms. God

made the human body to be in sync with the 24-hour day He created.

In a similar way, science has revealed that, as well as circadian rhythms, people operate in conjunction with *circaseptan* rhythms. Circaseptan rhythms are a seven-day version of the daily circadian rhythm. According to chronobiologists, our bodies operate according to a weekly rhythm. It has been found that heart-beat, blood pressure, and other important functions of the human body operate in harmony with an innate seven-day cycle.

For example, prothrombin, which causes blood to clot, is at its highest level in the human body a week after a baby is born, the very reason Hebrew boys were circumcised on the eighth day of their lives. Even many illnesses have a weekly clock; numerous ailments have been observed to peak after seven days.

So was the Sabbath day ever changed owing to changes made to the calendar? It is true that a significant change was made to the calendar in 1582 A.D. Because the Julian calendar slowly lost time over the years, the Gregorian calendar, which replaced it, dropped ten days from the month of March. While the change to the calendar (adopted in different years by

different countries) brought the calendar back into harmony with the realities of the seasons, it in no way affected the weekly seven-day cycle. The first day of the week was still followed by the second, which in turn was followed by the third, and so on. In 1793 A.D., France instituted a ten-day week, while in 1929 A.D. the Soviet Union changed to a five-day week, which soon morphed into a six-day week. Both experiments failed, and before long both nations reverted to the seven-day week.

Just as a body will not function well on a 29-hour day as opposed to a 24-hour day, humans were designed to function best when they observe a seven-day week that includes a weekly day of rest. When the Bible says we are “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:14), it’s clear that when God made the human family “in the beginning” He created us to live according to a seven-day cycle. The seventh-day Sabbath is the capstone of the God-designed week!

In his book, *The Blue Zones*, author Dan Buettner explained that several population groups around the world live considerably longer than population groups in other parts of the world. One of the population clusters noted for

longevity is located in Loma Linda, California. While Buettner noted many people in Loma Linda tend to be vegetarians, non-smokers, and non-drinkers, he also concluded that they realized a decided health benefit from observing the seventh-day Sabbath.

Writing in *National Geographic*, Mr. Buettner noted that Loma Linda is inhabited by many people who “observe Saturday Sabbath—as opposed to Sunday—when they cut out the rest of the world to pray, relieve stress, socialize with others, and enjoy a ‘sanctuary in time’ . . . a testimonial, perhaps to the potential power of mixing health and religion.”<sup>1</sup>

He went on to write, “They take this idea of Sabbath very seriously, so they’re decompressing the stress. About 84 percent of health care dollars are spent because of bad food choices, inactivity, and unmanaged stress. And they have these cultural ways of managing stress through their Sabbath.”

Mr. Buettner, writing in a secular magazine, echoes what Jesus said in Mark 2:27, “The Sabbath was made for man.” The Sabbath day

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1 From Dan Buettner, 2009, *The Blue Zones*.

is a gift from God to the human family, intended by God to be a blessing and a benefit.

The idea has often been advanced that the resurrection of Jesus taking place on a Sunday is a valid reason for the Sabbath being changed to Sunday. While it is true that Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week, Sunday (Luke 24:1-6), nothing in the Bible suggests believers are to observe Sunday as a holy day due to the resurrection. The resurrection is such an incredibly important theme in Christianity that the Holy Spirit inspired the writing of an entire chapter of the Bible—1 Corinthians 15—dedicated to the subject, but the basis of a change to the Sabbath? Not only unlikely, but entirely unbiblical.

While God certainly does want us to cherish the miracle of the resurrection, He has given us the communion service—the Lord's Supper—and baptism by which we do this. 1 Corinthians 11:26 says, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes," and Romans 6:4 reads, "Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness

of life.” The resurrection of Jesus is an absolute cornerstone of biblical faith, but nowhere does the Bible hint that it in any way impacts the seventh-day Sabbath.

So how did Sunday come to be generally recognized as the “holy day” when the Bible says absolutely nothing to that effect? The transition from Sabbath keeping to Sunday keeping was gradual, taking place over several centuries. The facts of the matter are deeply rooted in history.

The name “Sunday” has an interesting origin. When God created the earth, with the exception of one day—the Sabbath—He did not name the days of the week. Instead, the day we now call Sunday was called “the first day.” Monday was called “the second day,” Tuesday “the third day,” and so on through the week.

The English-language names we recognize today as the days of the week were derived largely from the names of pagan deities. While Monday is literally “Moon’s Day,” Tuesday through Saturday were named for the pagan gods Tyr, Woden, Thor, Frige, and Saturn. The origin of the name “Sunday” is therefore quite obvious, and historically, Sunday was the day on which pagans worshiped the sun.

While scholars vary in their opinions regarding precisely when Sunday worship began among Christians, there is no doubt that by the middle of the second century A.D. some Christians were worshiping on the first day of the week. It is believed the reason for this was because Jews were being persecuted in large numbers, and Sabbath-keeping Christians closely resembled Sabbath-keeping Jews. Therefore, in order to avoid the persecution the Jews were experiencing, certain Christians began worshiping on a day other than the Sabbath. This practice was not widespread, and the vast majority of Christians continued to worship on the seventh-day Sabbath.

When the pagan Roman Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity in the fourth century, he instituted the Day of the Sun as the day for Christian worship. Christianizing the Roman Empire earned him the favor of the large numbers of Christians in his realm. Establishing worship on the pagan worship day was a concession to pagans. But what may have been a win-win situation for the Roman Empire was a lose-lose situation for biblical Christianity.



When the seat of power in the Roman Empire shifted from the Emperors to the Popes, civil legislation concerning Sunday sacredness impacted church doctrine. Sunday became an official doctrine of the church.

“Christians must not judaize by resting on the Sabbath, but must work on that day, rather honouring the Lord’s Day; and, if they can, resting then as Christians. But if any shall be found to be judaizers, let them be anathema from Christ” (Council of Laodicea, 363-364 A.D., Canon 29).

The transition from the seventh-day Sabbath to Sunday did not happen overnight. In fact, it took hundreds of years to accomplish. And it was in no way founded on the Bible.

As the years passed, observance of the biblical Sabbath began to disappear, much like the disappearance of a certain island in the Coral Sea, west of New Caledonia. As the Roman Catholic Church assumed the ascendancy within Christianity—and eventually dominated not only the Christian landscape but also the political landscape—Sunday keeping became

entrenched as a tenet of the Christian faith. Not as a result of a “thus saith the Lord,” not owing to any teaching of the Bible, but simply due to the authority of a church that was willing to place tradition above the Bible.

In his 1995 book *Catholicism and Fundamentalism*, Karl Keating stated, “Fundamentalists meet for worship on Sunday, yet there is no evidence in the Bible that corporate worship was to be made on Sundays. The Jewish Sabbath, or day of rest, was, of course, Saturday. It was the Catholic Church that decided Sunday should be the day of worship for Christians, in honor of the resurrection” (*Catholicism and Fundamentalism*, p. 38).

The great evangelist Dwight Moody said many years ago, “The Sabbath was binding in Eden, and it has been in force ever since. This fourth commandment begins with the word ‘remember,’ showing that the Sabbath already existed when God wrote this law on the tables of stone at Sinai. How can men claim that this one commandment has been done away with when they will admit that the other nine are still binding?” (DL Moody, *Weighed and Wanting*, p. 47)

One version of a Catholic catechism, or religious instruction book, contains this revealing passage:

“Which is the Sabbath day?”

“Saturday is the Sabbath day.”

“Why do we observe Sunday instead of Saturday?”

“Because the Catholic Church transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday.”<sup>2</sup>

Sunday keeping simply didn't come into Christianity as a teaching of the Bible, but as a tradition of flawed human beings. And as Peter said in Acts 5:29, “We ought to obey God rather than men.”

Not only is the Sabbath a gift from God, a practical blessing when received into the daily life; there is also a moral imperative involved with Sabbath observance. Keeping the seventh-day Sabbath is such a good idea God commands it be observed. Not only is the Sabbath good for people spiritually and emotionally, it also serves as an important memorial.

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2 From Peter Geierman, 1995, *Convert's Catechism*, p. 50

God instituted the Sabbath at the end of creation week, and it serves today as a memorial of God's creative power. Further, it serves as a reminder of God's re-creative power, an eternal sign that the God of heaven—the Creator God—is the true God, and able to recreate fallen sinners in His image (Ezekiel 20:12, 20). David prayed, “Create in me a clean heart” (Psalm 51:10). The Sabbath remains a sign that the God of creation is also the God who can transform sinners into saints.

In the book of Revelation, John writes that he “was in the Spirit on the Lord's day” (Revelation 1:10). As the phrase “the Lord's day” is taken by many to refer to Sunday, it has been suggested this text is claiming that John was “in the Spirit” on Sunday. But does the Bible support that assertion?

The text simply says John was “in the Spirit on the Lord's day.” No other information relative to the day is offered. Clearly, John does not say, “I was in the Spirit on Sunday.” And neither does he say, “I was in the Spirit on the seventh-day Sabbath.” As he merely states he was in the Spirit—experiencing a vision—“on the Lord's day,” it is appropriate to allow the

Bible to determine the meaning of the phrase John uses.

A search of the Bible reveals that in Mark 2:28, Jesus declares that “the Son of man is also Lord of the Sabbath,” a thought expressed also in Matthew 12:8. In Isaiah 58:13, God calls the Sabbath “My holy day.” If there were to be one day of the week designated as “the Lord’s day,” the Sabbath stands out as the most likely candidate. At the very least, any reasoned argument would surely have to recognize that Sunday is in no way referred to in Revelation 1:10. Nowhere does the Bible suggest the first day of the week is “the Lord’s day.”

*The Emperor’s New Clothes* is a well-known short tale written by Danish author Hans Christian Andersen. In the story, a pair of con men convince a vain Emperor that they had tailored exquisite clothing for him, clothing that was unique in that it couldn’t be seen by anyone lacking intelligence.

Not wanting to admit he could not see the non-existent clothing himself—and hoping to identify those in his empire who were incompetent—the Emperor proudly wore his new “clothes” in a parade before his subjects. Knowing anyone who did not admire the new

clothing would be considered foolish, the city folk gushingly admired the Emperor's new apparel, until a child spoke up and pointed out the obvious. The emperor wasn't wearing any clothes! Both the people and the embarrassed king realized the naked truth: the Emperor's new clothes didn't really exist. They were an invention.

In the same fashion, Sunday "sacredness" doesn't exist. In spite of claims often made, the Bible doesn't even hint Sunday is a holy day. This Emperor—Sunday—simply isn't wearing any clothes.

It would pay to remember the significance of a subject of this nature. The abolishing—or even the amending—of one of God's Ten Commandments is an enormous thing to even contemplate! God wrote the Ten Commandments with His own finger (Exodus 31:18), and they were placed inside the Ark of the Covenant and stationed in the sanctuary, and later the temple in Jerusalem. Revelation 11:19 says that the Ten Commandments exist in Heaven. The religious leaders in Jesus' day were so outraged at the thought that Jesus had broken the Sabbath that they attempted to kill Him (John 5:18). The Sabbath was a

really, really, really big deal. Any presumption to change in the Sabbath—or any other of the Ten Commandments—would have been met with nothing less than a revolution in the time of the early church, and such a change would have been incredibly well documented.

An Old Testament story reveals clearly how God feels about any attempt to interfere with His law. After the Ark of the Covenant (which contained the Ten Commandments) was recaptured by Israel, it was transported from the home of Abinadab to Israel. During the transport, the oxen hauling the cart on which the Ten Commandments were being transported stumbled as they passed the property of a man named Nachor. The stumbling of the oxen caused the Ark of the Covenant to move, and fearing it might fall from the ox cart, Uzzah—who along with Ahio had been guiding the cart—reached out to stabilize the Ark of the Covenant. Uzzah's lapse of judgment resulted in his death as "God smote him there for his error" (2 Samuel 6:7). Twenty years earlier, the people of Beth-shemesh were involved in an even greater calamity when they looked inside the Ark of the Covenant and 70 of them lost their lives as a result, with the Philistines also

experiencing humiliation when they brought the Ark of the Covenant into the temple of their god, Dagon.

While God today obviously does not deal in the same way with people who put their hand on His Law so to speak, He has made it clear that His will is for those who love Him to obey Him and to keep all of His commandments. Jesus succinctly stated in John 14:15, "If you love Me, keep My commandments." John recorded that "sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 4:4 KJV), and Paul wrote pointedly "the wages of sin is death."

Jesus Himself stated categorically that His people would most definitely observe the seventh-day Sabbath after His death and resurrection. When He told His disciples that the temple in Jerusalem would be razed in the great destruction of Jerusalem, Jesus urged them to pray that their flight from Jerusalem "may not be in winter or on the Sabbath" (Matthew 24:20). Winter weather conditions would make escape from invading military forces virtually impossible, and Christian believers would be especially vulnerable if the destruction occurred on the Sabbath because they would be engaged in worship and rest.



The destruction of Jerusalem took place in the year 70 A.D., almost 40 years after the death of Jesus. If the seventh-day Sabbath was no longer going to be important to followers of Jesus after His death on Calvary, Jesus wouldn't have encouraged them to pray regarding a Sabbath 40 years after the crucifixion. His reference to the seventh-day Sabbath makes it clear He considered the Sabbath would still be holy four decades after His death for the world. Plainly, Christ's death on the cross would not alter the Ten Commandments and would not result in a change to the Sabbath.

However, something did change when Jesus died on the cross. The ceremonial law of sacrifices and feast days was made obsolete by the death of Jesus. The sacrifices under this law—sometimes referred to as the Law of Moses—pointed forward to Jesus, the Lamb who would come into the world to die for the sins of humanity. When Jesus died, the sacrifices pointing forward to His death were no longer necessary. God signaled this by tearing the veil in the temple at the time Jesus died on the cross (Mark 15:38). The handwriting of ordinances was nailed to the cross (Colossians 2:14, KJV). This is why Paul advised the Colossian

believers to allow no one to judge them in regard to offerings and feast days (or “Sabbath days” Colossians 2:16, KJV). He said these were “shadows of things to come” (verse 17, KJV). There was no longer any point offering an animal sacrifice, as such a sacrifice was a mere “shadow,” while Jesus was the reality to which those sacrifices pointed. In the same way, feast days such as Passover no longer had to be observed, “For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us” (1 Corinthians 5:7).

On the other hand, the Ten Commandments—including the seventh-day Sabbath—were still a vital part of the Christian experience and are not a “shadow” of anything. No society can function without law and any society in which laws are disregarded is a society in which anarchy reigns. Sadly, anarchy is promoted in the church by well-meaning people who have—wittingly or otherwise—placed tradition above the Bible.

This is not to say that a person keeping the Ten Commandments is not saved by grace. Nobody who was ever saved was saved any other way. Paul wrote powerfully that believers are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:8). Salvation does not

come by works; it cannot be earned and it is never deserved. Indeed, “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23, KJV), and as “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23), anyone who has ever lived is deserving of death. The gift of salvation comes to undeserving, flawed human beings only by grace through faith. But in what does the gift of salvation result?

While the Bible says we are saved by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ, it also says “we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10). We are saved *by* grace, *through* faith and *unto* good works. It is God’s intention that we live lives of obedience, in harmony with God and His will, experiencing the joy of God’s power and blessing in our lives.

Some people have wondered why, if the Sabbath was to be kept by New Testament Christians, the New Testament doesn’t say more to encourage the keeping of the Sabbath. If you were to borrow a friend’s car, he or she might explain to you about the sticky clutch or how to turn on the headlights, but you most likely wouldn’t be told about the speed limit,

because you would likely know that already. Unless you're in another country, you wouldn't have to be told which side of the road to drive on. It's a given that you would know these things.

For early Christians, it was a given that they would keep the seventh-day Sabbath. That's what *everyone* did. There hadn't ever been a change made to the Sabbath, so Bible writers didn't feel any special burden to make an issue out of a non-issue. However, this raises a good question: if the change from Sabbath to Sunday really occurred, why doesn't the Bible say more about *that*? In fact, why doesn't the Bible say *anything* about that?

The New Testament does say much about keeping the Sabbath day holy. As we've seen, Jesus assumed the disciples would be honoring the Sabbath in 70 A.D. The church in the book of Acts was a Sabbath-keeping church. Jesus Himself kept the Sabbath, and again and again the New Testament reinforced God's promise that those who lived surrendered lives would keep all of the Ten Commandments (see John 14:15; 1 Corinthians 7:9; Revelation 14:12; Revelation 22:14).

Indeed, God expresses the experience of the New Covenant in these words of hope and wholeness. "I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts. And I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people" (Hebrews 8:10; see also Hebrews 10:16, 17). When Jesus lives His life in an individual, He brings His law and His power to live in harmony with that law. A life is changed, God is honored, and the world witnesses a demonstration of the transforming power of God.

God has been very specific concerning worship. "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8), were His precise words. And the Sabbath day was indeed a time for worship. As far back as Leviticus 23:2, God described the Sabbath as a "holy convocation." It is unthinkable that the seventh-day Sabbath could be changed, altered or amended without an explicit command from God. The facts show that such a command isn't even hinted at in the Bible.

A story from the Old Testament demonstrates how particular God is when it comes to worship. Through the prophet Samuel, God gave this instruction to Saul, Israel's first king:

“Go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and do not spare them. But kill both man and woman, infant and nursing child, ox and sheep, camel and donkey” (1 Samuel 15:3).

The profoundly wicked Amalekites had attacked Israel on their way from Egypt to the promised land and inflicted significant losses. God pledged that the Amalekites would be punished for their cowardly and unnecessary attack, and called upon King Saul to carry out the promised punishment. God's instruction was clear: Amalek must be destroyed. Totally.

But the Bible records that “Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all that was good, and were unwilling to utterly destroy them. But everything despised and worthless, that they utterly destroyed” (1 Samuel 15:9). When confronted by Samuel for his obvious disobedience, Saul demurred, saying, “The people took of the plunder, sheep and oxen, the best of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice to the Lord your God in Gilgal” (1 Samuel 15:21).

King Saul contended that his disobedience was excusable because the people had brought the animals to sacrifice in worship to God. But as laudable as that might seem at first glance, worship that wasn't in accordance with God's purposes was worship God could not countenance. Sparing animals so they might be offered to God in worship didn't change the fact that the people were knowingly violating God's express commands.

In a similar way, excusing a change to the weekly Sabbath day on the grounds of worship doesn't make a known wrong right. Although God gladly accepts our worship, He has given us direction regarding that worship. Worshiping God but altering the day of worship is akin to sacrificing animals He had demanded be destroyed.

In recent years, an idea increasingly promoted is that Jesus Himself is the Sabbath rest for believers. That is, in order to truly keep the Sabbath holy, all a believer need do is to trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior. But nowhere in the Bible does God say Sabbath rest was solely a spiritual event. In fact, God inserted two new outward observances into the new covenant experience: the Lord's Supper—a memorial of

the death of Jesus—and water baptism, where followers of Jesus unite their lives with His. In neither case does faith in Jesus eliminate the necessity—or the joy—of the associated outward acts.

Jesus is neither our baptism nor our communion service. And although believers certainly find rest in Him, Jesus is not our Sabbath rest. In linking the seventh-day Sabbath with creation, God connects seventh-day rest with six days of activity. To reduce the Sabbath to a solely spiritual phenomenon is to render it meaningless, ignoring its importance as a memorial of creation and recreation. This obscure rationale for Sunday observance over Sabbath observance finds no support in Scripture.

Which raises an important question. Why would God want to deprive anyone of the blessing of the Sabbath? The Sabbath was given not only as a memorial of God's creative power and His power to recreate, but also as a restorative rest. When He gave the Sabbath, God knew the weekly pause from the regular rush of the world would be good for a person physically, spiritually, and emotionally. For God to retract such a valuable gift for no good reason at all would make no sense whatsoever.



On the contrary, the Bible shows the Sabbath was kept by the early Christians long after Jesus died on the cross, and proves the seventh-day Sabbath was never changed, altered or ended. History shows us the same thing. The only arena in which the Bible Sabbath was amended is tradition, and tradition can never supersede the Bible.

David said in Psalm 40:8, "I delight to do Thy will, O my God, yea Thy law is within my heart." Living in obedience to Christ isn't drudgery for someone who has received salvation. The one who has been living in sin and experiencing the shame and guilt associated with that life will rejoice when the burden of sin is lifted and a life once filled with sin is set on an entirely new trajectory.

As a child, I often visited the War Memorial in the town in which I grew up. It is a simple memorial, a stone obelisk inscribed on four sides with the names of those from our little town who gave their lives for their country. I have visited much grander memorials, such as the USS Arizona Memorial in Pearl Harbor, and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial on the mall in Washington D.C. At each of these powerful memorials visitors are called to reflect, to

remember the great sacrifice made by others in the name of freedom.

Every seventh day worshiper of God has the opportunity to reflect, to remember the great sacrifice made by Jesus who died for all humanity, and the great goodness of God who made us so we might live eternally with Him. The Sabbath was made for the entire human family. It has not disappeared from the Bible, like an island mistakenly marked on a map and then erased when it was shown not to exist. The Sabbath endures as an eternal sign of the love of a merciful God, who desires to spend quality time with His children in this world, and in the world to come.