

The Sabbath Sentinel

July–August 2013



Christ Healing the Paralytic on the Sabbath at the Pool of Bethesda

Bartolome Esteban Murillo, 1667

BSA — The Bible Sabbath Association

Jesus said, "the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath."

The Sabbath Sentinel

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Our Cover: (Source: christianimages.org)

Then Jesus said to them, I will ask you one thing: Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy? (Luke 6:9)

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Why the Sabbath?



Is the Sabbath really all that important? We all know very devout Christians who do not keep the Sabbath, but keep Sunday as their day of worship and appear to be very blessed by God. Does that automatically mean that it really doesn't make any difference which day we keep "holy?" I know this one thing: that I must keep the Sabbath. As Joshua said, "As for me and my house, we will obey the Lord."

The apostle Paul once said, "To him who knows to do good and does it not, it is sin." Let's put the apostle's statement another way, "To him who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, it is sin."

At a book store a few years ago I ran across an autobiography by the well-known actor Kirk Douglas, born Issur Danielovitch. The entire Douglas family was Russian and Jewish. Kirk Douglas' parents spoke Yiddish at home. As I sat on the floor reading portions of his autobiography, I was struck by something he had to say, and I paraphrase, "I have heard all my life that Jesus did away with the law, and that's why Christians don't have to follow all of the commandments. However, when I read in the New Testament that Jesus said in Matthew 5:17-18 that he did not come to do away with the law or the prophets but to fulfill those things in the law and the prophets, I was stunned." His conclusion was, "These Christians have it all wrong," and Douglas was correct in his conclusion. This is what most Christians need to do: accept the obvious.

What puzzles many Sabbatharians is that so many Sunday keepers are as equally blessed by God as they are. Although I cannot answer this question definitively, I suspect that those who keep the first day of the week are as dedicated to following Christ as we are. It's just that to this point they have not been "enlightened" about the true Sabbath. I do know many Sunday keepers who are probably better Christians than I am. Also, if taking the gospel to the world had been left to Sabbath keepers, many in this world would still be waiting for someone to show up and teach them the saving words of Christ. I find it ironic that Sunday-keeping missionaries have been willing to put themselves in grave danger over many centuries to keep the Word of God alive in the minds and hearts of people in far-off, foreign lands. What started with Jesus' Sabbath-keeping apostles taking the gospel to the world has been taken over by Sunday-keeping missionaries who risk their lives daily for the sake of the gospel. Maybe

this is where Sabbath keepers have fallen tragically short, and God is sending the Bread of Life to far-off nations by those who are willing to die to put God's manna into people's hands.

This is by no means a slap at those Sabbatharians who have strapped on their gear and headed to the mission field. It's just that their numbers are minuscule compared to those of Sunday-keeping missionaries. One Sabbatharian group, the Seventh-day Adventists, have done a remarkable job through their ADRA agency (Adventist Development and Relief Agency). Through ADRA they have gone to many countries ravaged by war and starvation and offered medical help, food, and they have drilled wells for the locals. This has often opened the door for ADRA workers to bring the gospel to people in those local communities.

And, don't underestimate what the Church of God, Seventh-day has been doing overseas. Their work in missions has been a true God-send to people in Latin America and Africa. Many Sabbath-keeping churches are springing up throughout Latin America and Africa due to the work of COG7 missionaries. Still, these efforts represent a small percentage of what is needed throughout the world, and Sunday-keeping missionaries are still doing the bulk of the heavy lifting in many areas of the world where one faces a death sentence for converting to Christianity and missionaries are subject to beheading or stoning. That is true both in Muslim and Hindu countries like India.

One of the problems that many who came out of the old Worldwide Church of God (WCG) face is that it was expected that ministers would do all the evangelism in countries outside of the U.S., Canada, and England. In fact, the average church member was not trusted to carry the gospel to others. Everything had to involve a bona fide minister in some way or another. Never mind that even the first-century deacons did miracles and preached the gospel, and those leaving Jerusalem after that first Pentecost when the Spirit came down on the apostles, carried the good news of Christ's death and resurrection to all the countries they had come from. They all kept the Sabbath back then.

After the breakup of the WCG, many have taken up the challenge to carry the gospel to foreign lands. These efforts are commendable and encouraging. Knowledge of the Sabbath is once again beginning to permeate the globe.

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All About Eve

by *Kenneth Westby*



Female is forever in the Grand Plan of God. Fashioning a female human was Yahweh's final act in the creation of all life. The first woman was unique, perfect, programmed by God himself, beautiful beyond description, and destined to be "the mother of all living." The last created but the first to sin. Is there more to the story of Eve?

We can thank Adam for describing what was made from his rib: "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, for she was taken out of man." The "this" could now be called a woman.

Part of Adam's job description was to name things, an exercise of his "dominion" or "rule" as God's agent on earth. It was a logical name: *issa* in Hebrew, meaning wife, or partner, or counterpart. But it was descriptive of what she was, her human sexual identity and her relationship to him. It was not her personal name. Adam would come up with that later.

You old timers will recall the Academy Award winning movie from 1950 by the same title as this article, "All About Eve." The movie starred Betty Davis and provided Marilyn Monroe one of her earliest breaks into film. It was about Broadway fluff and betrayal and resurrecting the timeless theme of the deviousness of women (Tip: save your movie rental money). Our focus here is on the Eve of Creation, her sin, her hope and how her child (seed) is destined to rule the earth.

There are two "Eves" in our story and they both play key roles in the fulfillment of God's Grand Plan. The "second Eve" or New Eve we could call the young Mary, a virgin, betrothed to Joseph, who would become the mother of the Eve of Creation's long-promised seed. Let's unfold the story of these two women and their God-given roles in the ultimate salvation of mankind.

The Three Names of Eve

Her first name was given by God. It is the same name given to the first man. Together they are called adam or "man" or "mankind," created by God after his image to be fruitful (reproduce abundantly), to fill the earth, and to rule over all living creatures (Genesis 1:26-28). The man and the woman were *haadam*, that is, made from *haadama*, the ground. The earthling is made from earth. Humans are mere earthlings, frail, made from

the dust of the ground. This is her primary name signifying that she, with the man, is created in the image of God, blessed by God, named by God and given responsibility over creation and in God's sight, fully equal with the man.

Her second name appears after she is created and brought to the first man who named her "woman" (Hebrew *issa*) to indicate that she was taken from man, made of the same bone and flesh, and therefore able to be his full partner and become one flesh with him (Genesis 2:23). This is Adam calling the woman his *issa*, or his "wife." This name given by her husband signifies her role as partner and wife, of "one flesh" with her husband.

Pause for a moment and consider the presentation scene. Adam is unconscious and God is hand-fashioning a woman like a master sculptor out of material from the earthly man.

What was going through God's mind? He knew this would be his final act of creation that would complete the "in his image" plan. She would be perfect, strong, bright, brilliant, and beautiful beyond description. Should she have long hair? How long? What would the man's mind find most appealing? God has also programmed sophisticated predispositions of like and dislike into Adam's psyche so He was out to make Eve as pleasing as possible to the man.

God had planned and perfected Eve to the last cell and then breathed life into her lungs. Her eyes popped open and there above her was the smile of her maker, most pleased with his handiwork and with her. What a warm and safe welcome into the land of the living.

I can picture God taking a comb and brush to her hair and telling her she was about to meet her partner. If she had questions, God answered them. God must have been delighted to present this stunning masterpiece creature to Adam and to watch his reaction.

Would they both have felt the closeness, tenderness, and the goodness of God? The Creator had given them

perfect partners, put them in a beautiful garden, filled it with delicious fruits and pure water, and honored them with a meaningful purpose in life, a job, to rule as God's vice-regents over creation. How good can it be?

Her third name isn't mentioned until after the rebellion against God's warning not to eat of the forbidden tree.

"And Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all living."¹

A next mention of her "Eve" name occurs when she becomes pregnant with her first child². Her third name, and the one most familiar to us, Eve, is apparently associated with her role as mother. The etymology of that Hebrew word for Eve, *hawwa* is in some dispute, but it is believed derived from the verb *hayya*, to "live."³

Adam, *Issa*, is now forever Eve, Mother of the Race of Adam. Human of the earth (*adam*), wife and partner with the man (*Issa*), she is now the mother, Eve, and by that name will be forever remembered — named once by God and twice by Adam.

The First Gospel

Genesis 3:15 has been called the protoevangelium, the first gospel. It is the good news (gospel) that evil will not forever rule the planet, but that the seed of the woman, Eve, will fatally strike the serpent's head, and the serpent will strike her seed's heel. The major drama of all salvation history is presented in this brief poetic passage which is part of the warning/curse against the Devil.

I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.⁴

God puts first blame upon the Devil who instigated Eve's and Adam's disobedience against their Maker. God is never fooled and when the living and the dead are judged, the book of Revelation tells us that the first to be judged will be Satan, the Devil, that Old Serpent.⁵

The good news was that a far future descendent of Adam and Eve would be born who would once-and-for-all bring dominion of earth back under mankind, dethrone the Devil, and set plans for a new Paradise, a new Garden of God—the Kingdom of God. But let's not get too far ahead of our setting in Eden.

The divine prophecy of Genesis 3:15 gives us hope that the woman's seed will win out in the end. Everything depends on it. God has cursed the serpent, and its crawling in the dust is a sign of its ultimate defeat. It will "bite the dust" and I believe that implies a future death for the Devil and his demons (see Psalm 82).

Let's not argue who was most to blame for the forbidden fruit episode. It was Satan. Neither Eve nor Adam wanted to initially take responsibility for their freewill disobedience, but were soon overwhelmed

with the guilt and shame of it all, and with the realization that they were "naked," had sinned against God, a reality not previously associated with something wrong.

These were not good feelings and didn't come from the care or goodness of God. Sin left the young couple hiding in fear and dread of their loving Father. The Devil had done his dirty work, and they, like fools, were played. Yet the good God who gave them life and all the wonder of Eden must be faced and their actions accounted for.

They talked. After their confession and as a loving token of his forgiveness and grace, God made a suit of clothes for his grown son and daughter. (God, the tailor! Have you ever wondered what those outfits looked like? Their colors, their style? From then on they would be making their own clothes.) The problem with sin is seen in how God personally and tenderly covers their nakedness ("to forgive" in Hebrew = "to cover" (Psalm 32:1). God wanted to restore them to a relationship with him, give them his forgiveness and grace, for they had a long and difficult life ahead.

Later we find their sons offering thank offerings to God. Adam and Eve were passing on their faith, and while we'd like a happy ending to this family story, the freewill of their offspring meant that some would accept and some reject the Way. The Cain and Abel story is the first example in the long history of mankind of the war between good and evil, between the evil seed and the good seed of the Genesis 3:15 prophecy.

I believe the first chapters of Genesis are highly symbolic and textured with a depth and complexity not easily seen by the casual reader. I don't claim to have all the pieces to the puzzle, just enough to realize that the maker of the cosmos has packed a lot of information into very few words. I believe there was a literal temple garden, a literal Adam and Eve, but they also function as ongoing types, and symbols of what God is working out. There is, absolutely, a literal truth behind it all. It is not a myth in the common usage, but an account of God putting man on earth and beginning something so important it can be called the Grand Plan. We know it is special for the key players on the earth he made, earthlings, are unique for they are "Made in His Image."

Eve's Special Seed Will Yet Appear

Centuries, millennia passed since a prophecy about a seed of Eve striking the head of the Devil. People forget. God doesn't. In the course of time, at his chosen time, God did something unique and it involved another young woman.

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Three Commandments for Long Life

By Brian Knowles



There are three commandments (*mitzva'ot*) in the Torah that offer the keeper long life — either in the land (*eretz Yisrael*), or personally. All three involve issues of ethics and kindness. By studying the content of these three commandments, we can learn a lot about what it means to be a just and ethical child of God.

Honoring Parents

The first is found in Exodus 20:12: ***"Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you."*** The land is God's land, and Israel is to be the designated tenant — but only so long as they keep Covenant with God. God's people Israel are God's people to the degree that they behave ethically, with kindness and justice.

What does it mean to "honor" one's parents? Among the Jewish sages, there was much discussion about the meaning of this *mitzvah*. Of the 613 commandments of Torah, it was Positive No. 210, and No. 5 in the Decalogue. The great medieval rabbi, Moses Maimonides, says of this commandment: "What is honouring [one's parents]? Providing them with food and drink, raiment and warmth, and guiding their footsteps [when they are old and infirm]" (*The Commandments, Vol. I* translated from the Hebrew by Rabbi Dr. Charles B. Chavel, p. 226.)

Maimonides, quoting the sages that had commented before him, points out that this commandment must be performed joyfully "with the finest of foods" and not in a "surlly manner" for that would merit punishment. In other words, it should be viewed as an honor and a duty to care for the needs of one's parents when they are old and unable to care for themselves. It should not be viewed as a resented burden.

To ignore or resent the needs of one's parents is to dishonor them; after all, they brought us into the world and nurtured us to adulthood.

Another rabbinic commentary on this commandment is quite extreme: "To what extent is one obliged to honor his father and mother? If they were to take his purse that was full of gold and throw it into the sea in his presence, he must nevertheless refrain from giving them any manner of offence, neither causing them distress nor taking umbrage at

their conduct; he must accept the Scriptural decree and keep his peace" (*Mishneh Torah, Shoftim, Hilchoth Mamrim VI, 7*).

By modern, Western, standards, this seems outrageous. Today's children are accustomed to arguing vigorously with their parents, openly criticizing them, calling them names, and generally rebelling against them. Such conduct would have been anathema in ancient times. Cursing one's parents was a crime worthy of capital punishment (Leviticus 20:9).

A word of qualification: The purpose of quoting these commandments is to show how seriously God, and the sages of Israel, took the commandment to honor one's parents. It is *not* to suggest that a modern rebellious child should be put to death! The commandments given in Mosaic times were given in the context of a national theocracy in which God was palpably present among his people. We live in what is largely a secular society in which biblical standards are being summarily rejected or discounted across the board.

Having said that, let's return to another comment by a sage: "Rabbi says: the honoring of one's father and mother is very dear in the sight of Him by whose word the world came into being. For He declared honoring them to be equal to honoring Him, fearing them equal to fearing Him, and cursing them equal to cursing Him" (*Ex. XX, 12, Mechilta*).

In Leviticus 19:3 we read: *"Each of you must respect his mother and father..."* Some translations render the word "respect" as "fear," others as "revere." The word means to "stand in awe" of. It implies "affectionate reverence."

Abraham Chill, in his book *The Mitzvot*, also elaborates on the meaning and application of the fifth commandment:

"To 'fear' one's parent means not to sit in the seat reserved for him at the table, not to contradict him, not to call him by his first name, etc.

"To 'honor' a parent means to provide him with food, clothing and shelter.

"The only instance in which a son or daughter may, and indeed must, disobey a parent is when the parent asks him to disobey a precept of the Torah.

"When the father and the mother each make a request of the son or daughter, the father's request takes precedence over that of the mother, because both the child and the mother are duty bound to honor the father.

"'Honoring' one's father includes showing respect for one's stepmother or one's stepfather, but only as long as the natural parent to whom they are married is alive" (The Mitzvot, pp. 42-43).

There are many other commentaries on the meaning and application of this commandment. Some seem extreme, others are more moderate. The point of bringing them into this discussion is, as I said, to show the seriousness with which God takes the fifth commandment. How we treat and show reverence to our parents is a possible reflection of how we feel about our heavenly parent, God. One commentator, Hinnukh, wrote: "We should honor our parents out of gratitude to them for having begotten us, and for having sustained and cared for us in our youth. If we take this attitude, we will see even more clearly the debt of gratitude we owe to God, because it was He who gave our parents the means to sustain us, and who gave us a soul which elevates men above the animals. In other words, respect for one's parents must lead to respect for God" — (*The Mitzvot*, p. 44).

In his letter to the Ephesians, the apostle Paul reiterates and comments on this commandment as it applies to Gentile Christians: "*Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor your father and mother — which is the first commandment with a promise — that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth*" (Ephesians 6:1-3).

Paul, in addressing Greek Christians far from Israel, changes "the land" (*eretz Yisrael*) to "the earth." His point: children who honor their parents may live longer. The way we treat our parents often reflects our attitudes toward God. When we show respect and honor toward our parents, we are honoring God.

On the other hand, if we are neglectful and disrespectful of, or insulting towards, our parents, God takes it personally. It is not a light thing in the sight of God to rebel against one's parents — unless the reason is to obey God (cf. Acts 5:29). Was rebellion against our divine parent not the first sin? Did it not incur the penalty of death? Who was behind it all? Was it not *Ha Satan* — the Adversary?

Honoring our parents ensures that the family unit is preserved and strengthened. It keeps us close to our greatest social unit of support. It preserves our legacy and posterity. Closely knit families are the backbone of

any successful nation. Each family member has a role to play in the strengthening and cohesion of the family unit. Those roles are under girded by other commandments. Immediately after reiterating the fifth commandment for Christian children, the apostle Paul writes: *Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord*" (Ephesians 6:4). In modern times, with all the peer group pressures, societal and cultural influences, and the advance of secular progressivism, it is almost impossible *not* to exasperate one's children. Rearing children in a godly manner is a major challenge in our post-Christian world. Children are drawn to the world with its myriad enticements. Following the training and instruction of the Lord may seem burdensome and unrealistic to young people trying to make it in "the real world."

As Christians, we must make the effort to do things in a godly way. In the world, we'll pay a price for it. With God, we will reap a reward. Families are only as strong as the people that make them up. If family members share high values, they will tend to march to the beat of the same drummer. They will work together for the common good. The strong will support the weak. Paul told the Galatian congregations: "*Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ*" (Galatians 6:2). To the Romans he wrote: "*We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak and not to please ourselves*" (Romans 15:1).

The greatest opportunities to fulfill these apostolic instructions are often found in families. Parents must teach their children to honor and respect their parents simply because they *are* their parents. Parents do not always epitomize wisdom, morality, justice, or kindness. Being human, they make mistakes. Who doesn't? Families ought to be a place to find healing and forgiveness — and the resources to rebuild.

I know a man whose father is in jail for bank robbery. His son, and his daughter-in-law, regularly visit and honor their father in prison. They take with them their father's infant grandson. The grandfather beams with pride and yearns for the time when he can hold his son's son in his arms. His son longs for the day when his father will be released, so that they can welcome him back into his family. It will be a time of joyful rebuilding. The Bible speaks of the "prodigal son" — but there are also prodigal fathers.

The Second Mitzvah for Long Life

The second commandment for which a connection with long life is made is found in Deuteronomy 22:6-7: "*If you come across a bird's nest beside the road, either in a tree or on the ground, and the mother is sitting on the young or on the eggs, do not take the mother with the young. You may take the young, but*

be sure to let the mother go, so that it will go well with you and you may have a long life."

Moses Maimonides commented on this commandment as follows: "...The eggs over which the bird sits, and the young that are in need of their mother, are generally unfit for food, and when the mother is sent away she does not see the taking of her young ones, and does not feel any pain. In most cases, however, this Commandment will cause man to leave the whole nest untouched, because [the young or the eggs], which he is allowed to take, are, as a rule, unfit for food. If the Law provides that such grief should not be caused to cattle or birds, how much more careful must we be that we should not cause grief to our fellow man' (*Moreh Nebuchim III, 48*).

If we are sensitive to the vulnerable lives of the creatures over which God has given us dominion (Genesis 1:28), then surely we will have even greater care for the lives of our fellow man, any one of which is of much more value than that the life of a brute beast (Matthew 10:29-31).

In today's world, there are animal activists who seem to value the life of animals much more than that of humans. They place animal and human life at least on an equal plane. Jesus, in contrast, placed human life on a higher plane because it alone is created in the image of God.

God has an accounting of every creature, no matter how seemingly insignificant. Every hair on our heads is numbered. Every sparrow that falls is accounted for. God has an ongoing micro-accounting of all that goes on in his creation. He notes those who care for life, and seek to preserve and enhance it, and those who produce only death. He sees those of us who generate suffering, and those who seek to end it. Those who care for life are worthy of life. Those who advance death and destruction on the earth are not themselves worthy of life. John, Jesus' disciple, taught, "*Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer; and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him*" (1 John 3:15, KJV).

Jesus said of himself, "*...I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly*" (John 10:10b, KJV).

The commandment about birds is really a commandment about life, and the sanctity thereof. Recently, my wife and I were watching an episode of "Survivor." One of the competitors had climbed a tree and was seeking eggs in a bird's nest. The mother bird was on the nest at the time. She appeared to be some kind of stork. Rather than checking first on the con-

tents of the nest, the man started whacking at the nest, which then fell to the ground. In it was a newly hatched, featherless baby bird. The mother bird was in deep distress, but she was helpless to rescue her baby. The man and his group were mortified at what they had done.

Immediately, the guilty party took the nest and the baby bird back up into the tree, from which the mother bird was anxiously watching, and placed it back in the crook of some branches. We don't know whether or not the baby survived. We do know that the man caused both the mother and the newly hatched chick profound distress. The man had leaped before he looked.

God wants us to consider the consequences of our actions. Do they promote life, or harm it? Do they enhance it, or make it more painful? Do we care for the creatures over which God has given us dominion? Or are we cavalier about our stewardship of God's creation?

In today's Dante-esque world, we see religious thugs commonly known as "terrorists" destroying life at every opportunity — their own, and anyone else's they can take. To borrow a line from the prophet Isaiah: "*...their works are works of iniquity, and the act of violence is in their hands. Their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed innocent blood; their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity; wasting and destruction are in their paths. The way of peace they know not...*" (Isaiah 59:6b-8a, KJV).

In context, Isaiah was referring to the wayward House of Israel that had violated its covenant with God, and had descended into evil. The words could just as easily be applied to any number of evil entities in our day. What was offensive to God in Isaiah's time is offensive to him in ours. The apostle Paul applied Isaiah's words to both Jews and gentiles in his day, many centuries later (Romans 3:15 ff.). They are a commentary on the general destructiveness of human nature.

If we can learn to respect the lives and well-being of small creatures over which God gave us responsibility, perhaps we can learn to better respect the lives of those fellow beings created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27-28). Those who murder men deserve to forfeit their own lives as a result (Genesis 9:5b, 6), for they have taken from the earth a part of the image of God.

Honesty in Business

Honesty in business sounds almost like an oxymoron. Business in our world is a highly competitive affair. I

have worked in the business world, and I am familiar with the ruthlessness, the “win at any cost” mentality that drives many businessmen.

If you’ve ever had contractors do work on your home — anything from plumbing to roofing — you’ll be familiar with broken promises, underestimates to get the job, finding yourself buying new parts you didn’t really need, price gouging, poor workmanship, missed appointments and various forms of deception. Finding reliable help is a life’s work, or so it often seems.

At the corporate level, we’re all familiar with company chairmen, presidents and officers, and union leaders who abscond with employee pension funds, embezzle money, siphon off profits, price gouge, defraud, and otherwise victimize employees and cheat customers. We know of insurance companies that seek to avoid paying legitimate claims, energy companies that take advantage of any real or managed “crisis” to gouge customers. We know about price-fixing, monopolies, frivolous and “deep pocket” law suits that bankrupt the competition, and other nasty devices of business. In much of the Third World, the bribe is a way of life. Anything can be had for a price. Nothing can be had without one.

Business, as it is commonly practiced in much of the world, can be a treacherous affair. In his *Torah*, God provided many safeguards against dishonest business practices. Most of these are ignored in practice today, yet many are reflected in our business laws.

The third *mitzvah* that is connected to long life is found in Deuteronomy 25:13-16: *“Do not have two differing weights in your bag — one heavy, one light. Do not have two differing measures in your house — one large, one small. You must have accurate and honest weights and measures, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you. For the Lord detests anyone who does these things, anyone who deals dishonestly.”*

The terms “accurate” and “honest” are translated from two Hebrew words which mean “whole” and “right.” A similar expression of business law is found in Leviticus 19:35 which reads: *“Do not use dishonest standards when measuring length, weight or quantity. Use honest scales and honest weights, an honest ephah and an honest hin. I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt.”*

In ancient times, traders used what by today’s standards would be crude weights and measures. If these were not standardized, then traders could use measures that gave them a slight advantage and put those with whom they were trading at a disadvantage. If one bought lumber by the cubit, but the seller’s “cubit” was less than 18-inches, then the buyer would be getting gypped. That would be like buying, and being charged

for, ten 8-foot two-by-fours only to find out that they were 7’ 6” long — too short to get the job done.

These commandments are about business ethics. When business people are dishonest, trust and confidence break down. Israel was God’s nation and the way the Israelites lived, and treated each other, was a reflection on their God. The covenant people were called to live by very high standards, both internally, and in their relations with the surrounding Gentile nations. God’s standard for business practices was one of absolute integrity. If a person paid for a pound of flour, he should receive no less than a full pound. If someone purchased a gallon of wine, he must receive the full gallon.

In later times, Israel allowed its business ethics to lapse into corruption and dishonesty. God sent the prophet Amos to rebuke the nation for allowing His standards to deteriorate: *“Hear this, you who trample the needy, and do away with the poor of the land, saying, ‘When will the New Moon be over that we may sell grain, and the Sabbath be ended that we may market wheat? — skimping the measure, boosting the price and cheating with dishonest scales, buying the poor with silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, selling even the sweepings with the wheat”* (Amos 8:4-6).

The hypocrisy of ritualistically religious people anxious to cheat and take advantage of the poor in business is evident here. What does it mean to observe days unless one is also honest, kind and equitable? No one who claims to represent God — whether Israel’s covenant people, or modern day preachers — should ever be accused of dishonest business practices. Yet, to use Paul’s terminology, some have thought that “godliness” — i.e. religion — is a means to gain (1 Timothy 6:5). Many have seen religion as an excellent way to make a living, rather than as a way to help people find and build a relationship with God. Some preachers have feathered their own nests while allowing the poor in their congregations to go begging.

In Summary

Whether we are seeking ways to honor a divine or human parent, caring for the smallest, most vulnerable creatures in nature, or simply doing business with each other, God has called us to a life of high ethics and sensitive kindness. He has connected his standards in these areas with longevity of life. If we celebrate life, and seek to enrich it for others — man or beast — God will enrich, and possibly even extend our lives, both now and in the world to come.

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There are several things we know about the Sabbath and its future as well as its past. It is written in Isaiah 66:22-23, "For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, said the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, said the LORD." This is obviously the future of the Sabbath. There will be no Sunday keepers in the new heavens and the new earth. All the saved will keep the Sabbath and worship the Lord in complete harmony and unity. There will be no denominations or religious factions. That is the essence of the gospel. All God's people will be a single, unified family.

Even in the New Testament, Sabbath keeping is very evident in spite of attempts to nullify the Sabbath and promote Sunday keeping. Look at Acts 13:42, "And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath." Can it be any plainer that the gentiles also respected the Sabbath?

To me one of the most powerful testimonies regarding the Sabbath and the keeping of the Law in general is the pronouncement of the apostle Paul in Acts chapters 24 through 26 when he is brought first before governor Felix and then before governor Festus, who replaced Felix, and King Agrippa. The apostle then ends up in Rome preaching the same message that he preached from the beginning. Here are a few excerpts:

Acts 24:14: "But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which were written in the Law and the Prophets." Acts 25:8 "...Neither against the law of the Jews, not against the temple, nor against Caesar have I offended in anything at all." And finally in Rome many Roman Jews came to Paul and heard his case. Acts 28:17 "...Men and brethren, though I have done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans." Acts 28:23, "So when they had appointed him a day, many came to him at his lodging, to whom he explained and solemnly testified to the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets from morning till evening." And the book of Acts ends with this testimony about the apostle Paul. Acts 28:30-31, "Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him."

So, we are brought back to Jesus' own statement in Matthew 5:17-18, "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to

fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled." What dawned on Kirk Douglas should also enlighten every Christian. Heaven and earth have not passed away, so God's law as written in the Ten Commandments is still in force. Why the light has not gone on in the mind of every child of God is to me a mystery, yet I can explain it in part. It's simply a matter of what people have been taught from the time of the Protestant Reformation until now. They hear it weekly from the pulpits of the churches they attend. "The Law was for the Jews, not for Christians." The Protestant Reformation stopped short of a complete reformation.

The apostle Paul is often falsely accused of preaching against the Law, yet we have seen clearly that the apostle was "persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets." He was simply parroting Jesus' words from Matthew 5:17-18. We can also see clearly his teaching in favor of the Law in his epistle to the Romans. It is evident in Romans 7:7-12 how Paul viewed the Law. "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, 'You shall not covet.' But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire. For apart from the law sin was dead. I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me. Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good."

Paul sees two purposes in the Law. One is to keep sin in check, and the other is to expose to us our own sinful nature. This is particularly true after the coming of Christ and His magnification of the Law in the Sermon on the Mount.

I don't know why people don't see what I see regarding the Sabbath, or the rest of the Law for that matter. One thing I have resigned myself to is to cease from judging what others may or may not do in their relationship with Christ. I have to leave all that in God's hands. Over many years of being a Christian I have had a difficult enough time trying to figure out what I need to be doing without worrying myself about what others should be doing. Also, I have realized that most Sabbatarians have wildly different views on many doctrinal issues, some of which I cannot accept or even fathom how they came to that conclusion. So, I have to simply let it all rest in God's hands and accept His final judgment on all matters of faith. I'm not the final arbiter. He is, and that's the bottom line for me.

I say to all, Shabbat Shalom.

—Kenneth Ryland

The Key to Human Freedom

by Kelly McDonald



In our modern civilization we have lost the concept of freedom that our forefathers understood. The founders of the United States knew that freedom came by the rule of law. They knew that laws were necessary to protect man's freedoms from man's government. As an example, consider the prohibition in our laws against murder and stealing property. These laws protect both life and property. There must be some law or rule to protect our lives and property from the government and from other people. These laws also promote certain ideals. By having laws that prohibit theft, our government promotes the private ownership of property. This in turn promotes capitalism and economic growth. If people know that their property is protected, then they will not be afraid to take the risk necessary to acquire more property or improve their current property. By having laws that prohibit murder, our country promotes life. Each of these laws is precious to us. Could you imagine a society where murder or theft was legal? I cannot imagine such a country.

Our laws have been so lauded by people in other countries that our land has become known as the "land of the free." People from other countries flock to America because of our laws! Most countries around the world do not have nearly the rights and protections we enjoy in America. Since we have a reputation of being a nation of laws, it seems strange that people in our society view God's Law as bondage. Some of us were even taught from a young age that Christ "did away" with the Law. Many of the laws in the U.S. came from God's Law! The prohibition against stealing and murder originate with the Ten Commandments. Other laws found in America, such as honesty in business contracts and some of our bankruptcy rules come from God's Law. His Law even serves some of the same functions as the laws in America. As mentioned previously, the laws in America protect us from other people. By obeying God's Law, we are protecting others from man's sinful nature. We are also protecting ourselves from the penalty of sin, which is death (Romans 6:23). Law is a good thing. It promotes peace, order, and tranquility. His Law helps us maintain our relationship with our Creator.

James called the Law the "perfect law that gives freedom" (James 1:25). Contrary to human thought, God's Law promotes freedom. Our human laws are just a reflection of His divine Law. In America, we have

some laws that promote or prohibit certain behavior. You are free to do anything else that you choose! This is the way that God's Law works as well. It is not all inclusive of what we can or cannot do in life. He gave us certain prohibitions and instructed us to follow other actions. We are free to do anything else we choose. One of the chief laws that helps us understand the freedom we have in Jesus Christ is the Sabbath.

One of the biggest problems we have as humans is that we want to do everything on our own power. We want to get the credit for every little action or accomplishment. We do not always like other people helping us! We do not always follow instructions. Our way seems to be better than anyone else's way. The Sabbath is one commandment through which we learn that working is not always as important as rest. When God gave the Sabbath, He said, "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy" (Exodus 20:8-11). When it comes to obeying the Sabbath, we learn that God does not want us to work that day. Our works are insufficient and will accomplish little. Instead, God asks us to rest. He asks us to stop toiling, stop trying to figure everything out, and cease from going our own way.

In Isaiah 58:13-14, God spoke to the prophet Isaiah and said, "If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as you please on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a delight and the Lord's holy day honorable, and if you honor it by not going your own way and not doing as you please or speaking idle words, then you will find your joy in the Lord, and I will cause you to ride on the heights of the land and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob." God makes wonderful promises in the Bible. To receive any of them requires that we meet certain conditions. This principle is reflected in these verses from Isaiah. If we want to have the blessing that comes from keeping the Sabbath, then we must keep our feet from going to places (such as work) that would lead us to break the

Sabbath. We must not go our own way (by pleasure seeking), and we must not speak idle words. Why did God choose to mention each of these things? These three things can enslave us humans. They are fundamental aspects of our nature and design. To help us overcome them, God gave us the Sabbath.

We all have bills to pay, and that requires we go to work for a living. In fact, God commands us to work for six days. Your job may be simple, such as serving burgers at McDonald's (which I have done in the past). Your job may be more complex, such as being the company manager. Our bosses put demands on us during the week. They want a certain amount of production for the time we put in. Sometimes the amount of work they place on us seems overwhelming and requires overtime. If you are self-employed (as I am now), then you will see that there is no end to the work. There is always something to do! Work places physical, mental, and emotional strains on us. At times it can be stressful. If you are not careful, your job can become your god. Your boss and other workers can put so much on you that you feel pressured into working on the Sabbath. If you do so, your life will be dictated by your boss and life's demands versus the sacred timing of God. The Sabbath gives us written, permanent permission from the God of the Universe to take off work on this day. We just have to follow through.

The next thing God identifies in Isaiah 58:13-14 that can enslave us is "doing as you please..." and "...going our own way" on the Sabbath. We all have desires in life. Some of us desire to have beautiful gardens. Others have the desire to be very physically fit. These desires are usually reflected in our hobbies and activities in our non-work time. There is nothing wrong with these desires, but they must have their proper place. If we allow them to cross over into the Sabbath, then the Sabbath becomes about our personal pursuits instead of being about pursuing Him. In other words, we can allow our pursuits of pleasure to drive us towards personal happiness and gratification instead of letting our pursuit of God drive us toward holiness and godliness. We can easily become enslaved by our own desires and hobbies.

Talking is a common activity for humans. It is our fundamental form of communication. Our conversation can be a hindrance or a help to our walk with God and fellowship with others. Just as a car in "idle" has no forward motion, in the same way idle words are those we speak with no forward motion. When we speak badly of other people, we are speaking idle words. When we speak of things that have no consequence such as endless celebrity news and other frivolous information, we are speaking idle words. Such words are unfruitful and do not promote the Kingdom of God. Jesus said that the Kingdom of God is forcefully advancing (Matthew 11:12). The Kingdom of God should

always be advancing in our lives, especially on the Sabbath. This is necessary even if we have to "force" our mouths to speak fruitful words. When we talk about the word of God, Bible prophecy in the news, or how God is working in our lives, then we are speaking words that advance the Kingdom of God. Our conversation reflects the things we think are important. When we spend the Sabbath speaking idle words, we are making holy time seem common. We are enslaving ourselves by our very words.

Freedom from being enslaved by these three common human activities is found by keeping the Sabbath. In the book of Ezekiel, the prophet Ezekiel had a vision about a temple that has never been built. This temple will be built in the Kingdom of God. In it there will be a wall to separate the common from the holy (Ezekiel 42:20). This shows us that we must put up a wall between common and holy time. This is not only to make a clear separation between the two, but also to protect our time with God from common distractions (such as work, hobbies, and idle talk). We must have clear boundaries of separation between the common activities of this world and the holy activities of God. There is a point at which we have to say "Enough!" to the things of this world. If we do not have this wall, then the common activities of our lives will overtake the importance of holy things.

The Sabbath is a spiritual barrier or wall to separate the common from the holy. Without the Sabbath barrier, we will be enslaved by our jobs, personal pursuits, and our own conversation. When the sun sets on Friday, we must put a stop to the common in our world. The Sabbath is a way to put the common activities of life in their proper perspective and to remember that they are secondary to the things of God. It is a vital part of God's system of Law to free us from our own human desires. We are promised in Isaiah that we will receive joy, ride on the heights of the land, and feast on the inheritance of Jacob. This means we will find true fulfillment in life, abundant blessings, and spiritual growth that we so eagerly desire. These things are not found by working. They are found by resting on His Sabbath. As we remember the blessing of freedom of law we have in our country, let us also remember the freedom we have through the Law of God.

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Westby: "All about Eve" cont. from page 5.

There had been other prophecies pointing toward a great prophet, the seed, even a messiah-like person being born. Daniel's encounter with Gabriel, the angel of the Presence, and the seventy weeks prophecy he received was taken to be about the coming of the "Anointed One."⁶

Another powerful prophecy, even more ancient, spoken by Moses:

Yahweh your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him....Yahweh said to me, "I will raise up for them a prophet like unto you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth and he will tell them everything I command him."⁷

This prophecy Moses received from God is most important for it describes perfectly the things Jesus said about himself: "the words I speak are not my own but what the Father gives me," etc. It should be noted that of Moses it was said that "no prophet had risen in Israel like Moses, whom Yahweh knew face to face."⁸ That Jesus would be that prophet of God keeps the promise of Genesis 3:15 alive. But I am getting ahead of the story.

The New Eve, Well Favored by God

The angel of the Presence, Gabriel, appears to a young girl named Mary who is married to Joseph (legally pledged to be married, a betrothal period when no sex was to take place prior to the end of the engagement or betrothal period. This was Jewish-biblical and cultural protocol.) The one who continually stands in Yahweh's presence, one of the highest, if not the highest angel in the angelic realm, speaks:

Greetings you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.⁹

Gabriel is God's agent and speaks directly for God. God's eyes have been upon this girl for a long time and he knows her heart. She, naturally, is shocked by this otherworldly announcement, but Gabriel calms her by saying,

"Do not be afraid. Mary you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the names Jesus."

She has questions about how this can happen and Gabriel answers them. At the end she accepts the message from God stating,

"I am the lord's servant, may it be to me as you have said."

In this critical episode Mary is what Eve was not. Mary accepted a message from God and was willing to comply with it even though she didn't know all the reasons why and also knew that there would be scandal and upset in its wake. Eve said I want to know what God knows and decide for myself what is or isn't good for me. Mary said, with a humble and wise spirit, God is good and nothing is impossible for him and in him I will trust. Beautiful.

If you want a deeper look into the heart and mind of this amazing woman, just read the song she composed summa-

rizing her understanding and passion for God. It is called Mary's Song, or the Magnificat,¹⁰ for it glorifies God and can be compared to the song of another woman who experienced a birth miracle, Hannah (see 1 Samuel 2:1-10).

The name Mary is fitting for this "Eve" as we reflect back to the Moses' prophecy of a coming great prophet. The Hebrew name for Mary is Mariam. Mariam was a leader in Israel and the older sister and protector of Moses when he was saved out of the river Nile. She, like her namesake Mary was of the priestly tribe as was Moses and Zechariah, father of John the Baptist—announcer of Jesus.¹¹

Mariam (Mary) and Moses composed a long hymn telling the triumphal story of what had just occurred—God's great deliverance (salvation) of his people from Egypt (see Exodus 15).

And now, fifteen centuries later another great act of salvation is being unveiled. Only a few were privileged with the message directly from God (God also came to Joseph in a dream), via the angel Gabriel: An old priest and a humble young girl. They both composed songs of praise to God. It is a pity that we do not hear them sung with gusto and pondered nowadays.

If you could peer back in history to see the young Mary, writing material in hand, intently composing her song, what would impress you most? Her grasp of the long history of God's dealings with his people? Her belief that God would lift up the humble and bring down the proud rulers from their thrones? She realized that what was happening to her by "the Mighty One" was such a marvelous miracle she would be called blessed by all future generations?

Did she see herself in the role as a New Eve giving birth to "the seed" that would deliver mankind from sin and bondage to the Devil? It is clear she was up on her Torah history and Genesis 3:15 and Deuteronomy 18:15 of a prophet like Moses yet to come. Did she put it all together when the heavenly host appeared and sang at Jesus' birth? Did she see herself as the one bearing the promised seed from Adam and Eve that would rise up and defeat the Devil? Probably not, at least at this point. Luke tells us that Mary "treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart."¹²

Soon events would complete the story. Jesus grew in wisdom and favor with men and God. He knew that the appointment promised by God to Satan in the Garden was his to keep. He prepared by drawing ever closer and more dependent upon his heavenly Father.

They meet in a lonely spot, the Devil, the Prince of Darkness Grim and Jesus, son of Mary, a descendent of Eve and Adam whom the Devil had deceived into sinning against God. As in the Garden, it was a battle of will and wit (read the accounts in Matthew 4 and Luke 4). A descendent of Eve, fully human, weak in body with fasting but strong in the spirit and love for his Father doing battle with the most powerful enemy of God and man.

Jesus was strong where Eve and Adam were weak. He was determined to obey God and assume rightful dominion over the earth that God gave to man. That required defeating the Devil. Mary wasn't within earshot to hear

how this titanic battle ended, but if she had, she might have thought of Genesis 3:15 "he will crush your head."

When the frustrated Devil could make no headway with his irresistible temptations, he simply got to the point and said to Jesus, "bow down and worship me." Jesus responds by another quote from Deuteronomy and commanded the Devil, "away from me!" The Devil fled and every encounter Jesus had with his demons thereafter demonstrates that Jesus now has dominion over earth and is the true Adam, made in God's image.

In the moving words from "A Mighty Fortress Is our God," Martin Luther says of the end of the Devil, "One little word shall fell him."

Closing Thoughts

There is more to what this seed of Eve would experience in his battle with the Serpent which would also "strike his heel." That story too is in the gospels and merits exploring at another time.

One day Eve will rise in the resurrection and meet face to face her promised descendent, Jesus. What an experience she has waiting! Her far out descendent son would turn the tables on the Devil and usher in a worldwide Garden of Eden with God the Father present, just as in Eden of Creation.

Eve will also be overwhelmed with joy to meet her counterpart, the righteous Mary, who actually gave birth to, suckled, taught, and nurtured the future King of the Earth.

Two very significant women upon whom God took great notice and their roles in the ultimate salvation of mankind are forever enshrined. Our fallen culture may disrespect women, and it usually does. God never has.

End Notes

1. Gen. 3:20
2. Gen. 4:1 Tradition, including the writings of Josephus suggest that Eve had a total of 56 children, 33 sons and 23 daughters, during her long childbearing life. (Josephus' *Antiquities of the Jews*, p. 35, note).
3. The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Vol. 2, p. 204.
4. Gen. 3:15
5. Rev. 20:10
6. Daniel, the 9th chapter
7. Deut. 18:15, 17-18
8. Deut. 34:10
9. Luke 1:28
10. Luke 1:46-55
11. See the very fine book, *The Birth of the Messiah* by Raymond E. Brown. It is a comprehensive commentary on the Infancy narratives. Doubleday, Anchor Bible Reference library, 752 pages.
12. Luke 2:19

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Our Perfect Example

By Aubrey L. Duncan



As He introduced Himself to the world, Jesus declared, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor, He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised" (Luke 4:18).

Quite interestingly, it was on the Sabbath-day that Jesus chose to declare to the world who He was and what His mission was all about. Such are the blessings of the Sabbath. The record reveals: "And He [Jesus] came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and, as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath-day, and stood up for to read" (Luke 4:16). This record alone is evidence enough regarding Jesus' attitude towards the Sabbath.

How men can conjecture that Jesus abolished the Sabbath is beyond reason and without Scriptural foundation. Jesus, being his or her example, the committed Christian should do likewise by honoring God on the Sabbath-day. By so doing, they would indeed be in the company of their Savior, resting in Him.

The apostle Peter declares that Jesus is our example. Says he, "For even hereunto were ye called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow His steps" (1 Peter 2:21).

Matthew reports, "At that time, Jesus went on the Sabbath day through the corn; and His disciples were an hungered, and began to pluck the ears of corn [grain] and to eat...But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto Him, Behold thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the Sabbath day" (Matthew 12:1,2). In responding to their charge, Jesus reminded them of David and his men when they entered the sanctuary and ate the shewbread, which was not "lawful" for them to do. Jesus' conclusion to the matter is recorded thus, "But if ye had known what this means, I will have mercy and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless...For the Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath day" (Matthew 12:7, 8).

First of all, Jesus was not the one who plucked the ears of grain. The Scripture is abundantly clear that it was his disciples. Second, Jesus declared them to be guiltless. For one to obtain food and eat on the Sabbath-day, if they are hungry, is not breaking the Sabbath. It is clear that Jesus and His disciples did not purposely go out on the Sabbath day to pick grain in defiance of the commandment not to do any work on the Sabbath day.

Jesus used the occasion to expose the hypocrisy of the Pharisees in their exacting, non-biblical rules regarding the Sabbath. Finally, and most importantly, Jesus declared

that He is Lord of the Sabbath. Nowhere in this episode did Jesus make the slightest reference to doing away with the Sabbath. He simply reinforced the principle that the Sabbath was still binding. He also declared that He is the Master of the Sabbath.

Many see this and other similar incidents as evidences not to keep God's Sabbath-day holy. All our encounters with Jesus on the Sabbath exemplify that we are to keep God's Sabbath-day holy. They help us to do so by giving us examples of what it is permissible to do and accepted by God on the Sabbath. Jesus teaches us that it is right in the sight of God to do good on the Sabbath-day. In stark contrast to what false prophets and teachers advocate, Jesus does not teach that men should profane or otherwise do away with the Sabbath day, simply because He came and died for us. Instead, He simply gave us many examples of how to keep the Sabbath-day holy.

Jesus constantly kept the importance of God's true Sabbath before the eyes and minds of the people. He, the only true Messiah, demonstrated the sanctity of the Sabbath even in death. All four of the gospel writers, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, testify to this fact. They all are remarkably consistent in reporting the events of Jesus' death, burial and resurrection. This being the case, the mention of one such account will be sufficient to illustrate the point of Jesus' rest on the Sabbath, even in death.

Luke records thus, "And that day was the preparation day, and the Sabbath drew on... And the women also, which came with Him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre and how His body was laid... And they returned and prepared spices and ointments and rested the Sabbath day, according to the commandment" (Luke 23:54-56). Certainly, Jesus' disciples never gave any thought to the notion that because He was crucified, the Sabbath was abolished. Nowhere, in His three and one half years of earthly ministry, did Jesus address the issue of changing or abolishing the seventh-day Sabbath.

For Christians, God's Sabbath-day is a reminder of who is our Creator. It is also a commemoration of who is our Redeemer. Paul stresses to Titus, "Who [Jesus Christ] gave himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good work" (Titus 2:14). Paul additionally declared to the Jews who had come to accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior, "For He spoke in a certain place of the seventh-day on this wise, 'and God did rest on the seventh day from all His works... For if Jesus had given them rest, then would He not afterward have spoken of another day.... There remaineth therefore a rest for the people of God'" (Hebrews 4:4, 8, 9).

Our rest is in Jesus Christ. Keeping His Sabbath-day holy is an outward demonstration of that rest in Him. It is an honor, a joy, and a privilege to do so. Sabbath keeping is a revelation of God's love and compassion for all humanity. It is a blessing. It is truthfully abiding in Jesus. It is being yoked up with Him. To keep God's Sabbath holy is to delight in Jesus Christ as our Creator, Savior and Redeemer. God's Sabbath day is not only a commemoration of our rest in Jesus, but a sign to the world that we are truly His.

Jesus Christ, on His sojourn on this earth, taught us how to truly keep His Sabbath-day holy. He continues to empower us to do so today. Ellen G. White, the nineteenth century Christian commentator, tells us in her classic, *Desire of Ages*, "By His humanity Christ touched humanity; by His divinity, He lays hold of the throne of God. As the son of man, He gave us an example of obedience; as the Son of God He gives us power to obey" (*Desire of Ages*, pp. 23-24). When we are truly resting in Him, He will lead and empower us to keep holy His blessed Sabbath day. We will come to realize that Sabbath keeping is not a mere round of rituals, encompassing a list of burdensome rules. Rather, we will experience being a partaker of a joyous experience in Him who is our Maker and Redeemer.

Our Lord and Savior emphatically declares, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:17-19). Jesus' fulfillment of the law was prophesied by the prophet Isaiah thus, "The Lord is well pleased for His righteousness' sake: He will magnify the law and make it honorable" (Isaiah 42:21).

His fulfillment of the law is not to do away with it; but rather to make it more clear through His living example. He kept it perfectly as an example for us to follow. Jesus never asks us what we think about the law, or what does Paul say about it. He simply beckons us to follow Him. He asks us to keep His Sabbath-day holy as evidence of our trust in Him.

The Savior longs to see His character reflected in our lives. His desire is for us to uplift Him as our Creator and submit to His will in our lives. When, by God's grace, we do that, we demonstrate to the world our genuine faith in His word. Our obedience to His will is the evidence of our saving relationship with our Creator, Savior, and Redeemer, Jesus Christ. He counsels and assures us, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven... Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill... For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Matthew 5:16-18).

By His grace our lights must shine as we strive to keep all of His commandments thus glorifying our Father which is in heaven. He is our perfect Example.

The writer is an Elder at the Wimbish Road Seventh-day Adventist church, Macon, Georgia. He is the author of the book, *God's Sabbath Truth*, from which this article is excerpted.

Learn more at www.thesabbathtruth.org

As It Was in the Days of Noah

by Chris DeWeese



"And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. "It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building; but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. "It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed" (Luke 17:26-30 NASB).

What a strange time we live in. Western culture has declined so rapidly in the last fifty years that I don't think it can compare with any other time period in history. Within the span of two or three generations, our culture has gone from one of solid family values with a majority of citizens claiming Christianity as their faith and actually attending services weekly to a place where people may even be reluctant to express their faith in public.

The moral decline is increasingly at a break-neck rate. In a recent Fox News article (<http://goo.gl/A7fLM>)—all URLs in this article have been shortened) we read how the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is planning to allow more nudity on television and to remove the ban on swear words. That means there is already nudity on free television and they want to allow more. And the removal of the strong language ban is pretty much the last barrier to a complete removal of barriers in broadcasting. In what world do we come to the conclusion that allowing risqué and off-color behavior on over the air television has actually improved our culture? Long gone are the days of *The Cosby Show* or *The Fresh Prince of Bel Air* where solid family units were promoted and irresponsible behavior mocked. Today, adultery, sorcery, vampires, cage fights, and reality shows filled with people who willingly prostrate themselves before "judges" in the hopes of fifteen minutes of fame are all the rage. These reality-tv "judges" aren't the righteous kind nor are they the black robed secular judges who are supposed to impartially apply the law, oh no. These "judges" are most often people of horrible personal repute who have had numerous public scandals.

An article in the *Kansas City Star* (<http://goo.gl/5yADt>) illustrates the demise of the family unit incredibly well, likely without meaning to. Two in five women, 40%, would consider willfully having a child without a "partner." I encourage the reader to search this article to find

the word "husband." It's not there. Nope, now that marriage is considered optional and is in the process of being artificially "hyphenated," the word "partner" is being substituted for "spouse" or "husband and wife" in our media. Lovely.

Our society is in the process of reaping the "benefits" that the cultural downturn has sewn with huge divorce rates creating broken homes, dual-income families raising children with an off-the-chart sense of entitlement, teens who go on to have babies, and welfare programs exploding as a result of all of this depraved behavior. What's the next logical step? Single-parent households on purpose. Since the declination we have experienced thus far is working out so well, why wouldn't we accelerate the destruction of the family? (Yes, that was a sarcastic and rhetorical question.)

The article references a survey that 36% of children were born to single mothers which is an increase from 31% in 2005. But nowhere does the article outline the reality of single motherhood in the USA for the majority of women who fall into this predicament. In fact, it cites anecdotal evidence from a few successful and educated women over thirty who have jobs that compensate them well and allow them the flex time to balance both job and child. It leaves out the stats on how many black children are born out of wedlock and that a full 50% of Black children live without a father in the house (see the following Census Bureau article <http://goo.gl/fKB4j>). It leaves out how many high-school and young adult aged women (girls) become pregnant and have to lean on their parents (if they have any) for support. It also leaves out that the vast majority of women raising children on their own are on government assistance, falling into a trap of complete dependence upon the government, which is a modern-day form of slavery. What does it include? This tid-bit:

"And this was true especially among mothers who waited until age 30 or older to have children. Fully 47 percent of those mothers said having a child had a negative impact on their careers. Of women overall, 32 percent of mothers reported a negative effect, compared with 10 percent of men."

The survey question asked was "did the kid negatively impact your career?" What about "did your career negatively impact raising your child?" or "do you wish you had spent more time with your children and less at the office?" The prophet Isaiah famously wrote, "woe to them who call evil good and good evil" in reference to

the topsy-turvy values the world will have at the end of days. That line right there fits the prophecy. If you read on in the article, the anecdotally cited career-mom actually says, paraphrasing, that now her child is two, she will be able to get back on her "a game." What game did she bring to RAISING THE TODDLER FOR TWO YEARS, pray tell?

The single mom they cite who actually regrets single motherhood has to have the obligatory relativist comment that if others want to do it, that's fine, it's just not for her. Well, I'll make the politically incorrect statement: It's not right and it's a recipe for disaster. People, stop having children out of wedlock and before you can afford to support them! It's wrecking our country!

I got to visit my niece and two nephews recently that I haven't seen in about seven years. They are high-school and young adult aged. Since we live far away, I don't have a relationship with them and don't know how much they have been taught about the sad reality of our modern culture. They were wonderful to be around, polite, upbeat, and very nice to my children who are much younger. They're great kids. I thought long and hard about what to say to them when we parted company. If I could just impart one or two sentences that might stick. One or two sentences that could have the most dramatic positive influence in their lives at this crucial juncture as they begin to enter Babylon on their own, what could I say? This is what I came up with: "No sex before marriage. No marriage until your career is at least on its way. No kids until you can afford to raise them properly."

I pray it is enough. As society continues its slide, we need to remember to live like there is a tomorrow. Many people who lived in the Civil War times thought it was the end. Many people who lived during the two world wars thought it was the end, and with Hitler coming to such power in Europe who could blame them? During the cold war, many people believed that armageddon was just a couple buttons pushed away (and it was). Granted, during those wars we did not witness a collapse of family values and the family structure, but this is not the first time mankind has witnessed birth pangs. Whether it is the last time or not, we need to live right, be good examples and teach our children proper values. It will make their lives much better in this life and help them gain access to life eternal.

Article taken from Chris DeWeese's blog, *First Century Christianity*:

<http://firstcenturychristianity.net/2013/06/02/as-it-was-in-the-days-of-noah/>

Chris came to the Sabbath through his wife Diana, who is a third generation Sabbath keeper. His path led him to the Holy Days and the other truths by way of meeting people on the internet. Chris is an elder of the First Century Christian Fellowship of Kansas City and maintains

<http://firstcenturychristianity.net> as a resource for those coming out of Babylon. Chris supervises a team of Field Service Engineers in the Bio-Medical Industry for his secular career.



If the Foundations be Destroyed ...

A Leap of Faith

by David Rives

Human life is an amazing thing. Not only are we complex in design, but we have the ability and innate curiosity to ponder our own complexity.

From this curiosity, some would conclude that they are an anomaly of nature, just the survival of the fittest in a chain of animal development, while others conclude they have a special purpose and marvel at the artistry of their design.

Little details we normally overlook are baffling to those who believe in chance origins. Even the smallest mammal or the tiniest insect has complexity warranting a second look at its incredible design.

Candid scientists will admit they have no satisfactory natural answer to some of the questions of biology. Those who are evasive quickly point the finger at those who believe in God, saying that their religion has clouded their opinion.

But it takes a giant leap of faith to trust that everything is the end result of NOTHING From shambles to structure over 14 billion years.

With that as an alternative, no wonder so many people have faith in God's incredible design.

I'm David Rives....

Truly, The Heavens Declare the Glory of God.

David lectures around the country on Creation and Biblical astronomy. He publishes a weekly video commentary on WorldNetDaily. For more information, visit www.davidrives.com

With this article *The Sabbath Sentinel* continues our series on the various movements within the Sabbath-keeping community



The Church of God, Seventh Day

by Calvin Burrell

The Church of God (Seventh Day) grew from the efforts of dedicated followers of Christ in western Michigan in the late 1850s. They believed in the soon coming of Christ, the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath, and the authority of the Bible alone for Christian faith and practice. And they called themselves “churches of Christ” at the start.

Joined by a Marion, Iowa, church of similar persuasion (1862), the Michigan church extended its influence into eastern and central United States through publication of *The Hope of Israel*, thus creating interest in the Church’s distinctive doctrines. The fledgling Church organized a General Conference in Michigan (1884) and incorporated in the state of Missouri (1899). In 1950, its central offices were moved from Stanberry, Missouri, to just north of Denver, Colorado.

Perhaps the most recognizable ministry of CoG7—as the Church is often called—is its flagship paper, the *Bible Advocate (BA)*. On August 10, 2013, the *BA* magazine, which began as *The Hope of Israel* back in 1863, will mark its 150th anniversary of publication.

Personalities

- Gilbert Cranmer (1814-1903): The founding of the Church in Michigan was the work of 19th century preacher Gilbert Cranmer. As a Millerite adventist, Cranmer went through the Great Disappointment of 1844, learned the Sabbath from Joseph Bates in 1853, and worked with James and Ellen White until their differences led him to set out with “my Bible and my Bible alone” in 1858. Cranmer’s primary point of contention with the Whites (not yet organized as the Seventh Day Adventist Church) was over the inspiration of Ellen G. White’s visions and their role in the developing work.

- Andrew Dugger (1886-1975). The most prominent churchman in the early twentieth century was Elder A. N. Dugger. As editor, writer, debater, evangelist, and conference president, he instituted positive reforms in Church finance and called for unity in support of his version of the Church’s doctrines. Ironically, the man who did much to unite the Church also led a schism

that lasted 16 years (1933-49). Elder Dugger spent his last 25 years (1953-75) in Israel, where he had long dreamed of establishing world headquarters for a restored New Testament church.

- Robert Coulter (b. 1930), served the Church as Chairman of its General Conference for 24 years (1963-87). Many of its organizational structures and operating policies were developed or modernized under his leadership. As a CoG7 missions pioneer, he was the architect and first president of the Church’s International Ministerial Congress, which loosely organized CoG7’s sister conferences around the world. In retirement, Elder Coulter has become the Church’s primary historian; his 300-page book, *The Story of the Church of God (Seventh Day)*, will be available in mid-2013.

- Current General Conference President Elder Whaid Rose has served that position since 1997. Rose’s 2011 booklet, “Dream in Progress,” describes his vision of a vibrant 21st century church as “Christ-centered; Distinct, not Exclusive; Sabbath-Observing; Bible-based; Spirit-formed; Passionate in Worship; Compassionate in Service; Aggressive in Witness; Warm in Fellowship; and Committed to Discipleship.” Pastor Loren Stacy of Lodi, California, has served as Chairman of CoG7’s Conference Board for the past 16 years.

Size and Service

The Church’s General Conference, whose offices near Denver, Colorado were built and occupied in 1972, represents 220 congregations and approximately 10,000 members in the United States and Canada. CoG7 branches in Meridian, Idaho, and Salem, West Virginia, along with independent congregations, add to the numbers of the broader movement, most of which goes by some form of the Church of God (Seventh Day) name.

The Church’s foreign affiliates have increased significantly in the past century, due largely to the distribution of literature and the *BA* magazine. The International Ministerial Congress of Church, organized in 1978, now serves conferences or mission churches in

about 40 countries. World membership in the Church is estimated above 200,000.

Missions Abroad is the arm of the Church that leads its efforts to birth new work around the world and to support its many missions. Through G.C. Missions, the Church supports more than 50 indigenous missionaries and more than 300 orphans in 15 countries. It maintains a Disaster Relief Fund that sends 10,000's of dollars each year to sites where the Church is impacted by drought, flood, earthquake, or other catastrophe. This March, a Church-sponsored team of 47 medical and dental personnel went to Haiti for a week of service to needy people, the tenth annual "SHINE" (Serving Him in Nations Everywhere) trip (see the Web site: www.cog7.org).

Publications and More

The longest-term service provided by the Church is its printed literature. When the Marion, Iowa, church became aware of Gilbert Cranmer's congregations in Michigan, these two states, with support from scattered Sabbath-keepers in Wisconsin and points east, began to cooperate (1863) in publishing a paper that expressed their common beliefs. First known as *The Hope of Israel*, that paper is still published now, 150 years later, as the *Bible Advocate*, one of the oldest Christian publications in this country. Supported by the Church and by freewill offerings, it is sent bimonthly without subscription charge and has a mailing list of about 15,000.

Spring Vale Academy, a boarding school near Owosso, Michigan, was founded by CoG7 leaders in 1948 and has operated all 65 years since then, with more than 1,200 high school graduates (www.springvale.us).

Ministerial training has been a feature of the Church's ministries for more than 60 years. It began in Stanberry, Missouri under the name Midwest Bible College. Moving to Denver, Colorado in 1976, the school operated 25 years as Summit School of Theology, and now as LifeSpring School of Ministry — offering coursework by distance-learning and by the latest simulcast technology (www.lifespringschool.org).

The General Conference also provides programmed fellowship and ministry opportunities for the Church's youth, young adults and women.

Teaching and Theology

The church's theological flavor is biblically conservative, evangelical (gospel-centered), and grace-based (mostly Arminian). Its polity is a blend of elders-rule with congregationalism. Its eschatology is historic pre-millennial and non-dispensational. It opposes the popular, traditional ideas of heaven (natural immortality of soul) and hell (as eternal torment) in favor of Christ's

return, resurrection of the righteous dead to immortality (as the gift of God through Christ) and of the wicked to destruction (annihilation), and the eternal Kingdom of God on a restored earth.

The Church's official doctrine—embodied in a twelve-point Statement of Faith—is entrusted to the care and cultivation of its Ministerial Council, now about 150 ministers and pastors (in the USA and Canada). The Statement of Faith is subject to amendment as the group grows in grace and knowledge of Christ and the written Word. The Statement may be read at the www.cog7.org. It is fully developed and defended in a 2012 book entitled, *THIS WE BELIEVE: Teachings of the Church of God (Seventh Day)*. This book is available at Bible Advocate Press, P. O. Box 33677, Denver, CO 80233.

This author has attended CoG7 for 70 years, and served it for nearly fifty. He has watched the Church evolve from a rather closed sect focused mostly on its own version of truth to a gospel-centered fellowship of folks who still embrace the moral law of God, the Sabbath, and the truths of conditional immortality, but now in the prevailing context of God's grace in Jesus Christ.

We've changed slowly over the years, and we're still growing as we come to ever-clearer understanding of Jesus Christ and the New Covenant gospel. Our changes come, not by revolution imposed by a top-heavy structure, but from members and ministers who treasure the concept of an "open creed," one that is subject to reasoned, studied adjustment under the authority of "the Bible and the Bible alone."

Sidebars:

- The oldest surviving CoG7 congregation still meets in Marion, Iowa, where it recently celebrated its 150th anniversary.
- The Church offers several youth camp opportunities each summer, as well as a variety of retreats for men, for women, and for youth and young adult groups through the year.
- The Church's International Ministerial Congress is now represented in almost every Central and South American nation, and is expanding in Africa. The largest membership of any single nation is in Nigeria.
- The Church's biennial General Conference Convention is scheduled for July 1-6, 2013, at the Hilton Century-Link Center in Omaha, Nebraska.

Calvin Burrell is currently the head of Missions for the Church of God (Seventh Day) and also president of the Bible Sabbath Association.

SEVEN

by Dr. Daniel Botkin



7

God seems to have a thing about the number seven. There are lots of numbers in the Bible, but the number seven seems to pop up more often than any other.

God's fixation on the number seven starts at the very beginning of the Bible when He blessed and sanctified the seventh day of the week in Genesis. God not only blessed and sanctified the seventh day, He even gave it a name, Shabbat (שַׁבָּת, from the verb shavat [שָׁבַת], "to cease"). None of the other six days of the week were given names. They were simply numbered: day one, second day, third day, etc. But day number seven was given the name Shabbat. In English we call it the Sabbath.

The word Shabbat is based on the idea of cessation. God ceased from His creative work on the seventh day. Following the example of our heavenly Father, we cease from our normal week-day activities, primarily and especially those activities which provide or produce our daily bread.

The weekly seventh-day Sabbath is not the only seven in God's biblical calendar. In Leviticus 23 the chapter which summarizes God's annual calendar, there are seven annual *mo'adim*, "appointed times." The *mo'adim* are times which Yahweh designates as times for His people to assemble together in holy convocation. The four spring *mo'adim* prophetically point to Messiah's first coming, and the three fall *mo'adim* prophetically point to Messiah's second coming.

Included in the seven annual *mo'adim* are seven days which are to be kept as annual sabbaths, whether those dates fall on the regular weekly Sabbath (Saturday) or on some other day of the week.

In addition to the weekly seventh-day Sabbath, the seven annual *mo'adim*, and the seven annual sabbaths, Yahweh's biblical calendar also prescribes a seventh-year land sabbath for the land of Israel in Leviticus 25.

The Israelites were told to farm the land for six years, then let it remain fallow on the seventh year. Then after seven seven-year periods (i.e., 49 years), the 49th-year land sabbath was followed by a 50th-year land sabbath, called the year of jubilee.

There is something interesting about this pattern of seven 7th-year land sabbaths followed by a 50th-year land sabbath, which makes two consecutive year-long land sabbaths at the end of the 50-year count toward jubilee. It fits the very same pattern as the fifty days that lead up to *Shavu'ot*, the Feast of Pentecost. After Passover and Firstfruits, we are commanded to count seven weekly Sabbaths "unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath" (Leviticus 23:13).

Then the morrow after the seventh Sabbath is kept as an annual sabbath. So there are two consecutive sabbaths: the weekly (Saturday) Sabbath and the following day, Pentecost.

(The Pharisees counted the fifty days between Passover and Pentecost differently, so today's Jews, following Pharisaic tradition, always celebrate *Shavu'ot* on 6 Sivan. Most Messianics follow the Sadducean method of counting because it appears to be more biblical. For an in-depth discussion of these differences, see *Gates of Eden* (GOE) 11-3 and 11-4, May-June & July- August 2005 in archives at www.gatesofeden.org, or mail a SASE for photocopies.)

So God's apparent fixation on the number seven can be seen in the seventh-day weekly Sabbath, seven annual feasts which include seven annual sabbaths, a seventh-year land sabbath, a seven-Sabbath count of weeks leading up to Pentecost (*Shavu'ot*, which literally means "weeks") on the 50th day, and a seven-year count of land sabbaths leading up to the year of jubilee in the 50th year.

And all these sevens are not just in God's calendar. We see lots of other sevens in the Bible, including but

not limited to: a seven-branched menorah in the Tabernacle, seven-fold sprinklings of sacrificial blood, a seven-day consecration of priests, a seven-day quarantine of lepers, a seven-day cessation of sexual activity during the woman's menstrual period, a seven-day march around Jericho, a threat of seven-fold increases of national punishment in Leviticus 26, and Naaman's seven dips in the Jordan River. A quick count in my Strong's Exhaustive Concordance shows that in the Book of Revelation the words seven and seventh appear 49 times. The square root of 49 is seven. Maybe that's just a coincidence, but if it is, it's a pretty interesting coincidence.

Obviously the number seven is important to the Creator. If God were just an ignorant human, we might suspect that He was superstitious about the number seven in a positive way, like some people are superstitious about the number thirteen in a negative way.

But, of course, God is not an ignorant human. He is the One who designed and created the universe, and He has reasons for doing what He does and for commanding what He commands. He has a reason for blessing and sanctifying the seventh day of the week and for commanding His children to keep it holy. He has a reason for designing an annual calendar with seven annual feasts, with seven annual sabbaths, with a cycle of seventh-year land sabbaths.

He had a reason for telling Moses and Aaron to make the seven-branched menorah, to sprinkle the blood seven times, and to consecrate the priests for seven days. He had a reason for decreeing a seven-day quarantine for lepers and a seven-day period of abstinence during a woman's menstrual period. He had a reason for commanding the Israelites to march around Jericho seven times, and for healing Naaman after seven dips in the Jordan.

If Naaman had dipped only six times, he would have emerged from the Jordan with his leprosy still clinging to him. If Joshua and the Israelites had marched around Jericho only six times, the walls would have remained upright. If Moses and Aaron had decided to modify God's commandment and make a candlestick with five branches instead of seven, God's glory would not have filled the Tabernacle.

And if you decided to ignore or modify God's commandment about the seventh-day Sabbath, you might miss out on some glory. You might be de-

prived of some possible healing, like Naaman would have been if he had not taken that seventh dip. You might be deprived of some victory like Joshua would have been if he had marched around Jericho only six times.

God blesses obedience, not ignorance. God in His mercy often overlooks people's ignorance when it is not willful ignorance, but He does not bless ignorance. He blesses those who trust and obey. If you ignore or modify God's seventh-day Sabbath, you might miss out on some glory and healing and victory. Furthermore, part of keeping the Sabbath is attending a holy convocation, to assemble with a body of disciples for corporate worship and fellowship. (See Leviticus 23:3, and the example of Yeshua in Luke 4:16. Also see GOE 9:3, "Holy Convocation: A Divine Imperative"). If your attendance and participation in the assembly is occasional, haphazard, and minimal, then the healing, the victories, and the glory you experience will be occasional, haphazard, and minimal, because we reap what we sow.

Some readers might be saying, "Daniel, why do you talk so much about the Sabbath?"

Because so many Christians ignore it, that's why. And because God talks about it so much. The Bible mentions the Sabbath around 150 times. God had a Sabbath-breaker stoned to death for picking up sticks on the Sabbath (Numbers 15). Through His prophet Jeremiah, God told the Jews that if they would only keep the Sabbath, God would protect Jerusalem from the Babylonians and not let them destroy the city and the Temple (Jeremiah 17).

But the Jews continued to break the Sabbath, so the Babylonians came and destroyed the city and the Temple and carried the Jews away as captives. In Babylon God reminded these captives through His prophet Ezekiel that one of the main reasons for their captivity was their profaning of the Sabbath (Ezekiel 20 and 22).

God is not superstitious about random numbers, but He is very serious about the number seven. If we are wise, we will be serious about it too. □

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The Church in the World

Attack in Nigeria that Killed 18 Christians Caps Two Years of Islamic Aggression

Muslim Fulani herdsmen suspected in another deadly assault in area.

Filed on April 24, 2013 By Our Nigeria Correspondent

MILE BAKWAI, Nigeria (Morning Star News) – Hosea Mashaf was resting in his village of Chirang Mangor, Nigeria, when area Christian youths told him that armed, Muslim Fulani herdsmen were attacking the Christian village of Mile Bakwai.

The 45-year-old farmer and other Christians rushed to Mile Bakwai, three kilometers away in the Bokkos Local Council Area of Plateau State, the night of March 27 to see how they might aid the Christians there, he told Morning Star News.

“When we got there, the gunmen had already retreated,” Mashaf said. “I saw dead bodies scattered all over the village. I counted the dead bodies we recovered, and in all we had 18 Christians who were killed by the Muslim attackers.”

They found five of those bodies in a minibus, he said.

“They were travelling in a bus back to our village when they ran into the attack going on at Mile Bakwai village,” Mashaf said. “They were killed by the attackers when they shot at the bus, which crashed into a building, but the attackers went to the place where the bus was and shot the occupants. Five of them were killed, while two others were injured.”

The 18 slain were members of Nigerian Baptist Convention, Christ Apostolic Church, and Church of Christ in Nigeria (COCIN) congregations, sources said. Pastor James Danladi Mahwash of the Bishara Baptist Church in Mile Bakwai village said five of his church members were killed, including the financial secretary of the Men’s Missionary Union of his church, 25-year-old Jamle Benjamin Sunday.

“At about 8 p.m. the attackers, all Muslim Fulani herdsmen, came into this village in two separate groups, attacking us from two different directions, and shooting down anyone they saw,” he said. “They came from the northwestern end of the village, and then separated into two groups with one of the groups attacking from the western end, while the second group attacked from the eastern end.”

Besides Sunday, Mahwash said, among those killed were Kokiwo Malo, 65; Maren Galadima, 18; Gambo Geoffrey Mafuyai, 45; Adamu Maren, 55; Zoron Adamu, 10; Maren Garba, 20; Danladi Mangar, 20; Joel Peter, 20; Boaz Masara, 20; Oge Emeka, 5; and one identified only as Jang from the neighboring village of Kunet.



Pastor James Danladi Mahwash baptizing Jamle Benjamin Sunday, who was killed in the attack in Mile Bakwai, Nigeria. (Morning Star News photo)

The assailants also burned the houses of three Christians – Malo Kabu, Marion Bitrus and Mapu Daniel – in Mile Bakwai, “Seventh Mile” in the Hausa language as it is about seven miles from the main mining camp at Tenti village. Mile Bakwai is a former mining camp in the rocky hills of the Jos Plateau, about 60 kilometers (37 miles) south of Jos.

In several previous attacks, the herdsmen robbed the 150-member church of about 211,000 naira (US\$1315), Mahwash added.

“We believe that our attackers are Muslim Fulani herdsmen,” he said. “We know they have been attacking Christian communities in rural areas across central Nigerian states. We are not happy about this and feel that the Nigerian government has to do something urgently to curtail these attacks in order to save lives and restore peace in the northern part of this country.”

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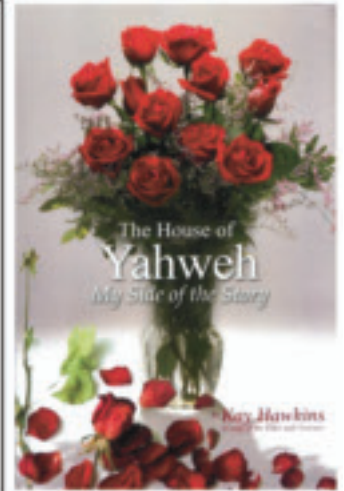
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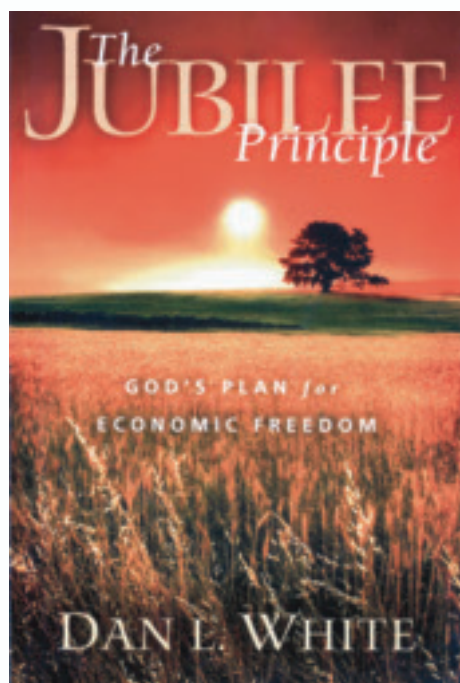
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