

The Sabbath and the Seal of God

--What I have learned about the Sabbath--

*" Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.
Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work:
But the seventh day is the Sabbath of Yehovah thy Elohim:
In it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter,
thy manservant, nor thy maid servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates:
For in six days Yehovah made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested
the seventh day: wherefore Yehovah blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it."
Exodus 20:8-11*

The fourth commandment has a distinctive construction:

- A.** Introduction
Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.
- B.** Command
Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work:
- C.** Motivation
But the seventh day is the Sabbath of Yehovah thy Elohim:
- B1.** Command
*In it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter,
thy manservant, nor thy maid servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy
gates:*
- C1.** Motivation
*For in six days Yehovah made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and
rested the seventh day:*
- D.** Conclusion
wherefore Yehovah blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.

The Introduction **A.** lays down the essential principle of the Sabbath commandment.

B. gives the positive command to do work on the first six days of the week.

B1. gives the corresponding prohibitive command to abstain from work on the seventh day of the week and applies this principle to the entire family, including servants, guests, and domestic animals.

C. and **C1.** supply the motivation for the commands.

C. acknowledges the seven-day time period by emphasizing that *the seventh day is the*

Sabbath of Yehovah thy Elohim.

C1. presents the detailed motivation in terms of Yehovah's six days of creation work and His resting on the seventh day, thereby rooting the commandment in the creation account of Genesis 1 and 2.

D. forms the Conclusion, and the last words of the commandment "*and hallowed it*" [made it holy] correspond with the exhortation in the introduction **A.** "*to keep it holy.*" Both statements link back to the holiness with which Yehovah endowed the Sabbath in Genesis 2:3.¹

Contained in the word "Sabbath" is the Hebrew word "*abba*" which means Father.

The Hebrew word is "*Shabbath*", *sha* meaning eternal One, *ab* being the root word for *Abba* and *bath* or *beth* meaning house. *Shabbath* then signifies "House of the eternal Father."

Before God all human beings are equal and the fourth commandment reveals this truth in a unique way.

During the six-day work week human activity unfolds along the lines of class, race, gender and social status, but the Sabbath day is the great equalizer, when all people and even the animals are to rest together at the same time.

The fourth commandment as it is expressed in Deuteronomy 5:12-15 emphasizes this point even more. After repeating many of the same phrases of the text in Exodus 20, it adds the following admonition:

"that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou.

And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and [that] Yehovah thy Elohim brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore Yehovah thy Elohim commanded thee to keep the sabbath day."

When the Sabbath was first instituted it was for a memorial of creation in an unfallen world. Before the fall there were no manservants and maidservants, no slavery in Egypt, which is in itself a symbol of bondage to sin, and no deliverance from bondage.

This element of redemption was added to the Sabbath commandment after the fall, when in addition to being a memorial of creation, the Sabbath also became a memorial for redemption, which is a type of re-creation (see 2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 6:15, Revelation 21:1).

Yahushua is God the Creator and God the Redeemer (see John 1:1-18) and both versions of the commandment show that the seventh-day Sabbath is a symbol and memorial of His work.

*"In **the** beginning Elohim created the heaven and the earth. "*
Genesis 1:1

The definite article in this sentence indicates a definite beginning which is measurable. This is in contrast to John 1:1 and 2, which speaks of an indefinite beginning in the Greek

text.

Whereas our heaven and earth have a definite beginning, the Word, which is God, has no definite beginning; He has always existed.

(For a discussion of the Hebrew grammar of Genesis, see:

<http://ancienthebrewgrammar.wordpress.com/2011/11/11/genesis-1-hebrew-grammar-translation/>)

According to the literal interpretation of Genesis, the flow of thought in Genesis 1-2 is as follows:

1. God is before all creation (verse 1).
2. There is an absolute beginning of time with regard to this world and its surrounding heavenly spheres (verse 1).
3. God creates the heavens and earth (verse 1), but they are at first different than now, they are "unformed" and "unfilled" (*tohu* and *bohu*; verse 2).
4. On the first day of the seven-day Creation week, God begins to form and fill the *tohu* and *bohu* (verses 3 and following).
5. The creative "forming and filling" activity of God is accomplished in six successive literal 24-hour days.
6. At the end of creation week, the heavens and earth are finally finished (Genesis 2:1). What God began in verse 1 is now completed.
7. God rests on the seventh day, blessing and sanctifying it as a memorial of Creation (2:1-4).

(For a more thorough discussion of this topic see

http://dialogue.adventist.org/articles/06_3_davidson_e.htm)

A definite order can be observed in the Creation week:

Days 1 and 4	Light and bodies of light.
Days 2 and 5	Firmament and filling of firmament.
Days 3 and 6	Earth with food and filling (or populating) the earth

In the first three days Elohim created physical spaces and in the next three days He filled these spaces.

For His Creation, Elohim used a framework of seven spaces of time: "*the evening and the morning*" which together make one day each. The Hebrew word for day is "*yom*" (Strong's H3117), and when the days are designated by ordinal numbers, i.e. *day one*, *day two*, etc, then a literal 24 hour day is referenced.

The entire Creation exists in a framework of seven days of time:

*“Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.
And on the seventh day Elohim ended his work which he had made; and he rested (shabat) on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.
And Elohim blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested (shabat) from all his work which Elohim created and made.”*
Genesis 2:1-3

In six days, His Word alone brought the world into existence, and then He rested. He ceased speaking and His Word, which lives and abides forever, continued to uphold His Creation (1 Peter 1:23).

The Sabbath commandment stands out like a seal among the other commandments. Since antiquity seals have been used to validate documents and letters in much the same way we use signatures today. The ancient cultures of Egypt and Babylon are known to have used seals, and successive empires since then, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome, have used them, and they are still used by governments and rulers today.

A seal typically specifies the **name** of the person to whom it belongs, his **official position of authority**, and his **dominion**, which is the territory over which he rules.

In dictionary.reference.com a seal is defined thus:

noun

1. an embossed emblem, figure, symbol, word, letter, etc., used as attestation or evidence of authenticity.
2. a stamp, medallion, ring, etc., engraved with such a device, for impressing paper, wax, lead, or the like: *The king took the seal from his finger and applied it to the document.*
3. the impression so obtained: *It was unmistakably the royal seal on the document.*
4. a mark or symbol attached to a legal document and imparting a formal character to it, originally wax with an impression.

The fourth commandment has all the characteristics of a seal:

the name	Yehovah thy Elohim
official position of authority	Creator
dominion	Heaven and Earth.

In the Bible the words “*seal*” and “*sign*” are often synonymous. The apostle Paul used them interchangeably:

“And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which [he had yet] being uncircumcised: “

Romans 4:11

According to the Bible, the Sabbath is also the sign of sanctification between Yehovah and His people:

“And hallow my sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I [am] Yehovah your Elohim.”

Ezekiel 20:20; see also Ezekiel 20:12, Exodus 31:13-17.

Bible prophecy uses the term “*seal of God*” to represent a symbolic mark (or sign) placed on individuals who are completely loyal to God, keeping all His commandments.

In the book of Revelation the word “*seal*” (and “*seals*” and “*sealed*”) is used 32 times. Some of these instances refer to the securing of God's faithful people for eternal salvation. In Revelation 7, which references the final generation as the *144,000*, a special act of God is described:

“And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.”

Revelation 7:2-3

This prophecy parallels an OT prophecy of Ezekiel 9 where the faithful agonize for the abominations taking place among God's people:

“And Yehovah said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.”

Ezekiel 9:4

The mark in Ezekiel and the seal in Revelation must be equivalent because they are given to secure God's people against destruction and for the kingdom of Heaven.

The seal is also described as God's name:

“And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty [and] four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.”

Revelation 14:1

Revelation being a book of symbols, we know that this does not refer to a literal signature in the forehead. The description of these 144,000 is also symbolic: they are spiritual virgins.

Two texts help us understand this symbolic description. In 2 Corinthians 11:2 Paul wants the church to be a chaste virgin, espoused to one husband, that is Christ.

In Revelation 17:1-5 John describes a harlot who causes the world to be drunk with the wine of her fornication.

The chaste woman represents a church with pure teachings and practices while the harlot represents a church which teaches and practices falsehood. Those who receive the seal of God do not defile themselves with the false teachings and practices of an impure church; they are completely Christ-like.

Revelation 14:4-5 describes how they follow the Lamb wherever He leads, no guile is found in their mouth, and they stand faultless before God.

Following Yahushua means living without sin:

“For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:

Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.”

1 Peter 2:21-22

According to Revelation 14 those who receive the seal of God are living saints and they will see Yahushua return in the clouds. They are “*ripe*” and “*firstfruits*”, ready to harvest for God's kingdom.

They keep God's law through the faith of Yahushua, which is what it means to live without sin, for sin is the transgression of God's law (1 John 3:4).

The Bible teaches that God only writes His name on the foreheads of those who love Him with all their heart and soul, and who willingly obey all His commandments through His power. These are the individuals who receive the Seal of God.²

For it is written:

“If ye love me, keep my commandments.”

John 14:15

“For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one [point], he is guilty of all.”

James 2:10

But some will ask how is one who claims to love Christ and yet forgets to keep the Sabbath holy guilty of breaking all the law?

Tell me, how can he take Yehovah's holy Sabbath for his own use, selfishly breaking it, without stealing also?

How can he steal it without first coveting it?

How can he thus put himself first before God, without having another god before Yehovah?

And how can he exalt his own will to such an extent without idolizing his own ego?

How can he so heedlessly and vainly break the commandment in which Yehovah has placed His name, without taking His name in vain?

How can he show such disrespect to his heavenly Father and not dishonor Him?

How can he commit such sins, when Yehovah has said that “*the soul that sinneth it shall die*”, without being guilty of taking his own life?

How can a man do all this, and by his words of self-justification say that his course is right, and be telling the truth?

And lastly, how can he stray so completely from his spiritual spouse as to join the sinful world, living with the world as a beloved companion, without being guilty of adultery, as God said ancient Israel was guilty of in doing the same thing?

Now some people may still say that it makes no difference which day one keeps as long as

one keeps some day. But if we want to keep Yehovah's rest day, we must rest on the same day He did, and the Bible says that He rested on the seventh day of the week. His resting and blessing made that day the Sabbath, for "shabat" (Strong's H7673) means 'rest'. Man's rest counts for nothing in making a day holy. If all the people on earth should rest on another day, that would not transform that other day into Yehovah's rest day. Man's rest day can never be Yehovah's rest day unless he rests on the same day on which Yehovah rested.

When Yehovah sanctified the seventh day at the end of Creation week, He put His presence into it unlike any other day.

His presence in the burning bush made the ground about it holy (Exodus 3:5), as it did also the place where the Captain of the Lord's host met with Joshua (Joshua 5:13-15). Although we may not outwardly discern any difference between the seventh and the first day of the week, the fact that Yehovah's presence is in the seventh day makes all the difference in the world.

His presence may and should be with us and in us every day of the week, but apart from this, it is in His holy day. When His sacred presence in the day and in the individual meets, there is in that heart a sense of holiness and sacredness that is felt and known only by those who know this truth and have this experience.³

God established this sacred space of time so that His children can come to Him to commune with Him and to receive rich spiritual blessings.

The seventh day of the week is a temple in time which comes to us wherever we are, so we cannot miss it.

Even though the Sabbath does not force itself on us, it is available to everyone on earth. This spiritual space which God created is not tainted by sin and no created being is capable of destroying it.

When we partake of the Sabbath rest instituted at Creation, we have the rest which comes from trusting in the Word of God. When we understand the power of the Word of God, then we cease from our own spiritual works and allow God to work in us (Hebrews 4:10). This spiritual rest comes to us when we realize that salvation can not come from ourselves, but from the Word that made and upholds heaven and earth.

As we cease all our work, especially that which provides our living, we are reminded that God supplies not only our spiritual but also our physical needs, and that we are dependent on Him for life itself.

True Sabbath rest is perfect trust in God, whose power created the universe out of nothing and who upholds it with His Word. He invites us to rest upon that all-powerful Word: ⁴

"Come unto me, all [ye] that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Matthew 11:28

So what about physical rest on the Sabbath? Is physical rest important?

We know that Elohim does not get tired:

"Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep."

Psalms 121:4

“Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, [that] the everlasting Elohim, Yehovah, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? [there is] no searching of his understanding.”

Isaiah 40:28

Creation involved hardly any physical work, because Elohim spoke and it was done (Psalm 33:9).

Adam and Eve were probably not tired either on that first Sabbath of Creation week because they had just been created, and with the exception of Adam naming the animals, they had not done any work yet.

Therefore, the rest which Elohim instituted on the seventh day of Creation must have been a spiritual rest at first.

After sin entered however, physical deterioration became a reality for all men and women, and physical rest became a necessity. Therefore it is important for us now to rest not only spiritually, but also physically.

But Yahushua criticized the inactivity which the Jewish religious leaders of His time tried to impose on the Sabbath. In John 5:17 He says: *“My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.”* Of course He worked miracles of healing on the Sabbath, which is redemptive work, and not the type of toil we engage in on the other six days of the week.

According to Yahushua, the Sabbath is the ideal day for blessing others (see Matthew 12). It's a day of change in activities from man-centered to God-centered. The Sabbath takes us back to Eden if we use it to celebrate our relationship with Elohim, the members of the family, and our ties to the rest of His Creation. The Sabbath is God's way of telling us that He wants an intimate relationship with us and that we are more important to Him than all the other things which He created.⁵

No other of the seven week days can function as a Sabbath because only the seventh day is a memorial of Creation as well as redemption, established by the Creator as a pact and a sign with the people He has created and redeemed.

Yahushua identifies Himself as Lord of the Sabbath in Matthew 12:8, Mark 2:28, and Luke 6:5. He did not specifically claim Lordship of all the days of the week or just any day of it. In this sense human beings are masters of the six days of the week (see Genesis 1:28), but on the seventh day humans are to recognize the Lordship of Elohim.⁶

Yahushua demonstrated by His Sabbath miracles what the Sabbath is ultimately all about: It is a day of healing and restoration.

On the Sabbath Yahushua freed the captives (Luke 4:31-37), made the lame walk (Luke 13:10-17; John 5:1-9), and restored the sight of the blind (John 9).

But not only during His life on earth did Yahushua keep the Sabbath holy, He also rested on the Sabbath day in His death, a fact of which all four gospels testify.

After His work of redemption was accomplished and He said *“It is finished”* (John 19:30) He rested on the Sabbath⁷, just as He had rested on the seventh day after His work of Creation (Genesis 2:1-3). Thus both in life and in death Yahushua demonstrated the continuing

importance and sacredness of the seventh day Sabbath.⁸

Now some people say that the Sabbath day is not on the seventh day of the week, but is based on moon phases and therefore occurs at irregular intervals throughout the month. But this is hardly possible, because the moon, as well as the earth and the sun, are hung on the framework of the seven-day Creation week, of which the Sabbath is the crowning event or seal. The seventh-day Sabbath is not determined by the moon, but the moon and the rest of Creation are determined by the foundational framework of Creation week.

The moon was not created until the fourth day, and even though it appears from Genesis 1:16-18 that the moon was made “*to rule the night*”, the text never even uses the word “*moon*,” but only speaks of “*the lesser light*.”

The Hebrew word translated as “*week*” in English (Strong's H7620) literally means “*period of seven*.” It would be a contradiction in Hebrew to say “*an eight day week*” or a “*ten day week*” because one would have to say “*an eight (or ten) day period of seven*.” Just like a “*dozen*” always means twelve in English, a “*week*” always means seven in Hebrew. The root word for week (H7620 - *shabuwa*) is H7651 - *sheba* - which is the number seven.

This is why the seven-day weekly cycle is not found anywhere in nature or in the universe. Instead, nature and the universe are found in the seven-day cycle.

(For an in-depth discussion of the lunar sabbath, see <http://www.elijah.com/lunarsabbath.html>)

The apostle Paul gives us some interesting insights into the Sabbath rest in the book of Hebrews chapter 3 and 4. He states “*But with whom was he grieved forty years? [was it] not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom swore he that they should not enter into his rest (katapausis - Strong's G2663), but to them that believed not?*

So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left [us] of entering into his rest (katapausis), any of you should seem to come short of it.”

Hebrews 3:17-19, 4:1

The Greek word *katapausis* (Strong's G2663) is defined as:

1) a putting to rest

a) calming of the winds

2) a resting place

a) metaph. the heavenly blessedness in which God dwells, and of which he has promised to make persevering believers in Christ partakers after the toils and trials of life on earth are ended

Thayer's Lexicon adds “*the fixed and tranquil abode promised to the Israelite in the land of Palestine.*”

Paul continues “*For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word*

preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard [it].

For we which have believed do enter into rest (katapausis), as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest (katapausis): although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.” Hebrews 4:2-3

Paul alludes to Psalm 95:11 here, which states “*Unto whom I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest (mēnuwchah).*”

Mēnuwchah, Strong's H4496, means “resting place, rest, quietness”.

Continuing Paul: “*For he spake in a certain place (in Exodus 20:11) of the seventh [day] on this wise, And God did rest (katapauō) the seventh day from all his works.*

And in this [place] (Exodus 20:11) again, If they shall enter into my rest (katapausis).

Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein (the abode of the promised land or salvation that is), and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief: Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.”

Hebrews 4:4-7

This is another allusion to Psalm 95, verses 7 and 8, which speaks of the Israelites' journey to the promised land.

Continuing Paul: “*For if Jesus (Yahushua or Joshua) had given them rest (katapauō - Strong's G2664), then would he not afterward have spoken of another day.*

There remaineth therefore a rest (sabbatismos - a Sabbath keeping, Strong's G4520) to the people of God.”

Hebrews 4:8-9

Paul compares and contrasts two different types of rest here. *Katapauō*, Strong's G2664, defined as:

- 1) to make quiet, to cause to be at rest, to grant rest
 - a) to lead to a quiet abode
 - b) to still, restrain, to cause (one striving to do something) to desist
- 2) to rest, take rest

and *Sabbatismos*, Strong's G4520, defined as:

- 1) a keeping sabbath
- 2) the blessed rest from toils and troubles looked for in the age to come by the true worshippers of God and true Christians.

Continuing Paul: “*For he that is entered into his rest (katapausis), he also hath ceased from his own works, as God [did] from his.*

Let us labour (from G4704--to hasten, make haste, to exert one's self, endeavour, give diligence) therefore to enter into that rest (katapausis), lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.

For the word of God [is] quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and [is] a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”

Hebrews 4:10-12

In his discourse Paul connects obedience to the Sabbath rest and the fourth commandment with an abiding relationship with God and resulting entry into the promised land, by faith in the Word of God.

Pauls discourse is also reminiscent of the fifth commandment, which is the first commandment with a promise:

"Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which Yehovah thy Elohim giveth thee."

Exodus 20:12

The promise of the fifth commandment is not just long life on earth, which may or may not be desirable to most of us, but especially eternal life in the promised land of Heaven and the earth made new.

In 1896, author Ellen G. WHITE wrote the following about the Sabbath commandment given by God the Father:

"The Gospel, first given to Adam in Eden, has lost none of its high claims since that time. We are required to obey all the commandments of God. The Sabbath commandment is placed in the midst of the Decalogue, and it was instituted in Eden at the same time that God instituted the marriage relation. God gave the Sabbath as a memorial of his creative power and works, "for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it."

He made its observance obligatory upon man, in order that he might contemplate the works of God, dwell upon his goodness, his mercy, and love, and through nature look up to nature's God. If man had always observed the Sabbath, there would never have been an unbeliever, and infidel, or an atheist in the world.

If Adam and Eve had contemplated the works of God in creating the world, if they had considered the reason that God had in giving them the Sabbath, if they had looked upon the beautiful tokens he had given them in withholding nothing that would add to their happiness, they would have been safe, they would have adored him for his goodness and love toward them, and in place of listening to the sophistries of Satan in casting blame upon God, in ascribing to him motives of selfishness, they would have considered the works of his hands, and songs of melody and thanksgiving and praise would have burst forth from their lips in adoration of him who had bountifully supplied them with every good thing. If they had considered how he had made them the object of his overflowing love, they would not have fallen; but they forgot the presence of God....

The Sabbath is a test to this generation. In obeying the fourth commandment in spirit and truth, men will obey all the precepts of the Decalogue. To fulfill this commandment one must love God supremely, and exercise love toward all the creatures that he has made. The Lord exhorts us to "remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy;" and since this is his exhortation, will any one charge us with wearying them in bringing this commandment to their remembrance?"⁹

In summary then, we have made these specific observations about Yehovah's sacred temple in time:

- The Sabbath was created differently than the other six days.
- God ceased His creative work and rested on the seventh day so that He could enjoy quality time with our first parents.
- The Sabbath day of Creation week was Adam and Eve's first complete day together as a married couple.
- Because the Sabbath day was created as a day of time to be spent with the Creator, and a commemoration of the Creation as well as the Redemption of our world, it has something that the other days don't have.
- God has blessed that day and filled it with His joy.
- The Sabbath functions as a seal, and is a sign between God and His loyal obedient subjects.
- There is a blessing connected with the seventh-day Sabbath rest which cannot be obtained from observing any other day.

“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

Revelation 22:17

- 1 Jo Ann Davidson, Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide, Jan, Feb, Mar. 2012; Seventh-Day Adventist Church publication
- 2 Colin Standish, *A Time For Choosing*, Last Generation Vol. 22 No. 2
- 3 paraphrased from JesusLordOfTheSabbath dot com
- 4 Janet Evert, *Come Rest Awhile*, Last Generation magazine "God's Gift of Rest"
- 5 Raul Quiroga, Th. D., *The Delight of Sabbath*, Adventist World Feb. 2012
- 6 Raul Quiroga, Th. D., *The Delight of Sabbath*, Adventist World Feb. 2012
- 7 For a discussion about the time which Christ spent in the grave, which day He died and when He was resurrected, see "Three Days and Three Nights" by Joe Crews, re-printed below.
- 8 Jo Ann Davidson, Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide, Jan, Feb, Mar. 2012; Seventh-Day Adventist Church publication.
- 9 *Signs of the Times*, Feb. 13, 1896

Three Days and Three Nights

by Joe Crews, 1985

Some of the strongest and most controversial opinions have built up around the statement of Jesus concerning Jonah and the whale. Strangely enough, the chief issue has nothing at all to do with the oft-challenged fact of a man being swallowed by a sea monster. The decisive point for many revolves around the length of time Jonah spent in the stomach of the whale. Here are the exact words Jesus used in describing the experience of the runaway prophet: "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here." Matthew 12:39-41.

Now this statement of Jesus is significant in more ways than one. In the first place, it positively affirms that the Old Testament story of Jonah did actually take place as the Scriptures record it. But more than that, the event constituted a sign of Christ's own death, and burial, and resurrection. Jesus referred to the preaching of Jonah on two other occasions as a sign to the unbelieving Pharisees.

Today there is a vocal minority of Christians who have made a tremendous issue out of the phrase "three days and three nights." They insist that Jesus used the expression because He was to be in the grave exactly seventy-two hours, not a second more or second less. This conviction has led them to conclude that Christ was crucified on Wednesday afternoon and was resurrected at the same hour late Sabbath afternoon. In this way they account for the full seventy-two hours which they believe Christ spent in the tomb.

Does this interpretation harmonize with the full Bible record on the subject? Does it fit with the many other inspired accounts of the time element involved? Is there other information given in the Word of God which will make it clear exactly how the three days and three nights are to be understood?

Fortunately, we have an abundance of Bible evidence to answer these questions. In fact, on seventeen separate occasions Jesus or His friends spoke of the timetable involving His death and resurrection. Ten times it was specified that the resurrection would take place on the "third day." On five occasions they said, "in" or "within three days." Twice they used the term, "after three days," and

one time only Jesus spoke of His death as "three days and three nights."

Without question all of these various expressions are used to describe the very same event. There seems to be no controversy regarding this point. "The third day," "in three days," "after three days," and "three days and three nights" are equivalent terms used in the Bible in reference to the resurrection of Jesus.

Expressions Cannot Be Literal

Now we ask the question: Can all of these expressions be taken in a strictly literal sense and still harmonize with each other? Absolutely not! For example, "after three days" would certainly have to be interpreted as longer than seventy-two hours. "Within three days" could mean anytime less than seventy-two hours, and "three days and three nights" could only mean exactly seventy-two hours to the second. And "the third day" presents even greater problems as we shall notice in a moment.

Does this sound terribly confusing? If so, it is only because men have placed their own interpretation upon the meaning of God's Word. We must let the Bible explain itself, and especially, we must let Christ provide definitions for the words which He spoke. It would be a mammoth mistake to seize upon any one of the expressions used and force its strict compliance with our interpretation without reference to the other sixteen texts on the subject.

Is it possible for all these texts to be explained so that they will not contradict each other? If they cannot be harmonized, then Jesus Himself was guilty of compounding the confusion, because He used all of the expressions at different times in speaking of His death and resurrection. In Matthew 12:40 He said, "three days and three nights," but in Mark 8:31 He said, "after three days." He referred to the same event in John 2:19 as "in three days," and on five occasions He said, "the third day." Matthew 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; Luke 13:32; 24:46.

Inclusive Reckoning

The only way we can harmonize all of these apparently contradictory statements of Jesus is to understand them in the light of inclusive reckoning of time. This was the method used throughout the Bible in computing time, and we must apply the same method now, unless we want mass confusion. The unreasonable insistence upon the use of twentieth century English idioms of speech to interpret first century Greek or Hebrew has led to some extreme views indeed. Jesus and His friends spoke and wrote in harmony with the common literacy usage of the day, and that usage recognized inclusive reckoning of time. In simple language, this means that any part of a day was counted as a whole day.

Before we turn to the Bible for confirmation of this principle, let us read the authoritative statement of the *Jewish Encyclopedia* on the matter. "A short time in the morning of the seventh day is counted as the seventh day; circumcision takes place on the eighth day, even though, of the first day only a few minutes after the birth of the child, these being counted as one day." Vol. 4, p. 475. How clearly this defines the Hebrew method of computing time. Any small part of a day was reckoned as the entire twenty-four hour period. It is the Hebrew form of speech and language. Scores of contradictions would appear in both Old and New Testament if this principle were ignored. We must compare Scripture with Scripture and use the idiom of the language in which the Bible was written. Inclusive reckoning was taken for granted by all writers of the Scripture.

Let us now notice a few examples of this usage in the Bible that will clarify the problem before us. In Genesis 7:4 God said to Noah, "For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth." But in verse 10 we read, "And it came to pass after seven days, that the waters of the flood were upon the earth." The marginal reading expresses it as "on the seventh day." Pity the poor chronologer who tries

to figure that one out. When did the flood come? In seven days? On the seventh day? Or after seven days? The answer is simple when inclusive reckoning is applied. The day on which God spoke to Noah counted as the first day, and the day on which it started raining was the seventh day. Even if God spoke just ten minutes before the end of that first day, it was still counted as one of the seven. And if it started raining at noon on the last day, it was also counted one of the seven. The same principle is revealed in the circumcision of babies. Genesis 17:12 specifies "he that is eight days old." But Luke 1:59 reads "on the eighth day." Luke 2:21 uses still another expression: "When eight days were accomplished."

Further proof for inclusive reckoning is seen in Joseph's dealing with his brethren. "He put them all together into ward three days. And Joseph said unto them the third day, This do, and live;... go ye..." Genesis 42:17-19. Consider also the tax issue between King Rehoboam and the people. "Come again unto me after three days. ... So ... all the people came to Rehoboam on the third day." 2 Chronicles 10:5, 12.

These examples are only a few of the many which could be cited to establish this important point. The Hebrew usage requires only that some part of each of the days should be involved in the time period.

The Third Day

Now we are ready to apply this clearly established rule to the time Jesus was in the tomb. At least a part of three days had to be included in the period He was actually dead. The most frequent expression Jesus used in describing the resurrection was the "third day." He defended His repetition of the term on the basis of the Scriptures. "And said unto them, *Thus it is written*, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day." Luke 24:46.

The two disciples on the road to Emmaus employed the same expression when they spoke of the terrible events surrounding the crucifixion. Unconscious of the fact that they were talking to Jesus, who had been resurrected earlier that same day, one of them said, "To day is the third day since these things were done." Luke 24:21.

Clearly, those people understood how to count the days and to determine which was the third one. They knew because it was a common idiom of their language. But Jesus did not leave any question in the matter. It almost seems that He anticipated the perplexity of later Christians who might not know about inclusive reckoning. Therefore, He gave such a plain, conclusive explanation of how to locate the third day that no one would ever need to doubt again. "Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to day and to morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected. Nevertheless I must walk to day, and to morrow, and the day following." Luke 13:32, 33.

How simple Jesus made it! Even a child can figure when the third day comes. The third day will always be the day after "to morrow" from any certain event. The first day is counted in its entirety, the whole of the second day, and the third day in its entirety.

Now we can understand the conversation Jesus had with the Jewish leaders and why they interpreted it as they did. He said, "Destroy this temple, and *in three days* I will raise it up." John 2:19-21. Later, after the crucifixion, the chief priest said to Pilate, "Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, *After three days* I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulcher be made sure *until the third day*, lest his disciples come by night and steal him away." Matthew 27:63, 64.

With Christ's definition of time before us, the picture snaps into clear focus. Speaking prophetically of His own death and resurrection, He said, "To day (crucifixion) and to morrow (in tomb), and the third day I shall be perfected (resurrection)." There are all three days in their sequence. Even though He died in the late afternoon, the entire day would be counted as the first day. The second day would span the Sabbath when He slept in the tomb. Even though He was resurrected in the early hours on the third day, inclusive reckoning would make it one of the three days.

The Resurrection on Sunday

Now the time has come to pinpoint the actual days of the week when these events took place. Again, we are amazed at the perfect harmony of the Scriptures on the subject. There can be no question but that He arose on Sunday, the first day of the week. Mark emphatically states, "Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene." Mark 16:9. Sunday is the first day of the week, and that is when He was resurrected. Words could be no plainer. Even the original Greek construction of the text will allow no other meaning. He did not rise from the grave on Saturday, as some contend. Neither was He crucified on Wednesday. There is not a scintilla of Bible evidence that He died on the fourth day of the week.

According to the inspired record, Christ was put to death on the "preparation day," and the preparation day was not Wednesday. In all the pages of biblical history, the preparation day has been Friday. Please read Mark 15:42, 43, "And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, Joseph of Arimathaea ... went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus."

Some might question whether this could be one of the ceremonial yearly sabbaths of the ordinance system. Notice these words, "The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away." John 19:31.

The day following the crucifixion was not only the weekly seventh-day Sabbath, but it was a *high Sabbath*. This means that a yearly Sabbath in that particular year happened to fall on the weekly Sabbath. In this case it was the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Luke clearly identified that preparation day as the one immediately preceding the weekly Sabbath. "And that day was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on. And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulcher, and how his body was laid. And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the sabbath day *according to the commandment*. Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulcher, bringing the spices which they had prepared." Luke 23:54-24:1.

Surely there can be no question as to the time elements involved. He died on the preparation day, or the day before the weekly Sabbath. The next day is designated as "the sabbath according to the commandment." Since the commandment says, "The seventh day is the sabbath," we know that this had to be the day we call Saturday. Furthermore, after describing the events of the preparation day in verse 55 and the Sabbath day in verse 56, the very next verse says, "Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared." Luke 24:1.

Please take note that after preparing the spices on the afternoon of the crucifixion (Friday), and resting over the Sabbath (Saturday), they came to the tomb with the spices on the first day of the week (Sunday) to do the work of anointing. This was their first opportunity after the Sabbath to carry out the preparations made on Friday afternoon. This is when they discovered that Christ was risen.

If the crucifixion took place on Wednesday, how can we explain why the women waited until Sunday to come to the sepulcher? Why didn't they come Thursday or Friday to anoint His body? Did they not understand that after four days His body would be decomposing and their work of love would be in vain? The answers to these questions constitute the strongest case against a Wednesday crucifixion.

The Bible, in fact, offers incontestable proof that no one would have attempted such an anointing under those circumstances. When Lazarus had been dead four days, Jesus ordered the stone removed from his tomb. Martha, the sister of Lazarus, protested in these words, "Lord, by this time he stinketh:

for he hath been dead four days.” John 11:39.

These words of Martha reveal the fact that no woman of that day would have considered it possible to prepare a body for burial four days after death. To Martha it seemed an irrational act even to open the tomb of Lazarus. To the other women who prepared the spices it would have been equally unreasonable to enter Christ's sepulcher four days after He had been crucified.

In view of the amazing weight of biblical evidence to the contrary, how can some still cling to the Wednesday crucifixion idea? The entire scheme is based upon the twisted interpretation of a single Bible text. The "three days and three nights" phrase is forced into artificial conformity with current English forms of speech, instead of the common usage of the people living at that time.

Those who believe that Jesus died on Wednesday and rose on Saturday base much of their evidence on Matthew 28:1: "In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulcher."

Figuring that the first day of the week "dawns" at sundown Saturday night as the Sabbath ends, these people assume that the women discovered the empty tomb in the twilight moments of the Sabbath, just before sundown. They count backwards exactly seventy-two hours and arrive at Wednesday evening just before sundown for the crucifixion.

Is this a valid conclusion? Or is there evidence that the women could not have visited the empty tomb on Saturday evening? There is indeed positive biblical proof that they did not. We find that evidence in Mark's account of the visit to the sepulcher: "And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him. And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulcher at the rising of the sun. And they said among themselves. Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulcher?" Mark 16:1-3. There is no question about this being an early Sunday morning visit. It is at sunrise. The very same women are named as in Matthew's account. Can we correctly assume that these same women had been to the tomb the night before and found Jesus risen? Impossible. Why? Because of the question they asked as they approached the garden on Sunday morning, "Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulcher?" If they had been there Saturday just before sundown and found the tomb empty, they would have known that the stone was already rolled away from the door. This is absolute proof that they had not been to an empty tomb the day before.

It also proves that Matthew's "dawn" refers to the dawning represented by the sunrise and not sunset. There is no contradiction between the two accounts.

Seventy-Two Hours Not Biblical

Those who insist that Christ was in the grave a full seventy-two hours contend that the three days and three nights must be taken in the fullest literal sense. But such a contention is absolutely contrary to the testimony of the Scriptures. An example of the way the Bible uses the term is found in Esther 4:16. We read these words of Queen Esther to Mordecai: "Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, *night or day*: I also and my maidens will fast likewise." Esther 4:16. Do not overlook the fact that they were to fast three days and three nights. Yet almost the next verse tells us, "Now it came to pass on *the third day*, that Esther put on her royal apparel, and stood in the inner court." Esther 5:1. Here is a perfect example of how three days and three nights terminate on the third day!

We have already learned how Jesus explained the third day. He said "to day, and to morrow, and the third day." Luke 13:32. Please think for a moment! When Jesus walked with the two disciples on the

road to Emmaus on Sunday afternoon, after the resurrection, Cleopas said, "To day is the *third day since these things were done.*" Luke 24:21.

No one denies that this was on Sunday. But listen, if Jesus had been crucified on Wednesday afternoon, Cleopas would have had to say "To day is the *fifth* day since these things were done." Count it for yourself - Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and most of Sunday! Later the same day - the first day of the week - Jesus made this statement: "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day." Luke 24:46. Who was right? Jesus was right and Cleopas was right! But those who claim the Wednesday crucifixion are wrong. Christ died on Friday, the preparation for the Sabbath - that was the first day. He rested in the tomb on the Sabbath according to the commandment - that was the second day. He arose on the first day of the week which was Sunday - that was the *third* day! How simple!

The proponents of a Wednesday crucifixion use a devious argument to explain away the words of Cleopas on the road to Emmaus. They contend that he was not counting the three days from the time of Christ's death, but rather from the sealing of the tomb by the Roman authorities the day after he was crucified. For this theoretical conjecture there is not a fragment of evidence in the Bible. Cleopas did speak about the trial of Jesus and certain events leading up to His crucifixion. By taking a bit of exegetical license one could possibly reach back to those events from which to reckon the third day. But by no stretch of the imagination could any point beyond the death of Christ be used in computing the three days.

In every related text the third day is counted from the time of His death on the cross.

Matthew said He would "be killed, and be raised again the third day." Matthew 16:21. Mark wrote that He must "be killed, and after three days rise again." Mark 8:31. Luke's account reports that He must "be slain, and be raised the third day." Luke 9:22.

Repeatedly, the Scriptures emphasize the death of Jesus as the starting point of the three days. To begin counting a full day after the crucifixion is not only unbiblical but grossly imaginary. The sealing of the tomb is never once referred to in connection with the period of time He was dead.

The expression "three days and three nights" does not indicate a precise computation of hours, minutes, seconds. We read that "forty days and forty nights" were spent by Christ in the wilderness of temptation. However, the writers of two of the gospels state it simply as a period of "forty days," showing that inspiration was not pinpointing the hours or minutes.

The Four Days of Cornelius

Now let us consider a final clear-cut example of inclusive reckoning that should lay this point to rest with every open-minded reader. It is taken from the New Testament and reveals graphically how days were numbered in the days of Jesus. In Acts 10:3 Cornelius "saw in a vision evidently about the *ninth hour* of the day an angel of God coming in to him."

Follow the story carefully now. He was instructed in the vision to send men to Joppa and call for Peter. "And when the angel which spake unto Cornelius was departed, he called two of his household servants, and ... he sent them to Joppa. On the *morrow*, as they went on their journey, and drew night unto the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray." Verse 7-9. While praying he had a vision, and the men knocked at his door when his vision ended. Verse 17. Please notice that this is one day after Cornelius received his angel visitor.

Peter invited the men to come in. He "lodged them. And *on the morrow* Peter went away with them, and certain brethren from Joppa accompanied him." Verse 23. Take note that this is now the second day since the men were dispatched by Cornelius. "*And the morrow after* they entered into Caesarea. And Cornelius waited for them." Verse 24. This is the third day since Cornelius had his angelic vision. But

don't miss this point a few minutes later, in talking to Peter, Cornelius said, "*Four days ago* I was fasting until this hour; and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house, and, behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing." Verse 30.

Now we get the picture in mind - it had been exactly three days, to the very hour. Yet Cornelius said, "*Four days ago*." How could he say it was four days when it was only three days? Because he used inclusive reckoning, which meant that parts of four days were involved. In the same way the Bible described the time of Christ's death as three days and three nights even though it was only a part of those three days.

Passover Week Proves Resurrection

Now we are brought to another line of evidence which constitutes the final proof positive that the resurrection of Jesus occurred on Sunday. It was to this particular evidence that Paul turned in his persuasive Corinthian discourse on the resurrection. He said, "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins *according to the scriptures*; And that he was buried, and that He rose again *the third day according to the scriptures*." 1 Corinthians 15:3,4.

It is most significant that Paul confirmed the death of Jesus, and also His resurrection on the third day, on the basis of the Scriptures. Evidently, Paul understood that the Old Testament contained prophecies which set forth the time sequence of the crucifixion and the resurrection. According to Paul, Jesus had to rise on the third day in order to fulfill the word of God, Furthermore, Jesus also declared, "*Thus it is written*, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day." Luke 24:46.

Is there such a Scripture - an "It is written" - in the Old Testament which can establish the actual day that Christ was raised from the dead? Yes! And it had to do with the special annual observance of the Passover service.

In Leviticus 23:5, 6 we read about the first two days of that solemn Passover week. "In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the Lord's passover. And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto the Lord."

Right now we will not take the time to establish the days of the week for these special observances. It is not essential to the proof we are seeking to establish. Just let your mind grasp this truth - *the fourteenth day of the month was the slaying of the passover, and the fifteenth day was the feast of unleavened bread*. Our next question is: What happened on the sixteenth day of the month? We shall now prove from the Scriptures that the sheaf of the firstfruits was offered on that sixteenth day. That service was first celebrated when the children of Israel came into the promised land. God commanded it in these words: "When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring the sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest: And he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted for you: *on the morrow after the sabbath* the priest shall wave it." Leviticus 23:10, 11.

What Sabbath is the verse talking about? The weekly Sabbath or the yearly passover sabbath? The answer appears as we read the actual experience of their entrance into the land, recorded by Joshua. God told them that after entering the promised land they should offer the firstfruits to Him before eating of the first harvest themselves. Joshua described how the Israelites passed over the Jordan while the river was flooded at the harvest time. "For Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest." Joshua 3:15. This is very important to understand because the grain was ready for reaping, and they would more quickly be able to eat of the land and offer the first sheaf to the Lord. After crossing dryshod through the flooded Jordan, after God rolled back the waters, the children of Israel camped at Gilgal. "And it came to pass, when the priests that bare up the ark of the covenant of the Lord were come up out of the midst of Jordan, and the soles of the priests' feet were lifted up unto the dry land,

that the waters of Jordan returned unto their place, and flowed over all his banks, as they did before. And the people came up out of Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and encamped in Gilgal, in the east border of Jericho." Joshua 4:18, 19.

Now we come to the next event which took place four days later. "And the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even in the plains of Jericho." Joshua 5:10.

In strict obedience to the commandment of the Lord, the grateful but weary wanderers stopped to slay the Passover lamb on the fourteenth day of the first month. The next verse tells us what happened on the following day, "And they did eat of the old corn of the land *on the morrow after the passover*, unleavened cakes, and parched corn in the selfsame day." Joshua 5:11.

Please notice that they observed the feast of unleavened bread on the fifteenth day of the month, following the slaying of the Passover lamb on the fourteenth. They also ate the last of the old corn, because the new crop of grain was ready to harvest. We continue reading to discover what happened on the next day, which was the sixteenth day of the month. "And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year." Joshua 5:12.

The sheaf of firstfruits was to be offered to the Lord before they ate of the harvest of the land. Since they began to eat of the fruit of the land on the sixteenth day, following the feast of unleavened bread, it is certain that they offered the firstfruits also on that day. Please remember that the Lord had commanded them to offer the firstfruits of the harvest "on the morrow after the sabbath." Leviticus 23:11. It was indeed on the day following the yearly sabbath of unleavened bread that the wave sheaf was offered, and the new harvest began to be eaten by the people that selfsame day.

Now the sequence of Passover events appears in sharp focus, and we will list them in the exact order revealed in the Scriptures.

1. *Fourteenth day* – Slaying of Passover lamb,
2. *Fifteenth day* – Feast of Unleavened Bread
3. *Sixteenth day* – Firstfruits of harvest presented.

By way of historical confirmation of these points, here is the testimony of Josephus, a contemporary of Jesus and a historian: "Nisan ... is the beginning of our year, on the *fourteenth day* of the lunar month ... and which was called the Passover. ... The feast of unleavened bread succeeds that of the Passover, and falls on the *fifteenth day* of the month, and continues seven days.... But on the second day of unleavened bread, which is the *sixteenth day* of the month, they first partake of the fruits of the earth....

They also at his anticipation of the firstfruits of the earth, sacrifice a lamb, as a burnt offering unto God." Book III, Chapter X, par. 5, pp. 79, 80.

Christ Our Passover

You may be wondering how these facts relate to the time of Christ's death and resurrection. Here is where the beauty of the Bible reveals itself. Jesus was the One to whom all those types and ceremonies pointed. He was the true Passover Lamb. That is why John cried out, "Behold the Lamb of God!" John 1:36. Paul showed how Jesus fulfilled the Passover: "For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, ... but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." 1 Corinthians 5:7, 8.

This is exactly why Jesus died on the fourteenth of Nisan. He did it to fulfill the Scriptures. Paul

declared that "Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures." 1 Corinthians 15:3. He had to die on the same day that the Passover lamb died in order to meet the prophetic type and to establish His identity as the true Passover Lamb.

But just as surely as Jesus died on a certain day according to the Scriptures, He also "rose again the third day, according to the scriptures." 1 Corinthians 15:4. He not only was our Passover, but He was *also the firstfruits!* Paul ties it specifically to the resurrection: "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept." 1 Corinthians 15:20. Again in verse 23, "But every man in his own order: *Christ the firstfruits*; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming."

No wonder, then, that Paul wrote so confidently about the resurrection on the third day according to the Scriptures. Christ rose from the dead as the firstfruits of those that slept. He was the antitype of the wave sheaf, and His resurrection took place on the very day that the wave sheaf was to be presented before the Lord.

We can now understand why Jesus and His followers used the expression "third day" more than any other to describe the resurrection. Prophecy had decreed hundreds of years earlier that He would be the fulfillment of the types and shadows surrounding the Passover observance. As the firstfruits, it was essential for Christ to be "harvested" and "presented" before the Lord "on the morrow after the sabbath." In the year of the crucifixion the Passover sabbath coincided with the weekly Sabbath, making it "a high day." John 19:31. It was the next day after that Sabbath that Jesus arose from the grave - on Sunday.

When Mary saw Him in the garden after His resurrection, Jesus said, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." John 20:17. Why did Jesus bid Mary not to hold Him or delay Him (as the Greek text implies)? Because He had to ascend that same day to present Himself before the Father as the firstfruits from the dead.

The biblical proof of those three successive days during Passover week completely shatters the Wednesday crucifixion theory. He had to die on Friday to fulfill the Scriptures concerning His death as the Passover lamb. He had to be resurrected on the third day after His death to meet the scriptural type of the firstfruits. Only three days can be involved in the time sequence, or the Word of God is broken.

In the light of this tremendous, undeniable evidence of the Word of God, we can positively affirm that Jesus was not, and could not have been, resurrected on the Sabbath. Neither could He have been crucified on a Wednesday.

The issues here are much deeper than most people realize. Had Christ not fulfilled every single Old Testament type and shadow pointing forward to His atoning death and resurrection He would be an imposter and fraud. It was absolutely essential that every prophecy of the Messiah should be fulfilled in His life and death. In a special sense, the prefiguring of His victory over the grave was the capstone of hope for both Old and New Testament believers. Just as the sheaf of firstfruit grain held the promise and assurance of abundant harvest, even so our blessed Lord's glorious resurrection is the guarantee of a mighty harvest in the resurrection soon to take place. "Because I live, ye shall live also." John 14:19.

Shadows Which Are Contrary To Us

The tragedy is that some Christians still cling to the dead types and ceremonies just as though the great antitype had never come. Because Jesus was the true Sin Offering, the daily animal sacrifices ceased the very moment He died on the cross. The veil in the temple was rent from top to bottom, signifying that there was to be no more sprinkled blood in the holy place. Matthew 27:51. That slain lamb on the altar had been only a shadow pointing forward to the death of the Messiah. When the shadow led up to the body which cast it, there could not possibly be any shadow beyond. Therefore, sacrifices became only empty rituals after the atoning death of Jesus.

In the same manner, the yearly Passover service, with its types and shadows, pointed forward to the sacrifice of the true Passover Lamb on the cross. The annual typical lamb, the old leaven, and the yearly wave sheaf were the shadow leading up to the body, which was Christ. After His death and resurrection, the old observances would be just as meaningless as the daily sacrifice of sin offerings. In a sense, to continue observing the type after the antitype came would be a denial that Christ was the true fulfillment. This is why Paul spoke of the fulfilled types as being contrary to the Christians. "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; ... Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink,... or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ." Colossians 2:14, 16, 17.

Please notice the clear evidence that meat and drink offerings, as well as certain *shadowy* holy days and sabbaths, came to an end when Jesus died. Now let us ask: Which sabbaths were nailed to the cross and canceled by the death of Jesus? Paul specified that they were "sabbath days which are a shadow of things to come." This certainly could not mean the weekly seventh-day Sabbath. It came into existence before sin came in to the world. It could not be a shadow. Shadows were introduced as a result of sin and pointed forward to the deliverance from sin. But there were other *yearly sabbaths* which were *shadows*, and they are specifically described in Leviticus 23:24, 25. They fell on certain set days of the month and came only once a year. "Speak unto the children of Israel, saying. In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a sabbath, ... an holy convocation. ... Ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord." This was the annual feast of trumpets. It was called a sabbath, but it was a yearly, shadowy sabbath.

Three other annual sabbaths are described in that same chapter, one of them being the Passover sabbath and another the feast of unleavened bread. Verses 37 and 38 sum up all of them in these words: "These are the feasts of the Lord, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, to offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord, a burnt offering, and a meat offering, a sacrifice, and drink offerings, every thing upon his day: *Beside the sabbaths of the Lord.*"

These texts show without question that the shadowy annual sabbaths were distinct from the weekly sabbaths of the Lord which were observed each seventh day. But don't miss this point: Paul did not indicate that the weekly Sabbath was blotted out at the cross. He designated only the sabbaths that were shadows of things to come. The meat and drink clearly had reference to the various offerings which were required on those ceremonial sabbaths. *These were nailed to the cross!* The Passover and feast of unleavened bread were included in those sabbaths which were blotted out.

No Christian today needs to celebrate those annual feast days and typical observances. Paul implies that to do so is to go contrary to Christian principles. They are now dead forms, bereft of any meaning. Just as the animal sacrifice for sin is meaningless since Christ came, so the other types and shadows are empty since the real Lamb has died. This is why Paul wrote, "For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven ... but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." 1 Corinthians 5:7, 8.

May we fasten our faith upon the true Sin Offering, the true Passover, and the true Firstfruits, refusing to be drawn back to hollow forms and empty shadows.

“ Every seed sown produces a harvest of its kind. So it is in human life. We all need to sow the seeds of compassion, sympathy, and love; for we shall reap what we sow. Every characteristic of selfishness, self-love, self-esteem, every act of self-indulgence, will bring forth a like harvest. He who lives for self is sowing to the flesh, and of the flesh he will reap corruption.

God destroys no man. Everyone who is destroyed will have destroyed himself. Everyone who stifles the admonitions of conscience is sowing the seeds of unbelief, and these will produce a sure harvest. By rejecting the first warning from God, Pharaoh of old sowed the seeds of obstinacy, and he reaped obstinacy....

Every act, every word, is a seed that will bear fruit. Every deed of thoughtful kindness, of obedience, or of self-denial, will reproduce itself in others, and through them in still others. So every act of envy, malice, or dissension is a seed that will spring up in a "root of bitterness" (Hebrews 12:15), whereby many shall be defiled.”

Ellen G. White, *The Faith I Live By*, p. 155