

# new Horizons

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addressing the important issues for today and tomorrow

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*inside...*

In this issue we  
feature some  
aspects of the  
Biblical Sabbath

**CGOM**

Churches Of God Outreach Ministries

**With around two thousand Christian denominations vying for your attention, it's easy to miss the important issues of life and religion. It's our hope that through *New Horizons* our readers will come to understand the true meaning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.**

**The Gospel was proclaimed by Jesus and by His apostles in the clearest of terms - and recorded for us in the Scriptures. Over the centuries that truth has been buried, dug up, buried again. Our desire is to restore the simple apostolic message. We hope you will be excited by what the Scriptures reveal about life, and the horizons beyond**

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These goals are within the framework of the commission set for his church by Jesus: "...going, therefore, disciple all nations, baptising them...and teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20). He further commanded that we "...Shepherd...[and] feed my sheep".

To these ends we publish Bible-based literature - eg our bi-monthly Newsletter OUTREACH, NEW HORIZONS magazine, the BIBLE BASICS on-line home study course, and the 32-lesson Study Course. The *Outreach Ministries* also supports a network of independent fellowships and scattered brethren

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# new Horizons

Issue No 81

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## The weekly Sabbath is, for Christians, a day in which to delight in God's presence

"Sabbath rest" is a concept far removed from the hurly-burly of modern life. The day is, for most, consumed with a round of strenuous (or couch-potato) leisure activity or shopping or visiting - leaving no time for recovery from the weekly grind. Besides, the notion of a day set apart for religious purpose is simply old hat.

But what if you consider Sabbath observance important to your Christian walk? Is it a day to hibernate in gloomy solitude? A day crammed with restriction? What is a Sabbath rest?

The manner of observance of a weekly "holy day" varies from, Bible in hand, staying in bed all day - through to minor adjustments to the normal daily routine. What is a godly **balance?**

### Brief History of Time

Health experts praise the benefits of a weekly time of rest. It's approximately twenty-four hours of physical recuperation. And certainly Sabbath observance provides that - a charging of our depleted spiritual and emotional batteries.

But there's more to it. For, apart from the physical benefit, Sabbath has no eternal value unless we are in a personal relationship with the Lord of the Sabbath. It is a 'covenant'.

Jesus Christ is that Lord: "*The Son*

*of man is also Lord of the Sabbath*" (Luke 6:5). As the Father's representative and executive it was he who was instrumental in creating the material universe and the creation of time itself. Writing of Jesus, the apostle Paul told the Colossian Christians: "...by him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible...and he is before all things and by him all things consist".

### A Day of Joy

Certainly such a memorial must encourage a joyful response. Yet many believers dread the approach of the Day! It's traditionally doled out as merely a time of boring inactivity punctuated by a church visit followed by the long-awaited end of the day. Others will invest the day with an endless round of "don't's" to the extent of suppressing the joy of Sabbath.

Whatever way observed it is a personal matter between each of us and our Creator. What guidance has He given us in the Scriptures as to its observance?

Sabbath is a day of God's appointment - a day He has set aside to meet with His people. It will be useful to note what God has said about this day. To Moses He said: "...the seventh day is a sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation" (Heb miqra) (Leviticus 23:3). That is, a separated day for assembling in His presence. And as the Almighty Creator He determines the time and the day! He tells us, too, the attitude we ought to have on Sabbath.

Following their seventy years of

serfdom in Babylon (imposed by God for Sabbath neglect!) the Jews returned chastened to the land of Israel. The religious Jews protected the Sabbath by numerous regulations (included in their Oral Law), many of which went contrary to the divine intent of Sabbath observance. Joy was largely emptied from this special Day!

God set the Sabbath aside for rest: "...in it you shall do no work" (Exodus 20:10). To fulfil this, the Pharisees minutely defined "work".

It was forbidden to pluck a head of grain, for example (Matthew 12:1ff) - that's harvesting. But it was permitted on the Sabbath to circumcise, which is work for someone (John 7:22). Permitted also to attend to distressed animals (Luke 13:15, 14:5) - a logical exception. For the Pharisees the day of joy had become a burdensome ball and chain - eased only by the addition of humanly-devised circumventions.

### Made For Man

By contrast, how does the Creator of the Sabbath expect us to spend this precious twenty-four hours? Through the prophet Isaiah God makes it crystal clear: "*If you refrain from doing your own business on the Sabbath, on my sacred day, and hold the Sabbath a delight, and the Eternal's sacred day [the true "Lord's Day"!] an honour, not following your own wonted round, not doing business and not talking idly, then you shall have delight in the Eternal's favour*" (ch 58:13-14, Moffatt).

God wants us to enjoy His Day!

## Delight in the Sabbath

Jesus picked up on the same theme. He saw no conflict when the disciples plucked some grain on the Sabbath. (This wasn't theft but was permitted in the Law, though the Pharisees said '*not on the Sabbath*'! That would be work.) He accepted the Pharisees right to circumcise and to attend to the needs of livestock. In essence, Jesus made it clear that "*the Sabbath was made [created] for man*" - ie, for our benefit (Mark 2:27). He cited the fact that the divine Law permitted the priestly work to proceed on the Sabbath. He cites also the example of the starving David and his men. [NB This was a one-off emergency situation!] They ate the shewbread - forbidden to all but the priests. Jesus refers here to the Jewish oral tradition (based on Leviticus 24:8) that the loaves were baked on the Sabbath, and that it was on this day David ate it.

From this incident, Jesus draws the conclusion that "*the son of man is lord of the Sabbath*" (Mark 2:28). Sabbath is our servant - for physical re-creation, and above all to provide spiritual nourishment through our contact with its Creator. In a special sense, Jesus Christ is with each of his brethren on that appointed day.

### Clear The Decks

Adam was created in the dying hours of the sixth day, and although he didn't need a physical rest, he stepped right into joyful Sabbath communion with his Creator. That's the fundamental purpose of Sabbath.

Sabbath, then, is indeed a time for physical rest. It's a day for joyful celebration. It's a day to spend extra time with the Saviour in prayer and in perusing God's Word. It's a time for fellowship, where possible, with brethren. It's even a time, following the example of Jesus, to "stroll through the corn-field". And to enjoy these benefits to the full we should "clear the decks" by preparing for it on the day before.

The vast majority of mankind, of course, treads all over God's holy day without a thought for their Creator. They will work in restaurants and power stations. They will serve in shops and deliver the milk and the newspapers. The Sabbath means nothing to them. In a sense that doesn't matter so long as they don't have a personal relationship with their Creator and Saviour. Are we not glad we can on the Sabbath switch on the power for heat and light and a cuppa! And if away from home can benefit from the services of transport and restaurants and service stations? That we can rest assured the emergency services are at the other end of the 'phone link?

### Balanced Choice

Wise King Solomon made a helpful statement which applies well to our keeping of the Sabbath. He wrote: "*Do not be overly righteous, nor overly wise. Why should you destroy yourself [ie be desolate, miserable]?"* (Ecclesiastes 7:16). As with life in general, our observance of the Sabbath is a matter of balanced choice. Each Christian must decide how he or she can in their situation best fulfil their weekly appointment with their Creator - in the liberated spirit of the example of Jesus.

The Colossian Christians had a thing about how to observe the weekly and annual Sabbaths. They had taken on board the then prevalent austere practices. Paul told them to lighten up! He wrote: "So let no one judge you in food or in drink or regarding a festival or new moon or sabbaths... Therefore if you died, with Christ, from the basic principles of the world why as living in the world do you subject yourselves to regulations - 'do not touch, do not taste, do not handle' - which all concern things which perish with the using, according to the commandments and doctrines of men? These indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh" (ch 2:16-23).

The apostle continues by focusing their minds (ch 3) on the important issue - through the risen Christ conquering our base human nature. It's largely through our Sabbath contact with the Saviour that we can so overcome!

Sabbath, then, is a day for the people of God to rejoice before Him, and a day in which to delight.  $\Omega$

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## From the Editor...

We have dedicated this issue of *New Horizons* to a collection of articles discussing various aspects of the Biblical Sabbath.

**Many—perhaps most—professing Christians fail to identify the Sabbath of the Bible as the *seventh* day of the week, Saturday mainly. Indeed, those who observe it are often viewed as 'legalists', and many believe that observance of the seventh-day Sabbath is burdensome. On the contrary, rightly viewed it is a time of physical and spiritual refreshment with the added benefit of knowing it is the day established by the Creator to distinguish Himself from other so-called gods—and for the benefit of all mankind.**

**You are invited to peruse these articles, and especially to delve into the Scriptures themselves '*...to see if these things are so*'.**

*Feel free to contact us with any related questions you may have.*

**What if God gave you a very valuable gift, a tool that you could use to maintain your physical, spiritual and mental health? And what if you would neglect it?**

**Steve Kieler**

The apostle Paul has a warning for us:

*Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him*

*(Hebrews 2:1-3)*

### **God's Gift**

The Sabbath was the first gift to man and is even recorded in the Ten Commandments. Notice it is the only gift therein given. We know it was a gift because Jesus said in Mark 2:27: "...The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." Obviously, God's greatest gift was his Son, but the Sabbath is the second greatest. Why so?

By way of explanation, let us interject a third gift. Woman was made for man (the third great gift). We could make some valid comparisons. The Sabbath was made for man's own good – and man needs a wife for his own good. Setting aside all jokes, I can think of two good comparative benefits:

- The Sabbath and a wife both balance a man's outlook on opposing viewpoints. Just as man and woman have two different perspectives so does mankind and God
- They both show him that he is not the center-point of his environment. Marriage acts as an interlude in life; it gives the opportunity to talk, reflect, think, etc.

## **Sabbath...a gift from God**

So also, the Sabbath rest does the same between God and man.

### **A Separator**

The Sabbath acts as a separator between the holy and the profane. This is a process the Bible calls sanctification. We must try to separate ourselves from the world. Watching world events, this is becoming more and more evident every day. (Acts 2:40) "And with many other words did He testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this evil generation

This is not to imply that we must cut all ties with our friends or relatives but that we must not be partakers of the sins and ways of the world. View the day as a time to reacquire yourself with God's law. The violation of those laws brought death in the "Old Testament" - - - it still does - albeit not by the hands of man.

Seneca, a Roman Senator (4BC - 65AD) said: "... they (Sabbath keepers) lost the seventh part of their life in keeping their Sabbaths; and injured themselves by abstaining from the performance of many necessary things in such times". I think this reflects the attitude of the world toward the rest day. Moreover, I fear it is also often a temptation to us.

### **Failure to Sanctify**

Here is recorded the miserable state of Jerusalem because of the just consequences of its sins.

*"How does the city sit solitary, that was full of people! how is she become as a widow! she that was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary! She weeps sore in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks: among all her lovers she has none to comfort her: all her friends have dealt treacherously with her, they are become her enemies. Judah is gone into captivity because of af-*

*fliction, and because of great servitude: she dwells among the heathen, she finds no rest: all her persecutors overtook her between the straits. The ways of Zion do mourn, because none come to the solemn feasts: all her gates are desolate: her priests sigh, her virgins are afflicted, and she is in bitterness....Jerusalem remembered in the days of her affliction and of her miseries all her pleasant things that she had in the days of old, when her people fell into the hand of the enemy, and none did help her: the adversaries saw her, and did mock at her Sabbaths* Lamentations 1:1-7

*"The Lord was as an enemy: He hath swallowed up Israel, He hath swallowed up all her palaces: He hath destroyed His strong holds, and hath increased in the daughter of Judah mourning and lamentation. And He hath violently taken away His tabernacle, as if it were of a garden: He hath destroyed His places of the assembly: the LORD hath caused the solemn feasts and Sabbaths to be forgotten in Zion, and hath despised in the indignation of His anger the king and the priest. The Lord hath cast off His altar, He hath abhorred His sanctuary, He hath given up into the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces; they have made a noise in the house of the LORD, as in the day of a solemn feast"*

Lamentations 2:5-7

Remember - the consequences of sin may fall on the individual as well as a nation. Later, in chapter 2, we see that God took His Sabbaths from the people:

Man trampled on God's Sabbaths, so, rightfully, God took that blessing from them. If you gave someone a valuable gift and they abused and defaced it, you would certainly take it back – if you had the power.

It is difficult to keep the Sabbath at first. We become so captivated by our desires, our jobs and our frantic lives, it is hard to make a major life-style change even though we know,

deep down, it is what we want. You can only understand the benefits of the Sabbath by experiencing it – by observing it. And that takes some practice; it is difficult to unlearn previous habits of working and enjoying worldly pleasures on the Sabbath.

#### **Sabbath attitude:**

Do we get so restless that we take on the attitude of Juvenal, A Roman Poet (60AD – 130AD)? Speaking of Jews, he said: *"To whom every seventh day was a blank, and formed not any part of their life."*

Man is not too bright. The Boss – God – told him to take a break, but the man said *"I'd rather work to exhaustion."*

Man's attitude to the Sabbath - indeed to all of God's law - is: *"I can't work."* What a difference it would make if we thought: *"I won't work, seek my own pleasure, or speak my own words. I won't give up this day that God has given me."*

*"Remember the Sabbath day"*. It was made for man – for me:

*"Speaking your own words"* does not refer to conversational speech. It means thinking your own thought, looking at things from your point of view.

The Sabbath is the time to focus on God's thoughts, trying to apply His truths to your life. Sabbath is more than rest; it is refreshment. As the physical body actually regenerates - repairs itself - during rest, so is our spiritual condition regenerated. Be zealous for the Sabbath. After all, what's not to like about the Sabbath? Take a break!

Figuring out which day is the real Sabbath is easy. Keeping it profitably is quite the more difficult - but the rewards are innumerable, grand, eternal. Ω

# A Day To Remember

**We all have them. Those special days that live in memory - good ones, painful ones; all significant. It's the same when we look at religious belief, for all religions have their special days**

For Christians, Christmas holds special affection, and Easter. Or *Sunday* - that weekly recurring day on which Christians worship. It's deeply entrenched in the traditions of the Church and indeed without Sunday observance you would rarely be classed as "Christian".

Of course, it hasn't always been so. The first three centuries of Christianity witnessed a running battle between those who wanted to observe Sunday, and those who wished to retain the apostolic practice of the seventh day or Sabbath. The Sunday-keepers won.

Every Christian worth his or her salt, however, will want to follow what God reveals in Scripture. So, what does God's Word teach?

Sunday observance has become so much a part of Christianity that it is often called "the Sabbath". An article on Sunday trading from the Lord's Day Observance Society [LDOS] emphasizes this: "God did not create the sabbath day [the writer applies this to Sunday], and bless it, for it to be sacrificed on the altar of secularism and greed". And further, "The aim of the LDOS is to help people find a fuller sense of God's purpose concerning the one

day in seven which He commanded us to remember and keep Holy".

Now this is strange, as LDOS are in fact promoting Sunday! Have a look at your Bible. In Exodus 20 verse 8 this command is applied to "the seventh day". It's a historical remembrance of the specific day on which God rested from creation - the seventh day (v.11). Moses sums up thus: *"... [God] rested the seventh day, wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and set it apart"*. But Pope John XXIII (*Mater et Magistra*) based his reason for Sunday observance on this same false premise that Sunday equals Sabbath.

By every scrap of credible research the seventh day is the twenty-four hours ending at sundown on Saturday. And through the intervening centuries time has, despite the vagaries of the calendar, not been lost or gained.

#### **Does It Matter?**

History records how the Church - in the fourth century - changed the time for weekly worship from Saturday to Sunday. But does it really matter? Isn't "one day in seven" - though most Christians say it must be none but Sunday! - just as pleasing to God?

Well, the evidence of the New Testament is that the primitive church continued to worship on the Biblical ("Jewish") Sabbath. It didn't cross their minds to change to Sunday! After all, they knew what Daniel *cont'd p.8*

**Remember ...cont'd**

**That the Biblical Sabbath was changed from Saturday to Sunday is widely recognized among Christian scholars**

"Centuries of the Christian era passed away before Sunday was observed by the Christian church as a sabbath. History does not furnish us with a single proof or indication that it was at any time so observed previous to the sabbatical edict of Constantine in AD321"

[Wm Domville: *Examination of Six Texts*]

"They know little who do not know that the ancient Sabbath remained and was observed by the Eastern churches three hundred years after our Saviour's passion"

[Prof. Brerewood: *Treatise on the Sabbath*]

"There is no word, no hint, in the New Testament about abstaining from work on Sunday ...into the rest of Sunday no divine law enters"

[Canon Eyton: *The Ten Commandments*]

"Take which you will, either the Fathers or the moderns, and we shall find no Lord's Day instituted by any apostolic mandate, no Sabbath set on foot by them on the first day of the week"

[P Heylyn: *History of the Sabbath*]

"...the transference to [Sunday] of the sabbatical obligation established by the promulgation of the 4th commandment has no basis whatever either in Holy Scripture or in Christian antiquity"

[Wm Smith: *Dictionary of Christian Antiquity*]

"Q: Have you any other way of proving that the [Roman] Church has power to institute festivals? A: Had she not such power she could not have done that in which all modern religionists agree with her - she could not have substituted the observance of Sunday, the first day of the week, for the observance of Saturday, the seventh day of the week, a change for which there is no Scriptural authority"

[Keenan's *Doctrinal Catechism*]

"It is quite clear that however devotedly we may spend Sunday we are not keeping the Sabbath...the Sabbath was founded on a specific divine command. We can plead no such command for the observance of Sunday"

[R W Dale: *The Ten Commandments*]

"In the interval between the days of the apostles and the conversion of Constantine [4th cent.] the Christian common-

wealth changed

*Columba (543-615 C.E)* Spread Celtic Christianity to France, Germany, Switzerland and Italy. Spent his early years in the studying in the halls at Bangor, in the tradition of Patrick, born in 360 C.E. and Columba 521 C.E.

"A large Celtic community, colonists from Asian Minor, migrated to Ireland and laid the foundations of the Pre-Patrick church. This Church evangelized Great Britain. The British Isles became the launching ground for Celtic Christianity into France, Germany, Switzerland and Italy. [Thomas Yeates: *East Indian Church History*]

Pope Gregory III warned the bishops of Bavaria to "beware of the Britons coming in among them and their false heretical priests." Boniface charged them with being adulterers because the clergy was married (*ie* not celibate).

Though the Roman Church made Patrick a Saint, in his day he was considered an heretic.

Flick in *The Rise of the Medieval Church* and the historian Barnett noted that both the Irish and Scots "kept Saturday as a day of rest." This Celtic tradition seems to have angered Pope Gregory I that in 602 he issued a bull declaring 'when the anti-christ would come, he would keep Saturday for the Sabbath'.

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*unsigned articles are by the Editor*

## FROM SABBATH TO SUNDAY

*...some observations by Sunday-observers*

"Early Celtic Christianity was the closest of all religious teachings to the original doctrines of Jesus, and it had emerged within a few years of the Crucifixion as the foremost Church of the Christian world. Christians of the Celtic Church were recorded in Ireland and in the latter reign of Emperor Tiberius (AD 14-37),

long before St. Peter went to Rome. Given that Jesus' own teachings formed the basis of the faith, the Mosaic structure of the Old Testament was duly incorporated. Judaic marriage laws were observed, together with the celebrations of the Sabbath and Passover, while Easter was correctly held as the traditional feast day of the

Spring goddess, Eostre, long before the Roman Church foisted a new significance on the old Celtic festival at the Synod of Whitby in 664." [Prince Michael of Albany: *The Forgotten Monarchy of Scotland*]

"Contrary to traditional belief, Emperor Constantine the Great (AD 274-337) did not embrace Christianity as the religion of Rome; he adapted Christianity into a new form which was implemented as the religion of Rome." [Bob Briggs ?]

### **When does the Sabbath start?**

...The Bible Sabbath is the *seventh* day of the week—mainly our Saturday, though many modern calendars list *Sunday* as the seventh day.

The reality is that the seventh day has remained unchanged in an unbroken chain since earliest times, though with various names. It has survived thus through several changes of calendar. Biblically, all days are numbered, except for the Sabbath..

In common with ancient practice, the seventh day begins at sundown on day six, Friday. An echo of this is our use of the words 'Christmas Eve' for the beginning of the celebration.

## What makes morality religious?

Some atheists—like some Christians or Muslims—are wild-eyed hard-line propagandists of their 'faith'. Civilised atheists, however, can be every bit as 'moral' as a dedicated believer. Which begs the question *What do you mean 'moral'?*

Atheists complain that they are branded as having no morals. Not true. The so-called 'empirical self' dictates self-preservation. So, I don't want someone to steal from me, commit adultery with my wife or husband, or kill me. Nor would the average professed atheist - despite rejecting religion - wish harm to his parents or his children. That's universal - not needing religion.

Those criminal activities might stir a memory of Bible texts: *'You shall not...'*. Right - they are the last six of the Ten Commandments. They express a sentiment common to all mankind, religious or not. And they are the foundation principles of every code of law. In fact, though, they are the Creator's rules by which mankind ought to live his life. Break them and someone suffers - atheist or religious zealot.

### Spirit in Man

The human *body* - its flesh and bones, its nervous and other systems - is 'animal', with all its appetites and with the desire for immediate satisfaction at every level of physical and material existence. It is infantile. That's why those laws are needed - to keep society on an even keel.

## The First Four...

These basic laws are written in our psyche, whether by culture or by gene. All sensible parents - atheist, agnostic, religious - instil them in their children. But that's not all there is to man. We are more than 'animal'.

The animal creation acts by instinct - the 'animal spirit'. Its every action is 'built in'. By divine decree some are more astute - incredibly so. Contrast the worm and the chimp.

Man, however, has an added dimension. It is 'the human spirit', which sets mankind apart from the lower creation. Animals were created *'after their kind'* (Genesis 1:24-25). Mankind, by contrast, is *'... in the image of God'* (v.27).

The human spirit - in all of mankind, no matter how dulled - is intellectually curious, aspirational, altruistic, plans, able to take the long view. It is self-aware. The spirit in us propels man to achievement, to scientific endeavour, to philosophy, to consider the divine. It gives reason and understanding. It provides the option of choice - so much abused. And it is what made man in the image of his Creator.

### Missing Dimension

Hence man looks God-ward. The human spirit seeks, perhaps unknowingly, to fill by whatever means the 'God-shaped hole' in each of us. For many it is religion, however bizarre. For increas-

ing numbers it is filling the gap with 'bread and circuses'. For others it is intellectual pursuits.

What, then, separates atheistic morality from religious morality?

The true faith, the faith that has accompanied mankind from the beginning, has been distorted beyond recognition. Hundreds of gods and thousands of religions have evolved - the product of human imagination, demonic influence and cross-fertilization. Choice - fuelled by antipathy to the true faith once for all revealed by the Creator.

**To the law and to the testimony! if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them**

*Isaiah 8:20*

The key to that true faith is in our title: *'The First Four...'*. That is, the first four of the Ten Commandments. They identify the one and only God, Creator of

heaven and earth. This is the dimension missing from atheism.

### Natural v. Supernatural

It is these four Commandments which separate atheistic morality from the only faith authored by God. Wrote Paul to the Romans: *'...the carnal mind [our natural inclination] is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be'* (ch 8:7).

Atheism is *naturalistic*. By definition, the atheist rejects the very notion of a supreme Creator God. His moral compass is relative - based on the shifting sands of personal conscience modified by his environment.

## Revelation

True religion by contrast is *supernatural*. Biblical morality is based on conscience informed by the solid rock of the immutable Word of the Creator as revealed in the Christian Scriptures. It is '*...the same yesterday, today and forever*'.

Those who willingly submit to the God of the Bible, Jesus the Messiah, and to His instruction (the Law) reflect the bed-rock of morality. Willing acceptance and submission to the first four of the Commandments sets them apart as worshippers of the one and only living God.

As writes the prophet Isaiah: '*...To the law and to the testimony! if they speak not according to this word, surely there is no morning for them*' (Isaiah 8:20). They are, in other words, still stranded in spiritual darkness!

When instituting His Law for the new nation of Israel, the LORD first established His unique identity. He singled out the seventh-day Sabbath—one of 'the four'—as an important sign distinguishing Him from the various false gods of the surrounding nations: '*...you shall keep my sabbaths: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that you may know that I am the LORD which sanctify you*' (Exodus 31:13-17). He is indeed a '*...jealous God*' (Exodus 20:5) - another of those 'four'. As the one and only God YHVH guards His uniqueness.

## Always the Same

And remember—God doesn't

change His fundamental nature and principles. He is '*...the same yesterday, and today, and for ever*' (Hebrews 13:8).

Not surprising, then, that the New Testament church continued to observe this self-same weekly sign. It was unthinkable for them to observe any other days for formal worship and fellowship. The form of worship defined by the LORD (Leviticus 23 summarizes) is the unspoken background of all church activity—Jew and Gentile—in the New Testament.

## The Future

Indeed at the return of our Saviour to reign on earth the weekly

### *...further reading*

#### **Get Ready for Sunday**

*...a worldwide requirement to observe Sunday 'blue laws' is possible*

#### **Why Observe Sunday?**

*...an examination of the 'Sunday' texts in the New Testament*

Sabbath will be celebrated universally: '*...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, says the LORD*' (Isaiah 66:23).

The LORD's annual holy days, too, as exemplified by the seven-day *Passover season* (Ezekiel 45:21) and the *Festival of Tabernacles* will be observed by all mankind. (Zechariah 14:16)

## The Challenge

Millions of sincere believers in Jesus unthinkingly embrace the

traditions handed down to them—from parents, even from their religious leaders—without careful examination of the Scriptures.

Jesus was the embodiment of the Law—the fulfilment of the *type* of the Ark of the Testimony, which held the unbroken 'tablets' of the divine Law. He rebuked the religious leadership for being blind to the meaning of the Scriptures—which identified him (John 5:39), and Paul commended the Berean Jews, who '*...received the word with all readiness of mind, every day examining the Scriptures whether those things were so*' (Acts 17:11). [Their only available 'Scriptures' were the books of the Old Testament.]

Jesus, the Jews, the first Christians lived and walked daily in the light of the divine Law. Wrote the Psalmist: '*...Your word is a lamp un to my feet, and a light unto my path*' (Psalm 119:1).

The Law of the LORD is the Christian's unwavering moral compass. As we increasingly identify ourselves with our Saviour by our attention to be observed by all mankind the 'first four'. by observing the weekly Sabbath and the holy days of Scripture, our lives will become a joyful celebration of God's plan for us.

Those *first four* of the precious Ten Commandments truly—and literally—identify our Saviour and the walk to be followed by all His people in every era. **Ω**

*Quotations from the Bible in New Horizons are from translations which clearly express the meaning in modern terms*

had been inspired to write about the rebellious "little horn": *"And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws" (ch 7:24-25).*

Even the Gentile churches (eg Acts 18:4) observed the seventh-day Sabbath. Towards the end of his ministry the great "Apostle to the Gentiles" - Paul - claimed: *"Neither against the law of the Jews...have I offended at all" (Acts 25:8. see also ch 28:17).* The seventh-day Sabbath was central to that Law!

So since the end of the Book of Acts someone changed it. The argument that Jesus rose from the dead on Sunday is a fiction.

The argument that "one day in seven" is just as pleasing to God is also a deceptive fiction. For there's not a shred of evidence in the New Testament that any other day - including Sunday - was an acceptable replacement for the Sabbath!

This is entirely logical, for God has always defined how He ought to be worshipped. Indeed both the House of Israel and the House of Judah were removed from their national territory because they substituted other days for worship in place of those revealed to them. It does make a difference!

### Origins

The seventh-day Sabbath was introduced at the creation of man: *"So God blessed the seventh day, and set it apart" (Genesis 2:3).* That's the only weekly day for wor-

ship that God has ever revealed!

In fact, when Israel was formed as a nation God made the seventh day a sign that helped identify His people: *"...it is a sign for ever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed" (Exodus 31:17).*

Jesus cast aside all the silly and burdensome restrictions which the Pharisees had added to God's original Law of the Sabbath. *"The sabbath",* he said, *"was made for man" (Mark 2:27)* - for both Jew and Gentile. Sabbath is for our benefit. Clearly, he doesn't "do away" with the Sabbath! It is the 'signet ring' that indicates our covenant relationship with Him

Indeed throughout the New Testament, observance of the *seventh-day* Sabbath is assumed. No text urges or even hints at observing Sunday! The texts which have been used to suggest this are clearly explained, text by text, in our book-

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let *Why Do You Observe Sunday?* You are invited to request a free copy.

The early Christians continued, with new understanding, to worship on the seventh-day Sabbath, and indeed on the various Holy Days revealed in Leviticus 23. No way would they dare *"to change times and laws" (Daniel 7:25)!*

But along the way the organized church grew powerful enough to do just that. They had the audacity to flaunt their usurped carnal authority in the face of God, Moses, Jesus Christ, the Apostles and indeed all of God's people through the millennia!

The Roman Catholic position is summed up by St Thomas Aquinas: *"[Sunday replaced Sabbath] by the institution of the Church and the custom of the Christian people".* And Catholic author J G Shea stated: *"Protestantism, in discarding the authority of the Church, has no good reasons for its Sunday theory, and ought logically to keep Saturday as the Sabbath".*

In today's world, the observance of God's Sabbath may draw - even from Christians! - ridicule, spite, persecution, loss of job and even death as anciently, for example under Roman Emperor Hadrian in the second century.

But Jesus never said his way would be easy, but 'promised' such rejection. If you have truly been drawn to repentance then certainly this is one Bible teaching that you must examine. What's important is not what you have observed all your life, or what your pastor or denomination teaches, or what you would like to do. It's God's revealed Word—the Scriptures - that alone must govern our belief.

In Paul's words, *"Examine yourself whether you are in the faith"!* Ω

MiniStudy**Sabbath—a day to remember**

*Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shall you labour, and do all your work; but the seventh day is a sabbath unto the LORD thy God, in it you shall not do any manner of work, you, nor thy son, nor your daughter, nor your man-servant, nor your maid-servant, nor your cattle, nor the stranger that is within your gates; for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested on the seventh day; wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it*  
(Exodus 20:8-11)

Any Bible scholar worth his salt knows that the weekly Sabbath of the Christian Scriptures is not Sunday but Saturday. Even Roman Catholic scholars will agree, though claiming that the Roman Church had, contrary to Scripture, divine authority to change it. So how should we observe the day?

- First, the ‘day’ itself is observed at your location from sundown on Friday to sundown Saturday. This is, in Bible terms, the *seventh* day of the week. It is a day that has remained in unbroken sequence since the beginning of time
- Sabbath is a time designated by the Creator as ‘holy’. That is, it is a day to be carefully distinguished from the other six days
- It is a day for physical joy and refreshment. We ‘rest from our labours’, our regular day-to-day business activity. It is well-known that mankind needs this regular recurring pause in our busy schedule. The Sabbath puts our acquisitive lives in perspective
- But Sabbath is especially a time for refreshment of the human spirit. It is a time to burnish our relationship with our heavenly Father and our Saviour through prayer and meditation on His Word. And a time to cement our relationships with our families and our brothers and sisters in Christ. It is also a time to assemble for instruction from competent teachers
- The seventh-day Sabbath is a sign of our covenant with our God, made at our baptism. It is a perpetual sign given by the LORD at creation to identify the people of God—a sign that has defined, and on occasion cost the lives of, obedient saints down the ages
- The *weekly Sabbath* and the *Day of Atonement* were, at their inception, the only holy days designated in Scripture as *full* ‘Sabbaths’. That is, when no secular work not of a humanitarian nature should be done, and chores minimized. The other holy days are likewise for fellowship, instruction and physical enjoyment—but without many of the physical strictures of the Sabbaths

In sum, the seventh-day Sabbath, for Christians, is not a burdensome chore but a welcome break from the daily grind, a pause in our daily lives that brings rich reward. It is not a complex system of ‘*dos and don’ts*’ but a willing personal expression of our submission to our Creator God and our Saviour, and of our liberty in Christ. Each of us is free to observe it within the principles outlined in the Scriptures

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