

# The Sabbath, has it “Passed Away”?

*...a comparative look between arguments against  
and in favour of the Sabbath.*

by Michael Meszaros

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*“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,  
for they shall be filled.” Matthew 5:6*

# Has the Sabbath “passed away”?

The implications of blessings, missed or received, and obedience, growing into the image of Christ, related to the Sabbath are huge. So, the following explores the scriptures that people use to explain why we don't need to keep the Sabbath, and why we do need to keep the Sabbath. The framework for the exploration is an article against the Sabbath by another author (the article is copied out in red and shaded). Additional information is also included for other people's arguments.

All Bible references are from the King James Version unless noted otherwise.

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# Is the Sabbath Binding on Christians Today?

by (another author)

It is believed that the Old Testament regulations governing Sabbath observances are ceremonial, not moral, aspects of the law. As such, they are no longer in force, but have passed away along with the sacrificial system, the Levitical priesthood, and all other aspects of Moses' law that prefigured Christ.

## Intro: Freedom from the Law

To begin, I agree with one of the assumptions that is behind this introduction. The article is not claiming that “we are free from the law of God”, nor that “God’s laws have ended”. This is because the law of God is still in effect, as shown below. Instead, the claim which I disagree with is that the Sabbath is prefiguring Christ and so is “summed up” in Christ, or has “ended” in Christ.

In terms of what we agree on, the following Bible passages show that we are not free from the law of God. The following scriptures are to the Gentile Christians after Christ’s resurrection and they show that the Ten Commandments are still in effect: 1 Corinthians 6:9, Romans 13:9, Acts 13:42, James 2:8, 1 Peter 1:14-16, Isaiah 2:2-3.

Some people confuse “getting saved” with “being saved”. What people are “free from” are the works of the law for obtaining salvation (Eph. 2:8-9, Romans 10:4). However, once we “are saved”, we are freed *from* service to sin (John 8:34, 1 John 3:4,8), “freed from breaking God’s laws”. We become “servants of righteousness” (Gal.5:13-15 (ESV), Rom 6:15,18, 1 Pet 2:24, Rev.19:7-8), and righteousness is obeying God’s laws. So, believers are freed to obey God’s laws.

So, resting on God’s Sabbath is not about salvation. It is about obedience after salvation, and growing into the image of Christ after salvation (John 14:15, 2 Cor.3:19).

Of note is that God’s laws are “not grievous or burdensome” (1 John 5:3, Psalm 19:7), and that keeping God’s laws from our heart is the New Covenant (Heb.8:10, Mt.15:6,8, Mt.5:27-28).

Actually, Hebrews 1:9 (NJKV) says, Jesus hates “freedom from the law” (lawlessness).

## **Intro: Has the Sabbath Law “passed away”?**

Before delving into the Bible verses, the following is a recap of the historical evidence of God’s laws that have “passed away”, as compared to the Sabbath, which has not passed away.

The sacrificial system is one of the laws that has “passed away”. Hebrews 10:1 and 5 says that this system was replaced by Jesus’ body. God says in Amos 3:7 (NKJV),

“Surely the Lord GOD does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.”

So, if we look at prophecy, it was prophesied in Daniel 9:26-27 and Mark 13:2 that Jesus would end the sacrificial system, destroy the temple, and stop the sacrifices. The result was that, in 70 AD, the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed by the physical hand of the Romans and the in-fighting of the Jews. As prophesied by Stephen (Acts 6:14), it was Jesus Himself who destroyed Jerusalem and the sacrificial system, so that even if they wanted to keep doing it, God prevented them and they were unable to. In 132-136 AD, the Jews succeeded in recapturing Jerusalem with the intent to rebuild the temple and reinstitute the sacrificial system; however, the Romans ended their revolt and any ability to rebuild the temple. Later, in 363 AD, Emperor Julian ordered a rebuilding of the temple; however, an earthquake and fire stopped that attempt. Thus, this “ending” was from God and so the sacrificial system has been stopped ever since 70 AD.

The Levitical priesthood is another law that has “passed away”. Hebrews 5:6 and Hebrews 4:14 say that Jesus Christ became the High Priest after the order of Melchisedec. Again, looking at prophecy to reveal God’s secrets, this was prophesied in the Old Testament passage of Psalms 110:4. This was also fulfilled in 70 AD, as God stopped the Levitical priesthood from sacrificing animals. The Sadducees sect also essentially ended because most of them were killed. In 90 AD, the Sanhedrin (Jewish supreme court) was re-established; however, there was no temple to conduct any sacrifices in. So, even if they wanted to continue their “duties”, they were unable to. Thus, this “ending” was from God. Further, the Sanhedrin was also later abolished. In 425 AD, the Romans forbade its assembly, declared capital punishment for any Rabbi who received ordination, and declared destruction for any town where the ordination would have occurred. So, the Sanhedrin was also stopped, and to this day, there is no recognized Levitical priesthood authority over Jewish law.

Compare this to the history of the Sabbath. Firstly, there is no Old or New Testament prophesy that says that God would end the Sabbath (like there is for the sacrificial system). Also, there is no Old or New Testament prophet’s comment about a double system for the Sabbath (like there is for two priestly orders, Levitical and Melchizedek). So, according to Amos 3:7 which says that God does nothing except what He reveals through His prophets, if there is no prophesy, this means that the Sabbath has neither changed nor ended.

From the physical evidence of God through history, the Sabbath was not stopped in 70 AD, or in any other year. The calendar was changed a couple of times (e.g., under

Gregory XIII in 1582, and in England in 1752); however, the Sabbath day on Saturday remained clearly intact each time. This is because the numbers on the calendar changed only, whereas the order of the days of the week stayed sequential. So, for example, the Jews today still keep the very same day of the week that Moses, King David, Jesus and Apostle Paul kept. In fact, the New Testament church kept the Sabbath on Saturday for at least four hundred years after Christ<sup>1</sup>. Also, the Gentiles who keep the Sabbath today still receive all the blessings that are spoken about in the Bible in reference to keeping the Sabbath (Isaiah 56:4-7, Deut.28:1-13, Heb.4:9). This is unlike the sacrificial system or the Levitical priesthood, which are not in operation today.

Incidentally, to assume that a “spiritual rest” took over and deleted the need for the physical rest, would miss the fact that today everyone’s actual physical “body” still needs a rest one day every week – and this applies to everyone, whether one is a believer, an unbeliever, a Jew or a Gentile, in the same way as every other Commandment in the Ten Commandments physically and spiritually affects everyone. So, again, the Sabbath was not removed or replaced by Christ.

There is no prophesy that the Sabbath has “ended” and, historically, one can see that the Sabbath has not “ended”. In fact, prophesy states that the Sabbath will not end. Isaiah 66:23 prophesies that the Sabbath will continue every week into heaven (when all flesh comes to worship before the Lord).

Isaiah 66:23 “...and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD.”

Since “all flesh” includes the Gentiles, the Sabbath law is still in effect for the Jews, Gentiles, and “all flesh” today.

## **Intro: Is Sunday the Sabbath?**

Is Sunday the Sabbath? There is another part of the referenced article that I agree with. In the conclusion, it states “we do not refer to Sunday as ‘the Sabbath.’”. I would like to emphasize that the Sabbath actually has nothing to do with Sunday, Monday, or any other day of the week.

In the Ten Commandments, Exodus 20:9-10, it states,

“Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work; But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work”

So, the issue is the “7<sup>th</sup> day”. In law making, every single word counts. So, by God specifically naming all the days of the week and specifically separating out the 7<sup>th</sup> day

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<sup>1</sup> Socrates of Constantinople covered Greek Christian church history for the years 305-439 AD, Ecclesiastical History, verse 21 and 22 in a select library of Nicene and post-Nicene fathers, the second series, volume 22, page 132.

from all the others, makes “which day” very important to keeping the commandment. In other words, resting on any other day has nothing to do with keeping this commandment.

Could the “7<sup>th</sup> day” be Sunday? The “7<sup>th</sup> day” could not be Sunday. It wasn’t until 1566 AD, in the Council of Trent’s Tridentine Catechism, that the Catholic Church replaced the word “Sabbath” with the word “Lord Day’s” (Sunday) in their teaching of the Ten Commandments. Earlier in history, single bishops had discouraged Christians from keeping the Sabbath, but it was not widespread. Also, the first such bishop’s writings was in 107 AD, which was years after all the Apostles had passed away. In reviewing church history, the Catholic Church’s literature boldly states “But the Church of God has thought it well to transfer the celebration and observance of the Sabbath to Sunday.”

The organization claims a “transfer” from Saturday to Sunday. So, the “7<sup>th</sup> day” was never Sunday. This is further shown in old languages. In Spanish and Portuguese, Saturday is called *sábado*, in Romanian, it’s *sâmbătă*, in French, it’s *samedi*, in Italian, it’s *sabato*. These all come from the phrase “*dies Sabbati*” which means “Day of the Sabbath”. Similarly, in Hebrew, today’s Saturday is called “*yom Shabbat*”, which means “day of rest”. So, there is actually no question that the Biblical 7<sup>th</sup> day can only be today’s Saturday, and specifically between Friday night and Saturday night because God defined “day” as being from “the evening to the morning” (Gen.1:5).

So, the issue at hand is, does God’s command to rest specifically from Friday night to Saturday night still apply to Christians today?

The following now goes through the articles’ explanations of why that author thinks the Sabbath has ended.

## **1. Galatians 4:10-11 “Observing days”**

1. In Galatians 4:10-11, Paul rebukes the Galatians for thinking God expected them to observe special days (including the Sabbath).

Unfortunately, the above argument has missed the context of the few verses immediately before it.

Gal.4:3, 8, 10-11 says “...we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: ... Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods. But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain. Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am;”

“Observing days and times” is referring to pagan astrology, when the Galatians did not know God. There is nothing here that is referring to the Sabbath.

So, this argument is out of context of the passage in Galatians.

## 2. Sign of Mosaic Covenant

2. The Sabbath was the sign to Israel of the Mosaic Covenant (Exodus 31:16-17; Ezekiel 20:12; Nehemiah 9:14).

Unfortunately, not one of the scriptures that the article references here supports this argument. Also, unfortunately, a number of well known preachers have made similar statements to the above statement. So, I have copied out each scripture to show that not one of them supports their claim (and there is no other scripture that I am aware of that supports their claim).

The first scripture reference in Argument 2 is:

Exodus 31:16-17 says “Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It <the Sabbath> is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.”

Note that the passage does not say, “the Sabbath was a sign of the Mosaic Covenant”. Rather, it says the Sabbath is a sign on its own (verse 17). So, the Sabbath is its own “perpetual covenant” (verse 16).

It is important to note that this in addition to the Ten Commandments covenant (Ex.34:28). So, for example, even if the article wished to dismiss the covenant sign of the Sabbath as being only for Israel (as opposed to being a sign for the Gentiles too), the Sabbath would still remain in the Ten Commandments, which, as referenced in the New Testament, are for the Gentiles too.

There were actually 9 different covenants that God gave during the leadership of Moses<sup>2</sup>. The Sabbath shows up in two of them. The fact that the Sabbath shows up twice gives an even greater importance to it.

In addition, the Bible verse says, the covenant is perpetual and for ever. So, even if the article thought that the Sabbath only applied to Israel, the Sabbath did not and

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<sup>2</sup> The 9 Covenants from God under Moses' leadership were as follows:

- i. Exodus 24:4 & 7 (Horeb, Sinai) (Deut.5, Exodus 34:28, Deut 4:13, Deut 9:9 & 11, Deut.29:1): Ten Commandments.
- ii. Deut.29:1, 13-15 (Moab) Covenant to establish Israel as a people unto Himself, and He to be their God.
- iii. Exodus 31:16: Covenant of keeping the Sabbath forever, a sign that it's the LORD that sanctifies.
- iv. Exodus 34:10: Covenant to do marvels.
- v. Lev.24:8 Covenant to take olive oil, fine flour, and pure frankincense from the Israelites for the Sabbath offerings.
- vi. Num 18:19 Covenant of giving the holy offerings to Aaron's line (covenant of salt).
- vii. Neh.13:29, Jer.33:21 Covenant of the priesthood to Aaron's line.
- viii. Neh.13:29, Jer.33:21, Num.1:50, Num.8:11 Covenant of the Levites as ministers.
- ix. Num.25:12-13 Covenant of peace and of an everlasting priesthood to Phineas.

could not “pass away”, because the covenant is forever.

Farther down in the same chapter, Exodus 31 also explains why they should keep the Sabbath in verse 14.

“Observe the Sabbath, because it is holy to you.” (Exodus 31:14)

Again, there is no reference to the Sabbath being a sign of a Mosaic covenant. It is a covenant on its own in addition to being part of the Horeb (Sinai) Ten Commandment covenant.

The next scripture reference in Argument 2 is:

Ezekiel 20:12 “Also I gave them my Sabbaths as a sign between us, so they would know that I the LORD made them holy.”

Again, there is no reference to the Sabbath being a sign of the Mosaic Covenant. The Sabbath was a sign that it is the LORD who makes them holy.

Some people assume that “them” is referring to only the Israelites; however, the verse is about who it is that makes people holy. It would be incorrect to say that God only makes the Israelites holy. God also makes the Gentiles holy (1 Peter 1:15-16). So, in the same way that it is only God who can make anyone holy, the Sabbath is a sign for everyone that it is God and God alone who makes them holy.

Further, Jesus said, “The Sabbath was made for man” (Mark 2:27). Jesus did not say, the Sabbath was made only for the Jews, and “man” includes the Gentiles. Paul says, “the gifts from God are irrevocable” (Romans 11:29 NKJV). So, the Sabbath was not only given to the Gentiles as them being part of mankind, but also, because it was a gift from God, it can not be taken back or replaced.

The next reference is:

Nehemiah 9:14 “You made known to them your holy Sabbath and gave them commands, decrees and laws through your servant Moses.”

Here it says the Sabbath was made known to the Israelites through Moses, just like other laws, like “do not worship idols” which is for the Gentiles (1 Cor 6:9). Again, there is no reference to the Sabbath being a sign of the Mosaic Covenant. The Sabbath is part of the Mosaic Covenant, not a sign of it. And, that very Mosaic Covenant has been placed in the believing Gentiles’ hearts (Heb.8:10,13).

So, Argument 2 is claiming that the Bible says something that it doesn’t say.

In contrast, Eph.2:19-20 says the Gentiles are “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone”. It does not say “Jesus replaced the previous foundation”, nor does it say “the Gentiles have a new foundation in Christ”. Moses was a prophet (Deut 34:10). Ephesians is saying that



Christianity (including the Gentiles) includes the foundation of Moses' teachings.

Mosaic Covenants are for the Gentiles.

## **2b. Church's New Covenant**

(2. Continued) Since we are now under the New Covenant (Hebrews 8), we are no longer required to observe the sign of the Mosaic Covenant.

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The assumption here is that when the New Covenant replaced the Old Covenant, this meant that the Old Covenant became no longer in force. This assumption is not Biblical. In fact, the New Covenant establishes the Old Covenant.

Romans 3:31 says

“Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.”

I have copied out the referenced verses from Hebrews 8 below.

Consider the question, what is the New Covenant that we are under?

Hebrews 8:8-10 “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: ...For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:”

From this, Hebrews 8 substantiates that the Old Covenant is still in effect. The New Covenant places the Old Covenant deep inside of us, in our minds and in our hearts.

Note, too, that the article's Argument 2 is self-contradictory. For example, it is impossible to both keep the New Covenant (the Ten Commandments in our heart, which includes the Sabbath), and at the same time delete the Sabbath, if for example the Sabbath were a “sign” of this covenant.

From another angle, per Hebrews 8, the New Covenant was given to Israel (no Bible passage has the words “New Covenant” and “Gentiles” together). By Argument 2 accepting that the Gentile Christians are “under the New Covenant”, the Argument is extending Israel's covenant to the Gentile Christians (which is correct). This extends the Horeb Mosaic Covenant (the Ten Commandments) to the Christians, and even more so, because it is now written in the Christians' hearts and minds. So, part of what has been written upon the believing Gentiles hearts is the fourth commandment, to keep God's Sabbath holy.

So, the Christian church is called to rest on God's Sabbath day.

Consider another angle. If there is no more Horeb Mosaic Covenant, what laws has God written on our hearts and minds?

Jesus was asked, "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" (Mt.22.36) Jesus did not say, "There will be no more Mosaic Law and so there is no more need of a sign for the Mosaic Covenant." Jesus said the opposite. He quoted the summary of the Ten Commandments, which was, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." (Mt.22:37) Jesus quoted Deut.6:5, which is referring to the laws named in Deuteronomy 5. Deuteronomy 5 lists the Ten Commandments.

Deut. 5:12 says "Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the LORD your God has commanded you."

Thus, Jesus substantiated for all His followers that loving God with all your heart included keeping all of the Ten Commandments, which includes the Sabbath.

### **3. New Testament command (Hebrews 4)**

3. The New Testament never commands Christians to observe the Sabbath.

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Unfortunately, Argument 3 is contrary to the Biblical. There is a direct command to Christians to observe the Sabbath in Hebrews 4, which is in the New Testament.

Firstly, I will quote what Hebrews 4 says, and then I will explain how people have twisted the meaning to undermine the Sabbath. Hebrews 4:4,9,10 says

"For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all His works. ...There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into His rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief."

The only way for us to "cease from our own works as God did from His" is to rest on the seventh day (otherwise it is not the same way that God rested).

Some people suggest that "God's rest" means "salvation without works", or that it refers to resting in Christ's "Millennium rule"; however, these do not fit the context because verse 3 says, "we who have believed do enter that rest". The words "have believed" are referring to people who have obtained salvation already without works, and "do enter" refers to something current. So, one enters the rest after salvation,

and before the future. The only meaning that fits the passage is the Sabbath, resting from Friday night to Saturday night when God rests.

Verse 9 says “There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God” and 1 Peter 2:10 says that “people of God” includes the Gentile Christians.

So, the command in Hebrews 4:11 is for all Christians to observe the Sabbath:

Hebrews 4:11 says, “Let us labour therefore to enter in.”

### **i) Separation of Israel and the Church**

Some people say that the book of Hebrews, or the Sabbath, is only for the Jews. Their starting point is that Israel is different than the church, so they claim that what is for the Jews is not for the Gentiles.

The key though is that the book of Hebrews is not for all of biological Israel. It is only for Jews who are Christian. This is because Hebrews refers to Christ as their high priest (Heb. 4:14) and Jesus as the replacement for animal sacrifices (Heb. 10:9-10).

The next key is that a command to Christian Jews is also a command to Christian Gentiles.

“...as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek... for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Gal.3:28)

So, any command to Christian Jews, is also applicable to Christian Gentiles.

Romans 11:17-18 names three components:

1. the natural olive branches (biological Israel),
2. the wild olive branches (Gentiles),
3. and the root (Christ).

Biological Israel (the natural branches) is illustrated as different from the Gentiles (the wild branches). The key, though, is that when the branches are grafted in, they are grafted into the same root. In other words, they have the same Lord, are in the same kingdom, and so have the same rules. Jesus says, “there shall be one fold, and one shepherd” (John 10:16, Heb.2-11-12). There is only one “new testament” and one “new covenant”, with Jesus being the mediator of them both (Heb.9:15, Heb.12:24). Thus, these are for the whole church (Heb.12:23, 1 Peter 2:10).

So, what is the new covenant? The new covenant is God placing His laws upon the hearts and minds of believers (Heb.8:10). This includes both Gentile and Jewish believers. So, again, there is one and the same law for both. Since the Sabbath applies to the Christian Jews, it also applies to the Christian Gentiles.

To emphasize the point, Heb.4:9 does not say, there remains a Sabbath rest for the Jews only. It says, “there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God”. Because 1 Peter 2:10 says that the Gentile Christians are included in “the people of God”, this command to keep the Sabbath rest is a command for the Gentile Christians as well as all the people of God, all Christians.

Romans 3:29-31 says “Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.”

What law is established?

Hebrews 4:10 says the law of resting on the Sabbath is established for all the people of God.

Jesus said, “The Sabbath was made for man” (Mark 2:27). Because Jesus did not say, the Sabbath was made only for the Jews, the Sabbath was also a gift for the Gentiles and all of mankind. Since Paul says, “the gifts from God are irrevocable” (Romans 11:29 NKJV), the Sabbath can not be taken back or replaced. So, there is no separation between Jews and Gentiles regarding the gift of the Sabbath.

## ii) Millennium rest

Some people say the “rest” in Hebrews 4:9 is referring to the “age of Christ’s Millennium rule”.

As mentioned above, the key is that the verb tenses are “present tense”, not “future tense”.

Hebrews 4:10 says “For he that is entered into His rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.”

Hebrews 4:3 says “For we which have believed do enter into rest...”

So, the “rest” in Hebrews 4 can not be referring to a future age, but rather is referring to the present weekly Sabbath.

From another angle, note that Rev. 2:26-27 describes the Millennium rule as “ruling the nations with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers”.

Consider that “smashing the nations” is not “ceasing from labour as God did from His labour on the Sabbath day”. Thus, the “Millennium age” could not be the “rest” referred to in Hebrews 4.

### iii) “Rest” means “to cease”

What does the word “rest” mean? The Greek word that is translated “rest” in Hebrews 4:10-11 is word καταπαύω (katapauō). This is the same word used in Acts 14:18, and here it is translated “restrained” or “stopped”.

Acts 14:18 “And with these sayings scarce restrained <καταπαύω (katapauō)> they the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them.

In other words, “katapauō” (“rest”) means “to cease” or “to stop”.

Note that the meaning is not “refreshment” or “relaxation” as in “restful activities”. The meaning is “cessation from activity” and “stopping”. Hebrews 4:10 says, we are to cease from our own works.

If “rest” meant an “age” or “era”, then believers during the whole era could not be doing their own works. They would be “ceasing” from their own works. However, like most Christians today, Apostle Paul had a non-preaching job to pay for his expenses (Acts 18:3). Thus, the “church age” could not be the “rest” referred to in Hebrews 4.

The “rest”, the “ceasing”, is keeping the Sabbath. Heb.4:4,10 defines the “rest” to mean “as God did rest the seventh day from all his works.”

### iii) Rest every day in Christ

Some people suggest that the passage refers to just “any” Sabbath, such as “resting in Christ every day of the week”, or a “spiritual age”. In Hebrews chapter 5, the writer of Hebrews shows that he is referring to the specific seventh-day Sabbath of the Ten Commandments.

Hebrews 5:12 says “For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.”

What are the “the oracles of God”?

The word “oracle” is from the Latin verb *orāre*, which means, “to speak”. God spoke through the prophets (2 Peter 1:21, referring to Hebrews’ quotes of various Psalms) and God also spoke directly Himself. The Sabbath is included in both the prophets and the direct audible voice of God (Exodus 20:1). Thus, “oracles of God” would include the Ten Commandments, and specifically, the Sabbath. Of note, is that Hebrews is referring to previous oracles, not new oracles. So, Hebrews is establishing that the prophets and the Ten Commandments are to be taught to all people of God (Eph 2:20, Rom.3:31).

Within the Ten Commandments is the fourth commandment which is the Sabbath command. This commandment does not say, “keep a Sabbath day holy”, nor does it say “keep your Sabbath day holy”, nor does it say “keep part of every day as a Sabbath”. The wording is “keep God’s Sabbath holy” (“the Sabbath of the LORD” Ex. 20:8). Hebrews 4:10 also says, “enter God’s rest”, not “enter your rest”, nor “enter rest whenever you think it is appropriate”. The testimony of Moses and the Israelites is that God’s rest, the Sabbath that they rested on, was only one day a week, on the seventh day. The testimony of Hebrews 4:4 is that God’s rest happens on the seventh day of the week. There is no prophecy or spoken word of God (an “oracle”) in the Bible that says to discard the Sabbath or to change the Sabbath into “keeping part of every day as the Sabbath”. So, Hebrews 4 must be referring to the Sabbath of the Ten Commandments and Hebrews 4 can not be referring to “resting during part of every day of the week”.

From another angle, some people think that upon becoming saved, one enters into Christ’s rest (resting in the “salvation of the Lord” and “no more works for salvation”); however, in Hebrews 4:11, the word “us” is referring to those who are already “holding fast our profession of faith” (Heb.4:14), i.e., people who are already believers. Thus, “that rest” is not upon salvation, but is for believers to enter into after salvation.

#### iv) Greek “rest”

Some argue that the Greek words prove the Millennium rule. The Greek words for “rest” throughout Hebrews 4:1-11 are

κατάπαυσις (katapausis, Strong’s index G2663) and

καταπαύω (katapauō, Strong’s index G2664),

except verse 9 which uses

σαββατισμός (sabbatismos, Strong’s index G4520).

The Greek word in verse 9 is not used anywhere else in the Greek New Testament to compare contexts, so some people extrapolate its meaning to say that it is referring to an era, such as the age of the church after the Acts 2 Day of Pentecost, or the age of the Millennium rule, or a perpetual Sabbath.

The key is that the command to “enter into God’s rest” is not in verse 9. So, regardless of what the Greek word in verse 9 is referring to, the command for us is in verses 10 and 11. The word “rest” in both verses 10 and 11 is the same Greek word used in verses 1 through 4, which refer to God’s seventh-day rest after creation.

Furthermore, the word “rest” in verse 9, σαββατισμός (sabbatismos), has the root word “Sabbath” right in it. As a comparison from the Greek Old Testament (Septuagint), the word for “Sabbath” in Exodus 20:8 is σαββάτων. Thus, the

commonly understood meaning is “Sabbath observance”. So, verse 9 actually reads

“There remaineth therefore an observance of the Sabbath for the people of God.”

Comparing the words in the Greek Old Testament Septuagint (which the New Testament Apostles often quoted from) compared with the Greek New Testament, the word for “rest” in Hebrews 4:1-11 is the same word “rest” used in Gen.2:3 (God’s first seventh-day day rest), Ex.20:11 (the command to Israel to rest on the seventh-day), and in Heb.4:10 (the command to the Christian church to cease from their works as God did from His).

#### **4. Early Church Worship (Acts 20:7, 1 Cor 16:2)**

4. In our only glimpse of an early church worship service in the New Testament, the church met on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7).

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In contrast to Argument 4, there are actually a number of “glimpses of an early church worship service” in the New Testament, and in fact, the early church met every Sabbath.

The following are a few of the passages. The question is, when did the church meet?

Acts 2:46 “And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart”.

They met daily. So, they met on the Sabbath as well.

Acts 20:7 “And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.”

The term “when the disciples comes together to break bread” actually is ambiguous. It could refer to the time of day that they ate a meal together (Luke 24:30). So, Sunday could have been one of many days that the disciples in Troas ate together, like the disciples in Jerusalem were during in Acts 2:46. Or, conversely, the verse could be interpreted to mean they were having Communion (1 Cor.11:20-22) and were only meeting on Sunday. Because the verse is ambiguous and could be taken equally to mean two different things, it is awkward to rely on it for doctrine.

What is clear is that it does not say that they no longer met on Saturday. So, since Paul, their teacher, kept the Sabbath, the plain interpretation would be that this meeting would have been in addition to them keeping the Sabbath.

Another reference that people use to try to justify Sunday-only worship is:

1 Corinthians 16:2 “Upon the first day of the week (Sunday) let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.”

Here it indicates that they did not necessarily meet on Sunday. Paul’s commandment is for every one to lay aside money on his own (“lay by him in store”, not “lay it into the church’s storehouse”).

Note also that any possible principle of bringing money to church on Sunday would not exempt one from keeping the Sabbath. In Lev.23:9-11, the Israelites were commanded to bring in their first fruits to be waved before the LORD not on the Sabbath, so they came sometimes on Sunday<sup>3</sup>. This, however, did not exempt them from keeping the Sabbath. In the same chapter, Sabbath observance was commanded as well (Lev.23:3). So, any Sunday (or any other day of the week) commandment did not exempt believers from keeping the Sabbath from Friday night to Saturday night.

Another reference of when the church met is:

Acts 2:1 “And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.”

Here, the church met on the day of Pentecost. The day of Pentecost occurred on any day of the week, including Sunday (depending on the year) (Deut.16:9)<sup>4</sup>. It wasn’t until 325 AD, that the Nicene Church Council first accepted setting Passover to only be on a Sunday (“Easter”) which then placed Pentecost to be always on Sunday. The word “Pentecost” comes from the Greek word πεντηκοστή, pronounced “pentēkostē”, and literally means “the fiftieth day”. The fifty days were counted from the Feast of Unleavened Bread (the feast immediately following the Passover). Keeping Pentecost was in addition to keeping the Sabbath. So, just like the Old Testament believers met both on the Sabbath and on the day of Pentecost, the New Testament meeting on Pentecost Sunday would not replace or end keeping the Sabbath, but would be in addition.

In fact, the New Testament church meeting on Pentecost and being anointed by the Holy Spirit on Pentecost substantiates the Sabbath and all the Ten Commandments. The Hebrew name for Pentecost is Shavuot (literally means “weeks”, pronounced “shä·vü·ah”, in Deut 16:10). The Ten Commandments were delivered to Moses fifty days after the exodus from Egypt and the Shavuot festival commemorates the time when God gave the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai. By the church meeting on the day of Pentecost, the church was effectively commemorating receiving the Ten Commandments and substantiated for itself to keep the Sabbath day holy (one of the

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<sup>3</sup> Deut.16:9 and Jewish tradition based the “day after the Sabbath” as being the 22<sup>nd</sup> day of the month of Nisan (the day after the Feast of Unleaven Bread), which could be any day of the week. Lev.23:9-16 could be interpreted to place the “waving of the first fruits” always on Sunday. The point though is that it was not on the Sabbath.

<sup>4</sup> See footnote 3 on the page 16.



Ten Commandments).

Another early church scripture reference is:

Acts 14:1 “And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed.”

Here, they met on the Sabbath. Note that this is well after Jesus’ death and resurrection and well after the “birth of the church”. So, the Sabbath did not “end” or “pass away”.

Another reference of when the church met is:

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

“Every Sabbath” shows that the Sabbath did not end even for the Greeks. They met on the Sabbath because the Sabbath was the day for holy meeting (Lev.23:3 “holy convocation”).

Incidentally, the only reference to the “Lord’s day” in the New Testament is Rev.1:10, when Apostle John received the words of the Book of Revelations. In Greek, the words for “Lord’s day” are κυριακός (kyriakos) and ἡμέρα (hēmera), which do not include any “Sabbath” or “rest” derivative, so it would seem reasonable that the Lord’s day would not be the Sabbath, though even that is unclear. Apostle John says nothing further about the “Lord’s day”, so all we know is that there was no commandment to replace the Sabbath with the “Lord’s day”. The other thing that seems clear from Rev.1 is that John was not in a Christian meeting.

So, there is no reference anywhere in the New Testament to the church meeting every Sunday instead of meeting on the Sabbath. Church history in fact says that the Christians who met on Sunday also met on Saturday. So, it seems that any speculation of the Sabbath having “passed away” is superimposed onto what is not said.

In contrast, Acts 18:4 says that the Christians met every Sabbath.

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

## 5. Gentile Nations in Old Testament

5. Nowhere in the Old Testament are the Gentile nations commanded to observe the Sabbath or condemned for failing to do so. That is certainly strange if Sabbath observance were meant to be an eternal moral principle.

The key to this argument is the assumption that if the Gentiles weren't commanded to keep a certain law, then this is proof that this law is not an eternal moral principle. This assumption, however, is not Biblical.

For example, nowhere in the Old Testament are Gentile nations commanded to “not covet” (the 10<sup>th</sup> Commandment); however, Paul says to the Gentiles that those who are covetous will not enter the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:10). So, just because the Gentile nations might not receive a specific command, does not mean that “breaking that commandment” is right.

Also, even though Gentiles as “nations” were not commanded to keep the Sabbath, the Old Testament does “command” Gentiles to keep the Sabbath. The following names a few verses:

Isaiah 56:6-7 declares a special blessing for Gentiles who keep the Sabbath.

Isaiah 56:6-7 says “Also the sons of the stranger (the Gentiles), that join themselves to the LORD, to serve him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer”

In addition, Exodus 20:10 says (note, most of Israel's servants were Gentiles, per Joshua 9:22-23),

“But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates”

Isaiah 66:23 says

“...from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD.”

“All flesh” includes all the Gentiles.

So, these verses support that the Sabbath is eternal and a universally moral principle.

## 6. Sabbath before Moses

6. There is no evidence in the Bible of anyone keeping the Sabbath before the time of Moses, nor are there any commands in the Bible to keep the Sabbath before the giving of the law at Mt. Sinai.

I would like to suggest that regardless of people's actions before Moses, we should follow Jesus. So, if Jesus commanded us to keep the Ten Commandments, by commanding us to love God with all our heart (Mt 22:37 was a reference to Deut.6:5 which refers to Deut.5:12), then that is what we should do.

However, in response to Argument 6, the following is some evidence that people before Moses kept the Sabbath:

Consider that it is unreasonable to think that Adam and Eve would not have kept the Sabbath. Adam and Eve were one day old when the Sabbath was created (Gen.2:3). Adam had finished all the animal naming on Day 6 of creation (Gen.2:20), God was Adam and Eve's direct companion, at this point they were completely obedient and sinless, the 7<sup>th</sup> day was sanctified by God Himself (Gen.2:3), and He spoke directly with them.

Consider Abraham. In Gen 26:4-5, it says,

"I will < bless Isaac >... Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws."

Note that God did not simply say, "because Abraham obeyed my command to leave Haran" (Gen.11:31, Gen.12:1). God named many commands: "my charge, my commandments, my statutes and my laws". That's substantial information. What were all those commandments? We don't know. So, to base an argument of not keeping the Sabbath on the fact that we don't know what laws for example Abraham kept seems very weak.

Further, this statement from God about Abraham parallels a similar statement from God when He referred to King David keeping God's "statutes and laws" (1 Kings 11:33). We know that King David kept the Sabbath (1 Chron. 31:5,6,31,32), so it is reasonable to believe that by stating that Abraham "kept God's statutes and laws", that Abraham also kept the Sabbath.

Another reasonable rationale for believing that people before Moses kept the Sabbath is the fact that a number of other laws in the Ten Commandment appear before the time of Moses (Murder, Commandment #6 - Genesis 4:10-11, Idolatry, Commandment #7 - Genesis 20:3).

Consider Noah. He used a seven-day cycle himself (Gen.8:10) and he knew which animals were clean and unclean (Gen. 8:20). This also suggests that God had given His laws in detail to the people before the time of Moses.

Israel was commanded to keep the Sabbath *before* Mt. Sinai (Ex.16:23). This was before the Ten Commandments were given in Exodus 20.

The Sabbath command itself starts with the word “remember”, so again this reflects that it was already being kept by people before Mt. Sinai.

So, there is evidence that people kept the Sabbath command before the time of Moses.

## **7. Acts 15:20 Church Council to the Gentiles**

7. When the Apostles met at the Jerusalem council (Acts 15), they did not impose Sabbath keeping on the Gentile believers.

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Acts 15:20 names 4 commandments; however, to assume these were the only commandments to the Gentiles is un-Biblical.

Acts 15:20 says “But that we write unto them, that they

1. abstain from pollutions of idols, and
2. from fornication, and
3. from things strangled, and
4. from blood.”

These 4 instructions do not include the command “do not kill”. So, if the logic of Argument 7 were correct, it would imply that it is ok for Gentile Christian to go about murdering others; however, “do not kill” is a command to the Gentile church (Gal.5:21, Rev.21:8), just not in Acts 15. So, the instructions to the Gentile church were not limited to those 4 instructions in Acts 15:20.

The article’s Argument 7 misses the very next verse:

Acts 15:21 (NJKV) says,

“For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath.”

In other words, “the Gentiles will learn the rest as they go to church every week on the Sabbath”.

## 8. Paul's Lists of Sins

8. The apostle Paul warned the Gentiles about many different sins in his epistles, but breaking the Sabbath was never one of them.

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It may not be obvious, but Paul actually did warn the Gentiles against breaking the Sabbath.

In 1 Corinthians 10:6 Paul instructs the Gentiles to learn from Israel's example. Ezekiel 20:13 specifically names breaking the Sabbath as one of the examples in the wilderness that was wrong. So, combining 1 Corinthians 10:6 with Ezekiel 20:13, Paul shows that polluting God's Sabbath is an evil thing that we should not lust after.

In addition, other writers warned against breaking the Sabbath. For example, the writer of Hebrews says to keep the Sabbath in Hebrews 4:11.

“Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.”

Also, in Acts 18:4 it shows that Paul and the Greeks were keeping the Sabbath every week.

“And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks.”

So, the believing Gentiles were keeping the Sabbath.

## 9. Early church fathers

9. The early church fathers, from Ignatius to Augustine, taught that the Old Testament Sabbath had been abolished and that the first day of the week (Sunday) was the day when Christians should meet for worship (contrary to the claim of many seventh-day Sabbatarians who claim that Sunday worship was not instituted until the fourth century).

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Ignatius (35 - 108 AD) is credited as being the first known Christian writer to argue in favor of the replacement of the Sabbath (Saturday) with the Lord's Day (Sunday) in 107 AD.

The fact that Ignatius was the first writer to replace the Sabbath with Sunday affirms that no one in the Bible, including Jesus or Paul, abolished the Sabbath nor instructed Christians to meet only on Sunday. This affirms that ignoring the Sabbath is a “doctrine of man” not a “doctrine of God” (Mt 15:9).

To better understand what Ignatius taught, the following is a quote from him about the Sabbath:

“Be not seduced by strange doctrines nor by antiquated fables, which are profitless. For if even unto this day we live after the manner of Judaism, we avow that we have not received grace.... If then those who had walked in ancient practices attained unto newness of hope, no longer observing Sabbaths but fashioning their lives after the Lord's day, on which our life also arose through Him and through His death which some men deny ... how shall we be able to live apart from Him? ... It is monstrous to talk of Jesus Christ and to practise Judaism. For Christianity did not believe in Judaism, but Judaism in Christianity”

– Ignatius to the *Magnesians* 8:1, 9:1-2, 10:3, Lightfoot translation.

Unfortunately, Ignatius' rationale is contrary to the Bible. According to Romans 6:4, our lives did not “rise through Christ on Christ's resurrection day”. Our lives “rose through Christ when we were saved and baptized”. Being saved and being baptized happens any day of the week. So, the foundation of Ignatius' teaching is unbiblical.

To further put Ignatius' teachings in context, Ignatius also wrote,

“Take care to do all things in harmony with God, with the bishop presiding in the place of God” – Letter to the *Magnesians* 2, 6:1

This is opposite to what the Bible says. 1 Tim.2:5 says “There is ...one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus”. The bishop is not to take the place of God.

Ignatius also wrote,

“They abstain from the Eucharist (also known as Communion or the Lord's Supper) and from prayer because they do not confess that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, flesh which suffered for our sins and which that Father, in his goodness, raised up again.” – *Letter to the Smyrnaeans* 6:2-7:1

Ignatius taught that every time the Eucharist, or Communion, is served it is Jesus' actual body.

Following Ignatius' teachings, some churches claim that because Jesus is eternal, so his death is eternally ongoing and his actual death is physically present in every Eucharist; however, that is contrary to the Bible. Heb.10:10-14 says

“By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.”

Three times it says Jesus was only sacrificed once. Jesus is not being perpetually sacrificed, but is now sitting at the right hand of God.

To superimpose that the Communion is the actual flesh of Jesus' body is idolatry (Ex. 20:4) and thus, Ignatius' teaching is an abomination to God. For there to be no idolatry, it becomes clearer that Jesus' word "remembrance" in His phrase "do this in remembrance of Me" (Luke 22:19, 1 Cor. 11:24) is referring to past tense, only one sacrifice, not to a recreated or extended sacrifice into the present.

So, Ignatius advocated departing away from God's holy scriptures, just like the Jewish leaders did in the Bible (Judges 2:7-11). So, by the article recommending that people follow Ignatius makes all of the article's claims questionable. Using Ignatius as a justification puts "Sabbath passed away" doctrine in the same category as Ignatius' other non-Biblical and non-Godly doctrine.

Regarding Augustine, he lived from 354 to 430 AD so he was even further removed from the original New Testament church. So, if he advocated against the Sabbath, it would be similar to Jewish leaders advocating against the Sabbath in Jeremiah's time (Jer. 17:27), or the Pharisees following and upholding the traditions of men handed down to them.

In contrast to Ignatius and Augustine's points of view, Socrates of Constantinople, who covered Greek Christian church history for the years 305-439 AD, wrote this:

"Almost all churches throughout the world celebrate the sacred mysteries on the Sabbath of every week. Yet the Christians of Alexandria and at Rome on account of the same ancient tradition have ceased to do this." – *Ecclesiastical History*, verse 21 and 22 in a select library of Nicene and post-Nicene fathers, the second series, volume 22, page 132.

So, even into the 400's AD, the Christians throughout the Roman Empire were keeping the Sabbath on Saturday. Despite some early church fathers trying to steer believers away from God's command, God kept the majority following Him and keeping the Sabbath for a very long time.

The early Godly church leaders also knew not to include Ignatius' writings in the canon of scripture.

## **10. Commemorate Jesus' Resurrection; Every day spiritual rest**

10. Sunday has not replaced Saturday as the Sabbath. Rather the Lord's Day is a time when believers gather to commemorate His resurrection, which occurred on the first day of the week. Every day to the believer is one of Sabbath rest, since we have ceased from our spiritual labor and are resting in the salvation of the Lord (Hebrews 4:9-11).

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The article's argument is hypocritical. On one hand, it is claiming that the Sabbath has "ended", yet it is still using a 7-day cycle to meet and commemorate.

Further, "every day could not be a Sabbath rest", otherwise one would not be working any day ("Sabbath" means "to cease from your work"). "If one doesn't work, neither shall he eat" (2 Thess. 3:10).

"Every day could not be a spiritual rest", otherwise no one would be "resisting the devil" (James 4:7).

"Part of every day could not be the Sabbath", otherwise one would not be "resting in the same way that God did" the day after creation (Hebrews 4:10).

So, trying to "spiritualize the Sabbath" appears to simply be an excuse to not obey God and keep His Sabbath.

To say that we should "commemorate Jesus resurrection" is also not Biblical. After Jesus resurrected, Jesus continued to teach over the course of 40 days (Acts 1:3) and then His apostles continued to teach and wrote scripture for many years after that. During all this time, there is not one verse that even hints at commemorating Jesus' resurrection, let alone commemorating it every week. This is a "man-made" creation and "man-made" rationalization.

Note that "man-made" creations are ok as long as they don't diminish a law of God, but if they decrease a law of God, they are sin.

Jesus said,

"Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?" ...in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."  
(Mt.15:3,9)

So, I agree with the author that the issue is not "replacement" of the Sabbath. The issue is "deletion" of the Sabbath. Sunday is not the issue. The issue is breaking the Sabbath by thinking that the Sabbath from Friday night to Saturday night has passed away.

The scripture referenced by the article's Argument 10 is Hebrews 4:9-11. The context of these verses is that they are referring to Hebrews 4:4 which says "God did rest the



seventh day”. Also, Hebrews 4:5 says “enter into My rest” (enter into God’s rest, which is the 7<sup>th</sup> day), not enter our rest, which would be whenever we choose it to be.

So, the question is, what is God’s rest?

Some think it is the “salvation of the Lord”, or being “saved without works”, but this could not be it because God was “already saved”, so to speak, before He rested (it’s “God’s rest” that is the question, not “rest that comes from God”). Also, the writer of Hebrews is talking to people who are already Christians, so they are already saved. Thus, the writer is commanding people who are already saved, who already are within the salvation of the Lord, to then enter God’s rest.

According to Gen. 2:3 and Hebrews 4:4, God’s rest happens only on the 7th day.

Hebrews 4:10 says “For he that is entered into His rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.” Note that there is nothing in the context that references resting every day in the salvation of the Lord. The context is God (the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in unity) resting on the 7th day, the weekly Sabbath.

Per verse 11, do not be disbelieving, but enter God’s rest.

## **11. Romans 14:5 “Esteemeth Every Day Alike”**

11. In Romans 14:5, Paul forbids those who observe the Sabbath (these were no doubt Jewish believers) to condemn those who do not (Gentile believers).

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...firstly, please consider that every other argument against the Sabbath was a misrepresentation of the context. The same pattern has been applied to Romans 14.

Romans 14:5 says,

“Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand. One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks.”

The context is “eating meat”, “not judging” and “master-servant relationship to God”.

Within this context, “esteeming one day above another” refers to eating or not eating

meat on certain days, and the passage speaks against judging others regarding their eating habits on those occasions. In contrast, there is no context regarding the Ten Commandments or the Sabbath in this passage.

The passage is about esteeming one day as a vegetarian day or not.

The hypocrisy in the article's argument is that the article esteems Sunday higher than other days. If one believes that one should not "esteem any day higher than another" or that "there is no difference between days", then Sunday should also not be esteemed higher than other days. In contrast, there is no context for this verse to refer to either the Sabbath or to Sunday. There is no context to give the reader any authority to superimpose a change in one of the Ten Commandments. The context is eating meat or not on certain days.

Consider the passage from another point of view. Remember that Paul was a keeper of God's laws.

James and the elders, speaking to Paul, said, "...and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law." (Acts 21:24)

Paul kept God's laws and there was no debate or conflict from any law-abiding Jews about this passage.

So, if we look at God's laws, there is no commandment to be or not be a vegetarian (except for the requirement once a year to eat the Passover lamb). So here, Paul's example of "eating meat" versus "eating herbs" is an example of things outside the laws of God. Because they are outside the laws of God, these are trivial to God and not to be judged over.

To assume then that the passage jumps from a non-law issue of vegetarianism to a law issue of such magnitude as one of the Ten Commandments, hand-written by God Himself, the Sabbath being ranked higher than adultery in the Ten Commandments, and those who broke the Sabbath were killed (Num.15:32-36, Mark 3:6), would be out of context, especially for an "aside comment" such as it is written in Romans 14:5.

To assume that the passage is referring to the Sabbath would be to assume that breaking the Sabbath is trivial to God. That would be in direct contradiction to the Ten Commandments which both Jesus supported and lived (Luke 4:16, Luke 23:56) and which His apostles, including Paul and the church leaders, supported and lived.

The meaning within the passage's context of "eating meat" is that one person may esteem one day as more important for not eating meat than another. The context is to not judge others on issues that are not named in the Old Testament laws as being significant to God.

## 12. Colossians 2:16-17

Here are the reasons we hold this view.

12. In Colossians 2:16-17, Paul explicitly refers to the Sabbath as a shadow of Christ, which is no longer binding since the substance (Christ) has come. It is quite clear in those verses that the weekly Sabbath is in view. The phrase "a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day" refers to the annual, monthly, and weekly holy days of the Jewish calendar (cf. 1 Chronicles 23:31; 2 Chronicles 2:4, 31:3; Ezekiel 45:17; Hosea 2:11).

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...again, firstly, please consider that every other argument against the Sabbath was a misrepresentation of the context. The same pattern has been applied to Colossians 2.

To understand Colossians 2, there are two different laws that are related to the Sabbath.

The first is the Ten Commandment's Sabbath law to cease (rest) (Exodus 20:10).

The second is the sacrificial law to burn two lambs, burn some flour mingled with oil (this was called a "meat offering"), and to pour strong wine before the Lord in the holy place (this was called a "drink offering") on the Sabbath (Numbers 28:9-10).

Colossians 2:16 is referring to the second one, that the sacrificial laws on the Sabbath (and on every other holy day) have ended. Col 2:16 is clarifying that it is not only the animal sacrifices that have ended, but also the "meat" offerings (the "flour" or, in some translations, "food" offerings) and the "wine" offerings associated with the animal sacrifices that have ended. This is consistent with Hebrews 10:8-10 which refer to both sacrifice and offerings and says that Jesus' body was the everlasting final sacrifice, and so has replaced all animal and grain sacrifices, not just the lambs.

In contrast, Colossians 2:16 could not be saying that the holy Sabbath rest from the Ten Commandments has "ended". For example, combining verses 20 and 21 of Matthew 24, Jesus said, "At the time of the great tribulation at the end of the world, pray that your flight be not on the Sabbath day". So here, Jesus talks about the future and shows that the holy Sabbath day of rest will continue after His death. So, the Sabbath has not "ended" nor has it been replaced by His sacrificial body.

Col.2 is talking about the weekly Sabbath and it is saying that the sacrifices on the weekly Sabbath have ended, not the Sabbath day itself.

## **i) Proof 1 — “Drink”**

The following is Col.2:16 quoted:

“Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days”.

This is a list of items. So, the verse is not focusing on the “Sabbath days” only; however, the article’s argument removes the “Sabbath days” out of the context of the rest of the list and basically claims that the verse says,

“Let no one judge you...in respect of the Sabbath days”.

To show that this is out of context, consider that if this argument or approach were correct, then the argument would also apply to each other item in the list. As an example, the second item in the list is “drink”. Using the article’s approach, the verse would say,

“Let no one judge you ...in respect of drink”.

This argument, however, is unbiblical. Paul names “drunkenness” in Gal 5:21 as a “work of the flesh”. Similarly, in 1 Cor.6:10 Paul says that the drunkards will not enter the kingdom of God.

So, Gentiles are still being “judged in respect of drink”.

What could Colossians 2:16 be referring to so that it doesn’t contradict other scripture verses? It is referring to the “drink offerings” as described in Numbers 28:7 that were part of the sacrificial system. The phrase “in meat (or “food”) and in drink” refers to the flour and wine offerings that were sacrificed as a “sweet savour” (Exodus 29:38-41, Num.28:9). This would be a commonly understood term in Paul’s mind because these offerings were occurring every day. Thus, “drink” is referring to “drink offerings”. Since the sacrificial system has “ended” by Christ’s sacrifice (Heb.10:10 “Jesus’ body was sacrificed once for all”), Paul is saying “therefore let no one judge you in respect of the sacrificial system”.

In the same way that isolating “drink” from the list generated an unbiblical interpretation, similarly, isolating “Sabbath” from the list generates an unbiblical interpretation.

Numbers 28 ties every component of Col.2:16’s list together by explaining that “meat (which means “flour”) and drink offerings” were required on “holydays, festivals, new moons, and Sabbath days”. The writer, Apostle Paul, would have been very familiar with Numbers 28 because he was trained as a Pharisee (Acts 22:3).

Thus, the context of the verse is a whole list, and the list as a whole is referring to sacrificial offerings, such as those on the Sabbath days, and not to the holy rest during the Sabbath day.

## **ii) Paul “means what he says” (“Yes, do judge with respect to the Sabbath”)**

Some people argue that “Paul means what he is saying” when he says “do not judge in respect of the Sabbath”. The confusion here is that a truth is being used to rationalize a non-truth.

The truth is that “Paul *does* mean what he is saying”. The non-truth is an assumption that Paul is referring to “resting” on the Sabbath.

The truth that “Paul *does* mean what he is saying” needs to parallel the correct truth that what he saying is “no more sacrificial offerings on the Sabbath”.

For example, there is nothing in the context of the verse that refers to other laws in the Ten Commandments or that refers to “resting”. One needs to ask, what context gives the reader the authority to superimpose a change from the Ten Commandments into this verse? As described above, the context is only about “animal sacrifices and grain offerings” on the Sabbath.

Consider, if Paul were referring to “do not judge with respect to anything about the Sabbath, including resting”, that then Paul would be disagreeing with Jesus. Jesus not only “judged others in respect of the Sabbath” but he also told others to “judge righteously in respect of the Sabbath” (John 7:21-24). Also, the writer of Hebrews in Hebrews 4:11 judged believers who didn’t keep the Sabbath and called these people “disbelieving”.

So, “Paul *does* mean what he says”, but Paul also is not disagreeing with the rest of the Bible. “Paul *does* mean what he is saying” and what Paul is saying is to “let no one judge you in respect of animal sacrifices and grain offerings (meat and drink offerings) on the Sabbath”.

## **iii) Proof 2 — “Lord of the Sabbath”**

Jesus was called the “Lamb of God” (John 1:36, Rev.5:6). This title places Jesus as the replacement of the “lamb, flour and wine offerings” which were required by God (Heb.10:8-10).

In contrast, Jesus was never called “the Sabbath of God”, which would have been a title for a replacement of the Sabbath. Rather He called Himself “Lord of the Sabbath” (Mt.12:8). By this, Jesus established that the Sabbath will continue as long as He is Lord, which is forever (Rev.11:15). Jesus made the Sabbath continue forever.

Referring to the future, God said,

“...from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD.” (Isaiah 66:23)

#### iv) Proof 3 — “The Shadow of Things to Come”

To emphasize that Paul is only talking about sacrifices, in the very next verse, Colossians 2:17, Paul says,

“Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body (substance) is of Christ.”

The same wording of “shadow of things to come” is used in Hebrews 10:1. It shows that this phrase is referring to animal sacrifices (not to any of the Ten Commandments).

Hebrews 10:1 says “For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.”

So, the “shadow” is the sacrifices, not any of the Ten Commandments.

Note the word “law” here refers to the sacrificial system’s laws only, not to the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments, including the Sabbath, are still in effect (1 Corinthians 6:9, Romans 13:9, Acts 13:42, James 2:8, 1 Peter 1:14-16, “walking in the Spirit” means obeying God’s laws Gal.5:16, “servants of righteousness” means obeying God’s laws Romans 6:18).

The word “law” here refers to the animal sacrifices on the Sabbath, and not to the Sabbath day of rest itself. So, it was the sacrificial system only that was the “shadow of things to come”.

#### v) Proof 4 — “The Substance is of Christ”

Some people use the word “substance” to imply that it means Christ has become the “central theme” or “spiritual Sabbath”. The Greek word for “body” or “substance” in Col.2:17 is σῶμα (pronounced sō'-mä)<sup>5</sup>. In all other locations that this word is used in the Bible, it only has the meaning of a “human body” or “animal body” (or to represent the “church” as a “physical body”). In Greek, it never has the additional meaning that the English has of, “central theme”, as in “the *body* of the statement”. In Greek, this word refers only to a physical being.

So, “body” or “substance” in Colossians 2:17 is referring to the actual physical body of Christ, not to the “central theme” or “spiritual substance”.

It was Christ’s physical body that was being foreshadowed by the physical bodies of the animal sacrifices.

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<sup>5</sup> Every Greek word in Col. 2:17 including σῶμα (translated “body” or “substance”) is identical in both the Greek manuscripts used by the King James Version (the Textus Receptus) and in the Greek manuscripts used by NASB, NIV, and others (the Alexandrian text type).

Hebrews 10:5 says “Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me:”

Just like Christ’s “body” or “substance” did not “end” the judgment against idol worshippers (7<sup>th</sup> Commandment, Ex.20:14) or drunkards (1 Cor.6:9-10), similarly, Christ’s “body” or “substance” did not “end” judgment against breaking the Sabbath (Ex.20:8-11).

Incidentally, after Christ’s death, after His sacrifice (which, according to the article’s argument, would have been when Sabbath rest ended), Christ still rested on the Sabbath (Luke 24:1) and so did His followers (Luke 23:56, Acts 14:1, Acts 18:4).

So the “Sabbath” did not end, because it is a universal moral concept like “not worshipping idols” or “not taking God’s name in vain”. The Sabbath is not an object like “animals and flour that are physically sacrificed”. Christ’s body was a physical object that shadowed the physical objects of the sacrificial system.

#### **vi) “Ordinances nailed to the Cross”**

Colossians 2:13-14 (KJV) says

“...having forgiven you all trespasses; 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;”

I was taught that this meant that “God’s laws were nailed to the cross”; however, it does not say that.

The King James Version says “the ordinances that were against us” were nailed to the cross. Farther along the same chapter, Col.2:20 (KJV) then goes on to define “ordinances” to mean “commandments of men” (not God’s law). So, in this context, it was the “commandments of men” (bondage to sin) that was nailed to the cross.

From the English Standard Version (ESV), it says

“...having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross.

The English Standard Version says “the record of debt was nailed to the cross”. So, again, it was not God’s law that was nailed to the cross. It was the debt from disobeying God’s law that was nailed to the cross. So, God’s law remains and we are still judged by it (Heb.10:29, 1 Cor 3:12-15).

Romans 6:1-2 says “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any

longer therein?"

Consider, what is sin?

1 John 3:4 "sin is the transgression of the law."

So, the law remains to define what sin is, and believers are called to be "dead to sin" which means to obey all of God's law as "servants of righteousness" (a command to the Gentiles, 1 Peter 2:24). So, God's law was not "nailed to the cross", and it hasn't "ended".

Consider if God's law had died on the cross, then we would be "free to do whatever we think is right". However, God says,

"Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes." (Deut.12:8)

Further, Jesus said,

"If ye love me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15, Mt.5:19).

Jesus did not say "do whatever you think is right". So, God's laws were not "nailed to the cross".

Jesus said, "it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail." (Luke 16:17)

So, the laws of God, God's commandments, including all of the Ten Commandments, are still in effect (Jesus words in Mt.22:37 are a quote from Deut.6:5 which is referring to all the Ten Commandments in Deut.5).

### **vii) Is there a Separation between Moses' Ordinances and God's laws?**

Some people argue that there is a separation between the law (or ordinances) of Moses and the law of God (or the 10 commandments); however, the two can not be separated. For example, Moses did not invent his own laws. They were spoken to him directly by God. So, the laws of Moses ARE the laws of God.

When one reads the "ordinances of Moses", they provide further information about the 10 Commandments. For example, they explain that "do not kill" means "do not murder". So, the laws of Moses can not be separated from the 10 Commandments.

In terms of what was "ended" or "covered", ALL the laws, including all the 10 Commandments and all the ordinances, were covered by Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. Jesus' sacrifice paid for every sin. The key is that all the law was "done away with" only "for salvation". Upon being saved, we are freed from breaking God's laws and breaking His ordinances, so that we can obey all His commandments, statutes,



testimonies, ordinances, and EVERYTHING that pleases Him.

The only laws or ordinances that Jesus' body replaced were those that were prophesied to be replaced, namely, the animal sacrifices and the Levitical priesthood (as per Hebrews' commentary on various prophetic Psalms).

Amos 3:7 says,

“Surely the Lord GOD does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.”

So, something has to be prophesied about for it to be “ended”. It is the prophecies that make the distinction. The distinction is not between the “ordinances of Moses” as compared to the “laws of God” since both are from God.

Regarding the Sabbath, since there is no prophecy in the Old Testament about the weekly Sabbath ever ending or being replaced, and, in fact, Isaiah 66:23 refers to the Sabbath continuing on in heaven, thus, Jesus' death and resurrection made no change to the weekly Sabbath.

#### **viii) Are Paul's writing sometimes difficult to interpret?**

The only scripture that I am aware of which warns people about misinterpreting another piece of scripture is Peter's warning about misinterpreting Paul's writings:

2 Peter 3:15-16 says “And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.”

Understanding that Paul's background was one of working for his salvation (as a Pharisee, Acts 26:5), and keeping all the sacrificial laws, helps one to keep Paul's writings in context.

Col.2:16-17 is only about the sacrifices and the sacrificial system.

## 12b. Colossians 2:17 special Sabbaths?

(1. Continued) If Paul were referring to special ceremonial dates of rest in that passage, why would he have used the word "Sabbath?" He had already mentioned the ceremonial dates when he spoke of festivals and new moons.

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It is actually of no effect whether Paul is referring to the special, extra Sabbaths ("special ceremonial dates of rest", Lev. 23:24, 32, and 39), or the weekly Sabbath (Exodus 20:8) because Paul is referring to "not respecting" the animal sacrifices that occurred on both of these types of dates (Num 28:1-11, Hebrews 10:1). Paul is not referring to other aspects of the Sabbath, such as resting.

Some people argue that there is a separation between "Sabbaths" (weekly Sabbaths) and "sabbaths" (extra Feast day sabbaths); however, in the Greek, there is no distinction.

The issue is animal sacrifices being replaced by Jesus' body. So, if in fact the weekly Sabbaths were not included in Col.2, then animal sacrifices on the weekly Sabbath would still be required; however, ALL animal sacrifices on ALL holy days have been replaced by Christ's body.

## The Article's Conclusion

So while we still follow the pattern of designating one day of the week a day for the Lord's people to gather in worship, we do not refer to this as "the Sabbath."

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In article's conclusion, he is following a "one day in seven" pattern; however, he is unfortunately denying the source of the "one-day-in-seven".

As an example, if his claim that the Sabbath has "ended" were correct, then one would need a different Bible verse to support Christians meeting once every seven days. However, consider the following:

1 Cor 16:2 says to store money on your own on Sundays, not at a meeting.

Acts 2:1 says that the church met on the once-a-year occasion to respect the law of the Feast of Pentecost.

Acts 20:7 makes no reference to this meeting being a daily meeting, a one-off meeting, or a once-a-month meeting.

Luke 24:33 was a once-per-death meeting (not weekly) to mourn Christ's death. Here, the followers of Jesus first kept the Sabbath, then they met on

Sunday (Luke 23:55-56).

Acts 2:46 says they met every day.

So, none of these verses which do not include the Sabbath say that the disciples were to meet one day in seven.

On the other hand, the verses that include the Sabbath, say they met every Sabbath.

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

So, it was not made clear that it was Sunday that they met “one-in-seven days”; however, it was made clear that they met every Sabbath.

The article’s conclusion of keeping a one-in-seven-day pattern would conclude that the “one-day-in-seven worship and rest” has not “passed away”. In other words, the Sabbath has not “passed away” because that is the only source of the “one-in-seven day” principle.

Also note that there is no scripture that commands people to worship on Sunday instead of on the Sabbath. Thus, rejecting the Sabbath is a “man-made” idea (i.e., “legalism” according to Jesus, Mt.15:9).

Some people question “how can the Sabbath still be applicable if so many Christians don’t keep it today”. The Israelites had also known about the Sabbath and yet many of them stopped keeping it at various points in history. Around 610 BC, God said to His people, “Cursed be the man that trusteth in man” (Jer.17:5) and “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jer. 17:9). This was God’s lead up to calling His people to come back to keeping the Sabbath, “Thus saith the LORD; Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the Sabbath day” (Jer.17:21-27).

Similarly, Jesus rebuked the religious leaders of His day for “teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Mt.15:9).

Similarly, in approx. 66 AD, the writer of Hebrews challenged the Christian church to “labour therefore to enter into God’s 7<sup>th</sup> day rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief that the Israelites had” (Hebrews 4:11).

So, God calls His people, His church, to trust in Him and not to trust in mankind, regardless of how many Christians or non-Christians are not following the Bible. God calls us to trust in Him, read the Bible for ourselves, and follow His words.

In Jeremiah’s day, God was calling His people back to keeping the Sabbath. In the New Testament, God was calling His people back to keeping God’s seventh-day Sabbath, and not to be disbelieving (Heb.4:11). Today, God is calling us to keep His holy Sabbath and not to be disbelieving. Please compare the scriptures for yourself and see which side represents what the Bible is saying.

King David knew and kept the Sabbath as part of the “law of the LORD” and he wrote:

Psalm 119:1 “Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD.”

And Isaiah said,

“Blessed is the man ...that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it.” (Isaiah 56:2)

## **Circumcision**

Consider circumcision for a moment. Firstly, consider the huge debate that Paul had for appearing to change this law (but, in fact, it was not a change). Now consider that there was no debate, no conflict, no large discussion about “the Sabbath ending”. This shows that none of Paul’s writings were intended to be against the Sabbath.

Paul spoke adamantly against needing circumcision for obtaining salvation (Acts 15:1, Gal.2:16). Paul says in Gal.5:2 “if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing”.

Now consider Acts 16:3. This was after the Church Council had met in Acts 15 regarding not needing circumcision for salvation. Paul gets Timothy circumcised.

So, did Paul force Timothy to lose his salvation by having him circumcised, since Paul says, “if one is circumcised, Christ will no longer profit you anything”?

No. Paul is talking about “obtaining salvation” (Gal.5:4). Acts 15:1 clearly says the issue is about “salvation”, not about “circumcision” in itself. In fact, health studies have overwhelmingly verified that circumcision is the best way to prevent diseases. So, Timothy being circumcised was a good thing. Paul was circumcised too (Philippians 3:5).

So, even the issue of circumcision was not about “ending circumcision” but about not requiring it for salvation. Keeping the Sabbath is similarly not about salvation. It is service to God after salvation.

Paul says in Gal. 4:8-9, “when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods.” Now that you know God, do service for Him.

The gods of “money”, “employer”, “not having enough time”, and “supplying your needs your way” are no gods. Now that you know the true God, why place these other “gods” higher than the Most High God? Since He is the Most High, not us, we need to serve Him His way, not our way.

God is still keeping the Sabbath today.

Many pastors testify that the Sabbath still exists but that it is for the Jews only. They are testifying that God is still resting on the Sabbath. This God is the same God of the

Gentile Christians. Instead of insisting on being a “wild” branch kicking against God’s design, I invite to try the Sabbath and see how good the juice from *God’s* root tastes.

Like Paul says, do not keep the Sabbath to obtain salvation. Keep the Sabbath because you have faith in Jesus and love Him. Jesus said, “If you love me, keep My commandments.” Consider that the Ten Commandments were the spoken word of God and that Jesus is the spoken word of God (John 1:1).

As you read Galatians, remember that Abraham kept God’s laws (Gen 26:4-5, James 2:21). Faith without works is dead (James 2:20).

I invite you to not get distracted by tradition or by fear of others. Try it for yourself. As a born-again Christian, we love God and want to do whatever pleases Him. So, I invite you to try the Sabbath and then you will see for yourself if keeping the Sabbath pleases the Lord.

## **Conclusion**

So, the reasons people use for not keeping the Sabbath are based on scriptures that were taken out of context, or from examples of people that we should not be following.

I had been taught the out-of-context rationale proposed here by this article when I was growing up so I had been bound by it for many years. As a result, even though I had been born-again, was baptized in the Holy Spirit and was reading my Bible an hour each day, I had many unanswered questions, including a lack of deep, deep contentment and a prayer life that felt like I was trying to reach God with my prayers rather than Him coming to me.

When I switched to resting on the Sabbath (Friday night to Saturday night), the verification from God was overwhelming that this was His design. God’s word had freed me (John 8:31-32) and I began experiencing even more abundant life from Jesus (John 10:10, John 14:15, 1 John 5:3). I instantly received deep, deep contentment inside and a closeness with God that was my deepest desire. Now, God comes to me (Isaiah 56:7 “joyful in My house of prayer”), instead me trying to reach Him in prayer – and many, many other outstanding blessings, just like the Bible says (Isaiah 58:13-14 and many other verses). Of course, one doesn’t keep the Sabbath because of the “rewards”, but because of “obedience” per Luke 17:10. The rewards do however provide strong verification from God that this is His plan and His command for us.

So, I have personally grown up trying the article’s suggested way of abandoning the Saturday Sabbath and have found it is self-destructive (knowingly and unknowingly) in comparison to the wonderful blessings from God when the Sabbath is kept His way.

I invite the author of the article and everyone else to give the true “day of rest” a try. I recommend trying it purely, without any compromise, and from your heart

(1 Sam.6:17, Luke 17:10). Then you will enter into God's rest, and you will be blessed! Try it!

*"O taste and see that the LORD is good" (Psalm 34:8)*

Michael Meszaros  
How to keep the Sabbath? See  
[www.michaelzm.com/Sabbath-WhatIsIt.pdf](http://www.michaelzm.com/Sabbath-WhatIsIt.pdf)