

April 16, 2010

Dear Jehovah's Witnesses,

Recently two of your members visited our home and left us copies of your February 1, 2010 issues of *Awake!* and *The Watchtower* magazines. During the course of the past several years we have had several members of the Jehovah's Witness organization visit our home and we always enjoy their visits. They have always been friendly and courteous. While we do not agree on some doctrinal views, we have enough in common that keeps our discussions lively and engaging. Some of our common areas include our mutual anticipation of the soon-coming kingdom of peace, our rejection of the trinity doctrine and our decision to not observe holidays such as Christmas or birthdays.

Before leaving, Jean and Linda very kindly invited my wife and me to join them at their place of meeting for fellowship on Sunday afternoons. They also gave us the two magazines that I mentioned above. I was reading *The Watchtower* magazine when I came across the article entitled "Should You Keep the Weekly Sabbath?" My wife and I have been observing the weekly Sabbath for 24 years, so by now we have heard nearly every argument there is against the observance of the weekly Sabbath. We have heard all of the arguments presented in your article, and since we have already sorted through them and disproven them to ourselves, we feel it is reasonable for us to respond to those arguments.

### *The Introduction*

The article begins ominously by portraying Sabbathkeepers as being overly eccentric or otherwise ditz. In the three examples, one group manned 70 roadblocks as they halted all traffic in Fiji as a part of their demand that the nation return to strict Sabbath observance. Another group requires all new buildings to have at least one elevator that stops at each floor so as to prevent anyone from performing the "work" of pushing the elevator buttons. The final example, from the island of Tonga, doesn't even include Sabbathkeepers because the day they keep holy is Sunday. Nevertheless, the activities they prohibit, such as not allowing aircraft to land or any ships to dock on that day, are inclusive of those that would not be permitted by the fourth commandment of Scripture. The three examples you presented exhibit a common approach used by authors who compose articles designed to ridicule or otherwise discredit the practice or belief represented by each respective group. In this case, the intent seems to be that of portraying Sabbathkeepers everywhere as being unstable in their ways. The negative seed has been planted in the minds of those who may have begun reading the article with an open mind, guiding them in the direction intended by the author.

I can convey this same type of subliminally negative message about Jehovah's Witnesses by digging up news items about eccentric members of your organization. For example, the March 19, 2009 edition of London's *The Daily Telegraph* included a story of a pregnant Jehovah's Witness who staged a bikini-clad protest against a school after it cut down a hedge that had separated their properties. Here is an excerpt from the article:

Mrs. King, a mother-of-five who is six months pregnant, said there was nothing wrong with her bikini protest and she was merely spreading the gospel according to Jehovah.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Telegraph.co.uk*, "Pregnant Jehovah Witness in bikini protest against independent school," by Auslan Cramb, Telegraph Media Group Limited, 111 Buckingham Palace Road, London, 19 Mar 2009. This article may be read in its entirety by accessing the following URL:

I am certain that many Jehovah's Witnesses would object to Mrs. King's actions, and I can understand their embarrassment. When I read the article, I was persuaded that Mrs. King is probably correct in her view that the school should not have cut down the hedge without at least consulting with her first. Nevertheless, while I may agree with her concern, this does not mean I agree with her methods of attempting to resolve the matter. Does this mean I believe all Jehovah's Witnesses behave in the same irrational manner when it comes to exercising their rights? Not at all. In the same way, while I agree with the Fiji Sabbathkeepers' view that their nation should embrace observance of the weekly Sabbath, this does not mean I agree with their method of attempting to achieve their desired result, nor should all Sabbathkeepers be lumped together in this manner. In other words, you weren't "playing fair."

You summarized your introduction by stating, "As the above examples show, many people feel that God requires them to keep a weekly Sabbath day. In fact, some say that Sabbath-keeping is of utmost importance, believing that it involves our eternal salvation. Others feel that the most important commandment from God is to keep the Sabbath. What is the Sabbath? And does the Bible urge Christians to observe a Sabbath day each week?"

As a professing Sabbath-keeper, I feel obligated to share my perspective in response to the above summary. First, I would ask, "Has our Heavenly Father commanded the observance of the weekly Sabbath day?" I can confidently answer that yes, He commanded all Israel to observe the weekly Sabbath. Thus, the question *really* isn't whether or not our Creator requires His people to keep a weekly Sabbath day – the question is, "Does He *still* require His people to observe the weekly Sabbath?"

Secondly, neither June nor I have *ever* stated or implied that our eternal salvation depends on whether or not we keep the Sabbath. Whereas some folks may choose to regard this issue from the angle of salvation versus condemnation, June and I prefer the Luke 17:10 approach. This is where the Messiah (Whom we refer to as *Yeshua* instead of the Grecian form *Jesus*) said:

<sup>10</sup> So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.

Rather than approach Sabbath-keeping from a "do it or die" perspective, June and I approach it from a "love" perspective. If we feel that our Creator wants us to do something, regardless of whether or not we have the correct understanding, we feel duty-bound to do it – not because our salvation is hanging in the balance, but because *not* doing what we feel He wants us to do is a clear demonstration of *rebellion*, not love. If we love Him, we will keep His commandments, just as Yeshua explained in Matthew 19:17 and affirmed by the Apostle John in I John 5:2-3:

<sup>2</sup> By this we know that we love the children of the Almighty, when we love the Almighty, and keep His commandments.

<sup>3</sup> For this is the love of the Almighty; that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous.

Finally, the author listed a third characteristic that might exemplify some Sabbath-keepers: that some Sabbath-keepers believe the most important commandment from our Creator is the one about keeping the Sabbath. I'm sure some Sabbath-keepers feel that the Sabbath is the most important commandment, but that certainly does not describe June and me. Since the Bible does not provide a list of "Most Important Commandments," I do not feel anyone is justified in attaching levels of importance to any

commandments.<sup>2</sup> The Sabbath stands out because, out of all of the Ten Commandments, it is the primary commandment singled out by Christians as having been “done away.” The other nine, it is reasoned, were either retained or else done away, then “brought back” under the new covenant.

For example, promiscuity is becoming commonplace within Christendom, yet adultery is still considered just as sinful now as it was at Sinai. I suppose that if Christendom were to have universally taught that adultery was “done away” while retaining the other nine commandments, some who, like June and me, believe adultery is a sin, would teach that it is the “most important commandment.” We would still disagree with such a notion. Thus, it seems to us that it isn’t so much a question as to which commandment is “most important,” but rather, which commandment is most neglected, ignored and disregarded? Many Sabbath-keepers answer that the fourth commandment is the most neglected.

### ***What is the Sabbath?***

The second portion of the article, in my opinion, would have offered your readers a more balanced introduction to your article. It provides us with an accurate definition of the word “Sabbath.” We read, “The English word ‘Sabbath’ comes from a Hebrew word meaning ‘rest, cease, desist.’” This is true. I might also add that according to *Strong’s Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary*, this word (שַׁבָּת, #7676) also means “intermission.” Regardless of whichever day one might choose to rest on each week, many scholars, including those from the medical field, agree that we all need a weekly “intermission” from our daily grind. For example, Jordan S. Rubin, PhD., in his book *The Maker’s Diet*, wrote, “Besides giving us the night for regular sleep, the Creator programmed people and animals to rest completely every seventh day. When we tinker with His design, things start to unravel. Even the Creator rested on the seventh day.”<sup>3</sup> Another author, Kevin Trudeau, in his book *Natural Cures “They” Don’t Want You to Know About*, wrote, “Rest from Friday sundown to Saturday sundown.”<sup>4</sup> Mr. Trudeau’s restful suggestion comes in a very brief three-sentence commentary, found in an otherwise vast sea of healthful advice, so I strongly doubt that he is out to promote a Sabbath-keeping agenda. The point, then, is clear: Our Creator designed us to need a weekly day of rest. The question is, “On which day of the week should we set aside for rest?”

### ***When Was Mankind First Commanded to Observe the Weekly Sabbath?***

According to your article, no one was ever commanded to observe the weekly Sabbath until the time of Moses. You state, “Although the Genesis account says that on the seventh day Jehovah God rested from his creative works, it was not until the time of Moses that God’s people were instructed to observe a 24-hour day of rest, or Sabbath. (Genesis 2:2)”

I find the above conclusion difficult to believe for several reasons. First, you seem to presume too much. Just because the first recorded command to observe the weekly Sabbath is found in association with the Israelites’ wilderness journey, this should not be construed as being the first-ever mandate to observe the weekly Sabbath. Secondly, we need to remember that the Almighty blessed the Sabbath day at the time of His having rested from His work (Gen. 2:3). Not only did He *bless* it, but he *sanctified* it,

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<sup>2</sup> Although we are presented with the “two greatest commandments”(Mk 12:28-34), neither of which is assigned a level higher than the other, Scripture does not attach levels of importance to commandments to the extent that some are considered as necessary to obey only by personal discretion.

<sup>3</sup> Rubin, Jordan S., *The Maker’s Diet*, Siloam, a Strang Company, Lake Mary, FL, 2004, p. 168.

<sup>4</sup> Trudeau, Kevin, *Natural Cures “They” Don’t Want You to Know About*, Alliance Publishing Group, Inc., Elk Grove Village, IL, 2004, p. 170.

which means that He declared it a holy, set apart day. How could the seventh day have been set apart without a precept enjoining its observance? If I am expected to believe that mankind was not expected to keep the Sabbath day holy from the very beginning, then I must similarly be expected to believe that our Creator didn't intend for mankind to have the same regard for the seventh day that He had for it. Why would our Creator declare the seventh day as "holy," yet expect the creatures He created in His image to have no regard for it? Why would the Messiah declare that the Sabbath was made for man (Mark 2:27) if, indeed, man was not expected to have any regard for it?

Another important item to remember is the fact that the first five books of the Bible are attributed to Moses. Moses, at the time He would have written down the Creation account, would have understood that the sanctification of the seventh day not only meant that the Sabbath was set apart by the Almighty and *for* the Almighty (that's right, He kept the Sabbath!), but also that it was intended for all of mankind. Why wait over 2,500 years to command His people to share in His Sabbath blessing? Why did Moses record that Noah, while waiting for the earth to dry from the Flood, sent the dove from the ark at seven-day intervals (Gen. 8:8-12)? Does this not strongly imply ancient knowledge of the seven-day week? Are we to believe that ancient knowledge of the weekly cycle excluded the understanding that we are to rest on the seventh day?

Finally, we read that Abraham obeyed the Creator's voice and kept His charge, His commandments, His statutes and His laws (Gen. 26:5). Since "weekly Sabbath" is not specified, shall we presume that it wasn't included among the commandments that he so faithfully obeyed? Of course, many do make this presumption. We regard it as a mistaken presumption, not only because we know the Sabbath was made for all men (Abraham included), but also because it does not make sense to believe that Yahweh would withhold knowledge of the day He blessed and sanctified from the man He chose to bless in such a mighty way. What did the Almighty's commandments consist of? Since we are not told, is it wise to presume that the weekly Sabbath was *excluded*? Since the Almighty blessed and sanctified the seventh day and created it for man, is it not reasonable to presume that it was *included* among the commandments that Abraham so faithfully obeyed?

We therefore do not agree with your statement that the Almighty's people were not instructed to observe the weekly Sabbath until the time of Moses.

### ***Did Yeshua Keep a Weekly Sabbath?***

The next section of your article addresses the fact that the son of the Almighty (we refer to Him as *Yeshua* instead of *Jesus*) observed the weekly Sabbath, but you then express the belief that it was "taken away" after His death. I will demonstrate that the authors of the New Testament did not agree with your conclusion.

First, I feel I should commend you for conveying the understanding that the Messiah observed the weekly Sabbath. You wrote, "Yes, Jesus did observe the Sabbath." I agree with you! In contrast, a few theologians have written that Yeshua "did away" with the Sabbath during His earthly ministry. A 4<sup>th</sup> century theologian named Epiphanius offered a classic demonstration of this approach in his work entitled *The Panarion*:

(1) But both the lame-brain's Sabbath observance and circumcision, and the daily baptisms of which he makes use, stand discredited; for Jesus made a point of healing mostly on the Sabbath. And it was not just that he heals, but he heals in two ways. (2) He directs the persons he has healed to pick their mattresses up and walk. Moreover, on the Sabbath he made clay and anointed the blind man's eyes,

but the making of clay is work. (3) Hence, since the apostles had learned from their association with him and from his teaching that the Sabbath had been abolished, they plucked ears of grain on the Sabbath, rubbed them in their hands and ate them.<sup>5</sup>

I am glad that most scholars, yourself included, disagree with Epiphanius' conclusions as stated above. Yeshua explained why He healed on the Sabbath in Luke 13:11-17, and when His critics heard the answer He gave to the synagogue ruler, they were ashamed. With regard to the account of Yeshua making clay on the Sabbath day to anoint the blind man's eyes (John 9), this amounted to Yeshua spitting on the ground and using the resulting mixture to do the anointing. Only by rabbinical decree could such an act be deemed a violation of the Sabbath precept. Yeshua Himself rightly expressed the true spirit of Sabbath observance when He said, "Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days" (Matt. 12:12). Thus, anointing the blind man's eyes, being an act of selfless giving of time and energy to help His fellow man, was most certainly not a violation of the fourth commandment.

What about the incident of Yeshua's disciples plucking the ears of grain on the Sabbath? Yeshua did not defend them by stating that the Sabbath was abolished, nor did He explain that plucking the ears was an acceptable thing to do on the Sabbath day; rather, He drew an analogy between what they were doing and what King David once did when he and his men were hungry, but the only available food was the shewbread, which was only lawful for priests to eat. King David and his men ate the shewbread, yet no lightning bolts descended upon them from heaven. This serves as a classic illustration of how the Almighty, in His mercy, made allowance for human need to supersede that law. In the same way, in the story of Yeshua's disciples plucking the ears of grain (Mark 2:23-28), they were at that time far away from home in the area of Capernaum and obviously had nothing to eat and nowhere to find food except in a field of grain. Jewish tradition is such that no Jew will allow his fellow man to spend the Sabbath without food and lodging. However, it is apparent from this account that no one had invited the wayfaring Yeshua and His disciples in for the Sabbath. This did not prevent the Pharisees from keeping their watchful eyes on them in an attempt to catch them sinning, so Yeshua's response actually threw the criticism right back at them. Had they invited Yeshua and His disciples to share the Sabbath meal with them, His disciples would not have been compelled to find their food in a field of standing grain.

It wasn't until I read the following commentary in this section that I became concerned about your understanding of New Testament writers, such as the Apostle Paul. You produced a generalization, then cited one of Paul's writings as supportive evidence. You wrote, "Jesus was born an Israelite and as such was under Law, and that included the Sabbath law. It was not until after Jesus' death that the Law covenant was taken away. (Colossians 2:13, 14)" Not only do I disagree with your interpretation of Paul's words in Colossians 2:13-14, but I'm curious as to how this passage relates to the subject of whether or not Yeshua observed the weekly Sabbath.

In order to address my disagreement with your interpretation of Colossians 2:13-14, I need to produce the text in question:

<sup>13</sup> And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;

<sup>14</sup> 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;

Does verse 13 indicate that the Law covenant was "taken away"? No, it does not. Notice that it *does* indicate that all trespasses have been forgiven.

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<sup>5</sup> *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis*, Book I, Section 32:1-3, "The Ebionites," Translated by Frank Williams, Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, The Netherlands, 2009, p. 161.

Verse 14, on the surface, *might* be considered as evidence that the weekly Sabbath was “blotted out,” but if this one verse truly means that the weekly Sabbath was abolished, then you will have many other New Testament verses to explain, which I plan on addressing later in this letter.

For the “handwriting of ordinances” to be inclusive of the weekly Sabbath day requires that the weekly Sabbath was “against us.” Where in Scripture do we ever read that the weekly Sabbath is or was against us? Where do we ever read that the Almighty’s law is or ever was “against us”?

If we carefully read the book of Colossians, we do not read a message explaining that the law was “done away.” The message is not about being released from obeying the law; rather, it is a message of *forgiveness* from having disobeyed the law. The Greek word translated “handwriting” in verse 14 is the word pronounced “cheirographon” (χειρόγραφον). This word can be demonstrated as being a specific reference, not to the law (“nomos,” νόμος), but to the record book (charge list) of our sins. Yeshua’s death does not release us from a moral obligation to obey the Torah; rather, His death *blotted out, wiped away* our sins.

I will not take the time and space here to explain what I believe is the originally-intended meaning of “blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us,” but if you do need me to explain further in a subsequent letter, I will be happy to do so. For now, I will simply explain that (a) the Greek word for Torah (*nomos*) does not ever appear in the book of Colossians, and (b) the best way to understand what the Apostle Paul meant by his comment that the “handwriting of ordinances” was blotted out is to find out what he *didn’t* mean. Here are a few examples illustrating what he *didn’t* mean for us to understand from his Colossians 2:14 comment:

- \* He didn’t mean that the law is “done away” because in Romans 3:31 he wrote, “Do we then make void the law through faith? The Almighty forbid: yea, we establish the law.”
- \* He didn’t mean that the law is no longer holy because in Romans 7:12 he wrote, “Wherefore the law *is* holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.”
- \* He didn’t mean that he had disobeyed the law because in Acts 25:8 he said, “Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended (sinned) any thing at all.” Paul later reaffirmed this same stand when he explained in Acts 28:17, “Men *and* brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans.” Presuming that the Apostle Paul was honest, he emphasized that he had never sinned against the law. Since Paul also taught others to follow His example (I Cor. 11:1), it does not follow that he taught anyone that the law was “blotted out.”

Finally, I feel I should point out that it is helpful to read other translations to see how those scholars understood the meaning of the Greek text. George Lamsa, in his *Holy Bible From the Ancient Eastern Text*, translated Colossians 2:14 as follows:

<sup>14</sup> And by his commandments he cancelled the written bond of our sins, which stood against us; and he took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;

Lamsa did not understand a cancellation of the law, but rather a cancellation of the “written bond of our sins.” While it is true that the majority of translations favor a “blotting out” of the law, even though the word *nomos* does not appear in the book of Colossians, these translations do not explain how Paul, on the one hand, “establishes the law,” then on the other hand explains that it was “blotted out.” Such an explanation is also missing from your article.

What antinomian authors tend to leave unexplained is how a first-century Jew, having been trained to obey the Torah and to beware of those who might try to turn him away from following its precepts, should be expected to recognize a man whose death “did away” with the law as being the Messiah. After all, Daniel himself prophesied of a “little horn” who would eventually appear and attempt to change “times and laws” (Daniel 7). If, indeed, this is what the Messiah came to do, then he must be a *false messiah*. Jeremiah prophesied of a time when the Almighty will put His law in our “inward parts” and that He will write it on our hearts (Jer. 31:33). Note that He didn’t say that He would produce a “new law” to write on our hearts. Why would He write His law on our hearts if it has been “blotted out”? It is little wonder that Jews are not easily converted to the Christian faith when, upon conversion, they are expected to believe that the Torah was “blotted out”!

### ***What Did Yeshua Mean in Matthew 5:17?***

Upon mentioning Colossians 2:13-14 as your proof text for believing that the law was “taken away,” you proceed to address one of the verses that contradicts your conclusion. Here is what you wrote:

True, Jesus did say: “Do not think I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I came, not to destroy, but to fulfill.” (Matthew 5:17) But what does the expression “to fulfill” mean? To illustrate: A builder fulfills a contract to complete a building, not by ripping up the contract, but by finishing the structure. However, once the work has been completed to the client’s satisfaction, the contract is fulfilled and the builder is no longer under obligation to it. Likewise, Jesus did not break, or rip up, the Law; rather, he fulfilled it by keeping it perfectly. Once fulfilled, that Law “contract” was no longer binding on God’s people.

The above commentary raises more questions than it answers. First, please consider the implications of your conclusion: *Yeshua didn’t come to destroy the Law, but within a couple of years He would abolish it*. This is what you surely must believe. Since you believe that the Law was “taken away” at the time when you believe it was fulfilled, yet you agree that Yeshua did not come to destroy it, then what exactly *did* He come to do with regard to the Law? Why didn’t He just say, “Do not think I have come to destroy the law YET. In a couple of years, I will abolish it”?

Let’s take a closer look at the word “fulfill.” If, upon fulfilling an act, it is no longer binding, then we must believe that *righteousness* is no longer binding. To prove this, please consider what Yeshua told John the Baptist in Matthew 5:13-15 when John suggested that Yeshua should baptize *him*:

<sup>13</sup>¶ Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.

<sup>14</sup> But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?

<sup>15</sup> And Yeshua answering said unto him, Suffer *it to be so* now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.

Since Yeshua “fulfilled all righteousness” when He was baptized, and since (by your definition) “fulfilling” something means its previous requirements are no longer binding, shall we presume that righteousness is no longer binding on believers? This is the natural progression of your suggested line of reasoning.

Consider also the meaning of the word fulfill (Greek πληρόω, “plērōō”). According to *The New Thayer’s Greek English Lexicon*, p. 518, this word as used in Matthew 5:17 denotes the following:

Universally and absolutely, to *fulfil*, i.e. *to cause God's will* (as made known in the law) *to be obeyed as it should be, and God's promises* (given through the prophets) *to receive fulfillment*: Mt. v. 17; cf. Weiss, Das Matthäusevang. u.s.w. p. 146 sq. [COMP.: ἀνα-, ἀντ-ανα-, προσ-ανα-, ἐκ-, συμ-πληρώω.]

I agree with the above reasoning – that Yeshua’s use of the word “fulfil” had nothing to do with “completing a contract that would result in the law being abolished (destroyed), but *everything* to do with causing and demonstrating how the Almighty’s will should be obeyed. In this way, Yeshua not only fulfilled the law, but He also showed us how we should live our lives – following His example of obedience.

Finally, I believe we can more fully grasp Yeshua’s intended meaning by reading the very next verse (verse 18):

<sup>18</sup> For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

<sup>19</sup> Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach *them*, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

When we read both Matthew 5:17 and verse 18 in context, it should be clear that Yeshua is not hinting that all the law would be fulfilled within a couple of years. “Till heaven and earth pass” is pointing to a time in the very distant future.

Consider also the way Luke, in Luke 16:17, quoted Yeshua’s words:

<sup>17</sup> And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail.

Do these sound like the words of a Man who knew that the law was about to be abolished?

In verse 19, Yeshua plainly states that whosoever breaks one of these least commandments and teaches men to do the same shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven. Are you aware that you are fulfilling Yeshua’s admonition? It is plain from your article that you do not observe the weekly Sabbath; moreover, you teach your readers to break the Sabbath commandment as well when you inform them that it is no longer binding. If you feel comfortable knowing that this is what you are doing, then that is your prerogative. As for me, I prefer to obey Torah – not because it makes me any better than you or anyone else – but because I want to please the Father and follow the example set by His son. I also want to heed Yeshua’s cautionary advice as found in Matthew 5:18.

However, Yeshua didn’t confine His expectations regarding Torah obedience to Matthew 5:18. In the 19<sup>th</sup> chapter, He made it even plainer. In verse 17 of that chapter, He said, “If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.” This comment was made within days of Yeshua’s death, burial and resurrection. It appears that you believe He gave this advice, knowing that within a matter of days it would be obsolete? Then, in the 24<sup>th</sup> chapter, Yeshua told His followers to pray that their flight be not on the Sabbath day. Why suggest such a prayer if the Sabbath was about to be “taken away”?

Over the years, I have posed these and so many other questions to those who teach that the Sabbath has been “done away.” The responses we have received thus far have been less than satisfactory; however, if you believe you have reasonable answers, I will consider them.

***Did the Apostle Paul Condemn Sabbathkeeping?***

In your section entitled “Did Jesus Keep a Weekly Sabbath?”, you reached what I feel is a very premature conclusion regarding the meaning of the Greek word translated “fulfill.” I have already presented my view with regard to the proper understanding of “fulfill,” and it does *not* mean “done away when someone keeps it perfectly” or whatever deeper meaning you seem to pull from this word. The mistaken understanding of what “fulfill” means then leads you to offer your readers a commentary on your interpretation of Colossians 2:16-17. Here is what you wrote:

Since Christ fulfilled the Law, are Christians obligated to keep the weekly Sabbath? Under inspiration, the apostle Paul answers: “Therefore let no man judge you in eating and drinking or in respect of a festival or of an observance of the new moon or of a sabbath; for those things are a shadow of the things to come, but the reality belongs to Christ.”—Colossians 2:16, 17.

Those inspired words suggest quite a change in God’s requirements for his servants. Why the change? Because Christians are under a new law, “the law of the Christ.” (Galatians 6:2) The former Law covenant given through Moses to Israel came to an end when Jesus’ death fulfilled it. (Romans 10:4; Ephesians 2:15) Did the commandment about keeping the Sabbath also come to an end? Yes. After saying that “we have been discharged from the Law,” Paul went on to refer to one of the Ten Commandments. (Romans 7:6, 7) So the Ten Commandments—including the Sabbath law—are part of the Law that came to an end. God’s worshippers, therefore, are no longer required to observe a weekly Sabbath.

Just as I disagree with your interpretation of Colossians 2:13-14, so I likewise disagree with your interpretation of verses 16-17.

First, I do not agree with your impression that Paul’s words suggest a change in the Almighty’s requirements for His servants. The mere fact that you were compelled to use the word “suggest” demonstrates your understanding that Paul did not come out and *declare* unequivocally that there is a change in our Creator’s requirements. Why didn’t he?

I previously made the point that anyone raised to obey Torah, upon being presented with a teaching that a certain “messiah” came who brought about the dissolution of the law, would immediately recognize such a new teaching as a fraud. If one is raised to understand the Torah as the Creator’s message to His people – His method of revealing His ways to us – but someone comes along who informs us that a certain “messiah” took that law away, it shouldn’t be too difficult to recognize the bearer of such news as a false teacher! When we are presented with the requirement to simultaneously recognize Yeshua as the Messiah along with the understanding that the Torah is “done away,” it should immediately become clear that something is wrong with that expectation, not just because Yeshua told His followers to not even *think* such a thing, but also because the Torah cautions us to beware of those who would entice us to discontinue obeying those instructions (Deut. 13 et al). The more I reflect upon the typical responses we would hear from Torah-observant believers upon being told about a messiah who came to take away the law, the more I am persuaded that Paul needed to do more than “suggest” that there was a change in the Torah requirements. He needed to make bold statements to that effect! A Jewish believer, having been trained to obey the Torah, would naturally be skeptical of anyone who came along teaching him or her *not* to do so! It is little wonder that Judaism is so slow to recognize Yeshua as the Messiah – and it’s all due to a “bum rap” wrongly attributed to Him. Instead of teaching His followers that the Torah would be “taken away,” He forthrightly taught exactly the opposite: “If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.”

Of course, we now turn our attention to Colossians 2:16-17, which you quoted in your article. Let's take a closer look at the phrase "Let no man judge you ...." The Greek word translated "judge" is the word *krinō*. It is word #2919 in *Strong's Greek Dictionary of the New Testament*, and means "to distinguish, i.e. decide (mentally or judicially); by impl. to try, condemn, punish." As revealed by *Strong's*, Colossians 2:16 could just as easily have been translated, "Therefore let no man *condemn* you in eating and drinking or in respect of a festival or of an observance of the new moon or of a sabbath."

Why does it make more sense to translate the Greek verb *krinō* as "condemn"? To best answer this question, I must ask you to imagine what things must have been like in the city of Colosse during the first century. To begin with, it is a known fact that angel worship was predominant in Colosse.<sup>6</sup> In fact, Paul alludes to this angel worship in Colossians 2:18:

<sup>18</sup> Let no man beguile you of our reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind.

As we can see from the above verse, Paul was more concerned about the Colossian believers becoming involved in heathen customs than whether or not they observed the law. When we understand that Paul was instructing the Colossian believers to not allow anyone to *condemn* them for what they ate or drank, nor to allow anyone to condemn them regarding Sabbath or new moon observances, it becomes apparent that he was writing to a few scattered brethren who were sticking out like sore thumbs in a city dominated by heathen practices. It is very unlikely that Paul was instructing the Colossian assembly how to cope with those who passed judgment on them based on whether or not they observed the weekly Sabbath. Paul encouraged them to not allow anyone to condemn/judge them for what they ate or drank, or for what day they worshipped on, or for observing new moon days. Each of these observances are commanded in the Torah and as we have already seen, the apostle Paul made it clear that he had never sinned against the law of the Jews. The "law of the Jews," while certainly attributed to Jewish practice and belief, is more specifically known as the Creator's law, given to Israel by Moses.

Finally, I feel obligated to mention here that even before my decision to observe the weekly Sabbath, I had read the book of Colossians, including chapter 2:13-16. Those verses never struck me as consisting of Paul's informing the Colossian believers that the law had been "nailed to the cross." It wasn't until I found myself conducting personal research into why our nation no longer seems to keep Sunday holy that I stumbled across the interpretation that this passage proves the abrogation of the weekly Sabbath, as well as the rest of the law. Although, at that time, I worshipped on Sunday, I did not view Colossians 2:13-16 as a validation for this practice and belief.

It was while I was a young, enthusiastic lay leader at a non-denominational Christian church that the minister would occasionally ask me to present a sermon, and in June 1985, he made such a request in order that he could accompany the youth group on a canoeing trip. I am extremely nervous when it comes to public speaking, but I do like to help out whenever there is a need, so I agreed. However, I had no idea what topic I should address, so I asked him for advice. His response was, "You'll think of something!"

As it turned out, June and I had both been concerned about the way our nation seemed to be ignoring the sanctity of Sunday. Why was Sunday becoming so secular? At best, many had relegated keeping Sunday "holy" to attending a morning worship service. Even at our church, June and I noticed how many members couldn't seem to wait for the service to end so they could "beat the rush" to their favorite restaurant. We had, by this time, discontinued cooking on Sundays, doing all of our preparation the day

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<sup>6</sup> According to the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, "In religion the people were specially lax, worshipping angels. Of them, Michael was the chief, and the protecting saint of the city. It is said that once he appeared to the people, saving the city in time of a flood."

before. We realized that many members of that church would have considered our treatment of Sunday as extreme, so we kept this aspect of Sunday observance to ourselves. At the same time, however, we felt that many members were leaning towards the *other* extreme! Something was wrong, and my pastor's request seemed to be the Almighty's way of opening the door for me to speak out in favor of keeping Sunday holy. I decided that just using Scripture as my supportive evidence would not be as effective as using other sources as well, so I paid a visit to the university from which I had graduated a few years earlier and spent an afternoon skimming through as many books and references as I could find. It was while reading an early 20<sup>th</sup> century book entitled *Rest Days* that I first learned that certain scholars believe that Colossians 2:13-16 proves that the Sabbath was "taken away":

Though Jesus regarded the Sabbath as still binding on his followers, his teaching that it was a social institution designed for practical benefit to mankind, and not as a fetish, brought him repeatedly into conflict with the Pharisees, and called forth those utterances which have been so strangely neglected by sabbatarians in after ages: "For the Son of man is lord of the Sabbath"; "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath"; "My Father worketh [on it] even until now, and I work." Jewish Christians appear at first to have continued the observance of the Sabbath, but this practice met the unqualified condemnation of St. Paul;<sup>7</sup> and one of the *Epistles* of St. Ignatius, who suffered martyrdom about 107 A.D., refers to Christians as "no longer observing the Sabbath, but living in the observance of the Lord's Day (μηκέτι σαββατίζοντες, ἀλλὰ κατὰ κυριακὴν ζῶντες), on which also our life has sprung up again by Him and by His death."<sup>8</sup>

Did Sabbath observance "meet the unqualified condemnation of St. Paul"? Those words jumped out at me to be sure, but the opening words of the paragraph were as eye-opening as the condemnation! Although I knew Yeshua never sinned, which includes Sabbath observance, I hadn't considered whether or not He actually taught His followers to do the same. As we have already covered, the answer is yes. But did the Apostle Paul later *condemn* the observance of the Sabbath? Again, as we have just covered, the answer is indisputably no. Even if we were to accept the notion that we shouldn't let anyone judge us with regard to whether or not we keep the Sabbath day holy, the implication is that if we *do* keep it holy, then they *still* shouldn't judge us. The author of *Rest Days* goes to the other extreme, suggesting that, indeed, Paul exhorts us to judge ... *condemn* ... those who observe the weekly Sabbath. Paul never wrote nor suggested any such thing.

I do not deny that if you search through commentaries, you will find that the majority of scholars agree with your conclusion that Colossians 2:16-17 validates believing that the Sabbath was "taken away" and even "nailed to the Cross." Those who are well acquainted with me know that I support checking out commentaries and other references as a part of diligently researching a matter, especially one as controversial as Sabbath observance. However, I also urge caution when reviewing the opinions of others, even if their name has a "PHD" after it. The late Dr. Curtis Vaughan, who was a Professor of New Testament at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, had a name that was followed by B.D. and Th.D. Dr. Vaughan wrote several commentaries on the New Testament, including one that is found within *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*. I have found this 12-volume commentary to be very helpful in my own studies, but if we were to accept at face value everything found written in all the commentaries out there, we would certainly end up extremely confused. This is why we must weigh the commentators' conclusions in the light of the Scriptural standard. Vaughan summarizes his understanding of Colossians 2:16 as follows:

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<sup>7</sup> The author footnoted this remark as follows: "*Colossians*, ii, 16; compare *Romans*, xiv, 5; *Galatians*, iv, 10-11."

<sup>8</sup> Hutton Webster, Ph.D., *Rest Days*, The MacMillan Company, New York, NY, 1916, p. 269.

“Religious festival,” “New Moon celebration,” and “Sabbath day” probably refer to various holy days of the Jewish calendar—annual, monthly and weekly. The reference to “Sabbath day” points clearly to the Jewish calendar, for only Jews kept the Sabbath. That being the case, “religious festival” and “New Moon celebration” must point primarily to the ritual calendar of the Jews. Paul’s thought is that the Christian is freed from obligations of this kind (cf. v.14; Gal 4:9-11; 5:1).<sup>9</sup>

If we are to accept Curtis Vaughan’s conclusion, we would be compelled to agree that Messianic believers are under no obligation to observe the weekly Sabbath. While I appreciate gaining other perspectives with regard to interpretations of Scripture, I am simultaneously bound to weigh those perspectives against other Scriptural teachings. For example, in my previous section, I pointed out the importance of learning what the Apostle Paul *didn’t* mean before reaching premature conclusions of what he *did* mean. It is in this light that I remain persuaded that Paul *didn’t* mean the law is “taken away” by virtue of the fact that he “established” the law (Romans 3:31). He *didn’t* mean we shouldn’t observe the law by virtue of the fact that he wrote, “The *doers* of the law shall be justified” (Romans 2:13). He *didn’t* mean that he himself didn’t observe the law by virtue of the fact that he testified of his own obedience in Acts 25:8. Certainly, if the Apostle Paul was attempting to persuade his readers that we shouldn’t obey the law, he needed to present his argument more clearly.

As it is, we are left with conflicting interpretations by different commentators. Curtis Vaughan, as we read above, concluded that believers are “freed” from obligations such as observance of the weekly Sabbath. Nineteenth century scholar A. R. Fausset, on the other hand, expressed a different view:

**the sabbath**—Omit "THE," which is not in the Greek (compare Note, see on Ga 4:10). "Sabbaths" (not "the sabbaths") of the day of atonement and feast of tabernacles have come to an end with the Jewish services to which they belonged (Le 23:32, 37-39). The weekly sabbath rests on a more permanent foundation, having been instituted in Paradise to commemorate the completion of creation in six days. Le 23:38 expressly distinguished "the sabbath of the Lord" from the other sabbaths. A positive precept is right because it is commanded, and ceases to be obligatory when abrogated; a moral precept is commanded eternally, because it is eternally right. If we could keep a perpetual sabbath, as we shall hereafter, the positive precept of the sabbath, one in each week, would not be needed. Heb 4:9, "rests," Greek, "keeping of sabbath" (Isa 66:23). But we cannot, since even Adam, in innocence, needed one amidst his earthly employments; therefore the sabbath is still needed and is therefore still linked with the other nine commandments, as obligatory in the spirit, though the letter of the law has been superseded by that higher spirit of love which is the essence of law and Gospel alike (Ro 13:8-10).<sup>10</sup>

As presented by A. R. Fausset, the Apostle Paul’s reference to “sabbaths” has nothing to do with the weekly Sabbath. It thus appears that Fausset supports believing that the other laws, *apart from the weekly Sabbath*, were “taken away.” I have already pointed out that I believe the Apostle Paul was exhorting the Colossian believers to not allow anyone to *condemn* them for their observance of the Sabbath, new moons and festival days.<sup>11</sup> Thus, while I agree with Fausset’s view that the Sabbath was not “taken away,” I

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<sup>9</sup> Curtis Vaughan, “Colossians,” Frank E. Gæbelein, Gen. Ed., *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, Vol. 11 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), p. 204.

<sup>10</sup> A. R. Fausset, “Colossians,” Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown: *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, Hartford, Conn.: S. S. Scranton & Company, 1871.

<sup>11</sup> The individual who provided commentary on Colossians 2:16-17 for *The Word in Life Study Bible* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN, 1993, p. 697) seems to agree with our perspective on the issue of *condemnation* as opposed to judgment: “The community of believers at Colosse was plagued by opinionated people who tried to impose their preferences

nevertheless disagree with his overall interpretation of the Apostle Paul's message. My point, then, is that we really need to be careful when it comes to relying on commentaries. I frequently use commentaries, especially when it comes to reinforcing my interpretation of a certain text, but this should never be so construed as meaning that I support everything that any particular commentator believes.

When it comes to reviewing any commentator's view that, in Colossians 2:16-17 the Apostle Paul meant for his readers to understand that the Sabbath was "taken away," I need to see how that same commentator explains the things that Paul *didn't* mean. In the case of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, they do not satisfactorily reconcile such verses as Colossians 2:14-16 with, say, Romans 3:31, where the Apostle Paul "establishes" the law. Here is an excerpt of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary's* attempt:

Paul has twice mentioned law observance (vv.27, 28) as not entering at all into justification, which is by faith apart from works of the law. May we draw the conclusion, then, that the law is useless? By no means, the apostle would answer, for the operation of faith really upholds or establishes the law. The gospel establishes the law in that the latter is vindicated. The law has fulfilled a vital role by bringing an awareness of sin (v.20). A broken law made the redeeming work of Christ at the cross necessary (vv.24, 25). One who sees that the cross was a divine necessity will never feel that he can make himself approved by God by fulfilling the law's demands. If that were possible, Christ would have died in vain. Since the death of Christ was in terms of God's righteousness (v.26), this means that the demands of the law have not been set aside in God's plan of salvation.<sup>12</sup>

As you can see by comparing *The Expositor's Bible Commentary's* treatment of Colossians 2:14-16 with their analysis of Romans 3:31, the one conclusion is that believers are no longer under obligation to observe the law; the other conclusion is that "the demands of the law have not been set aside." While it is true that two different individuals provided the respective commentaries for this work, nevertheless, anyone relying on *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* for understanding whether or not we should obey Torah would likely come away confused.

### ***What About Romans 14:5 and Galatians 4:10-11?***

Not long after June and I began observing the weekly Sabbath, we attended a Bible Study on the book of Romans in which the central topic was Sabbath observance. This Bible Study took place in the home of our dear friends whom we had known for several years while still attending a Sunday-keeping organization. We regularly met in their home on Tuesday evenings with around ten or so other believers, and even after our decision to observe the weekly Sabbath we continued attending their Bible Study. At first, when the announcement was made that we would begin a study of the book of Romans, June and I thought nothing of it. However, it wasn't long before we looked ahead in the study book to see what sort of lesson it had in store for Romans 14:5, which is a key verse used against Sabbath observance. Let's review this passage in order to get some context into what June and I were up against:

**14** Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, *but* not to doubtful disputations.

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on others. Paul challenged his readers to stand up for their own convictions, and not allow others to coerce them through intimidation or condemnation (vv. 16-17)."

<sup>12</sup> Everett F. Harrison, "Romans," Frank E. Gæbelein, Gen. Ed., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 10 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), p. 46. (Commentary on Romans 3:31).

<sup>2</sup>For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs.

<sup>3</sup>Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for the Almighty hath received him.

<sup>4</sup>Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for the Almighty is able to make him stand.

<sup>5</sup>One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.

<sup>6</sup>He that regardeth the day, regardeth *it* unto the Master; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Master he doth not regard *it*. He that eateth, eateth to the Master, for he giveth the Almighty thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Master he eateth not, and giveth the Almighty thanks.

<sup>7</sup>For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.

<sup>8</sup>For whether we live, we live unto the Master; and whether we die, we die unto the Master: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Master's.

<sup>9</sup>For to this end Messiah both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Master both of the dead and living.

<sup>10</sup>But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Messiah.

<sup>11</sup>For it is written, As I live, saith the Master, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to the Almighty.

<sup>12</sup>So then every one of us shall give account of himself to the Almighty. Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in *his* brother's way.

I provided the first twelve verses of Romans 14 in order to dispel any concerns about quoting anything out of context. Certainly, if I were to only cite verse five, I could understand why someone might come away with the understanding that Paul exhorts us to worship on whichever day seems best. If someone wants to set aside Sunday as a holy day, then we should respect that decision. If someone prefers to set aside Monday, then, again, we should respect that decision. And, hey, if someone insists on continuing to observe Saturday, then go easy on them! Yes, I can see how someone *might* come away with such an interpretation of Romans 14:5 if they had no other context or background information.

However, when we read the entire chapter, we should notice a few peculiarities that shed a different light on what Paul was proposing to the believers in Rome. The peculiarities are not so much founded on what Paul *wrote* as they are on what he *didn't write*. For example, you will not find the word "Sabbath" in Romans chapter 14. Neither will you find the word "law" in that chapter. This is especially significant in view of the fact that Paul had already informed the Roman believers that he "established" the law (ch. 3:31). If Paul, on the one hand, intended his brothers to understand that he established the law, then why would he, on the other hand, expect them to understand that it's no longer the *seventh day* that we are to keep holy, but whichever day an individual believer chooses to keep holy?

Let's face it: If I were to tell you that I "establish" and uphold the Torah, then what would you think of me if I later informed you that you can keep the Sabbath on whichever day you esteem most?

This brings us to the Tuesday night Bible Study group that June and I attended. As I mentioned, when we looked ahead in our study guide, we could tell things were going to get interesting when we got to Romans 14. However, we had to wait until we reached Lesson #12 before that particular Bible study could be held! Since we only did one lesson per week, we knew we had quite a wait ahead of us!

However, the “big night” finally arrived. The study guide consisted of a small book entitled *Romans: The Gospel for All*, by Keith L. Brooks.<sup>13</sup> Lesson 12 was entitled “Righteousness Manifested in Daily Life.” On page two of that lesson, we are instructed to read Romans 14:4-6 and answer the following questions:

- \* *What shows plainly that the Old Testament sabbath law was not in effect under the gospel?*
- \* *Is the particular day of the week that is kept the essential thing?*
- \* *Has any person a right to judge another over a matter of what day of the week is kept unto God? (Colossians 2:16)*

For each of the above questions, the study guide provided space for us to write a brief answer. For the third question listed above, not only did it reference Colossians 2:16, but it also offered the following commentary—just to make certain we reached the desired conclusion:

Some Jewish believers in the early Church still clung to Saturday worship as a permanent moral obligation in addition to the first day or Lord’s day. Paul saw no harm, even if they kept every day in the week holy unto the Lord. Those who had the greater light concerning the resurrection day were to bear with them in love. It was not a matter to bar fellowship, so long as they were fully persuaded in their own minds. The same might be said of Seventh Day Adventists of our own day were it not for their acceptance of more serious errors based on alleged revelations to Mrs. Ellen White.<sup>14</sup>

While June and I share the above author’s sentiments pertaining to Ellen White, whom Seventh-Day Adventists consider to have been a prophetess, we do not agree with his interpretation of Romans 14:5. For one thing, he commits the same blunder as *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*. This commentary, as I previously demonstrated, on the one hand agrees that the Apostle Paul’s “establishing the law” in Romans 3:31 means that the law was not “set aside.” On the other hand, this same commentary maintains that believers are no longer obligated to observe the weekly Sabbath. As the saying goes, “You can’t have it both ways.” Keith L. Brooks, who compiled the study guide for Romans, made it very clear that those who have the “greater light” observe Sunday instead of Saturday, which in turn means he must believe that Sabbath observance is no longer binding. The fourth commandment, as all Bible students know, makes no provision for observing the Sabbath on any day other than the seventh day.

What Mr. Brooks fails to explain is why, on the one hand, he does not believe we should obey the fourth commandment while, on the other hand, he agrees that the law is morally binding on all believers. This is what he wrote in the section of his study guide that addresses Romans 3:31:

The apostle proceeds now to bring out the proofs of the position stated in Romans 3:21-31:

- a. Righteousness by faith is witnessed by the law and the prophets (3:21).
- b. By faith boasting is excluded (3:27).
- c. The gospel does not set aside but establishes the law (3:31).<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Keith L. Brooks, *Romans: The Gospel for All*, The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL, 1987, pp. 72-78.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, p. 73.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, p. 22.

Like it or not, those who share Keith L. Brooks' views regarding the book of Romans are left with the conundrum of having to explain why the same apostle who "established" and upheld the law (Torah) *also* upheld the abrogation of the weekly Sabbath.

Sadly, June and I were the only ones in the Bible Study group who could see the obvious contradiction in Keith L. Brooks' study guide. Yes, they agreed, the Apostle Paul established the law, but this wasn't the *Torah* law he was establishing – it's "Christ's law." Of course, no one was able to spell out just exactly what that law consists of, nor could they explain how this same law – according to Romans 3:21 – is presented as "righteousness without the law."

As the Bible Study discussion began to heat up, we all read Romans 14:1-5 and individuals volunteered to answer the questions from the study guide. It didn't take long for me to raise my hand in protest of the first answer given. The first question, as already noted, was, "*What shows plainly that the Old Testament sabbath law was not in effect under the gospel?*" The desired answer was something like this: Romans 14:5 shows that the sabbath law is not in effect because we are told that we should each be "fully persuaded in our own minds" as to which day we want to observe as the Sabbath instead of being bound to a certain day of the week.

I protested, explaining that not only do we not find the word "Sabbath" in Romans 14, but that the primary topic seems to be that of *food*. I had read somewhere that during the period of time in which the Apostle Paul wrote to the Romans, certain self-righteous Jews had been arguing about which days of the week were better for fasting. As Yeshua Himself pointed out, many Jews routinely fasted twice each week (Luke 18:12). However, there seems to have been a controversy over which days were most suitable for fasting. Some believers felt that they should fast on Wednesdays and Fridays, whereas Jews typically fasted on Mondays and Thursdays.<sup>16</sup> The Apostle Paul, in Romans 14, appears to have attempted to settle the dispute by encouraging the believers that, on whichever days they chose, they observed them for the Almighty and not for boasting or for other self-serving purposes.

To my amazement, when I offered the above explanation, the host's wife uttered an exclamation of surprise. She had been reading along while using either a commentary or a reference Bible, and the accompanying explanatory notes outlined this same Jewish controversy regarding the best days on which to fast. This woman was well-known among her peers as an outspoken and influential person. "Wow!" I thought. "Does this mean that she is finally open to observing the Sabbath?"

However, nothing more came of the discussion. Although no one at that Bible Study protested the argument that I presented, and even though the host's wife read a scholarly commentary that agreed with my explanation, the topic of the weekly Sabbath was never again broached at any subsequent Bible Study.

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<sup>16</sup> I do not recall the exact source of information supportive of Romans 14:5 being a reference to *fast days* instead of the weekly Sabbath, but years later I read this same conclusion from Seventh-Day Adventist author Samuele Bacchiocchi. Bacchiocchi states the following on page 120 of his book *The Sabbath in the New Testament*, 1985, Biblical Perspectives, Berrien Springs, Michigan: "The preference over days in Romans presumably had to do with fast-days rather than feast-days, since the context deals with abstinence from meat and wine (Rom 14:2, 6, 21). Support for this view is provided by the *Didache* (ch. 8) which enjoins Christians to fast on Wednesday and Friday rather than on Monday and Thursday like the Jews.

"Paul refuses to deliberate on such private matters such as fasting, because he recognizes that spiritual exercises can be performed in different ways by different people. The important thing for Paul is to 'pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding' (Rom 14:19).

"If the conflict in the Roman Church had been over the observance of holy days, the problem would have been even more manifest than the one over diet. After all, eating habits are a private matter, but Sabbathkeeping is a public, religious exercise of the whole community. Any disagreement on the latter would have been not only noticeable but also inflammatory.

"The fact that Paul devotes 21 verses to the discussion of food and less than two verses (Rom 14:5-6) to that of days suggests that the latter was a very limited problem for the Roman Church, presumably because it had to do with private conviction on the merit or demerit of doing certain spiritual exercises such as fasting on some specific days."

In fact, June and I eventually began to sense that we were the proverbial “outsiders looking in” at the Bible Studies, so a few months later we decided it would be best for us to discontinue attending. We were both heartbroken over the stark reality of the situation – which would effectively bring an end to a friendship that we had cherished for five years. On the night of that final Bible Study, I had to go by myself – as I recall, it was because June had to stay home with our children for some reason. I have no memory of how that final Bible Study went or what the topic of discussion even was, but I will always remember my departure. I waited until everyone else had left, and as I made my way out the door, I struggled to find the words to say. I’m not sure how I worded things, but I do remember that it was somewhat of an apologetic farewell as I explained the obvious separation between us. The host’s wife seemed well prepared for our decision. With a smile on her face, she said, “We were wondering when you and June would shake the dust from your shoes at us!”

I was totally unprepared for her remark. I guess I was expecting her to try to persuade us to stick around and to explain how we can all learn from each other. Pushover that I am, I probably would have agreed. But I didn’t know how to respond to her melodramatic, finalistic comment. Later, it occurred to me that I should have answered, “But how could we shake the dust from our shoes at those whom we love so much?” However, those words are words that really had to be spoken right away in order to be effective, and I missed the opportunity. I realize our decision to discontinue meeting with the Bible Study group has nothing to do with the topic at hand, but at the same time it serves as a small illustration of how lonely the road can be when you decide to follow Scripture instead of your heart. We had already left over 100 friends a year earlier when we began observing the Sabbath, so when we stopped attending the Tuesday evening Bible Studies, we had no friends. They were our last hope for friends in that rural area who would either accept us or seriously consider the path we had chosen. Something to think about the next time you sing the song “Where He Leads Me I Will Follow.”

### *Galatians 4:10-11*

This section’s title not only presented inquiry regarding Romans 14:5, but also Galatians 4:10-11. For the sake of brevity, I will present the summary that we offer in our study “The Sabbath in Galatians.” Galatians 4:10-11 is typically cited as proof that the Apostle Paul criticized the Galatian believers for observing the weekly Sabbath and other holy days. Here is the text in question:

<sup>9</sup>But now, after that ye have known the Almighty, or rather are known of the Almighty, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?

<sup>10</sup>Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years.

<sup>11</sup>I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.

In view of what we already gleaned in our study of Romans 14:5, it should be clear that Paul would not have criticized any fellow believers for observing the weekly Sabbath. From the perspective of those who believe Romans 14:5 is an admonition from Paul to be tolerant of those who observe whichever day seems best “in their own mind,” it hardly seems likely that he would change such a tolerant message to the Romans into a critical one directed at the Galatian assembly. On the one hand, according to our Sundaykeeping friends, Paul encourages us to let everyone be “fully persuaded in their own mind” regarding which day they wish to observe. On the other hand, these same Sundaykeeping friends believe the Apostle Paul chastised the Galatian believers for “observing days” such as the weekly Sabbath!

As we mentioned earlier, you can’t have it both ways!

In our study entitled “The Sabbath in Galatians,” we demonstrate that Paul’s admonition to the Galatian believers is more likely a rebuke against those who cast lots for their “lucky days.” The modern day equivalent to this would be those who insist on checking their horoscope before considering business ventures, marriage, etc.<sup>17</sup> While you do not specifically use the text of Galatians 4:9-11 in your article, on the final page you provide a chart in which you list this passage as a proof text while writing, “The apostle Paul was concerned about Christians who put emphasis on observing special days.—Galatians 4:9-11.” Thus you, like many within nominal Christianity, on the one hand believe that Paul expected us to be understanding of others’ decisions to worship on whichever days seem best to them, while on the other hand, we should be “concerned” about those who put emphasis on observing “special days.” Might your reference to “special days” be inclusive of the weekly Sabbath? Since you clearly join nominal Christianity in using this passage to discourage Sabbath observance, I feel it is necessary to address it here in this response.

### *What is “The Law of Christ”?*

In our previous section, I pointed out that some individuals in our Tuesday night Bible study felt that when the Apostle Paul “established the law,” the law he was establishing was not the Torah, but rather “the law of Christ,” as though the Messiah had implemented a new set of laws for believers to follow after His death and resurrection. Of course, they never explained, at least to my satisfaction, how the Apostle Paul never seemed to have gotten the message. Otherwise, why did he state in Acts 25:8 that he had never offended (sinned against) the law of the Jews? Not only does the “law of the Jews,” which is actually the law of Yahweh, enjoin Sabbath observance, but it also directs us to *teach* that law to our children (Deut. 6:1-7). For Paul to have taught *disobedience* to that law would have been a violation of it in and of itself, resulting in parents *not* teaching it to their children.

Nevertheless, in your study entitled “Should You Keep the Weekly Sabbath,” you raise the same objection – that we should now obey “the law of the Christ” – while avoiding informing your readers of what that law consists of. It seems to me that the Messiah’s law is the Almighty’s law, as in He made no changes to that which was already defined as “perfect” (Psalms 19:7). We have already addressed what Yeshua taught His followers to do with regard to Torah; His obedience in no way minimizes our need to follow His example (I Peter 2:21-25), and His example was to obey Torah. Your next section suggests that we are under a “new constitution,” which simultaneously consists of new laws. This would be fine – if the One implementing those new laws informed us what those new laws *are*. Here is what you wrote:

The change from the Israelite to the Christian system of worship could be illustrated this way: A nation may change its constitution. Once the new constitution is legally in place, people are no longer required to obey the former one. Even though some of the laws in the new constitution may be the same as those in the former constitution, others may be different. So a person would need to study the new constitution carefully to see what laws now apply. Additionally, a loyal citizen would want to know when the new constitution went into effect.

I actually agree with the analogy as provided above. The question is, “Has the Almighty changed His constitution?” If so, His Son never informed us of what changes were made. As loyal citizens, we need to study the “new constitution” very carefully. In this particular instance, we need to study the new constitution – the New Covenant – to see where we are instructed to no longer observe the weekly

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<sup>17</sup> You can read our study entitled “The Sabbath in Galatians” by accessing the following URL: [http://www.ponderscripture.org/Sabbath%20in%20Galatians.html#\\_ftn7](http://www.ponderscripture.org/Sabbath%20in%20Galatians.html#_ftn7)

Sabbath day. Thus far into our examination, we have reviewed the verses that, in your estimation, serve as your primary witnesses to validate your case. In each instance, flaws have been exposed.

When it comes to the New Covenant, which so many folks insist has ushered in a new set of laws, all June and I see is a new priesthood that ministers this new constitution. The Levitical priesthood, which had become morally and politically corrupt, had disqualified itself. Other than that, we see no other changes. The author of Hebrews understood that the change in the priesthood of necessity effected a change in the law, but it seems that everyone is intent on “throwing the baby out with the bath water.” Does a change in the priesthood mean we can no longer observe the weekly Sabbath? No, but it *does* mean there are no longer sacrifices made in association with the weekly Sabbath.

I recommend a careful reading of Hebrews chapter 7, where the author plainly presents Yeshua as the high priest Whose “unchangeable priesthood” completely overshadows the Levitical priesthood, which is now made obsolete. I will cite the majority of this chapter because I feel it is so vital in understanding that a change in the priesthood does not signal the end of Torah:

<sup>11</sup>If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?

<sup>12</sup>For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.

<sup>13</sup>For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar.

<sup>14</sup>For it is evident that our Master sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.

<sup>15</sup> ¶ And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchiz'edek there ariseth another priest,

<sup>16</sup> Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.

<sup>17</sup>For he testifieth,

Thou art a priest for ever

after the order of Melchiz'edek. (Ps. 110:4)

<sup>18</sup>For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.

<sup>19</sup>For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto the Almighty.

<sup>20</sup> ¶ And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest:

<sup>21</sup>(for those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him,

YHWH sware and will not repent,

Thou art a priest for ever

after the order of Melchiz'edek: Ps. 110.4 )

<sup>22</sup>By so much was Yeshua made a surety of a better testament.

<sup>23</sup> ¶ And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death:

<sup>24</sup>But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.

<sup>25</sup>Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto the Almighty by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

<sup>26</sup> ¶ For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;

<sup>27</sup>Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's (Lev. 9.7): for this he did once, when he offered up himself.

<sup>28</sup>For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.

The author of the above text plainly understood that the change in the priesthood brought about a change in the law – but *what* law? Stealing? Adultery? Murder? No, none of *those* laws, claim Sundaykeepers. No, the law they believe is being specifically referred to is none other than the *weekly Sabbath*. But on what basis? None that June and I have ever been shown.

When I read the book of Hebrews, I don't come away with the feeling that any changes have been made with regard to the fourth commandment, and no passage illustrates this more effectively than what we just read from the seventh chapter. If that "change of the law" represents the annulment of the weekly Sabbath, this chapter was where the change needed to be clarified and specified. Rather, the change presented in Hebrews 7 is the law pertaining to the priesthood – the sacrificial system. Yeshua is embodied in both the Victim and the Minister – the High Priest who offered Himself. This High Priest, however, did not spell out any other changes to the Law that our Creator gave to Moses.

Continuing on with your "new constitution" analogy, here is what you wrote:

In like manner, Jehovah God provided over 600 laws, including 10 main ones, for the nation of Israel. These included laws about morals, sacrifices, health matters, and Sabbath-keeping. However, Jesus said that his anointed followers would constitute a new "nation." (Matthew 21:43) From 33 C.E. onward, this nation has had a new "constitution," founded on two basic laws—love of God and love of neighbor. (Matthew 22:36-40) Although "the law of the Christ" includes instructions that are similar to those in the Law given to Israel, we should not be surprised that some laws are very different and that others are no longer required. The law pertaining to the observance of a weekly Sabbath is one of those that are no longer binding.

A key point that I feel needs to be reinforced is the fact that you make it so plain that, in your estimation, the observance of the weekly Sabbath is no longer binding. You not only make this statement in the above commentary, but elsewhere in your article as well, such as the comment, "So the Ten Commandments—including the Sabbath law—are part of the Law that came to an end." Why is this point that you word so plainly *not* so plainly worded in Scripture? Why do we have to rely on someone's *interpretation* to conclude that the weekly Sabbath is "no longer binding"? It would have been a small thing for any of the New Testament authors to have forthrightly written something to the effect of, "The weekly Sabbath is no longer binding." However, they did not. Please consider again the ramifications of such a teaching. It is recorded that over 3,000 Jews were baptized in one day as a result of hearing Peter's brilliant appeal to recognize Yeshua as the Savior, the anointed of the Almighty. His speech mentioned nothing about any laws being "taken away" or "no longer binding." If he had mentioned that the weekly Sabbath is "no longer binding," would 3,000 Jews have converted?

Something else that concerns me regarding your commentary above is your treatment of our Creator's moral laws and health laws, which you seem to believe were *also* abolished. You wrote, "These included laws about morals, sacrifices, health matters, and Sabbath-keeping." Since you lump *morals* and *health matters* in with Sabbath-keeping, this certainly creates the impression that you believe those laws were also "taken away." Might I inquire about the specific moral laws and laws pertaining to health matters that you believe came to an end?

Another remark from the above commentary that I find disturbing is this one: “However, Jesus said that his anointed followers would constitute a new ‘nation’ (Matthew 21:43). From 33 C.E. onward, this nation has had a new ‘constitution,’ founded on two basic laws—love of God and love of neighbor (Matthew 22:36-40).” Let’s take a look at Matthew 21:43. Yeshua has just told the Parable of the Wicked Tenants to the chief priests and elders, and then He makes it clear that *they* are the wicked tenants:

<sup>43</sup>Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of the Almighty shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

I believe the “nation” referenced by Yeshua represents a nation consisting of the antithesis of the priests and elders with whom He was conversing – a nation that will bear the fruits of righteousness, which includes obedience to the Almighty’s laws. Yeshua had already made it plain in Matthew 19:17 that if we are to enter into Life, we must keep the commandments, but now you’re saying that’s not what He *really* meant. Do you see why your perspective is so confusing? It seems to me that if you want to hone in on what “the law of the Christ” *really* is, just turn to Matthew 19:17. Verses such as John 8:29 and 10:27-28 seal the matter. He gave no “new laws” to His sheep:

<sup>8:29</sup>And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.

<sup>10:27</sup>My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

<sup>10:28</sup>And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any *man* pluck them out of my hand.

Tell me: If Yeshua obeyed the commandments and taught His followers to do the same, then how do we conclude that we should discontinue observing the weekly Sabbath?

### ***Has the Almighty Changed His Standards?***

In the next section of your article you ask the question if the Almighty has changed His standards. Certainly, if the weekly Sabbath is no longer a “standard,” then the answer, from your perspective, must be a resounding, “Yes.” However, you say the answer is, “No,” which only adds to the confusion:

Does this change from the Law of Moses to the law of the Christ mean that God has changed his standards? No. Just as a parent will adjust the rules he makes for his children, taking into consideration their ages and circumstances, Jehovah has adjusted the laws his people are required to obey. The Apostle Paul explains the matter this way: “Before the faith arrived, we were being guarded under law, being delivered up together into custody, looking to the faith that was destined to be revealed. Consequently the Law has become our tutor leading to Christ, that we might be declared righteous due to faith. But now that faith has arrived, we are no longer under a tutor.” —Galatians 3:23-25

In response to the above commentary, I would like to first point out that I have already addressed my disagreement with your definition of “the law of the Christ.” If this is the Messiah’s law, then He is the one Who is qualified to define His own law, and He made it plain that we are to “keep the commandments.” Secondly, if the Almighty has indeed “taken away” the fourth commandment, then He *really has* changed His standards! To illustrate my point, I will cite a modern-day example. If a company requires all of its employees to attend an annual training session for security protocols, but later rescinds the requirement, this means there has been a procedural change, which is also considered a change in the

company's standards. Thus, if the Almighty once required His children to observe the weekly Sabbath, but later rescinded that requirement, His standards changed at that point.

Another dimension you add to your argument involves incorporating a text from the book of Galatians (Gal 3:23-25). The gist of your interpretation is that the law was a tutor to lead us to the Messiah, but now that we've been led to Him, we don't need the tutor any more. Apparently, this reasoning seems logical to many folks, including yourself. However, if we incorporate everything we have covered thus far – what the Messiah Himself told us – what the Apostle Paul practiced – how the Apostle Paul “established” the law – the missing statements in the New Testament specifically spelling out the abrogation of the fourth commandment – when we put all these together, it becomes clear that we need to re-examine the text from Galatians that you cited. What are you missing?

June and I have written a study outlining our specific concerns regarding your interpretation of Galatians.<sup>18</sup> It is too lengthy to incorporate here, but the above points notwithstanding, I will also mention that we need to read the entire chapter in order to grasp the context of what Paul was communicating. Citing two isolated verses may appear to validate your position, but when they are examined in their proper context, it becomes clear that you are missing Paul's point. For one thing, if you go back up to verse 17, this law was *added* 430 years after the Almighty's covenant with Abraham was established. As previously mentioned, Abraham is recorded as having observed the Almighty's commandments, His statutes and His laws (Gen. 26:5), which we believe was inclusive of the Sabbath. Therefore, I do not believe the Sabbath was an “added” law.

Moreover, in Galatians 3:19, we find that the law was “added” because of transgressions. Do you *really* believe the Sabbath, ordained from Creation, was added because of transgressions?

I am persuaded that the “added law” is *not* Torah, but rather the law pertaining to the Levitical priesthood. The priesthood consisted of much more than a bunch of men who carried out ritual sacrifices. They were also saddled with the responsibility of teaching the law to the children of Israel. They were the *tutors* who safeguarded the law by teaching others to obey it. This priesthood was the forerunner of the ultimate high priest, Yeshua the Messiah. Now that He has come, He is our Master and Teacher. We are no longer under the tutor represented by the Levitical priesthood.

I realize that you may not agree with my interpretation, and that's fine. Nevertheless, it certainly resolves the inconsistencies that I see with *your* interpretation. I haven't even mentioned the inconsistency of believing that if we are no longer under a tutor, this means that everything the tutor taught is now made void. This is what you seem to promote. If the tutor is truly represented by the Torah, which includes the fourth commandment, and if we are no longer under that tutor – which means we no longer need to abide by what that tutor taught us to do – then of what benefit was the tutor to those who never kept the law before being converted to Faith in the Messiah?

To put it another way, if the weekly Sabbath “tutorial” guided the children of Israel to the Messiah, that is fine for them, but what about those who never observed the weekly Sabbath before learning about Him? What benefit does the weekly Sabbath offer those people? What benefit does *any* of the Torah offer those people?

You continue with your “tutor” example by providing the following analogy:

How does Paul's line of reasoning apply to the Sabbath? Consider this illustration: While at school, a student may be required to learn a certain subject,

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<sup>18</sup> Our study is entitled *Is the Torah Relevant Today?* It is not currently available online due to enhancements that we are incorporating. However, we will be glad to send the incomplete version to those who request it.

such as woodworking, on a particular day each week. However, upon entering the workforce, he may need to use the skills he learned, not just on that one day, but on every day of the week. Likewise, while under the Law, the Israelites were required to set aside one day every week for rest and worship. Christians, on the other hand, are required to worship God, not just one day per week, but every day.

I believe the above reasoning is flawed and here's why: First, in your example, the student applies what he learned by the tutor (at school) *every day of the week*. However, in your previous paragraph, you established that the student is no longer under a tutor, which implies that what he was taught to do (such as observe the Sabbath) no longer applies. In other words, on the one hand you established that no longer being under a tutor = no longer practicing what the tutor taught, while on the other hand your analogy has the student applying what the tutor taught *every day of the week!*

Which is it? No longer observing the Sabbath at all or observing it every day of the week? You answer the question as follows: "Christians, on the other hand, are required to worship God, not just one day per week, but every day." I'm not sure what you mean by this exhortation, but I am certain of what you *don't* mean. You *don't* mean that believers should observe the Sabbath every day. To do so would require not working seven days a week, whereas the fourth commandment specifies *one day* of rest – the seventh day.

Certainly, since worshipping the Almighty must include obeying Him, and since we are servants to whom we obey (Romans 6:16), worshipping Him is a 24 x 7 *lifestyle*. As such, we should worship Him every day. However, this is nothing new! Believers have *always* understood this to be true! No true believer has ever practiced a lifestyle of sin for six days followed by worship of the Almighty on the seventh day! Worshipping the Almighty has always been a 24 x 7 lifestyle, including observing a day of special rest and worship on the *seventh day*. In your analogy, the student continues "worshipping" the Almighty – except He chooses to discontinue resting on the seventh day. Again I ask: *Of what benefit was the tutor?*

You conclude your article with the following paragraph:

Is it wrong, then, to set aside one day every week for rest and worship? No. God's Word leaves such a decision to each individual, saying: "One person decides that one day is holier than another. Another person decides that all days are the same. Every person must make his own decision." (Romans 14:5, *God's Word*) While some may choose to view one day as more holy than others, the Bible clearly indicates that God does not expect Christians to observe a weekly Sabbath.

Here you raise the same argument that I addressed previously in this letter (***What About Romans 14:5 and Galatians 4:10-11?***). I explained that Romans 14:5 is best understood in the sense that Paul was attempting to resolve a dispute over which days were better for fasting. Not only does the word "Sabbath" not appear in Romans chapter 14, but I do not believe you reasonably grasp the consequences of applying your understanding of this verse. Let me explain.

As I referenced at the beginning of this letter, the Jehovah's Witnesses who visited our home invited us to attend their place of meeting for fellowship on Sunday afternoons. Fellowship is a wonderful thing. It is a time for believers to meet, study, sharpen, and encourage each other while strengthening the bonds of friendship. However, I am persuaded that we should meet on *Saturdays*, not *Sundays*! How, then, can we achieve the desired benefits of fellowship if we meet on different days? Unless we agree to meet on the same day each week, there can be no fellowship!

You are proposing that the Apostle Paul exhorted the Roman believers to each “make his own decision” regarding which day he or she set aside for rest and worship. One believer might choose the second day of the week. Another believer might choose the fourth day. Someone else might choose the sixth day, and on and on. If there was a large enough contingency, this might suffice to produce some congregations sizable enough to provide the fellowship for whichever day an individual might choose to set aside. However, think of the *separation* (not to mention *confusion*) that this would encourage and cultivate. How do you propose achieving *unity* when different individuals and groups rest and worship on different days? The resulting splinter groups would never get to know each other unless they were to mutually agree on a certain day to meet. Is this what you *really* believe the Apostle Paul had in mind? If so, then why do all Jehovah’s Witnesses in the United States mutually agree on *one* day, the first day of the week, as the day on which they regularly set aside for meeting? Is it not because it is the day on which most citizens, secular and Christian, take off from work? It would seem that Jehovah’s Witnesses “make their decision” based on the decision already made by the nations in which they live, i.e., “When in Rome, do as the Romans do.”

### ***The International Date Line and the Sabbath***

In your article, you provided a “side issue” commentary pertaining to what you *perceive* as being a Sabbathkeeper’s dilemma: The International Date Line. I stress that you *perceive* this as being a problem because that is precisely what it is – a misguided perception. I will quote your entire commentary below, followed by my response:

The international date line presents a challenge for those who believe that they must keep a weekly Sabbath on the same day everywhere. The date line is an imaginary line that runs for the most part through the Pacific Ocean along the 180th meridian. Countries to the west of the date line are one day ahead of those to the east.

For example, when it is Sunday in Fiji and Tonga, it is Saturday in Samoa and Niue. So if a person keeps the Sabbath in Fiji on Saturday, members of his religion in Samoa, just 711 miles away, would be working because it is Friday there.

Seventh-Day Adventists in Tonga keep their Sabbath on Sunday, reasoning that by doing so, they are keeping the Sabbath at the same time as their members in Samoa, a little over 500 miles away. However, at the same time, Seventh-Day Adventists less than 500 miles away in Fiji are not resting because it is Sunday there, and they observe the Sabbath on Saturday!

The above commentary constitutes what is known as a “red herring” argument. A "red herring" argument is one which distracts the audience from the issue in question through the introduction of some irrelevancy. In this instance, a non-existent problem is presented involving the International Date Line.

There are several ways of exposing the weaknesses of this particular argument. To begin with, we should consider the fact that you agree the fourth commandment was in force prior to the Messiah’s death and resurrection. Judaism certainly knew which day of the week on which the weekly Sabbath fell, and certainly the Creator knew which day of the week He blessed, and He knows which day of the week it is anywhere on His creation. If an individual is considering making a move to Fiji, Tonga or Samoa but is confused over which day represents the first (and seventh) day of the week, maybe he or she should reconsider!

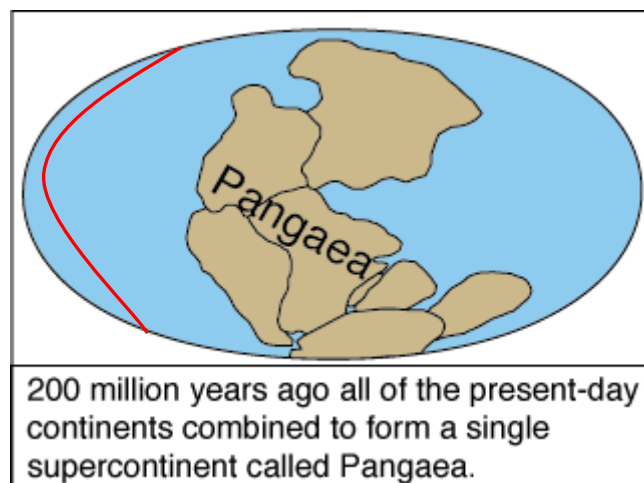
Secondly, if Seventh-Day Adventists in Tonga observe the weekly Sabbath on Sunday, which is the first day of the week, this means they work on the seventh day of the week, which is contrary to the directive found in the fourth commandment. As the expression goes, “That’s *their* problem!” If I were to find myself living in Tonga, I would observe the weekly Sabbath on the seventh day of the week. If I were confused about whether or not the seventh day is *really* the seventh day, I would either move to a location where I could be certain or else I would make a conscious decision, based on my own personal research, to either accept or reject the placement of the date line.

Something you omitted from your commentary is the fact that the International Date Line was originally placed *west* of Tonga, which would have had them “on the same page” with Samoa.

This brings me to the solution of the problem. Over the years, there have been many debates over the placement of the International Date Line. We have even heard arguments that it should be placed in Israel. In my opinion, it is just fine right where it is! Here’s why:

Those who are familiar with what is known as “Continental Drift” understand that, in the distant past, the continents were connected. Currently, most continents are separated by thousands of miles of ocean. Scientists have different theories as to how the continents became separated. Many believe the separation was gradual, occurring over a period of millions of years. Others, like me, believe it occurred suddenly. I personally believe the Great Flood of Noah’s day produced cataclysmic changes affecting the face of planet earth, including the vast separation of the continents.

With this in mind, if we go back to the pre-Flood days, when the continents were still joined together, there would have been one immense land mass separated at both ends by thousands of miles of water. Here’s an artist’s conception of what the earth may have looked like at that time:



**Figure 15.2 The supercontinent of Pangea**

Diagram Courtesy of USGS<sup>19</sup>

In the above illustration, I added the red line to depict the approximate placement of the original International Date Line prior to the Great Flood. Notice that no land is affected at all! As a result, in the above scenario, no dateline controversies would exist because all mankind would be “on the same page,” so to speak.

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<sup>19</sup> Ritter, Michael E. *The Physical Environment: an Introduction to Physical Geography*, Chapter 15: “Tectonics and Landforms,” 2006. Date accessed: 03/28/2010. Taken from the University of Wisconsin web site at the following URL: [http://www.uwsp.edu/geo/faculty/ritter/geog101/textbook/tectonics\\_landforms/tectonics\\_introduction.html](http://www.uwsp.edu/geo/faculty/ritter/geog101/textbook/tectonics_landforms/tectonics_introduction.html)

The red line in the above illustration illustrates where I personally believe the Almighty originally designated the “zero population” center of the earth for the original date line. It was there that He separated the land from the waters – in the middle of the earth – in the middle of the Creation week. It was there that another “separation” took place ... and the “great light” (Gen. 1:14) was involved. The “great light” was used to separate one day from another in that location. Since there would have been no one living where the waters were separated from the land, there could have been no "date line controversy" in the beginning. Later, at the time of the flood, when the one land mass was broken up, localized population centers crossed over into the date line area. Those whose lives are affected by this “interference” are free to either resolve the apparent “problem” the best they can or else move away to a less problematic area. Either way, it has absolutely *no bearing* on whether or not our Creator expects His children to observe the weekly Sabbath.

In the love of YHWH through Yeshua the Messiah,

Larry Acheson