

# Endtime Issues

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## Paul and the Sabbath

*Adapted from Chapter 6 of **THE SABBATH UNDER CROSSFIRE***

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The most popular weapons used to attack the Sabbath are the following three Pauline texts: Colossians 2:14-17, Galatians 4:8-11, and Romans 10:4-5. Of these references, greater importance has been attached to Colossians 2:14-17, inasmuch as the passage explicitly speaks of Christ's nailing something to the Cross (Col 2:14) and warns against paying heed to regulations regarding several things, including "a sabbath" (Col 2:16).

Based on these texts, the predominant historical consensus has been that Paul regarded the Sabbath as part of the Old Covenant that was nailed to the Cross.<sup>1</sup> Paul K. Jewett exemplifies the historical interpretation when he writes: "Paul's statement (Col 2:16) comes as near to a demonstration as anything could, that he taught his converts they had no obligation to observe the seventh-day Sabbath of the Old Testament."<sup>2</sup>

This popular view has been adopted and defended recently by former Sabbatarians. For example,

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## Understanding the Attacks Against the Sabbath

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The last Endtime Issues Newsletter, which featured an article entitled, "Rediscovering the Sabbath," that was adapted from Chapter 7 of my father's book, **THE SABBATH UNDER CROSSFIRE**, helped bring awareness of how the Sabbath is being rediscovered by many different groups of people around the world. However, at the same time that the Sabbath is being rediscovered for the fullness and meaning that it brings to our life, it is also being attacked as being no longer relevant, being legalistic, and having been done away with at the cross and replaced by an hour of worship on Sunday.

While the Catholic Church officially does not deny its pivotal role in changing Sabbath observance, Sundaykeeping Protestants have over the centuries tried to find a biblical basis to justify the keeping of Sunday as God's ordained day of worship. Even though Protestantism evolved out of the Catholic Church and the tradition of Sundaykeeping, Sundaykeeping Protestants are unwilling to acknowledge the role that the Catholic Church played in changing the day of worship. Rather, they look to the Bible to defend their Sundaykeeping tradition and have rested their arguments on a few texts in the Bible that have often been misunderstood. This Endtime Issues Newsletter addresses the key Pauline biblical texts that are often cited by Sundaykeeping Protestants to defend Sunday as the Biblical day of worship, or in the alternative, to negate the Saturday Sabbath.

If after reading this study, you would like further information on Paul's view on the Sabbath, you can find more information in the appendix of my father's book, **FROM SABBATH TO SUNDAY**, which is also entitled "Paul and the Sabbath."

May God richly bless you as you read this important study on Paul and the Sabbath.

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## Ordering Books, DVDs and CDs from Biblical Perspectives

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All of Dr. Bacchiocchi's books, DVD and CDs are available at [www.biblicalperspectives.com](http://www.biblicalperspectives.com). Just click the link for the Bookstore once you are on the website.

Alternatively, feel free to call us at (269) 471-2915 or write to Biblical Perspectives, 4975 Appian Way, Berrien Springs, MI 49103. If you have any questions regarding the ordering of materials, you can also email Daniel Bacchiocchi at [dan@biblicalperspectives.com](mailto:dan@biblicalperspectives.com).

## Projectors

One of the unique aspects of Dr. Bacchiocchi's ministry was his passion to use colorful PowerPoint presentations to enhance his lectures. Since he traveled around the world giving lectures in many churches that didn't have projectors, he started experimenting with different projectors until he found Hitachi, his favorite brand of projectors. After people would see his presentations and be impressed by the quality of the projector, they would ask him if he could help them get a similar projector. Dr. Bacchiocchi saw this as a potential ministry to help individuals, churches, schools and hospitals to obtain top quality projectors that included a 3 year manufacturer warranty at affordable prices. So he began to negotiate with different distributors of projectors to see if he could obtain special pricing for all these people and organizations that would come to him asking for his help to obtain a projector. God blessed his efforts and he was able to help many individuals, churches, schools and hospitals purchase top quality Hitachi projectors for low prices. Because we believe that this was a very important part of Dr. Bacchiocchi's ministry, we continue to work with the same distributors and strive to obtain the lowest possible prices on projectors that include a 3 year manufacturer warranty for all individuals, churches, schools and hospitals. If you or your organization is interested in purchasing a projector, please call Biblical Perspectives at (269) 471-2915 and ask for Dan or email Dan directly at [dan@biblicalperspectives.com](mailto:dan@biblicalperspectives.com). He will be more than happy to help you purchase the right projector for your purpose as well as any peripherals that you may need.

commenting on Colossians 2:16-17, the Worldwide Church of God affirms: "Under the laws of Moses, the Sabbath was a law by which people were judged. But Jesus' crucifixion has changed that. Now the Sabbath is no longer a basis for judgment."<sup>3</sup> The implication is that Christians are no longer held accountable for transgressing the Sabbath commandment because it was a "shadow" of things to come."<sup>4</sup>

In **SABBATH IN CRISIS**, Dale Ratzlaff categorically affirms: "In every instance in the epistles [of Paul] where there is teaching about the Sabbath, that teaching suggests that the Sabbath either undermines the Christian's standing in Christ, or is nonessential. . . . The Sabbath is said to be enslaving. Observance of the Sabbath, and the related old covenant convocations, made Paul 'fear' that he had labored in vain."<sup>5</sup> Ratzlaff goes so far as to say that, according to Paul, "the observance of the Sabbath by Christians seriously undermines the finished work of Christ."<sup>6</sup>

Did Paul take such a strong stand against the Sabbath, warning his converts against the detrimental effects of its observance in their Christian life? Did the Apostle really find Sabbathkeeping so dangerous? In what way could the act of stopping our work on the Sabbath to allow our Savior to work in our lives more fully and freely "seriously undermine the finished work of Christ"?

**Objectives of This Study.** This study seeks to answer these questions by examining Paul's attitude toward the Sabbath as reflected primarily in Colossians 2:14-17 and secondarily in Galatians 4:8-11 and Romans 14:5-6. We endeavor to establish whether Paul advocated the abrogation or the permanence of the principle and practice of Sabbathkeeping.

### PART 1

## COLOSSIANS 2:14-17: APPROBATION OR CONDEMNATION OF THE SABBATH?

### (1) The Colossian Heresy

Paul's reference to the observance of "Sabbaths" in Colossians 2:16 is only one aspect of the "Colossian heresy" refuted by Paul. It is necessary, therefore, to ascertain first of all the overall nature of the false

teachings that threatened to “disqualify” (Col 2:18) the Colossian believers. Were these teachings Mosaic ordinances and can they be identified with the “written document—*cheirographon*” which God through Christ “wiped out . . . removed, nailed to the cross” (Col 2:14)?

Most commentators define the Colossian heresy as syncretistic teachings which incorporated both Hellenistic and Jewish elements. Such a false teaching had both a *theological* and *practical* aspect.

**Theological Aspect.** *Theologically*, the Colossian “philosophy” (Col 2:8) was competing with Christ for believer’s allegiance. Its source of authority was human “tradition” (Col 2:8), and its object was to impart true “wisdom” (Col 2:3, 23), “knowledge” (Col 2:2-3; 3:10) and the assurance access to and participation in the divine “fullness” (Col 2:9-10; 1:19).

To attain divine fullness, Christians were urged to do homage to cosmic principalities (Col 2:10, 15), to “the elements of the universe” (Col 2:8, 20), and to angelic powers (2:15, 18), following ritualistic ascetic practices (Col 2:11-14, 16, 17, 21-22).

To gain protection from these cosmic powers and principalities, the Colossian “philosophers” urged Christians to offer cultic adoration to angelic powers (Col 2:15, 18, 19, 23) and to follow ritualistic and ascetic practices (Col 2:11, 14, 16, 17, 21, 22). By that process, one was assured of access to and participation in the divine “fullness—*pleroma*” (Col 2:9, 10, cf. 1:19). Essentially, then, the theological error consisted in interposing inferior mediators in place of the Head Himself, Jesus Christ (Col 2:9-10, 18-19).

**Practical Aspect.** The *practical* outcome of the theological speculations of the Colossian heretics was their insistence on strict ascetism and ritualism. These consisted in “putting off the body of flesh” (Col 2:11—apparently meaning withdrawal from the world); rigorous treatment of the body (Col 2:23); prohibition to either taste or touch certain kinds of foods and beverages (Col 2:16, 21), and careful observance of sacred days and seasons—festival, new moon, Sabbath (Col 2:16).

Christians presumably were led to believe that by submitting to these ascetic practices, they were not surrendering their faith in Christ but rather, they were receiving added protection and were assured of full access to the divine fullness. This may be inferred both from Paul’s distinction between living “according to the elements of the universe” and “according to Christ” (Col

2:8) and from the Apostle’s insistence on the supremacy of the incarnate Christ. “In him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily” (Col 2:9); therefore Christians attain “the fullness—*pleroma*” of life not by worshipping the elements of the universe, but through Christ, “who is the head of all rule and authority” (2:10; cf. 1:15-20; 3:3).

This bare outline suffices to show that the Sabbath is not mentioned in the passage in the context of a direct discussion of the Old Covenant law, as Ratzlaff claims,<sup>7</sup> but rather in the context of syncretistic beliefs and practices, which included elements from the Old Testament. Presumably the latter provided a justification for the ascetic principles advocated by the Colossian “philosophers.” We are not informed what type of Sabbath observance these teachers promoted; nevertheless, on the basis of their emphasis on scrupulous adherence to “regulations,” it is apparent that the day was to be observed in a most rigorous and superstitious manner.

**Circumcision and Baptism.** To combat the above false teachings, Paul chose to extol the centrality and superiority of Christ who possesses “the fullness of deity” (Col 2:9) and provides full redemption and forgiveness of sin (Col 2:11-14). To emphasize the certainty and fullness of Christ’s forgiveness, Paul utilizes three metaphors: circumcision, baptism, and “the written document” (Col 2:11-14).

Of the first two metaphors, Paul says: “In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of flesh in the circumcision of Christ; and you were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. And you, who were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of the flesh, God has made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses” (Col 2:11-13).

To support his contention that the Sabbath is part of the Old Covenant nailed to the Cross, Ratzlaff interprets Paul’s reference to the circumcision and baptism in this passage as indicating that the Old Covenant, of which circumcision was the entrance sign, has been replaced by the New Covenant, of which baptism is the entrance sign. “Circumcision not only served as the entrance sign to the old covenant, Paul shows how it also pointed forward to Christ, yet it does not continue as a sign in the new covenant. In the new covenant baptism replaces circumcision.”<sup>8</sup>

The problem with Ratzlaff’s interpretation is his failure

to recognize that Paul is not comparing or contrasting the Old and New Covenants, but affirming the benefits of Christ's death and resurrection through the imageries of circumcision and baptism. The imageries of circumcision and baptism are not used by Paul to discuss the Old and New Covenants, but to affirm the fullness of God's forgiveness, accomplished by Christ on the cross and extended through baptism to the Christian. Indeed, the proclamation of God's forgiveness constitutes Paul's basic answer to those attempting perfection by submitting to worship of angels (Col 2:18) and of the "elements of the world" (Col 2:8) by means of ascetic practices.

## (2) The Written Document Nailed to the Cross

To further emphasize the certainty and fullness of divine forgiveness explicitly mentioned in verses 11-13, Paul utilizes a legal metaphor in verse 14, namely that of God as a judge who "wiped out, . . . removed [and] nailed to the cross . . . the written document—*cheirographon*."

**Mosaic Law?** What is the "written document—*cheirographon*" nailed to the Cross? Traditionally, it has been interpreted to be the Mosaic Law with all its ordinances, including the Sabbath, which God allegedly set aside and nailed to the Cross. This interpretation is defended by Ratzlaff who writes: "What was the 'certificate of debt' or 'decrees' which were nailed to the cross? In context, Paul has been speaking of the old covenant. Was the old covenant 'against us'? We should remember from our study of the old covenant that one of its functions was to act as a 'testimony' against Israel if they sinned . . . (Deut 31:26). The cursing associated with the broken law and the ability of the law to condemn were both taken away when Christ was nailed to the Cross. 'There is therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus' (Rom 8:1)."<sup>9</sup>

This interpretation has several serious problems. First, the wrong assumption is made that the Old Covenant was "against us." If that were true, God would be guilty of establishing a covenant that was against His people. Could a gracious, redeeming God do such an unjust thing? What was against the people was not the covenant, which is God's commitment to save, but their sins which were exposed by the Law. The reason there is "no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom 8:1) is not because Christ nailed to the Cross "the ability of the law to condemn," thus leaving mankind without moral principles, but because God sent "his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh . . . in order that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk

not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit" (Rom 8:3-4).

Even more serious is Ratzlaff's misinterpretation of the "written document" that was nailed to the Cross. He interprets this document to be the Old Covenant including the Sabbath, which God allegedly set aside and nailed to the Cross.<sup>10</sup> This popular and traditional interpretation has largely been discredited by modern scholarship for at least two reasons. First, as Eduard Lohse points out in his commentary on Colossians, "in the whole of the epistle the word law is not used at all. Not only that, but the whole significance of the law, which appears unavoidable for Paul when he presents his gospel, is completely absent."<sup>11</sup>

Second, this interpretation detracts from the immediate argument designed to prove the fullness of God's forgiveness. The wiping out of the moral and/or ceremonial law would hardly provide Christians with the divine assurance of forgiveness. Guilt is not removed by destroying law codes. The latter would only leave mankind without moral principles.

The validity of these comments is acknowledged even by Douglas R. De Lacey, Professor of New Testament at Cambridge University and contributor to the scholarly symposium **FROM SABBATH TO THE LORD'S DAY**, which is largely a response to my dissertation **FROM SABBATH TO SUNDAY**. De Lacey writes: "Bacchiocchi lays great stress on the fact that the term *nomos* [law] is entirely absent from Colossians, and although his own interpretation at times fails to convince, *he is surely right in his conclusion that this passage cannot be interpreted as stating that the Mosaic law itself was 'wiped out' in the death of Christ.*"<sup>12</sup>

**Record Book of Sin.** The meaning of *cheirographon*, which occurs only once in Scripture (Col 2:14), has been clarified by recent studies on the usage of the term in apocalyptic and rabbinic literature.<sup>13</sup> The term is used to denote the "record book of sins" or a "certificate of sin-indebtedness" but not the moral or ceremonial law. This view is supported also by the clause "and this he has removed out of the middle" (Col 2:14). "The middle" was the position occupied at the center of the court or assembly by the accusing witness. In the context of Colossians, the accusing witness is the "record book of sins" which God in Christ has erased and removed out of the court.

By this daring metaphor, Paul affirms the completeness of God's forgiveness. Through Christ, God has "cancelled," "set aside," and "nailed to the cross" "the

written record of our sins which because of the regulations was against us.” The legal basis of the record of sins was “the binding statutes,” or “regulations” (*tois dogmasin*), but what God destroyed on the Cross was not the *legal ground* (law) for our entanglement into sin, but the *written record* of our sins.

By destroying the *evidence* of our sins, God also “disarmed the principalities and powers” (Col 2:15) since it is no longer possible for them to accuse those who have been forgiven. There is no reason, therefore, for Christians to feel incomplete and to seek the help of inferior mediators since Christ has provided complete redemption and forgiveness.

We conclude, then, that the document nailed to the Cross is not the Law, in general, or the Sabbath, in particular, but rather the record of our sins. Any attempt to read into this text a reference to the Law or the Sabbath lacks contextual and linguistic support.

### (3) Approbation or Condemnation of Sabbathkeeping?

Having refuted the *theological* speculations of the Colossian false teachers by reaffirming the supremacy of Christ and the fullness of His redemption (Col 2:8-15), Paul turns to some *practical* aspects of their religious practices, saying: “Therefore, let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a sabbath. These are only a shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ” (Col 2:16-17).

**Warning Against the Sabbath?** Historically, this passage has been interpreted, as stated by Luther, that “here Paul abolished the Sabbath by name and called it a bygone shadow because the body, which is Christ himself, has come.”<sup>14</sup> Ratzlaff interprets the passage along the same line, saying: “The context makes it clear that Paul is against those who are trying to force the Colossians to keep the Sabbath and other old covenant convocations. They are to allow no one to make them feel guilty for *not* observing them.”<sup>15</sup> He interprets the statement “Therefore, let no one pass judgment on you . . .” as a warning from Paul against the five mentioned practices, which include the Sabbath.<sup>16</sup>

This interpretation is wrong because in this passage Paul warns the Colossians not against the observances of these practices as such, but against “anyone” (*tis*) who passes judgment on how to eat, to drink, and to observe sacred times. The judge who passed judgment is not Paul but the Colossians false teachers who imposed

“regulations” (Col 2:20) on how to observe these practices in order to achieve “rigor of devotion and self-abasement and severity to the body” (Col 2:23).

Douglas De Lacey, a contributor to the scholarly symposium **FROM SABBATH TO THE LORD’S DAY** cited earlier, rightly comments: “The judge is likely to be a man of ascetic tendencies who objects to the Colossians’ eating and drinking. The most natural way of taking the rest of the passage is not that he also imposes a ritual of feast days, but rather that he objects to certain elements of such observation.”<sup>17</sup> Presumably the “judge” wanted the community to observe these practices in a more ascetic way (“severity to the body”— Col 2:23, 21); to put it bluntly, he wanted the Colossian believers to do less feasting and more fasting.

**Approbation of the Sabbath.** By warning against the right of the false teachers to “pass judgment” on how to observe festivals, Paul is challenging not the validity of the festivals as such but the authority of the false teachers to legislate the manner of their observance. The obvious implication, then, is that Paul in this text is expressing not a condemnation but an approbation of the mentioned practices, which include Sabbathkeeping.

It is noteworthy that even De Lacey reaches this conclusion, in spite of his view that Paul did not expect Gentile converts to observe the Sabbath. He writes: “Here again (Col 2:16), then, it seems that Paul could *happily countenance Sabbathkeeping* . . . However, we interpret the situation, Paul’s statement ‘Let no one pass judgment on you,’ indicates that no stringent regulations are to be laid down over the use of festivals.”<sup>18</sup>

Troy Martin, Professor at Saint Xavier University in Chicago, comes to the same conclusion in a 1996 article published in *New Testament Studies*. He writes: “This essay provides evidence that the Pauline community at Colossae, not the opponents, practices the temporal schemes outlined by Colossians 2:16. . . . This investigation into the function of the list in Colossians 2:16 indicates that the Colossians Christians, not their critics, participate in a religious calendar that includes festivals, new moons, and Sabbaths.”<sup>19</sup>

It is encouraging to see scholars finally recognizing that, contrary to the traditional and popular interpretation advocated by people like Ratzlaff, Colossians 2:16 is not the death knell of Sabbathkeeping in the New Testament but, instead, a proof of its Pauline approbation. Why does Ratzlaff totally ignore the conclusion of Prof. De Lacey (and others), though he uses the symposium as the

major resource for his own book? Most likely because he does not want readers to learn about anything that contradicts his anti-Sabbath interpretation of Colossians 2:16. This methodology is hardly reflective of responsible scholarship which requires the examination of opposing views before presenting one's own conclusions.

#### (4) The Manner of Sabbathkeeping

What is the nature of the “regulations” promoted by the Colossians false teachers regarding food and festivals, including the weekly Sabbath? Regrettably, Paul gives us only few catch phrases such as “self-abasement and worship of angels,” “rigor of devotion . . . severity to the body” (Col 2:18, 23) and their teachings—“Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch” (Col 2:21). These catch phrases indicate that the regulations did not derive from the Levitical law since nowhere does the latter contemplate such an ascetic program. Though the designation of the festivals is Jewish, the motivation and manner of their observance stems from pagan syncretistic ideologies.

Eduard Lohse perceptively notes that “In the context of Colossians, the command to keep festival, new moon, and Sabbath is not based on the Torah according to which Israel received the Sabbath as a sign of her election from among the nations. Rather the sacred days must be kept for the sake of ‘the elements of the universe’ who direct the course of the stars and also prescribe minutely the order of the calendar . . . The ‘philosophy’ made use of terms which stemmed from Jewish tradition, but which had been transformed in the crucible of syncretism to be subject to the service of ‘the elements of the universe.’”<sup>20</sup>

In the ancient world there was widespread belief that ascetism and fasting enabled a person to come closer to a deity and to receive divine revelation.<sup>21</sup> In the case of the Colossian “philosophy,” the dietary taboos and the observance of sacred times were apparently regarded as an expression of subjection to and worship of the cosmic powers (elements) of the universe.

Paul’s warning against the “regulations” of the false teachers cannot be interpreted as a condemnation of Mosaic laws regarding food and festivals, since what the Apostle condemns is not the teachings of Moses but their perverted use by Colossian false teachers. A *precept* is not nullified by the condemnation of its *perversion*.

**Shadow of the Reality.** Paul continues his argument in the following verse, saying: “These are the shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ”

(Col 2:17). To what does the relative pronoun “these” (*ha* in Greek) refer? Does it refer to the five practices mentioned in the previous verse or to the “regulations” (*dogmata*) regarding these practices promoted by the false teachers?

In a previous study, I argued for the former, suggesting that Paul places dietary practices and the observance of days “in their proper perspective with Christ by means of the contrast ‘shadow-body.’”<sup>22</sup> Additional reflection caused me to change my mind and to agree with Eduard Lohse that the relative pronoun “these” refers not to the five mentioned practices as such, but rather to the “regulations” regarding such practices promoted by the false teachers.<sup>23</sup>

**A Reference to “Regulations.”** This conclusion is supported by two considerations. First, in verse 16, Paul is not warning against the merits or demerits of the Mosaic law regarding food and festivals, but against the “regulations” regarding these practices advocated by the false teachers. Thus, it is more plausible to take “the regulations” rather than the actual practices as the antecedent of “these.”

Second, in the verses that immediately follow, Paul continues his warning against the deceptive teachings, saying, for example, “Let no one disqualify you, insisting on self-abasement . . .” (Col 2:18); “Why do you submit to regulations, ‘Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch?’” (Col 2:21). Since what precedes and what follows that relative pronoun “these” deals with the “regulations” of the Colossian “philosophy,” it is most likely that Paul describes the latter as “a shadow of what is to come” (Col 2:17).

The proponents of the Colossian “philosophy” presumably maintained that their “regulations” represented a copy which enabled the believer to have access to the reality (“fullness”). In such a case, Paul is turning their argument against them by saying that their regulations “are only a shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ” (Col 2:17). By emphasizing that Christ is the “body” and the “head” (Col 2:17, 19), Paul indicates that any “shadow” cast by the regulations has no significant value.

In the light of the above indications, we conclude that what Paul calls a “bygone shadow” is not the Sabbath but the deceptive teachings of the Colossian “philosophy” which promoted dietary practices and the observance of sacred times as auxiliary aids to salvation.

## (5) The Sabbath in Colossians 2:16

The “regulations” advocated by the Colossian “philosophy” had to do not only with “food and drink” but also with sacred times referred to as “a festival or a new moon or a sabbath” (Col 2:16). Commentators agree that these three words represent a logical and progressive sequence (annual, monthly, and weekly), as well as an exhaustive enumeration of sacred times. This interpretation is validated by the occurrence of these terms in similar or reverse sequence five times in the Septuagint and several other times in other literature.<sup>24</sup>

Some view the “sabbaths—*sabbaton*” as a reference to annual ceremonial Sabbaths rather than the weekly Sabbath (Lev 23:6-8, 21, 24- 25, 27-28, 37-38).<sup>25</sup> Such a view, however, breaks the logical and progressive sequence and ignores the fact that in the Septuagint the annual ceremonial Sabbaths are never designated simply as “sabbath” (*sabbaton*), but always with the compound expression “Sabbath of Sabbaths” (*sabbata sabbaton*). Indications such as these compellingly show that the word “*sabbaton*” used in Colossians 2:16 cannot refer to any of the annual ceremonial Sabbaths.

**Weekdays.** The plural form “Sabbaths” (*sabbaton*) is used in Scripture to designate not only the seventh-day Sabbath but also the week as a whole (Greek Septuagint on Ps 23:1; 47:1; 93:1; Mark 16:2; Luke 24:1; Acts 20:7). This fact suggests the possibility that the term “Sabbath” may refer to weekdays as a whole.<sup>26</sup> The latter view harmonizes better with the sequence of the enumeration which suggests yearly, monthly, and weekly festivities.

A similar sequence, though in reverse order, is given by Paul in Galatians 4:10 where he opposes a strikingly similar teaching which included the observance of “days, and months, and seasons, and years.” The fact that the Galatian list begins with “days” (*hemeras*, plural) suggests the possibility that the “Sabbaths” in Colossians may also refer to weekdays, in general, rather than to the seventh-day Sabbath, in particular.

Assuming for the sake of inquiry that the “sabbaths” in Colossians do refer to or include the Sabbath day, the question to be considered is this: What kind of Sabbath observance would the false teachers advocate? The data provided by Colossians are too meager to answer this question conclusively.

Yet the nature of the heresy allows us to conclude that the rigoristic emphasis on observance of dietary rules would undoubtedly be carried over to Sabbathkeeping as well. The veneration of “the elements of the universe”

would also affect the observance of the Sabbath and of sacred times, since it was commonly believed that the astral powers, which direct the stars, control both the calendar and human lives.<sup>27</sup>

We know that in the pagan world Saturday was regarded as an unlucky day because of its association with the planet Saturn.<sup>28</sup> In view of the prevailing astral superstitions associated with the days of the week, any Sabbath observance promoted by the Colossians’ ascetic teachers—known for their worship of the elements of the world—could only have been of a rigorous, superstitious type. A warning against such a superstitious type of Sabbathkeeping by Paul would have been not only appropriate but also desirable. In this case, Paul could be attacking not the *principle* of Sabbathkeeping but its *perverted function* and *motivation* which adulterated the ground of salvation. This conclusion is confirmed by two other Pauline passages (Rom 14:4-5; Gal 4:10) to be considered now.

## PART 2

### THE SABBATH IN ROMANS AND GALATIANS

#### (1) The Sabbath in Romans

The Sabbath is not specifically mentioned in Paul’s Epistle to the Romans. However, in chapter 14, the Apostle distinguishes between two types of believers: the “strong” who believed “he may eat anything” and the “weak” who ate only “vegetables” and drank no wine (Rom 14:2, 21). The difference extended also to the observance of days, as indicated by Paul’s statement: “One man esteems one day as better than another, while another man esteems all days alike. Let every one be fully convinced in his own mind” (Rom 14:5).

Many Christians maintain that the weekly Sabbath comes within the scope of this distinction respecting days. They presume that the “weak” believers esteemed the Sabbath better than other days while “the strong” treated the Sabbath like the rest of the weekdays. For example, the Worldwide Church of God uses Romans 14:5 to argue that “Paul did not teach Gentile Christians to keep the Sabbath. He actually told them that the Sabbath was not an area in which we should be judged.”<sup>29</sup> “That is because something had happened to change the basis of our relationship with God . . . the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Because of that, the Old Covenant laws came to an end. Days are no longer a matter for judging behavior.”<sup>30</sup> In a similar vein, Ratzlaff concludes that “The ‘days’ mentioned in this chapter [Rom 14:5] that some ‘regard’ and ‘observe’ over other

days, are *probably* Sabbath days, although the evidence is not conclusive.”<sup>31</sup>

**No Reference to Mosaic Law.** Can the Sabbath be legitimately read into this passage? The answer is “No!” for at least three reasons. First, the conflict between the “weak” and the “strong” over diet and days cannot be traced back to the Mosaic law. The “weak man” who “eats only vegetables” (Rom 14:2), drinks no wine (Rom 14:21), and “esteems one day as better [apparently for fasting] than another” (Rom 14:5) can claim no support for such convictions from the Old Testament. Nowhere does the Mosaic law prescribe strict vegetarianism, total abstinence from fermented and unfermented wine,<sup>32</sup> and a preference for fasting days.

Similarly, the “strong man” who “believes he may eat anything” (Rom 14:2) and who “esteems all days alike” is not asserting his freedom from the Mosaic law but from ascetic beliefs apparently derived from sectarian movements. The whole discussion then is not about freedom to observe the law versus freedom from its observance, but concerns “unessential” scruples of conscience dictated not by divine precepts but by human conventions and superstitions. Since these differing convictions and practices did not undermine the essence of the Gospel, Paul advises mutual tolerance and respect in this matter.

That the Mosaic law is not at stake in Romans 14 is also indicated by the term *“koinos—common”* which is used in verse 14 to designate “unclean” food. This term is radically different from the word *“akathartos—impure”* used in Leviticus 11 (Septuagint) to designate unlawful foods. This suggests that the dispute was not over meat which was unlawful according to the Mosaic Law, but about meat which per se was lawful to eat but because of its association with idol worship (cf. 1 Cor 8:1-13) was regarded by some as *“koinos—common,”* that is, to be avoided by Christians.

A second point to note is that Paul applies the basic principle “observe it in honor of the Lord” (Rom 14:6) *only* to the case of the person “who observes the day.” He never says the opposite, namely, “the man who esteems all days alike, esteems them in honor of the Lord.” In other words, with regard to diet, Paul teaches that one can honor the Lord both by eating and by abstaining (Rom 14:6); but with regard to days, he does not even concede that the person who regards all the days alike does so to the Lord. Thus, Paul hardly gives his endorsement to those who esteemed all days alike.

**Sabbathkeeping: For “Weak” Believers?** Finally, if as generally presumed, it was the “weak” believer who observed the Sabbath, Paul would classify himself with the “weak” since he observed the Sabbath and other Jewish feasts (Acts 18:4, 19; 17:1, 10, 17; 20:16). Paul, however, views himself as “strong” (“we who are strong”—Rom 15:1); thus, he could not have been thinking of Sabbathkeeping when he speaks of the preference over days.

Support for this conclusion is also provided by Paul’s advice: “Let every one be fully convinced in his own mind” (Rom 14:5). It is difficult to see how Paul could reduce the observance of holy days such as the Sabbath, Passover, and Pentecost to a matter of personal conviction without ever explaining the reason for it. This is especially surprising since he labors at great length to explain why circumcision was not binding upon the Gentiles.

If Paul taught his Gentile converts to regard Sabbathkeeping as a personal matter, Jewish Christians readily would have attacked his temerity in setting aside the Sabbath law, as they did regarding circumcision (Acts 21:21). The fact that there is no hint of any such controversy in the New Testament indicates that Paul never discouraged Sabbathkeeping or encouraged Sundaykeeping instead.<sup>33</sup>

**No Hint of Conflict.** 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 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 Sabbath-keeping 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 the Roman world there was a superstitious belief that certain days were more favorable than others for undertaking some specific projects. The Fathers frequently rebuked Christians for adopting such a superstitious mentality.<sup>34</sup> Possibly, Paul alludes to this kind of problem, which at his time was still too small to deserve much attention. Since these practices did not undermine the essence of the Gospel, Paul advises mutual tolerance and respect on this matter. In the light of these considerations, we conclude that it is hardly possible that Sabbathkeeping is included in the “days” of Romans 14:5.

## (2) The Sabbath in Galatians

In Galatians, as in Romans, there is no specific reference to the Sabbath. Paul does mention, however, that some Galatian Christians had themselves circumcised (Gal 6:12; 5:2) and had begun to “observe days, and months, and seasons, and years” (Gal 4:10).

In many respects, the polemic in Galatians 4:8-11 is strikingly similar to that of Colossians 2:8-23. In both places the superstitious observance of sacred times is described as slavery to the “elements.” In Galatians, however, the denunciation of the “false teachers” is stronger. They are regarded as “accursed” (Gal 1:8, 9) because they were teaching a “different gospel.” Their teaching that the observance of days and seasons was necessary to justification and salvation perverted the very heart of the Gospel (Gal 5:4).

**Pagan Days or Sabbath Day?** The question to be addressed is whether the “days” (*hemera*—Gal 4:10) observed by the Galatians were superstitious pagan holidays or the biblical Sabbath day. Some scholars argue on the basis of the parallel passage of Colossians 2:16, where “sabbaths” are explicitly mentioned, that the “days” mentioned in Galatians were the Biblical seventh-day Sabbaths.<sup>35</sup>

Ratzlaff affirms categorically this view saying: “We have a clear reference to the seventh-day Sabbath in this passage [Gal 4:10] for the following four reasons. (1) The context of the book of Galatians, including chapter 4, is dealing with those ‘who want to be under the law.’ (2) Paul’s use of ‘elemental things’ usually, if not always, refer to that which is contained in the old covenant. (3) The Galatians were observing days, months, seasons, and

years, thus placing themselves back under the old covenant law. (4) These convocations are listed in order.”<sup>36</sup>

## Comparison of Colossians 2:16 and Galatians 4:10.

The fundamental problem with Ratzlaff’s four reasons is that they are based on gratuitous assumptions rather than on a careful analysis of the context. In the immediate context, Paul reminds the Galatians that in their pre-Christian days they “were slaves to the elemental spirits of the universe” (Gal 4:3). The “elemental spirits—*stoikeia tou kosmou*” have nothing to do with the Old Covenant since the Mosaic Law was unknown to the Corinthians in their pagan days. Most scholars interpret the “elements” as the basic elements of this world, such as the earth, water, air, and fire, or pagan astral gods who were credited with controlling human destiny.<sup>37</sup>

The context clearly indicates that Paul rebukes the Galatians for turning back to their pagan days by reverting to their pagan calendar. Thus, the issue is not their adoption of Jewish Holy Days but their return to observing pagan superstitious days. Paul makes this point rather clearly: “Formerly, when you did not know God, you were in bondage to beings that by nature are no gods; but now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and beggarly elemental spirits, whose slaves you want to be once more? You observe days, and months, and seasons, and years! I am afraid that I have labored over you in vain” (Gal 4:8-10).

Two articles by Troy Martin, published in *New Testament Studies* and the *Journal of Biblical Literature*, make a significant contribution to the understanding of the passage under consideration. Martin points out that the time-keeping scheme found in Galatians 4:10 (“days, and months, and seasons, and years”) is clearly different from that found in Colossians 2:16 (“a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths”). He shows that while the list in Colossians 2:16 is unquestionably Jewish, because the temporal categories of festival, new moon, and Sabbaths are characteristic of the Jewish religious calendar, the list in Galatians 4:10 of “days, and months, and seasons, and years” “describes a pagan calendar unacceptable to Paul and his communities.”<sup>38</sup>

Martin reaches this conclusion by examining not only the time structure of pagan calendars,<sup>39</sup> but especially the immediate context where Paul condemns the Galatians’ attempt to return to their pagan practices (Gal 4:89) by

reverting to the use of their pagan calendar. “As the immediate context clearly states, Paul is worried that he has labored for the Galatians in vain since they have returned to their former pagan life as evidenced by their renewed preconversion reckoning of time. Because of its association with idolatry and false deities, marking time according to this pagan scheme is tantamount to rejecting Paul’s Gospel and the one and only true God it proclaims (Gal 4:8-9). Galatians 4:10, therefore, stipulates that when the Galatians accepted Paul’s Gospel with its aversion to idolatry (Gal 4:8), they discarded their pagan method of reckoning time. . . . A comparison of these lists demonstrates that the Gentile conversion to Paul’s gospel involves rejection of idolatrous pagan temporal schemes in favor of the Jewish liturgical calendar.”<sup>40</sup>

**Gentiles’ Adoption of Jewish Calendar.** Troy Martin’s conclusion, that the Gentiles’ conversion to the Gospel involved the rejection of their pagan calendar built upon the idolatrous worship of many gods and the adoption of the Jewish religious calendar which had been transformed by Christ’s coming, represents in my view a significant breakthrough in our understanding of the continuity between Judaism and Christianity.

Paul’s time references clearly reflect his adoption of the Jewish religious calendar, though modified and transformed by the coming of Christ. For example, in 1 Corinthians 16:2, Paul recommends a fund-raising plan for the Jerusalem church consisting of laying aside at home some money *kata mian sabbaton*, that is, “every first day from the Sabbath.” The fact that Paul refers to the first day of the week by the Jewish designation “first day from the Sabbath,” and not by the prevailing pagan name *dies solis*—Day of the Sun, reveals that he taught his Gentile converts to regulate their lives by the Jewish calendar.

In the same epistle, Paul builds an elaborate argument based upon the festival of Passover and unleavened bread in order to exhort the Corinthians, “Let us keep the festival” (1 Cor 5:6-8). The whole argument and exhortation to keep Passover would have been meaningless to the Gentile congregation of Corinth unless Paul had taught about the Jewish religious calendar. In the light of these considerations we conclude, with Martin, that “although the temporal references in Paul’s letters are sparse, 1 Corinthians provides strong evidence for the Pauline adoption of the Jewish practice that marked time by festivals and Sabbaths.”<sup>41</sup>

The Christian adherence to the Jewish calendar is especially evident in the book of Acts. Repeatedly, Paul proclaims the Gospel in synagogues and in the outdoors on the Sabbath (Acts 13:14, 44; 16:13; 17:2). In Troas, Paul speaks to the believers on the first day from Sabbath (*mia ton sabbaton*) (Acts 20:7). “The portrayal of Paul in Acts,” as Martin points out, “supplies clear evidence that Christians mark time by segments of festivals and Sabbaths.”<sup>42</sup> This conclusion is clearly supported by Colossians 2:16 where we find the standard Jewish nomenclature of annual feasts, monthly new moons, and weekly Sabbaths.

The fact that Paul taught his Gentile congregations to reject their pagan calendar, where the days were named after planetary gods and the months after deified emperors, and to reckon time according to the Jewish religious calendar, does not necessarily mean that he taught them to practice Jewish religious rituals. The Romans themselves replaced just before the origin of Christianity their “eight day week—*nundinum*” with the Jewish seven-day week and adopted in the first century the Jewish Sabbath as their new day for rest and feasting, without the concomitant adoption of the Jewish rituals.<sup>43</sup> By the same token, Paul taught his Gentile converts to reckon time according to the Jewish religious calendar without expecting them to practice the rituals associated with it. A good example is Paul’s discussion of the new meaning of the feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread in the light of Christ’s event (1 Cor 5:6-8).<sup>44</sup>

**Superstitious Motivation.** Our preceding discussion shows that the temporal categories of Galatians 4:10 (“days, and months, and seasons, and years”) are pagan and not Jewish, like the list found in Colossians 2:16. To argue, as Ratzlaff does, that the Galatians were observing the Old Covenant Holy Days means to ignore the immediate context where Paul speaks of pagan temporal categories to which the Galatians were turning back again.

The Galatians’ observance of pagan sacred times was motivated by superstitious beliefs in astral influences. This is suggested by Paul’s charge that their adoption of these practices was tantamount to a return to their former pagan subjection to elemental spirits and demons (Gal 4:8-9).

Paul’s concern is not to expose the superstitious ideas attached to these observances but to challenge the whole system of salvation which the Galatians’ false teachers had devised. By conditioning justification and acceptance with God to such things as circumcision and the

observance of pagan days and seasons, the Galatians were making salvation dependent upon human achievement. This for Paul was a betrayal of the Gospel: "You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace" (Gal 5:4).

It is within this context that Paul's denouncement of the observance of days and seasons must be understood. If the motivations for these observances had not undermined the vital principle of justification by faith in Jesus Christ, Paul would only have recommended tolerance and respect, as he does in Romans 14. The motivation for these practices, however, adulterated the very ground of salvation. Thus the Apostle had no choice but strongly to reject them. In Galatians as in Colossians, then, it is not the principle of Sabbathkeeping that Paul opposes, but rather the perverted use of cultic observations which were designed to promote salvation as a human achievement rather than as a divine gift of grace.

### Conclusion

Several conclusions emerge from this study of Paul's attitude toward the law, in general, and the Sabbath, in particular.

First, the three texts (Col 2:14-16; Rom 14:5, Gal 4:10) generally adduced as proof of Paul's repudiation of the Sabbath do not deal with the validity or invalidity of the Sabbath commandment for Christians but, rather, with ascetic and cultic practices which undermined (especially in Colossians and Galatians) the vital principle of justification by faith in Jesus Christ.

Second, in the crucial passage of Colossians 2:16, Paul's warning is not against the validity of observing the Sabbath and festivals as such but against the authority of false teachers to legislate on the manner of their observance. Implicitly, Paul expresses approval rather than disapproval of their observance. Any condemnation had to do with a *perversion* rather than a *precept*.

Third, Paul's tolerance with respect to diet and days (Rom 14:3-6) indicates that he would not have promoted the abandonment of the Sabbath and the adoption of Sunday observance instead. If he had done so, he would have encountered endless disputes with Sabbath advocates, especially among Jewish Christians. The absence of any trace of such a polemic is perhaps the most telling evidence of Paul's respect for the institution of the Sabbath.

In the final analysis, Paul's attitude toward the Sabbath must be determined not on the basis of his denunciation

of heretical and superstitious observances which may have influenced Sabbathkeeping, but rather on the basis of his overall attitude toward the law.

The failure to understand that Paul rejects the law as a method of salvation but upholds it as a moral standard of Christian conduct has been the root cause of much misunderstanding of Paul's attitude toward the law, in general, and toward the Sabbath, in particular. May this study contribute to clarify this misunderstanding and allow us to discover, with Paul, that "the law is good, if any one uses it lawfully" (1 Tim 1:8).

### NOTES

1. For a brief historical survey of this interpretation, see Samuele Bacchiocchi, "Paul and the Sabbath," in **FROM SABBATH TO SUNDAY** (Rome, 1977), Appendix, pp. 339-343.

2. Paul K. Jewett, **THE LORD'S DAY: A THEOLOGICAL GUIDE TO THE CHRISTIAN DAY OF WORSHIP** (Grand Rapids, 1971), p. 45.

3. "The Sabbath in Acts and the Epistles," Bible Study prepared by the Worldwide Church of God and posted in its web page ([www.wcg.org](http://www.wcg.org), September, 1998), p. 2.

4. *Ibid.*

5. Dale Ratzlaff, **SABBATH IN CRISIS: TRANSFER/MODIFICATION? REFORMATION/CONTINUATION? FULFILLMENT/TRANSFORMATION?** (Applegate, California, 1990), pp. 173-174.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 174.

7. Commenting on Colossians 2:14,15, Ratzlaff writes: "What was the 'certificate of debt' or the 'decrees' which were nailed to the Cross? In context, Paul has been speaking about the old covenant" (note 5, p. 156). This cannot be true, because in the context Paul refutes the Colossian heresy by affirming the fullness of God's forgiveness.

8. Dale Ratzlaff (note 5), pp. 155-156.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 156.

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 156-161.

11. Eduard Lohse, **A COMMENTARY ON THE EPISTLES TO THE COLOSSIANS AND TO PHILEMON** (Philadelphia, 1971), p. 116. In a similar vein, Herold Weiss emphasizes that in Paul's argument (Col 2:8-19), the law "plays no role at all" ("The Law in the Epistle to the Colossians," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 34 [1972]: 311).

12. Douglas R. De Lacey, "The Sabbath/Sunday Question and the Law in the Pauline Corpus," **FROM SABBATH TO**

**LORD'S DAY. A BIBLICAL, HISTORICAL, AND THEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION**, ed. Donald A. Carson (Grand Rapids, 1982), p. 173. Emphasis supplied.

13. For a lengthy list of commentators who interpret the *cheirographon* either as the "certificate of indebtedness" resulting from our transgressions or as the "book containing the record of sin," see Samuele Bacchiocchi, **FROM SABBATH TO SUNDAY. A HISTORICAL INVESTIGATION OF THE RISE OF SUNDAY OBSERVANCE IN EARLY CHRISTIANITY** (Rome, 1977), Appendix, pp. 349-350.

14. Martin Luther, "Wider die himmlischen Propheten," in his **SÄMTLICHE SCHRIFTEN**, ed. by Johann Georg Walch (1890), vol. XX, col. 148.

15. Dale Ratzlaff (note 5), p. 163.

16. *Ibid.*, pp. 161-162.

17. Douglas R. De Lacey (note 12), p. 182.

18. *Ibid.*, emphasis supplied.

19. Troy Martin, "Pagan and Judeo-Christian Time-keeping Schemes in Galatians 4:10 and Colossians 2:16," *New Testament Studies* 42 (1996), p. 111.

20. Eduard Lohse (note 11), p. 155.

21. For texts and discussion, see G. Bornhamm, "*Lakanon*," **THEOLOGICAL DICTIONARY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT**, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids, 1967), vol. 4, p. 67; also J. Behm writes in the same **THEOLOGICAL DICTIONARY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT**, IV, p. 297: "The Greeks and Romans knew that abstention makes receptive to ecstatic revelations."

22. For a discussion of Colossians 2:17, see Samuele Bacchiocchi, **FROM SABBATH TO SUNDAY** (note 1), pp. 356-357.

23. Eduard Lohse (note 11), p. 116.

24. See the Septuagint on 2 Chron 2:4; 31:3; Neh 10:33; Ezek 45:17; Hos 2:11. Also *Jub* 1:14; *Jos. Ber.* 3:11; Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 8:4.

25. See, **THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST BIBLE COMMENTARY** (Washington, D. C., 1957), vol. 7, pp. 205-206.

26. This is the view of Nobeit Hugedé, **COMMENTAIRE DE L'ÉPÎTRE AUX COLOSSIENS** (Paris, 1969), p. 144. On the plural usage of "Sabbaths" to designate the week as a whole, see Eduard Lohse (note 11), pp. 7, 20.

27. Günter Bornhamm emphasizes this view when he writes: "Paul mentions New Moon and Sabbath (Col

2:16), days, months, season, and years (Gal 4:10), i.e., in each case days and seasons that do not stand under the sign of the history of salvation, but under the sign of the periodic cycles of nature, i.e., corresponding to the movement of the stars" ("The Heresy of Colossians," in Fred O. Francis and Wayne A. Meeks, eds., **CONFLICT AT COLOSSAE, SBL SOURCES FOR BIBLICAL STUDY** 4, 1973, p. 131).

28. Texts and discussion are found in Samuele Bacchiocchi, **FROM SABBATH TO SUNDAY** (note 1), pp. 173f. and 243.

29. "Paul and the Sabbath," Bible Study prepared by the Worldwide Church of God and posted in its web page ([www.wcg.org](http://www.wcg.org), September, 1998), p. 1.

30. "The Sabbath in Acts and the Epistles," Bible Study prepared by the Worldwide Church of God and posted in its web page ([www.wcg.org](http://www.wcg.org), September, 1998), p. 2.

31. Dale Ratzlaff (note 5), p. 169.

32. The Nazarite's vow included abstention from all grape products (Num 6:2-4). This, however, was a temporary and voluntary vow. Some, such as Samuel (1 Sam 1:11) and John the Baptist (Luke 1:15) were Nazarites for life. But we have no record of a person taking the vow voluntarily for life. Perpetual vows were taken by parents on behalf of children. The Rechabites led a nomadic life in tents and abstained from all intoxicating drinks (Jer 35:119). For a study on the Biblical teaching regarding the use of alcoholic beverages, see Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Wine in the Bible* (Berrien Springs, Michigan, 1989). My study shows that the Bible disapproves of the use of fermented wine but approves the consumption of unfermented wine, commonly called "grape juice."

33. Paul K. Jewett wisely acknowledges that "if Paul had introduced Sunday worship among the Gentiles, it seems likely Jewish opposition would have accused his temerity in setting aside the law of the Sabbath, as was the case with the rite of circumcision (Acts 21:21)" (note 2), p. 57.

34. For texts and discussion, see Samuele Bacchiocchi, **FROM SABBATH TO SUNDAY** (note 1), p. 254.

35. See, for example, Willy Rordorf, **SUNDAY: THE HISTORY OF THE DAY OF REST AND WORSHIP IN THE EARLIEST CENTURIES OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH** (Philadelphia, 1968), p. 131; C. S. Mosna, **STORIA DELLA DOMENICA DALLE ORIGINI FINO AGLI INIZI DEL V. SECOLO** (Rome, 1969), p. 183.

36. Dale Ratzlaff (note 5), p. 165.

37. For a discussion of scholarly views regarding the meaning of *stoicheia*, see Samuele Bacchiocchi, **FROM SABBATH TO SUNDAY** (note 1), pp. 344-345.
38. Troy Martin (note 19), p. 119. See also idem, "But Let Everyone Discern the Body of Christ (Colossians 2:17)," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 114/2 (1995), p. 255.
39. For a discussion of the pagan calendar, see also E. J. Bickerman, **CHRONOLOGY OF THE ANCIENT WORLD** (Ithaca, New York, 1968), pp. 70-79.
40. Troy Martin (note 19), pp. 117, 119.
41. Ibid., pp. 108-109.
42. Ibid., p. 109.
43. The Roman adoption of the seven-day planetary week just prior to the beginning of Christianity is discussed at some length in Samuele Bacchiocchi, **FROM SABBATH TO SUNDAY** (note 1), pp. 238-251.
44. For a discussion of the observance and meaning of Passover/ Unleavened Bread in the New Testament, see Samuele Bacchiocchi, **GOD'S FESTIVALS IN SCRIPTURE AND HISTORY: VOLUME 1: THE SPRING FESTIVALS** (Berrien Springs, Michigan, 1995), pp. 75-77.

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