

JESUS AND THE SABBATH.

A THOROUGH EXAMINATION OF THE GREEK WORD “SABBATON” AS IT IS USED IN THE FOUR GOSPELS.

Compiled by Rick Henwood.

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NOTE: - All Bible texts are taken from the King James Version; and the compiler has supplied all emphasis throughout this document.

JESUS AND THE SABBATH.

In the long standing controversy between Seventh Day Sabbatarians and First Day Observers concerning which day of the week is the Biblical and thus the only Divinely appointed day of rest and worship for Christ's followers to observe, there can be no higher authority to settle this issue than our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. After all he did state that he was **the Lord of the Sabbath day**. Therefore his own personal example and public teachings concerning the Sabbath day should be the highest and ultimate authority to settle this issue once and for all, amongst those who profess to accept the Scriptures as the only source of authority for their faith and practise.

The Greek word that is translated as "Sabbath" in the New Testament is the word "sabbaton" – See Strong's Concordance; Greek, No. 4521. This word occurs 56 times in the four gospels. It is defined as "1. Sabbath, ... 2. week".¹ In the four gospels it is translated in the King James Version as "Sabbath" or "Week".

It is the purpose of this study document to examine the use of this word in the four gospels, in relation to the public ministry and teachings of Jesus Christ, and to see how Jesus personally related to the Sabbath day both by his personal example, and in his public teachings.

THE USE OF THE WORD "SABBATON" IN THE FOUR GOSPELS: -

- Matthew 12:1 - 8: - "At that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn; and his disciples were an hungred, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat. But when the Pharisees saw [it], they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day. But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungred, and they that were with him; How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the showbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests? Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless? But I say unto you, That in this place is [one] greater than the temple. But if ye had known what [this] meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day."

See also: - Mark 2:23 - 28 & Luke 6:1 - 5 where the other gospel writers record this incident.

The Pharisees questioned Jesus concerning the legality of his disciples plucking the ears of corn in the field and eating them upon the Sabbath day. It should be stated that according to the Law of Moses, it was lawful for Jesus' disciples to pluck and eat the corn from the field that they were passing through. In other words, the Pharisees claim was founded upon the uninspired traditions of the elders, and **NOT** upon the inspired Word of God.

Deuteronomy 23:25: - "When thou comest into the standing corn of thy neighbour, then thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand; but thou shalt not move a sickle unto thy neighbour's standing corn."

Jesus answered the Pharisees' accusation against his disciples by referring them to the story of David and his men taking and eating the Shewbread from the Priest Ahimelech.

1 Samuel 21:1 - 6: - "Then came David to Nob to Ahimelech the priest: and Ahimelech was afraid at the meeting of David, and said unto him, Why [art] thou alone, and no man with thee? And David said unto Ahimelech the priest, The king hath commanded me a business, and hath said unto me, Let no man know any thing of the business whereabout I send thee, and what I have commanded thee: and I have appointed [my] servants to such and such a place. Now therefore what is under thine hand? give [me] five [loaves of] bread in mine hand, or what there is present. **And the priest answered David, and said, [There is] no common bread under mine hand, but there**

¹ A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, by W. Bauer, Translated and revised by W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich, and F. W. Danker, page 739. From now on it shall be referred to as "BAGD".

is hallowed bread; if the young men have kept themselves at least from women. And David answered the priest, and said unto him, Of a truth women [have been] kept from us about these three days, since I came out, and the vessels of the young men are holy, and [the bread is] in a manner common, yea, **though it were sanctified this day in the vessel.** So the priest gave him hallowed [bread]: for there was no bread there but the showbread, that was taken from before the LORD, to put hot bread in the day when it was taken away.”

This consecrated bread was to be baked fresh every Sabbath day, and then it was only to be eaten by the Priests according to the Law of Moses.

Leviticus 24:5 - 9: - “And thou shalt take fine flour, and bake twelve cakes thereof: two tenth deals shall be in one cake. And thou shalt set them in two rows, six on a row, upon the pure table before the LORD. And thou shalt put pure frankincense upon [each] row, that it may be on the bread for a memorial, [even] an offering made by fire unto the LORD. **Every sabbath he shall set it in order before the LORD continually, [being taken] from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant. And it shall be Aaron's and his sons'; and they shall eat it in the holy place:** for it [is] most holy unto him of the offerings of the LORD made by fire by a perpetual statute.”

1 Chronicles 9:32: - “And [other] of their brethren, of the sons of the Kohathites, **[were] over the showbread, to prepare [it] every sabbath.**”

The relevance of Jesus' use of the story of David and the Shewbread to this controversy concerning the Sabbath day should be obvious. As we have just read from Leviticus 24 & 1 Chronicles 9, the Shewbread was to be baked fresh every Sabbath day. Reading 1 Samuel 21:5 carefully, it is clear that this incident took place upon the Sabbath day, as Ahimelech stated to David concerning the consecrated bread, “though it were sanctified **this day** in the vessel”.

☞ If excessive hunger excused David for violating even the holiness of the sanctuary, and made his act guiltless, how much more excusable was the simple act of the disciples in plucking the grain and eating it upon the Sabbath day. Jesus would teach his disciples and his enemies that the service of God was first of all; and, if fatigue and hunger attended the work, it was right to satisfy the wants of humanity, even upon the Sabbath day.

Jesus then used the example of the priests engaged in the service of the Temple, who offered more sacrifices upon the Sabbath day (and who also baked the Shewbread upon the Sabbath day), than upon the other six days of the week, and yet they are blameless before God.

Numbers 28:9 & 10: - “And on the sabbath day two lambs of the first year without spot, and two tenth deals of flour [for] a meat offering, mingled with oil, and the drink offering thereof: [This is] the burnt offering of every sabbath, beside the continual burnt offering, and his drink offering.”

☞ The work done in the temple upon the Sabbath day was in harmony with the Law of God; yet the same labor, if employed in ordinary business, would be a violation of the Law.

In this controversy with the Pharisees concerning what was lawful to be done upon the Sabbath day, Jesus claimed to be the “LORD” of the Sabbath day in VS. 8.² This was his crowning argument in this controversy with the Jewish Church leaders. By claiming this title concerning the Sabbath day, he is claiming to be the **MASTER** or **RULER** over the Sabbath day, the One who is the **ULTIMATE AUTHORITY** concerning the Sabbath day, and what is and what is not lawful to be done upon that holy day. The importance of this statement by Jesus cannot be underestimated. Jesus by claiming this title concerning the Sabbath day is the **ONLY BEING** who could abolish or

² The other gospel writers record this significant statement from Jesus in Mark 2:28 & Luke 6:5.

change the seventh-day Sabbath in any way. Please remember that Jesus taught his doctrines openly to the world, and did not communicate his teachings secretly to his disciples.

John 18:19 & 20: - “The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine. Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; **and in secret have I said nothing.**”

Therefore any **supposed** abolishing or change of the Sabbath Commandment that does not come directly from the lips of Jesus Christ as recorded in the sacred Scriptures, is a teaching that undermines and usurps the rightful authority of the LORD of the Sabbath day.

We note that in Mark’s account of this incident as recorded in Mark 2:27, Jesus stated a profound truth concerning **WHO** the Sabbath day was made for: - “**The sabbath was made for man**, and not man for the Sabbath.” In light of the popular tradition that asserts that the Sabbath day was made especially for the Jewish people, the words of Jesus Christ refute such an assertion. Jesus stated that the Sabbath was made for **man**. The fact that Jesus in his capacity as being the LORD of the Sabbath day tells us **WHO** the Sabbath day was made for, should forever settle the controversy over the supposed Jewishness of the seventh-day Sabbath.

The Greek word that is translated as “man” in this verse from Mark 2, is the word “anthropos” –See Strong’s Concordance, Greek, No. 444. It is defined as “human being, man”.³ This is clearly indicating that the word “man” is a generic term for **mankind as a whole**. The word “man” is **NOT** spelt “J – E – W”.

- Matthew 12:9 - 13: - “And when he was departed thence, he went into their synagogue: And, behold, there was a man which had [his] hand withered. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days? that they might accuse him. And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift [it] out? How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days. Then saith he to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched [it] forth; and it was restored whole, like as the other.”
See also: - Mark 3:1 - 5 & Luke 6:6 - 10 where the other gospel writers record this incident.

After Jesus and his disciples had the controversy with the Pharisees in the cornfield, he then goes into the synagogue upon the Sabbath day. Finding there a man who had a withered hand, the Pharisees after being defeated in the cornfield, ask Jesus the accusing question, “Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days?” It should be stated plainly, that throughout Jesus’ controversies with the Jewish Church Leaders concerning the lawfulness of his healing the sick upon the Sabbath day, as recorded in the four gospels, **NOWHERE** in the inspired writings of the Scriptures – in “the Law and the Prophets”, does God’s Word forbid the healing of the sick upon the Sabbath day. **NOWHERE!** This was an uninspired tradition of the Jewish elders concerning the Sabbath day, which Jesus set the Jewish people free from.

Jesus answers their accusing question with a question, as to what person among them would not free a sheep that had fallen into a pit upon the Sabbath day? He then states that a man is of more value than a sheep, and that it is lawful to do good deeds upon the Sabbath day. Deeds of mercy and relieving the sufferings of people and animals are permitted upon the Sabbath day. Jesus then heals the man with the withered hand.

- Matthew 24:20 & 21: - “But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.”

In this statement to his disciples Jesus has taught the binding obligation of the Sabbath day, even until the time of the “great tribulation” at the end of the world. He instructed his disciples in VS. 20 to pray that they would not have

³ BAGD, pages 68 & 69.

to flee for their lives in wintertime, or upon the Sabbath day. And then in the very next phrase in VS. 21, he indicates that at that time when they have to flee for their lives – “For then” would be the time of greatest tribulation since the beginning of the world to this same time. And this time of “great tribulation” does indeed occur just before the 2nd Coming of Jesus Christ in the clouds of heaven, as is evidenced by this next passage found within Matthew 24. Thus establishing the binding claims of the Sabbath day among the disciples of Christ until the end of the world. Matthew 24:29 & 30: - **“Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.”**

The prophets Jeremiah and Daniel referred to this Time of Trouble at the end of the world, in the following prophecies.

Jeremiah 30:5 - 7: - “For thus saith the LORD; We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness? **Alas! for that day [is] great, so that none [is] like it: it [is] even the time of Jacob's trouble;** but he shall be saved out of it.”

Daniel 12:1: - “And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: **and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation [even] to that same time:** and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.”

- Matthew 28:1: - “In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first [day] of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.”

The Greek words that have been translated in the KJV as “In the end of the sabbath”, are “Opse de sabbaton”. “Opse” is listed as being “used as an improper preposition with genitive. after.”⁴ A more accurate translation of this expression therefore would be, “And after the Sabbath”.

And after the Sabbath, upon the first day of the week (the Greek word that is translated as “week” is the word – “sabbaton”), Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to the sepulchre. Below are the other three gospel writer’s accounts of this visit to the tomb of Jesus by these women that also include some of the other women followers of Jesus. They came to anoint the body of Jesus, early upon the first day of the week. Please note, that in all these passages the Greek word that is translated as “week” is “sabbaton”.

Mark 16:1 & 2: - “And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the [mother] of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him. And very early in the morning the first [day] of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun.”

Luke 24:1: - “Now upon the first [day] of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain [others] with them.”

John 20:1: - “The first [day] of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre.”

- Mark 1:21 - 34: - “And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught. And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes. And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, saying, Let [us] alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou

⁴ BAGD., page 601.

art, the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him. And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine [is] this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him. And immediately his fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee. And forthwith, when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and anon they tell him of her. And he came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her, and she ministered unto them. And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils. And all the city was gathered together at the door. And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him.”

See also: - Luke 4:31 - 41 where Luke has also recorded this incident for us.

At Capernaum when the Sabbath day had come, Jesus immediately went into the synagogue and taught the people. In the congregation in the synagogue was a demon-possessed man. Jesus cast out the demon with his word. The people were all amazed at this miracle by Christ. After Jesus and his disciples departed from the synagogue, they went to the home of Simon. Simon's mother-in-law was sick with a fever, and they mentioned this to Jesus, who took her by the hand, lifted her up, and the fever immediately left her. And when even came (which is at sunset), the people of the city brought all that were diseased and possessed with devils to Simon's home, and Jesus healed them all, and cast out the devils.

It is interesting to note that in this passage from the gospel of Mark we find carried over into the New Testament Scriptures, the truth that the Sabbath day lasts from “even to even” – from sunset to sunset in the time of Jesus. Just as it did in the Scriptures of “the Law and the Prophets.

Leviticus 23:32: - “It [shall be] unto you a sabbath of rest, and ye shall afflict your souls: in the ninth [day] of the month at even, **from even unto even, shall ye celebrate your sabbath.**”

Deuteronomy 16:6: - “But at the place which the LORD thy God shall choose to place his name in, there thou shalt sacrifice the passover **at even, at the going down of the sun,** at the season that thou camest forth out of Egypt.”

- Mark 6:1 - 6: - “And he went out from thence, and came into his own country; and his disciples follow him. And when the sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing [him] were astonished, saying, From whence hath this [man] these things? and what wisdom [is] this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house. And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed [them]. And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching.”

Jesus went into his own country, to the city of Nazareth with his disciples following him, and when the Sabbath day came, he began to teach in the synagogue. But many of the local people being astonished at Jesus' teachings and power, questioned where he could get such wisdom from, only seeing in him the humble carpenter and his humble family connections within the city of Nazareth that they had previously known. They would not believe in Jesus as the Messiah, and therefore Jesus was not able to perform many miracles among them because of their unbelief.

- Mark 16:9: - “Now when [Jesus] was risen early the first [day] of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils.”

The Greek word that is used for “week” is “sabbaton”. All Mark informs us concerning the first day of the week in this verse, is that Jesus was raised early on that day, and first appeared to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast out seven devils.

- Luke 4:16 - 30: - “And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord [is] upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave [it] again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son? And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country. And he said, Verily, I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country. But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, [a city] of Sidon, unto a woman [that was] a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian. And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. But he passing through the midst of them went his way.”

Jesus came to his home city of Nazareth and as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read from the Scriptures to the congregation. He read to the congregation from the book of Isaiah concerning the mission of the Messiah. He then closed the book and gave it back to the attendant of the synagogue and sat down.

VS. 16 is significant because it establishes the truth that Jesus' **custom** or **habit** was to worship in the synagogue on the Sabbath day. The Greek word that is translated in VS. 16 as “custom was” is the word “eiotha” – See Strong's Concordance, Greek No. 1486. It is defined as “be accustomed”.⁵ It is interesting to note that this same Greek word was used also by Luke to describe Paul's custom of Sabbath-keeping in the synagogue as well.

Acts 17:2: - “And Paul, as his **manner was** (“eiotha”), went in unto them, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures.”

The truth is incontrovertible: - **Jesus Christ was a devoted and faithful seventh-day Sabbath-keeper throughout his earthly life and ministry.**

- Luke 4:31 & 32: - “And came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the sabbath days. And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power.”

Jesus used the Sabbath days in the city of Capernaum to teach the people.

- Luke 13:10 - 17: - “And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up [herself]. And when Jesus saw her, he called [her to him], and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. And he laid [his] hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day. The Lord

⁵ BAGD, page 234.

then answered him, and said, [Thou] hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or [his] ass from the stall, and lead [him] away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day? And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.”

Again we find Jesus teaching in one of the Jewish synagogues upon the Sabbath day, and he healed a deformed woman from her disability. But the ruler of the synagogue was angry at Jesus’ healing this poor woman on the Sabbath day, and accused Jesus before the congregation, by stating that “There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day.” It is quite clear that this Jewish Church leader was interpreting the Sabbath Commandment according to the tradition of the elders, and **NOT** according to the inspired Scriptures of “the Law and the Prophets”, which do **NOT** forbid works of healing upon the Sabbath day.

Jesus publicly rebuked this leader, using the example of the Jews being willing to lead away an ox or an ass from their stall upon the Sabbath day to water them. Jesus then crowns his argument with the truth that this poor woman, who was a daughter of Abraham, and who had been bound by Satan for eighteen years with her disability, ought to have been freed from her physical bondage upon the Sabbath day. Jesus’ reply silenced this religious hypocrite, and the congregation rejoiced in all that Jesus had done.

- Luke 14:1 - 6: - “And it came to pass, as he went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the sabbath day, that they watched him. And, behold, there was a certain man before him which had the dropsy. And Jesus answering spake unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day? And they held their peace. And he took [him], and healed him, and let him go; And answered them, saying, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day? And they could not answer him again to these things.”

Jesus accepted an invitation to eat a meal with a chief Pharisee upon the Sabbath day, and while eating a man with dropsy was there. It appears that the “they” referred to in VS. 1 were some of the other Pharisees and lawyers who were also there, and who were watching Jesus to see if he would heal this disabled man upon the Sabbath day. No doubt with the intention of accusing him of being a Sabbath-breaker.

Jesus asked these religious leaders if it was lawful to heal upon the Sabbath. But these men kept silent. Jesus then healed this disabled man, and he asked these religious leaders the question, “Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day?” They could not refute Jesus’ question or condemn his act of healing this man upon the Sabbath day. Please keep in mind that **NOWHERE** in the Scriptures of “the Law and the Prophets” is healing forbidden upon the Sabbath day. This was a teaching based upon the uninspired tradition of the elders.

- Luke 18:11 & 12: - “The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men [are], extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.”

In this prayer of the self-righteous Pharisee in Jesus’ parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, this self-deceived man exalted himself to God for his fasting “twice in the week”. The Greek word that is translated as “week” is the word “sabbaton”. This verse clearly establishes the truth that this Greek word does indeed have the meaning of “WEEK” in its range of meanings, and does not just mean “SABBATH”. The Pharisee could fast twice in the week; but he could not fast twice on the Sabbath.

- Luke 23:54 - 24:1: - “And that day was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on. And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid. And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the sabbath day according to the commandment. Now upon the first [day] of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain [others] with them.”

In this passage we find that Jesus was crucified and died on the Preparation Day – our Friday, and as the Sabbath drew on Jesus’ body was placed within the tomb. The women followers of Jesus saw the sepulchre and how Jesus’ body was laid. And they returned to Jerusalem preparing spices and ointments to anoint his body, and then they rested the Sabbath day according to the Commandment. We then find that upon the first day of the week (the Greek word used for “week” is the word “sabbaton”), these women followers of Christ go to the tomb, bring the spices that they had previously prepared to anoint his body.

The importance of this passage cannot be underestimated. The inspired writer Luke, who wrought many years **AFTER** the death and resurrection of Christ, has clearly distinguished for his readers, between “the sabbath day according to the commandment” and “the first [day] of the week”. They are two **SEPARATE** and **DISTINCT** days. Certainly the inspired writer Luke knew nothing about any supposed change of the Sabbath Commandment, when he wrote his gospel. Therefore any person who calls the first day of the week “the Sabbath day” is **NOT** speaking in harmony with the writers of the New Testament.

- John 5:2 - 18: - “Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep [market] a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had. And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years. When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time [in that case], he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole? The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me. Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath. The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured, It is the sabbath day: it is not lawful for thee to carry [thy] bed. He answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk. Then asked they him, What man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed, and walk? And he that was healed wist not who it was: for Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being in [that] place. Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee. The man departed, and told the Jews that it was Jesus, which had made him whole. And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day. But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.”

In the city of Jerusalem at the pool of Bethesda, an impotent man who had his disability for thirty-eight years dwelt at this pool, hoping to be healed, by stepping down into the water first, when an angel stirred it. But because of his disability, somebody more able bodied would always beat him first into the pool to be healed. When Jesus saw him lying there he had compassion upon him, and commanded him to “Rise, take up thy bed, and walk”. The man was healed immediately and responded to Jesus’ command immediately, taking up his bed (which would have been in reality only a Bed Roll or Mat) and walked. The healing of this disabled man took place upon the Sabbath day.

The Jews accused this man of breaking the Sabbath because he was carrying his bed, saying, “It is the sabbath day: it is not lawful for thee to carry [thy] bed.” This man replied that the man who had healed him commanded him to take up his bed and walk. But to the Jew’s question as to who his benefactor was, the healed man was unable to identify him. After this, Jesus finds this man in the Temple, and said to the healed man, “Behold, thou art made

whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.” The healed man then reported to the Jews that Jesus was the person who had healed him, and then the Jews accused Jesus of breaking the Sabbath Commandment, and attempted to slay him.

I wish to address three points concerning the Jew’s accusation against Jesus that he was a Sabbath-breaker in this passage, and John’s comment in VS. 18 concerning Jesus that he “had broken the sabbath”: -

1. We repeat again, that **NOWHERE** in the inspired Scriptures of “the Law and the Prophets” was healing the sick forbidden upon the Sabbath day. Therefore, this part of the Jew’s accusation against Jesus was based upon the uninspired tradition of the elders.
2. Jesus’ Command to the healed man to take up his Bed upon the Sabbath day was probably misconstrued by the Jews as Jesus commanding this man to bear a burden upon the Sabbath day. It is true that the Scriptures do forbid the carrying of burdens upon the Sabbath day. But as we shall see below, the burdens prohibited were the carrying of merchandise so as to be able to engage in business and buying and selling upon the Sabbath day.

Nehemiah 13:15 - 22: - **“In those days saw I in Judah [some] treading wine presses on the sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all [manner of] burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the sabbath day: and I testified [against them] in the day wherein they sold victuals. There dwelt men of Tyre also therein, which brought fish, and all manner of ware, and sold on the sabbath unto the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem. Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing [is] this that ye do, and profane the sabbath day? Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the sabbath. And it came to pass, that when the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the sabbath, I commanded that the gates should be shut, and charged that they should not be opened till after the sabbath: and [some] of my servants set I at the gates, [that] there should no burden be brought in on the sabbath day. So the merchants and sellers of all kind of ware lodged without Jerusalem once or twice. Then I testified against them, and said unto them, Why lodge ye about the wall? if ye do [so] again, I will lay hands on you. From that time forth came they no [more] on the sabbath. And I commanded the Levites that they should cleanse themselves, and [that] they should come [and] keep the gates, to sanctify the sabbath day. Remember me, O my God, [concerning] this also, and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy.”**

☞ Jesus’ command to the healed man to carry his Bed Roll or Mat upon the Sabbath day was **NOT** a violation of the Sabbath Commandment as outlined in the book of Nehemiah.

3. Jesus himself proclaimed that he was obedient to his Father’s Commandments, which also include the Sabbath Commandment. Therefore Jesus was **NOT** a Sabbath-breaker in anyway.
John 15:10: - “If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; **even as I have kept my Father’s commandments**, and abide in his love.”

Jesus himself taught people to respect and to obey the teachings that were found in the Scriptures of “the Law and the Prophets”, as is evidenced in his command to the healed leper, to present his offering as commanded by the Law of Moses.

Matthew 8:4: - “And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man; but go thy way, **show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.**”

☞ Jesus was freeing the Sabbath Commandment from the restrictive and uninspired traditions of the Jewish Church leaders, thus leaving the Sabbath day standing exactly as it is written and commanded in the inspired Scriptures. And because Jesus did **NOT** abide by the uninspired tradition of the elders concerning the Sabbath day, the Jewish Church leaders accused him of being a Sabbath-breaker.

- John 7:21 - 24: - “Jesus answered and said unto them, I have done one work, and ye all marvel. Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;) and ye on the sabbath day circumcise a man. If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day? Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.”

Jesus in this passage answers the Jew’s accusation against him as being a Sabbath-breaker, concerning his healing of the impotent man in John 5:2 - 18. He challenges the Jews with the truth that if it is right for them to circumcise a man upon the Sabbath day, to obey the Law of Moses, it was certainly righteous and just for him to heal a man completely upon the Sabbath day.

- John 9:1 - 16: - “And as [Jesus] passed by, he saw a man which was blind from [his] birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing. The neighbours therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged? Some said, This is he: others [said], He is like him: [but] he said, I am [he]. Therefore said they unto him, How were thine eyes opened? He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight. Then said they unto him, Where is he? He said, I know not. They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind. And it was the sabbath day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes. Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see. Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them.”

Jesus heals a man upon the Sabbath day who had been born blind, by making clay from spittle and earth, and then applying it to the blind man’s eyes. He then commands the blind man to go to the pool of Siloam, and wash his eyes. When he did this, his sight was restored. The healed man tells the Jews what Jesus had done to him, and again some of the Pharisees accuse Jesus of being a Sabbath-breaker. Others considered that “How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles?” And there was a division among the Jews because of Jesus’ miracle of healing the blind man upon the Sabbath day.

It must be stated again, that **NOWHERE** in the inspired Scriptures of “the Law and the Prophets” is there any prohibition forbidding healing upon the Sabbath day. This controversy was generated because the Jews were following the uninspired tradition of the elders.

- John 19:31: - “The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and [that] they might be taken away.”

When Jesus had died upon the cross on the Preparation Day, as the Sabbath day was drawing on, the Jewish leaders did not want the bodies of Jesus and the two thieves who were crucified with him, to remain upon the cross throughout the Sabbath day. The reason for this being that the approaching Sabbath day was “an high day”.

The Greek word that is translated as “high” is the adjective “megas” – See Strong’s Concordance; Greek, No. 3173. It is defined as “large, great.”⁶ Concerning its use in this verse it is defined as having the following meaning: - “of things: great, sublime, important ... Of the Sabbath day that begins a festival period J 19:31;”⁷

The Festival period or Feast that was about to commence in the year that Jesus was crucified, on the approaching weekly, seventh-day Saturday Sabbath, was the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This Feast had its 1st day as being an annual ceremonial Sabbath.

Leviticus 23:5 - 7: - “In the fourteenth [day] of the first month at even [is] the LORD's passover. **And on the fifteenth day of the same month [is] the feast of unleavened bread unto the LORD:** seven days ye must eat unleavened bread. **In the first day ye shall have an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein.**”

Luke 22:1: - “Now the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the Passover.”

- John 20:19: - “Then the same day at evening, being the first [day] of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace [be] unto you.”

The Greek word used for “week” is the word “sabbaton”.

It is claimed by those who observe the first day of the week, that because Jesus met with the 10 apostles in the Upper Room on this occasion, it shows Jesus’ and his apostle’s special regard for the first day of the week, because of Jesus’ resurrection from the dead upon this day. But a careful examination of this passage completely overthrows this popular tradition.

The inspired writer John does **not** use any sacred title in describing the first day of the week at all. He still retains the common Hebrew method of expression applied to the various days of the week. The Sabbath day was the **ONLY** day the Hebrews named. The six working days of the week were simply called, 1st day of the week; 2nd day of the week; 3rd day of the week and so on. (As we shall see in a moment, the Hebrews received this method for naming the seven days of the week, from God himself in Genesis Chapter 1 & 2.) The fact that John did **not** use any sacred title to describe this common working day indicates that it was **not** considered a sacred day at all by Christians when John wrote his gospel years after these events took place.⁸

The disciples were gathered together with the doors being shut, because they were afraid of the Jews. They were gathered together **in private** to avoid the persecution of the unbelieving Jews.

The disciples were certainly **NOT** gathered together in the Upper Room to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus, as they did **NOT** believe that Jesus had risen from the dead at this point in time.

Mark 16:9 - 14: - “Now when [Jesus] was risen early the first [day] of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils. **[And] she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept. And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not.** After that he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. **And they went and told [it] unto the residue: neither believed they them. Afterward he appeared unto the**

⁶ BAGD., page 497.

⁷ IBID., page 498.

⁸ This fact is also added proof that the apostolic Christians were indeed seventh-day Sabbath-keepers, as in the four Gospels and in the book of Acts the Hebrew method of reckoning the days of the week was still being used by the inspired writers years **AFTER** the resurrection of Christ.

eleven as they sat at meat, and upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen."

In reality, Jesus' appearance to his disciples took place according to the Biblical method of measuring the commencement and ending of a day, **upon the second day of the week**. Let us establish this point very clearly.

a.) God ordained at the creation week the measurement of one 24-hour period of time – one day, to be made up of an evening and a morning; with the first day commencing **at evening**.

Genesis 1:5: - "And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. **And the evening and the morning were the first day.**"

Genesis 1:8: - "And God called the firmament Heaven. **And the evening and the morning were the second day.**"

Genesis 1:13: - "**And the evening and the morning were the third day.**"

Genesis 1:19: - "**And the evening and the morning were the fourth day.**"

Genesis 1:23: - "**And the evening and the morning were the fifth day.**"

Genesis 1:31: - "And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, [it was] very good. **And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.**"

NOTE: - We can now see that God himself was the One who gave the six working days their names – 1st day of the week, 2nd day of the week etc. He would have also being the One who gave the 7th day of the week the name "the Sabbath". Thus the gospel writers have retained this God-ordained method concerning the names of the days of the week in the four Gospels.

b.) The statute regarding the annual Day of Atonement, is decisive proof that the day begins at evening, and that the night is considered part of one day.

Leviticus 23:32: - "It [shall be] unto you a sabbath of rest, and ye shall afflict your souls: **in the ninth [day] of the month at even, from even unto even, shall ye celebrate your sabbath.**"

c.) Even or Evening is defined in the Scriptures as being at sundown or sunset.

Leviticus 22:6 & 7: - "**The soul which hath touched any such shall be unclean until even**, and shall not eat of the holy things, unless he wash his flesh with water. **And when the sun is down, he shall be clean**, and shall afterward eat of the holy things; because it [is] his food."

Deuteronomy 16:6: - "But at the place which the LORD thy God shall choose to place his name in, there thou shalt sacrifice the passover **at even, at the going down of the sun**, at the season that thou camest forth out of Egypt."

Mark 1:32: - "**And at even, when the sun did set**, they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils."

Having established this truth very clearly from the Scriptures, we can easily establish that this appearance of Christ in John 20:19 took place well and truly after sunset, and thus it actually took place upon the 2nd day of the week.

1. In Luke 24:13 - 36 the inspired writer Luke records the story of the two disciples of Jesus walking from Jerusalem to the village of Emmaus, which was located about 60 furlongs from Jerusalem. This involves a distance **of at least seven miles** of walking on unsealed roads.

2. Jesus in disguise joins them on their walk to their home, and opens their minds to correctly understand the truth from the Scriptures concerning the prophecies relating to the Messiah.
3. They arrive at their home as the evening is rapidly approaching.
Luke 24:29: - “But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: **for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.** And he went in to tarry with them.”
4. They urged Jesus to stay with them that night, and they prepared a simple meal, with Jesus saying the blessing upon the food.
5. They finally recognized that it was their risen Lord in the distinct manner he broke the bread. Jesus immediately vanishes out of their sight.
6. That “same hour” (Luke 24:33) they started to retrace their steps to the city of Jerusalem, to tell the other disciples their good news.
7. Considering the fact that it was **after** sunset when they would have started their return journey, and allowing for the fact that they would have been walking or running in the dark, over unpaved roads, a distance **of at least seven miles**, it would have taken them at least two hours to cover this distance and to travel back to their brethren in the Upper Room in the city.
8. They would have arrived in complete darkness with the 2nd day of the week having already commenced, according to the Biblical method of calculating a day.
9. Jesus then appears in the midst of the disciples in the Upper Room, to convince them that he had indeed risen from the dead.

Then what does the expression used in John 20:19 – “**Then the same day at evening, being the first [day] of the week**” mean? This expression finds an exact parallel in its meaning in the expression, “**in the ninth [day] of the month at even,**” – Leviticus 23:32, concerning the annual Day of Atonement; this expression applies to the evening with which the tenth day of the seventh month commenced, to signify the start of the Day of Atonement – “**on the tenth [day] of this seventh month [there shall be] a day of atonement**” – Leviticus 23:27.

☞ So in reality this appearance of Jesus in John 20:19 took place upon the 2nd day of the week as we have clearly established. And even if this meeting had occurred upon the first day of the week, it would not constitute it the “Christian Sabbath” without a plain and written command from our Lord Jesus Christ. It lends no Biblical support to first day sacredness at all.

✋ **Jesus left the seventh-day Saturday Sabbath standing as it was written in the Scriptures, having freed it from the uninspired traditions of the Jewish elders. We have no Scriptural record in the four gospels, that Jesus ever commanded the first day of the week to be kept holy, or that he changed the Sabbath day from the seventh day of the week to the first day. We also have no record of Jesus ever keeping holy one first day of the week. Not one! Jesus Christ was a seventh-day Sabbath-keeper. His Example in Sabbath-keeping consisted of healing the sick, worshipping in the synagogue and teaching his doctrines to the lay people upon the Sabbath day. His Example and teachings concerning the Sabbath day should settle this issue once and for all, for those who accept the holy Scriptures as their only rule of faith and practise.**