

CHAPTER 16

The Power Behind the Planetary Week

WHEN the cosmogonies of the pagan peoples of antiquity are compared, the parallels seen in them are too striking to be ignored. They suggest a common origin and appear to be but variations of an original erroneous conception of the natural universe, one that time and fancy adapted to the trends of religious and philosophic thought of the heathen nations.

Speaking of the cosmogony of the Phoenicians, F. Lenormant has made this impressive statement: “In comparing it with the Babylonian cosmogony of Berosus, and that of the different Aryan nations quoted in the first chapter of the history of the Persians, the analogy is striking between the teaching of all pagan religions as to the origin of the world. From a desire to escape from the acknowledgment of the creative act, by which the Almighty formed the universe from nothing, all these religious systems without exception fell into the same serious errors.”¹

¹ F. Lenormant, *A Manual of the Ancient History of the East*, Vol. 2, pp. 224, 225.

An Inspired Explanation

The sentiments of the French historian and archaeologist seem to be an echo of those expressed by the inspired and learned scholar of Tarsus of Cilicia, who declared, in the first century A. D., that paganism was born out of man’s desire to have a natural philosophy that would exclude belief in the Creator. He explains the rise of paganism in these words:

“For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they become fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves: who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever.”²

² Romans 1:20-25.

Nature Deified

The foundation of the natural science taught in the Holy Scriptures is this: “In the beginning God.”³ When this doctrine was rejected, the only alternative was to adopt the following false premise: “In the beginning nature.” This was the basis of the philosophy underlying the religions

of heathenism. It exalted nature to the place of God, gave to created things the adoration due to the Creator, and ascribed to creation the attributes of the Deity as being self-existent, eternal, omnipotent, and omniscient. Hence the ancient Chaldeans taught that “the world [universe] is by its nature eternal, and neither had a first beginning nor will at a later time suffer destruction.”⁴

³ Genesis 1:1.

⁴ Diodorus Siculus, *The Library of History*, book 2, chap. 30, in Loeb Classical Library, *Diodorus Siculus*, Vol. 1, p. 449.

The Pseudo Science of Astrology

Such philosophy naturally led to a perversion of the study of astronomy. Once the stars—particularly the Sun, the Moon, and the five visible planets—came to be regarded as gods, astronomy became for star worshipers a sacred science, and the study of it became a *holy* profession.

Because the astral deities were supposed to govern and direct the universe, and were believed to play a decisive and determining role in the affairs of men, both public and private, the priest-astrologers, who professed to be the ministers of the divine rulers, sought to interpret to men the will and purposes of the planetary gods by carefully studying their movements in order to make prognostications from them. The study of natural phenomena affords a real basis for a certain amount of accurate forecasting. This is readily seen in the predictions our astronomers commonly make concerning the eclipses of the Sun and the Moon, the transits of Venus and Mercury, the time of rising and setting of the stars from day to day, the movements of the tides, and the state of the weather.

Among a people steeped in heathenism such astronomical knowledge, used together with trickery and deceit, afforded the stargazing pagan priests opportunity for exploiting their profession for personal profit and prestige, even to the extent of wielding a powerful influence in the public life of the nation and over private affairs of their countrymen. In a word, when pagan philosophy deified nature, the proper study of astronomy was converted into the pseudo science of astrology, and the true worship of the Creator was perverted into the false religion of astrolatry.

E. W. Maunder has rightly called astrology “the bastard science which has always tried—parasitelike—to suck its life from astronomy.”⁵ And he properly remarks: “Astrology is inevitably linked with heathenism, and both shut up spirit and mind against the knowledge of God Himself, which is religion; and against the knowledge of His works, which is science. And though a man may be religious without being scientific, or scientific without being religious, religion and science alike both rest on one and the same basis—the belief in One God, Maker of heaven and earth.”⁶

⁵ E. W. Maunder, *The Astronomy of the Bible*, p. 5.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 145, 146.

Paganism is Devil Worship

The study of the history of the nations impresses one with the fact that the pseudo science of astrology was inseparably linked with, and served the interests of, the false religion of astrolatry. This leads us to this important question: What is the power behind paganism?

The Holy Scriptures explicitly designate the rites of heathenism as devil worship. “But I say,” says the apostle Paul, “that the things which the Gentiles [the heathen] sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.”⁷

⁷ 1 Corinthians 10:20.

The barbarities and abominations of pagan worship are attributed by God to the influence of demons. It is written of the apostasies of Israel: “They provoked Him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations they provoked Him to anger. They sacrificed unto devils, not to God.”⁸ “They did not destroy the nations, concerning whom the Lord commanded them: but were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works. And they served their idols: which were a snare unto them. Yea, they sacrificed their Sons and their daughters unto devils, and shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan.”⁹

⁸ Deuteronomy 32:16, 17.

⁹ Psalms 106:34-38. See also Leviticus 17:7.

The Devil Deified Himself

What was the devil’s objective in heathenism? To the prophet Isaiah were revealed his motives: “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High.”¹⁰

¹⁰ Isaiah 14: 12-14.

Lucifer coveted divine honors and wished to be worshiped as a god. “I will be like the Most High,” he said within himself. He intended to establish a government of his own over the beings created by God. “I will exalt *my throne* above the stars of God,” he proposed. When he later tempted Christ, he showed Him “all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto Him, All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me.”¹¹ The audacity of this request is seen in the fact that Christ was the divine Son of God, and was the One who had created angels and men in the beginning.

¹¹ Matthew 4:8, 9.

¹² See John 1:1-3, 10, 14; Colossians 1:13-17; John 5:17, 24; Micah 5:2; Isaiah 7:14; 9:6; Matthew 1:23; Luke 1:35; Philippians 2:6; Colossians 2:9; Hebrews 1:1, 2.

Lucifer never revealed to his fellow creatures his real motives in rebellion. The Lord declared of him: “Thou hast said in thine heart.” Concealing the true object he had in mind, the devil subtly insinuated disaffection into the minds of his fellow creatures against the character and government of the Creator. His insinuation to man was that God’s law was unjust, that His restriction concerning the forbidden fruit was unreasonable, that He had evil designs in keeping back from the human family the knowledge of evil, and that the human race would become wiser and more exalted by ignoring than by acknowledging the claims of our Maker.¹³ Satan did not reveal to man that his objective was to lead him to rebel against the Lord. But God has exposed him.

¹³ Genesis 3:1-5.

“Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?”¹⁴ By obeying Satan, the human race exalts a created being¹⁵ to the place of its Maker, and obeys and adores the creature instead of the Creator. For this reason the evil one claims dominion over all mankind. When he showed to Christ “all the kingdoms of the world,” he said: “That is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it.”¹⁶ Christ Himself spoke of him as “the prince of this world.”¹⁷ And Paul called him “the god of this world.”¹⁸ This indicates that mankind at large renders to this rebellious angel the loyalty and worship which it owes to the Creator.

¹⁴ Romans 6:16.

¹⁵ Ezekiel 28:13, 15.

¹⁶ Luke 4:5, 6.

¹⁷ John 12:31; 14:30.

¹⁸ 2 Corinthians 4:4.

The Plan of Redemption Perverted

When Satan succeeded in persuading the human family to join him in the great rebellion against the Creator, he faced the problem of holding men and women subject to his sway. God knew that “the way of transgressors is hard,”¹⁹ and He foreknew that some sinners would repent and turn to Him if they should be given a opportunity. Being a God of love and mercy, He could not leave His precious creatures to perish in sin and do nothing to save them from it.²⁰ Therefore, immediately after man sinned it was revealed that a Saviour would come. There would be born among men One who would defeat the purposes of the evil one and save repentant sinners from their transgressions and the consequences.²¹ That promised Seed was Christ, the Son of God.²²

¹⁹ Proverbs 13:15.

²⁰ John 3:16.

²¹ Genesis 3:15.

²² Galatians 3:16; 4:4, 5; Romans 16:20.

Until the appearance of “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world,”²³ believers in God’s Word were to show their faith in His plan of salvation by the offering of certain animals, the sacrifice of which typified and prefigured the death of God’s Son. Satan decided to pervert the sacrificial system pointing forward to the death of the Lamb of God for man’s deliverance, and to cause this plan of worship to lose its true significance. The story of Cain and Abel reveals that Satan did this very thing. Abel showed his faith, his dependence, and his hope in God’s plan of redemption by bringing of the firstlings of his flock a sacrifice when he came to worship. Cain brought only “of the fruit of the ground.”²⁴ “The wages of sin is death”²⁵ and “without shedding of blood is no remission.”²⁶ The following comment upon Cain’s conduct is excellent:

“The class of worshipers who follow the example of Cain includes by far the greater portion of the world; for nearly every false religion has been based on the same principle,—that man can depend upon his own efforts for salvation. It is claimed by some that the human race is in need, not of redemption, but of development,—that it can refine, elevate, and regenerate itself. As Cain thought to secure the divine favor by an offering that lacked the blood of a sacrifice, so do these expect to exalt humanity to the divine standard, independent of the atonement. The history of Cain shows what must be the result. It shows what man will become apart from Christ. Humanity has no power to regenerate itself. It does not tend upward, toward the divine, but downward, toward the satanic. Christ is our only hope.”²⁷

²³ John 1:29, 36; 1 Peter 1:18-20.

²⁴ Genesis 4:1-4.

²⁵ Romans 6:23; Ezekiel 18:4, 20.

²⁶ Hebrews 9:22.

²⁷ E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 73.

Heathen Systems a Perversion

Indeed, it has been said in truth: “The heathen systems of sacrifice were a perversion of the system that God had appointed.”²⁸ Not long after the world had been destroyed because of the corrupting influence of Cain’s defiant paganism, the same rebellious spirit possessed the hearts of men again. Although Noah had taught his sons the true plan of the sacrificial system²⁹ pointing forward to the death of the Lamb of God, apostasy crept in and men sought to establish at Babel, in the plain of Shinar, a government and a religion apart from the true God.³⁰ Thus it was on the banks of the Euphrates that paganism³¹ again raised its head. And it is appalling to think what the world at large lost as a result of this ancient adventure into science falsely so called. Generation after generation of pagan peoples, in the millenniums between Babel and Copernicus, lived and died steeped in astrological folly and the religious superstition of heathenism.

²⁸ E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 28.

²⁹ Genesis 8:20.

³⁰ Genesis 11:1.9.

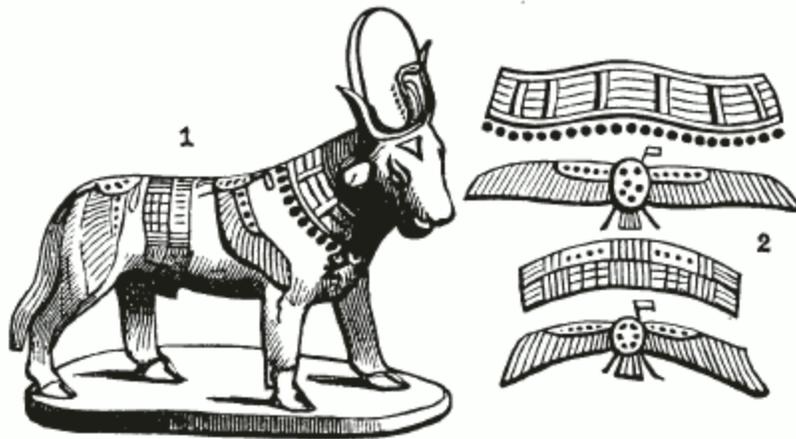
³¹ Joshua 24:2.

Sun Worship

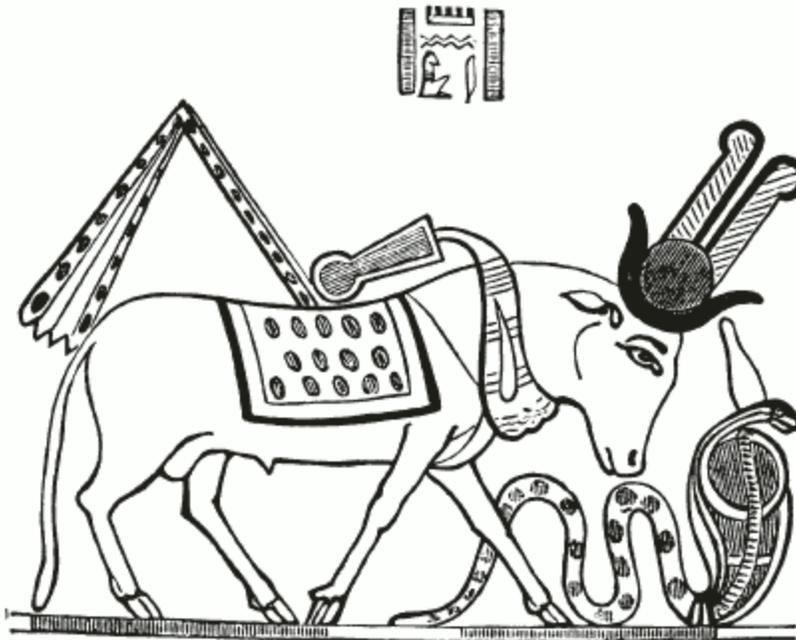
The devil's name before his fall is said to be *Lucifer*, which means "Light bearer." The Hebrew term is *Helel*, which literally means "shining one." In the margin of the Authorized and the American Revised Versions it is rendered "day-star."³² Webster's New International Dictionary defines *day-star* as meaning poetically "the Sun, as the orb of day."³³ It is not to be wondered at that Satan should choose the shining solar orb—the most glorious object in the sky—to be the supreme symbol of paganism.

³² Isaiah 14: 12-14.

³³ Edition of 1941, p. 673.



One form of Egyptian Sun worship was the adoration of a bull or calf. This bronze figure represents Apis, the calf god of Memphis. His back markings are here pictured separately.



Here is pictured the calf god Mne, who was worshiped at On, or Heliopolis. Notice the disk of the Sun between his horns. He is represented as yellow, and is significantly connected with the golden calf at Sinai.

Sun worship appears to have been in vogue as far back as Job's day, at least 3,500 years ago, for he said: "If I beheld the Sun when it shined, or the Moon walking in brightness; and my heart hath been secretly enticed, or my mouth hath kissed my hand: this also were an iniquity to be

punished by the judge: for I should have denied the God that is above.”³⁴ It was a common practice for Oriental pagans, and still is, to greet the rising Sun by throwing a kiss at him with the hand.

³⁴ Job 31:26-28.

Many authorities affirm that Ra was one of the many Egyptian names of the Sun, which was worshiped in Egypt; and that Pharaoh, the official title of Egypt’s rulers, signifies “the son of Ra.” Franz Cumont, the celebrated authority on ancient Sun worship, says of the Egyptians:

“Not only did the royal race derive its origin from the Sun god Ra, but the soul of each sovereign was a double detached from the Sun god Horus. All the Pharaohs were thus successive incarnations of the great daystar. They were not only the representatives of divinities, but living gods worshiped on the same footing with those that traversed the skies, and their insignia resembled those of this divinity.”³⁵

³⁵ F. Cumont, *The Mysteries of Mithra*, pp. 91, 92.

The Egyptian city of On³⁶ was a famous center of Sun worship, being known to the Greeks as Heliopolis (City of the Sun) and to the Hebrews as Beth-shemesh (House of the Sun).³⁷ At this place the Egyptians worshiped a sacred bull called *Mne*, which symbolized the Sun. It is said that “in the only figure of him hitherto discovered, [*Mne*] is colored *bright yellow*, evidently with the intention of representing a *golden image*. This fact, though not a conclusive proof, affords a strong presumption that the golden calf [made by the Israelites] was made according to the usual form and color of the images of Mnevis. The annexed engraving represents this symbolical deity of Heliopolis as he is painted on the coffin of a mummy at Turin, the name being distinctly written in hieroglyphical characters, MNE, without the Greek termination.”³⁸

³⁶ Mentioned in Genesis 41:45, 50; 46:20.

³⁷ Jeremiah 43:13.

³⁸ J. M’Clintock and J. Strong, *Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, Vol. 2, p. 27, art. “Calf.” See also E. A. T. Wallis Budge, *From Fetish to God in Ancient Egypt*, p. 74.

The worship of the golden calf by the Israelites at Mount Sinai, as recorded in Exodus 32, was doubtless a form of Egyptian Sun worship.

The same writer says of the image of Mne that “it differs in color only, and not in form, from another painting on the same coffin, which bears the name of Apis. Both have the same trappings—the Sun’s disk between the horns, surmounted by the plume of ostrich feathers, signifying justice, and the whip, the emblem of power; and both are accompanied by the serpent, representing the spirit of the gods.”³⁹ Apis was worshiped at Memphis and was depicted as being black. It is possible that Mne represented the shining Sun of the daytime, while Apis symbolized the hidden Sun of nighttime.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

The worship of the two calves among the ten tribes of Israel after the division of the Hebrew kingdom in the days of Rehoboam was probably borrowed from Egypt.”⁴⁰ Jeroboam, who set up the shrines, one at Bethel and the other at Dan, had spent some time in Egypt during the reign of Solomon.⁴¹

⁴⁰ “So strong was Jeroboam’s desire to keep the ten tribes away from Jerusalem, that he lost sight of the fundamental weakness of his plan. He failed to take into consideration the great peril to which he was exposing the Israelites by setting before them the idolatrous symbol of the Deity with which their ancestors had been so familiar during the centuries of Egyptian bondage. Jeroboam’s recent residence in Egypt should have taught him the folly of placing before the people such heathen representations.”—E. G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 100. Furthermore, this calf worship instituted by Jeroboam was in reality homage paid to the devil. The Holy Scriptures say that this apostate king “ordained him priests for the high places, and for the devils, and for the calves which he had made.” 2 Chronicles 11:15.

⁴¹ 1 Kings 11:40; 12:26-33.

Sun Worship Forbidden

God solemnly warned His people against the worship of the heavenly bodies, making it a capital offense punishable by death. “Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves...lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the Sun, and the Moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldst be driven to worship them, and serve them.”⁴² “If there be found among you, within any of thy gates which the Lord thy God giveth thee, man or woman, that . . . hath gone and served other gods, and worshiped them, either the Sun, or Moon, or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded; and it be told thee, and thou hast heard of it, and inquired diligently, and, behold, ...that such abomination is wrought in Israel: then thou shalt bring forth that man or that woman, which have committed that wicked thing, unto thy gates, even that man or that woman, and shalt stone them with stones, till they die.”⁴³

⁴² Deuteronomy 4:15-19.

⁴³ Deuteronomy 17:2-5.

Nevertheless, the Hebrews had not been long at the borders of the Promised Land when they were seduced by the strategem of Balaam, an apostate prophet, to join in the licentious worship of Baal, the Sun-god of the Phoenicians and the Canaanites. Some 24,000 Israelites paid the penalty with their lives, and the leaders of the apostasy were hanged up “before the Lord against the Sun.”⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Numbers 25:4. See also Revelation 2:14; 2 Peter 2:15.

The Sun Worship of Baal

The old, old story of Israel’s apostasies usually runs thus: “They forsook the Lord and followed Baal.”⁴⁵ “According to Sanchoniathon, the proper title of Baal was Beelsemin, Lord of the

Heavens, or Sun,” says one writer. “He was the principal Phoenician divinity, and thus his name came to be equivalent to Supreme God, and is more frequently used in this sense than with reference to his original character of Sun-god.”⁴⁶ Ashtoreth was the Moon goddess, who had a notorious seat of worship at Jericho.⁴⁷ She was adored as the wife of Baal and as the queen of heaven.

⁴⁶ Judges 2:13; 10:10; 1 Samuel 12:10.

⁴⁶ *The Historians' History of the World*, Vol. 2, p. 350.

⁴⁷ “Jericho was one of the principal seats of idol worship, being especially devoted to Ashtoreth, the goddess of the moon.”—E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 487.

“The worshipers of Baal claimed that the treasures of heaven, the dew and the rain, came not from Jehovah, but from the ruling forces of nature, and that it was through the creative energy of the Sun that the earth was enriched and made to bring forth abundantly.”⁴⁸

⁴⁸ E.G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 120.

The name *Baal* “is the name of the Sun god, the chief of Syrophenician nations, as Ashtoreth was the principal female deity....*Baal* signifies ‘lord’ or ‘master,’ and personifies the productive power of the Sun....Originally, a personification of the Sun, his sovereignty in the moral world was a later conception.”⁴⁹ Baal is depicted on a stele preserved in the Louvre Museum in Paris, France, as a Sun-god with rays of light streaming from his head.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ *New Standard Encyclopedia*, Vol. 2, pp. 303, 304.

⁵⁰ See *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. 2, p. 379, art. “Baal and Baal Worship.”

The marriage of King Ahab with Jezebel, daughter of the king and high priest of the pagan Sidonians, led to the official establishment of the cult of Baal among the ten tribes of Israel. Jezebel herself was a zealous propagator of the religion of Baal among the Israelites, and maintained 850 of its prophets and priests at her table. A sumptuous temple was dedicated to Baal in Samaria.⁵¹

⁵¹ 1 Kings 16:30-33; 18:19.

It seemed for a time that the cult of the Phoenician Sun-god would entirely supplant that of Jehovah. It spread over into Judah until its groves, high places, altars and “the Sun images that were high above them,”⁵² were found everywhere. Its abominations entered into the very precincts of the temple of Jehovah at Jerusalem, and a monstrous idol was set up there.⁵³ They “burned incense unto Baal, to the Sun, and to the Moon, and to the planets, and to all the host of heaven.”⁵⁴ God-fearing prophets and kings from time to time called the people to repentance, and partial reforms were effected. But the apostasy became so great that God permitted the heathen Assyrians and Babylonians to take His people into captivity. However, in all this there was a faithful remnant that did not bow the knee to Baal.

⁵² 2 Chronicles 34:4, margin.

⁵³ 2 Kings 21:2-7; Jeremiah 7:30.

⁵⁴ 2 Kings 23:5.

The Climax

The climax of these pagan abominations came shortly before the fall of Jerusalem under the onslaughts of Nebuchadnezzar in the sixth century B. C. Concluding a description of the heathen practices there, Ezekiel says ‘He brought me into the inner court of the Lord’s house, and, behold, at the door of the temple of the Lord, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the Lord, and their faces toward the east; and they worshiped the Sun toward the east.’⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Ezekiel 8:16.

Two Unpopular Precepts

The two commandments of the decalogue which least recommended themselves to the Gentile world were the second and the fourth. The application of the second commandment was to lay the ax to the prevailing forms of idolatry in pagan worship. This caused no small riot in Ephesus, because the silversmiths lost their business of manufacturing miniature images and shrines of Diana when the people turned from heathenism to the worship of the Creator.⁵⁶ The fourth commandment bears a very close relationship to the second, because Sabbath observance was designed to be a mark of separation from idolatry, a sign of allegiance to the living God, the Creator of heaven and earth.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Acts 19:26-29.

⁵⁷ Ezekiel 20:12, 20; Jeremiah 10:10-12.

The Roman emperor Julian (known as “the Apostate”), who was not only a devotee of Mithras, but also Pontifex Maximus of the pagan religion of the Roman Empire, made this statement about the decalogue: “Now except for the command ‘Thou shalt not worship other gods,’ and ‘Remember the Sabbath day,’ what nation is there, I ask in the name of the gods, which does not think it ought to keep the other commandments?”⁵⁸

⁵⁸ Julian, *Against the Galileans*, in Loeb Classical Library, *Julian*, Vol. 3, p. 361.

A Hated Institution

It is not surprising that Satan should hate especially the Sabbath institution. The record of creation, the decalogue, the Mosaic law, and the New Testament, all point to the creation of this world as the time when the Sabbath was instituted.⁵⁹ At that time God not only rested on the seventh day, but He also sanctified it—set it apart as hallowed for holy use—and blessed it. “The Sabbath was made for man.”⁶⁰ It was not a ceremonial institution pointing forward to the first

advent of Christ, but a memorial of the creation of the world. It was ordained before sin had ever blighted the fair earth with its curse.

⁵⁹ Genesis 2:2,3; Exodus 20:8-11; 31:17; Hebrews 4:4.

⁶⁰ Mark 2:27.

Because the Sabbath was designed to remind man of his Creator, that the world was created by the true and living God, and that we are ever dependent upon Him, it is no wonder that the devil has hated it. Every Sabbath day is a call to men to come and worship the Creator of the heavens and the earth. “The Sabbath, as a memorial of God’s creative power, points to Him as the Maker of the heavens and the earth. Hence it is a constant witness to His existence and a reminder of His greatness, His wisdom, and His love. Had the Sabbath always been sacredly observed, there could never have been an atheist or an idolater.”⁶¹

⁶¹ E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 336.

It is worthy of note that when Israel went off into idolatry, the violation of the second commandment of the decalogue was almost always accompanied by the transgression of the fourth.⁶² A revival of godliness among God’s people invariably called for a more loyal spirit of Sabbath observance among them.⁶³

⁶² Jeremiah 17:1, 2, 19-27; Ezekiel 20.

⁶³ Isaiah 58:12-14; Nehemiah 13:15-22.

The seventy years’ Babylonian captivity effectually cured the Hebrew people of heathen idolatry. They never lapsed into it again. They went to the other extreme and attempted to make numerous improvements upon the religion which God had taught their fathers. Among these man-made innovations were numerous regulations for the observance of the Sabbath, which made the keeping of the Lord’s day burdensome and gloomy.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ “ See the *Babylonian Talmud*, Tract “Sabbath,” for the much-discussed 31 regulations covering Sabbath observance.

The True Lord’s Day

Christ rescued the Sabbath from the abuses which the man-made regulations of Pharisaism had heaped upon it.⁶⁵ Three of the Gospel writers were careful to note that He had declared in the presence of both His friends and His enemies that the Sabbath is the Lord’s day. “The Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath day.”⁶⁶ And, “as His custom was,” He attended divine worship on the Sabbath day.⁶⁷ When He was forced to leave Nazareth, He did not give up that custom, but “came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the Sabbath days.” There He was joined by His fishermen disciples—Peter, Andrew, James, and John—and they accompanied Him on the Sabbath days to the place of worship.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ See Matthew 12:1-12; Mark 2:23-28; 3:2-4; Luke 6:1-9; 13:10-17; 14:1-6; John 5:1-18; 7:21-23; 9:1-16.

⁶⁷ Matthew 12:8; Mark 2:28; Luke 6:5. See also Revelation 1:10.

⁶⁸ Luke 4:16.

⁶⁹ Luke 4:31.

⁷⁰ Mark 1:16-22.

Shortly before His death He foretold to the apostles the destruction that would overtake Jerusalem nearly forty years later, and in speaking of it He said: “Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day.”⁷⁰ Here is a definite New Testament commandment concerning Sabbath observance. The apostles were to remember that sacred institution which Christ, as Creator, had sanctified and blessed in the beginning. They were to make the observance of that holy day a matter of prayer in that time of peril and hardship. The sacred seventh day was to remind them that God is their Creator and that the universe is under His control and not man’s, even when the most powerful of pagans, the Romans, should destroy the city long regarded as the dwelling place of God on earth. In fulfillment of the Lord’s prophecy, Jerusalem was destroyed by the armies of Rome in 70 A. D.

⁷⁰ Matthew 24:20.

The Apostolic Church

As the Master lay dead, resting in the tomb on that Sabbath following His crucifixion, His devout followers were resting too. After the burial of their Lord on Friday eve, “they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the Sabbath day according to the commandment.”⁷¹

⁷¹ Luke 23:56.

Following the example and instructions given them by Christ before His ascension, the apostles regularly observed the Sabbath. At Antioch in Pisidia they met with their country men on the Sabbath, and Paul preached. The interest was so great that “the Gentiles [not merely those of Jewish blood] besought that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath.” “And the next Sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the Word of God.”⁷²

⁷² Acts 13:14, 42, 44.

At Philippi, in Macedonia—in *Europe*—Paul and his companions spent several days. “And on the Sabbath we went,” says Luke, “out of the city by a riverside, where prayer was wont to be made.” There they taught the gospel of Christ to the women who came there.⁷³ At Thessalonica Paul spoke, “as his manner was,” to the people on three successive Sabbaths. There were not only many Jews present, but “of the devout Greeks a great multitude.”⁷⁴

⁷³ Acts 16:12, 13.

⁷⁴ Acts 17: 1-4.

In the great European city of Corinth, Paul labored at tentmaking during the working days of the week, but “he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks.” He spent one year and six months teaching there.⁷⁵ The great apostle left on record this outstanding truth: “There remaineth therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God.”⁷⁶ Thus Christianity spread the Biblical week and the true day of rest among the Gentile people of Europe.

⁷⁵ Acts 18:1-4, 11.

⁷⁶ Hebrews 4:9, A. R. V. The Greek term *sabbatismos*, according to Liddel and Scott, means “a keeping of the Sabbath, rest on the Sabbath.”

The repeated reference in these texts to the observance of the Sabbath by the Gentiles reminds us that it was God’s plan that long before the first advent of Christ the Gentiles should join with the Hebrews in the keeping of the Sabbath day. “Also the Sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the Lord, to serve Him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be His servants, everyone that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of My covenant; even them will I bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon Mine altar; for Mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.”⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Isaiah 56:6, 7.

Calendars

The Holy Scriptures tell us that in the creation of the world the Creator ordained that the Sun and Moon should “be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years.”⁷⁸ By careful observation of the movements of the heavenly bodies in relation to the earth, men could prepare calendars by which the days, the months, the seasons, and the year could be recorded with sufficient accuracy for practical knowledge and useful purposes. In the Book of Genesis there is abundant evidence to show that from the beginning men did keep a faithful record of the passing days, months, and years, which are natural divisions of time. By these a system of dating events was also employed.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Genesis 1:14.

⁷⁹ See Genesis 5:3-32; 6:3; 7:4, 6, 10-12 24; 8:1-6 10, 12-14; 11:1-32

The week of seven days is not a natural division of time, and is not related to the movements of any of the heavenly bodies. The creation record of Genesis, the decalogue, and the Mosaic law clearly show that it was originally a divinely established institution and is a twin sister of the Sabbath.⁸⁰ It was in use among the Syrians and the Hebrews before the proclamation of the decalogue at Mount Sinai.⁸¹ The only reason for the existence of the week, according to the Holy Scriptures, is that it serves as a septenary cycle of the days in order that man may conveniently keep track of the Sabbath, for “the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God.”⁸² God not only “blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it,” but also expressly says that “the Sabbath was made for man.”⁸³ And not only through the centuries before the birth of Christ, but through those

that have passed since then, the sacred day of rest has been observed among His faithful children.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Genesis 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31; 2:2, 3; Exodus 20:11; 31:17. “Like the Sabbath, the week originated at creation, and it has been preserved and brought down to us through Bible history. God Himself measured off the first week as a sample for successive weeks to the close of time. Like every other, it consisted of seven literal days.”—E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 111.

⁸¹ Genesis 29:27, 28; Exodus 16:1, 5 22-29. The wedding festivities in olden times lasted a week. (See Judges 14:17.) Hence Laban required Jacob to go through a week of marriage festivity for each woman. In the matter of the manna, note that it was given a month before the Israelites arrived at Mount Sinai. (Compare Exodus 16:1 and 19:1.)

⁸² Exodus 20:10.

⁸³ 83 Genesis 2:3; Mark 2:27.

⁸⁴ See J. N. Andrews, *History of the Sabbath*; Carlye B. Haynes, *The Christian Sabbath* and *From Sabbath to Sunday*. Historical records show that among the Celtic Christians of Britain and Ireland, among the Waldenses, the Ethiopians and Abyssinians, the Armenians, the Spanish, and others, the true Sabbath was observed even in the Dark Ages.

Two Rival Systems

The antipathy of paganism toward the worship of the Creator is striking. Of that pious man called from pagan Ur of the Chaldees to serve God in Canaan, the Lord could say: “Abraham obeyed My voice, and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws.”⁸⁵ About four centuries later the descendants of Abraham were made slaves by the heathen in Egypt. By that time idolatry had spread over the earth like a plague. The Sun-worshiping Egyptians persecuted God’s people without mercy.

⁸⁵ Genesis 26:5.

The Sabbath was a special object of Egyptian hatred. They intended that the Israelites should not have freedom to worship the Creator. And when the leaders of God’s people requested it, the king of Egypt defiantly refused to acknowledge Jehovah’s claims to their obedience and adoration. The Hebrews had been taught by men of God that they should not be at work when they ought to be at worship. Pharaoh complained of this, saying:

“Wherefore do ye, Moses and Aaron, let the people from their works? get you unto your burdens. And Pharaoh said, Behold, the people of the land now are many, and *ye make them rest* from their burdens.”⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Exodus 5:4 6. “In their bondage the Israelites had to some extent lost the knowledge of God’s law, and they had departed from its precepts. The Sabbath had been generally disregarded, and the exactions of their taskmasters made its observance apparently impossible. But Moses had shown his people that obedience to God was the first condition of deliverance; and the efforts made to restore the observance of the Sabbath had come to the notice of their oppressors.”—E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 258.

The Hebrew verb of the phrase “ye make them rest” in this scripture is the same as the one translated “rested” in Genesis 2:2, 3. It is *shabath*, which literally means “to sabbatize, to rest, to cease.” In Genesis 2:2, 3, we are told that God *shabath* (sabbatized) on the seventh day. In

Exodus 5:5 we have the causative (*Hiphil*) form of the same Hebrew verb, meaning “ye cause to sabbatize.” The people ceased work because it was the Sabbath, on which day they should worship Jehovah. Pharaoh, became angry because of this, and he determined to compel them to labor on God’s holy day. When they complained of the unjust treatment given them, the king replied: “Ye are idle, ye are idle: therefore ye say, Let us go and do sacrifice to the Lord.”⁸⁷

⁸⁷ Exodus 5:17. “At the time of the exodus from Egypt, the Sabbath institution was brought prominently before the people of God. While they were still in bondage, their taskmasters had attempted to force them to labor on the Sabbath, by increasing the amount of work required each week.”—E. G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 180.

Forty years later Moses reminded the Israelites of the hard experience they had in keeping the Sabbath while they were slaves of Pharaoh. Therefore he urged the Hebrews to deal justly with their servants and leave them free to keep the Lord’s day as He had commanded in the decalogue.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Deuteronomy 5:12-15.

A Counterfeit Week

In this book it has been shown that there was devised and put into use among the pagan peoples of ancient times an astrological institution known as the planetary week. It probably began among the Babylonians as an invention of Chaldean astrology, and certainly became widespread in the world by the time Christ was born at Bethlehem in Palestine. We know of a certainty that it was in use in the Roman Empire in the first century B. C. We have noted the abundant evidence of its use among the Romans, as seen in the testimonies of ancient and modern writers, in the Latin and Greek inscriptions, monuments, and calendars. This planetary week was heathenism’s counterfeit of the true, Biblical week instituted by the Creator in the beginning of earth’s history.

A Counterfeit Sabbath

In the counterfeit week employed in ancient paganism “the venerable day of the Sun” was esteemed by the heathen above the other six days because it was regarded as sacred to the Sun, the chiefest of the planetary deities. Tertullian, as we have already pointed out, said to the Roman pagans: “You certainly are the ones who also received the Sun into the register of the seven days, and from among the days preferred it, on which day you leave off the bath, or you may defer it until the evening, or you may devote it [the day] to idleness and eating.”⁸⁹ On this day—the day of the Sun—prayers were said to the Sun-god. Because “the things which the Gentiles [the heathen] sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God,”⁹⁰ we may rightly conclude that the observance of Sunday by the pagan Romans was nothing else than homage paid to Satan.

⁸⁹ See chapter 9 of this book.

⁹⁰ 1 Corinthians 10:20.

Just as the true Sabbath is inseparably linked with the Biblical week, so the false sabbath of pagan origin needed a weekly cycle. Thus we have found that the planetary week of heathenism is Sunday's twin sister, and that the two counterfeit institutions were linked together.

In 321 A. D., Constantine, emperor of Rome, as we have pointed out already, by civil enactments made "the venerable day of the Sun," which day was then "notable for its veneration,"⁹¹ the weekly rest day of the empire. The Sunday laws of Constantine are the legal precedents for the Sunday legislation enacted by the lawmakers who followed him. The enforcement of the weekly observance of Sunday gave official recognition to the week of seven days and resulted in the introduction of it into the official civil calendar of Rome. The Romans passed that calendar down to us, and in it we have still the ancient planetary titles of the days of the week. And just as it was in the pagan world of Tertullian's time, the day of the Sun is by the majority of people still preferred above the other days of the week.

⁹¹ See chapter 8 of this book.

Foisted Upon Christendom

While it is true that Christ rose from the dead on the first day of the week, the Holy Scriptures do not record that He ever made mention of the day at any time. It is equally certain that His apostles never left on record in Holy Writ any command for Sunday observance. They never speak of the first day of the week as being holy, blessed, a day of rest, the Sabbath, or the Lord's day. They did not prohibit labor on it and never taught that the Sabbath rest was transferred from the seventh to the first day of the week.

Sunday observance among Christians began about the middle of the second century A. D. Justin Martyr, writing in those days, said to the pagan Romans: "On that called the day of the Sun an assembly is had of all those dwelling in the cities and rural districts."⁹² He was not writing as representative of all the Christian church, but as spokesman of Roman Christianity. We find traces of Sunday keeping among Christians at Alexandria, Egypt, near the close of the same century.

⁹² See chapter 13 of this book.

Tertullian, speaking for Roman Christianity in an apology to the heathen, said: "Others, indeed, with more culture and truthfulness, believe that the Sun is our god. We shall be taken for Persians, perhaps, although it is not permitted that we worship the Sun depicted on the linen, having him every where in his disk. The reason for this is, I suppose, because it is known that we pray towards the east."⁹³ In another treatise addressed to the pagans, he said: "Others, certainly more cultured, think that the Sun is the god of the Christians, because it is known that we pray toward the east and make a festivity on the day of the Sun."⁹⁴

⁹³ See chapter 9 of this book.

⁹⁴ See chapter 9 of this book.

Sunday as a religious festival is not a Biblical institution. It originated in paganism, in which it was venerated as the day sacred to the Sun. It was adopted from paganism as a weekly religious festival among Gentile Christians, and was exalted gradually, particularly by the Roman church, until it became the ecclesiastical festival of the first rank in Latin Christianity. In the fourth century Constantine, influenced by the popular clergymen of his day, made Sunday the weekly rest day for the Roman Empire. Regard for the true Sabbath, the seventh day of the week, gradually waned until it became eclipsed entirely by the pagan Sunday in the practice of the majority of Christians.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ “In nearly every council the Sabbath which God had instituted was pressed down a little lower while the Sunday was correspondingly exalted. Thus the pagan festival came finally to be honored as a divine institution, while the Bible Sabbath was pronounced a relic of Judaism, and its observers were declared to be accursed.”—E. G. White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan*, p. 53.

Hutton Webster, who has made a special study of the subject, remarks: “The early Christians had at first adopted the Jewish seven-day week, with its numbered weekdays, but by the close of the third century A. D. this began to give way to the planetary week; and in the fourth and fifth centuries the pagan designations became generally accepted in the western half of Christendom. The use of the planetary names by Christians attests the growing influence of astrological speculations introduced by converts from paganism....During these same centuries the spread of Oriental solar worships, especially that of Mithra, in the Roman world, had already led to the substitution by the pagans of *dies Solis* for *dies Saturni*, as the first day of the planetary week...Thus gradually a pagan institution was engrafted on Christianity.”⁹⁶

⁹⁶ Hutton Webster, *Rest Days*, pp. 220, 221.

Roman Catholic Testimony

Outstanding authorities of the Roman Catholic Church not only have declared that the Holy Scriptures do not authorize the observance of Sunday, but loudly boast that the Papacy changed the day of rest from the seventh to the first day of the week. For example, Cardinal Gibbons’ book, which has gone through 110 editions since it was first published in 1876, declares that “you may read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and you will not find a single line authorizing the sanctification of Sunday. The Scriptures enforce the religious observance of Saturday, a day which we never sanctify.”⁹⁷

⁹⁷ James Cardinal Gibbons, *The Faith of Our Fathers*, 1893 ed., p. 111.

Another popular work, which received the “apostolic blessing” of Pius X on January 25, 1910, discusses the change of the Sabbath thus:

“Q.—Which is the Sabbath day?

“A.—Saturday is the Sabbath day.

“Q.—Why do we observe Sunday instead of Saturday?

“A.—We observe Sunday instead of Saturday because the Catholic Church, in the Council of Laodicea (A. D. 336), transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday.”⁹⁸

⁹⁸ Peter Geiermann (C.S.S.R.), *The Convert's Catechism of Catholic Doctrine*, 2d ed., p. 50.

When the leaders of the great Protestant Reformation came to grips with the Papacy in the sixteenth century, they declared that the Holy Scriptures alone constitute the basis of faith and doctrine for the Christian. Doctor Eck, the papal champion, presented to the Reformers the following problem:

“If, however, the [Roman] Church has had power to change the Sabbath of the Bible into Sunday and to command Sunday keeping, why should it not have also this power concerning other days, many of which are based on the Scriptures—such as Christmas, circumcision of the heart, three kings, etc.? If you omit the latter, and turn from the Church to the Scriptures alone, then you must keep the Sabbath with the Jews, which has been kept from the beginning of the world.”⁹⁹

⁹⁹ Dr. Eck, *Enchirion*, pp. 78, 79.

The Council of Trent was convened in March, 1545, with the avowed purpose of arresting the progress of Protestantism. Its proceedings went on, with interruptions, until 1564. The council tried to find a good argument for condemning the Protestant principle of the Bible only as the rule of faith and doctrine. A large group of influential men stood for the abandonment of the papal doctrine of the “Scripture and tradition” together, affirming that the Roman Catholic Church ought to take its stand on the Holy Scriptures alone. This view was maintained so tenaciously in the council that the pope’s legates wrote to him saying that there was a strong tendency to set aside ecclesiastical tradition and stand for the Bible only. After sixteen sessions of the council had been held, and while the contending factions were still at loggerheads on this question, Gaspar del Fosso, archbishop of Rheggio, turned the tide in favor of church tradition, in the opening speech of the seventeenth session, held on January 18, 1652. He said:

“Such is the condition of the heretics today that they appeal to no other matter more than that they, under the pretense of the Word of God, overthrow the [Roman] Church; as though the Church, which is the body of Christ, could be opposed to his Word, or the head to the body. Yea, the authority of the Church is most gloriously set forth by the Scriptures; for while on the one hand she recommends them, declares them divine, offers them to us to read, explains them faithfully in doubtful [passages], and condemns [whatever is] contrary to them; on the other hand, the legal precepts of the Lord contained in them have ceased by virtue of the same authority. The Sabbath, the most glorious day in the law, has been changed into the Lord’s [day]....This and other similar matters have not ceased by virtue of Christ’s teaching (for He says He came to fulfill the law, not to destroy it), but they have been changed by virtue of the authority of the Church. Should this authority cease (which would surely please the heretics), who would then witness for truth, and confound the obstinacy of the heretics?”¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ See the text given in J. D. Mansi, *Sacrorum Conciliorum*, Vol. 33, cols. 529, 530, author's translation.

Thus the Papacy clung to such traditional doctrines and practices as were well known to be openly contrary to teachings of the Sacred Scriptures. Protestants at large have followed a similar course, although it is well known that Sunday observance is not commanded by God in Holy Writ.

A Revival of the Primitive Faith

Christ foretold that there would be a revival of primitive Christianity shortly before His second advent. Speaking to the apostles about the sign of His coming and of the end of the world, He said: "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come."¹⁰¹ In vision the apostle John was shown the second advent.¹⁰² He also saw that before this sublime event would take place, the everlasting gospel would be "preached unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people."¹⁰³ In that message would go forth the call: "Worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters."¹⁰⁴ Thus the entire world is to be called back to the worship of the true and living God, the Creator of heaven and earth.

¹⁰¹ Matthew 24:14.

¹⁰² Revelation 14:14-16.

¹⁰³ Revelation 14:6.

¹⁰⁴ Revelation 14:7.

Will this world wide call result in a revival of primitive Sabbath observance, of the keeping of the day which Christ set up as a memorial of the work of the creation of this earth by Him in the beginning? Yes, for this is indicated by the class of people whom John saw in this vision of last-day evangelization of the world. The angel said to him: "Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus."¹⁰⁵ One of God's commandments says: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it."¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Revelation 14:12.

¹⁰⁶ Exodus 20:8-11.

In harmony with and in fulfillment of prophecy, the missionary movement of Seventh-day Adventists has risen in these last days to proclaim the everlasting gospel "unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people."¹⁰⁷ Of them it can truly be said that they stand for "the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus."¹⁰⁸ They are calling men back to the observance of the true Sabbath, the seventh day. Their message is being proclaimed in more than eight hundred languages and in practically every nation on earth today.

Like the early Christians, Seventh-day Adventists also rest on “the Sabbath day according to the commandment.”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Revelation 14:6.

¹⁰⁸ Revelation 14:12.

¹⁰⁹ Luke 23:56.

In the World to Come

Some day the Lord will come, and to His faithful ones He will say: “Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”¹¹⁰ And Peter assures us that “we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteous ness.”¹¹¹ John was shown a vision of that new earth in all its glory. And as it was in the earth pure and undefiled by sin in the beginning that “the Sabbath was made for man,” so it shall be in the better world to come—in the new earth—that “it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before Me, saith the Lord.”¹¹² Thus the true Biblical week and God’s holy Sabbath, the seventh day, will remain perpetual institutions throughout the endless ages of eternity.

¹¹⁰ Matthew 25:34.

¹¹¹ 2 Peter 3:13.

¹¹² Isaiah 66:23.

“Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.”¹¹³

¹¹³ Revelation 22:14.