



January 6, 2023

The Seven Day Cycle and the Sabbath

Warm hellos friends, brethren, co-workers, spiritual family, and scattered children of God from here on the Gulf Coast. My wife and I pray and hope this finds you doing well, and that again your week has been blessed.

As most of you know that read my weekly Friday evening letters, Church of God Ministries (CGM) observes the Seven Day Cycle and the Sabbath. For most of my life, my weekly calendar has revolved around the Sabbath, not Monday, (the first work day for most in the U.S.). I plan my week around the Sabbath. I don't call Saturday and Sunday "the weekend" as many do for multiple reasons.

Speaking of God's Sabbath, occasionally we receive comments and assertions from individuals that claim "...the seven day cycle and Sabbath determination is directly connected with the timing of the new moon!" I'd like to examine this comment, and answer it, so as to help with some who might be confused.

First, there is no indication in Scripture that the new moon or the lunar conjunction has any bearing on determining the day for beginning the counting of the seven day week and then the seventh day Sabbath.

Let's more closely examine the original mention of the Sabbath.

Genesis chapter one records the events of creation on 6 consecutive days. These days are not long epochs but are normal days.

Notice the description of the sixth day. ". . . *So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.*" (Genesis 1:31) Biblical days begin at sunset and are composed of a period of darkness followed by a period of light that begins at sunrise. The Hebrew word translated evening is # 06153 'ereb and refers to sunset. The Hebrew word translated morning is # 01242 boqer and refers to sunrise or break

of day.

The sequence of days continues to the seventh day. *"And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made."* (Genesis 2:2-3)

There is no reason to define the seventh day differently from the sixth day or the other days in the sequence. Many dismiss the fact that the Sabbath is mentioned in v.2 in the verb form. The Hebrew word translated "rested" is #07673 shabath. Here are several comments about shabath from the Online Bible Hebrew Lexicon: "to rest, desist (from labour); to keep or observe the sabbath."

The Ten Commandments are listed in Exodus 20, (including the Fourth or Sabbath Commandment). *"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God."* (vv.8-10) Verse 11 explains the verb "remember" by referring back to Genesis 2. Clearly the six days of work are normal days of night followed by daylight, not undefined epochs. The six days of work are followed by the seventh *day of rest*, a day of desisting from work, the Sabbath day. There's no connection here to the lunar cycle, or beginning the first day of the sequence with the new moon or any other day of the lunar cycle.

God blessed the seventh day of this seven day cycle. The Sabbath is again defined in Exodus 31 in exactly the same way. *"Work shall be done for six days, but the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD."* (Exodus 31:15) The seven day sequence is consistently defined throughout Scripture.

When God called the Israelites from Egypt to become His special nation, He revealed to them His seventh day Sabbath. Evidently they had lost this knowledge and practice. God used the sending of manna, with twice as much sent on the sixth day of the week and the withdrawing of manna on the seventh day, not the phase of the moon, to reveal which day was the seventh day (See Exodus 16:4-23) There is no mention of the lunar cycle there, in Genesis 2:2-3, or Exodus 20:8-11

where the Sabbath command is stated.

1 Chronicles 23:30-31 lists the occasions when the Levites and priests performed special functions at the Temple. Marking the new moon in the Old Testament helped Israel to keep track of the passing of months in a methodical way, so they would always observe God's Holy Days at the correct time. The simplest reason for this was that calendars were not readily available. That was the case for the early New Testament Church of God, too. So, the early Christians' purpose for marking the beginning of a month was the same as it was for Israel.

God never instructed Israel to observe the new moons as part of worship in the same way that He taught them to keep His Holy Days. New moons were not "holy" time for the Israelites or the church. We don't find their observance mentioned in the list in Leviticus 23. When the new moon occurs is still important to the Church of God, for we continue to keep His Holy Days which are determined by the lunar cycle. But, it isn't necessary to mark the new moon, (that is, the beginning of each month), with special meetings in order to keep track of when they occur.

The seven day week has continued from ancient times. It has been preserved and maintained in unbroken succession by the Jewish community from even before the times of Jesus the Messiah. It was not dependent on the appearance of the new moon. The Roman Julian calendar (and later the Gregorian calendar) perpetuated the existing weekly cycle, but that does not make that cycle pagan.

Jesus addressed various sins and shortcomings of the leaders of the Jewish community of His day, but He never corrected their determination of the Sabbath, the calendar, or holy days. The Scriptural record affirms that Jesus and the apostles observed the weekly Sabbath at the same time as the Jews of both the synagogue and the Temple structure. (Luke 4:16; Luke 6:6; Acts 13:14; Acts 17:2)

Some thoughts to consider as we near the end of another week, and look forward to God's Sabbath. And, we'll continue this theme next time...

Arms up friends! Our sincere prayers and thoughts are with you daily. Thanks in

advance for your heartfelt prayers for us.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S. Hoefker', written in a cursive style.

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