

3. Who commanded John to write and send the scroll to the seven churches - vs. 11?
4. According to vs. 12 - Was John merely a listener to the voice, or was he also engaged in the conversation?
5. What O.T. prophet is the source of the term "the Son of Man" - vs. 13?
6. What two characteristics of the Son of Man does the imagery of vs. 13 probably reveal?
7. To what does the imagery of the two-edged sword refer - vs. 16?
8. In vs. 17 John is commanded to do what?
9. What credentials of Christ were revealed in vs. 18?
10. What was John commanded to record in vs. 19?
11. Is it possible, from a biblical standpoint, that the angles mentioned in vs. 20 are the ruling bishops of each of the seven churches of Asia?

### *Special Study*

#### The Lord's Day - Sabbath Controversy Revisited

Why does confusion persist about the Lord's Day? How is it possible to confuse the Sabbath Day and the Lord's Day? In this scope we shall provide a background and bibliography for further, more detailed study.

#### The Sabbath Day in Historical Perspective

The brilliant Catholic director of the Ecole Biblique in Jerusalem and editor of the *Revue Biblique*, Roland de Vaux, O.P., has placed all concerned with the Sabbath issue in his debt. (He is also an example of the R.C. Churches attitude toward her first-rate scholars who take some negative critical attitudes toward the scripture but never an extreme position). His classic work, *The Sociology of Ancient Israel, Its Life and Institutions*, McGraw-Hill Book Co., New York, 1961, pp. 475) provides us with the most recent research on this persistent but quite unnecessary confusion between the Sabbath and the Lord's Day.

The Hebrew word *shabbath* is not translated into English - rather it is transcribed into our English word Sabbath. In the Hebrew O.T. this word is used only in the context of the O.T.

religion (once used for entire week, Lev. 23:5). The O.T. also mentions the sabbatical year (occurs every 7 years - see Lev. 25:2,8, etc.). A longer term (*sahbbathon*) is used of special feast days, etc., but it is most important that we realize that these days did not always fall on a Sabbath. With Linguistic skill available to very few men in the world today, de Vaux repudiates the theory of a Mesopotamian origin for the Hebrew Sabbath. Roland de Vaux declares that the simplest etymology root of the word) is the verb which means "to cease working, i.e., to rest." There are theories concerning a Babylonian, a Cannanite, a Qenite, a creation law, etc., source of the Sabbath. But what does the Bible say?

#### Biblical Origin of the Sabbath

Certain sources are still persistent in declaring that the Sabbath had its origin in creation (Gen. 2:2-3). If this is a true assertion, it would be difficult to find out why an inspired prophet Nehemiah (9:13-14) was not aware of it. He declares that God made known the Sabbath from Mt. Sinai. In support of Nehemiah's contention, it must be pointed out that there is no biblical record of a holy Sabbath being given or observed before the Mosiac period. We must hasten to declare that Genesis, chp. 2:2-3 is no counter example to my claim, because the term Sabbath means *rest* not *seven* (as is claimed by the adherents of The Akkadian origin theory). There certainly was a Sabbath (rest day), but from this claim one cannot validly conclude that it was a seventh day Sabbath (i.e., Sabbath's fell on other days of the week than on what we call Saturday). Involved in this problem is the very intricate issue of calendaration, but it is too technical for us to consider here. There is not one verse in the O.T. which even intimates that any of the patriarchs knew anything about or observed a seventh day Sabbath. The unlearned continue to bring to our attention that the Hebrew word *zakor* (Ex. 2:8) necessitates long history of the Hebrew holy Sabbath (note the term in the parallel passage Deut. 5:12 - *shamor* - observe). All that can be grammatically and logically claimed for these terms is that they call attention to the fact that a few weeks before (Exodus 16) they had received the religious, holy Sabbath through medium of special revelation. (For advanced Bible Students grounded in the Eternal Word see the views of H. H. Rowley, *Moses and the Decalogue*, Bulletin of John Rylands

Library. Also, Sigmund Mowinckel, *Le Decalogue*, T. Wever, Boekhandel - 1951, Netherlands. The first biblical declaration (Ex. 16:22-30) about the Sabbath Day is associated specifically with the giving of the manna (and later stated as one of the Ten Commandments, Ex. 20:8-3). Besides the theory held by all Sabbatarians, (some Baptists, 7th Day Adventists, *et al.*) the view already mentioned from the great work of de Vaux, is set forth as a live option - that is the Babylonian or Akkadian origin. This view must be rejected on critical linguistic and extra biblical grounds. Besides this the Babylonian *shabbatu* was determined by the phases of the moon, and thus did not necessarily fall on the seventh day. Their *shabbatu* was not a day of rest as was the Hebrew *Shabbath*. Neither did it have religious meaning, rather it was a day of evil omen.

(For further study, see R. H. Charles, *The Decalogue*, Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1926, pp. 118; also Robert H. Pfeiffer's ridiculous claim that the religious significance of *The Shabbath* was impossible for wandering Israelite monads. See his *Introduction to Old Testament*, Harpers, N.Y., 1941, p. 231; even the negative critic James Muilenburg acknowledges that *The Shabbath* was a religious institution founded by Moses. This is some concession from him. See his work vol. V *Interpreters Bible*, Abingdon, Nashville, 1956, p. 687.

#### The Seventh Day Adventists and the Sabbath

This group of Sabbatarians attempt to escape the O.T. Doctrine of the Hebrew religious *Shabbath* by dividing the O.T. Law into moral and ceremonial law. They acknowledge that Christ nailed the Law to the Cross but only the ceremonial law, and the Sabbath Law is not ceremonial, but rather moral in nature. In fact, they identify the "mark of the Beast" of The Revelation with the change from the O.T. Sabbath which they attribute to the Roman Catholic Church, to the Lord's Day, Sunday. Is this a true claim? If the Lord's Day as a day of worship is found in the N.T. scriptures then it follows that the change was not effected by the Roman Catholic Church for the simple reason that no such institution existed at the time with all due respects to their claim to the contrary. (For an excellent popular style analysis of the Seventh Day Adventists' claim see Walter R. Martin, *The Truth About Seventh Day Adventism*, Zondervan Pub. House, p. 140-173, 1960.)

Note: For an examination of the attitude towards the Lord's Day - Sabbath, Lord's Day problem in the Patristic Literature, see Jean Danielou, *The Bible and the Liturgy: Liturgical Studies*, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, Indiana, 1956; a few Patristic attitudes are also mentioned in Martin's work on *7th Day Adventism* mentioned above - pp. 152-4 - for brief discussion of the Sabbath and the year of the Lord see H. Riesenfeld, *Sabbat et Jour die Seigneur*, p. 210-217 in *N.T. Essays: Studies in Memory of T. W. Manson*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, England, 1959.

### The N.T. and the Lord's Day

The N.T. is crystal clear about two things: (1) That the O.T. Sabbath is not the Lord's Day; (2) and that the Church, even though the book of Acts shows us that early Jewish Christians persisted in also worshipping on the Sabbath - (besides) the Lord's Day; in fact they worshipped everyday, - worshipped on the Lord's Day because that was the day when the Victim became Victor over sin and death. What does the term "the Lord's Day" mean? In a special sense, it is His day for His followers to gather to acknowledge Him as Lord of heaven and earth. The Old Testament religious Sabbath comes on the seventh day, but the Lord's Day is the first day of the week. Why and when was the change made? The Old Testament Sabbath and the New Testament Lord's Day were both commanded of the Lord, but for entirely different reasons, and for a completely different group of people. The Lord came forth from the realm of the dead to be our savior on the first day of the week and not on the seventh, that is why the change was made. The two days just had different purposes!

We cannot here critically examine the problem of chronology in the Gospel records, but we must realize that the date of crucifixion plays a determining role in the time of the resurrection. Those who are spokesmen for Sabbatarianism claim that Jesus was crucified on Thursday or late Wednesday and not on Friday as this author would claim. The Gospel authors clearly tell us that Jesus was crucified Friday afternoon, because the preparation was without any question, the day before the Sabbath. (Literally Matt. 28:62 declares - "and on the morrow, which is after the preparation.") The crucifixion account in Matthew concludes with the burial scene (Matt. 28:57-61), and evening had come (*genomenes* - 2nd aor. participle). Then in the very next section (vs. 62-66 we read "then on the morrow which is the day after preparation." Preparation comes on

Friday (there can be no valid challenge to this fact) and vs. 62 declares that on the next day (the Sabbath) the chief priests, *et al.*, took further precautions against the man on the middle cross. Why? Wasn't he dead? Then we read about *Eis mian sabbatōn* (or towards one of the Sabbaths) the grave did not and could not hold its prey. The above Greek phrase is the standard New Testament phrase for the Lord's Day (See Acts 20:7). This was a day commemorating Christ's victory over death. John was "in the Spirit on the Lord's Day" and received information about the past, present, and future never before vouchesafe to mortals. Empirical historiography does not have access to this information. It came by way of special revelation!

Roland de Vaux states well the biblical distinctions between the Sabbath and the Lord's Day when he says that Jesus claimed "the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath" (Mk. 2:28); he could therefore abolish the Sabbath, and he did in fact do so, for the New Covenant which he brought abrogated the Old Covenant, of which the Sabbath was the sign. The Christian Sunday is not in any sense a continuation of the Jewish Sabbath. The latter closed the week, but the Christian Sunday opens the week in the new era by commemorating the Resurrection of our Lord, and the appearances of the risen Christ, and by directing our attention to the future, when he will come again. And yet Sunday does symbolize the fulfilment of those promises which the Sabbath foreshadowed. Like all the other promises of the Old Testament, these promises too are realized not in an institution, but in the person of Christ; it is he who fulfils the entire Law. Sunday is the "Lord's Day" the day of him who lightens our burdens (Mt. 11:28), through whom, with whom, and in whom we enter into God's own rest (He. 4:1-11).

Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel, Its Life and Institution*, McGraw-Hill Book Co. Inc., New York, 1961.

We have revisited this persistent and ill-founded controversy—now may we truly be in the Spirit on the Lord's Day!

#### SECTION 4

Text 2:1-7

To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:

These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, he that walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks: 2 I know thy works, and thy toil and patience,

and that thou canst not bear evil men, and didst try them that call themselves apostles, and they are not, and didst find them false; 3 and thou hast patience and didst bear for my name's sake, and hast not grown weary 4 But I have this against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love. 4 Remember therefore whence thou art fallen, and repent and do the first works; or else I come to thee, and will move thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent. 6 But this thou hast, that thou hatest the works of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. 7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. To him that overcometh, to him will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.

#### Initial Questions 2:1-7

1. Who is *he* who holds the seven stars in his hand and walks among the seven golden candlesticks - vs. 1?
2. How does the Lord commend the Ephesian Church - vs. 2, 3?
3. Were these commendable characteristics enough to save the Church from the purging power of Christ - vs. 4, 5?
4. What is our *first love* to be?
5. Does the Lord tell this Church that after all no one is perfect, therefore, they are not to worry too much about their spiritual condition - vs. 5?
6. Who were the Nicolaitans?
7. Is this message and warning applicable to us today?
8. If John was writing to the Church at Ephesus (singular in chp 2), why does John conclude with the plural - churches, vs. 7?
9. How long must a Christian remain loyal and continue to mature in Christ - vs. 7?

#### The Church in Ephesus Chapter 2:1-7

Dr. Merrill Tenney (*Revelation Interpreted*, pp. 50-69) has an excellent simple preaching - teaching break down of each of the letters to the seven churches. The analysis contains seven factors which are as follows: (from p. 51 of chapter 5)

1. The Commission
2. The Character
3. The Commendation