

# The Sabbath Watchman

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Vol. 100, No. 4 – Beacon of hope, faith, and truth in a confused world.

## The Fourth *Commandment*

Part 4

### WORLD IN BRIEF

- Peru
- Colombia
- Philippines

#thesabbathwatchman

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# Introduction

The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. Exodus 20:10.

When God created the earth and placed human beings upon it, He divided time into seven periods. Six He gave to us for our own use, to employ in secular business; one He reserved for Himself. Having rested on the seventh day, He blessed and sanctified it. Henceforth, the seventh day was to be regarded as the Lord's rest day and to be sacredly observed as the memorial of His creative work. It was not the first, second, third, fourth, fifth, or sixth day that was sanctified, or set apart to a holy use; neither was it a seventh part of time and no day in particular; but it was the seventh day, the day upon which God had rested....

When the law was given at Sinai, the Sabbath was placed in the midst of moral precepts, in the very bosom of the Decalogue. But the Sabbath institution was not then made known for the first time. The fourth commandment places its origin at Creation. The Creator's rest day was hallowed by Adam in holy Eden and by the people of God throughout the patriarchal ages. During Israel's long bondage in Egypt, under taskmasters that knew not God, they could not keep the Sabbath; therefore the Lord brought them out where they could remember His holy day....

A threefold miracle was wrought in honor of the Sabbath, even before the law was given on Sinai. A double quantity of manna fell on the sixth day, none upon the Sabbath, and the portion needed for the Sabbath was preserved sweet and pure, when if any were kept over at any other time, it became unfit for food. Here is conclusive evidence that the Sabbath was instituted at Creation, when the foundations of the earth were laid, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy. And its sacredness remains unchanged, and will so remain even to the close of time. From the Creation, every precept of the divine law has been obligatory on mankind and has been observed by those who fear the Lord. The doctrine that God's law has been abolished is one of Satan's devices to compass the ruin of the race....

The holy oracles were especially committed to the Jews; not to be an Israelite was not to belong to the favored people of God.... Now the prophet declares that the stranger who will love and obey God shall enjoy the privileges that have belonged exclusively to the chosen people.—*Signs of the Times*, February 28, 1884.

*Ellen G. White.*

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Beacon of hope, faith, and truth in a confused world.

We believe:

- The all-wise, loving God created all things in the universe by His Son, Jesus Christ; He is its Owner and Sustainer.
- He met the challenge to His loving leadership and authority by reconciling the world to Himself through the life, death, and resurrection of His Son, the Word made flesh.
- The Holy Spirit, Jesus' representative on earth, convicts of sin, guides into truth, and, when abiding in man, overcomes all unrighteousness.
- The Bible is the record of God's dealings with mankind and the standard of all doctrine; the Ten Commandments are the transcript of His character and the foundation of all enduring reform.
- His people, in harmony with God's Word and under the direction of the Holy Spirit, call all men everywhere to be reconciled to God through faith in Jesus.
- Bible prophecy reveals that earth's history will soon close with the visible return of Jesus Christ as King to claim all who have accepted Him as the world's only Redeemer and their Lord.

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The Sabbath Watchman



# God Blessed Sabbath Keepers

By Antonino Di Franca

**T**he Ten Commandments constitute the Magna Carta of religious and moral principle for all humanity, and the Sabbath commandment is part of that divine law. It is therefore obvious that all who take the Bible as the rule of faith and practice would accept and respect it in its entirety. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Many people separate the fourth commandment from the other nine and arbitrarily circumscribe its application to Israel alone. Others believe and accept the principle of having a day for rest and worship, but not the day that the Lord specified. And then there are others who do not believe that there is any particular day (God given or otherwise) in the New Testament era that is required to be kept holy.

There are verses in the Scriptures that connect the Sabbath with Israel, but this is because God entrusted His holy oracles to them (Romans 3:2) and addressed them first in covenant relationship. A number of verses apply specific promises to Israel and to foreigners, or Gentiles, when they observe the holy day. Nevertheless, many authors—now and in the past—maintain that the seventh day is a Jewish institution, which is why many people believe that this idea is in the Bible. Thus, God's sacred word is devalued and a lie is spread in place of the truth. Therefore, it is critically important to study what the Bible actually teaches, so that one does not fall victim to human theories and speculations, believing errors as if they are truth.

In its opening pages, the Bible presents the character and application of the Sabbath. At creation and the beginning of humanity, long before Israel existed, God rested and then blessed and made the seventh day holy. Genesis 2:1-3. He made the entire creation for all mankind; and the Sabbath, being part of that, is also for all humanity. The Lord blessed and hallowed it right then, so it cannot be separated from its origin and somehow made to be valid thousands of years later.

Veres in other books of the Bible spoke of "foreigners" or non-Israelites who lived in the territory of Israel and instructed that they were required to keep the Sabbath holy. The fourth commandment itself referred first to the Israelites (Exodus 20:10) and then to foreigners. Therefore, it was nothing new when the prophet Isaiah referred to every man and declare, "Blessed is the man who ... keeps the Sabbath" (56:2), the word "man" being a general term that was not restricted to Israel and denoted everyone who honored the sacred day. In the same verse, after saying, "blessed is the man," the verse presented a parallel: "Blessed is ... the son of man who holds it fast, who keeps the Sabbath, not profaning it," no matter who he was or where he lived. Then, Isaiah included in the blessings the "foreigners" ["sons of the stranger" (King James Version)] and "everyone who keeps the Sabbath." (56:6). The prophet confirmed what was written in other books of the Bible and was definitely in harmony with what Jesus later taught—"the Sabbath was made for man" (Mark 2:27)—thus applying it to all mankind.

## FOREIGNERS AND THE SABBATH

The last part of the previous chapter briefly mentioned about foreigners and the seventh day. Now is the time to clarify this by considering Bible verses that were written by prophets and others.

When the Lord gave guidelines to Israel concerning the Sabbath, He also specified certain things that concerned foreigners. The instructions given to the non-Jewish foreigners who left Egypt with the Israelites, lived with them in the desert, and would live with them in some places in the promised land, included keeping the Sabbath day holy.

It is well known that some foreigners travelled with Israel when they left Egypt and lived

with them afterward. The Scriptures report that “a mixed multitude went up with them” (Exodus 12:38), and another version states, “many other people went up with them.” Exodus 12:38, New International Version. Numbers 11:4 stated: “The rabble that was among them.” It was therefore consistent when the Decalogue included instructions concerning the Sabbath’s alien sojourners. “The seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates.” Exodus 20:10.

Forty years later, when Israel reached the Jordan River, the Ten Commandments were repeated to the new generation and included the information concerning foreigners: “The seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter or your male servant or your female servant, or your ox or your donkey or any of your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you.” Deuteronomy 5:14. Both books, Exodus and Deuteronomy, where the full Sabbath commandment appears, included sojourners among those who were to be blessed in the Sabbath rest.

In addition to the Ten Commandments, there were other indications that the Lord intended the seventh day to be a rest day for all people. “Six days you shall do your work, but on the seventh day you shall rest; that your ox and your donkey may have rest, and the son of your servant woman, and the alien, may be refreshed.” Exodus 23:12. Giving a foreign servant the right to keep the Sabbath was not something optional that an employer could grant or not, as he wished; rather, it was granted by the law, and the Gentiles who resided in the Israelite territory received the same benefits that were granted to the Israelites.

If what some people believe now were true then, these verses would have said that the Sabbath was only for the Israelites and that the foreigners had nothing to do with it, just as foreigners were not permitted to eat the passover lamb or be given offerings of sacred things. Exodus 12:43; Leviticus 22:13. Yet neither here nor anywhere else was it ever written that the Sabbath was for Israel only and that others were not required to observe it. In fact, this would have provided a good opportunity to make such a clarification, since the foreigners

had been among them ever since the exodus. The fact that no such phrase appeared here or anywhere else and that the Scriptures stated exactly the opposite concerning foreigners keeping the Sabbath indeed confirmed that such an idea never existed.

A number of scholars recognized that the Sabbath was also for foreigners, or Gentiles, which is what we are! Following are some of the things that have been written concerning this matter.

“This is so important that it must be protected for those with less power than others. The institution of Sabbath as a commandment protects the weak from exploitation by the strong—it is one of the many ways Israel is commanded to practice justice, but doesn’t. The commandment is very specific that Sabbath is to be observed by children, servants, animals, and foreigners as well as the heads of households.” —Catherine Hirshfeld Crouch, *Keeping the Sabbath: A Day of Worship, Celebration, and Rest*, April 21, 2014.

“Foreigners in Israel enjoyed certain limited religious and civic privileges and were subject to certain laws. They could offer sacrifices (Leviticus 17:8; 22:18, 19) but were not permitted to enter the sanctuary unless they were circumcised. Ezekiel 44:9. They could take part in the great annual religious festivals attended by all Israelite males. Deuteronomy 16:11, 14. Like the Israelites, they were forbidden to work on the Sabbath and on the Day of Atonement (Exodus 20:10; 23:12; Leviticus 16:19; Deuteronomy 5:14); and like them they were stoned to death for reviling or blaspheming God’s name. Leviticus 24:16; Numbers 15:30.” —J.D. Douglas, Merrill C. Tenney, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, p. 1397, art. “Stranger.”

“There were strangers among the Israelites from the first. A ‘mixed multitude’ went up from Egypt with Israel. Exodus 12:28, King James Version.... The historical books frequently make mention of resident aliens, such as Uriah the Hittite. A whole clan or tribe might be sojourners in Israel, as for ex-



ample the people of Gibeon (Joshua 9:22-27) and of Bee-Roth. 2 Samuel 4:2, 3, verb *gûr* H1591. Solomon's census shows that the number of aliens in the land of Israel was quite considerable. 2 Chronicles 2:17....

"Foreigners in Israel enjoyed certain limited religious and civic privileges and were subject to certain laws. They could offer sacrifices (Leviticus 17:8; 22:18, 19) but were not permitted to enter the sanctuary unless they were circumcised. Ezekiel 44:9. They could take part in the three great annual religious festivals attended by all Israelite males. Deuteronomy 16:11, 14. They were not permitted to eat of the Passover unless they were circumcised (Exodus 12:43, 48), and the Passover prohibition of the use of leaven applied also to them. Exodus 12:19. Like the Israelites, they were forbidden to work on the Sabbath and on the Day of Atonement (Exodus 20:10; 23:12; Leviticus 16:19; Deuteronomy 5:14); and like them also they were stoned to death for reviling or blaspheming God's name. Leviticus 24:16; Numbers 15:30. They heard the law read to all the people in the Sabbatical year. Deuteronomy 31:10-13." —Merrill C. Tenney, Moisés Silva (eds.), *The Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible*, revised edition, vol. 2 D-G, article, 2010 "Foreigner."

"The term *gēr* [sojourners] applies to those who have religiously, philosophically, ceremonially, and legally, joined Israel. They were not Israelites in the sense of being descendants of Jacob, but they were not simply immigrants. Their rights and provisions came not from merely being there, but from pledging allegiance to the Lord and His covenant with Israel.... Even in religion they are similar. *Gēr*—sojourners were to rest on Sabbath just like the Israelites. They could make sacrifices to the Lord, and celebrate festivals like Passover, as long as the males were circumcised." —Brian Webster, *Who Was a "Sojourner?"* December 4, 2012.

Referring to Exodus 12:38; 16:2; and Numbers 11:4, another website carries the following comment: "Here were the Egyptians (a mixed multitude) with the Israelites, and all were included among the murmurers. All were proved by Yahuwah's law of the Sabbath, whether they would keep it or not, and that thirty days, at least, before its formal delivery upon Mt. Sinai. In this case, Israelite and Egyptian (Jew and Gentile) were treated alike, both were obliged to observe the Sabbath." —*The Gentile Sabbath.*



"As a part of creation, time brings to creation a rhythm of working and resting, and creation will not be complete as long as that rhythm is not honored. Everyone, everything deserves rest—a period of time when they can safely cease their activities, a time when the lamb can lie down with the lion—and not wake up as lamb chops. That's why, to quote Terence Fretheim, 'Sabbath keeping is an act of creation keeping.' The Sabbath year and the Jubilee expand this basic principle. They are a time of rest, not just for the Israelites but for subordinates, servants, foreigners, the animals, and the land itself. All deserve a rest—a release from restlessness. That is the divine plan, the divine hope, and to keep the Sabbath is to participate in that plan and hope....

"It made sense that the God of the Israelites would command the Israelites to rest—crazy and counterintuitive though that may seem. Even more crazy was the idea that God would extend Sabbath rest to family, to indentured servants, to animals, and to foreigners (who generally hired themselves out to landowners as workers). I said earlier that the word Sabbath means not just 'rest,' but 'stop, cease, come to a dead halt.' And now this work stoppage is extended to everyone and everything involved in the work process. The Deuteronomy version adds that this stoppage includes 'your ox and your donkey,' the beasts that bore the burden of hauling and transportation. Deuteronomy also adds that slaves have coming to them not just any rest, but exactly the same rest as each Israelite enjoys." —Tony Prete, *Sabbath—Much More Than Just "Rest,"* 2006.

#### AM I CAUSING SOMEONE ELSE TO SIN AND ROBBING THEM OF REST?

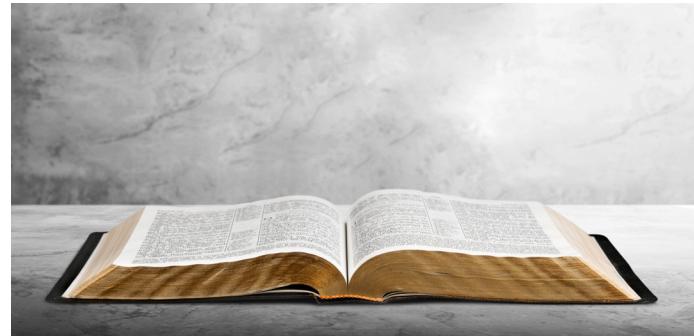
"So God is plainly telling us in the Sabbath commandment itself that we are not to employ anyone

on the Sabbath. Why? It makes perfect sense—God wants everyone, including ‘Gentiles,’ or those who do not have a relationship with Him, to also enjoy the rest He has to give them on the Sabbath, even if they don’t realize it. If I am causing them to work on the Sabbath by paying them to serve me whether it be at a restaurant or a store, I am causing them, albeit unknowingly, to sin by breaking the fourth commandment. I am also robbing them of the rest that belongs to them by the command of God even when they don’t realize it yet. What if I were given the opportunity to study the Bible with the server at a restaurant I patronized on Sabbath. How could I not look like a hypocrite when telling them that God wants them to rest from their work on the Sabbath if I myself have actually paid them to work on the Sabbath?” —Jennifer Arruda, *A Sabbath for the Gentiles*, March 5, 2016.

Writing about the last verse of the fourth commandment, Deuteronomy 5:15, the same author focused on the Sabbath and what Israel suffered under—slavery.

“The final major difference ... is the last verse..., the one that provides the foundation for Sabbath practice. In Deuteronomy, you may recall, it reads: ‘Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm.’

“The reference, of course, is to the exodus from Egyptian slavery.... It does not take much to imagine the wound that the word ‘slave’ would expose—pain and depression, injustice and forced labor, hunger and weariness, fear and shame. But that re-opened wound is immediately soothed by the balm of those other words ‘brought you out.’ The word in Hebrew is *yatza*, translated ‘I brought you out.’ But it’s not ‘brought’ in that sense of ‘take along with’ or ‘deliver.’ It’s causative. It means ‘because of Me you went forth.’ ‘I was the driving force behind your going forth.’ The emphasis is on God’s mighty intervention. The escape from slavery to freedom is



all God’s doing.” —Tony Prete, *Sabbath—Much More Than Just “Rest,”* 2006.

It is worthy of mention that slaves, who in many cases were foreigners (1 Kings 9:21; Numbers 31:25-47; Joshua 9:23), were also entitled to the benefit of the Sabbath rest. Exodus 20:10; Deuteronomy 5:14. The idea that the Sabbath was only for the Jews was denied in the Scriptures several times.

“The personal rights and responsibilities of a slave were clearly more important than the owner’s ‘property rights.’ Slavery was generally an economic transaction and not a human rights violation. As but one example, slaves were forbidden to work on the Sabbath and were expected to take part in social celebrations..., just like their masters. It’s clear that the slavery in the Old Testament wasn’t like modern western slavery at all. Obviously, these slaves received great benefits from making such arrangements.” —On Background: *Does the Old Testament Condone Slavery?* “Assumption #3: Slavery was cruel and inhumane.”

“Sabbath originated with the creation itself and appears in all the major law codes.... Given as a gift to Israel, God intended Sabbath time to be extended to all people, all flesh.... Sabbath had the theological purpose of memorializing God’s resting from the work of creation and of reminding people of their special relationship to God, and the practical purpose of giving people and animals a time of rest.” —Bonnie Thurston, *To Everything a Season: A Spirituality of Time*, pp. 71, 72.

“The Sabbatarian pattern—six days of work, followed by one of rest—is woven deep in the fabric of the Bible. The very first story of Hebrew and Christian Scriptures climaxes on the seventh day, the very first time there was a seventh day. Having created everything, God rests, blesses this day, and makes it holy.” —Dorothy C. Bass, “Keeping Sabbath,” in *Practicing our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People*, pp. 77, 78.

“As I have worked on these questions for many years, I have become convinced that the Sabbath is a gift of God given to all people, not just the Jews. God has created us with a need for weekly rest. We live most fully when we imitate Him by setting aside a day each week for rest and refreshment. But a legalistic approach to Sabbath is inconsistent with the grace of God in Christ. Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath, invites us into the joy of His rest. Here we are renewed in our relationship with Him

and find ourselves strengthened to serve Him in our daily work.” —Mark D. Roberts, *The Sabbath for Gentiles*, 2008.

## PROPHETIC APPEALS AND EXHORTATIONS TO OBEDIENCE

Even though God’s plan provided for the Sabbath to be a great blessing for His people Israel, as well as for all others who would accept and practice it, it is recorded that during the desert time the Israelites did not really appreciate the fact and so did not reach true Sabbath sanctification. Referring to that time, the Lord lamented through the prophet Ezekiel: “I gave them My Sabbaths, as a sign between Me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord who sanctifies them. But the house of Israel rebelled against Me in the wilderness. They did not walk in My statutes but rejected My rules, by which, if a person does them, he shall live; and My Sabbaths they greatly profaned.” The books of the Pentateuch did not record very much about Sabbath profanation during the wilderness wandering; but it must have been a serious problem, because in the same chapter the Lord lamented again that they “profaned My Sabbaths,” “they profaned My Sabbaths,” and “they ... rejected My statutes and profaned My Sabbaths.” Ezekiel 20:12, 13, 16, 20, 21, 24.

That is what the prophet Ezekiel wrote about the forty years of the wilderness wandering, but what occurred after the chosen people entered the promised land? There are not detailed reports of every century, but some references showed that Israel was not always faithful in honoring the Sabbath. Warnings and appeals for reformation and loyalty in this matter were strong. In the seventh century B.C., for example, Jeremiah referred to the “fathers” of his contemporaries (Jeremiah 17:22) and wrote that “they did not listen or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck, that they might not hear and receive instruction.” Jeremiah 17:23.



Then, turning to his contemporaries, Jeremiah gave a heartfelt appeal for them to change their ways: “Thus says the Lord: Take care for the sake of your lives, and do not bear a burden on the Sabbath day or bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem. And do not carry a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath or do any work, but keep the Sabbath day holy, as I commanded your fathers.” Jeremiah 17:21, 22. Only by surrendering to God’s will could they hope to receive peace and blessing.

Then, in the name of the Lord, he continued to plead and give wonderful promises. “... If you listen to Me, declares the Lord, and bring in no burden by the gates of this city on the Sabbath day, but keep the Sabbath day holy and do no work on it, then there shall enter by the gates of this city kings and princes who sit on the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they and their officials, the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.” Jeremiah 17:24, 25.

Yet the servant of God also had to warn the leaders and people what would happen if they continued to disobey. “But if you do not listen to Me, to keep the Sabbath day holy, and not to bear a burden and enter by the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day, then I will kindle a fire in its gates, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem and shall not be quenched.” Jeremiah 17:27. This meant consequences like invasion by foreign armies, destruction, and captivity. These warnings were fulfilled in the long years of bitter Babylonian captivity. 2 Chronicles 36:11-21.

The following authors commented about the writings of Jeremiah.

“Neither carry forth a burden.’ Interpreted by the parallel passage in Nehemiah 13:15-22, the burden would be the baskets of fruit, vegetables, or fish which were brought in from the country by the villagers who came to the temple services, and the wares of the city which were taken to the gates to be sold in turn to them. The Sabbath was observed after a fashion; but, as Sunday has been for many centuries and in many parts of Christendom, it was turned into a market day, and so, though men abstained probably from manual labor, the quiet sanctity which of right belonged to it was lost. Passages like Isaiah 56:2-6; 58:13 show that the evil was one of some standing, and the practice of the time of Jehoiakim was not likely to be more rigorous than it had been in the time of Isaiah, or was, at a later period, after the return from the captiv-

ity." —*Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers*, comments on Jeremiah 17:21-27.

"Bear no burden on the sabbath day.' Apparently the Sabbath day was kept negligently. The country people were in the habit of coming to Jerusalem on the Sabbath to attend the temple service but mingled traffic with their devotions, bringing the produce of their fields and gardens with them for disposal. The people of Jerusalem for their part took their wares to the gates, and carried on a brisk traffic there with the villagers. Jeremiah 17:22. Both parties seem to have abstained from manual labor, but did not consider that buying and selling were prohibited by the fourth commandment." —*Barnes' Notes on the Bible*, comments on Jeremiah 17:21-27.

"Sabbath—The non-observance of it was a chief cause of the captivity, the number of years of the latter, seventy, being exactly made to agree with the number of Sabbaths which elapsed during the four hundred ninety years of their possession of Canaan from Saul to their removal. Leviticus 26:34, 35; 2 Chronicles 36:21. On the restoration, therefore, stress was especially placed on Sabbath observance. Nehemiah 13:19.

"Jerusalem—It would have been scandalous anywhere; but in the capital, Jerusalem, it was an open insult to God. Sabbath hallowing is intended as a symbol of holiness in general (Ezekiel 20:12); therefore much stress is laid on it; the Jews' gross impiety is manifested in their setting God's will at naught, in the case of such an easy and positive command." —*Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary*, comments on Jeremiah 17:21-27.

"This command for the sanctification of the Sabbath was given (Exodus 20:8) and repeated (Exodus 23:12; 31:14, 15; Leviticus 19:3; 23:3; Deuteronomy 5:12, 15; Ezekiel 20:12): The bearing of burdens forbidden was such as was for profit; for in some cases it was lawful to carry burdens for the saving of the lives of men or beasts;... but no unnecessary burdens, no trading burdens, might on the Sabbath day be either carried out of the gates of the city, or out of the gates of any of their private houses." —*Matthew Poole's Commentary*, comments on Jeremiah 17:21-27.

"Neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath day, neither do ye any work, but hallow ye the Sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers." —*Geneva Study Bible*, comments on Jeremiah 17:21-27.

"Take heed to yourselves and bear no burden—From this and the following verses we find the ruin of the Jews attributed to the breach of the Sabbath; as this led to a neglect of sacrifice, the ordinances of religion, and all public worship, so it necessarily brought with it all immorality.... This breach of the Sabbath was that which let in upon them all the waters of God's wrath." —Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments.... A Commentary and Critical Notes*, vol. 6, p. 303, comments on Jeremiah 17:21-24.

"Let them be told their duty first, particularly this duty; for, if Sabbaths be not sanctified as they should be, the rulers of Judah are to be contended with (so they were, Nehemiah 13:17), for they are certainly wanting in their duty. He must also preach it in all the gates of Jerusalem. It is a matter of great and general concern; therefore let all take notice of it. Let the kings of Judah hear the word of the Lord (for, high as they are, He is above them), and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for, mean as they are, He takes notice of them, and of what they say and do on Sabbath days. Observe, (1) How the Sabbath is to be sanctified, and what is the law concerning it, verse 21, verse 11.1. They must rest from their worldly employment on the Sabbath day, must do no servile work. They must bear no burden into the city nor out of it, into their houses nor out of them; husbandmen's burdens of corn must not be carried in, nor manure carried out; nor must tradesmen's burdens of wares or merchandises be imported or exported. There must not a loaded horse, or cart, or wagon, be seen on the Sabbath day either in the streets or in the roads; the porters must not ply on that day, nor must the servants be suffered to fetch in provisions or fuel. It is a day of rest, and must not be made a day of labor, unless in case of necessity. (2) They must apply themselves to that which is the proper work and business of the day: 'Hallow you the Sabbath, that is, consecrate it to the honor of God and spend it in His service and worship.' It is in order to do this that worldly business must be laid aside, that we may be entire for, and intent upon, that work, which requires and deserves the whole man. (3) They must herein be very circumspect: 'Take heed to yourselves, watch against everything that borders upon the profanation of the Sabbath.' Where God is jealous, we must be cautious. 'Take heed to yourselves, for it is at your peril if you rob God of that part of your time which He has reserved to

Himself.'... Let not the soul be burdened with the cares of this world on Sabbath days, but let that be employed, even all that is within us, in the work of the day....

"Where Sabbaths are neglected all religion automatically goes to decay. What blessings God had in store for them if they would make conscience of Sabbath sanctification. Though their fathers had been guilty of the profanation of the Sabbath, they should not only not smart for it, but their city and nation should recover its ancient glory, if they would keep Sabbaths better. Verses 24-26. Let them take care to hallow the Sabbath and do no work therein; and then, (1) The court shall flourish. Kings in succession, or the many branches of the royal family at the same time, all as great as kings, with the other princes that sit upon the thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David (Psalm 122:5 ), shall ride in great pomp through the gates of Jerusalem, some in chariots and some on horses, attended with a numerous retinue of the men of Judah....

"And this is the effect of Sabbath sanctification; when that branch of religion is kept up, other instances of it are kept up likewise; but, when that is lost, devotion is lost either in superstition or in profaneness. It is a true observation, which some have made, that the streams of all religion run either deep or shallow according as the banks of the Sabbath are kept up or neglected." —*Matthew Henry Commentary on the Whole Bible*; comments on Jeremiah 17:19-27.

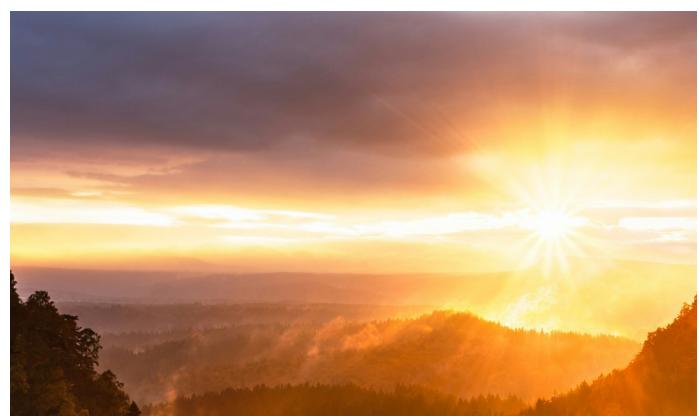
"The prophet was to lay before the rulers and the people of Judah the command to keep holy the Sabbath day. Let them strictly observe the fourth command. If they obeyed this word, their prosperity should be restored. It is a day of rest, and must not be made a day of labor.... Take heed, watch against the profanation of the Sabbath. Let not the soul be burdened with the cares of this world on Sabbath days. The streams of religion run deep or shallow, according as the banks of the Sabbath are kept up or neglected. The degree of strictness with which this ordinance is observed, or the neglect shown towards it, is a good test to find the state of spiritual religion in any land. Let all, by their own example, by attention to their families, strive to check this evil, that national prosperity may be preserved, and, above all, that souls may be saved." —*Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary*, comments on Jeremiah 17:19-27.

"The Jews say that there is no fire kindled but where the Sabbath is profaned; and that Jerusalem was destroyed because they profaned the Sabbath. —*Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*, comments on Jeremiah 17:19-27.

"The bearing of burdens on the Sabbath, both into the city and out of one's house, seems to point most directly at market trade and business, cf. Nehemiah 13:15, but is used only as one instance of the citizens' occupations; hence are appended the very words of the law: to do no work, Exodus 12:16; 20:10; Deuteronomy 5:14, and to hallow the Sabbath; namely, by cessation from all labor, cf. Jeremiah 17:24. The remark in Jeremiah 17:23, that the fathers have already transgressed God's law, is neither contrary to the aim in view,... nor superfluous, but serves to characterize the transgression censured as an old and deeplyrooted sin, which God must at length punish unless the people cease therefrom....

"In the next verses the observance of this commandment is enforced by a representation of the blessings which the hallowing of the Sabbath will bring to the people (Jeremiah 17:24-26), and the curse upon its profanation. Jeremiah 2:27. If they keep the Sabbath holy, the glory of the dynasty of David and the prosperity of the people will acquire permanence, and Jerusalem remain continually inhabited, and the people at large will bring thank offerings to the Lord in His temple." —*Keil and Delitzsch Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament*, comments on Jeremiah 17:21-27.

"However, if the people did not observe the Sabbath day to keep it holy (different from other days), the Lord would consume Jerusalem with unquenchable fire. Notice the prominence in these promises and threats, of: the throne of David, the temple, and the city of Jerusalem. These comprised the basic elements of the national and religious life of the



covenant people." –Thomas Constable, *Expository Notes of Dr. Thomas Constable*, Commentary on Jeremiah 17:27, 2012.

"Blessed, forever blessed be the Lord for the Sabbath, that sweet day for men! Oh! for grace to honor it, to reverence it, to love it, and to sanctify and hallow it to the Lord's glory. Oh, Thou great Lord of the Sabbath, preserve it to our nation, to our people; and be Thou the very Sabbath of our souls, and our hope of glory forever." –Robert Hawker, D.D., *Hawker's Poor Man's Commentary*, commentary on Jeremiah 17:27.

### **WARNING TO THE JEWS AGAINST VIOLATING THE SABBATH**

What was the spiritual condition in Israel when Nehemiah visited his beloved country from Persia in the fifth century B.C.? Had the Israelites who were living in Judah learned the lesson of faithfulness in Sabbath observance? If not, how high would the cost of disobedience have been? When Nehemiah arrived in his country to help with the reconstruction of the city walls, he saw with great sadness "in Judah people treading winepresses on the Sabbath, and bringing in heaps of grain and loading them on donkeys, and also wine, grapes, figs, and all kinds of loads, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. And I warned them on the day when they sold food." Nehemiah 13:15.

Nehemiah was alarmed when he saw that those who were openly transgressing the Sabbath during the entire day of rest were Jews. Without wasting time, he intervened vigorously by warning the violators and confronting the leaders so they would stop such abuses. "Then I confronted the nobles of Judah and said to them, 'What is this evil thing that you are doing, profaning the Sabbath day? Did not your fathers act in this way, and did not our God bring all this disaster on us and on this city? Now you are bringing more wrath on Israel by profaning the Sabbath.'" Nehemiah 13:17, 18. Therefore, Nehemiah was fully aware that the city's destruction and the people's captivity were the consequences of their fathers' transgressions against the divine Sabbath commandment, and in no way could he tolerate such abuses.

Many authors recognized that such practices were open violations of the divine commandment and believed that this should be a lesson for all to avoid doing the same thing.

"The treading of the winepress 'on the Sabbath' was an express violation of the fourth commandment (Exodus 20:8-11) and also strange forgetfulness of a recent covenant. Nehemiah 10:31." –Whedon's *Commentary on the Bible*, comments on Nehemiah 13:15.

"And if the people of the land bring wares,... any thing to be sold, any sort of goods, that being sold might be taken away, as the word signifies: or any victuals on the Sabbath day to sell; anything to make food of; wheat or barley, as Aben Ezra interprets it; the same word is rendered corn; see Gill on Genesis 42:1; to sell, which was not lawful on the Sabbath day, see Amos 8:5, that we would not buy it of them on the Sabbath...." –Gill's *Exposition of the Entire Bible*, comments on Nehemiah 10:31.

"Keeping holy the Lord's day forms an important object for their attention who would promote true godliness. Religion never prospers while Sabbaths are trodden under foot. No wonder there was a general decay of religion, and corruption of manners among the Jews, when they forsook the sanctuary and profaned the Sabbath. Those little consider what an evil they do, who profane the Sabbath. We must answer for the sins others are led to commit by our example. Nehemiah charges it on them as an evil thing, for so it is, proceeding from contempt of God and our own souls. He shows that Sabbath-breaking was one of the sins for which God had brought judgments upon them; and if they did not take warning, but returned to the same sins again, they had to expect further judgments. The courage, zeal, and prudence of Nehemiah in this matter are recorded for us to do likewise; and we have reason to think that the cure he wrought was lasting. He felt and confessed himself a sinner, who could demand nothing from God as justice, when he thus cried unto Him for mercy." –Matthew Henry's *Concise Commentary*, comments on Nehemiah 13:15.

"The desecration of the Sabbath is first brought into prominence among the sins of the Jewish people by Jeremiah. Jeremiah 17:21-27. It could not but have gained ground during the captivity, when foreign masters would not have allowed the cessation of labor for one day in seven. On the return from the captivity, the sabbatical rest appears to have been one of the institutions most difficult to reestablish." –Albert Barnes' *Notes on the Whole Bible*, comments on Nehemiah 13:15.

## PROSCRIPTIONS ON TYRIAN TRADERS

Violations of Sabbath sacredness occurred among the Jews living in the capital city, Jerusalem. Therefore, it was not surprising that the foreigners living in Jerusalem, such as the Tyrian traders, noticed what the Jews were doing and also brought goods and food products and sold them to the Israelites on the Sabbath. The verse says: "Tyrians also, who lived in the city, brought in fish and all kinds of goods and sold them on the Sabbath to the people of Judah, in Jerusalem itself!" Nehemiah 13:16.

Aware of the seriousness of such violations and of their bitter consequences, Nehemiah did not limit his reaction to words of disapproval. To stop such abuses that, among others, were a real temptation for the city's inhabitants who were not so stable in the faith, he took serious action. "As soon as it began to grow dark at the gates of Jerusalem before the Sabbath, I commanded that the doors should be shut and gave orders that they should not be opened until after the Sabbath. And I stationed some of my servants at the gates, that no load might be brought in on the Sabbath day. Then the merchants and sellers of all kinds of wares lodged outside Jerusalem once or twice. But I warned them and said to them, 'Why do you lodge outside the wall?...'" Nehemiah 13:19-21.

The measures taken to close the city gates before the Sabbath and then reopen them after its close were excellent decisions; but, according to Nehemiah, even more was needed. It was necessary to set guards at the gates so that no one would open them, and the Levites were called to manage this. "Then I commanded the Levites to purify themselves and go and guard the gates in order to keep the Sabbath day holy." Nehemiah 13:22. This example teaches us something important; we must not only obey the divine fourth commandment ourselves, but also do whatever we can to help others obey it.

The authority that Nehemiah exercised in regard to the foreigners in this example showed that in the territory of Israel the observance of the Sabbath day by foreigners was not simply an option—a voluntary choice that they could make or not, at their own discretion. It was mandatory, compulsory, re-

quired by the law (Exodus 20:10; Deuteronomy 5:14); therefore Nehemiah could enforce it vigorously, even if the sellers only thought about their own material interests and were unwilling to stop selling on the Sabbath.

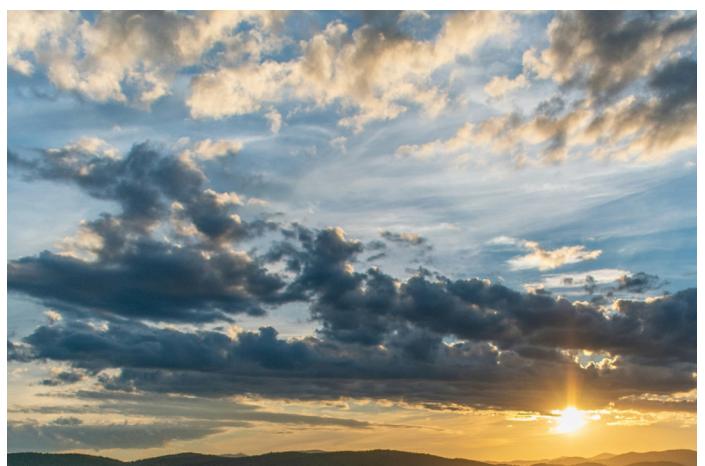
This incident proved that Sabbath keeping applied equally to both the Jewish people and the resident foreigners. Because the Phoenician sellers were made to understand that it was absolutely prohibited for them to sell their merchandise in Jerusalem on the Sabbath, "from that time on they did not come on the Sabbath." Nehemiah 13:21. At the same time, the Jewish leaders, Levites, and people made a covenant with God to be faithful in the observance of God's holy day and not to purchase merchandise on the Sabbath. Nehemiah 10:28-31.

Thus, the fourth commandment required the Gentiles living among God's people to observe the Sabbath day (Exodus 20:10; Deuteronomy 5:14), and the book of Nehemiah recorded the instruction that were to be followed for its observance even if foreigners were unwilling to respect the Lord's provisions.

## RELEVANT QUOTATIONS

Considering the Biblical data, some modern writers recognized that Sabbath observance applied equally to Jewish and non-Jewish inhabitants. Following are some comments written about this.

Considering the reforms that were made in Sabbath keeping under Nehemiah's ministry in the fifth century B.C., one author observed that, at that time, "Violation of the Sabbath commandment by Jews and foreigners alike was quickly corrected, while additional measures were taken to prevent a



recurrence. [Nehemiah 13] verses 15-22." –Simon Kershaw, Nehemiah 12:44-13:31—*Nehemiah's Final Reforms*, 25 October 2017.

"They not only would not sell goods themselves for gain on that day, but they would not encourage the heathen to sell by buying of them, no, not victuals, under pretense of necessity, but would buy their provisions for their families the day before. They that covenant to keep all the commandments of God, must particularly covenant to keep the Sabbath holy, for the profanation of this is a sure inlet to all manner of profaneness." –*Benson Commentary*, comments on Nehemiah 10:31.

"People.' The peoples of the land ('ammey haârec) are the heathen dwellers in the land. The title 'the people of the land' ('am haârec) was used in later days of the unlearned multitude 'which knoweth not the law.' John 7:49....

"On the Sabbath day.' The prohibition is not found in so many words in the Pentateuch. But it represents the natural expansion of the command to keep the Sabbath holy. Pollution would most easily be contracted by the interchange of wares with the heathen.

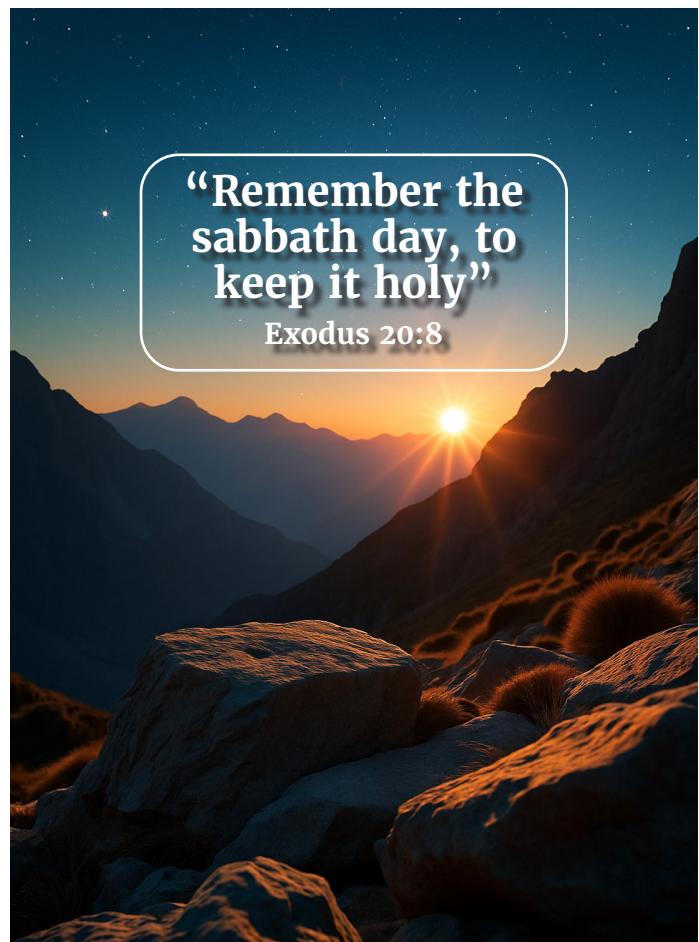
"Complete abstention from such occupation was the only safeguard for the purity of the people, as well as for the observance of the Sabbath as a day of rest, cf. Nehemiah 13:15. This abstention was practiced in the kingly period in respect of the Sabbath and the new moon days. Amos 8:5: 'When will the new moon be gone that we may sell corn? and the Sabbath, that we may set forth wheat?'" –*Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*, comments on Nehemiah 10:31.

"Nehemiah, in his capacity of governor, was able to put his foot down upon this evasion of his law. He threatened the traders that, if they hung about on the outskirts of the walls on the Sabbath, he would treat them as public enemies." –*Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*, comments on Nehemiah 13:15-22.

"If the people of the land bring wares ... on the Sabbath.' If the heathen of this region insist on bringing their wares into our cities and offering them for immediate sale on the Sabbath, we Jews bind ourselves not to deal with them on that day. Subsequently, Nehemiah carried out more stringent regulations. Nehemiah 13:15-22." –*Pulpit Commentary*, comments on Nehemiah 10:31.

"The reason why Gentile sojourners in Canaan (the socalled proselytes of the gate) were forbidden to work on the Sabbath is said by Grotius in his Annotations to have been 'that they may not disturb the civil order, and occasion loss to the Israelites;' 'for if, on the day when the Israelite rested, it had been allowed to foreigners promiscuously to transact businesses, they would have turned away profit from the native inhabitants, who by this means would have suffered injury." –Hugo Grotius, *On the Truth of Christian Religion*, vol. 1, pp. 34, 36, on Exodus 20:10, as quoted in Robert Cox, *The Literature of the Sabbath Question*, vol. 1, 1865, p. 221.

"He [Hugo Grotius, 1583-1645] knew the truth about the Decalogue because he made an exegesis of each of the precepts, including a theology of the Sabbath. The Sabbath is since Adam and long before Moses, he correctly concluded from his readings of the Scriptures.... He admits that the Sabbath is universal and perpetual...." –Koot Van Wyk, *Sabbath and Antichrist*, with Hugo Grotius and the denunciation thereof, February 28, 2018.





## AMERICA

### PERU

#### New Baptisms in Peru: *Faith Blossoming in the Northern Andes*

Huamachuco, Peru — Eighteen souls — twelve sisters and six brothers in the faith of Jesus — were baptized on October 26, 2025, following a successful regional Christian conference in Huamachuco, a city in northern Peru and capital of the Sánchez Carrión province in La Libertad region.

The baptisms were performed by two pastors, including Pastor Berardo Alvarado. Prior to the ceremony, Pastor Rubén Alva, from the Montebello church and a member of the Peruvian Union, preached a message based on Matthew 3:1–3, emphasizing that preparing the way of the Lord involves preparing one's heart to accept Christ.





## The Colombian Union Reorganization 2026-2028

*A renewed commitment for the time of the end*

Quinchía, Risaralda, Colombia — Within the framework of the Reorganization, the election of the new leadership of the Colombian Union for the 2026–2028 term was held, under the motto “A Supreme Work for the Time of the End.”

The process was directed by the committee of the Latin American Division, represented by its director, Pr. Habimelec Hernández, and was attended by the President of the General Conference, Pr. Tzvetan Petkov, who accompanied and spiritually guided each stage of the reorganization.

The conference took place in an atmosphere of order, prayer, and unity, highlighting the importance of preparing the church for present and future challenges, with leadership consecrated to the service of God and the fulfillment of the mission.

*“For thus says the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place...”*  
Isaiah 57:15

## COLOMBIA





# WORLD IN BRIEF

# NEWS



# ASIA

## Philippine Union Reorganization Ordination and Sabbath fellowship

Davao City, Philippines — Within the framework of the 4th Triennial Meeting of the Philippine Union, days of deep spiritual blessing, organization, and Christian fellowship were experienced, under the official motto presented at the event, which guided every activity and message shared throughout the gathering.

The program was attended by the President of the General Conference, Pr. Tzvetan Petkov, as well as the Asian Division, represented by its director, Pr. Roland de la Paz, who spiritually accompanied the processes of reorganization and ministerial ordination.

*“For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace.”*  
1 Corinthians 14:33.

# THE PHILIPPINES



*The Sabbath*

Wachman

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