

Lunar Sabbaths

A False Doctrine Infecting the Church of God

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There is a doctrine that is gaining a foothold inside the Church of God-the doctrine of the Lunar Sabbaths. This has been around for a while but today it is really beginning to resonate among the church groups and many have begun to believe it. What is the truth about the Lunar Sabbath doctrine?

Since the apostasy of many in the churches of God today, many false doctrines are beginning to take hold of many of its members; Armstrongism, Sunday worship, Christmas and Easter by the parent organization, and now the doctrine of lunar Sabbaths. Examining the history of the church of God; when apostasy occurs, many more false doctrines begin to creep in and the church of God slides deeper and deeper into oblivion to the point it is unrecognizable!

The Apostles when they were alive, they prevented the church from subjecting themselves to a lot of false doctrines that the world was trying to insert into it; the Apostles were there to protect it. Once they died, the apostasy was in full swing. By the second century, the church of God was a totally different church than the one established by the Apostles, and only a “little flock” hung on to the truth while the rest went apostate and became what is known today as the “Mother Church.”

Today with the breakup of the Church of God, many of the truths have been abandoned. Many are Sunday keepers, along with Christmas and Easter. Others have fallen victims to cult leaders that promote Armstrongism, and follow men *not* Christ; these people also proclaim themselves to be priest, prophets and Apostles, and many blindly follow them. Now to compound the problem even more, Lunar Sabbaths are making their way into the church of God as well. So what about this doctrine is it biblical?

Explanation of the Lunar Sabbaths

Apparently, the church of God and the Jews have it all wrong when it comes to keeping the true weekly Sabbath day. The doctrine is as follows:

This theory says that the fixed traditional Sabbath keeping every seventh day from Friday sunset through Saturday sunset is a corruption of an “original” biblical Sabbath based on the lunar cycle. Thus, the new moon day is the first day of the month. The Sabbath days are always on the 8th, 15th, 22nd and 29th days of the month in the view of the Lunar Sabbath system. This is what they admit in their own writings, “On the Biblical lunar-solar calendar, each lunation (or lunar month) always begins with a New Moon day, which is in a class of worship day all by itself. Six work days follow on the second through seventh of the month. The seventh-day Sabbath always falls on the 8th, the 15th, the 22nd and the 29th of every lunar month. This is the reason it is called a lunar Sabbath” (www.worldslastchance.com, “Saturday Sabbath? Or Lunar Sabbath?” (accessed January 2011).

Since the lunar month is 29 ½ days, each month has 4 weeks with seven days and one or two days *over* depending on whether the month has 29 or 30 days, every calendar month looks like this:

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The Month According to the Lunar Sabbath Theory

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	
	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	
	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30

However some lunar Sabbatarian's observe the 7th, 14th, 21st and 28th days of each Hebrew month; so even lunar Sabbatarian's can't get their story straight.

At first glance, the Lunar Sabbaths on the 8th, 15th, 22nd and 29th, spaced 7 days apart, resemble the biblically prescribed seven day Sabbath cycle. However, this resemblance ends once you pass a month boundary. Instead of there being the required six intervening work days between one Sabbath and next, you instead have *alternately seven or eight days between the last Sabbath of the month on the 29th and the first Sabbath of the next month on the 8th*. This is due to the fact that the lunar cycle averages 29.5 days, instead of the needed 28 days to make this idea work.

This should be a fairly obvious death knell to the Lunar Sabbath theory. You may wonder how anyone could answer this clear mathematical impasse. Proponents sidestep it by claiming that those one or two extra days at the end of the month while the moon is dark do not count because hidden days are "void" days. In other words, the *seven or eight day interval between Sabbaths at month boundaries* is equated with the required six day interval. If this sounds irrational to you then you are not alone.

If you maintain a seven-day rhythm, it means that the *lunar Sabbath can fall on any day of the regular week*; The Sabbath can take place on a Monday or a Friday, because with each new lunar month it falls a day or two later in the week than the last month. *As a result, to follow this system one must deal with the difficult and impractical situation of having to take a different day off from work each month on a rotating schedule.*

The other explanation given to keep the lunar Sabbath was that "Scripture never says that Shabbat is a cycle of seven just that we are to 'accomplish' our work in six days and rest in the seventh. It is never stated that we must go back to work the next day" This comment comes from the author of a book on Lunar Sabbath, an authority on the subject. Yet, if God was not describing a seven day cycle, then why does he say things like...

"And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; *seven sabbaths shall be complete*:

"Even unto the morrow after the *seventh sabbath* shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the LORD." (Lev 23:15-16).

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...which naturally cause most of us to reasonably conclude that the Sabbath is the last day of a repeating *seven day weekly cycle*? Is God capricious and prone to playing tricks on us to trip up sincere truth seekers? Why not just tell us, “You shall surely keep one day every quarter of the moon as a Sabbath unto me” instead of explicitly describing a repeating seven day weekly cycle for reckoning Sabbath? If God wanted each weekly Sabbath celebrated on the 8th, 15th, 22nd, 29th of the month why is there *not a single verse in Scripture* telling the Israelites that the Sabbath should be observed on these days?

The primary difference between the seventh-day Sabbath and the lunar Sabbath is this: The seventh-day Sabbath does *not* “reset” with the coming of each lunar month. The lunar month is *irrelevant* to determining the arrival of the seventh-day Sabbath, which is based simply on a recurring seven-day cycle. Hence, the seventh-day Sabbath always falls on the same day of the seven-day week. It falls on a day the Jews call “Sabbath,” which the Romans named Saturday.

Two Cycles

Lunar Sabbatarian’s *a priori* dismissal of an important fact has led them to a wrong conclusion. That fact is this: God recognizes *two distinct cycles* in determining Sabbaths: He created an *annual* cycle. He also created a *weekly* one. They are *not* the same.

The primary argument for the lunar Sabbath is pegging the weekly Sabbath on the lunar month by citing primarily two scriptures. One is Genesis 1:14 (Holman Christian Standard Bible [HCSB]): “Then God said, ‘Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate the day from the night. They will serve as signs for *festivals* and for days and years.’” Lunar Sabbatarian’s, looking at Genesis 1:14, correctly conclude that the sun—and particularly the moon—play a key role in establishing the seasons, and most specifically, the appointed feast days, the holy days of God.

Linking the above scripture with Leviticus 23:1-4; they come to the conclusion that the Sabbath should be counted like the annual holy days. The passage states, (Note: Moedim is translated as “appointed times” in verses 2 and 4.).

The Lord spoke to Moses: “Speak to the Israelites and tell them: These are *My appointed times*, the times of the Lord that you will proclaim as sacred assemblies. Work may be done for six days, but on the seventh day there must be a Sabbath of complete rest, a sacred assembly. You are not to do any work; it is a Sabbath to the Lord wherever you live. *These are the Lord’s appointed times*, the sacred assemblies you are to proclaim at their *appointed times*.” (HCSB) (emphasis ours).

The remainder of Leviticus 23 discusses the *moedim*, the holy days, in their sequence through the year. Since the weekly Sabbath is included among God’s feast days, they conclude that the moon, as mentioned in Genesis 1:14, is the basis for determining the weekly Sabbath, just as it is basic in determining the arrival of the holy days. Lunar Sabbatarian’s argue that the moon, which determines when a new month begins, also determines when the count toward the weekly Sabbaths begins. Yet God says that we are to count the Sabbath from sunset to sunset, “from even unto even, shall ye celebrate your Sabbath.” (Lev 23:32). The word “even” is “ereb”

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(Strong's #6153) which means “dusk” or “sunset” (see Browns Driver and Briggs). Sunset to sunset the Sabbath is counted by the sun, *not* the moon. The moon is used to count the beginning of the month. This raises another serious problem with the lunar Sabbath reckoning; namely, that by making the Sabbath operate off of the moon, it changes the Biblical calendar from “luni-solar” to *solely* “lunar,” thus disregarding Genesis 1:14 entirely. Instead one can see that there *are two cycles*, the *weekly* and the *annual* cycles.

The annual cycle, which defines the appointed feasts (*moedim*), is intrinsically connected with the moon, as Genesis 1:14 says. Specifically, the annual cycle is *connected* with the new moon, which in Hebrew is *khodesh* (Strong's #2320). The annual cycle actually *begins* on a new moon, the one starting the Hebrew month of Abib. The counting of most *moedim*, that is, most appointed festivals, is determined by the occurrence of a new moon.

Khodesh appears ten times in Leviticus 23, always in reference to determining the day on which the *moedim* arrive. This stress on the new moon is consistent with God's comments in Genesis 1:14 that the moon would “serve as signs for festivals.” The annual holy days define one cycle, a annual cycle of seven holy days throughout the year.

The weekly cycle is a *second* and *different* cycle altogether. Although it is called a “feast” day it is not determined in the same as the annual festivals. Because the Sabbath is listed in Leviticus 23 with the other feasts – all of which are determined by the moon – that *therefore* the Sabbath must be kept the same way. This is known as “guilt by association.” The (flawed) logic goes that because A is listed with B, A and B must be identical. This would be similar to the assertion that because two people in the same building are lawyers, and one of them is a woman, they therefore must both be women.

In addition, the Sabbath rest was *different* from the rest required during the annual Sabbaths. Leviticus 23:3 states that during the Sabbath the Israelites were “not to do *any* work.” But during the time of the sacred assembly the people were commanded to “do no *regular* work” (23:8, 21, 25, 35, 36, NIV). This indicates that there was a type of work they were allowed to do during the festivals that was forbidden during the Sabbath.

Something Missing

In the description of the seventh-day Sabbath, the concepts of *moedim* and *khodesh* are *not* at all present when it comes to determining *how to count* to the beginning of the Sabbath! Neither word appears in Leviticus 23:3, “Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day *is* the sabbath of rest, an holy convocation; ye shall do no work *therein*: it *is* the sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings.”

Yet the Passover is specific when it says, “*In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the LORD'S passover.*”

“*And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto the LORD: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread.*” Notice that the 15th day of the month is the feast of unleavened Bread. *If it was a weekly Sabbath as well why isn't it mentioned?*

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Genesis 2 records God’s creation of the seventh-day Sabbath and hence, the institution of the weekly occasion. In this passage as well, neither the word *moedim* (appointed feasts) nor *khodesh* (new moon) appear even once to determine *how to count* the Sabbath:

“And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.

“And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.” (vv.2-3).

Now in Genesis 1:14 when it states that the sun and the moon are “for days.” It is *not* to count how *many days* in the week, but to determine the *length* of the day and night as it says in the same passage, “to divide the day from the night;” as Jesus said, “Are there not *twelve hours* in the day?” (John 11:9).

khodesh and *moedim* are conspicuous absence in the Sabbath commandment itself—not even a hint: “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.

“*Six days* shalt thou labour, and do all thy work:

“*But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God:*” (Ex 20:8-10). What is strikingly stressed in all passages about the Sabbath is the *cycle of the seventh day*, **not** the arrival of a new moon. (Exodus 23:12; 31:15, 17; 34:21; 35:2; and Deuteronomy 5:13-14); indicating that the new moon is *not* a factor in determining the coming of the seventh-day Sabbath. So even though God calls it a “feast” it is not determined the same way as the annual feasts are counted, it is counted differently by the weekly cycle not the annual cycle. The new moon and the lunar month are irrelevant in determining which day the seventh-day Sabbath falls on.

Origins of the Weekly Cycle

The weekly cycle was instituted at the time of *re-creation* week in Genesis 1. The days were counted “evening and the morning” The days are determined from “sunset to sunset” as the Jamieson Fausset and Brown Commentary writes, “a natural day, as the mention of its two parts clearly determines; and Moses reckons, according to Oriental usage, *from sunset to sunset*, saying not day and night as we do, but evening and morning.” (emphasis added).

After dividing day from night, God tells us that “the evening and the morning were the first day” (verse 5). “Evening” [ereb “dusk”] is mentioned first, followed by “morning.” [boqer “dawn” (Strong’s #1242)] God describes each day’s creation in similar terms (verses 8, 13, 19, 23, 31).

In the Bible, evening began when the sun went down (Joshua 8:29; 2 Chronicles 18:34; Nehemiah 13:19; Mark 1:32), and at that time a new day (morning) began to “dawn” [boqer]. Regarding His Sabbaths, God commands that they be observed “from evening to evening” (Leviticus 23:32). This was the usual way at that time of calculating the beginning and ending of days (Exodus 12:18).

Days of the week counted:

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
Sunset to sunset	The Sabbath					
Sunset to sunset						

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Now why is the phrase “evening and morning” missing when one gets to the Sabbath day?

The commandment for man is to work six days and rest the seventh. Adam and Eve *did not work* the first six days because they were created on the sixth day. *God* was the one who worked; therefore it was *God* who rested. *The first Sabbath was belonged to God and God alone.* As soon as man was created he was given work to do (Genesis 2:15). The seventh day that *man* was to keep therefore was the following Sabbath after the first that belong to God.

We must understand that God is not in the sphere of time (see Isaiah 57:15) He is outside of time, living far above the “time telling elements.” Man, however, is subject to “time.” Adam and Eve were, as we are, living through a *seven day cycle* and the “evening and the morning” was for *them* to *count* to determine the Sabbath day. If the other days of the week are counted by evening and the morning why would the Sabbath be any different following the obvious progression? Although the Sabbath was made “for man,” (Mark 2:27) the first Sabbath... was God’s hence the reason for the missing phrase “evening and morning.”

Which Day of the Week?

How does one know that the 7th day is the day we call Saturday? Many are confused over the issue, but such confusion is unnecessary. Not only is the answer plain from history and the Bible, it is *also* clear from the names for the seventh day of the week, Saturday, in *many* languages-it’s almost universal.

In fact, in more than 100 ancient and modern languages the seventh day of the week was named “Sabbath” or its equivalent. Following is a list of names for the seventh day of the week, Saturday, in 24 languages in which the root word Sabbath is still easily recognizable. Such widespread use of forms of the word Sabbath for the seventh day of the week, Saturday, is clear evidence that speakers of these languages understood which day is the Sabbath.

Arabic: Sabet	Czech: Sobota	Maltese: is-Sibt	Slovak: Sobota
Armenian: Shabat	Georgian: Sabati	Polish: Sobota	Slovene: Sobota
Bosnian: Subota	Greek: Savvato	Portuguese: Sàbado	Somali: Sabti
Bulgarian: Sabota	Indonesian: Sabtu	Romanian: Sambata	Spanish: Sabado
Corsican: Sàbatu	Italian: Sabato	Russian: Subbota	Sudanese: Saptu
Croatian: Subota	Latin: Sabbatum	Serbian: Subota	Ukranian: Subot

Here is a list of ancient languages in which the vast majority indicate **a seven day weekly cycle** and the **seventh day means Sabbath or Rest.**

Shemitic:

- Hebrew Bible Yom Hash Shabbath or Day of the Sabbath
- Hebrew (ancient and modern) Shabbath or Sabbath
- Targum of Onkelos (Hebrew literature) Yom Shviaa or Day Seventh AND Sabbath or Sabbath
- Kurdistan Jews (Targum dialect) Yoymet Shabbat Kodesh or Holy Sabbath Day
- Ancient Syriac Shabbatho or Sabbath

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- Chaldee Syriac (Kurdistan; Urumia, Persia) Shapta or Sabbath
- Samaritan (Nablas, Palestine) (use old Hebrew letters) Yoma Hasheviah or Day the Seventh AND Shabbath or Sabbath
- Babylonian (Euphrates and Tigris Valleys, Mesopotamia) Sabatu or Sabbath
- Assyrian (Euphrates & Tigris Valleys, Mesopotamia) Sabatu or Sabbath
- Arabic (very old names) Shiyar or Chief or Rejoicing Day
- Arabic (ancient and modern; W. Asia, E, W & N Africa) Assabt or The Sabbath
- Maltese (Malta) Issibt or Sabbath
- Tigre (Abyssinia) Sanbat or Sabbath
- Amharic (Abyssinia) Sanbat or Sabbath
- Falasha (Jews of Abyssinia) Yini Sanbat or The Sabbath

Hamitic:

- Coptic (Egypt; a dead language for 300 years) *Pi Sabbaton or The Sabbath*
- Orma or Galla (south of Abyssinia) *Zambada or Sabbath*
- Tamashek or Towarek (ancient Libyan or Numidian) *Ahal Essabt or The Sabbath Day*
- Kabyle or Berber (Ancient Numidian; N Africa) *Ghas or Sabbath Day*
- Hausa (Central Africa) *Aseebatu or The Sabbath*

Japhetic:

- Sanscrit (India) Shanivar or Saturn-day
- Hindi (India) Shumiwar or Saturn-day
- Pali (India) Sanivaro or Saturn-day
- Urdu or Hindustani (Islamic and Hindu, India) Shamba or Sabbath; And Sanichar or Saturn
- Pashto or Afghan (Afghanistan) Khali or Unemployed day; And Shamba or Holiday, Sabbath
- Pahlavi or Pahlavi-Pazand (Ancient Persian) Kevan or Saturn; And Shambid or Fragrance - The pleasantest day of the week; And Dies Sabbati or Sabbath
- Persian (Persia; Modern Iran) Shambih or Holiday, Sabbath
- Armenian (Armenia) Shapat or Sabbath
- Kurdish (Kurdistan) Shamba or Sabbath
- Brahuiky (Beluchistan) Awalhafta or First or Chief of the Seven; And Shambe or Sabbath

The Seventh-day Sabbath from the time of Genesis to Moses was clearly the same. God told Moses the seventh day was the Sabbath, “To morrow *is* the rest of THE Holy Sabbath unto the LORD” (Ex 16:23).

But before this, the weekly cycle was known. Noah during the time of the flood knew and understood the counting of months and the weekly cycle, hence the reason why the name of the Sabbath is almost universal in nature among the ancient languages of antiquity!

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Noah writing about the flood said, “In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the *second month, the seventeenth day of the month*, the same *day* were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.

“And the rain was upon the earth *forty days and forty nights*.

“In the *selfsame day* entered Noah, and Shem, and Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife, and the three wives of his sons with them, into the ark;

“And the waters prevailed upon the earth an *hundred and fifty days*.

“And the ark rested in the *seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month*, upon the mountains of Ararat.

“And the waters decreased continually *until the tenth month: in the tenth month, on the first day of the month*, were the tops of the mountains seen.

” (Gen 7:11-13, 24; 8:4-5). The concept of days, nights and months were known and understood.

One also notices the weekly cycle used by Noah, “And he sent forth a raven, which went forth to and fro, until the waters were dried up from off the earth.

“Also he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters were abated from off the face of the ground;

“But the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him into the ark, for the waters *were* on the face of the whole earth: then he put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark.

“And he stayed yet ***other seven days***; and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark;

“And the dove came in to him in the evening; and, lo, in her mouth *was* an olive leaf pluckt off: so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth.

“And he stayed yet ***other seven days***; and sent forth the dove; which returned not again unto him any more.” (Gen 8:7-12).

Keil and Deiltzsch commentary makes this interesting observation, “After that, Noah let a dove fly out three times, *at intervals of seven days*. It is not distinctly stated that he sent it out the first time seven days after the raven, but this is implied in the statement that *he stayed yet other seven days before sending it out the second time, and the same again before sending it the third time* (Gen 8:10 and Gen 8:12).” (emphasis added).

The Pulpit Commentary goes further and says, “**Yet other seven days**. עוֹד, prop. the inf. absol, of the verb עוֹד, to go over again, to repeat; hence, as an adverb, conveying the idea of *doing over again the action expressed in the verb* (cf. Gen 46:29; Psalm 84:5).” (emphasis added).

Why is there at least three cycles of seven days? Why not eight or nine? Yet in these two chapters Noah *meticulously* counts the months and the days-*why not the weeks?* It is obvious that he is counting the weeks by seven, as it is revealed by God to Adam, and was passed to Noah.

Barnes Notes states: “These intervals point *evidently* to the period of seven days, *determined* by the six days of creation and the seventh day of rest.” (emphasis added).

Bullinger’s Companion Bible writes: “**Seven** = the seven. Another *Sabbath*, 18th day of 11th month.” (emphasis added).

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This way of counting weeks, days, months and years was continued on by Noah and his sons, and as one can see from the names (above), the seventh day was called the Sabbath in many ancient languages.

The Popular Cyclopaedia of Biblical Literature by Kitto makes this observation, “The division of time into periods of seven days of which mention is made *in the account of the deluge*, and which is found among *all ancient nations*, Egyptians, Arabians, Greeks, Romans, and even among the American Indians, furnishes a strong *confirmation of the opinion that the Sabbath is coeval with the creation*” (Article “Sabbath” emphasis added).

Ancient inscriptions discovered reveal, “The ancient Babylonian calendar, as seen from recently recovered inscriptions on the bricks among the ruins of the royal palace, was based on the division of time *into weeks of seven days*. The *Sabbath* is in these inscriptions designated Sabattu, and defined as ‘a day of rest for the heart’ and ‘a day of completion of labour.’” (Easton’s Bible Dictionary “Sabbath”).

In Moses’ day the Sabbath was *known* among the Hebrews and confirmed by God himself. The day was not revealed to them as one can see by the language. It is just said “tomorrow is the Holy Sabbath,” and God says “remember the Sabbath.” The day was known to the Israelites, and God was revealing to them that that day was the day of rest and holy to God, and no work was to be done on it. Those *aspects* of the Sabbath were *not* kept due to being slaves in Egypt. Then from Moses to Nehemiah and Ezra, the Sabbath was known and remained the same.

Nehemiah testifies, “Thou camest down also upon *mount Sinai*, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgments, and true laws, good statutes and commandments: “And madest *known unto them* thy holy Sabbath, and commandedst them precepts, statutes, and laws, *by the hand of Moses* thy servant:” (9:13-14).

The Pulpit Commentary says of this verse, “The *anterior existence* of the Sabbath to the law is here implied, which accords with Gen 2:2, Gen 2:3, and Ex 20:11.” (emphasis added). As mentioned above they *knew* of the Sabbath but God revealed to them *how to keep it*. This is the *same* Sabbath as kept by Moses, Abraham, Noah, Adam.

So what about from Nehemiah’s time and the final prophet Malachi to Jesus? Was it preserved?

The Jews during the Intertestamental period did not go into war during the Sabbath day. This was well known to their enemies, so their enemies made it a habit to attack the Jews on that day.

The outbreak of the Maccabean revolt (166–142 B.C.) against the Seleucid ruler Antiochus IV Epiphanes; Early in the Maccabean struggle, the enemy troops routed and killed some thousand Jews (1 Macc. 2:31–38), the Maccabean leader Mattathias and his companions determined that defensive warfare was proper for the Sabbath (verses 39–41).

In 63 B.C. Pompey the Great, a Roman general, used the Sabbath days for military preparations such as raising earthworks against the walls of Jerusalem; finally, after a three-month siege, he entered the city on a Sabbath.

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Again in 37 B.C. it was on a Sabbath that the Romans captured Jerusalem. What was that day *called* by their enemies?

Dio Cassius, a Roman historian, explained the strategy employed by Pompey in taking Jerusalem in 63 BCE: “If they [i.e., the Jews] had continued defending it [i.e., the Temple] on all days alike, he could not have got possession of it. *As it was, they made an exception of what are called the days of Saturn*, and by doing no work at all on *those days* afforded the Romans an opportunity in this interval to batter down the wall. The latter, on learning of this superstitious awe of theirs, made no serious attempts the rest of the time, *but on those days*, when they came around in *succession*, [a weekly occurrence this is why it’s called “days”] assaulted most vigorously. *Thus the defenders were captured on the day of Saturn without making any defense*, and all the wealth was plundered. The kingdom was given to Hyrcanus, and Aristobulus was carried away.”

In passing, the Roman historian also made the following comment upon the Jewish custom of observing the Sabbath: “They are distinguished from the rest of mankind in practically every detail of life and especially by the fact that they do not honor any of the usual gods, but show extreme reverence for one particular divinity. They never had any statue of him even in Jerusalem itself, but believing him to be Linnamable and invisible, they worship him in the most extravagant fashion on earth. They built to him a temple that was extremely large and beautiful except in so far as it was open and roofless, *and likewise dedicated to him the day called the day of Saturn*, on which, among many other most peculiar observances, they undertake no serious occupation.” (Chapter 17, in Loeb Classical Library, Dio’s Roman History, Volume 3, Pages 125, 127, 129, emphasis added).

The important fact for us to note in this story of the capture of Jerusalem by Pompey in 63 BC is *that the day of Saturn in the planetary week of the pagans then corresponded to the Sabbath or seventh day of the Biblical week of the Jews*. He did **not** say it was the 8th, 15th, 22nd and 29th day of the month, but *the day of Saturn*, a day of the week the 7th DAY OF THE WEEK!

The testimony of Dio Cassius is confirmed by that of Josephus, the Hebrew historian, who was a contemporary of the apostles. Josephus’s account of the siege runs thus: “Nor had the Romans succeeded in their endeavors, had not Pompey taken notice of *the seventh days*, on which the Jews abstain from all sorts of work on a religious account, and raised his bank, but restrained his soldiers from fighting *on those days*; for the Jews only acted defensively *on Sabbath days*.”

“Had it not been for our practice, from the days of our forefathers, to rest on the seventh day, this bank [thrown up by Pompey] could never have been perfected, by reason of the opposition the Jews would have made; for though our law gives us leave then to defend ourselves against those that begin to fight us and assault us, yet does it not permit it to meddle with our enemies while they do anything else. Which thing when the Romans understood, on those days which we *call Sabbaths* [weekly occurrence] they threw nothing at the Jews, nor came to any pitched battle with them; but raised up their earthen banks, and brought their engines into such forwardness, that they might do execution *the next day*. The city was taken on the third month, on the day of the fast, upon the hundred and seventy-ninth olympiad, when Caius Antonius and Marcus Tullius Cicero were consuls.”

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Josephus adds, in the same account, that his testimony was confirmed by the writings of Strabo, Nicolaus of Damascus, and Titus Livius (Livy). (*source: Josephus, Wars of the Jews, Book 1, Chapter 7, Section 3, in The Works of Flavius Josephus, Page 618; See footnote 9; Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, Book 14, Chapter 4, Sections 2, 3, in The Works of Flavius Josephus, Page 413*). Notice, this practice was from the days of their “forefathers.” The practice of the Sabbath in the first century was practiced in Old Testament times as well as in the time of Jesus, *unabated*. The Romans called it the “day of Saturn” which of course corresponds to our day called Saturday-Josephus called it the Sabbath!

Dio Cassius wrote that the Jews worshipped God every Sabbath, a weekly occurrence on the same day, “The Jews, indeed, had done much injury to the Romans, for the race is very bitter when aroused to anger, but they suffered far more themselves. The first of them to be captured were those who were fighting for the precinct of their god, and *then the rest on the day even then called the day of Saturn*. And so excessive were they in their devotion to religion that the first set of prisoners, those who had been captured along with the temple, obtained leave from Sosius, *when the day of Saturn came round again, and went up into the temple and there performed all the customary rites, together with the rest of the people.*” (Dio Cassius, Roman History, book 49, Chapter 22, in Loeb Classical Library, Dio’s Roman History, Volume 5, Page 387, emphasis added). The day of Saturn was a weekly occurrence of every seven days, every Saturday the Jews rested and worshipped God on the day the Jews called the Sabbath! Dio Cassius recognized that the “very day of Saturn, the day which *even now the Jews reverence most.*” (Dio Cassius, Roman History, book 65, Chapter 7, in Loeb Classical Library, Dio’s Roman History, Volume 8, Page 271, emphasis added).

Josephus-A Jew his own testimony in his Antiquities of the Jews states: “Accordingly Moses says, That in just six days the world, and all that is therein, was made. And that the seventh day was a rest, and a release from the labor of such operations; whence it is that *we* [The Jews] Celebrate a rest from our labors *on that day*, and call it *the Sabbath*, which word denotes rest in the Hebrew tongue.” (chpt.1. bk.1, emphasis added). The Sabbath the Jews were celebrating according to Josephus (*and what their enemies called the “day of Saturn”*) Saturday was the *same Sabbath instituted at creation!* The Sabbath has not changed!

And Josephus made sure that what he wrote was accurate as he says himself, “I was myself interested in that war which we Jews had with the Romans, and knew myself its particular actions, and what conclusion it had, I was forced to give the history of it, because I saw that others perverted the truth of those actions in their writings...Now I have undertaken the present work, as thinking it will appear to all the Greeks worthy of their study; for it will contain all our antiquities, and the constitution of our government, as interpreted out of the Hebrew Scriptures...As I proceed, therefore, *I shall accurately describe what is contained in our records, in the order of time that belongs to them*; for I have already promised so to do throughout this undertaking; and this without adding anything to what is therein contained, or taking away anything therefrom.” (ibid, preface vv. 1, 2, 3, emphasis added).

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Did Jesus keep a different Sabbath?

If the lunar Sabbath were true then we should find evidence that Jesus kept it in the New Testament. However no evidence exists. Jesus kept the *same* Sabbath the *Jews* were observing, the seventh day of the week, the day we call Saturday!

In the Gospel of Luke Jesus after the temptation in the wilderness came to his home town of Nazareth, “....and, *as his custom was*, he went into the synagogue on the *Sabbath day*, and stood up for to read” (4:16). We know from biblical and secular sources that the Sabbath day was Friday sunset to Saturday sunset. This is the day Christ recognized as the holy day of God. He was in the synagogue with the *other Jews*, these other Jews also recognized the *same* day, and it was as “as his custom was.”

The reason he went to synagogue was *not* that he knew the Jews were in the synagogue that day and he had to preach to them; instead he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, THAT WAS HIS CUSTOM! In fact Robertson’s Word Pictures puts it, “As his custom was (kata to ei thos aut i). Second perfect active neuter singular participle of an old eth (Homer), to be accustomed. Literally according to *what was customary to him* (aut i, dative case). This is one of the flashlights on the early life of Jesus. He had the habit of going to public worship in the synagogue as a boy, *a habit* that he kept up when a *grown* man.” (emphasis added). If Christ had kept the lunar Sabbath, chances are He would have been reading to an empty room that day in the synagogue. There would have been no one present there to hand Him the scroll of Isaiah. The Jews would have been elsewhere.

Here in another confrontation with the Pharisees they said to him, “Behold, why do they on the *Sabbath day* that which is not lawful?” (Mark 2:24). Was it a lunar Sabbath? No! These were *Jews*, and as secular and Biblical history tells us, this was a Saturday-the weekly Sabbath. Jesus answered them and said, “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath: “Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath.” If he were speaking of a lunar Sabbath an explanation would be here but it is not. The Sabbath Jesus was speaking of is the *same Sabbath day that the Pharisees were speaking of* or else Jesus would have told them of a lunar Sabbath and that the Saturday Sabbath was not the correct one (*this scenario is of course according to lunar Sabbath theorist*). But Jesus goes all the way back to the creation of the Sabbath in Genesis and the purpose of the Sabbath, so the seventh-day Sabbath is the *same day* confirmed by Jesus from creation all the way to his day as Saturday!

Notice this other incident when Jesus confronts the Jews, “And he entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand.” (Mark 3:1). Here again in the synagogue filled with Jews keeping the seventh day Sabbath-Saturday as Josephus and Dio Cassius informs us; as it says, “And they watched him, whether he would heal him on *the Sabbath day*; that they might accuse him.” (v.2).

Now what does Jesus say to the crowd? Does he say “this is the wrong Sabbath”? “You should keep the right Sabbath on the 8th, 15th, 22nd, and 29th day of the month”? No! Instead he says, “Is it lawful to do good *on the Sabbath days*, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace.” (v.4). Jesus acknowledges that it WAS THE SABBATH and was asking if it was

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“lawful” to do good on the Sabbath day. Jesus was correcting their theology *about* the Sabbath, *not* the day itself!

From Jesus time till now the Jews and the true church of God have been keeping this same day the seventh-day Sabbath what we call today Saturday!

Lunar Sabbatarian Arguments

Here we will examine some of the arguments made by Lunar Sabbatarian’s.

1. Certain encyclopedias state that the Sabbath was originally kept by a lunar cycle, and was later changed to the current 7-day cycle by the Jews.

By “Certain encyclopedias,” they mean specifically three: JewishEncyclopedia.com, The Encyclopedia Biblica (1899), and the Universal Jewish Encyclopedia (1939).

There is no evidence cited in any of the encyclopedias despite the unusual nature of the claims, and they are replete with terms such as “probably” and “possibly.” Of course, none of these three sources help the proponents of a lunar Sabbath for a variety of reasons:

- A) The conjecture is based upon a naturalistic view of the Scriptures, not an inspired one. The reasoning is solely grounded upon the assumption that the Sabbath was not instituted in Eden as Scripture declares, but that its origin was as a ritual gained by way of osmosis from other pagan groups that worshipped the moon.
- B) Even these sources acknowledge the lack of a historical reference to this change by qualifying the assertion with terms such as “probably,” and place the change from lunar to solar so far back in Jewish history as to be entirely useless for those claiming that the change happened after the time of Christ.

A brief referencing of these books reveals that, “The thread between all three references is readily apparent; *so far from being confessions of a Jewish scholar as to the history of Sabbath keeping*, the books are written from a *naturalistic viewpoint* that regards the Scriptures as a myth to be compared with other ancient myths, with ‘possible’ and ‘probable’ conclusions based on suggested similarities. The authors are noted as those who ‘maintained a negative or at most neutral attitude’ towards the subject matter and the works are cited for *conjectural errors by both orthodox Jews and secular historical agencies alike*.

“Obviously, this is *not* the sound basis for a Biblical doctrine, and most definitely is not a sound basis for providing a historical fact.” (Lunar Sabbaths: An Examination from Scripture and History, vo.2, ed.8, p.3, emphasis added).

This source however is a reliable one that states, “It is now held by many that the Sabbath is Babylonian in origin...Consequently the Babylonian Sabbath was a day of *penance*, and the middle of the Babylonian month. *It has also been held that the seventh, fourteenth, twenty-first, and twenty-eighth days of the month, designated as ill-omened, were the Babylonian Sabbaths*; but for this argument there is no evidence, and it must accordingly be assumed that the

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fifteenth day of each month was the Sabbath of the Babylonians. *This day was reckoned that of the full moon, but* since the Hebrew Sabbath was *not* connected with the full moon and was a day of *gladness, not* of *penance*, and since the Babylonians had no week of seven days, *the assumption that the Hebrews borrowed the Sabbath from the Babylonians lacks all foundation.*” (The New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, Vol X, p.135, emphasis added). History reveals that the Hebrew Sabbath *has no connection* with the Babylonian Sabbath, and that the Babylonian Sabbath falls on the day of the Month *that the lunar Sabbatarian’s claim is the real Sabbath*, when in **actuality** they are observing the *pagan Sabbath*, the claim *they make* for the true Sabbath, when it’s really the other way around!

2. Some statements of Philo, an Alexandrian Jew and prolific author regarding the laws and customs of Judaism in the time of Christ, are often used to attempt to show that both Philo and the Jewish nation kept lunar Sabbaths in the time of Jesus.

This argument from Philo actually reveals the error of the lunar Sabbath argument *not* its *validity*.

Philo wrote, “The fourth commandment has reference to the sacred seventh day that it may be passed in a sacred and holy manner. *Some* states keep the ‘holy festival’ only *once* in the *month*, counting from the *new moon*, as a day sacred to God; *but the nation of the Jews keep every seventh day regularly, after each interval of six days.*” (Philo, The Decalogue, XXX, emphasis added). And according to Dio Cassius it was every week on “the day of Saturn.”

The lunar Sabbath argument focuses on the *first half* of this quote, and using a strange and specious form of logic claims that “because Philo calls it the ‘holy festival’ when these states keep it once a month by the moon, it therefore means they were using the right method – the moon.” This completely ignores the fact that they were also keeping it only *once a month! Not the 8th, 15th, 22nd, 29th of the month, but once a month!* And what day of the month? Was it the 5th, 25th which day? It doesn’t say! Also notice it says “*some*” states, *not* all of the people were doing this.

Essentially, the lunar Sabbath argument picks which half of the error it likes, applies the term “holy festival” as an endorsement of that half, and completely *ignores the conclusion*: that regardless of what these other states do, *the nation of the Jews keep every seventh day regularly, after each interval of six days-this was the day Jesus called the Sabbath day!*

Also the quote *does not* say “Every seventh day from the New Moon after each interval of six working days, except for at the end of some months, when we have some extra working days in there before the New Moon.” If there was plainer language to express the idea of every seventh day regularly— not irregularly—I am unaware of it. Philo says, “*but the nation of the Jews keep every seventh day regularly, after each interval of six days.*” History proves this to be the day of Saturn, what we call Saturday, every Saturday was the Sabbath day.

3. “The seventh-day Sabbath fell on every 8th, 15th, 22nd, 29th of the lunar month.”

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Is there any biblical evidence for this? The fact is there not a single verse in Scripture telling the Israelites that the Sabbath should be observed on these days! Was not the weekly Sabbath more important than any other day on the calendar? Yes it was! So if it was the most important holy day why aren't scriptures clear about the Sabbath falling on the 8th, 15th, 22nd, 29th?

Here however are some examples in the Bible that demonstrate that on some of these days there is *no evidence* of a Sabbath.

The children of Israel arrived in the wilderness of sin “on the fifteenth day of the second month after they departed from the land of Egypt” (Ex 16:1) Again, they travelled on the 15th; therefore it cannot have been a Sabbath. In light of Matthew 24:20 where Jesus told the disciples “And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath,” It highly likely that would be travelling if this was the Sabbath. And why is it the 15th of the month not called “the Sabbath” as God plainly called the *seventh-day* the Sabbath later in the *same* chapter (v.23)?

God instructed the Israelites to gather manna for six days and rest on the seventh day (Ex. 16:22-23, 26-27). If the Israelites were keeping a “lunar Sabbath” then where is the mention of gathering enough manna once each month at the end of the month to last not just for one day, but for up to three days while awaiting the arrival of the new moon and hence the first day of the week?

In the days of Hezekiah, the priests were cleansing the temple of God, they were “to *carry forth* the filthiness out of the holy *place*” (2 Chron 29:5).

So, “...they gathered their brethren, and sanctified themselves, and came, according to the commandment of the king, by the words of the LORD, to cleanse the house of the LORD. “And the priests went into the inner part of the house of the LORD, to cleanse it, and *brought out all the uncleanness* that they found in the temple of the LORD into the court of the house of the LORD. *And the Levites took it, to carry it out abroad into the brook Kidron.* “Now they began on the first *day* of the first month to sanctify, *and on the eighth day of the month came they to the porch of the LORD: so they sanctified the house of the LORD in eight days; and in the sixteenth day of the first month they made an end.*” Here it reveals that in the 8th day of the month, and a day *after* the 15th day of the month which are *supposed to be the weekly Sabbath*, the scriptures say they were cleansing the temple *carrying* all the unclean things out of the temple in those days. The 8th is specifically mentioned and there is no mention of a Sabbath rest taking place on that day. Instead work is being done on the 8th day of the month.

In the book of Samuel the 20th and 21st chapter this throws a wrench in the entire Lunar Sabbath theory. Here it is revealed that the weekly Sabbath actually falls on the *third day of the month!* Not the 8th or the 15th etc....but the 3rd of the month. Of course it's the 7th day of the week that falls in the third day of the month but Lunar Sabbatarian's believe that the Sabbath falls on every seven days *of the month*, and not every 7th day of the week.

David says to Jonathan, “Behold, to morrow *is* the new moon, and I should not fail to sit with the king at meat: but let me go, that I may hide myself in the field unto the *third day at even.*” Here it is perfectly laid out for anyone to understand. It's the beginning of the month and on the third

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day of the month he was to meet Jonathan again about Saul and if things were well between Saul and David.

So, "...when the new moon was come, the king sat him down to eat meat." (v.24). Saul said nothing about David "that day" (v.26).

Then, "And it came to pass on the morrow, *which was the second day* of the month, that David's place was empty: and Saul said unto Jonathan his son, Wherefore cometh not the son of Jesse to meat, neither *yesterday, nor to day?*" (v.27). Here is the second day of the month; Saul is upset with David for not coming to eat with the King.

Saul was furious with David for he knew David was going to be King over Israel and Saul was threatened by him and wanted to kill him (vv.31-32).

"So Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger, and did eat no meat the *second day of the month*: for he was grieved for David, because his father had done him shame.

"And it came to pass *in the morning*, that Jonathan went out into the field at the *time appointed* with David, and a little lad with him." (vv.34-35). This is obviously the 3rd day the "time appointed" to meet with David which was the 3rd day of the Month (v.5). The two words "even" and "morning" in vv.5, 34, are the same words used in Genesis 1 of the "evening and the morning" meaning sunset to sunset so this was the third day at or near sunset.

"Then came David to Nob to Ahimelech the priest:" (1 Sam 21:1). David asks for bread to eat (v.3). All the priest had was showbread in the tabernacle (v.4).

Notice what David says, "And David answered the priest, and said unto him, Of a truth women *have been* kept from us *about these three days, since I came out*, and the vessels of the young men are holy, and *the bread is* in a manner common, yea, though it were sanctified this day in the vessel." (v.5). what three days? It was the three days in which David was in hiding. This source writes, "This *exactly* agrees with the time during which *David had lain concealed* (1Sam 20:24, 1Sam 20:27, 1Sam 20:35), and explains the *hunger* under which he was suffering, as he had no doubt taken with him only feed sufficient for his immediate wants," (Pulpit Commentary, emphasis added). Obviously David was in a hurry to get away from Saul since Saul wanted to kill him, and Nob was close, "It is computed to have been about 5 miles south of Gibeah," (JFB Commentary). Gibeah is where Saul dwelt (1 Sam 22:6).

Now notice what the Priest says to David, "So the priest gave him hallowed *bread*: for there was no bread there but the shewbread, that was taken from before the LORD, *to put hot bread in the day when it was taken away.*"

God's Word Translation makes it more understandable, "So the priest gave him holy bread because he only had the bread of the presence which had been taken from the LORD'S presence and replaced with warm bread *that day*." What day is this done? "The removal of the old and the substitution of new bread was done on the *Sabbath* (Lev 24:8)" (JFB Commentary, emphasis added). He gave the old bread that was taken off the table of showbread and the new bread was placed on the table "that day" the Sabbath day! This Sabbath day took place *on the third day of*

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the month, not the 8th or the 15th but the third day, how do lunar Sabbatarian's reconcile this problem?

4. The Jews were forced to give up their lunar calendar and accept the pagan Roman calendar. The Julian/Gregorian calendar has never changed its seven day cycle once it changed from the original eight day cycle around the time of Constantine in A.D. 321. . . . Most people have had no idea that the eight day week of the original pagan Julian calendar was not recognized by the Hebrew communities at the time of Christ. . . . It was only after Rome conquered Jerusalem in A.D. 70 that the Jews began to succumb to the ways of Rome and her pagan calendar

The Roman eight-day calendar was changed to a seven-day calendar early in the imperial period *not* in the time of Constantine. (*“During the first two centuries AD, the Greco-Roman world generally adopted the planetary seven-day week of the astrologers”* (Encyclopedia Britannica), 15th edition, s.v. “Church Year”).

Now, if the Jews were forced to give up their lunar Sabbath calendar in exchange for adopting the pagan Julian calendar either in the days after A.D. 70 or since the time of Constantine, there should be a *huge amount of evidence* in existence today that this change occurred.

The Jews have always been persistent and faithful in observing the Sabbath. If they believed God had given them a lunar Sabbath, they would not have given it up without a major struggle. There would be records everywhere in history about the resistance of the Jews in changing their method of keeping Sabbath.

Since the Jews were spread throughout the nations of the world it would have required an army of missionaries going everywhere to convince and enforce the change of their Sabbath-keeping from the lunar method to the weekly cycle.

There should have been pockets of Jews worldwide ferociously clinging to the old ways that God had given them and many Jewish groups still keeping the lunar Sabbath to this day. *But the exact opposite is true.* History is absolutely silent as to any such events taking place. There are no recorded commands given to change the cycle from a lunar to weekly Sabbath, and the Jews today around the world keep the Sabbath on Saturday. The mathematical odds of all the Jews worldwide changing from the lunar calendar to the 7-day week without leaving any historical trace are *astronomical* – it is virtually impossible. This is an overwhelming missing link for the lunar Sabbath theory.

Pentecost and the Lunar Sabbath

Probably one of the best arguments against the lunar Sabbath concerns Pentecost. God instructs that the Day of Pentecost, correctly counted, will always occur on the day after a Sabbath:

“And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the Sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven Sabbaths shall be complete:

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“Even unto the morrow after the seventh Sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the LORD.”

So, the requirement that Pentecost falls on the day *after* the seventh Sabbath becomes a “check point” to ensure that we have counted correctly.

A person keeping the lunar Sabbath will never find an occasion where the count of those fifty days brings him to the day *after* the Sabbath he is keeping. No scenario exists where Pentecost falls on the day after a lunar Sabbath. It will never happen!

If the concept of the lunar Sabbath were correct, the requirement that Pentecost fall after a Sabbath would be impossible to meet. The model that lunar Sabbatarian’s use to determine the Sabbath does not mesh with the instruction concerning Pentecost, as stated in Leviticus 23:15-16.

The word “Pentecost” means literally “Fifty Count” in Greek, due to the fact that it occurs fifty days after the offering of the wave sheaf at Unleavened Bread. The passage above states this count two ways, and in so doing, it makes the lunar Sabbath an impossibility. If “the morrow after the seventh Sabbath” is the fiftieth day, then seven Sabbaths must account for 49 days.

This is only possible through an unbroken cycle of seven-day weeks between Sabbaths regardless of New Moons or monthly “shifts,” because $7 \times 7 = 49$. The lunar Sabbath, by inserting extra days between weekly Sabbaths at the end of each month, comes out to a count of roughly 52-55 days for the day after the seventh Sabbath.

Several interesting attempts have been made to explain away this apparent death-knell to the doctrine, including an insistence that the word “unto” in “unto the morrow” actually means “after.” No textual evidence either Hebrew or English is ever cited for this assertion, as the word “ad” in Hebrew undeniably means “unto, until, before.” Neither is any source cited to defend the fact that beginning a count of 50 days after seven Sabbaths would place Pentecost over 100 days after the wave sheaf, making the very name “fifty count” a false one.

Philo The Alexandrian Jew states of the practices of Israel in his day makes it very clear that “Also the day on which is offered the sheaf of corn, as an offering of gratitude for the fertility and productiveness of the plain, as exhibited in the fullness of the ears of corn. And the day of Pentecost, *which is numbered from this day by seven portions of seven days*, in which it is the custom to offer up loaves, which are truly called the loaves of the first fruits, since, in fact, they are the first fruits of the productions and crops of eatable grain, which God has given to mankind, as the most tractable of all his creatures.” [Philo, The Decalogue, XXX (160)].

He does not say “seven portions of seven days plus another 50,” nor does he say “7 to 9 portions of 6 working days, sometimes less between the last Sabbath of a month and the following New Moon.” No; quite simply, “seven Sabbaths” as the Scripture calls it is “seven portions of seven days” as Philo claims, both of which equate the day after with the number fifty.

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Many have to be aware of the fact that these people are introducing and promoting a Sabbath rest that is *different* from the biblical seventh-day Sabbath rest. The Bible is clear that the week has a recurring cycle of seven days ending with the Sabbath. This is supported by the plain statements of God's word, and history.