



REFLECTIONS ON THE SEAL OF GOD

by Pastor Stephen Bohr

The Sabbath and the Third Angel's Message

There are several churches in the Christian world today that keep the Seventh Day Sabbath because it is one of the Ten Commandments. Seventh-day Adventists keep it for the same reason, but their understanding is far deeper than theirs.

The Seventh-day Adventist view of the Sabbath is **unique** because it links the Sabbath with the three angels' messages of Revelation 14, and believes that its observance will be the final test for the world. Seventh-day Adventists see the Sabbath in the context of the beast, his image, and his mark in Revelation 13 and 14, and believe that the Sabbath is the **eschatological** seal of God. Writing to a Seventh-day Adventist pastor, Ellen White warned about preaching the Sabbath simply as one of the Ten Commandments, as do the Seventh-day Baptists:

*"Elder K knows not of what spirit he is. He is uniting his influence with the dragon host to oppose those who keep the commandments of God, and who have the testimony of Jesus. He has a hard warfare before him. As far as the Sabbath is concerned, he occupies the same position as the **Seventh Day Baptists**. **Separate the Sabbath from the [three angels'] messages, and it loses its power; but when connected with the message of the third angel, a power attends it which convicts unbelievers and infidels, and brings them out with strength to stand, to live, grow, and flourish in the Lord.**" Testimonies for the Church, volume 1, p. 337*

The Sabbath as the Seal of God

Since its early history, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has consistently taught that the Sabbath is the seal of authenticity in the heart of the law, as well as the eschatological Seal that will be placed on the foreheads of those who will go through the final time of trouble. As far as we know, the first person to discover this truth was Captain Joseph Bates, who in 1846 published a booklet titled, *The Seventh-day Sabbath a Perpetual Sign*.

With the passing of time, Ellen White and her husband reached the same conclusion and unequivocally and repeatedly identified the Sabbath as the Seal in the law and the sign and test of loyalty to God at the end. In the following statement, Ellen White used the words 'seal', 'sign', 'test', and 'Sabbath' together:

*"The **Sabbath** was placed in the Decalogue as the seal of the living God, pointing out the Law-giver, and making known his right to rule. It was a sign between God and his people, a test of their loyalty to him." *Signs of the Times*, May 13, 1886*

Ellen White explained that the Sabbath is the seal of God because it is the only commandment that contains the name and title of the Lawgiver, and for this reason, it is the sign of the law's authenticity:

*"The fourth commandment is the only one of all the ten in which are found both the name and the title of the Lawgiver. It is the only one that shows by whose authority the law is given. Thus, it contains the seal of God, affixed to His law as evidence of its authenticity and binding force." *PP*, p. 307*

The Sabbath is the seal and sign of God's authority over everything that He has made:

*"The Sabbath of the fourth commandment is the seal of the living God. It points to God as the Creator, and is the sign of His rightful authority over the beings He has made." *Signs of the Times*, November 1, 1899*

Not only is the Sabbath the sign or seal that is imprinted in the center of the law, it will also be imprinted on the foreheads of those who faithfully observe it just before the close of probation:

*“The **sign** or **seal** of God **is the observance** of the seventh-day Sabbath, and the Lord's memorial of his work of creation.” Special Testimony to Battle Creek, 1898, p. 6*

Ellen White encouraged the church to **proclaim** the Sabbath as the seal of God:

*“The truth in regard to the Sabbath of the Lord is to be **proclaimed**. The **seventh-day** is to be shown to be the **seal** of the living God.” 4MR, p. 425*

In fact, during the little time of trouble just before the close of probation, Ellen White understood that the Sabbath will be proclaimed **more fully**, that is, in connection with the loud cry of the third angel:

*“I saw that God had children who **do not see and keep** the Sabbath. They have **not rejected** the light upon it. And at the commencement of the time of trouble, we were filled with the **Holy Ghost [the latter rain]** as we went forth and **proclaimed** the Sabbath **[the loud cry] more fully [in connection with the third angel's message]** This enraged the **[Protestant] churches and nominal Adventists [in name only]**, as they could not refute the Sabbath truth. And at this time **God's chosen** all saw clearly that we had the truth, and they came out **[of Babylon]** and endured the persecution with us. I saw the **sword, famine, pestilence**, and great **confusion** in the land **[Matthew 24:6-9]**. The wicked thought that **we had brought** the judgments upon them, and they rose up and took counsel to **rid the earth of us**, thinking that then the evil **would be stayed**.” Christian Experience and Teaching of Mrs. Ellen G White, pp. 93-95)*

In the Center of God's Law

It should not surprise us that the Sabbath seal is **in the heart** of the Ten Commandments (cf. 1T, pp. 75, 76). Several years ago, when I was doing research at the James White Library at **Andrews University**, I saw on one of the shelves several large green volumes containing pictures of **tablets of clay** that archeologists had unearthed in the ancient Canaanite city of **Ugarit**. As I leafed through one of the volumes something **caught my eye**.

The volume contained pictures of ancient **covenants** between sovereign kings and their vassals. The clay **tablets** were written in cuneiform on **both sides** and the **middle** of the tablets contained a large seal impressed on the clay while it was still fresh. The covenants were deemed **authentic** because they contained

the **name**, **title** and **territory** over which the sovereign king ruled. The covenant promised the **protection** of the sovereign in exchange for obedience to the terms of the covenant.

This immediately brought to mind the Ten Commandment **covenant** between God and Israel (Deuteronomy 4:13; Exodus 19:1-8). The stone (not flimsy clay) **tables** of God's covenant were written on **both sides** (Exodus 32:15, 16). Then I thought to myself, where would I expect to find the seal in God's covenant? The answer was obvious—it must be in the **very center** of the table and must contain the **name**, **title**, and **territory** of the covenant maker! And I knew that in the end time, the covenant seal will guarantee **God's protection** for those who are loyal to the terms of the covenant! (Revelation 7:1-4).

The Holy Spirit as the Seal/Sealer

A **superficial** and hasty reading of Scripture **out of context** has led some to abandon the Seventh-day Adventist church, and others who remain to doubt the reliability of the Spirit of Prophecy. The doubters claim that Ellen White was wrong when she wrote that the Sabbath is the seal of God in the heart of the Decalogue. In their estimation, she contradicted three texts in the writings of the apostle Paul.

Three times, Paul wrote that the **internal** work of the **Holy Spirit** on the human heart is the seal. It bears noting, however, that the seal that Paul referred to is the gift of the **early rain** that an **individual believer** receives **at conversion** at the **beginning** of the Christian life. It is important to underline that the three texts quoted below are all in the **past perfect** tense. The Ephesian and Corinthian believers had **already been sealed** with/by the Holy Spirit when Paul wrote.

Clearly, then, the apostle could not be referring to the end-time seal spoken of in Revelation 7:1-4 and 14:1-5 because that seal is yet future and will be placed upon God's faithful people when they receive **latter rain** power just before the close of probationary time.

It is a mistaken assumption to **equate** the **conversion** seal of the early rain at the beginning of the Christian life, with the **protective** eschatological seal at the end of the Christian dispensation. Let's examine the three texts where Paul referred to the Holy Spirit as the seal/sealer:

*“In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, **having believed**, you **were [past passive tense] sealed with the Holy Spirit** of promise, **who** is the **guarantee** of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.” (Ephesians 1:13-14)*

*“And do not grieve the **Holy Spirit** of God, **by whom** you **were sealed [past passive tense]** for the day of redemption.” (Ephesians 4:30)*

*“Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also **has sealed us [past passive tense]** and **given** us the **Spirit** in our hearts as a **guarantee**.” (2 Corinthians 1:21, 22)*

How do we resolve the **seeming** discrepancy between Paul and Ellen G. White? Is there really a contradiction, or is the problem with our own understanding? Is it possible that the Holy Spirit is the seal/sealer in both the gospel seal and the eschatological seal?

In this study, we will find that Ellen White and the Bible are in perfect harmony. They are describing **two different sides** of the same reality, but in **different historical** contexts. The Bible is describing the **invisible, internal** work of the Holy Spirit while Ellen White is describing the **external, visible** manifestation of that very work.

Abraham and the External Act of Circumcision

In order to better understand the relationship between the external observance of the Sabbath and the internal work of the Holy Spirit, let's take the analogous case of circumcision.

God commanded that circumcision be **visibly** and **outwardly** performed by the **literal** removal of the foreskin. In Leviticus 12:3 God explicitly **commanded** that the **external act** be performed on the eighth day after birth:

*“And in the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin **shall be** circumcised.”*

According to **Genesis 17:14**, so important was the **outward** observance of circumcision, that whoever did not perform the visible, **outward** act, was to be cut off from God's people because circumcision was the visible **sign** or **seal** of the covenant (Romans 4:11, 12).

*“And the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person **shall be cut off** from his people; he has **broken** My covenant.”*

According to **Exodus 4:24-26**, so serious was this matter of the **outward, visible** circumcision sign that God sent an angel who threatened to kill Moses for neglecting to circumcise his son.

Abraham and the Deeper Dimension of Circumcision

Though the external act of circumcision was mandatory, the ceremony had a **deeper meaning** than just the physical removal of the foreskin. It was an **outward** sign of the **internal** and **invisible** work of the Holy Spirit in the heart. We see this deeper meaning in the experience of Abraham.

According to **Genesis 15:6**, God promised Abraham a son from his own loins when he was about **84 years old**, and the story tells us that Abraham **trusted** God’s word and it was accounted to him for righteousness:

*“And he **believed** [**trusted**] in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness.”*

Genesis 17:24 tells us that Abraham, however, was not circumcised until he was **99 years old** some fifteen years **after he was justified** by faith. The crucial question is this: Did the **outward act** of circumcision save or justify Abraham? Of course not! Circumcision was a **visible sign** that he had experienced righteousness by faith fifteen years earlier. It was an **outward** sign of an **internal** experience.

In the days of Paul, the Jews had made the **outward act** of circumcision the **litmus test of salvation** and the outward **sign** of **belonging to God’s people**. The Jews considered **the physical act** as all important, but the apostle explained that the outward act was a visible **sign** or **seal** that Abraham had been justified by faith fifteen years earlier. Notice that Paul uses the words ‘seal’ and ‘sign’ interchangeably:

*“And he received the [**outward**] **sign** of circumcision, a [**outward**] **seal** of the righteousness of the faith which he had **while still uncircumcised**, that he might be the father of all those who believe, though they are uncircumcised, that*

*righteousness might be imputed to them also, and the father of circumcision to those who not only are of the circumcision, but who also walk in the **steps of the faith** which our father Abraham had while still uncircumcised.” (Romans 4:11, 12)*

The internal and **deeper dimension** of circumcision was already present in the Old Testament. Moses wrote that the external act was to be the visible announcement of an internal experience brought about by the Holy Spirit:

*“And the Lord your God will **circumcise** your **heart** and the **heart** of your descendants, **to love the Lord** your God with all your heart and with all your soul that you may live.” (Deuteronomy 30:6)*

Moses described the removal of the **visible foreskin** as a sign of the removal of the **invisible** foreskin from the heart:

*“Therefore circumcise **the foreskin of your heart**, and be stiff-necked no longer.” (Deuteronomy 10:16-17).*

The apostle **Paul agreed** with Moses:

*“For we are the **circumcision** who **worship God** in **the Spirit**, **rejoice** in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in **the flesh**” (Philippians 3:3)*

*“For he is not a Jew who is one **outwardly**, nor is **circumcision** that which is **outward** in the flesh; ²⁹ but he is a Jew who is one **inwardly**; and **circumcision** is that of the **heart**, in the **Spirit**, not in the **letter**; whose **praise** is not from men but from God.” (Romans 2:28-29)*

At this point someone might argue that because circumcision is no longer required as an outward seal or sign of justification and belonging to God’s people, neither is the Sabbath. However, the Bible makes clear that circumcision was a purely **Jewish** institution, established **after sin**, replaced by **baptism** and, according to the **explicit teaching** of the **Jerusalem Council**, no longer mandatory for Christians:

*“In Him you were also **circumcised** with the circumcision made **without hands**, by putting off the body of the **sins of the flesh**, by the **circumcision** of Christ, ¹² **buried with Him in baptism**, in which you also were **raised with Him** through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.” (Colossians 2:11, 12)*

In contrast to circumcision, the **Sabbath** was made for **all mankind** (Mark 2:27, 28) **at creation** (Genesis 2:1-3), **before sin** and in the New Testament there is not the slightest **hint** that it has been **abolished** or **replaced**.

The Example of Baptism

As we noted before, baptism **took the place** of circumcision (Colossians 2:11-13). So I ask, is the **outward act** of baptism mandatory or is it sufficient **simply to invite** Jesus into our heart? There are texts in the New Testament that make the **external rite** of baptism **a condition of salvation**. However, when we carefully read these texts, we discern that the outward water ceremony, though required by God, is **not sufficient**. The external rite must be **preceded** by the **internal** work of the Holy Spirit at **conversion**. The Great Commission makes clear that belief or faith in Jesus must precede the baptismal act:

*“And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. ¹⁶ He who **believes [the internal experience]** and is **baptized [the outward act]** **will be saved**; but he who does not believe will be condemned.” (Mark 16:15-17)*

The apostle Peter concurred:

*“There is also an antitype which **now saves us**—**baptism** (not the removal of the filth of the **flesh [outward]**), but the answer of a **good conscience** toward God **[internal]**, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 3:21-22)*

Ellen White agreed with the Bible testimony. She wrote that the outward rite of baptism although required, is not sufficient:

*“Christ made **baptism the entrance** to His spiritual kingdom. He made this a **positive condition** with which **all must comply** who wish to be acknowledged as under the authority of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Those who **receive the ordinance** of baptism thereby make a **public [visible] declaration** that they **have renounced** the world, and **have become** members of the royal family, children of the heavenly King.” *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, volume 6, p. 1075*

Concerning the words that the Father spoke to Jesus at His baptism, Ellen White wrote that believers receive the **imprint** of God at baptism. The word ‘imprint’

is related to the word 'seal'. According to one source, 'a seal is an emblem or device used to authenticate a document, while an imprint is the mark left by a seal or a stamp.' This means that the Holy Spirit is **both** the internal imprinter as well as the imprint, the **sealer** and the **seal**!

Several Ellen White statements follow where she discusses the internal work of the Holy Spirit as a precursor of the visible sign of baptism:

*"Let those who received the **imprint** of God by **baptism** heed these words, remembering that upon them the Lord has placed **His signature**, declaring them to be His sons and daughters. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, powers infinite and omniscient, receive those who **truly enter** into covenant relation with God. They are present at every baptism, to receive the candidates who **have renounced** the world and **have received** Christ into the **soul temple**. These candidates **have entered** into the family of God, and their **names are inscribed** in the Lamb's book of life." *God's Amazing Grace*, p. 143*

*"The **new birth** [an internal work of the Holy Spirit—John 3:3, 8] is a rare experience in this age of the world. This is the reason why there are so many **perplexities** in the churches. Many, **so many**, who assume the name of Christ are **unsanctified and unholy**. They **have been baptized**, but they were **buried alive**. [they had the external but not the internal] Self did not die, and therefore they **did not rise** to newness of life in Christ (MS, p. 148, 1897)." *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, volume 6, p. 1075*

*"It is the **grace of Christ** [the internal work of the Holy Spirit] that gives life to the soul. **Apart from Christ**, baptism [the external act], like any other service, is a **worthless form**." *DA*, p. 181*

*"Baptism **does not make** children Christians; neither does it **convert** [the internal work of the Holy Spirit] them; it is but an **outward sign**, showing that they are sensible that they should be children of God by acknowledging that **they believe** in Jesus Christ as their Savior and will henceforth live for Christ." *CG*, p. 499*

The example of Communion

At the communion service Adventists first **literally and visibly** wash one another's feet. Three times Jesus enjoined His followers to follow His example

by an **outward, visible act** (John 13:12-17). However, the **internal** prerequisite is that the believer has made everything right with the Lord and with others before coming to the communion table. That is why Protestants refer to the Communion service as ‘an outward sign of inward grace’.

Likewise, with the unleavened bread and grape juice. At the communion service Adventists partake of a **literal** morsel of bread and a **literal** cup of unfermented grape juice. However, the visible emblems have a profound **internal, spiritual significance**! Ellen White explained that the Holy Spirit is present to impart spiritual blessings to those who truly discern the meaning of the emblems. On the other hand, Paul explained that those who do not discern the meaning of the symbols are guilty of the Lord’s body and blood! (1 Corinthians 11:27-32).

Ellen wrote about the profound meaning of Christ’s **first miracle** in Cana of Galilee:

*“The gift of Christ to the marriage feast was a **symbol**. The water **represented baptism** into **His death**; the wine, the shedding of His blood for the sins of the world. The water to fill the jars was brought by human hands, but the word of Christ alone could impart to it life-giving virtue. So with **the rites** which point to the Savior’s death. It is only by the power of Christ, **working through faith**, that they **have efficacy to nourish the soul**.” DA, pp. 148, 149*

The Observance of the Sabbath as a Visible or Outward Sign

God commanded His people to keep the Sabbath **outwardly** by abstaining from work. In fact, God commanded the observance of a **specific, visible** day and prescribed principles on **how** to keep it holy:

*“Remember the Sabbath day, to **keep it holy**.⁹ Six days you shall **labor** and do all your **work**,¹⁰ but the **seventh day** is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it **you shall do no work**: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates.¹¹ For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.” (Exodus 20:8-11)*

The ‘gospel prophet’ **Isaiah** wrote that on the Sabbath we should turn away our foot from the Sabbath, by not doing our pleasure, nor our own ways, nor finding

our own pleasure, nor speaking our own words (Isaiah 58:13). Clearly there are **outward** requirements for a proper observance of the Sabbath!

The word 'sign' refers to a **visible** phenomenon in the Old Testament (cf. Genesis 1:14; 4:15; 9:17; Ezekiel 20:12, 20) and the Sabbath is called a 'sign'. One significant use of this word, which is worth quoting, is in Exodus 31:16-18:

*"**Work** shall be done for six days, but the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy **to the Lord**. Whoever does any **work** on the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. ¹⁶ Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. ¹⁷ It is a **sign** between Me and the children of Israel forever; for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed." ¹⁸ And when He had made an end of speaking with him on Mount Sinai, He gave Moses two tablets of the Testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God."*

There are some important points in these verses. The Sabbath institution predates Israel and takes us all the way back to creation before sin entered the world. It is as much a creation ordinance as heterosexual marriage. Furthermore, the text refers to the Sabbath as 'the Sabbath **unto the Lord**', not the Sabbath of the Jews. Never, **not even once**, is the Sabbath referred to in the Bible as the **Jewish Sabbath** or the Sabbath of the Jews. It is always the Lord's Sabbath:

- Sabbath rest, a holy Sabbath **unto the Lord** (Ex 16:23)
- 'the Sabbath **of the Lord** your God' (Exodus 20:11)
- 'you shall keep **my** Sabbaths' (Ezekiel 20:12, 20),
- God refers to it as '**my** holy day' (Isaiah 58:13, 14)
- Jesus proclaimed Himself the **Lord of the Sabbath** (Mark 2:27)

It is undeniable that, according to Exodus 31, God gave the Sabbath **to Israel** as an everlasting covenant. However, the text does **not say** that He gave it **exclusively** to Israel. God gave it to them because they were His people at the time, but it does not follow that it applied **only to them**.

God gave **all** the Ten Commandments to Israel. In fact, the **prologue** to the Commandments in Exodus 20:1, 2 gives the deliverance of Israel from bondage as the reason for them to keep the law:

“And God spoke all these words, saying: “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.”

Does this prologue mean that **all** Ten Commandments applied only to the Jews because God delivered them from bondage in Egypt? Of course not! They were given to Israel because they were God’s people at that time.

It is also remarkable that the writing of the law on tables of stone by the finger of God is immediately preceded by a command to keep the Sabbath. Although the Sabbath is one of the commandments written with God’s own finger (verse 18), its importance is emphasized by its mention in the previous five verses (verses 12-17).

Perhaps this is the reason why the Sabbath is not merely one of the Ten Commandments in the Ark of the Covenant but its importance is highlighted by the **pot of Manna** in the Ark (Hebrews 9:4) which teaches that the Sabbath is the **test** of whether God’s people will keep, not only the Sabbath, but the entire law (cf. Exodus 16:4, 22-30). This explains the reason why Ellen White saw the Sabbath commandment in the Ark surrounded by a **halo**, thus highlighting its importance:

*“Jesus raised the cover of the ark, and I beheld the tables of stone on which the ten commandments were written. I was amazed as I saw the **fourth commandment** in the **very center** of the ten precepts, with a **soft halo of light** encircling it. Said the angel, ‘It is the **only one** of the ten which defines the living God who created the heavens and the earth and all things that are therein.’ Life Sketches of Ellen G. White, pp. 95,96*

The Deeper Dimension of the Sabbath

Clearly, God commands His people to keep the Sabbath in a visible way. However, the observance of the Sabbath has a **deeper dimension**. It is an **outward sign** of an **internal** relationship created by the **Holy Spirit** in the heart.

God instructed His people to **internalize** His Word. Perhaps an analogous example will serve to explain the relationship between the inward and the outward. God commanded Moses (with my own explanatory details in brackets):

*"And these words which I command you today shall be in your **heart [in the heart before they are placed on the hand, the forehead and the doorposts]**. ⁷ You shall **teach them [after they are in the heart]** diligently to your children, and shall **talk of them [after they are in the heart]** when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. ⁸ You shall bind them **as a sign [external behavior is to reveal that they are in the heart first]** on your **hand [they should guide what we do]**, and they shall be as **frontlets** between your eyes **[they should guide what we think]**. ⁹ You shall write them on the **doorposts** of your house and on your **gates**." (Deuteronomy 6:6-8)*

The rabbis of Christ's day followed this counsel, **literally**, jot and tittle, to a T, and yet totally missed the internal purpose of God's counsel. Ellen White explained the misconceptions of the Jewish leadership:

*"The command given to Moses was construed into a direction that the precepts of Scripture should be worn **upon the person**. They were accordingly written upon strips of parchment, and bound in a conspicuous manner about the **head and wrists**. But this did not cause the law of God to take a firmer hold of the **mind and heart**. These parchments were worn merely as **badges**, to **attract attention**. They were thought to give the wearers an **air of devotion** which would command the reverence of the people. Jesus struck a blow at this **vain pretense**." DA, pp. 612, 613.*

The Sabbath: An Outward Sign of Internal Holiness

The observance of the Sabbath did **not make Israel holy** but rather was a **visible sign** to the surrounding nations that God **had** already set them apart as His holy nation, His own special people. In other words, the **external observance** of the Sabbath had the purpose of announcing to the surrounding nations that Israel had an **inward, holy relationship** with the Lord. Only a holy people, distinct from the world, could truly keep the Sabbath holy. As Ellen White so aptly put it:

*“**No other institution** which was committed to the Jews tended so fully **to distinguish** them from surrounding nations as did the Sabbath. God designed that its observance should designate them **as His worshipers**. It was to be a **token** of their **separation** from idolatry, and their **connection** with the true God. But in order to keep the Sabbath holy, **men must themselves be holy.**” DA, p. 283*

It will be noticed that Ellen White refers to the Sabbath as a **token**. What is a token? The Merriam-Webster Thesaurus defines it as “an **outward sign** or expression” and illustrates the meaning of the word with the example, “his tears were **tokens** of his grief”—grief internal and tears external. Another online dictionary defines it as “a **visible** or **tangible** representation”. Thus, the Sabbath is the **outward visible** sign or token that the heart has been sanctified by the Holy Spirit:

*“Nothing so distinguished the Jews from surrounding nations, and designated them as true worshipers of the Creator, as the institution of the Sabbath. Its observance was a continual **visible token** of their **connection with God**, and separation from other people.” Spirit of Prophecy, volume 2, p. 193*

Like Ellen White, the **Mosaic** legislation and the prophet **Ezekiel** had already linked sanctification with the observance of the Sabbath:

*“And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Speak also to the children of Israel, saying: ‘Surely **My** Sabbaths you **shall keep**, for it is a **sign** between Me and you throughout your generations, **that you may know** that I am the Lord who **sanctifies** you.’ (Exodus 31:12-13)*

*“Moreover I also gave them My Sabbaths, to be a **sign** between them and Me, that they might know that **I am the Lord who sanctifies** them.²⁰ hallow My Sabbaths, and they will be a **sign** between Me and you, **that you may know** that I am the Lord your God.’ (Ezekiel 20:12, 20).*

Ellen White drew a parallel between the experience of Israel and God’s end time remnant in regards to the Sabbath:

*“As the Sabbath was the **sign that distinguished** Israel when they came out of Egypt to enter the earthly Canaan, so **it is the sign** that now **distinguishes** God’s people as they come out from the world to enter the heavenly rest. The Sabbath **is a sign** of the relationship existing between God and His people, **a sign** that they*

honor His law. It **distinguishes** between His loyal subjects and transgressors.”
Counsels to the Church, p. 261

The Creator of the Internal Relationship

Of course, this leads us to ask: What is the relationship between the Holy Spirit seal and the Sabbath seal? Perhaps a better question is, what makes our **hearts holy** so that our Sabbath observance is holy? Clearly, the **Holy Spirit** is the agent who performs this work. The Spirit who wrote the law on tables stone writes them on the tables of our hearts (2 Corinthians 3:3, 17, 18), of which true Sabbath observance is the **visible sign**. So, it is not a contradiction to state that the Holy Spirit and the Sabbath are closely linked.

Exodus 31:17, 18 tells us that God wrote the Ten Commandments on tables of stone with His **own finger**. **Who** is the finger of God? **Matthew 12:28** tells us that Jesus cast out demons by the **Spirit of God**, but the parallel passage in **Luke 11:20** explains that He did it by the **finger of God**. Thus, the finger of God who wrote the Ten Commandments was the Holy Spirit, and the same Spirit writes them on our hearts (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

The apostle Paul wrote that the Holy Spirit is the agent that sanctifies the heart:

*“But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through **sanctification by the Spirit** and belief in the truth.”* (2 Thessalonians 2:13)

It is the Holy Spirit who **transforms the life** and leads us to obey God’s law of which the Sabbath is the sign:

*“I will give you a **new heart** and put a **new spirit** within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ I will put **My Spirit within you** and cause you to **walk in My statutes**, and you will **keep My judgments** and do them.”* (Ezekiel 36:26, 27)

The wind is **invisible** to human eyes but its visible **effects** can be seen. So, the work of the Holy Spirit on the human heart is **unseen** but the effects can be seen in the observance of the commandments, particularly the holy Sabbath.

Ellen White saw no contradiction between the Holy Spirit seal and the Sabbath seal because both are true. One is the outward manifestation of the other:

*“Would you impress **the seal** to obtain a **clear impression** upon the wax, you do not dash it on by a violent action, but you place the seal carefully and firmly and press it down until the wax receives the mold. **Just so** the Lord is dealing with our souls. . . Not now and then, but constantly the **new life is implanted** by the **Holy Spirit** after Christ's likeness.” *In Heavenly Places*, p. 66*

*“As **wax** takes the **impression** of the **seal**, so the soul is to take the **impression** of the **Spirit of God** and retain the image of Christ.” *1SM*, p. 336*

Contrary to what many detractors believe, Ellen White did not teach that Sabbath observance is **an end** in itself. Its observance does not **confer holiness**, nor does it earn us salvation. In fact, she has several statements where she explains that the Sabbath is an **outward sign** of an **inward experience** produced by the **Holy Spirit**:

*“Pointing to God as the Maker of the heavens and the earth, it [the Sabbath] distinguishes the true God from all false gods. All who keep the seventh day **signify** by this act that they are worshipers of Jehovah. Thus the Sabbath is the [visible] **sign** of man's allegiance to God as long as there are any upon the earth to serve Him.” *PP*, p. 307*

What is Patriotism?

Let's take an example to explain the relationship between the inward and the outward. The word "patriotism" is an abstract concept that citizens feel deeply in their hearts. However, although patriotism is internal, it is visibly expressed.

Singing the **Star Spangled Banner** at a sporting event allows fans to **externalize** their patriotism, making it **visible** and **audible**. Likewise, pledging allegiance to the **flag** of the United States while placing one's hand over the heart is a visible expression of patriotism.

Would it be proper to pledge allegiance to the United States by using a Russian flag? Does it really make any difference which flag we pledge allegiance to? What would you think of someone who says: *“I am a red blooded American, I love this country”* and then pledges allegiance to the Russian flag? Does the **visible** flag make a difference? How can we pledge allegiance to the ‘nation’ of heaven by keeping Sunday, so to speak, the wrong flag? I think you get the point!

Ellen White wrote repeatedly that we **demonstrate** our loyalty to the only true God by keeping the Sabbath:

*“Those who would have the seal of God in their foreheads **must keep the Sabbath of the fourth commandment**. This is what **distinguishes them** from the **disloyal**, who have accepted a **man-made** institution in the place of the true Sabbath. The observance of God's rest day is the **mark of distinction** between him who serves God and he who does not.” Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, volume 7, p. 970*

*“The **keeping** of the Sabbath is a **sign** of **loyalty** to the true God.” GC, p. 438*

*“The Sabbath is a pledge given by God to man—a **sign** of the relation existing between the Creator and His created beings. By observing the memorial of the creation of the world in six days and the rest of the Creator on the seventh day, by keeping the Sabbath holy, according to His directions, the Israelites were to **declare to the world [particularly important in a polytheistic world] their loyalty** to the **only true** and living God, the Sovereign of the universe.” 3SM, p. 256*

*“Let us reverence God's institution, the Sabbath day; for it is the **sign** of our relationship to God, the **sign** by which we are **demonstrated** as His people.” 5MR, p. 86*

*“To the **obedient**, it is a **sign** of their **loyalty** to God.” 11MR, p. 18*

*“**True** observance of the Sabbath is the **sign** of **loyalty** to God.” 15MR, p. 32*

Ellen White on the Sabbath as a Deeper Spiritual Experience

While Ellen White repeatedly underlined the importance of keeping the Sabbath according to God's directions, she also addressed the importance of the inward, loving motivation for its observance:

*“The quiet, consistent, godly life is a living epistle, known and read of all men. **Holiness** is not shaped **from without** or **put on**; it **radiates from within**. If goodness, purity, meekness, lowliness, and integrity **dwell in the heart**, they will **shine forth in the character**; and such a character is full of power. Not the instrument, but the great Worker in whose hand the instrument is used, **receives***

the glory. *The heart filled with the Savior's love, daily **receives grace to impart.** The **life reveals** the redeeming power of the truth." *In Heavenly Places*, p. 237*

The prerequisite for keeping the Sabbath holy is to love God supremely and the creatures that He has made; the commandment must be obeyed in spirit and in truth:

*"The Sabbath is a **test** to this generation. In obeying the fourth commandment in **spirit and truth**, men will obey all the precepts of the Decalogue. To fulfill this commandment one must **love God supremely**, and exercise **love toward all the creatures** that he has made." *Signs of the Times*, February 13, 1896*

In order to receive the seal of God, a believer's character must bear a likeness to Christ:

*"The **seal of the living God** will be placed upon those only who bear a **likeness to Christ in character.**" *The Review and Herald*, May 21, 1895*

Technically speaking, the observance of the Sabbath is not the seal as such, but rather a visible sign that a person has received the seal:

*"The **sign**, or **seal**, of God is **revealed** in the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath, the Lord's memorial of creation." *8T*, p. 117*

Some in the church have used a **single statement** in an attempt to prove that Ellen White believed that the seal is not the observance of the Sabbath, but rather a settling into the truth intellectually and spiritually:

*"Just as soon as the people of God are sealed in their foreheads—it is **not any seal or mark that can be seen**, but a **settling into the truth**, both **intellectually and spiritually**, so they **cannot be moved**—just as soon as **God's people are sealed and prepared for the shaking**, it will come." *Manuscript 173*, 1902, pp. 1-6. ("Medical Missionary Work in Southern California," Interview held in Los Angeles, California, September 15, 1902 found in *Manuscript Releases*, volume 10, p. 252).*

However, this single quotation cannot be used to overturn the plethora of statements where Ellen White categorically wrote that the seal is the Sabbath in the heart of the law. Ellen White is not talking out of both sides of her mouth. This particular statement is describing the Holy Spirit's sealing in the mind and heart which is then revealed **visibly** by a careful and faithful observance of the

Sabbath. Even the threat of death will not move those whose heart the Spirit has sealed! The choice of Ellen White statements is not either/or but rather both/and.

Sabbath Observance in the Times of Jesus

The best way to understand the relationship between the **internal** sealing of the Holy Spirit and the outward observance of the Sabbath as a sign is by contrasting how Jesus and the Jewish intelligentsia kept the Sabbath. While the religious leaders were mean-spirited, ugly, and restrictive, they **appeared** to be meticulous Sabbath 'keepers'. They were sticklers, 'keeping' the Sabbath **outwardly according to their traditions**, but without the **internal** work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts. Their visible behavior on the Sabbath revealed that they did not really have the seal. We call their attitude 'legalism'. Jesus rebuked this external facade. In His woes upon the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus 'brutally' diagnosed the problem:

*"Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the **outside** of the cup and dish, but **inside** they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the **inside** of the cup and dish, that the **outside** of them may be clean also. "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful **outwardly**, but **inside** are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also **outwardly** appear righteous to men, but **inside** you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness" (Matthew 23:25-28)*

It is noteworthy that every single miraculous healing of Jesus on the Sabbath was a **chronic case**. He could have waited till sundown to prevent antagonizing the religious leaders. However, He wanted to make a point that could not be missed.

When Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River, He received the seal of the Holy Spirit, and **His manner** of Sabbath observance visibly revealed it. The gospels do not mention a single instance where Jesus said what should **not be done** on the Sabbath. In all seven of His healings the emphasis falls on what **He did!** He rebuked the religious leadership because they honored Him with their lips but their hearts were far from Him. He exclaimed, *"I desire mercy, not sacrifice"*. He revealed the Sabbath as a day of mercy!

Let's take one example of the contrast between spiritual and legalistic Sabbath keeping:

*"And He entered the synagogue again, and a man was there who had a withered hand. ² So they **watched Him closely**, whether He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might **accuse Him**. ³ And He said to the man who had the withered hand, "**Step forward**." ⁴ Then He said to them, "Is it **lawful** on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to **save life** or to **kill**?" But they kept silent. ⁵ And when He had looked around at them with **anger**, being grieved by the **hardness of their hearts [the inward problem]**, He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other. ⁶ Then the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him, how they might **destroy Him**." (Mark 3:1-7).*

Several details stand out in this story. For the religious leaders, it was alright to **spy** on the Sabbath and launch **accusations**. In their minds, it was wrong for Jesus to heal on the Sabbath, but it was alright to plot to kill. The passage clearly tells us that the problem with the religious leaders was the **hardness of their hearts**. Thus, Ellen White wrote:

*"Its [**observance of the Sabbath**] mere **outward** observance was a mockery."
DA, p. 286*

The accusers 'kept' the **Sabbath outwardly** but did not have the seal of the **Holy Spirit** in their hearts. In fact, they were close to committing the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Whoever has been sealed by the Holy Spirit in the heart will keep the Sabbath as Jesus did. *"It is lawful to **do good** on the Sabbath"*. Ellen White described the style of Sabbath 'keeping' enforced by the religious leaders:

*"As the Jews departed from God, and failed to make the **righteousness of Christ their own by faith**, the Sabbath **lost its significance** to them. Satan was seeking to exalt himself and to draw men away from Christ, and he worked to **pervert the Sabbath**, because it is the **sign** of the power of Christ. The Jewish leaders accomplished the will of Satan by surrounding God's rest day with **burdensome requirements**. In the days of Christ, the Sabbath had become **so perverted** that its observance **reflected** the character of selfish and arbitrary men rather than the character of the **loving heavenly Father**. The rabbis virtually represented*

God as giving laws which it **was impossible for men to obey**. They led the people to look upon God as a tyrant, and to think that the observance of the Sabbath, as He required it, made men **hard-hearted** and **cruel**. It was the work of Christ to clear away these misconceptions. Although the rabbis followed Him with merciless hostility, He did not even appear to conform to their requirements, but went straight forward, **keeping the Sabbath according to the law of God.**" *DA, pp. 283, 284)*

From a sign of **Christ's righteousness** in the life, and to His glory, the Sabbath had become a sign of their **own righteousness** for their own glory. Their Sabbath 'keeping' made them **intolerant, mean-spirited, judgmental,** and **arrogant**. The Sabbath makes **no one holy**; it is the sign of holiness or sanctification that flows from the heart.

Ellen White wrote that the message of the faithful witness to the church of Laodicea will cause the shaking among God's people. And what is Laodicea's problem? It is a church that thinks it is "*rich and increased with goods and in need of nothing*". Outwardly, the church is **checking every box**. However, one thing is missing: Jesus is outside the heart, knocking and begging to enter! (Revelation 3:20) Thus, the disease of Laodicea is the same that existed in the days of Christ—outward 'piety' without the **internal** work of the Holy Spirit. Sabbath observance that does not come from the heart is a farce!

Does this mean that we do not need to be careful Sabbath keepers? Of course not! When we are doing what we are supposed to do on the Sabbath, what we should not do takes care of itself.

Some enemies of the Sabbath see strict obedience to the Sabbath commandment as legalism and therefore teach that Jesus is our Sabbath rest, and for this reason, we need not keep a day but only enjoy rest in Him. After all, they argue, didn't Jesus say:

*"Come to Me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and **I will give you rest.**"*
(Matthew 11:28-30)

However, does resting in the righteousness of Jesus exonerate us from careful Sabbath observance as an **external expression** of an internal experience of rest in Him?

It bears noting that the offer of spiritual rest that Jesus made in Matthew 11:28 is closely related to the Sabbath day because at the very beginning of the very next chapter, Jesus faced an example of legalistic pharisaical observance of the Sabbath. When Jesus promised rest to those who come to Him, He was referring to delivering the people from the burdensome Sabbath rules and regulations that the religious leaders had added to the Sabbath and imposed upon the people:

*“Christ saw that lessons must be given to scatter the rubbish of **traditional exactions** which they themselves **had invented** and **piled upon** the holy institution, **given in love** by a merciful God. The Sabbath **was not** to be that which the Jews had made it—a rigorous **burden** and exaction, **loaded down** with continual **additions** of their **own invention**. By this means the day was made what Satan had been working on human minds to make it—a **grievous yoke** in the place of a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable. God gave the Sabbath to be a blessing to man; it was to be to him a memorial of God's work of creation; it was to remind him of God's sacred rest, for which reason he had “blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.” The Review and Herald, August 3, 1897.*

The problem with the religious world today is that they see the Sabbath through the eyes of the scribes and Pharisees and equate it with the true Bible Sabbath. Therefore, they claim that we don't need to keep a day but rather to simply find rest in Jesus.

Would those who make this claim also affirm that we don't need to be baptized in water because it is enough to accept Jesus as our Savior in our hearts? Would they say that it is not necessary to partake of the literal bread and grape juice at communion because we already believe internally what these symbols represent? Would they contend that it is unnecessary to get married in an official legal ceremony simply because love is already in the heart?

Mere External Sabbath Keepers

Ellen White always kept a proper balance in her view of the Sabbath. She taught that an internal relationship with Jesus will lead to an external observance of the Sabbath. She also taught that an external observance of the Sabbath without the internal work of the Holy Spirit in the heart is of no value before God:

"I was shown that **merely** observing the Sabbath and praying morning and evening are **not** positive evidences that we are Christians. These **outward forms [external]** may all be strictly observed, and yet **true godliness [internal]** be lacking." *Spiritual Gifts*, volume 4, p. 95

"An **outward observance** of the Sabbath will **not save** the soul. The principles interwoven with every one of the Ten Commandments are to be honored and obeyed in the individual, **practical life**. The law, God requires, shall be written on the **tablets of every soul**." *Letter 191*, 1899, pp. 3, 4 (Found in 6MR 396, 397)

"All who keep the Sabbath **in truth** bear the mark of **loyalty to God**. They are representatives of His kingdom. Their light is to shine forth to others in **good works**. We are not merely to observe the Sabbath as a **legal matter**; we are to be intelligent in regard to **its spiritual bearing** upon all the transactions of life. God says, "Verily, my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you." Exodus 31:13. **This is sanctification through the truth**." *3MR*, p. 424

Some "Sabbath keepers" will be lost

Ellen White never taught that those who outwardly keep the Sabbath will be saved. In fact, she taught that some 'Sabbath keepers' will be lost because their service to God was merely a claim:

"Not all who **profess** to keep the Sabbath will be **sealed**. There are many even among those who **teach the truth to others** who will **not receive the seal** of God in their foreheads. They **had the light** of truth, they **knew their Master's will**, they **understood every point** of our faith, but they had not **corresponding works**. These who were so familiar with prophecy and the treasures of divine wisdom, should have **acted their faith**. They should have commanded their households after them, that by a well-ordered family they might **present to the world** the influence of the truth upon the human heart." *Christian Experience and Teaching*, p. 189

"The quiet, consistent, godly life is a living epistle, known and read of all men. **Holiness** is not shaped from **without or put on**; it **radiates from within**. If goodness, purity, meekness, lowliness, and integrity dwell in the heart, they will

***shine forth in the character;** and such a character is full of power. Not the instrument, but the great Worker in whose hand the instrument is used, receives the glory. The heart filled with the Savior's love, daily receives **grace to impart.** The life reveals the redeeming power of the truth." In Heavenly Places, p. 237*

Is it perhaps true that we have focused so much on what we should **not do** on the Sabbath that we have forgotten what **we should do**? If we love Jesus, we will do what Jesus did on the Sabbath—bless humanity and focus on our relationship with Him.

The Tree and Day Test

Seventh-day Adventists believe that the world will be divided into two groups at the end, and the **visible** dividing factor will be worship on the seventh-day Sabbath versus worship on Sunday, the first. However, the test will not simply be a matter of days but rather of loyalty and obedience! At the end, two different days will be visible **signs of allegiance**. By the way, this will not be a **novel way** of testing a person's loyalty to God. It will be, in principle, the **same test** that Adam and Eve faced in the **Garden**.

God had told the progenitors of the race that they could enjoy the fruit of the trees of the Garden for their **personal consumption**. However, He specifically instructed them that one tree was **off-limits**. In similar fashion, God has given humanity **six days** for their **personal** labor but He has specified that the **seventh** day is **off-limits**.

In the Garden, the Creator tested Adam and Eve's **loyalty** by means of a **visible tree**. The issue was not a tree. The tree was the means **to test** whether they would be loyal to God's Word and obey His authority or loyal to the serpent's word and to his authority.

Just before the close of probation, everyone on earth will face the same kind of test as Adam and Eve but, instead of a tree it will be a day. On the one hand, the test will reveal who will render obedience to the Creator's authority and demonstrate it by keeping the Sabbath, the visible sign of His authority. On the other hand, will be those who render obedience to the beast by keeping Sunday, his sign of authority. Israel faced a similar Sabbath test of loyalty to God's authority and law even before they arrived at Sinai and the test was the Manna:

*“Then the Lord said to Moses, “Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you. And the people shall go out and gather a certain quota every day, that I may **test** them, whether they will **walk in My law** or not. . . ²⁷ Now it happened that some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather, but they found none. ²⁸ And the Lord said to Moses, “How long do you refuse to keep My **commandments** and My **laws**?” (Exodus 16:4, 27, 28)*

The Replacement of the Seal in the Law

As I have pointed out before, the Sabbath commandment is the only one in the law that has the **name** of the Lawgiver, the **realm** of His dominion, and His **office**. Therefore, it is the **only** commandment that contains the **seal of authenticity**. That being the case, the followers of the Lawgiver will receive the seal of God by keeping the Sabbath as the outward sign of worship.

Satan always seeks to replace the genuine with a counterfeit. God has a genuine day of worship, and Satan has a counterfeit. Both are 24-hour days, both are marked off by sunrise and sunset, and the keepers of both claim that they are honoring God. Yet the days are at **opposite ends** of the week, Sunday being the first, and Sabbath the seventh!

When the papacy claimed to change the law by removing the Sabbath and inserting Sunday in its place, it not only usurped the power and prerogatives that belong only to God but also **removed** God’s seal from the law and **replaced** it with its own.

The Final Test

Seventh-day Adventists believe that just before the close of probation, the papacy’s followers who keep Sunday as their day of worship, will receive the mark of the beast, the sign of loyalty to the power that claims to have changed the day of worship. Ellen White described the Sabbath/Sunday issue as a matter of loyalty or disloyalty to the Creator:

*“The image of the beast will be formed before probation closes; for it is to be **the great test** for the people of God, by which their **eternal destiny** will be decided. . . This is the **test** that the people of God must have **before** they are **sealed**. All who **prove their loyalty** to God by **observing His law**, and refusing to accept a **spurious sabbath**, will rank under the banner of the Lord God Jehovah, and **will***

receive the seal of the living God. Those who yield the truth of heavenly origin, and accept the Sunday sabbath, **will receive** the mark of the beast.” *Maranatha*, p. 164

God has many sincere followers in every denomination. In the closing period of probationary time, those who choose to stay in Babylon will become “a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird!” and will receive the plagues. The rebellious religious world will give a decree to kill those who do not worship the beast and his image and who refuse the mark. Those who keep the Sabbath will do so because they love their Creator, not because they are under duress. Adventists have been accused of being legalistic observers of the Sabbath, but there is no greater legalism than saying, ‘you either keep Sunday or we will kill you’. This will be the identical attitude of the Jewish leaders when Jesus, in their opinion, broke the Sabbath.

“No one has yet received the mark of the beast. The **testing time** has **not yet come**. There are true Christians in **every church**, not excepting the Roman Catholic communion. **None are condemned** until they have had the light and have seen the obligation of the fourth commandment. But **when the decree** shall go forth **enforcing** the counterfeit sabbath, and the **loud cry** of the third angel shall warn men against the worship of the beast and his image, the line will be **clearly drawn** between the false and the true. **Then** those who still continue in transgression **will receive** the mark of the beast.” *Evangelism*, p. 234

In a world where the planet seems to be falling apart at the seams, in the midst of wars, rumors of wars, pestilence, famine, earthquakes, and riots, nominal ‘Christians’ will convince the civil powers of the world that Sabbath keepers are bringing down the wrath of God. They will claim that the only way to earn God’s favor and blessing is to get rid of the voice of reproof. This will be legalism to the greatest extent. The idea will be that humanity can earn God’s blessings again by shaping up!

In Christ’s day, the Jews were ‘keeping’ the Sabbath in the **wrong way**, and at the end, Christians will be keeping the **wrong day**. The Sabbath of the Jews in Christ’s day was not the Sabbath of the Lord, and neither is Sunday. Satan cares not if we keep the wrong day or the true Sabbath in the wrong way because the end result is the same.

Of course, the question is, why will God make the Sabbath the test? Why not use a tree or some other method? There could be **no better sign** to test the faith of God's people than the day on which they worship, because this will be the central issue in the final controversy. It would make no sense to test humanity with a tree or anything else because that will not be the issue in the controversy.

Ellen White wrote regarding the reason why God chose a day to be the test:

*"The Sabbath will be the great **test of loyalty**, for it is the point of truth **especially controverted** [testing with a tree like in Eden would not be the issue a hand]. When the **final test** shall be brought to bear upon men, then the **line of distinction** will be drawn between those who serve God and those who serve Him not. While the observance of the **false sabbath** in compliance with the **law of the state**, contrary to the fourth commandment, will be an **avowal** [an open declaration] of **allegiance** to a power that is in opposition to God, the keeping of the true Sabbath, in obedience to God's law, is an **evidence of loyalty** to the Creator. While one class, by accepting the **sign** of submission to **earthly powers**, receive the mark of the beast, the other choosing the **token of allegiance** to divine authority, receive the **seal of God**." GC, p. 605*

Sabbath and Sunday, which are at either end of the week, will be a **token, sign, avowal, seal** of allegiance to one power or the other. Yes, Sabbath and Sunday are at opposite ends of the week. Although it appears that Sunday comes right after Sabbath, really, Sunday is the first day and Sabbath is the seventh. The faithful will be willing to die to be faithful to their convictions, but they will only be willing to die because they have received the **inward** seal of the Holy Spirit in their hearts. Like Daniel and his three friends, loyalty to their beloved God will be more important than life itself. The Sabbath will be an **outward sign** of an inward commitment. God's people will not **die for the Sabbath** but rather because they love the **Lord of the Sabbath**. Jesus said; "if you love me you will keep my commandments".

Why Satan Hates the Sabbath

Satan has revealed his intense hatred of the Sabbath by:

- By the theory of **macroevolution**, if macroevolution is true then there was no seven-day week of creation, no Garden of Eden, no Adam and Eve,

no tree of knowledge, no temptation, no sin, no need for a Redeemer, no second coming to restore things to their original perfection. And, NO SABBATH!

- By influencing the **pagan nations** of antiquity to worship the sun and to honor the **venerable day** of the sun instead of the Sabbath.
- By leading Israel to trample on the Sabbath before the Babylonian captivity (Ezekiel 20:12, 13, 16, 20, 21, 24, Jeremiah 17:19-27, Ezekiel 8:15-18).
- By leading the Jews in Christ's day to make the Sabbath a **burdensome day** of rules and regulations.

"To prepare the way for the work which he designed to accomplish, Satan had led the Jews, before the advent of Christ, to load down the Sabbath with the most rigorous exactions, making its observance a burden. Now, taking advantage of the false light in which he had thus caused it to be regarded, he cast contempt upon it as a Jewish institution." GC, p. 52

- By influencing early **church councils** to press the Sabbath lower and lower and the Sunday correspondingly exalted. Ellen White referred to the Council of **Laodicea in 364 AD**:

*"Vast councils were held, from time to time, in which the dignitaries of the church were convened from all the world. In nearly every council the Sabbath which God had instituted was **pressed down a little lower**, while the Sunday was **correspondingly exalted**. Thus the **pagan festival** came finally to be honored as a divine institution, while the Bible Sabbath was pronounced a **relic of Judaism**, and its observers were declared **to be accursed**." GC, p. 53*

*"Royal edicts, **general councils**, and church ordinances sustained by secular power were the steps by which the pagan festival attained its position of honor in the Christian world." GC, p. 574*

- By influencing the **papacy** to change the day from Sabbath to Sunday (Daniel 7:25).

*"The papacy has attempted to change the law of God. The second commandment, forbidding image worship, **has been dropped** from the*

law, and the fourth commandment has been so changed as to authorize the observance of the first instead of the seventh day as the Sabbath. But papists urge, as a reason for omitting the second commandment, that **it is unnecessary**, being included in the first, and that they are giving the law exactly as God designed it to be understood. **This cannot be the change** foretold by the prophet. An **intentional, deliberate** change is presented: "He shall think to change the times and the law." The change in the fourth commandment **exactly fulfills** the prophecy. For this the only authority claimed is that of the church. Here the papal power openly sets itself **above God**." *GC*, p. 446

- By leading **Protestants** to cradle and nurture this child of the papacy.

"The Sunday sabbath, the child of the Papacy, has been accepted by the Protestant church, who have fostered and cradled it as if of heavenly birth. But their human sanction can never give it acceptance with God. It is a rival, spurious Sabbath, usurping the place of the holy day upon which God rested, which he blessed and sanctified, and gave to man as an everlasting memorial of the Creator's work." (*Signs of the Times*, June 12, 1893)

John O'Brien, who for many years was a theology professor at the University of **Notre Dame**, and who **authored** some 40 books, challenged Protestants:

*"The **Church** received the authority to make such a **change** from her Founder, Jesus Christ. He solemnly **conferred upon His Church** the power to legislate, govern and administer. . . the power of the keys. It is to be noted that the Church **did not change the divine law** obliging men to worship, but **merely changed the day** in which such public worship was to be offered; thus the law involved was merely a ceremonial law.*

*"But since Saturday, not Sunday, is **specified in the Bible**, isn't it curious that non-Catholics [**Protestants**] who profess to take their religion **directly from the Bible** and not from the Church, observe Sunday instead of Saturday? Yes, of course, it is inconsistent; but this **change** was made about fifteen centuries before **Protestantism** was born, and by that time **the custom** was universally observed. They [**Protestants**] have continued the custom, even though it rests upon the **authority of the Catholic Church***

and not upon an **explicit text** in the Bible. That observance remains as a reminder of the **Mother Church** from which the non-Catholic sects broke away—like a boy running away from home but still carrying in his pocket a picture of his mother or a lock of her hair.” John O’Brien, *The Faith of Millions* (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 1974) p. 400, 401

- By a **final death decree** against those who keep it and **refuse** to keep Sunday!

Why does Satan hate the Sabbath with such intensity? In order to understand the reason, we must go back to heavenly events before creation week.

The Father and the Word

The Bible repeatedly teaches that creation was **of** the Father **through** the Son. The Father took the **initiative**. So to speak, the Father was the **Architect** who **thought out** the plan, and Jesus, the **Word**, was the **Master Builder** who spoke into existence and **fashioned** it.

Jesus performed the **Father’s will** at creation and **finished** His Father’s plan. Remember this because we will come back to it later in our study.

Genesis 1:1

*“In the [1] **beginning** [2] **God** [3] **created** the heavens and the earth.”*

The **three** key thoughts in Genesis 1:1:

- “In the beginning”
- “God”
- “created”

John **echoed** Genesis 1:1 but added that **two** persons were involved. Both persons are **equally God** in **nature** but **not in function: One created through the instrumentality of the other:**

John 1:1-3

*“In the beginning **was** the Word, and the Word was **with** God, and the Word was **God**.² **He [the Word]** was in the beginning **with God**.³ **All things** were made **through** Him, and without Him **[the Word]** **nothing was made** that was made.”*

- “In the beginning”
- “God”
- “created”

God created through **His Word**:

Psalm 33:6, 9

*“**By the word** of the Lord the heavens were made, and all **the host** of them by the breath of His mouth. . . For He **spoke**, and it was done; He **commanded**, and it stood fast.”*

Ellen White made a perceptive comment about the relationship between the Father and the Son at creation. She wrote that the **Father thought** out the creation plan in His **mind**, and the **Son spoke** and **fashioned** it into existence:

*“What **speech** is to **thought**, so is **Christ** to the invisible **Father**. He is the manifestation of the Father, and is called the **Word of God**.” *5SDABC, p. 1131**

The Father Took the Initiative: Genesis 1:26

Genesis 1:26 describes **two persons** involved in the creation of man, and **one of them** took the **initiative**:

Genesis 1:26

*“Then **God** said, “Let **Us** make man in **Our** image, according to **Our** likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”*

Ellen White explained that the **Father was speaking** to His Son:

*“Satan was once an honored angel in heaven, next to Christ. His countenance, like those of the other angels, was mild and expressive of happiness. His forehead was high and broad, showing great intelligence. His form was perfect; his bearing noble and majestic. But when **God said to His Son**, “Let us make man in our image,” Satan was jealous of Jesus.” *EW, p. 145**

In another place Ellen White explained that the Son was the Father’s **Associate** and **Co-Worker**:

*"The **Sovereign of the universe** was **not alone** in His work of beneficence. He had **an associate**—a **co-worker** who could appreciate His purposes, and could share His joy in giving happiness to created beings. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God." **John 1:1, 2**. Christ, the Word, the only begotten of God, was one with the eternal Father—one in nature, in character, in purpose—the only being that could enter into all the counsels and purposes of God. . . The Father **wrought by His Son** in the creation of all heavenly beings." *PP*, p. 34*

The creation texts in the New Testament frequently use the preposition **diá** ('through' or 'by means of') to explain that the Father created 'by means of' the Son:

1 Corinthians 8:6

*"yet for us there is **one God**, the Father, **from whom** are **all things**, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, **through [diá] whom** are all things, and **through [diá] whom** we live."*

Hebrews 1:1, 2

*"**God [the Father]**, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, ² **[the Father]** has in these last days spoken to us **by His Son**, whom **He has appointed** heir of all things, **through whom [diá]** also **He [the Father]** made the worlds."*

Colossians 1:15-17

*"**He [Jesus]** is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. ¹⁶ For **by Him [Jesus]** **all things were created** that are in **heaven** and that are on **earth**, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. **All things** were created **through [diá]** Him and **for Him**. ¹⁷ And He is **before all things**, and in Him all things **consist. [hold together]**".*

Ephesians 3:9

"To me, who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages

has been hidden in **God** who created **all** things **through** [in the *Textus Receptus*] Jesus Christ.”

Revelation 4:11 seems to indicate that the Father was the Creator. However, a **careful reading** of the text indicates that the Father was the creator in the sense that the Son carried out the **Father’s will**. Furthermore, the **passive voice** ‘were created’, indicates that the Father was not the active agent:

Revelation 4:11

*“You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for **You created all things**, and **by Your will** they exist and **were** created.”*

Ellen White confirmed that the Son wrought the **Father’s will** in the creation of **all** the hosts of heaven as well as **the earth** and its inhabitants:

*“The **Son of God had wrought the Father’s will** in the creation of **all the hosts of heaven**; and to Him, as well as to God, their homage and allegiance were due. **Christ was still to exercise** divine power, in the creation of the earth and its inhabitants. But in all this He would not seek power or exaltation for Himself contrary to God’s plan, but would exalt the **Father’s glory** and execute **His purposes** of beneficence and love.” *PP*, p. 36*

Thus, the **irrefutable evidence** indicates that **Jesus was active agent** of the seven-day week, including the Sabbath. This clearly indicates that the Sabbath does not belong to the Jews but to Christ. Satan hates the Sabbath because it points to the Lord of the Sabbath, his deadly **rival**.

The Sabbath is unlike any other divine institution. Circumcision, baptism, communion, and other institutions were established after sin and point forward to redemption. However, the Sabbath was instituted at creation before sin raised its ugly head; it was still binding when Jesus rested in the tomb (Luke 23:54-56) and will be observed throughout eternity (Isaiah 66:22, 23). It is a perpetual sign!

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