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.”

Exodus 16:4

The Sabbath Test

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Every week members of the Church of God assemble on the Sabbath to honor the Creator of the universe. However, is it possible that many of God's people have lost sight of what it means to keep His Sabbath holy? Has this day become a time for comfort and convenience? Is it considered a day to enjoy personal pleasures disguised as spiritual activities? Do we truly respect God's instructions regarding His Sabbath?

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Dear Brethren,

The contents of this book began when I finally connected the dots. After serving as a deacon, and later as pastor to several congregations, the light finally went on! For a number of years, friends and I occasionally went to restaurants after church services. It felt celebrative and we always enjoyed the experience. The activity spread and was evolving into a tradition among many congregations.

While serving on the doctrinal committee of a conservative Church of God, the leading evangelist asked us to review the question of dining out on the Sabbath. I studied the subject and what I found shocked me! The answer wasn't difficult or complex, but simple, plain, and clear. I read how Nehemiah had rebuked the returning Israelites for buying and selling food on the Sabbath. It was obvious that it was Israel's lukewarm attitude toward God's law that resulted in their captivity. I recalled that the Apostle Paul said, "Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come." Was this a warning to the many believers who will experience the great tribulation? Does Nehemiah's rebuke apply to the last Church era of Laodicea? If so, the Church had to be warned!

I wrote a lengthy paper on the subject and submitted it to the doctrinal committee for review. After our meeting, the leading evangelist took me aside stating that the brethren were not ready to address this subject. He assured me that we would deal with it the following year. However, that never happened.

The question of doing business while causing others to work for cook and clean for us on the Sabbath continued to trouble me. I was compelled to publish the truth. Other Church members agreed and assisted in this endeavor by editing and adding more evidence—all with a sincere desire that God's people would seriously consider this unique day in which God commands us to keep it holy. Could this be the *Sabbath Test* of our age?

Arthur V. Braidic

Introduction

The book you are about to read addresses one of the most important issues facing the Church of God today. This subject has been at the center of controversy among leaders and members alike with no apparent resolution. Some have tried to dismiss it as unimportant. Others have called it a minor point; not worthy of risking the possible division it might bring upon the Church. However, some recognize this issue as a matter of enormous importance—one that must be addressed by God's people. They see it as a line in the sand drawn by none other than God Himself.

Despite the fact that buying and selling on the Sabbath is directly addressed in the Scriptures, it has been ignored by most leaders in God's Church today. What does the Bible say about purchasing goods and services on the Sabbath and holy days? What about going to restaurants? Is this activity contrary to God's instructions?

Many in the Church of God consider the Sabbath to be a "test commandment." It is a day that can challenge the very faith of those who profess loyalty to God. This test has been at the center of many difficult moments. Some have lost jobs over it. Others have lost friends or family relationships. Almost every Sabbath-keeper has a story regarding some type of Sabbath trial.

Down through the ages, many believers suffered great persecution for honoring the fourth command. Some were publicly ridiculed and scorned. Others were ostracized from society. Some suffered excruciating torture and even death for refusing to compromise their commitment to keeping the Sabbath holy. These heroes demonstrated tremendous faith. No price was too high to pay for the privilege of honoring God by keeping His Sabbath.

What about us? What price are we willing to pay? Do we view the Sabbath with the same profound reverence as the

biblical champions of faith? Do God's people today truly honor the Sabbath and sincerely strive to keep it holy?

Most would probably say yes to these questions. After all, every Sabbath God's people attend services, listen to sermons, fellowship with brethren, and serve in their local congregations. Many of these dedicate extra time to prayer and Bible study. Thus, they are convinced that the way they keep the Sabbath honors the great God of heaven. But is this really true when these same people also participate in activities that are inappropriate?

The words that follow proclaim that there is more to honoring the fourth commandment than study, prayer, and attending a Church service. Furthermore, these words reveal that some of God's people, including Church leaders, have carelessly drifted into a wrong practice—one that undermines the proper observance of this day.

Although Sabbath violations can take many forms, in our age it is primarily found in dining out. Enjoying a meal at a restaurant on the Sabbath has become so popular that many do not give it a second thought. They take it for granted as a convenient activity where people can enjoy the companionship of family and friends. Tragically, few realize that this practice threatens the very faith God's people cherish so deeply. Furthermore, it makes a profound statement regarding how seriously we take the Word of God. What you are about to read will make the truth unmistakably clear.

This book is written in two parts. Part one presents seven Biblical keys proving that God's people are commanded to refrain from buying and selling in any form on the Sabbath. Part two examines the arguments advanced by those who feel this practice is acceptable.

It is important to understand that this book is not an attempt to judge God's people. It is not to cause members to leave one group and join another. The information presented here is not a means to feel superior or self-righteous, and it must never be used as such.

This book was written with the hope that we will carefully examine our approach to a day God calls “Holy.” It is intended to prompt us to examine our attitude toward the Sabbath, and to evaluate our behavior on the day that God sanctified for a special purpose.

A Worldly Tradition

Therefore "come out from among them
and be separate," says the Lord.
~ 2 Corinthians 6:17 ~

In the professing Christian world there is a popular tradition that takes place every Sunday. It begins when the believer will wake up, prepare the family for church, and then drive to a sanctuary of his or her choice. After a church service, and some brief fellowship, the family will leave the establishment to pursue any one of a variety of activities.

Included among these is going to a restaurant and sharing a delicious meal with family and friends. After all, what could be more enjoyable? For many, a Sunday brunch has become a tradition, and every Sunday restaurants are filled with churchgoers. But what is wrong with this picture?

To those who keep God's Sabbath and holy days, one particular error is easy to detect. That error is the day these people keep as their day of worship. The Bible clearly identifies the seventh day (Saturday) as God's Sabbath—not Sunday as so many assume. The true Sabbath was designated by the Creator at the very beginning when Adam and Eve were less than one day old. The Almighty God finished His work and rested on the seventh day. "Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it..." (Gen. 2:3).

The Scriptures make it clear that this day was designed for a special purpose. It is linked to a great plan God has for all humankind. The Bible also indicates that the Sabbath has been honored by great heroes of faith down through the ages. Abraham, Moses, and King David kept it. Samuel, Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Isaiah kept it. Ezra and Nehemiah kept it. Christ and all of the apostles kept it. The New Testament Church, including the gentile congregations, kept the Sabbath. Furthermore, God's Sabbath is still honored by His true

Church today. The point is that the Sabbath is alive and well and has continually been observed throughout human history.

But is there something else wrong with this tradition; something subtle that even God's people may be committing today? Is our observance of the Sabbath beginning to resemble the way Catholics and Protestants observe Sunday? Has the Sabbath simply become a day to get together with friends and enjoy fellowship, or is there more to honoring this time God calls holy?

A Day of Recreation

In the Sunday keeping world, recreation is as much a part of their worship as any sermon given at church. Sunday brunch at a local restaurant has been established as one of the most popular traditions practiced by those who consider themselves believers in God and the Bible. But what does the Bible say about such a tradition? Obviously, it repudiates Sunday worship, but what does it tell us about buying and selling on the Sabbath? Is it a harmless activity or is it a dangerous sin disguised as innocuous? Furthermore, has this tradition influenced those whom God has called and placed them in grave danger? At the center of this debate, one question stands as paramount. What does God Almighty think of this tradition?

The Sabbath is a critical part of God's moral code engraved in the Ten Commandments. Each of these wonderful laws reflects the mind of God. It is also important to understand that God's written word provides specific instructions concerning how His Sabbath is to be kept. It outlines appropriate as well as inappropriate activities for this day.

The following chapters contain Biblical truths that reveal how God views His Sabbath as well as how He desires it to be observed. Specifically addressed is the issue of going to restaurants on this day. However, it will be easy to see that these keys involve many other aspects of remembering to keep the Sabbath holy (Exo. 20:8). Each truth is presented with the

desire for God's word to stand as the unimpeachable authority on this subject. Therefore, human reasoning does not take center stage in these keys. God's wisdom is what is sought, and His Spirit of truth will reveal understanding (1Cor. 2:12-13).

Key 1

God's Sabbath is Holy

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.
~ Exodus 20:8 ~

The Sabbath rest is so important to God that He established it as a part of creation. By this act, the great Sustainer of all that exists began man's extraordinary journey on this planet. He also indelibly stamped this day as an identifying mark (Exo. 31:13). The Bible reveals that this mark will have a profound effect on God's people and their ultimate destiny.

The Sabbath was designed to be a weekly memorial of God's physical and spiritual creation. It is a continual reminder of the Creator and His plan for man. Because of this, God set the seventh day apart from all the rest and made the Sabbath holy. When doing so, He integrated spiritual properties into this day. Notice what Genesis says about the creation of the Sabbath:

> On the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made (Genesis 2:2-3).

The word "sanctified" in this verse is very interesting. Literally translated it means consecrated, hallowed, dedicated, and divinely chosen as a day that is holy (*Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, H6942). In other words, God set this day apart from all other days and placed His blessing on it. Notice what God revealed about His Sabbath when relating this commandment to Israel:

> 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 20:11).

When God instituted the Sabbath, He elevated it to a special state. Only God has the power to make something holy. When He does, it reflects His qualities. It becomes sacred and pure. At this point humankind can do one of two things: we can honor His Sabbath by keeping it holy, or we can profane it.

Why God Sanctified the Sabbath

The Bible makes it clear that God set the Sabbath apart from all other days. But why would He do such a thing? The Eternal answered this question, and revealed why His people should have profound respect for this day, 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 31:13).

The word "sign" in this verse is used several times throughout the Bible when describing the Sabbath and annual holy days. It comes from the Hebrew word *oth* and is defined as "a signal, flag, beacon, evidence, or mark" (*Strong's,* H226). This word is an expression of profound significance. God is saying that the Sabbath is an identifiable link between Him and His people. Additionally, the Creator revealed that through observing the Sabbath people would know Him. And by the way we observe it, He will know us. But there is more to this extraordinary day.

God's command points to a remarkable hope. The Eternal explained that, as He made the Sabbath holy, this day is evidence that He intends for us to be holy. Therefore, God sanctified the Sabbath so that we would know He has also sanctified a people to be a part of His magnificent plan. The

fulfillment of this plan will take place when God's children are born again into His Family as literal sons and daughters. When describing this future birth, the Apostle John proclaimed that God's family would be just like Him, stating:

> Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is (1 John 3:2).

Many may find it difficult to imagine becoming like the God who made the universe; possessing His virtue and wisdom. But that is exactly what is going to happen to those who yield to His authority at this time. The Apostle Peter wrote that they will be partakers of the nature of God (2Pet. 1:4). This is the destiny that awaits the faithful chosen few, and this glorious future is pictured by the Sabbath.

A Gateway to Holiness

The Bible reveals that God wants His people to be holy even as He is holy (Lev. 11:44). The Sabbath is a gateway to that holiness. It is a link between corruptible man and an incorruptible God. It stands as proof that God will bring a great Kingdom to this earth that will be ruled by Christ and His saints (Rev. 20:6).

When God's people honor His Sabbath, we are not simply obeying a command. We are expressing our desire to be the recipients of that promise. In other words, by keeping the Sabbath holy we are saying Your Kingdom come, Your will be done in me as it is in heaven.

Every true believer should show great deference to this day that points to our part in eternity. Our conduct on the Sabbath should reflect a dignity befitting a king or priest commissioned to serve in that Kingdom (Rev. 5:10). Our behavior should not be common or profane, but honorable and virtuous. Everyone who desires to be a future leader in God's

Kingdom should have great respect for God's wisdom in establishing the Sabbath. Their conduct should make it clear that the Sabbath is different. It is not a worldly day—it is a divine sign.

Remember the Sabbath

The scriptures tell us that God commanded His people to remember the Sabbath (Exo. 20:8). This command expresses more than simply being aware of when it takes place. After all, most Bible scholars know that God's Sabbath falls on the seventh day, and yet they profane it. We must be different. We must know HOW to remember it. God explained this by stating, "Remember the Sabbath day, **to keep it holy**!" These words instruct us to honor and respect the Sabbath. Our conduct should reflect the understanding that the Sabbath is unique. It is a day with great purpose—a holy purpose.

The Sabbath Belongs to God

God declared that the Sabbath is His day. It is not to be taken lightly. It is called "the Sabbath of the LORD" (Exo. 20:10). The seventh day belongs to God, and as such it is not to be contaminated by man. Everything we do on this day should be directed toward our Father in heaven and His purpose for us. Contrary to popular belief, this day is not only about resting from work. It is not about pleasure. The Sabbath is about our personal connection to God, spiritual rejuvenation, and holiness!

Sadly, some believe they can engage in certain pleasures on this day that God declares are improper. One such pleasure is dining out at a restaurant. Shockingly, some leaders in God's Church have even suggested that such a practice can actually enhance God's Sabbath. This thinking is a grave mistake.

Upon entering a restaurant, we become key players in the food preparation industry. We are patrons in a money-making establishment where people sin by working on the

Sabbath. In these places there is often a cacophony of noise generated by dishes and silverware, televisions, worldly conversations, and a frequent chorus of birthday songs. Such environments are not a place to keep God's Sabbath holy.

Going to a restaurant does not honor God or His Sabbath. Ironically it is the patrons who are honored by those who work to serve them. In reality, this activity profanes the Sabbath. It embraces one of the most popular traditions of the secular world by hiring servants, conducting business, and cooking food on a day where this kind of activity should not be taking place.

Ambassadors for Christ

Christ will soon return in all His glory to govern the earth as its God King. At that time, He will rule with a rod of iron (Rev. 19:15). This means that He will be unbending in upholding His moral law. In addition, the saints will rule with Him (Rev. 20:4). What will the resurrected people of God teach the world about going to restaurants on the Sabbath? The answer is obvious. They will teach God's truth regarding this wonderful day, and reprimand anyone attempting to engage in labor and commerce on the Sabbath.

This being the case, how could future kings and priests teach others not to go to restaurants on the Sabbath if, in their lifetime, they frequented such establishments? It makes no logical sense and is a total contradiction to proper Sabbath observance.

To illustrate this point, envision the time when God's Kingdom is established on the earth. Citizens will be comprised of those who survived the horrible devastation that took place during the tribulation. Most of these people will know little of God's law or His plan for humankind. However, it is now time for them to be taught these great truths by God's resurrected saints. Imagine that you are commissioned to teach people about the Sabbath. As the lesson begins, one of them asks the following question. "If it was wrong for me to

work in a restaurant on the Sabbath, why did you regularly come to my workplace and pay me to work for you?" Picture Christ (the Lord of the Sabbath) standing next to you as you prepare to respond. He is very interested in what you have to say. How would you answer this question? What would you tell this millennial citizen?

God's people today are to be ambassadors of His soon-coming Kingdom. They are to represent its ways and its laws. In a very real sense, the way they live their lives proclaims the gospel. By their example, God's people act out His Kingdom every day—including the Sabbath. The truth is that if a representative of God's Kingdom went to a restaurant on His Sabbath or holy day, that person would be engaging in a practice that contradicts the very Kingdom he or she is supposed to represent. To do so would be nothing short of rank hypocrisy.

Because of this, the above conversation would actually never take place. The reason is that those who break God's Sabbath in this way will not be chosen to become leaders of the Kingdom of God—unless they repent and change.

With this in mind, consider that God's people not only proclaim their faith by what they do, but also by what they do not do. Refraining from dining out on the Sabbath makes a powerful statement about the God we serve and the Kingdom we represent. To illustrate this point, imagine a different conversation with a citizen of the millennium. This citizen comes to one of the chosen saints and says, "When I worked at a restaurant, I would often see you. I even waited on you occasionally. However, I never saw you on the Sabbath or holy days. Why?"

Imagine the wonderful lesson that could be taught to a future child of God. Perhaps you would begin by explaining why the Eternal instructed Israel to make sure no one worked on their behalf on His Sabbath—including servants or unbelievers. You might actually quote the very words of God saying:

> Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 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 ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your cattle, nor your stranger who *is* within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you (Deuteronomy 5:12-14).

God made it clear that servants are not to work on the Sabbath. The question is why? It is no small matter that God provided the answer.

> Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day (Deuteronomy 5:15).

Notice what God revealed in this verse. Immediately after instructing Israel to not compel servants or strangers to work on His Sabbath, He tells them it is because they (the Israelites) were once enslaved by a nation that worshiped idols. Egypt practiced a faith that was contrary to that which God taught. Furthermore, these pagans did so because they did not know any better.

Tragically, when the Israelites lived in Egypt, they eventually lost the faith of their forefathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They engaged in much of the same idolatry practiced by their masters. However, God made them free. He personally intervened and delivered them from the bondage of a godless society. But what does this have to do with God's people today?

Deliverance

The scriptures reveal that the children of Israel were once enslaved in Egypt. God miraculously delivered them. In like manner, we were once enslaved in Satan's world. The exodus from Egypt represents this spiritual truth. In other words, God's people today were once in bondage to sin. We were willing participants to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. We profaned God's Sabbath because we did not know better, and we earned the wages of sin which is death (Rom. 6:23).

However, our calling reveals that God has provided a way of escape. Christ died in our place; freeing us from the wages and bondage of sin. He allowed us to enter His covenant in which we agreed to keep His commandments. Because of this, we should never compel unbelievers to cook, clean, and serve us on the Sabbath. We must refrain from this practice because we were miraculously delivered from such slavery.

With this in mind, we must understand that our great Deliverer would no more condone His people returning to a life of sin than He would permit the Israelites to return to the slavery of Egypt. As much as some might desire to return to Egypt today, God forbids it and warns of its dire consequences. He said:

> Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues (Revelation 18:4).

Consider these words in the context of dining out on the Sabbath. In order to engage in this practice, God's people must disregard specific instructions given in the fourth commandment and return to a world that breaks the Sabbath and does not know God. In the Old Covenant that world was called Egypt. In the New Testament it is called Babylon. But make no mistake about it; these worlds are one and the same.

Come Out of Her

When God commanded His people to cease from working on the Sabbath, and to not compel others to work on their behalf, He made a powerful statement. He commanded Israel to come out of the sinful ways of Egypt, and he commands us to come out of the sinful ways of modern-day Babylon! In other words, God's people are not to be a part of the very sin that once gripped their lives.

This is the answer that God's resurrected saints will share with countless millions who will learn about their Deliverer when His Kingdom is restored to this earth. Although the world today is truly in bondage, sincere Sabbath keepers stand as proof that it will not always be that way. By refusing to allow slaves of this world to labor for them on God's day of rest, His people are proclaiming a great hope—a hope that one day all who are enslaved will be free. At that time all people will come to remember the Sabbath day, and they will keep it holy.

Key 2

A Day of Rest

Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it.
~ Hebrews 4:1 ~

The book of Genesis indicates that on the seventh day God rested from his work (Gen. 2:2). He did not do this because He was tired (Isa. 40:28), but rather because of the profound purpose He envisioned for this holy time. The Sabbath stands as proof that God has a spiritual plan for mankind. To impress this upon His people, He commanded them to cease from their labor on this day. Notice what He said while thundering the fourth commandment:

> 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 (Exodus 20:10).

When God declared this command, He was very specific. His prohibition against labor on the Sabbath included everyone. Consider the scope of this command. Servants are not to work, children are not to work, and animals under our care are not to work. Even the stranger (a non-believer) under the authority of an Israelite was to cease from laboring on the Sabbath. Clearly this command is far reaching. It touches everyone His people would come in contact with.

God's command does not allow having servants work for us. It does not matter if they are our servants or someone else's. And yet this is the very excuse many members of the Church of God use in defense of going to a restaurant on the Sabbath. They believe that employees who labor and prepare meals on this day are not THEIR servants, but rather are the

servants of the restaurant owner. Therefore, in their fabricated technical justification, they believe that it does not violate the fourth commandment to compel other people's servants, strangers, and unbelievers to work for us.

Additionally, God's command specifically mentions "the stranger who *is* within your gates." However, those who frequent restaurants on the Sabbath claim the Bible says nothing about the stranger who is outside of your gates. Thus, they go outside their homes believing that this somehow makes their sin acceptable. However, the expression "within your gates" is a spiritual principle that refers to people within our control. Restaurant employees come directly under our control when we enter their workplace as paying customers.

While dining at a restaurant the table becomes ours for a period of time. Thus, the area now falls within our gates. The employees also become our servants as they serve everyone sitting at our table. Those who rationalize that they are not causing people within their gates to work need to honestly ask themselves an important question. How impressed is God with this type of argument? Do proponents of such reasoning have a sincere desire to obey God? Or, do they appear to be more interested in finding a way to circumvent His law? While God alone can judge in this matter, make no mistake about it. HE WILL JUDGE!

Two Wrongs Don't Make a Right

All Sabbath-keepers would agree that those who work at restaurants on the seventh day are transgressing the fourth commandment. They are engaging in labor and commerce on the Sabbath. This being the case, why would any Sabbath-keeper think that he or she could patronize such a business? Upon doing so, they become the beneficiary of an activity God forbids. They conduct the Sabbath breaking activity by giving orders and directly participate in the sin!

How could this practice NOT be a violation of God's law? How can anyone honestly believe that by going into a

restaurant, ordering food, dirtying dishes, paying for food, and tipping the server, that a Sabbath-keeper is not partially responsible for the labor of the establishment's employees? They are not only condoning this sin; they are joining them in it!

These people can attempt to fool themselves by using semantics rationalizing this behavior. But if we are truly honest with ourselves, we know that such a practice is wrong.

Regarding Strangers

When giving the fourth commandment, God stated that He prohibited "the stranger who *is* within your gates" from performing any labor on the Sabbath. The "stranger" is a reference to an unbeliever—one who does not embrace the faith. The world today is filled with such people. There are virtually billions who do not know the true God or His plan for mankind. As a result, these people think nothing of working on the Sabbath and holy days.

Even though this is the case, God's position regarding His Sabbath cannot be compromised. The unbeliever shall not be compelled to labor on behalf of a believer. Though strangers may choose to profane God's Sabbath of their own volition, they are not to be encouraged by those God has called. The Creator forbids it!

Furthermore, the day will come when unbelievers will know why God gave such a command. At that time, they will appreciate what God's people did on their behalf. Obedience on the part of God's people demonstrates a profound respect for both God's law as well as the "stranger" who does not yet understand it.

Within Your Gates - Privileges and Restrictions

There is another term included in the fourth commandment that has been at the center of discussion among many people in God's Church. The expression "within your gates" can have several meanings. For example, it can mean

inside your house, on your property, or even within the city walls. The implied meaning of this verse takes the principle even further. In essence, it is saying that God's people are not to compel anyone under their authority to work on the Sabbath. Therefore, if we have the power to prevent someone from laboring on our behalf on God's Sabbath, we must exercise that power.

It seems that many have forgotten that observing the Sabbath is a great privilege. There are many things that can be enjoyed on the Sabbath, but there are some things that must be avoided. Instead of considering that which we can take pleasure in, many are reaching out for that which should be avoided. Going to a restaurant is definitely one of those things to avoid. This practice contradicts every part of God's Kingdom. It encourages labor, it participates in commerce, it inspires competition, and it separates those who work on this day from those who believe it is a sin to do any work.

Think this through using common sense. Every believer has control over their own behavior. We are within our own gates. It is true that we cannot prevent restaurant personnel from working at this time, but we can certainly prevent them from working for us.

Casting Pearls before Swine

There are some who have suggested that the fourth commandment is not prohibiting God's people from hiring an unbeliever to work on the Sabbath, but rather from forcing the unbeliever to work against his or her will on that day. In other words, they feel that avoiding restaurants on the Sabbath is likened to trying to force our religion on unbelievers. Therefore, they conclude that if a "stranger" truly wishes to labor on behalf of the believer, they should be permitted to do so.

This is a radical view of God's law. Furthermore, there is no evidence in the Scriptures that supports such an understanding. When giving His command regarding the

Sabbath, God was not crafting some elaborate labor code. He was proclaiming a great spiritual law. A critical element of that law involved working on the Sabbath. Simply put, work is NOT to be done on the Sabbath. God's people are under direct orders from their Creator. They are not allowed to work on His day, nor are they to allow others to labor for them. This law applies to believers and unbelievers alike. Even if restaurant personnel desire to work on your behalf on the Sabbath, you are not to permit it. Tragically, when it comes to many of God's people today, this aspect of the fourth command is widely ignored.

Male Servant and Female Servant

Some have argued that restaurant personnel are technically not working for them, but rather for the restaurant owner. Therefore, a Sabbath-keeper is not responsible for their labor. If this were true, would it be acceptable to hire a mechanic to work on the family car on the Sabbath? Or how about going to a beauty salon? Would God give a stamp of approval to employing these services on the Sabbath? Obviously, the answer is no. What makes us think differently when it comes to restaurant employees?

Waiters and waitresses are servants. Regardless of who their employer is, they serve all patrons who enter the establishment. Many restaurants even call them food servers. They are in essence hired by customers to perform explicit tasks specifically for each customer. Additionally, when God's people dine out on the Sabbath, they do so with the full understanding that they are paying a team of restaurant workers to prepare the meal, serve the meal, and clean up after the meal is finished. Restaurant personnel clearly assume the role of a male or female servant.

We should not try to find an angle to avoid having to obey the great moral Authority of the universe. Instead, we should diligently seek His wisdom regarding how to conduct our lives. When it comes to compelling others to labor on the

Sabbath, God's word is straightforward and His intent is not difficult to understand. Our servants are to do NO WORK on that day! Even if they are unbelievers, they are not to labor on behalf of God's people. In a very real sense, this is one way God's people can be identified. They do not compel others to do what they themselves would not do on His Sabbath. Such behavior is a violation of the fourth commandment!

A Matter of Life and Death

At this point, it is critical to understand that the Sabbath is so important to God that He outlined the consequences for failing to honor it. God said that breaking the Sabbath was a capital crime. Notice His words:

> 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 (Exodus 31:15).

So important is this point that God reiterated this same judgment four chapters later (Exo. 35:2). With these words, God was not simply issuing an idle threat. He was serious—dead serious. Regrettably, He had to prove this fact to the Israelites.

Picking up Sticks

The book of Numbers records an incident in which the Israelites witnessed God's judgment in the matter of breaking the Sabbath. At this time, a man went out to gather wood on the Sabbath. As Moses recorded:

> Now while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering sticks on the Sabbath day. And those who found him gathering sticks brought him to Moses and Aaron, and to all the congregation. They put him under guard, because it had not been explained what

> should be done to him. Then the LORD said to Moses, "The man must surely be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp." So, as the LORD commanded Moses, all the congregation brought him outside the camp and stoned him with stones, and he died (Numbers 15:32-36).

When this man was caught breaking the Sabbath, he was detained to await God's judgment. There was no doubt regarding how God viewed this trespass. His judgment was swift and severe.

We do not see God intervening in such ways today, and therefore few are afraid to transgress His commandments. But it must be understood that God does not intervene in every case. If He did, men and women would be dropping like flies. Instead, God acts dramatically in first-time events so that there is a record showing us how He feels about such matters. The example of the man gathering sticks on the Sabbath is a powerful illustration revealing God's standard and the ultimate fate of those who think they can disobey Him without retribution.

Because many of God's people have been influenced by the values and standards of this world, they have become desensitized to God's law. This is a grave mistake and this mistake is repeated every time God's people go to a restaurant on His Sabbath. By causing others to break His commandment they also violate the Sabbath.

Picking Grain

Many attempt to defend the practice of dining at restaurants on the Sabbath by citing the incident in which the disciples picked grain. They conclude that this exceptional situation provides justification for them to eat at restaurants any Sabbath they wish. As we will see, those who embrace this belief wrest the Scriptures in order to reach such a

conclusion. Consider what the biblical account does, and does not, say:

> At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. And His disciples were hungry, and began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. And when the Pharisees saw *it,* they said to Him, "Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!" (Matthew 12:1-2).

The Pharisees accused the disciples of unlawful behavior, but they did not accuse Christ. The reason is because He did NOT pick or eat any of the grain. It was only His disciples who did so. Two other New Testament books confirm this (Mark 2:23-24; Luke 6:1).

As Savior of humanity, Christ would not pluck heads of grain on the Sabbath even if there was a legitimate need. His abstinence is further evidence that such activity was not lawful. On any other day of the week, picking a few handfuls of grain for sustenance would not have resulted in a railing accusation by the Pharisees. Although the Pharisees may have been religious hypocrites, they were intelligent men who were aware of the provision in the law permitting eating some produce from another individual's field. As Moses wrote:

> When you come into your neighbor's vineyard, you may eat your fill of grapes at your pleasure, but you shall not put *any* in your container. When you come into your neighbor's standing grain, you may pluck the heads with your hand, but you shall not use a sickle on your neighbor's standing grain (Deuteronomy 23:24-25).

What the disciples did would have been considered acceptable by the Pharisees if was not the Sabbath. However, these men understood that the fourth commandment forbids such activity (Lev. 23:3). God provided a preparation day in

which food was to be acquired, and picking grain was not lawful on the seventh day. It is therefore concluded that, under ordinary circumstances, the disciple's actions would have been unlawful!

For this reason, Christ explained why He permitted the disciples to pluck some heads of grain on the Sabbath. His explanation included an example explaining why it was permissible at this particular time. The example He gave was David and his unlawful use of the showbread:

> But He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and ate the showbread which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests?" (Matthew 12:3-4).

If the disciple's act was lawful, Christ would have simply said so. Instead, He cited the example of David who did that which was "not lawful" under ordinary circumstances. By this statement alone, any belief that gathering food was permissible on the Sabbath is baseless and false. There were never crowds of people wandering into the fields to grab handfuls of grain on the Sabbath. Instead, Christ's response reveals a truth that few realize. He compared the disciples to David who urgently needed the showbread because these two circumstances were similar.

David and his men had been out three days fleeing from Saul who desired to kill them. These men were famished! They had nothing to eat and needed to press on.

Nonetheless, even in such extreme distress, David and his men did not decide to take the showbread on their own. Instead, David approached the high priest of the tabernacle and requested that he inquire of God to see if the holy bread could be used to sustain him and his men (1Sam. 21:1-6). This

event was witnessed by a man named Doeg who informed the king that the high priest had assisted David:

> Then answered Doeg the Edomite, who was set over the servants of Saul, and said, "I saw the son of Jesse going to Nob, to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub. And **he inquired of the LORD for him, gave him provisions**, and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine." (1 Samuel 22:9-10).

Ahimelech wore the ephod. This was a vest like garment upon which the breast plate was worn. It contained the Urim and Thummin; stones of judgment that provided the priest with divine answers to inquiries (Exo. 28:30; Num. 27:21).

The parallel in Christ's example is that, when the high priest inquired for David, he was actually inquiring of Christ! The Messiah was David's Lord and the God of the Old Covenant (Mark 12:36; John 5:39; 8:58). This means that the Creator allowed the law to be violated for the sake of helping David and his men who were truly in need. This was an ox in a ditch situation, and the same LORD stood before the Pharisees as a human giving permission to His disciples to take and eat on the Sabbath:

> Yet I say to you that in this place there is *One* greater than the temple. But if you had known what *this* means, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice," you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath (Matthew 12:6-8).

There is no question that picking grain on the Sabbath was unlawful as the Pharisees had charged. The comparison given by Christ regarding David's use of the showbread, and the fact that the Savior did not pick the grain Himself, is evidence that, under ordinary circumstances, it would have

been a sin. Even so, the Messiah considered His disciples guiltless. This was not because what they did was lawful. It was because the Lord of the Sabbath authorized it under unusual circumstances.

Christ's example indicates that the disciples were just as famished as David and his men, and the Savior exercised mercy in both instances. This demonstrates that, in such emergencies, the Sabbath law can be temporarily suspended to save life or property. If someone is suffering from extreme hunger, hypoglycemia, or if there is a genuine emergency, in an act of mercy we can purchase food or medicine to ease suffering or preserve life.

However, we must not fool ourselves. Such exceptional situations cannot be used to disregard God's law by dining out on the Sabbath any time we wish. Those who do so are, in effect, pushing their ox into a ditch in an attempt to justify their behavior.

Two things must be understood from this example. First, Christ was greater than both the temple and the law. Second, He never challenged the Pharisees' understanding of the law. Instead, he questioned their perception of mercy. This is the core issue of these verses.

The disciple's picking grain does not justify going to a restaurant on the Sabbath. This example shows that anyone desiring to harvest or purchase food on this day must be in dire need. They must be unable to prepare the day prior. We must be honest and the circumstance must genuinely fall into the category of an ox in a ditch where life or property is threatened.

A Stern Warning

Nearly 6,000 years ago Satan told Eve to disobey God and "you will not surely die" (Gen. 3:4). She ate the forbidden fruit and ultimately perished. Today there are some who teach God's people that it is acceptable to go to restaurants on the Sabbath. In other words, eat and you won't

die. However, God clearly stated that if we choose to violate His Sabbath, we will pay the ultimate consequence.

Key 3

A Matter of Business

If the peoples of the land brought wares or any grain to sell on the Sabbath day, we would not buy it from them on the Sabbath, or on a holy day.
~ Nehemiah 10:31 ~

When God gave Israel His instructions regarding the observance of the Sabbath, He told them that they were not to make a fire on the seventh day. There are two views concerning what is meant by this decree. Some believe that fires of any kind (personal or commercial) were not to be kindled on the Sabbath. Others believe that God is only speaking of an industrial or commercial fire. The latter argument is advanced because of the belief that there would have been family campfires on the Sabbath when the Israelites were wandering in the wilderness. These were used for the sake of warmth, and not for cooking or industrial use.

At this point, it is important to understand that God's command does not prohibit having a fire burning on the Sabbath, but rather the building of a fire on this day. Notice His words.

> Work shall be done for six days, but the seventh day shall be a holy day for you, a Sabbath of rest to the LORD. Whoever does any work on it shall be put to death. You shall kindle no fire throughout your dwellings on the Sabbath day (Exodus 35:2-3).

It is important to understand what this passage does not say. It does not say that having a fire burning on the Sabbath is wrong. It does not say that all fires must be extinguished before the Sabbath begins. It only indicates that *kindling* a fire should not be done. This is a reference to the

work necessary to prepare a fire. After all, this kind of work is exactly what the preparation day was given for.

The issue at hand is work. Therefore, God preceded the subject of fire with "Whoever does any work on it shall be put to death." For this reason, the man found gathering wood on the Sabbath was stoned. He was caught brazenly doing work on the Sabbath. The context becomes more obvious if we continue reading this chapter where God instructs Israel to gather material and begin work on the Tabernacle. However, he prefaced these divine instructions by emphasizing that even work performed for the sake of constructing the Tabernacle was to cease on the Sabbath. God's command to not kindle a fire regarded industrial use.

Understanding this, it is likely that the Israelites gathered wood on the preparation day and built family fires prior to the beginning of the Sabbath. When the Sabbath arrived, placing an occasional piece of wood on the flames to sustain it would take little effort.

However, when it comes to building or sustaining a commercial fire, a significant amount of work would be required. Furthermore, such a fire would serve no purpose on the Sabbath. Remember, the Sabbath is a day of rest and the building or sustaining a large industrial fire on this day would clearly violate the command.

Sabbath keepers would never think of creating a commercial fire for industry or manufacturing on the Sabbath. We understand that this would constitute a clear violation of the fourth commandment. However, when it comes to the fire necessary for cooking food at a restaurant, many have come to think that such a practice is somehow acceptable. Nothing could be further from the truth. Their stoves, ovens, and grills are specifically for commercial use!

The food processing industry is no different than any other commercial enterprise. Further, when it comes to preparing meals, God commanded that we refrain from cooking food on the Sabbath (Exo. 16:23). In addition, God commands

that we are not to have others perform the work of cooking meals for us. Instead, we are to prepare meals the day before and eat that which we have laid up on the Sabbath.

God's instructions regarding the proper observance of His Sabbath went far beyond commanding His people to refrain from labor on this day. Because the Sabbath is holy, God provided examples of how it could be contaminated. One such way was to engage in business on this day. God said such behavior is wrong and that it profaned His Sabbath.

Buying and Selling

Nothing more clearly defines a commercial enterprise than the exchanging of money for goods or services rendered. These types of transactions are what drive our economy, but what does God's word say about this practice on His Sabbath?

One of the great champions of faith was a man named Nehemiah. As cupbearer to the Persian King Artaxerxes, Nehemiah held a position of considerable prominence. However, when he heard of conditions in Jerusalem, he returned to the city of his people and organized rebuilding the temple, reinstituting the priesthood, and reestablishing Judah in the Promised Land. This man was instrumental during this era of God's Old Covenant Church.

Nehemiah was also painfully aware of the tragic story of Judah's captivity. He understood one of its chief causes being contempt for God's Sabbath, and specifically its practice of buying and selling on this day. Nehemiah's passion regarding this issue is legendary and is captured in the book that bears his name.

This great servant condemned every aspect of engaging in business on God's Sabbath and thoroughly excoriated those who participated in this practice. He began His indictment by identifying the vendors who were selling products to God's people on this day. Notice his words.

> In those days I saw *people* in Judah treading wine presses on the Sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and loading donkeys with wine, grapes, figs, and all *kinds of* burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. And I warned *them* about the day on which they were selling provisions. Men of Tyre dwelt there also, who brought in fish and all kinds of goods, and sold *them* on the Sabbath to the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem (Nehemiah 13:15-16).

Nehemiah testified against these vendors because he knew that God did not want His people to buy and sell on the Sabbath day—even if it was only food that was being purchased. Furthermore, it didn't make any difference if the people preparing the food were unbelievers such as those from Tyre. The point is that God's instructions are very clear in this matter. His people are not to conduct business of any kind on His holy Sabbath neither as a buyer or a seller.

This being the case, how could anyone think that a Christian is now able to go to a restaurant on the Sabbath? Dining at a restaurant is conducting business! The believer is a consumer—a role that is essential in any commercial enterprise. Therefore, when God's people go to a restaurant on His Sabbath, they are doing exactly what He said NOT to do.

More Technicalities

There are some who suggest that Nehemiah's indictment is only against doing business with merchants selling food in open markets and this does not include restaurants. Therefore, they claim that God appears to be silent on the subject of dining out on the Sabbath. But this inference is not the truth.

Why would God forbid buying food at a market, while permitting buying the same food baked and seethed at a restaurant? The only difference is that the restaurant takes the sin to another level by working to prepare and serve the food.

Despite the parsing of words, the point Nehemiah was clearly making in his indictment was that Judah should not take part in any commercial business on the Sabbath—nor were they to patronize such businesses on this day. Any other understanding is simply manipulating the Scriptures in an attempt to justify a sin.

A Scathing Indictment

Nehemiah was so upset with this practice that he threatened to use force to remove these vendors from Jerusalem. If they persisted in engaging in business on the Sabbath, they would be assaulted. Notice his words:

> Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said to them, "What evil thing *is* this that you do, by which you profane the Sabbath day? Did not your fathers do thus, and did not our God bring all this disaster on us and on this city? Yet you bring added wrath on Israel by profaning the Sabbath." So it was, at the gates of Jerusalem, as it began to be dark before the Sabbath, that I commanded the gates to be shut, and charged that they must not be opened till after the Sabbath. Then I posted *some* of my servants at the gates, *so that* no burdens would be brought in on the Sabbath day. Now the merchants and sellers of all kinds of wares lodged outside Jerusalem once or twice. Then I warned them, and said to them, "Why do you spend the night around the wall? If you do *so* again, I will lay hands on you!" From that time on they came no *more* on the Sabbath (Nehemiah 13:17-21).

Whether one wishes to believe it or not, those who go to restaurants on the Sabbath are engaging in a commercial enterprise. This business involves an agreement of price, the contracting of labor, the purchase of goods, and an appropriate method of payment. There is even a provision for

the food server to receive a bonus in the form of a tip. Furthermore, in this business relationship, the patron possesses a considerable level of authority over personnel. Customers define what they will purchase, how it will be prepared, and when it will be served.

Patrons also have expectations of the personnel working for them as well as the products they are purchasing. For this reason, customers reserve the right to exercise disciplinary action if expectations are not met. They can lodge complaints, refuse payment, and even engage the services of governmental agencies that protect the rights of consumers. They may do so because they are participants in a real business transaction. The restaurant understands this principle very well. To believe otherwise is simply foolish thinking.

Engaging in business with food services, as either the retailer or the consumer, is the very conduct that inspired Nehemiah's righteous indignation. With this in mind, here is a question to consider. Would Nehemiah think differently about buying and selling today? Would this righteous man approve of going to restaurants on the Sabbath? Or would he condemn the practice just as he denounced what Judah was doing on God's holy Sabbath?

Key 4

A Matter of Pleasure

They did not walk in My statutes; they despised My judgments,
which, *if* a man does, he shall live by them;
and they greatly defiled My Sabbaths.
~ Ezekiel 20:13 ~

Prior to Israel's captivity, God directed the prophet Isaiah to indict the people because of their wanton disregard of His law. This message made it clear that Israel was in grave danger. Notice the force of His words.

> Cry aloud, spare not; Lift up your voice like a trumpet; Tell My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins (Isaiah 58:1).

When these words were spoken, Israel saw themselves as God's chosen people. They were quite zealous for their religion. However, what they practiced was simply their personal interpretation of God's law. They were sinning by not obeying the fourth commandment. This is evident by what Isaiah wrote twelve verses later:

> If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, *from* doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy *day* of the LORD honorable, and shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking *your own* words, then you shall delight yourself in the LORD; And I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father (Isaiah 58:13-14).

This is not unlike God's Church today. This verse contains several elements that we should continue to consider

when deciding how we will honor the Sabbath. It addresses what to avoid as well as what to embrace when keeping this day holy.

First, consider the words "turn away your foot from the Sabbath." This expression can be translated as do not walk all over My holy day!

The Sabbath is not a day to do whatever we want. From God's point of view, His people were trampling all over the day He sanctified. This was done because Israel sought to do as they pleased on the Sabbath. They wanted to pursue what appealed to them and put personal desires above the commandment.

By this statement, God makes it abundantly clear that we are not to seek personal enjoyment on His Sabbath. It is true that the Sabbath was made for man, but it is also true that it is God's day—not ours (Mark 2:27; Exo. 31:13). Therefore, His people are to honor His instructions regarding how it should be kept.

Secondly, when God addressed the issue of "pleasure" on His Sabbath, His instructions were clear. His people were to turn away from doing their pleasure on this day. But what does this mean?

The word "pleasure" used by Isaiah comes from the Hebrew *chephets.* This term means something that possesses personal desire and value (*Strong's*, H2656). Therefore, God was instructing His people to avoid activities which cater to physical, carnal enjoyment. This does not mean we cannot eat food, rest, or enjoy a sunset. It refers specifically to behavior that draws people away from proper Sabbath observance. We are not to seek entertainment, business, hobbies, or worldly pleasures.

This is exactly what dining out does. It is personal pleasure for the sake of recreation and entertainment. It engages business where food and labor are provided in exchange for money. It places believers in the midst of unbelievers who are violating the Sabbath and causes both to

tread on God's holy day! This is entirely inappropriate activity for God's holy Sabbath.

Some Interesting Facts

According to the National Restaurant Association (NRA), the food services business is among the largest of the entertainment industries. It is currently the largest private-sector employer in the U.S.A. This business provides 10% of the workforce with a staggering 13.1 million jobs; nearly doubling the bloated U.S. government. Restaurants have become so popular that 4 out of 10 people eat at some form of food preparation establishment every day. There are more than 980,000 restaurant locations nationwide that annually provide over 54 billion meals at a cost of more than 660 billion dollars to consumers.

Interestingly, surveys indicate that the most popular day of the week for dining out is Saturday. With this in mind, God's people must ask themselves. Should the Sabbath be our chosen day to dine out? If the answer to this question is yes, then consider why? Is it to fulfill God's word, or is it to fulfill our own pleasure?

The Sabbath is Honorable

A third element of God's instructions regarding His Sabbath is that His people are to call the Sabbath honorable. This means it is to carry an enormous weight of respect and dignity in the believer's eyes. It is to be a glorious day that is to be spiritually rich. God's people are to honor the Sabbath with great deference.

God gave specific instructions regarding how His Sabbath is to be kept. He does not want us to dishonor this wonderful day by mundane practices. Going to restaurants on the Sabbath deprecates God's day. Whether we want to admit it or not, dining out on the Sabbath shows disrespect toward the great dignity this day was designed to carry. Just because it is convenient does not change the fact that it is a sin.

The Sabbath Is a Delight

A fourth point made by Isaiah is that God wants His people to call this day a delight. Some have presumptuously put a twist on these words. They interpret them to mean that we should plan activities in order to make the Sabbath a delight. In other words, find something that gives you pleasure and do it on the Sabbath. After constructing this premise, many believers contend that dining out allows them to do less work and makes the Sabbath more enjoyable. Therefore, they consider going to a restaurant on God's Sabbath to be exactly the kind of activity God would approve of.

Such an inference is a horrible distortion of the Scriptures! God did not create the Sabbath to insure that people would enjoy themselves one day a week. He created this day so that our pursuit of personal desires would not consume our lives and estrange us from Him. It was designed to be a day to refocus, to keep us on track in our pursuit of the Kingdom, to remind us of who we are, who God is, and what we should be seeking in life. In other words, the Sabbath is not a day to seek personal pleasures, but rather to reject them. It is a day dedicated to embracing that which is holy—not that which is profane.

But what does it mean to call the Sabbath a delight? What exactly are we supposed to delight in? To better understand what God was conveying, consider what He specifically said:

> If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, *from* doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight (Isaiah 58:13).

God is not telling His people to MAKE the Sabbath a delight. He is instructing us to CALL what He sanctified a delight. God's people should delight in being able to put our job, schedules, bills, and the stresses of life aside. We should call this rest from worldly pursuits delightful. We should

delight in the ways of God and focus on the great hope of His Kingdom which the Sabbath pictures. That Kingdom will be a time of enormous abundance. The Sabbath is evidence that God will deliver on His promise and establish worldwide peace and prosperity when Christ returns in power and glory. That hope is the delight Isaiah spoke of.

Those who believe going to a restaurant on the Sabbath adds joy to this day fail to grasp the true enjoyment of this sacred time. Consequently, they feel a need to do something worldly in order to make the Sabbath more joyous. This is a terrible mistake.

God created the delight that fills each Sabbath. His instruction is to recognize this joy and celebrate it in our worship of Him. It is not a day of convenience. It is a day of hope when God's children assemble together and appear before their King in anticipation of His second coming. It is a perpetual reminder of God's power over the physical as well as the spiritual universe.

The Sabbath truly is a great delight. Through the prophet Isaiah, God appeals to His people to see the Sabbath for what it really is. If the world today with all its suffering could get just one brief glimpse of what this day pictures, it too would call the Sabbath a delight.

The word "delight" used by Isaiah when describing God's Sabbath is interesting. It literally means "luxury or pleasant" (*Strong's*, H6027). The point God makes is that His Sabbath is a luxurious and pleasant day. We are to call it so because it is a day that is set aside to be special and different. It is an exquisite exception from the rest of the week.

A Day of Liberation

All week-long God's people are in a kind of bondage. We are forced to labor in order to provide for our physical needs. Every day we are subjected to a continual barrage of chores and deadlines. We are rushed and discomfited as we

struggle to meet an endless array of obligations as we strive to keep up with the "tyranny of the urgent."

When the Sabbath comes, picturing liberation and freedom from bondage, we can finally stop doing the labor, chores, and mundane activities of life. On the Sabbath we can come out of this world for one day, and joyfully remember that this world will be delivered into the hands of the King of kings.

The Sabbath is not a delight because we are amusing ourselves and being entertained. It is a delight because we have been given a special time to refocus and draw close to our Creator. In a very real sense, the Sabbath is a time when the bride shares moments with her Bridegroom.

The Church of God should consider the Sabbath as an appointment—a date with her Fiancé. She should look forward to it with a deep longing because it offers the luxury of 24 hours of rest from a world that is defiant toward God. It is a day to celebrate the transcendent hope of living and working together with our Father and His Son for eternity.

This is the delight that Isaiah spoke of. God created the Sabbath as a time of immense hope. His people must see that hope and rejoice in it—not try to improve on it.

Key 5

A Day of Preparation

And it shall be on the sixth day that they shall prepare what they bring in, and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily.
~ Exodus 16:5 ~

God is so opposed to engaging in profane labor on the Sabbath that He actually designated the sixth day as a period to prepare for the Sabbath. Notice His words:

> 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. And it shall be on the sixth day that they shall prepare what they bring in, and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily" (Exodus 16:4-5).

God rained down enough manna on the sixth day for the people to collect a double portion with the express purpose of testing them. In other words, He did this to see if they were truly committed to obeying Him or not. If they were, they would gather just enough food on the day of preparation to satisfy their needs for both that day and the Sabbath. They would then do all their cooking ahead of time so that they would not profane the Sabbath. Note the instructions Moses gave to God's people.

> And so it was, on the sixth day, *that* they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for each one. And all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. Then he said to them, "This *is what* the LORD has said: '**Tomorrow *is* a Sabbath rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD. Bake what you will bake *today,* and boil what you will boil; and lay**

> **up for yourselves all that remains, to be kept until morning.**'" So they laid it up till morning, as Moses commanded; and it did not stink, nor were there any worms in it. Then Moses said, "Eat that today, for today *is* a Sabbath to the LORD; today you will not find it in the field. Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, the Sabbath, there will be none." Now it happened *that some* of the people went out on the seventh day to gather, but they found none (Exodus 16:22-27).

These verses reveal that God supernaturally intervened to provide a way for the Israelites to properly honor His Sabbath. He not only provided twice as much food on the preparation day, but He also miraculously preserved it so that it would not spoil. This indicates that God intended for His Sabbath to be treated differently. It is holy time. Therefore, He made sure that His people were provided a way to keep it holy.

But what about the Israelites who failed to prepare adequately? What were they to do? Were they to go out and buy food from unbelievers on the Sabbath? Were they allowed to bake and boil food on the seventh day? Absolutely not! God did not give them an alternate choice when they failed to properly use the preparation day. The Scriptures state that some went out to gather manna on the Sabbath and "they found none."

This is an enduring principle. It is a lesson for God's people today. Based on His clear instructions, we should ask ourselves the following question. Is it right for us to go outside our spiritual camp and gather food by purchasing it from unbelievers on the Sabbath? Are we justified by knowingly ignoring the preparation day? Can we fail to prepare for the Sabbath and then rationalize that we have a legitimate excuse to profane it? Absolutely not!

The Significance of the Preparation Day

Almost everyone in the greater Church of God understands the significance of the Sabbath and holy days. These appointed times declare a magnificent plan that was envisioned by God before the world was created (Rev. 13:8). With this in mind, consider what God is teaching His people through the preparation day.

The seventh day Sabbath pictures God's Kingdom coming to the earth. At that time, 6,000 years of man's rule on the planet will cease and 1,000 years of God's rule will begin. The sixth day of preparation reflects 6,000 years of human existence in which every man, woman, or child who is called must prepare for Christ's return during their lifetime. His coming will begin the 7th millennium and a time of rest from the toil, pain, and suffering that man has caused. In other words, if we do not make ourselves ready, will God allow us to enjoy His Kingdom? Will we prepare for that time by following His instructions, or do we think we can forge our own path and do it our own way? It is clear that some believe the latter because Christ actually warned against such thinking, saying:

> Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness! (Matthew 7:21-23).

When Jesus spoke of those who worked iniquity, He was referring to people who did not keep His law. These are believers who thought they were obeying Him, but did so according to their own standards. In essence, they did not take God's law seriously enough.

A cornerstone of that law is His Sabbath. Knowing this, is it possible that Jesus' warning applies to those who refuse to honor His instructions concerning the preparation day? Could this scenario include believers who claim to keep the Sabbath, but judge for themselves how it should be kept? After all, the preparation day instructions were given to ensure that God's people could keep the Sabbath holy, and as a test to see if His people would obey Him or not.

Consider a sobering thought. Could people in God's Church today end up crying out "Lord, Lord" to Jesus Christ when He returns because they failed to properly obey the fourth commandment? Has the modern convenience of dining out caused many to lose sight of the preparation day? Have we begun to think that we have already attained, and there is no need to continue preparing for the Kingdom? Do we feel we rich and have need of nothing? If this is the case, beware lest we become disqualified (1Cor. 9:27; Php. 3:12-13; Rev. 3:16).

Certainly, today, there is no great sense of urgency with respect to preparing food for the Sabbath. In a like manner, there seems to be a lack of urgency to overcome sin in order to prepare for Christ's return. Could it be that these two Laodicean characteristics are one in the same? After all, if God's people ignore the seeming little things in this life, like preparing for His Sabbath, why would they think they need to do the big things like plan and prepare for His Kingdom? Perhaps we need to reexamine ourselves regarding Christ's admonition in which He stated:

> He who *is* faithful in *what is* least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in *what is* least is unjust also in much (Luke 16:10).

These are serious words and should not be taken lightly. In addition, while some might believe that dining out on the Sabbath is a small matter, or a twiggy issue, it is far more important than we might think. It is foundational and

reflects how we treat the things of God. Notice what God said to Israel regarding their cavalier attitude toward His Sabbath and how they prepared for it:

> How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My laws? See! For the LORD has given you the Sabbath; therefore He gives you on the sixth day bread for two days. Let every man remain in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day (Exodus 16:28-29).

God rebuked those who refused to honor His Sabbath. Specifically, He addressed their lack of preparation. In essence, God conveyed three critical elements concerning eating on the Sabbath:

- Food was not to be acquired on the Sabbath.
- Food was not to be prepared on the Sabbath.
- People were not to go out to acquire food.

Where Do We Belong on the Sabbath?

Notice that God said "let no man go out of his place on the seventh day." With these words He did not mean that individuals could not leave their tent or property for any reason. This is evident by the fact that individuals of the tribe of Levi left their tents to attend to their duties on the Sabbath (Num. 10:2-10). Additionally, Christ shared food at the homes of others on the Sabbath (Luke 14:1-6).

The point God made with these instructions was that the Israelites were not to leave their place for the purpose of gathering or preparing food on the Sabbath. God had provided the preparation day. If God prohibited the Israelites from going outside their place to acquire and prepare food on the Sabbath, why would He approve of His people doing so today? The answer is He wouldn't.

During the time of Moses, some of the people sinned by leaving their place in order to acquire or prepare food. Whether it is our home, a meeting hall, or even our vehicle, our place on the Sabbath day is where God's law is observed (Acts 15:21). Today, God's people sin by leaving their spiritual place on the Sabbath and going into the secular, commercial world where God's law is not kept.

Breaking Every Rule

Those who dine out on the Sabbath are breaking every aspect of God's command with respect to eating and resting on His sacred day. Consider what they do. They acquire food on the Sabbath. They have it prepared for them on the Sabbath. They go outside the community of faith to procure the food as well as to consume it. Then they engage in a business transaction by paying for the meal and tipping the server. Tragically, many of God's people rationalize every one of these practices. Even more tragic is the fate that awaits them if they fail to repent of this sin.

The Sabbath is holy. Virtually every person working in a restaurant on the Sabbath is breaking God's command. Furthermore, they tread all over the Sabbath every time they comply with orders given by managers and customers. Today, some of these patrons claim to be God's people. Do you really want to be among those giving such orders?

Key 6

A Mark and a Warning

And it shall be: like people, like priest. So I will punish them for their ways, and reward them for their deeds.
~ Hosea 4:9 ~

The book of Revelation describes a future time in which a powerful political leader known as the beast will cause the vast majority of people on earth to receive a blasphemous mark (Rev. 13:16). Those who refuse will suffer great persecution and even death (v. 15). Those who receive this mark will suffer the wrath of Almighty God (Rev. 14:9-10).

The mark of the beast is a rejection of God and His authority over people's lives. It embraces false religious customs and festivals and rejects the proper observance of God's Sabbaths.

On the other hand, God has a mark that is carried by His faithful people called a "sign" between Him and us that we may know it is the Eternal who sanctifies us (Exo. 31:13). God's sign is also worn in the hand and forehead (Deu. 6:8). This expression refers to His law being in the frontal lobe of our minds where we process thought and make judgments. It is also to be displayed in our hand reflecting what we apply our strength to do (Ecc. 9:10).

Which mark do we carry? One of the most obvious displays of God's mark is our behavior on the Sabbath. The Church of God must realize that when people choose to frequent restaurants, they are rejecting God's authority, they are refusing to accept His mark, and giving way to the mark of the beast!

Consequences for Disobedience

The Bible indicates that Israel eventually rejected God's Sabbath and was destroyed as a nation. Ezekiel recorded Israel's rebellion, as well as God's reaction to their violation of His Sabbaths, stating:

> And I gave them My statutes and showed them My judgments, 'which, *if* a man does, he shall live by them. 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. Yet the house of Israel rebelled against Me in the wilderness; they did not walk in My statutes; they despised My judgments, which, *if* a man does, he shall live by them'; and they greatly defiled My Sabbaths. Then I said I would pour out My fury on them in the wilderness, to consume them (Ezekiel 20:11-13).

God said that He would destroy these people for polluting His Sabbaths. Now compare these words to what God said shall befall those who have the mark of the beast.

> Then a third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives *his* mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb" (Revelation 14:9-10).

This is further evidence of the link between God's mark and Satan's counterfeit. This alone should cause every true Christian to seriously examine how they treat His Sabbath. If this were not warning enough, there is another.

A Warning of Captivity

Despite God's appeal to repent, Israel continued to rebel against Him. Nowhere was this rebellion more apparent than their flagrant disregard of His Sabbath. Like so many today, Israel failed to appreciate what this day truly means and the great Kingdom it pictures. As a result of their indifference, they thought nothing of ignoring God's instructions regarding the proper observance of His day. The result was devastating.

God allowed the House of Israel to be conquered by the ruthless Assyrian empire. As a result of their crushing defeat, Israel lost the Sabbath and with it their identity as people of God. Today they are known as the lost ten tribes.

A Horrible Mistake Repeated

The northern tribes were not the only nation under God that wanted to do things their own way. The southern kingdom of Judah also descended into perverted morality and paid a heavy price for it. They contaminated God's Sabbath and were taken captive because of their sin. Only this time it was the Babylonian empire that conquered and removed the house of Judah from the land.

After 70 years of captivity, the Jews were allowed to return to Jerusalem and renovate part of the city. During this rebuilding process, a faithful servant by the name of Nehemiah noticed that some were again profaning the Sabbath by engaging in business on this day. Fearing that God would punish them once again for this sin, Nehemiah argued powerfully to correct the wrong. This servant of God wrote:

> Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said to them, "What evil thing *is* this that you do, by which you profane the Sabbath day? Did not your fathers do thus, and did not our God bring all this disaster on us and on this city? Yet you bring added wrath on Israel by profaning the Sabbath" (Nehemiah 13:17-18).

Notice that Nehemiah called this practice "evil." It was not a matter of personal preference or an acceptable choice. It was, and still is, wicked and profane.

It is also clear that transgressing the fourth commandment was a significant factor in causing Judah to be taken captive. Tragically, these returning exiles were making the same mistake. But what were they doing wrong? They were buying and selling food on the Sabbath! As Nehemiah wrote:

> In those days I saw *people* in Judah treading wine presses on the Sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and loading donkeys with wine, grapes, figs, and all *kinds of* burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. And I warned *them* about the day on which they were selling provisions (Nehemiah 13:15).

The abhorrent sin described by Nehemiah was buying and selling on the day God made holy. Sadly, this sin is widespread in God's Church today.

A Mistaken Opinion

There are some who argue that the Jews during the time of Nehemiah were not going to a restaurant, but rather were purchasing goods in the open market. They contend that Nehemiah was not addressing the issue of cafés and only admonished grocery shopping. Such a belief is an attempt to skirt the heart of the matter with a half-truth.

The merchants that set up booths in the city offered a variety of products. Some sold handicrafts, other sold merchandise. However, many were selling food products that could be eaten immediately. And the Scriptures bear this out.

The word used by Nehemiah regarding these products is "provisions." It is the Hebrew *tsayid* which means, "game, (that which is taken in) hunting, lunch, food, venison" (*Strong's*, H6718). Obviously, Nehemiah was excoriating the

Jews for buying, not just merchandise or groceries, but food cooked and ready for consumption. This practice is not unlike people today buying a meal from a hamburger stand or catering truck.

But does this really make a difference? How can anyone honestly think that Nehemiah would give a free pass to the Jews if they were sitting down to eat at a cafe? Such thinking is absurd. Nehemiah viewed such activity as a clear violation of the Sabbath, and so does God.

Men of Tyre—Unbelievers

It is important to reiterate that the vendors who were selling food on the Sabbath were unbelievers. They did not obey God and rejected the Sabbath (Neh. 13:16). They were totally ignorant of His plan for humankind. The same goes for people who work in restaurants today. However, this shortcoming was irrelevant to Nehemiah and it should be for us. Ignorance is no excuse for allowing or propagating lawless behavior. This truth is borne out by the actions of Nehemiah.

There were numerous options available to this man. For example, Nehemiah could have reasoned that these people were going to work regardless of what God's people did. He could have said that the Jews were not causing the vendors to work, and allowed Judah to buy their products. Nehemiah could have rationalized that, in the past, Israelite leaders purchased foodstuffs on the Sabbath so why should he rebuke such a thing? After all, it would only stir up contention and cause division.

Each of these responses could have been engaged by a man chosen by God to lead His people, but they were not. The reason they were not used is because such inference goes contrary to the Scriptures. Despite this fact, such irrational lies are employed by many in God's Church today. Many ministers seem content to take a different path than that taken by a proven faithful man of God.

The uncompromising Nehemiah did not hesitate when addressing what he saw was an egregious evil. And make no mistake about it. That is exactly how he viewed buying and selling on the Sabbath. To him this practice represented a mortal threat to God's people. Furthermore, he realized that the very future of this nation hung in the balance because of this issue. Therefore, He took immediate action. Notice what he did.

> So it was, at the gates of Jerusalem, as it began to be dark before the Sabbath, that I commanded the gates to be shut, and charged that they must not be opened till after the Sabbath. Then I posted *some* of my servants at the gates, *so that* no burdens would be brought in on the Sabbath day (Nehemiah 13:19).

With these words, Nehemiah warned Judah that they were in captivity in no small part because they had profaned the Sabbath. Specifically, they were buying and selling on that day. God's servant was so concerned over this sin that he took what can only be regarded as radical measures. He expelled the street vendors from the city. Furthermore, when they returned the following Sabbath, Nehemiah stood his ground and threatened to forcefully remove them if they dared to return on God's day. As he wrote:

> Then I warned them, and said to them, "Why do you spend the night around the wall? If you do *so* again, I will lay hands on you!" From that time on they came no *more* on the Sabbath (Nehemiah 13:21).

The example of Nehemiah's uncompromising love of God's law is a great lesson for Christians everywhere. This champion of faith boldly confronted those who were complicit in causing God's people to profane His Sabbath. His remedy was swift and reflected God's thinking about engaging in

commerce on the day He made holy. What we must understand is God not only abhorred this practice then. His opinion has not changed. He has not made an exception to Sabbath observance because of our modern conveniences. He changes not, and is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8). He still detests such behavior.

Today it would be impossible to do what Nehemiah did during Judah's captivity. God's people do not have ability to force restaurants near our homes or meeting halls to close on the seventh day. We cannot lock up eateries to prevent believers from buying food on the Sabbath. However, God's people can do something else. We can lock ourselves out of these places on God's day! Tragically, many believe that restaurants should be open for business to God's people on the Sabbath.

Legislating Righteousness

Some leaders in God's Church have introduced an interesting reason for not passing judgment in the matter of dining out on God's Sabbath. They contend that it is not the role of the Church to legislate righteousness. What they fail to understand is that God has already performed this task. While it is not our responsibility to set doctrine, we are most certainly responsible for administering and enforcing doctrines that God has legislated. This is the duty Church leaders have been entrusted with. Additionally, failing to properly teach and uphold God's law is a huge mistake. Consider what Christ said about this kind of omission.

> Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:19).

The Savior's words should make every true minister of God carefully consider the things he does as well as what he teaches others to do. The Scriptures are adamant about this.

God's ministers are duty-bound to truthfully represent Him. They are not allowed to enforce human reasoning. Despite the fact that some Church members may not like what they hear, God's ministers must powerfully proclaim the truth. If they do not, God's judgment on them will be far worse than that of lay members or even the unbeliever (Jam. 3:1).

The bottom line is this. The ministry is responsible for administering God's word and doctrine to His children—whether it is popular or not!

Is This a Minor Issue?

Some leaders have suggested that going to restaurants on the Sabbath represents only a small aspect of Sabbath observance. They contend that the Sabbath is much broader in scope, and to place so much emphasis on one piece of the command diminishes the rest of God's holy day. At first this reasoning might sound sensible. However, consider how much of the fourth commandment is impacted by dining out on the Sabbath.

- Work is being performed at the request of the believer—a clear violation of the fourth commandment (Exo. 20:10).
- A servant is being compelled to perform work specifically for the believer—a clear violation of the fourth commandment (Deu. 5:14).
- Food is being acquired on the Sabbath by the believer—a clear violation of the fourth commandment (Exo. 16:26-29).
- Food is being prepared on the Sabbath for and at the request of the believer—a clear violation of the fourth commandment (Exo. 16:23-24).
- The believer has to go outside the spiritual camp on the Sabbath—a clear violation of the fourth commandment (Exo. 16:29).

- The believer is engaged in the purchase of goods and services on the Sabbath—a clear violation of the fourth commandment (Neh. 10:31).
- The believer is involved in the pursuit of personal pleasure on the Sabbath—a clear violation of the fourth commandment (Isa. 58:13-14).
- The believer takes it upon himself to judge how to keep the Sabbath—a clear violation of the first commandment (Exo. 20:3).
- The believer calls himself a Christian, but does not obey God—a clear violation of the third commandment (Exo. 20:7).
- The believer does not heed to the instructions of our spiritual forefathers—the great champions of faith in the Bible—a clear violation of the fifth commandment (Exo. 20:12).
- The believer illegally takes time from God for the sake of personal pleasure—a clear violation of the eighth commandment (Exo. 20:15).
- The believer desires to enjoy those things that unbelievers enjoy on the Sabbath—a clear violation of the tenth commandment (Exo. 20:17).

These are just some of the aspects of God's law that are violated with impunity when people decide they can do as they wish on His day.

Nehemiah realized this truth. He understood that improper Sabbath observance posed a great threat to God's people and violated more than just a single commandment. Additionally, he understood that honoring God's holy day could make the difference between being taken captive and being protected. Is it possible that we are being challenged with a similar lesson? Could this issue play a role in deciding who will be protected and who will not? If so, at the end of this age there are two possible outcomes for God's people;

Captivity or a place of safety. For more on this subject read or request our booklet titled *A Place of Safety* explaining when, how, and why God will protect His people.

Key 7

A Perfect Example

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.
~ Philippians 2:5 ~

All Christians acknowledge that Christ is the example we must follow. This truth was affirmed by the apostles throughout their writings. It is hard to imagine anyone being a greater authority regarding proper conduct for God's children on the Sabbath than Christ who is the Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28). He is the Architect of this day and its transcendent purpose. Everything He did on the Sabbath was dedicated to fulfilling that purpose. This leads us to an obvious question. How did Christ honor the Sabbath?

The gospels speak prolifically concerning Jesus' actions on the Sabbath. And although he was accused of profaning this day, He never came close to doing such a thing. Christ's conduct on the Sabbath was a model for all believers to follow. His behavior spoke of hope and consolation that will be restored to this world a short time from now. Consider some of the things that defined the Sabbath that the Messiah kept:

- He assembled with other believers
- He read from the Scriptures
- He healed the sick
- He shared meals
- He prayed to His Father
- He walked with close friends
- He criticized self-righteous religious leaders
- He inspired hope in the weak

Noticeably absent from the Bible is any hint that Christ spent money on the Sabbath. In addition, there is not a single verse indicating that Christ had others cook meals and serve

them on this day. The Messiah loved the Sabbath. He knew every facet of the time He sanctified. If we are truly His people, then we must direct our steps as He did His.

An Extraordinary Example

Although Jesus undoubtedly provided meals for His family during His lifetime on earth, there is no example of Him doing so in the New Testament. However, one example does appear in the Old Covenant that speaks volumes about how God approaches that which is holy.

This event took place while the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness. At that time, God commanded them to refrain from going outside the camp to gather manna on the Sabbath. But God did not simply let them go hungry on the seventh day. He provided a double portion of manna on the sixth day. Additionally, the great Provider supernaturally intervened to prevent the manna from spoiling on the Sabbath.

What God did with respect to this act is far more extraordinary than meets the eye. Most believe God rained a double portion of food for the Israelites on the preparation day because He did not want them to work on His Sabbath. Although this is true, by this act God honored His own law. In other words, by providing extra food the day before, God utilized the preparation day and revealed that He would not profane His Sabbath by encouraging labor on that day. Even if the act required little effort, God honors His own Sabbath.

On the seventh day of creation God set this day apart from all other days and He did not work. He continues to sustain its purpose by keeping the Sabbath holy. While it is true that God never tires, that is not why He rests on the Sabbath. He ceases from work because He desires to use that time to spend with those who love Him and keep His commandments. God looks forward to the Sabbath's millennial fulfillment, and so should we.

A Unique Sign

When the great Architect of heaven and earth created the physical universe, He was executing a critical part of a plan that will ultimately bring mankind into His Family. As a part of that physical creation, God fashioned the sun, moon, planets, and stars. His purpose for doing this was not simply to beautify the sky. These celestial bodies were designed with a transcendent purpose. As God said:

> Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years (Genesis 1:14).

God declared that the astronomical bodies are for signs and seasons. These two words have profound meaning. They express the commitment God has to His plan of salvation. The word "sign" is the Hebrew *oth* meaning "a *signal, flag*, *beacon*, *monument*: - mark (*Strong's*, H226). It is the same word used by God when describing His Sabbath (Exo. 31:13). The word "seasons" is *mo'ed* meaning "an *appointment*; specifically a *festival*; by implication, an *assembly*; technically the *congregation*; by extension, the *place of meeting*; also a *signal*, (set, solemn) feast" (*Strong's*, H4150). These words are a direct reference to God's appointed feasts—His holy days.

God's Sabbath and holy days represent the blueprint of a plan that was borne out of the infinite love of the greatest Being in existence. That Being wants His people to trust His wisdom regarding how to honor the Sabbath and holy days. He has provided the moral guidance necessary for those He calls to be a holy people. We should reject anything that does not reflect His guidance.

When it comes to going to restaurants on the Sabbath where do we honestly think He stands? Does he approve of

labor, commerce, cooking, buying, and selling on the Sabbath or not!?

Christ said that His people were to be lights of righteousness in a world filled with the darkness and wickedness (Mat. 5:14-16; Eph. 6:12). A vital aspect of being lights is proper Sabbath observance. The Sabbath is a beacon that illuminates the identity of the true God. It is a prophetic sign giving people spiritual insight and directing them towards the Kingdom of God (Heb. 4:4-9).

However, the Sabbath points both ways. While it is a sign identifying who the Creator is, it is also a sign that identifies who His people are. Through it, the great Creator of heaven and earth not only sees who keeps His Sabbath, He sees the way in which it is kept. Our conduct on the Sabbath reveals the degree of our love and dedication to His way. To see it as anything else is an enormous mistake.

The Sabbath is also a test commandment. It is God's indicator of whether we will walk in His law or not (Exo. 16:4). The way we honor the Sabbath is our declaration to God that we will yield to His authority. It is a test. Will you pass it?

Nothing New

And *there is* nothing new under the sun.
~ Ecclesiastes 1:9 ~

As a result of human nature, over time our tendency is to neglect the Almighty's law. For example, ancient Israel took the Promised Land with enormous success, but as generations passed there was an increasing movement to disregard the commandments of God. The loyalty of God's people sank to lower levels until Israel finally abandoned God's faith entirely. As a result, they were severely punished. The Assyrians took them into a captivity from which they never returned.

The Temple and its Priests remained in Judah and the southern tribes continued for nearly a hundred more years. Eventually they also corrupted God's religion and found themselves taken captive by the armies of Babylon.

Seventy years later the Jews were permitted to return to Jerusalem and rebuild their nation. However, when Nehemiah came to check on their progress, he witnessed the people buying and selling on the Sabbath. He quickly condemned the practice.

The New Testament Church also began with great zeal, but down through the ages each era seemed to let down in its devotion to God and His Sabbaths. In recent years, the Church flourished for several decades. The Sabbath was held in the highest regard by many who understood that dining out on the seventh day was not necessary. For example, notice the respect and application of Sabbath observance taught by a leading minister of our age. This evangelist wrote:

> In order that we may have our minds free from last minute duties on the Sabbath, God has commanded that we prepare for it the day before. Exodus 16:22-25 shows that we should do any baking or time-consuming boiling before the Sabbath. Long hours

> of cooking and stewing should NEVER clutter up God's day. So do all your "sprucing up" and any heavy cooking on Friday, the preparation day. Then at sunset Friday evening, when the Sabbath begins, you will have put all worldly cares aside and will be able to enter the Sabbath in a spirit of rejoicing and worship toward God… You can't be running down town for a cup of coffee or an ice-cream soda. That kind of procuring food is *entirely* UNNECESSARY (Roderick C. Meredith, Rejoice in God's Sabbath! *The Good News*, Dec. 1957, Vol. VI, Number 12, pp. 4, 8).

Members once knew that eating at a restaurant on the Sabbath was wrong, but many have compromised this truth. It occurred slowly at first. The ministry once suggested that there might be times when eating out on the Sabbath was appropriate. No doctrinal studies were done, no papers were produced, and no official changes were ever made. As time went on, more and more people began dining out with greater frequency. Men began to take their wives out to dinner Friday night. Eventually this practice became habitual.

Today, Church members join thousands of unbelievers as they dine at various restaurants on the Sabbath. It has become a tradition that has been adopted as a part of many people's religious culture.

This change toward Sabbath observance might lead one to wonder; could the same terrible tragedy that occurred to ancient Israel and Judah happen to God's end-time Church? Have we lost some of the truth regarding Sabbath observance? What evidence has been advanced in an attempt to legitimatize dining out on the Sabbath?

Irrational—Lies

But they all with one *accord* began to make excuses.
~ Luke 14:18 ~

When *The Sabbath Test* was first published, it was our hope that the larger groups would see the simple truth it contained. Our desire was that, after the apostasy of our parent organization, a truth of this magnitude would become a catalyst for repentance and renewal in the greater Church of God. Tragically this has not been the case.

Though many individuals have seen the truth and are now keeping God's Sabbath holy, there has been a steady stream of attacks against this book and its authors. Ministers have given sermons and written articles rationalizing this tradition. Almost every imaginable excuse for ignoring this truth has been advanced. Worse yet, Christians who were originally taught to prove all things now seem willing to accept these absurd excuses without question. For these reasons, we have compiled their irrational excuses with the hope that God's people will see the obvious truth and heed.

Each excuse presented in the following pages was received with a sincere desire to understand the reasoning. While doing so, it became obvious that there was not a single one that justifies buying and selling on the Sabbath. Such wide acceptance of these rationalizations deeply concerns us regarding the welfare of God's people. It is this concern that motivated us to publish answers to these excuses.

This section of the book is not designed to denigrate others or promote division. It is not to motivate people to leave one group and join another. We have chosen not to name the organization or the ministers who presented the following excuses. Our only desire is to provide answers to the lies our brethren have been told in the hope that those who wish to see the truth will see it—and change.

"Restaurant Employees Are Working Anyway"

Every group that advocates eating in restaurants on the Sabbath offers a variation of this same, time worn, irrational lie. They state:

> "Those working in the restaurant would be working anyway. It doesn't matter if we buy their food and make use of their services or not. If we are absent, they will simply provide this service for someone else."

If Christians can hear it, this is exactly the point of God's Sabbath commandment. Though workers might be there, that does not justify us being there! If this argument was legitimate, it could also be used to justify going anywhere and doing anything we want on the Sabbath.

We all agree that restaurant workers are sinning on the Sabbath. They would be sinning if we join them or not. The real issue is not that they would be working anyway, but should we join them in their sin?

The answer is revealed when we consider that God gave us a preparation day for the express purpose of acquiring food beforehand (Exo. 16:16-30). He also commands us not to compel family, servants, strangers, or animals to work for us on the Sabbath (Exo. 20:10). He says we are not to go out of our place. This refers to remaining among brethren on the Sabbath—not going out to be with those of the world. We are told not to engage in buying or selling (Neh. 10:31). We are instructed not to do whatever we please and to keep the Sabbath holy (Isa. 58:13). There is nothing holy about a secular restaurant and visiting one on the Sabbath is certainly for our own pleasure.

It should be obvious that the argument "they will be working anyway" entirely misses the point. Restaurant employees will be working to serve many people on the Sabbath, but that should not have anything to do with us. The

fact that they sin by working every Sabbath does not mean we can seek them out and join them in their sin!

"The Bible is Silent on this Issue"

A respected minister gave a sermon about dining out on the Sabbath. In this message he stated:

> "We now live in a different age than that of ancient Israel. They did not have restaurants. The Scriptures never speak of restaurants on the Sabbath, and therefore, the Bible is silent on this issue. It is impossible to know God's opinion today."

Is the Bible truly silent about this issue? Is it impossible for us to know God's opinion? Of course not! This is simply human justification. While it may be true that there were no restaurants like we have today, in ancient Israel there were inns and a market place that sold food. Those businesses were closed. No one worked by preparing, cooking, serving, or selling food on the Sabbath.

When it comes to doing business and employing labor, the Scriptures abound with principles regarding Sabbath observance. For example, to justify dining at a restaurant an individual must disregard God's commanded preparation day (Exo. 16:23). They must ignore the fact that servants, animals, and even unbelievers are not to labor for us on this day (Exo. 20:10). They must ignore the instructions not to do our own pleasure on this day, and they must dismiss Nehemiah's edict not to buy or sell (Isa. 58:13; Neh. 10:13).

Every true Christian would agree that operating any business on the Sabbath is a sin. Ironically, people who frequent such enterprises on the Sabbath must seek out commandment breakers and join them in their sin. They must pay them to perform work by preparing food, serving it, and cleaning up afterward. The Scriptures make it clear that each one of these behaviors is a violation of the fourth

commandment. In fact, so adamant is the Creator about His commandments that if these prohibitions were violated, it was considered a capital crime:

> You shall keep the Sabbath, therefore, for *it is* holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does *any* work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people (Exodus 31:14).

God never made a provision that if unbelievers are working anyway we may employ them to work for us on this day. Most of the country's citizens are strangers to us, but this does not change God's law. The Almighty stated that we are not to cause the stranger among us to work, and He gave us a preparation day to avoid such activity. Nehemiah rebuked all who would buy or sell on the Sabbath. The Bible speaks loud and clear about this issue.

"Modern Society Justifies Modifying God's Law"

One minister gave a sermon in which he discussed the difficulties of living in modern society. Regarding dining out on the Sabbath, he stated:

> "The complicated libertine 'Babylonish' system in which we live has made discernment exceedingly difficult. The application of God's law may have slightly different ramifications in secular modern Israel."

Because our society is different, this man suggests that we may need to adjust our application of God's law.

It must first be realized that God's Ten Commandments are not subject to human amendment. They existed at creation, during Christ's ministry, after His resurrection, and they will continue to exist during the

millennium (Isa. 66:23). They were written in stone picturing God's intention that they endure.

Just think! If this minister's argument were true, exactly what slight modifications must occur to allow us to dine out on the Sabbath?

1. God says don't go out and acquire meals on the Sabbath (Exo. 16:29). We would have to modify this edict to say, acquire food wherever we please on the Sabbath.
2. God says not to cook food on the Sabbath (Exo. 16:23). This must be altered to say that we are allowed to have unbelievers cook food for us.
3. God says don't compel servants to labor on the Sabbath (Exo. 20:10). This must be modified to say that other people's servants can labor for us.
4. Nehemiah declared that it is wrong to buy or sell on the Sabbath (Neh. 10:31). Another slight modification would have to be made to say that it is permissible to buy and sell on the Sabbath.

The fallacy of such reasoning is obvious. Dining out on the Sabbath is not a minor "ramification" to the fourth commandment. It is defiance toward God's Word! Things may be different today, but the societies the Apostle Paul faced were nothing like ancient Israel either. Ephesus was the port of entry to Asia Minor. It was a trade center for much of the world. Did this fact allow Christians to modify God's law and join in the sin of unbelievers? No! As Paul explained:

> Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them. For you were once darkness, but now *you are* light in the Lord. Walk as children of light... finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And **have no fellowship with the unfruitful**

> **works of darkness**, but rather expose *them* (Ephesians 5:6-11).

"Gleaning is Permissible on the Sabbath"

Another minister said, "The disciples ate grain from the field on the Sabbath. It was permissible to glean on the Sabbath... (Therefore) it must be appropriate for us to dine out on the Sabbath." He quoted God telling Israel:

> When you come into your neighbor's vineyard, you may eat your fill of grapes at your pleasure, but you shall not put *any* in your container. When you come into your neighbor's standing grain, you may pluck the heads with your hand, but you shall not use a sickle on your neighbor's standing grain (Deuteronomy 23:24-25).

Notice that nowhere do these verses mention gleaning. They only indicate that people in need of food were allowed to satisfy their hunger by taking a meal's worth of produce. Gleaning was never allowed on the Sabbath. There isn't a shred of evidence suggesting that the poor could go out and glean on the Sabbath. The disciples only took a few handfuls of grain to satisfy an immediate need for food.

Still, some continue to believe the incident recorded in the New Testament provides justification for frequenting restaurants on the Sabbath and holy days. But they must wrest the Scriptures in order to reach such a conclusion. Notice the following facts:

1. The Pharisees accused the disciples of wrong doing; a fact that Christ did not deny (Mat. 12:1-2).
2. Only the disciples picked grain; Christ neither picked nor ate the grain because it was unlawful on the Sabbath. If He would have, Christ would have sinned, and we would have no Savior.

3. Christ explained why He allowed them to pick and eat by citing David and the showbread (Mat. 12:3-4). David and his men were famished, indicating that the disciples were in a similar situation.
4. This was an ox in a ditch circumstance. Christ, the Lord of the Sabbath, and God of the Old Covenant, allowed David to have the showbread as well as giving the disciples permission to eat and be blameless (Mat. 12:6-8).

We must not fool ourselves. Christ allowed His disciples to satisfy their extreme hunger, but He did not give them permission to gather produce every Sabbath. In like manner, David's one time use of the showbread did not allow him to eat it every week.

These verses cannot be used to disregard God's law any time we wish. Those who do so are pushing their ox into a ditch while falsely believing they are guiltless. For a detailed review of this subject, read *Picking Grain* on page 36.

"We Can Violate the Sabbath When Traveling"

A well-known minister assumed that, since Christ and the disciples were walking when they plucked grain from a field, they must have been traveling. Based on this assumption, he presumptuously declared that:

> "Jesus changed the law regarding the Sabbath so that we can eat out on the Sabbath when we travel."

This excuse is blatantly spurious. The Scriptures never indicate that Christ and His disciples were traveling on the Sabbath, or that He changed any law regarding the Sabbath observance. "Jesus Christ *is* the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Heb. 13:8). He did not come to destroy the law or the prophets (Mat. 5:17). And yet this man believes this

circumstance introduces a major change to the fourth commandment.

Consider the fact that nearly everyone today travels in some shape or form in order to get to Church services. Therefore, according to this man's heretical interpretation, everyone can dine out every Sabbath.

There isn't a single verse that even remotely hints we are allowed to purchase food, have it cooked, and served to us on the Sabbath simply because we might be traveling. Instead, the Bible tells us that such behavior is wrong. Instead of using our travel as a means to rationalize dining out on the Sabbath, we should prepare ahead of time and limit our traveling so that we do not need to stop and purchase provisions.

Further, any law changed in the New Testament was explained in detail. Such was the case regarding circumcision, animal sacrifices, and the symbols used for Passover. Nothing else was changed! The Church of God has always been keenly aware that changes in the law were not made through illustrations. To teach that Christ changed the law regarding Sabbath observance is actually the same method used by Protestants who claim that Christ did away with the Ten Commandments. This minister's conclusion is a clear case of adding to the Scriptures to create an unbiblical doctrine in an attempt to justify a behavior that he and others enjoy.

"The Weekly Sabbath is Just like Annual Holy Days"

One man quoted Mr. Armstrong stating that "the Sabbath and Holy Days stand or fall together." He read Leviticus 23 which says we are to "do no servile work" on these annual holy days. Then he read the following verse indicating that preparing food is not considered servile work:

> On the first day *there shall be* a holy convocation, and on the seventh day there shall be a holy convocation for you. No manner of work shall be

> done on them; but *that* which everyone must eat—that only may be prepared by you (Exodus 12:16).

This minister has attempted to link cooking food, which is allowed during most annual holy days, to the weekly Sabbath which prohibits such behavior. While we are allowed to cook on six of the seven high days each year, these observances are not exactly like the Sabbath. What this man conveniently left out of his argument were the verses mentioning the weekly Sabbath which state:

> Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'The feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim *to be* holy convocations, these *are* My feasts. Six days shall work be done, but **the seventh day *is* a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work *on it*;** it *is* the Sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings (Leviticus 23:2-3).

The annual holy days stand with the Sabbath in that observance of both is required. But they are not observed exactly the same. We may prepare food on most of the holy days, but we are instructed NOT to cook food on the Sabbath or the Day of Atonement. During these two observances absolutely, no work may be done (Lev. 23:28). Further, while the Scriptures allow personal cooking on the holy days, they do not permit buying food on the Sabbath or the high days. As Nehemiah stated:

> *If* the peoples of the land brought wares or any grain to sell on the Sabbath day, we would not buy it from them on the Sabbath, or on a holy day (Nehemiah 10:31).

Dr. Alfred Edersheim is an authority on the Temple and its service. He explained that:

> The approach of the Sabbath, and then its actual commencement, were announced by threefold blasts from the priests' trumpets. The first three blasts were drawn when 'one-third of the evening sacrifice service was over;' …about the ninth hour, that is, about three P.M. on Friday… When the priests for the first time sounded their trumpets, all business was to cease, and every kind of work to be stopped (*The Temple its Ministry and Services*, p. 139).

The duties of the temple priests and reaction of those around Jerusalem show that Israel understood business of any kind was forbidden on the week and annual Sabbaths.

"Long Drives make the Sabbath like a Pilgrimage Feast"

A Church member explained to his congregation that the time we live in is unique in all of human history. During this extraordinary time:

> "We need to travel long distances to attend services. Therefore the Sabbath is like one of the pilgrimage feasts."

His point was that in observing these annual feasts, the people could take their second tithe and buy whatever their soul desired. Therefore, this means that they could buy food at restaurants. To him, the long distances some drive today in order to attend services justifies dinning out on the Sabbath.

In an attempt to support his conclusion, he conveniently overlooked several important aspects of Sabbath observance. For example, traveling from far countries to Jerusalem is not like driving a few hours in the comfort of a motor vehicle with cushioned seats, heating, air conditioning, and all its modern conveniences.

Further, while it is true that the people could buy food at an inn while traveling to the Feast site, they absolutely could not buy food on the high day or Sabbath. The Scriptures allow

personal cooking on the high holy days, but they do not permit buying food. As Nehemiah stated:

> We would not buy it from them on the Sabbath, or on a holy day (Nehemiah 10:31).

As Dr. Edersheim previously explained, Israel knew that prior to the start of Sabbath, every kind of work stopped. The Israelites understood that business of any kind was forbidden on the Sabbath. Why is it that so many have a hard time accepting this?

Are Restaurant Chefs like Temple Priests?

A notable leader in the Church speculated about Christ's rule on earth and the future temple activities, stating:

> "During the millennium, people will go to the temple on the Sabbath and present their sacrifices. The priests will act as chefs and hundreds will dine together. God made an exception for the priests to do Temple work and were blameless. Those who cook and serve food for us at restaurants on the Sabbath are like the Temple Priests and are also blameless."

In this man's vision the millennium will be much like going to a restaurant on the Sabbath. But think this through. The future Temple will be a holy place with holy priests performing holy duties for God. That Temple will be nothing like today's restaurants which employ blatant sinners—many of which boldly shake their fist at God and His commandments. The priests in the millennium will serve God while those working in restaurants on the Sabbath are serving the devil who wants everyone to violate the Sabbath.

Further, those called by God to perform priestly duties on the Sabbath are held blameless. Those working in

restaurants on the Sabbath are guilty of breaking the fourth commandment, and God calls them to repent of such behavior.

The leader of this particular group has also ignored the fact that no personal offerings were ever presented on the Sabbath. Because of this, no priests were, or will ever be, cooking meal offerings for congregants. The only offerings made on the Sabbath were those restricted to the prescribed daily offering performed by the priests alone. Dr. Edersheim described the role of the temple on the Sabbath, saying:

> The only directions given in Scripture for the celebration of the Sabbath in the sanctuary are those which enjoin 'a holy convocation,' or a sacred assembly (Lev. 23:3); the weekly renewal of the shewbread (Lev. 24:8; Num. 4:7); and an additional burnt-offering of two lambs, with the appropriate meat- and drink-offerings, 'beside the continual' (that is, the ordinary daily) 'burnt-offering and his drink-offering' (Num. 28:9, 10). …**No fresh business was then undertaken; no journey of any distance commenced**; but everything purchased and made ready against the feast, the victuals being placed in a heated oven, and surrounded by dry substances to keep them warm (*The Temple Its Ministry and Services*, pp. 138-139).

No sacrifices were offered by common folk on the Sabbath. No food was prepared on the Sabbath by the priests or laymen. All was done, and made ready, on the preparation day, and this set of laws will be the same in the millennium.

"Restaurant Employees Are Not Our Servants"

The doctrinal team of one of the larger churches of God concluded that waiters, chefs, and dishwashers are not our servants. They claimed that the fourth commandment was given to a people whose servants dwelt in the master's home and were subject to their owner in all respects. In other words,

they believe that the Sabbath command is only referencing slaves. These men continued stating that restaurant employees don't live with us and are not subject to us in every respect. They are only servants of the restaurant and therefore we are allowed to have them work on our behalf.

It is surprising that a group of supposed Bible experts actually believe that God wrote the Ten Commandments without the foresight that a "servant" would have different applications in future generations. In order for such an absurd perspective to be true, these people would have to re-write the fourth commandment to say, "You shall not do any work, not you or your son, or your daughter, or your male servant, or your female servant—but you may have someone else's servant do work on your behalf."

This belief is preposterous. To say that restaurant employees are not the servants of patrons is tantamount to stating that they do not cook and serve us food. Consider that restaurant workers are even called servers because, in their trade, they prepare and serve you food. In fact, it is customary to pay them a tip in proportion to how well they serve you.

If we want to use the situation of Israel at the time that the Ten Commandments were given, when God thundered the fourth commandment from Mount Sinai, the nation of Israel had no servants! They had just come out of a land where they were the Egyptian's servants. God foresaw His people one day both possessing servants, and also living in a society where servants would be hired and paid on a day-to-day basis. Therefore, the "servants" spoken of by God includes housekeepers, gardeners, waiters, waitresses, and chefs.

If the argument presented by these men was correct, we could also apply it to the other commands. We could have someone else murder, lie, or steal for us. Such reasoning is foolishness. We cannot have someone else do our dirty work and consider ourselves blameless. The commandments are comprehensive and complete. They are not subject to personal

interpretation or preference. They apply to all people of every age. For more on this subject see *A Day of Rest* on page 29.

"We Do Not Contribute to Restaurant Employees Sin"

One minister presented his evidence that we are not complicit in the restaurant worker's sin by stating:

> "If dining out on the Sabbath causes employees to sin, we must conclude that God contributed to the sin of foreigners when He decreed that animals that die of themselves should be given, or even sold, to strangers among the Israelites."

This man attempts to make two completely different cases appear similar. But these issues are not related. God never forbade foreigners to eat meat from an animal that died of itself. To them it was not a sin. The meat Israelites would give them was not from an unclean animal, and they had God's approval to apportion it to gentiles.

Israel was told not to eat such meat because to them it was sin. This decree was one of the many ways that God set them apart from others. God desired Israel to understand that they were to be holy as He is holy (Deu. 14:21; Lev. 11:45). They were to be different from the heathen and were to have a higher standard. God did not want His people eating garbage from trash cans or doing any of the degrading things that the gentiles did. While outsiders were not judged for eating such meat, when converted, they too will understand God's standards and no longer partake of meat from an animal that died of itself.

Eating at a restaurant on the Sabbath is enormously different from what God allowed regarding meat eaten by gentiles. From creation God prohibited all people from working on the Sabbath. Unbelievers are sinning by working, or doing business at a restaurant on the Sabbath. If we choose to dine out on this day we sin with them.

The only principle from this man's argument that applies is that we should strive to reflect an example of God's holiness. We should stay pure and not join in with the unconverted who have no respect for God's holy Sabbath.

"We Should Not Hate What Restaurants Do on Sabbath"

The official doctrinal team of one group wrote an extensive article rebuking the belief that we should not dine out on the Sabbath. They stated:

> "We would not patronize the business of anyone who is knowingly and defiantly breaking the Sabbath. But in most cases, this does not apply to unbelievers. So we do not hate what is done in a restaurant. Rather, we feel sorry for those who do not know about the Sabbath and look forward to sharing the truth of this gracious gift of God to these people when God opens their minds…"

It's ironic that these men admit what takes place on the Sabbath in restaurants is a sin. But because the unbeliever does not know it is a sin, these people of God claim they do NOT actually hate it. Instead, they suggest we should be indifferent to sins of ignorance. Tragically, this line of thinking is rank heresy, and harms the conscience of any who adopt it. How can any true Christian believe that if we feel sorry for individuals who sin unknowingly, it is acceptable to join them in their sin?

Consider idolatry, pornography, extortion, stealing, or abortion. Do these doctrinal "experts" feel sorry for those who break these commandments? Is it appropriate to willingly join unbelievers in these sins? Are we expected to believe that God does not hate the sins committed by those He has not yet called? Was He indifferent to the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah or Nineveh? Did God think that the ignorance of these people enabled others to indulge in the very same sin and be blameless?

God hates the fact that the world does not keep His commandments, and He expects us to hate it too. Consider a vision given to Ezekiel that directly pertains to this issue:

> And the LORD said to him, "Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it." To the others He said in my hearing, "Go after him through the city and kill; do not let your eye spare, nor have any pity. Utterly slay old *and* young men, maidens and little children and women; but do not come near anyone on whom *is* the mark; and begin at My sanctuary." So they began with the elders who *were* before the temple (Ezekiel 9:4-6).

A similar mark will be placed on the people of God before His terrifying plagues begin (Rev. 7:2-3). Those who have it will be protected, while those who knowingly participate in the sin of unbelievers will suffer God's wrath.

Do these men understand the position they are placing themselves in by leading people to believe that they should simply feel sorry for the sin others commit, and then join them in it? God wants us to hate and cry out against the sins committed in our land. If He were indifferent to the world's sins, Christ would never have commissioned His Church to go into the world and preach the gospel to everyone (Mark 16:15). When Christ returns, He will punish a world that is filled with sin whether they know it or not.

Every Christian should feel sorry for those who do not know God's way, but we must not be indifferent to their sins. We must hate the sin, knowing every sin killed Christ, and we should certainly never join unbelievers in their iniquity.

"If the Atmosphere is Right, it's Not a Sin"

A team of writers for another organization completely disagree with the stand this book takes, and published a rebuttal which stated:

> "God condemns things that detract from, or cheapen, his Sabbath day. Today, this could include things such as going to sporting events or amusement parks, shopping, or to the beach to swim or sunbathe. It could also include going to a restaurant that provides an inappropriate environment—for example, a congested restaurant that places diners in a rowdy atmosphere of worldly chatter, cigarette smoke or loud, intrusive music. A more acceptable atmosphere would be a restaurant with spacious seating, subdued lighting and quiet, sensible background music."

In response to this team's perspective, we would like to ask it what privileged class of society do they live? It is obvious that they are completely out of touch with the vast majority of the Church.

First, most communities do not have restaurants that provide "spacious seating, subdued lighting, and quiet, sensible background music." Of those that do, these facilities are costly. Few Church members have the funds to frequent such restaurants. Members will generally end up going to places like Denny's. Those with large families tend to frequent a pizza parlor or purchase fast food.

More importantly, whatever led these writers to think the more expensive restaurants have God's approval, but the cheaper ones do not? Such an idea directly violates the Scripture stating that "God shows no partiality" (Acts 10:34). Everything done in any restaurant on the Sabbath is carnal and worldly. The establishment was not designed for God's people to enjoy the Sabbath by dining out. It exists for the purpose of making money and satisfying fleshly desires.

Again, imagine applying this same line of thought to any other commandment. Can we practice idolatry if it is peaceful and soothing? Can children dishonor their parents if it helps them to relax? Can we commit adultery if we are in a subdued atmosphere with low lighting and soft music?

This concept is ludicrous. God forbids us to do business on the Sabbath. It does not matter if the business is high priced, and serene, or inexpensive and boisterous. The issue is obedience to God's commandments—not the quality of the environment. Tragically, these "scholarly" men are teaching God's people a horrible lie. They are telling us to find a comfortable place in the world and indulge in sin.

Are Restaurants Are a Necessity of Life?

A prominent minister attacked the authors of this book, stating:

> "Do you grasp what these people are saying? They are equating the physical necessity of eating—ingesting food in order to obtain necessary nutrients for life—as entertainment and recreation. Who is missing something here? Should such a rift in logic or judgment not serve as a warning flag to reasonable, Spirit-led minds? Should it not also be painfully obvious that these people simply do not know and understand the true God?"

This man takes God's fourth commandment and the injunction not to do our own pleasure on the Sabbath and turns these verses upside down. He claims that dining out on the Sabbath is necessary to fulfill a physiological need. He also implies it has nothing to do with entertainment, and those who oppose his view do not understand God.

Sadly, while this man claims to know God, it is painfully obvious that he does not understand the sign between God and His people. God's Sabbath is a feast day. This day includes including eating, but it is also a day that is

to be kept holy. We must not defile the Sabbath by hiring restaurant staff and participating in secular business on this day. Those who do NOT eat at restaurants enjoy having a meal just like anyone else. But they are strictly opposed to paying people to cook, clean, and serve that food to us. There are numerous ways to procure food without paying people to prepare it for us.

What is the motive behind this excuse? Does anyone really believe that this minister only goes to a restaurant to sustain his bodily needs? If that were the case, why not bring food from home?

Contrary to what this man teaches, the nutrients necessary for life are not the issue. His desire is to enjoy eating out while God's desire is that we keep the commandments!

Think about this and decide who has the "reasonable, Spirit-led mind." Did God prohibit people from gathering manna or preparing it on the Sabbath because He was against food? Does anyone believe the Almighty wanted His people to go hungry on the seventh day? Absolutely not! He gave Israel twice the manna the sixth day and designated a preparation day so that His people would have plenty of food to eat when the Sabbath arrived (Exo. 16:22-27).

God says there is a time and place for everything. Sabbath is not the time, and restaurants are not the place, for us to pay others to labor, by making and serving food, on the day God said no work was to be done. The Spirit led mind desires to keep this day holy—not profane it. For more on this subject see *A Day of Preparation*, page 53.

Dining Out on the Sabbath Is a Need

In a rebuttal to this book, a doctrinal team wrote an article claiming that:

> "In the millennial rule of Christ on earth, everyone will learn to keep the Sabbath and reap its benefits, far beyond what we are able to enjoy today.

> Eventually all mankind will keep the Sabbath. Work will cease early on the sixth day with plenty of time to prepare for the Sabbath. Of course, there will be no restaurants or other business establishments open on the Sabbath. But neither will there be a NEED as there is today."

Similar to the minister in the preceding section, these individuals believe that what takes place in restaurants on the Sabbath is a necessity. In other words, they imply that without restaurants we could not properly keep the Sabbath. To them, paying people to work for us is not a sin. It is something that we "need" to do.

While it may be necessary to eat food on the Sabbath, do we honestly believe that this requires contracting labor and doing business? Is going out to dinner Friday night a need? Is dining at restaurants after services really crucial?

For thousands of years God's faithful people did not need to break the Sabbath to procure food. These were men and women who did not have modern conveniences such as refrigerators, ice chests, microwaves, Ziploc baggies, bottled beverages, and prepackaged snacks, and yet they still managed to keep the Sabbath holy with a sufficient amount of food to eat. In our modern age, having numerous options to prepare food in advance, how could anyone say that it is necessary to break God's Sabbath in order to obtain food on the seventh day?

With this excuse in mind, consider the following scenario. Imagine that we are in the Kingdom of God and meet faithful men and women from distant ages. Some of them died to keep the Sabbath holy as God commanded. Imagine their response learning about all our amazing devices for preserving food. Could we honestly tell these people that it was necessary for us to go to a restaurant on the Sabbath? Their jaws would drop when considering what they went through to observe God's law as we try to excuse ourselves by

saying that it was necessary for us to break God's Sabbath in order to have food to eat. Such an excuse would be absurd! In our modern society there are dozens of ways to preserve food. More than any other time in history, there is no need to go to a restaurant on the Sabbath.

Is Dining at a Restaurant Is the Same as Using Utilities?

One leader claimed that using electricity, natural gas, and water on the Sabbath is equivalent to dining out. In a published sermon, he said:

> "Utility workers must be there to make available the services you are taking advantage of. In doing this, are you not a partaker of their sins?"

This man attempts to blur the line between that which is within our control and what is not. The truth is that utilities are not under our control or authority. Turning on a light or flushing the toilet does not require others to labor. Our homes are already connected to the source. Anyone who might be working at a power plant is not required to lift a finger for us when we take a shower or flip a light switch. In addition, we do not pay for these services on the Sabbath.

Consider the vast difference. It is not necessary to choose a utility company and hire the workers on the Sabbath. However, in order to dine out we must seek out a restaurant and engage in commerce. We submit a to-do list as we order our meals and the staff proceeds to perform the exact work, we have personally requested them to do. Tables are set, food is baked, broiled and fried, and dishes are washed specifically for us. Then, to top off the insult to God's fourth commandment, we pay the restaurant and tip the server according to how hard they work on the day when no work is to be done.

Further, it must be understood that utilities are an essential service. They are necessary for traffic lights,

hospitals, firefighters, and homes. This is not the case when it comes to restaurants. We can all live comfortably without a single restaurant. It is a business of luxury and convenience—not one of necessity. It is for personal pleasure. As such, it is forbidden by God on the Sabbath.

Is Dining Out Is an Expression of Christian Love?

An elder gave a sermon on this subject saying that taking others to a restaurant is a display of Christian love:

> "For some it might be the only opportunity they have for fellowship… Someone who is single or a widower hardly ever has the opportunity to serve others a meal. Yet, they can use this liberty to invite other brethren for a meal on the Sabbath or High Holy Day at an appropriate restaurant."

Ironically, the truth is the exact opposite of what this man suggests. Taking others to a restaurant on the Sabbath leads them to fellowship with sin; not with God and His people. While we might think that we are showing love to others, we are actually showing disrespect to the Eternal and His commandments. Christ said that the Sabbath was made for man, but this does not mean it is made for man to do as he pleases. He meant it was made for man's benefit.

When this elder spoke about the liberty of being able to take people to a restaurant, he was not speaking biblically. His definition of Christian liberty is made up out of thin air. Notice how the Apostle Paul defined our liberty:

> For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not *use* liberty as an opportunity for the flesh (Galatians 5:13).

The freedom we are called to enjoy is liberation from a world filled with sin. We are not at liberty to fulfill fleshly desires that are borne out of sin.

Dining out is a pleasure for the flesh. To dine out on the Sabbath is a sin. This excuse is simply another case of Protestant thinking creeping into the Church. It is the very kind of reasoning that Satan uses. He integrates evil into something good to make the wrong seem acceptable. He tries to make that which God hates appear as something He loves. Christ warned us about the futility in trying to cover iniquity with our own idea of religious works (Mat. 7:21-23).

We must be hospitable, and should enjoy fellowship on the Sabbath, but this can easily be accomplished without doing business. The Church can reserve the hall for an hour or two longer and have pot-lucks. This is what Jude referred to when he wrote about brethren having "love feasts." People can also invite others to their home which is a true form of hospitality. Brethren can meet at a park or picnic area. There are numerous ways to enjoy fellowship, have food, and show hospitality without violating God's law by going to a restaurant on the Sabbath.

"We Cause others to Work during the Feast of Tabernacles"

One minister said "If we are responsible for the labor of servers at a restaurant then, we are also responsible for hotel staff at the feast." This statement is blatantly untrue. The only people we are responsible for are those we require to work specifically for us, and the fact that it is a holy day does not allow us to transgress the law.

God commands us to keep His Feasts, but He also requires us to keep them holy by not doing business on His holy days. These two aspects of holy day and Sabbath observance are not difficult to fulfill. If there is staff at a hotel, we do not have to solicit their services during God's sacred time. We can take care of our payment before or after the holy day. We can put a "Do not disturb" sign on our door. We can get a room with a kitchenette, or purchase food ahead of time.

The fact that staff is on hand during these times is not within our control. We are not responsible for their behavior

if we do not ask them to work for us. However, there is someone that we are responsible for—ourselves! What we do on the Sabbath and holy days is a direct reflection of our commitment to God.

"Refusing to Dine out on the Sabbath is Chauvinism"

A minister referred to the authors of *The Sabbath Test,* saying:

> "These critics seek to make the Sabbath a burden, especially upon the women. They fail to recognize that their misguided zeal in not adding to the burdens of restaurant employees on the Sabbath automatically transfers over to their wives, mothers and daughters who labor in cooking, re-heating, setting up tableware, etc. Like chauvinists these critics do not take into consideration the fact that their wives, mothers, and daughters would appreciate an opportunity to occasionally have their burdens lightened on the Sabbath. Ironically, the critics give this consideration to the restaurant employees—unbelievers who have no regard for, or understanding of, this holy time!"

While this man admits that women cooking and serving food on the Sabbath is a burden, he has chosen to disregard the reason God put the man in charge of the family. It was not to be waited on by his wife and children on the Sabbath. His authority was established to maintain God's doctrine in the home (1Tim. 2:11-14). As the head of the household, no man should allow his wife, mother, daughter, or anyone to work for his family by preparing meals during the Sabbath.

The Almighty states that the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall not do any work. Not you or any of your household! (Exo. 20:10). How could this "minister" think that by not dining out at

restaurants on the Sabbath he is requiring women of his household to work? If this is the case, he is abrogating his position as husband and father.

God defines requiring people to work for us on the Sabbath as a sin. If this man requires his wife to cook him food on the Sabbath, taking his family to a restaurant is simply trading one sin for another! If he truly desired to remove the burden of cooking food on the Sabbath, why not help with the preparation on the day God designated?

We have to wonder—who is really the chauvinist here? For example, why would this man choose to take his wife out on God's time, but not on his own time? This is a prime example of vain human reasoning. If one feels that they simply must have restaurant food on the Sabbath, they can simply purchase food to take out before the Sabbath begins.

This irrational excuse completely ignores the preparation day. The reason God designated a day to prepare for the Sabbath was to see if we will walk in His law or not (Exo. 16:4). This ancient question still stands today. Will we keep the Sabbath holy or not? Sadly, for many of God's people the answer seems to be the same reply that dissenters gave to Jeremiah:

> *As for* the word that you have spoken to us in the name of the LORD, we will not listen to you! But we will certainly do whatever has gone out of our own mouth (Jeremiah 44:16-17).

"Not Doing Business on the Sabbath is a Jewish Tradition"

One group insinuated that not doing business on Sabbath was self-righteous and Pharisaical by stating:

> "The Sanhedrin prohibited all forms of buying, selling, trading, and other commerce for a variety of reasons. The Jewish rules declared the Sabbath must be a day when all business stops… Jesus Christ did not support the many rules and

> regulations developed by the Sanhedrin to legislate Sabbath observance. He denounced many of these traditions… This should give us reason to pause when it comes to Jewish rules and regulations concerning Sabbath observance."

This group is trying to compare the fourth commandment to various traditions of the Jewish sects, but they are missing a vital point. Refusing to buy, sell, and trade on the Sabbath is not a Jewish tradition. If it were, we would have reason to pause. But the truth is—refusing to buy and sell is not tradition! Christ never denounced the Sanhedrin for not allowing business on the Sabbath. He did not reprimand anyone for keeping the Ten Commandments as they were written.

There is something vitally important that must be understood. Today, many believe a Pharisee is an individual who is too strict in keeping God's law. However, Christ defined them in a different way, saying:

> *All too* well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition (Mark 7:9).

Christ did not criticize the religious leaders for being too strict in observing God's law. He did not chastise anyone for strictly observing the Sabbath. His critique was for keeping their man-made traditions instead of God's commandments. However, in the case where the Sanhedrin made rules that prevented buying and selling on the Sabbath, these rules were not their own tradition. They were based directly on the words and examples of Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Nehemiah, and God Himself.

The issue was plain and clear to these faithful biblical leaders. They warned people not to do business or buy provisions on the Sabbath. The instructions were not to carry burdens related to business, and not to cause others to work

on the Sabbath or holy days. The definition of the fourth commandment has always included these conditions.

Today people try to blur the lines, re-define the terms, and justify themselves in their breaking of God's law. In fact, this excuse may be one of the greatest examples of irony you will ever find. It points at those who advocate keeping God's law and accuses them of following traditions. Ironically, going to restaurants on the Sabbath is entirely a man-made tradition. Nowhere does the Bible indicate that we are allowed to pay others to work for us on the Sabbath. Therefore, those who use this excuse are actually the ones being Pharisaical. They are following a tradition started by the Protestant community who teach that we do not have to obey God's law as long as we profess love for Him. On Sunday they go to a church service and then to a restaurant afterward. We must not follow the error of this group who, like the Pharisees, put their tradition before the commandment of God.

Dining Out Is Like Going to a Healthcare Facility

One congregation wrote that going to a restaurant on the Sabbath is equivalent to being in a hospital or nursing home. In their diatribe against *The Sabbath Test*, they wrote that members can call 911 on the Sabbath and go to a hospital for healthcare. Therefore, a true Christian should be able to call a restaurant for reservations and go to a restaurant.

In a second aspect of their excuse, they state that a Church member in a hospital or convalescent home is served food and charged for the meals they eat on the Sabbath. Therefore, Church members can eat at restaurants and pay for the food on any Sabbath they want.

We take enormous exception to this logic. When it comes to the fee for meals in hospitals or nursing homes, it is never paid on the Sabbath. In fact, the accounting department is closed on Saturday. Further, any kind of hospital care falls under a different category of work. It is an ox in a ditch. As Christ answered his accusers:

> Which of you, having a donkey or an ox that has fallen into a pit, will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day? (Luke 14:5).

The Savior made it clear that we can do work necessary to save life or property on the Sabbath. He also explained that healing the sick falls into this same category (Mark 3:1-5). Such incidences should only be considered emergencies and are something to be avoided. They are not the rule, and never to be anticipated.

This principle shows us that there may be times when it is lawful to call for an ambulance or buy food on the Sabbath when life or property is in jeopardy. For example, if a diabetic has become weak and disoriented, we can get these individuals something to eat, or if necessary, call for assistance. These life-threatening circumstances fulfill the ox in a ditch principle. However, in no way does this mean that we can dine at restaurants on the Sabbath and be blameless. There is no legitimate comparison.

It is shocking to see ministers blur the difference between emergency situations and matters of pleasure. God does not accept such rationalizations and neither should we. Someone's home might be a convalescent facility. They may be unable to exercise control over their lives, and the cost for their care is automatically charged. However, this condition does not provide an excuse for healthy people to hire chefs and waiters to cook and serve them on the Sabbath.

"If It Feels Right, It Can't Be Wrong"

Well known female vocalist Debbie Boone wrote a famous song that stated, "It can't be wrong, when it feels so right." Sadly, some in the Church of God have grafted this sentiment into the fourth commandment. As a well-known pastor stated:

> "Let's use the example of the recent elder's conference. If it were wrong for us to do the things that we did, and hire the hotel to do the things that they provided, then God would not have inspired anything that went on here. But you can ask anyone that was there. It was one of the most uplifting and moving Sabbaths that we have experienced in a long time... Between services we had a wonderful meal. If you were a curmudgeon and didn't believe in eating a meal out, why would you even come there? God blessed that!"

The reason this man's meeting felt good is because human nature enjoys freedom from God's law (Rom. 8:7). By hosting a conference and having servants cook and serve them, he preached a message that we are free from authority over us! However, this minister's self-righteousness is abhorred by God. Breaking and mocking the fourth commandment may feel good, and we may think our feelings are a sign of God's blessing, but ultimately it will yield no blessing from God!

If there is one thing the Eternal wants us to understand it is that we cannot trust our own feelings about what is right and wrong. Jeremiah recorded that "The heart *is* deceitful above all *things,* and desperately wicked; who can know it?" (Jer. 17:9) God also stated, "For My thoughts *are* not your thoughts, nor *are* your ways My ways" (Isa. 55:8). To think that God blesses meetings where people break the Sabbath is the same Protestant reasoning used to believe that God is with them in Christmas, Easter, and Sunday worship—simply because they feel good during these observances.

Instead of edifying God's people, this man is fulfilling the Scriptures regarding the end time. Today many ministers are verbally abusing others by calling them names while they eat and drink with those who are drunk on the false doctrines of this world (Mat. 24:48-49).

"Since We Don't Have Manna, We Can Dine Out"

Another church leader wrote that, because God does not give us manna today, the principles found in Exodus 16 do not apply to gathering and preparing other types of food in advance. He wrote:

> "By way of review, as manna was first given to Israel, the instructions were to gather enough manna on the sixth day to cover the Sabbath. Note that this instruction specifically applied to the gathering of manna—nothing else. Then, Exodus continued with further instructions to not gather manna on the Sabbath."

This man claims God's instructions regarding gathering and cooking food on the preparation day was only in effect when He provided Israel with manna. Once the manna ceased, he believes that people were free to gather and cook food whenever they wanted. As this minister continued to say:

> "Gleaning other food in order to fill one's hunger on the Sabbath was not forbidden for all time… You ask, 'Why would God allow his people to procure any food on his Sabbath when he actually prohibited the children of Israel from doing such a thing when they wandered in the Sinai desert?' The simple answer is that God does not deposit manna on our property six days a week."

In order to spread this outrageous opinion, this man must reject Paul's inspired insight that those things written of Israel are for our admonition (1Cor. 10:11). He must disregard the reason Israel only collected manna. It was because manna is all that God provided. Further, he must think that God no longer provides our daily bread today (Mat. 6:11). He must also believe that the terrible things that happened to Israel and

Judah were not largely the result of buying and selling on the Sabbath after the manna had stopped (Neh. 13:17-18; Jer. 17).

Does anyone honestly believe that if a person did not gather enough manna on the sixth day, he was allowed to slaughter and cook one of his sheep on the Sabbath? Of course not! This edict obviously applied to all food—not just manna. For example, in a unique situation, God gave Israel quail to eat on the preparation day; but it was not provided on the Sabbath (Exo. 16:12-16).

If such an excuse were true why doesn't the Bible record a change in the law? If God abrogated the preparation day He would have said so—but He did not. Many Jews and faithful Christians continue to observe the preparation day. The manna stopped, but the law did not end with it. To believe that preparing for the Sabbath ended when the manna ceased is likened to the belief that the commandments were done away when Christ died. Remember that God said we are to live by every word of the Eternal (Deu. 8:3; Mat. 4:4). He did not mean every word except those in Exodus 16.

God Only Condemns Shopping—Not Dining Out

A doctrinal committee claims that Nehemiah did not actually prohibit buying food on the Sabbath. Instead, they assert he was condemning the Jews for doing their weekly shopping. This team wrote that:

> "There is a huge difference between opening up a market or going to market on the Sabbath day and eating a meal in a restaurant."

While admitting that buying and selling on the Sabbath is wrong, to these men it is a matter of degree. They presumptuously proceed to place their own limits on the amount of food a person can buy. While they believe that a couple of hours having a meal, drinks, and dessert at a restaurant are permissible, two hours shopping at a market

would be a sin. This is tantamount to believing that sin is acceptable in moderation. To demonstrate how silly this logic is, consider a few scenarios using this irrational standard.

Working eight hours chopping wood on the Sabbath would be wrong, but working a few hours seated in an air-conditioned office would be acceptable. Watching a full-length pornographic movie would be wrong, but a few minutes would be permissible. While stealing large sum of money would violate the eighth commandment, skimming a few bucks would be alright. Can you see how irrational this line of thinking is? How could anyone imagine that buying a cart full of food on the Sabbath is wrong, but paying people to cook, serve, and clean up after a meal is permissible? What if the entire congregation decided to go out to the same restaurant on the Sabbath as some do on high holy days? Would this quantity of food being purchased be enough to call it a sin, or would these individuals simply redefine their terms of how much food is permissible? Making such judgments is not only wrong; it is obviously self-serving!

God draws a line regarding Sabbath activity. Where do these people draw their line? This committee continued:

> "Nehemiah saw people treading grapes on the Sabbath—working in clear violation of the Sabbath command... They were loading up their produce and bringing it into Jerusalem to sell. They had again made the Sabbath a market day. All of these activities mentioned here dealt with a market day. This is not a restaurant nor does it have anything to do with eating a meal. It was a market day!"

Despite what these men state, notice the items mentioned: wine, grapes, figs, provisions (corn and other items of sustenance), fish and all kinds of goods. While these men attempt to deny any similarity between eating at a restaurant and an afternoon of shopping, consider the work necessary for restaurants to function on Saturday.

Restaurant employees must arrive early in the morning to begin their work day. They proceed to unload meat, vegetables, fruit, and grains from freezers and storage rooms. Chefs have to skin, peel, dice, shred, mix, bake, boil, fry, and grill multitudes of consumables. Dishes, cups, and flatware are continually washed, rinsed, and dried. Floors are mopped and vacuumed as food is dropped and spilled in the hustle and bustle of the restaurant. Bathrooms are cleaned and trash is continually hauled out to dumpsters. Then the restaurant charges their patrons money for the food and services supplied. This kind of activity is EXACTLY what Nehemiah spoke of.

There is one major difference, however, but it is not the amount of food that is sold. While both shopping and dining out are purchasing consumables, an eatery takes this sin even further than a market. They cook it for you, they serve it to you, and they clean up your mess. They actually cause more work to be done than is required at a market. Still, this group continued their dissent by stating that:

> "The prohibition was against setting up a market on the Sabbath or a holy day. There is no mention of eating or not eating on the Sabbath. The Jews had made the Sabbath a secular day in which it was acceptable to go to market."

Is this really what happened? Consider that Nehemiah was leading the Jewish people to reform, and his words were as follows:

> In those days I saw *people* in Judah treading wine presses on the Sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and loading donkeys with wine, grapes, figs, and all *kinds of* burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. And I warned *them* about the day on which they were selling provisions (Nehemiah 13:15).

These people were selling provisions. As explained in an earlier chapter, this term is the Hebrew *tsah-yid* which includes the definition of "lunch" (*Strong's,* H6718). Not only does *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* define "provisions" as lunch, consider the words used to describe the products. Although the vendors were selling many things, they also sold food that was cooked and food that could be consumed on the spot. For example, Jacob brought provisions for Isaac to eat. There is no question that cooking, cleaning, and serving were also occurring during what these dissenters claim was only a "market day." How could anyone think the Jews were doing weekly shopping when markets were open other days of the week?

In either case a vital question must be asked. What is the difference between buying food for a week or food for one meal? God did not set limits regarding the amount of food that may be cooked on the Sabbath. He said they were not to cook anything (Exo. 16:23). God did not say that we can do some work, or that your neighbor's servants can work for you. He said that no work shall be done by anyone. In like manner, Nehemiah did not say that the people were permitted to purchase a meal, but could not do weekly shopping. He forbade every aspect of buying and selling! As he stated:

> *If* the peoples of the land brought wares or any grain to sell on the Sabbath day, **we would not buy it from them** on the Sabbath, or on a holy day (Nehemiah 10:31).

Why can't we see the obvious? Israel went into captivity for disobeying God and buying and selling on the Sabbath (Neh. 13:17-18). Many members of the end time Church will also go into captivity (Luke 21:24; Dan. 12:7: Rev. 12:17). The evidence suggests that those who try to rationalize this practice of doing business on the Sabbath are risking a similar fate.

Can We Disregard Nehemiah?

A prominent Church of God organization said that we cannot take the principle found in the book of Nehemiah seriously because we cannot close the gates to our cities on the Sabbath. They wrote:

> "Nehemiah's reaction to those who violated the Sabbath came at a time when the civil power controlled keeping of the Sabbath. We do not live in such a time today. Obviously there are aspects of Nehemiah's conduct that cannot be applied directly to our lives today. We must be careful when extracting principles and not jump to conclusions in our comparisons to modern-day life when civil law is not in the hands of Sabbath keepers. One cannot transfer the events of that day to our day."

These people believe that, because the Church cannot enforce Sabbath observance on society, we can join them in their sin. This is a terrible and insincere distortion of the truth. There is not an ounce of biblical truth in their words.

While we cannot enforce the Sabbath on others, we are more than capable of enforcing this commandment on ourselves. We were given the Spirit of God for this very reason; to discern between the unclean and the clean—good and evil. Each one of us is capable of enforcing God's law on ourselves. We recognize the ungodly ways of this world, and we can choose not to partake of its sins. For this reason, Christ admonished us to "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues (Rev. 18:4).

What has happened to the common, biblical sense of God's people? Why do we refuse to see the problem? What is preventing us from accepting the fact that sin of any kind, or to any degree, is wrong? Why do we continue to look for insincere, fabricated loopholes instead of taking God's word literally and striving to keep His Sabbath holy?

"Construction Zones are like Restaurants"

One person tried to use the apples to oranges comparison stating:

> "Those who do not dine out on the Sabbath are hypocrites. Suppose that, while driving your car on the Sabbath, you approach a highway construction site en route to services. As you draw near, a flagman waves for you to stop. Then, a few minutes later, he waves you on through the construction zone. By driving through the work zone you caused extra labor for the flagman.
>
> Though it might not be proportionate to the work that restaurant employees do in accommodating additional customers, the fact remains that you caused the flagman an extra measure of work—thus making him break the Sabbath. If one truly opposed eating out on the Sabbath on the grounds that extra labor is produced on our behalf, then he would be obliged to bypass all construction zones during Sabbath time."

According to this reasoning, circumstances outside our ability to control, such as a flagman, gives us the right to hire restaurant staff and break the Sabbath with them. It doesn't take a genius to realize that these two situations are vastly different. Using this man's stream of logic, consider a similar situation.

Imagine you were an Israelite during the time of the Exodus and God told you to prepare your food on the sixth day and not cook or do any work on the Sabbath. You personally witnessed a man being stoned for gathering sticks in order to cook food on the Sabbath. However, the next Sabbath you wake up to find your children missing! You step outside your tent and ask your neighbor if he had seen them. He points in the direction that he saw them go and you retrieve your children.

According to this religious leader's ridiculous logic, you caused your neighbor to work on the Sabbath by lifting his arm. Therefore, since you supposedly caused him to sin, you are now justified in ignoring the preparation day. You can proceed to search for food, create a fire, and cook it on the Sabbath. In addition, you are now able to hire people to cook and serve you your meals. Honestly brethren, human logic doesn't get much sillier than this. We ask the question; who is truly the hypocrite?

"Paying a Toll Road Is the Same as Paying a Restaurant"

Another minister put a twist on the flagman theory by comparing toll roads to restaurants:

> "When I cross a toll bridge on the Sabbath, I have to pay that fee and I am hiring that individual so I can get through... This is no different than paying a restaurant."

The excuse attempts to use the same lie that we can mix things outside our control with those that are within our control. However, toll bridges, road construction crews, law enforcement, and emergency personnel are not within our ability to control. We cannot avoid many of these services, and God does not expect us to attempt managing people outside our authority. We cannot tell these workers to stop providing their services on the Sabbath. In these cases we simply have no influence, but that does not mean we have no choice.

God will not condemn us for paying a toll if we are unable to avoid it. But He will judge us on those things we can circumvent. Therefore, if this man knew there was a toll on the route he took to services He should put obedience to the fourth commandment before his own comfort. He could easily rearrange his route to by-pass the toll on the Sabbath. Or, as most people do, he could purchase a monthly or even a yearly pass ahead of time. However, if the circumstance existed in

which there was no way to by-pass the toll, and the situation was out of his control, he would have no choice and would therefore be blameless.

But that is the entire point! When it comes to frequenting restaurants, we do have a choice! Dining out is completely within our ability to control. We can choose whether to employ their services or not. God says do not buy or sell on the Sabbath. He says do not cook, and do not have others work for you. If we choose to eat at restaurants on the Sabbath, then we are knowingly and willingly breaking the fourth commandment.

Does Refusing to Dine Mean We Can't Leave Our Homes?

A well-known minister claimed that we cannot take Exodus 16 literally because verse 29 would mean that "you cannot even leave your homes on the Sabbath." He went on to say that those who oppose going to restaurants:

> "...really and truly advocate just staying at home. We need to love the brethren as Christ has loved us! If you are strapped down at home how are you ever going to learn to love the brethren?"

This minister knows full well that the Eternal Church of God does not advocate forsaking the assembly of ourselves. He also knows that God did not tell Israel they could never leave their tents on the Sabbath. God was not refusing them the opportunity of relieving themselves the entire day. He did not deny them the opportunity to come together to worship on that day. The Israelites were expected to convoke on the Sabbath (Lev. 23:3). They left their tent to assemble before the Tabernacle in the wilderness, and later Israel went to the Temple and congregated at various synagogues. The context is clearly food preparation. They were not to go out of their place for the purpose of acquiring food. God gave them what

they needed on the sixth day, and they were told to prepare it before the Sabbath to be free of any work on the seventh day.

In addition, this minister's accusation reeks of irony. While he accuses others, he is the one who recommends that people stay at home. In fact, he has built an entire website for the purpose of encouraging people to stay home and watch his "Church at Home" videos.

Further, this excuse completely disregards the context of Exodus 16. Consider the intent of God's words:

> Now it happened *that some* of the people went out on the seventh day to gather, but they found none. And the LORD said to Moses, "How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My laws? See! For **the LORD has given you the Sabbath; therefore He gives you on the sixth day bread for two days**. Let every man remain in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day" (Exodus 16:27-30).

This minister is fully aware that this passage is not telling us to stay at home on Sabbath. Anyone who teaches people that it does, and that we cannot take Exodus 16 literally, is wresting the Scriptures from their context while both adding and taking away from God's Word. This is a clear transgression of God's command (Deu. 12:32).

"Some Products Are Made On Sabbath, So We Dine Out"

One group wrote that when we shop during the week, some of the goods we buy were produced on Sabbath. Therefore, they stated:

> "We do not consider eating out on the Sabbath as paying for the fruit of sacrilege. Much of the food sold in grocery stores may have been harvested or packaged on the Sabbath. These products would also be the fruit of their sacrilege."

Once again, another group attempts to force two different situations into a single mold in order to make them appear as if they are the same. They are telling people that if we purchase groceries during the week that were unknowingly processed on Saturday, then we can deliberately seek out unbelievers and pay them to work for us on the Sabbath.

This group is making two major mistakes. First, they believe the sin of a manufacturer gives us a free pass to sin. Evidently, they never learned the truism that—two wrongs do not make a right. Second, while we are sure that processing food on the Sabbath is sacrilege, we are just as certain that purchasing this food during the first six days of the week is not.

This situation is much like Paul's advice regarding meat offered to idols. We don't have to ask when it was processed. The processing of food on the Sabbath is not within our control. However, as Paul indicated, if we are aware that a particular product was produced on the Sabbath, we should not purchase it (1Cor. 10:25-28).

Understanding the apostle's principle, paying restaurant staff to cook and serve us food on the Sabbath is within our control. We know that these workers transgress the Sabbath in order to serve people food, and we are told to not partake of their sin. The fact that farmers or market employees unknowingly transgresses the Sabbath does not justify knowingly, and deliberately, violating it.

"Restaurants Are God's Gift to Sabbath Keepers"

In a letter to the authors of this book, a Church member wrote that:

> "Eating out is God's gift to us for Sabbath-keeping. How awful for you, to call this blessed beneficial, God-bestowed privilege for the appreciation of His holy Sabbath a symbol of slavery and captivity!

> May God have mercy on you and lead you to sounder thinking."

The children of Israel were enslaved in Egypt which was a type of bondage to sin. God miraculously freed them from this terrible condition. In doing so, He commanded that they remember their slavery when keeping the Sabbath:

> And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day (Deuteronomy 5:15).

Like Israel, we were once enslaved to sin (Rom. 6:16). During that period of our lives, we worked on the Sabbath. However, we have been called out of that way of life and now realize that Christ died to free us from that slavery. We have been called to liberty, and each Sabbath God wants us to remember our previous slavery, cherish the freedom we have been offered, and celebrate that freedom by keeping the Sabbath holy.

Those who work in a restaurant on the Sabbath are still trapped in slavery to sin. Consequently, they work on this day. Does any true Christian honestly believe that it is a blessing from God to have people work for us on His Sabbath while we enjoy its rest?

Those who believe such a thing are like the ancient Israelites who wanted to return to Egypt because they missed the foods they enjoyed while in slavery. What takes place in restaurants on the Sabbath is a sin.

How could any converted individual feel that God is bestowing sin for His people to enjoy, and that we should take pleasure in it? It is a slap in God's face from those who were freed from sin to return to that sin on the very day He gave us to celebrate our liberation from it. It is as if God's people now want to take the position of the Egyptian

taskmaster, requiring others to sin by working for them and serve them for their benefit.

Finally, it is an abomination of the highest degree to encourage other Christians to join in this sin and then call it a "God-bestowed privilege." As Isaiah wrote:

> Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! (Isaiah 5:20).

"Paul Changed the Law So We Can Dine Out on Sabbath"

A doctrinal committee concluded that Paul must have changed the law when permitting gentiles to eat meat offered to idols. They believe his advice to the Corinthians gives us permission to dine out on the Sabbath. This team of "experts" wrote that:

> "Paul permitted the eating of meat offered to idols under different circumstances. Therefore, they (Christians) were not an accessory to the sins committed while the food was prepared."

First of all, Paul made it clear that he kept the law of Christian faith (Acts 24:14). Paul could not, and did not, change the Church ruling on meat offered to idols. Further, Paul's writings regarding meat offered to idols have no legitimate connection to the Sabbath. Perhaps this is why this committee stated that it was "under different circumstances." The example that these men try to use was a completely different situation than their proposed excuse for dining out on the Sabbath.

The Church in Corinth knew the conference ruling of Acts 15. They understood that merchants sometimes mixed meat offered to idols with their regular stock. Christians were often unsure if the meat in the marketplace had been used in idol worship and were therefore reluctant to buy it. Brethren asked Paul how they should handle this situation.

Paul did not abandon the decision made in the Acts conference. Instead, he explained how to apply the decision made there. The idol was actually nothing. Therefore, unknowingly eating such meat was not a sin. However, if brethren knew it was offered to an idol, they should not eat it. Paul wrote to them, saying:

> Eat whatever is sold in the meat market, asking no questions for conscience' sake; for "the earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness." If any of those who do not believe invites you *to dinner,* and you desire to go, eat whatever is set before you, asking no question for conscience' sake. **But if anyone says to you, "This was offered to idols," do not eat it** for the sake of the one who told you, and for conscience' sake; for "the earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness" (1 Corinthians 10:25-28).

Compare this situation to eating out on the Sabbath. We know we are to prepare our food on the sixth day. We know we are NOT to have others labor for us. We know we should not do business on the Sabbath. We know this because the Scriptures tell us so!

If we want to apply Paul's advice to our situation, the comparison yields an opposite conclusion to that of this doctrinal team. In other words, if someone brings us food that was purchased or cooked on Sabbath, and we do NOT know it, and eat, this is not a sin. On the other hand, if we are offered food that we know has been cooked, served, and paid for on the Sabbath, we are NOT to eat. Based on Paul's example, we know what occurs in a restaurant, and it is clear, we should not dine out on the Sabbath.

Is it okay to Sin in Moderation?

Most who advocate doing business at a restaurant on the Sabbath imply that it is acceptable if done in moderation. After all, moderation and balance are aspects of Christian

character. However, nowhere does God say sin is acceptable in moderation.

Isn't this issue obvious? The fact that so many state that dining out on the Sabbath is acceptable in moderation shows us something. If there is something wrong with doing an act all the time, there must be something wrong with doing it occasionally. After all, if it were occasionally acceptable why wouldn't it be acceptable every Sabbath? The truth is that it is NEVER acceptable.

We wonder why this statement itself is not a red flag to God's people. It is the very principle the Days of Unleavened Bread teach us. A little leaven leavens the whole lump, and a little compromise leads to greater compromise. In time people will push the envelope and do other commercial interests during holy time. The Bible does not teach Sin in moderation, and such a practice can render a person unfit for God's Kingdom.

"Dining Out Is a Personal Choice"

One fellowship stated that dining out on Sabbath is a matter of conscience. They claim that it is only a personal conviction and not a biblical mandate. They wrote:

> "The issue of eating out on the Sabbath has been raised occasionally over the years. Clearly Christianity involves personal choice for conscience sake."

This statement is absolutely wrong! We only have personal choice over issues that are not sin. We CANNOT presume to choose for ourselves what is right or wrong. We do not have the authority or the inherent moral compass to make such decisions. That is why God gave us His moral law.

This is the same mistake Adam and Eve made. We are clearly not to lean to our own understanding (Pro. 3:5). God gave us specific commandments to follow. One of those

commandments was not to cook on the Sabbath, work, or cause others to work for us. This is not a matter of choice. The only choice we have is to obey God or not. This fellowship continued to write:

> "The Apostle Paul took the position that he would not eat meat if it would cause someone to stumble. To eat or not to eat meat was a choice that he could make. The act itself was not a matter of sin. There was no reason to force or cause someone to feel badly if he, for conscience sake, felt he could not eat meat that had been offered to an idol."

This view is absolutely backwards! To eat meat offered to an idol was not a personal choice that Paul could make. He could eat meat offered to an idol only if he did not know it was offered to an idol. If he knew it was used in this way, he had no choice—he could not eat it. This was for the sake of the other person's conscience, not his own.

Paul would not eat meat if he knew it was offered to an idol. This is a plain and simple fact (1Cor. 10:28). He also would not eat any meat in the presence of a vegetarian if it would be offensive to them (Rom. 14). Paul was not like those who purposefully seek to justify dining out on the Sabbath by wresting the Scriptures and confusing the issue in order to justify their personal desires. Tragically, unlike the Apostle Paul, they eat at a restaurant if it offends others or not. They do what is their personal choice, even if it is abhorred by other Christians.

This must be understood. We cannot trust our own conscience. The conscience can be programmed to think wrong is right. When it comes to doctrine, we must program our conscience according to God's law and not place faith in our personal feelings.

Sadly, those who eat out on the Sabbath feel like they can trust their own conscience. They continue this practice because they enjoy it. By continuing to do it, in time, they sear

their conscience so that they feel it must be right. To avoid this trap, we must live only by God's Word and not according to our feelings. Remember the vital truth:

> There is a way *that seems* right to a man, But its end *is* the way of death (Proverbs 14:12).

We cannot keep God's commands according to our conscience. To illustrate this truth, consider that the Scriptures tell us that God will protect one Church era during the end time (Rev. 3:10). He allows Satan to go after a remnant of the Church that observes God's commandments (Rev. 12:17). This brings up an important question. Why is one group of commandment keepers forced to suffer while others are kept safe? What is the difference between these two? The answer is found in the way that they keep the commandments.

Those who suffer at the end are keeping the commandments according to their own standards. They believe that the way we keep the commandments is a matter of conscience. The problem is that those in this fellowship believe they are not breaking God's law by going to a restaurant on the Sabbath. They believe that if it doesn't bother them then it is not a sin. But consider this kind of thinking if applied to other commandments.

If it doesn't bother you to bow down before a statue of Baal, is it no longer violating the second commandment? Is watching a pornographic film a choice we are allowed to make? What about exaggerating the truth? Is that simply a matter of conscience? Such thinking is ludicrous!

"Selling on the Sabbath is a Sin, but Buying is not"

A doctrinal committee of one of the larger congregations concluded that doing business only involves providing services—not consuming them. They wrote:

> "Question: Aren't you participating in a business transaction when you eat out on the Sabbath? You most certainly will be expected to pay for the meal that you consume on the Sabbath. Answer: This is not running your business on the Sabbath. It is simply paying for the meal you received. There is nothing in Scripture that declares this act to be a violation of the Sabbath."

While these "experts" admit that selling products on the Sabbath is sin, they believe that buying them is not. If this were the case, we would also be able to have construction workers remodel our home. After all, it's not our business. We are not selling anything. We are only buying. Surely God approves of us having people work for us on the Sabbath, right? Wrong!

This excuse is another lie. While they claim that "There is nothing in Scripture that declares this act to be a violation of the Sabbath," the biblical record tells us otherwise. The fourth commandment clearly tells us to not have anyone work for us on the Sabbath—not even an unbeliever. When dining out, we place restaurant personnel within our gates. They are within our jurisdiction by the fact that we now control the work they are doing. During the period of time that we are their customers, they are working for us.

Further, Nehemiah faithfully upheld God's law and said not to buy on the Sabbath. He did not care if the gentiles bought from one another because he had no control over what they did outside of the city. His issue was that God's people were not to be their customers. Therefore, on the Sabbath day Nehemiah locked the merchants out of the city to prevent this sin.

A restaurant is a commercial business that sells products. They labor for the purpose of making money. It is their trade, it is work, and on the seventh day it violates the Sabbath. By using their services, we are joining them in their

sin. To this the Scriptures declare that "we would not buy it from them on the Sabbath, or on a holy day" (Neh. 10:31).

Going to Restaurants on the Sabbath Preaches the Gospel

One excuse we have repeatedly heard is that going to restaurants on the Sabbath "preaches the gospel to unbelievers." Those who use this excuse claim that the people in the restaurant see that our behavior is courteous and considerate. They see how our children are well behaved. They conclude that dining out on the Sabbath is actually a way to "let our light shine."

Such rationalizing is completely self-serving. To say that doing our own pleasure on the Sabbath preaches the good news of the Kingdom of God is simply an invalid attempt to justify their sin. Such reasoning could also be used to go shopping at a department store, a grocery market, or a used car lot. But why stop there? Why not preach the gospel by going to an amusement park or a bowling alley. Those who reason that this practice is fulfilling Christ's commission given to His Church have completely fooled themselves. Breaking God's fourth commandment reflects an example of disobedience. The truth is that going to such places on the Sabbath preaches AGAINST the gospel.

The Sabbath foreshadows God's Kingdom (2Pet. 3:8; Heb. 4:1-10; Acts 3:21). It will be a time when absolutely no restaurants will be open on the Sabbath. How could such blatant disregard for the Sabbath preach a message of a time when all will not buy or sell; all will not work, no one will have others work for them, and everyone will keep the Sabbath holy?

When Christ preached the gospel of the Kingdom, He said that people should repent of their lawlessness (Mark 1:15). Individuals who dine out on God's day openly break the Sabbath. Their example actually represents opposition to what the Kingdom portrays.

Those who use this reasoning should consider the words Christ promised to speak to those who rationalized His law. The Savior will say "I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness!" (Mat. 7:23).

It appears that the Church today includes vast numbers who do not want to believe that buying, selling, cooking food, and causing others to work on the Sabbath is breaking God's law. He has never accepted irrational excuses in the past, and He will not do so today or in the future. In that context, those who believe they are preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God by doing business on the Sabbath may end up absent from the very Kingdom they believe they are reflecting.

"Dining Out on the Sabbath Is an Ox in a Ditch"

There are some who claim they need to dine out because, in their words, "It is an ox in a ditch." This is a reference to Christ's statement after healing a man of a fatal illness. The Savior said:

> Which of you, having a donkey or an ox that has fallen into a pit, will not immediately pull him out on the Sabbath day? (Luke 14:5).

Christ gave us an example of what kinds of circumstances provide a valid reason for work on the Sabbath. It is to save life or property. Despite the dire circumstance presented in this example, members will suggest numerous situations in which they claim it is an ox in a ditch.

Some will not purchase fuel for their vehicle on Friday and claim it is an ox in the ditch when they buy gasoline on the Sabbath. Others will work up to the final moments and not give themselves time to prepare food and say "it is an ox in a ditch" when they go out to purchase food.

Think about this. What is more important? Keeping the Sabbath holy, or attending Church services? In recent years many have put a greater emphasis on attending services

than keeping the Sabbath. This pressures many to fabricate excuses. However, an ox in a ditch is something unforeseen, not something we neglected to prepare for. It is something to be dreaded—not anticipated and then enjoyed as we dine out at a restaurant.

It seems that the excuses, rationalizations, and self-justifications will never end. However, Christ's words show us that the only legitimate reasons to break the Sabbath are to save life or property. Nothing else justifies buying or selling on the Sabbath.

"Do Not Take Nehemiah's Words Too Seriously"

One minister gave a sermon in which he evaluated the caliber of certain books of the Bible. In regards to Nehemiah, he stated:

> "Christ chiefly spoke of the law and prophets. When looking at doctrine, we should primarily focus on the law and the prophets."

He proceeded to say that Nehemiah falls into the category of the writings which do not carry the same weight as these other two categories of the Bible. According to this man:

> "We do not need to pay a great deal of attention to Nehemiah's words."

Listening to this sermon was absolutely shocking. While this minister thinks we can skirt the restaurant issue by emphasizing the importance of the prophets over the writings, Christ powerfully stated that we are to live by every word of God—not just the ones we think are important (Mat. 4:4).

Further, the definition of a prophet reaches beyond one who is sent by God to foretell a future event. It refers to an inspired speaker. The prophets of old were individuals sent by

God to instruct or correct His people. Great men of faith such as Samuel, David, Ezra, and Nehemiah fall into this category.

In addition, the Savior taught His disciples those things written of Him in the law, the prophets, and the psalms (Luke 24:44). The Psalms are part of what we now call the writings, and it is clear that Christ gave them equal weight. However, if we think we can dine out at restaurants by only considering what the law and the prophets wrote, let's consider what the law states:

> Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day *is* the Sabbath of the LORD your God. *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 (Exodus 20:8-10).

The law certainly commands us to keep the Sabbath holy by not doing any work or causing others to work for us. Now let's consider what a prophet wrote:

> If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, *From* doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy *day* of the LORD honorable, and shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking *your own* words, then you shall delight yourself in the LORD (Isaiah 58:13-14).

The prophet Isaiah declared that we must not trample all over the Sabbath by doing our own pleasure, but that is exactly what people do when dining out on the Sabbath. They show God that we prefer to be catered to instead of utilizing His designated preparation day. Rather than calling the Sabbath a delight, by the act of dining out, many Church

members are showing God that they would rather delight in satisfying the flesh.

While this excuse tries to disregard biblical writings by great men of faith such as Nehemiah, what this minister doesn't want people to realize is that Nehemiah's writings repeatedly declare the exact same message recorded in the law and the prophets. For example, when Nehemiah spoke of not doing business on the Sabbath, he was alluding to the words of the prophet Jeremiah who wrote:

> Thus says the LORD: "Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the Sabbath day, nor bring *it* in by the gates of Jerusalem; nor carry a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath day, nor do any work, but hallow the Sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers" (Jeremiah 17:21-22).

This is no small warning! God grabs our attention by stating "Take heed to yourselves." The Hebrew word for "yourselves" is *nephesh* meaning YOUR LIFE! We should take note! God is warning the people if you desire to live, keep the Sabbath holy. Notice how a different translation puts it:

> This is what the LORD says: **Watch out! If you value your lives**, do not carry anything on the day of worship or bring it through the gates of Jerusalem (GW, Jeremiah 17:21).

Realize that God was not saying that we cannot carry anything on the Sabbath. For example, Christ told a man he could take up his bed and walk on this day. Likewise, we understand that carrying a coat, purse, Bible, or briefcase to services is permissible. So, what exactly was the burden God was speaking of? Jeremiah continued:

> But they did not obey nor incline their ear, but made their neck stiff, that they might not hear nor receive

> instruction. "And it shall be, if you heed Me carefully," says the LORD, "to bring no burden through the gates of this city on the Sabbath day, but hallow the Sabbath day, to do no work in it, then shall enter the gates of this city kings and princes sitting on the throne of David" (Jeremiah 17:23-25).

Bringing a burden through the gates is an expression for doing work and conducting business! It was acceptable to bring food for personal consumption, but they were taking their lives in their own hands if they brought items for business reasons. Jeremiah continued:

> But if you will not heed Me to hallow the Sabbath day, such as not carrying a burden when entering the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day, then I will kindle a fire in its gates, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched (Jeremiah 17:27).

The people of Judah profaned the Sabbath by bringing items into Jerusalem to sell on the Sabbath. As a result, God kindled a fire in Jerusalem. That fire devoured the palaces and many people. Others died of starvation. Even greater numbers were killed by Nebuchadnezzar's army. Those who lived through it were taken captive to Babylon for 70 years. Nehemiah was talking about these very verses when he warned the returning captives about buying and selling on the Sabbath, saying:

> Did not your fathers do thus, and did not our God bring all this disaster on us and on this city? Yet you bring added wrath on Israel by profaning the Sabbath (Nehemiah 13:18).

At the end of the age, some people must build character in a similar fire (Rev. 3:18). This is what happened

to Judah, and it is why Nehemiah protested the act of buying and selling on the Sabbath. All those things happened to them as an example for us (1Cor. 10:6) God is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb. 13:8). Profaning the Sabbath today will bring about the same result. We must not do business on the Sabbath. We must not treat it as a day to do our own pleasure.

"The Church Always Taught It Was Acceptable"

One large organization published an article stating that dining out on the Sabbath has always received a stamp of approval by the Church. They claim that the Church of God has "consistently taught that eating in a restaurant on the Sabbath was permissible." In an attempt to justify this belief, they quote Mr. Armstrong who said the following prior to a Bible study.

> "Now if you go out to a restaurant on the Sabbath, that restaurant is going to be there and that food is going to be prepared whether you go or not and the other people are going to be working anyway. They don't keep the Sabbath. They pay no attention to that. **Now I had never thought until this evening when the question was brought up to me** about whether it's wrong to go to a restaurant to eat. I know when I travel, I have to do it or do without. And so I do."

Before anyone can claim that Mr. Armstrong approved of this practice, we must first understand the context of his statement. When asked about this issue, it was five minutes prior to a Bible study he was to give on a separate subject. His reply came from an "off the cuff" perspective. He did not take the question home and study it before responding. He did not present it to the council of Elders and produce an article to the Church changing this doctrine. This fact is obvious from the

words "I had never thought until this evening when the question was brought up..."

In addition, Mr. Armstrong traveled the world visiting various leaders and dignitaries. In his case, he believed it was necessary to occasionally visit restaurants during the Sabbath or he would have to do without any food. Therefore, because he did it on occasion, he felt that it was probably permissible under certain circumstances. His unusual set of circumstances likely motivated his statement. However, over the years, these words led many brethren to believe that they can do business at a restaurant any time they want. This is simply human error.

We must recognize that the only man who was ever sinless was Christ. While Mr. Armstrong was an apostle, he was not without fault. All of the apostles have made mistakes. All grew in grace and knowledge over time. For example, Moses failed to tell the people that God gave them the water. At one time Elijah wanted to give up, and asked God to take his life. Peter had to be corrected by Paul regarding eating with gentiles. The Church came to an understanding of circumcision years after its beginning, and Paul mistakenly believed he was living during the end time.

In like manner, the apostle of our age modified his teachings as he came to a more complete understanding. Over decades he made changes to the church position on the doctrines of government, the destiny of mankind, divorce, remarriage, and Pentecost.

The Church of God is one of the only churches that admits wrong and changes when it finds the truth. We are told to prove all things, and hold fast to what is true (1Ths. 5:21). Our process of growth and understanding was not meant to stop when a leader died. Therefore, we are convinced that if Mr. Armstrong would have lived to this become an issue in our time, he would have agreed with our conclusion.

If this organization desires to teach that the Church of God always believed that we can dine out on the Sabbath by using an "off the cuff" statement, or a few other brief

comments by some ministers after 1982, they must consider the earlier article written to the Church by Roderick Meredith quoted at the beginning of this section of the book which states that this activity is unacceptable.

Further, we must also consider the most important, and long standing, principle taught by the apostle of our age. Mr. Armstrong continually told the Church "Don't believe me—believe your Bible—believe God!"

Christ is our King. God is the authority on Sabbath observance; not the Church and not any man. God's printed Word makes it absolutely clear that we are not to cause others to do work for us, contract labor, buy, sell, or dine out at restaurants on the Sabbath. Our question in this life is, just who are we going to follow—a man, a church, or God?

No End to the Arguments

These excuses are those that various ministers have published with the intent of undermining this book. Though it is possible to refute every one of them using the word of God, there will be no end to their arguments. If people wish to do something they will rationalize their behavior. Human nature is just as wicked as God says it is, and we cannot always know our own motives. We must challenge ourselves with the desire to accept the truth and do the will of God. If we do not, we fulfill the words of Christ who said:

> You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God (Luke 16:15).

Understand that this is exactly what all these excuses are. They are self-justifications pronounced by modern day Pharisees who have elevated their tradition above the Bible. They are all irrational lies that, when confronted with the Scriptures, do not make good sense.

There are many, powerful, and unambiguous Scriptures that make it obvious that we are not to do business on the Sabbath. However, there is not one verse allowing such a practice.

Those who attempt to use God's Word to defend the practice of dining out on the Sabbath wrest and twist holy writ in order to make their rationalizations appear reasonable. It is certain that more excuses will come, but not one will be true, and such excuses will not be accepted by God.

We are living in the Church era of Laodicea and the name is certainly fitting. It means the people judge, or a people fit for judgment (*Strong's*, G2992; G1349). Today the people of God are judging how God's law should be kept. They are using human reasoning and personal desire to judge matters.

As the Scriptures foretell, ministers are eating and drinking with the drunken. But who are the drunken? They are those who profess to believe in God and the Bible, but are drunk on the false doctrines of the whore. Church leaders are being affected by her blasphemous practices. Her worshipers attend services on Sunday and go out to restaurants afterwards.

We must not be misled by these lies, or any other excuses. We must not have anything to do with the practice of frequenting restaurants. We cannot excuse ourselves from God's command to keep the Sabbath holy. When it comes to God's law, we cannot trust our feelings. We must trust His written word. So let's strive to keep God's Word that states:

> Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it;
> you shall not add to it nor take away from it
> (Deuteronomy 12:32).

Do not believe any of these irrational lies.

Scriptures Prohibiting Business on the Sabbath

And so it was, on the sixth day, *that* they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for each one. And all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. Then he said to them, "This *is what* the LORD has said: 'Tomorrow *is* a Sabbath rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD. Bake what you will bake *today,* and boil what you will boil; and lay up for yourselves all that remains, to be kept until morning (Exodus 16:22-23).

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day *is* the Sabbath of the LORD your God. *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 (Exodus 20:8-10).

You shall keep the Sabbath, therefore, for *it is* holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does *any* work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people. 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 (Exodus 31:14-15).

Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 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 ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your cattle, nor your stranger who *is* within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you (Deuteronomy 5:12-14).

Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day *is* a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work *on it;* it *is* the Sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings (Leviticus 23:3).

If the peoples of the land brought wares or any grain to sell on the Sabbath day, we would not buy it from them on the Sabbath, or on a holy day (Nehemiah 10:31).

Men of Tyre dwelt there also, who brought in fish and all kinds of goods, and sold *them* on the Sabbath to the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem. Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said to them, "What evil thing *is* this that you do, by which you profane the Sabbath day? Did not your fathers do thus, and did not our God bring all this disaster on us and on this city? Yet you bring added wrath on Israel by profaning the Sabbath" (Nehemiah 13:16-18).

If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, *from* doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy *day* of the LORD honorable, and shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking *your own* words, then you shall delight yourself in the LORD; and I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the LORD has spoken (Isaiah 58:13-14).

Thus says the LORD: "Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the Sabbath day, nor bring *it* in by the gates of Jerusalem; nor carry a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath day, nor do any work, but hallow the Sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers" (Jeremiah 17:21-22).

Hallow My Sabbaths, and they will be a sign between Me and you, that you may know that I *am* the LORD your God. Notwithstanding, the children rebelled against Me; they did not walk in My statutes, and were not careful to observe My judgments, which, *if* a man does, he shall live by them; but they profaned My Sabbaths (Ezekiel 20:20-21).

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