

KNOX THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

**BEYOND THE SABBATH'S SHADOW:
A BIBLICAL UNDERSTANDING AND APPLICATION
OF GODLY REST**

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To my parents, Larry and Eleanor.
You've paid for much of my education.
In return you get this... and a "participation trophy"!

Thank you so much for being great parents and grandparents.
You've done well... now get some rest!

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Introduction

The Sabbath¹ is a confusing concept. It was introduced with the creation of the world in Genesis (Gen. 2:2-3). It is reapplied at the giving of manna in the wilderness (Exod. 16:22-23). It becomes the longest of the ten commandments (Exod. 20:8-11). It is expanded within the festivals of the Lord (Lev. 25). The Sabbath concept is applied to entire years within the Jewish calendar (Lev. 27) and eventually even to a land that people inhabited (Josh. 21:43-44). Jesus interacted with the Sabbath and challenged peoples' understanding of it (Matt. 12:8). The author of Hebrews invites believers to consider a Sabbath that remains even to this day (Heb. 4:9). What remains to this day is the question? What part of the OT teaching still applies? Is there something more? While not everyone has an opinion, the concept of the Sabbath is still relevant to the church... but to negotiate the Sabbath landscape can be a difficult and confusing task for the twenty-first century follower of Christ.

The confusion surrounding the Sabbath has led to many questions from pastors and laity alike. What does it really mean to say that God rested on the seventh day? Does the OT Sabbath apply to the NT church? If so, what day is it? Is Sunday the new Christian Sabbath? Is it a twenty-four hour period of time or can that rest be randomly split up into smaller chunks as believers see fit? Does it really have to do with physical rest at all? Is not our true rest somehow found in Jesus? Questions surrounding how the church should define and interact with the Sabbath seem perhaps more numerous now

¹ For consistency, I have chosen to capitalize every instance of the word "Sabbath" in this project. This includes all mentions in cited quotations even if it differs from the original.

than ever before. This confusion has caused many within the church to practically abandon any connection to, or observance of, a Sabbath. Yet, in Hebrews chapter four the author reminds us that, even today, there is some aspect of the Sabbath that remains relevant to the church. To what is the author of Hebrews alluding? However one chooses to interpret this instruction, abandoning the Sabbath concept cannot be an appropriate response. It is time the church takes a closer look at the Sabbath, both its theology and implications, so the next generation will find relevance in rest.

This project will discuss the current problem by summarizing several modern-day understandings and applications of the Sabbath. While a minority within the church might attempt to return to a strict OT definition, others say that the Christian Sabbath has been fulfilled with a move to Sunday worship. Some feel the particular day is not important and some have gone so far as to disregard the topic altogether. As Donato points out, “The Christian church, from at least the time of the sixteenth century (and probably before the eighth century or thereabouts), no longer shares a single set of fundamental assumptions with respect to the Sabbath question.”²

The Sabbath rest, first introduced in the creation account in Genesis, is further defined and expanded in the Mosaic Law. The obligation of NT believers to the Mosaic law has been a point of confusion since the cross event. Early believers in Christ struggled to understand their relationship to the law in many regards. Circumcision, dietary laws, and temple sacrifices, each had to be reexamined in light of the cross of Christ. A believer’s response to these today, in light of the cross, is much different than

² Christopher John Donato, et al, *Perspectives on the Sabbath*. (Nashville: B&H, 2011), introduction.

the previously understood OT application. Recently, a renewed interest by some believers in the “Hebrew roots” of the Christian faith has caused some to reexamine the Church’s relationship to various aspects of the OT Law. One of the more complex topics being revisited in this discussion is the Sabbath. Is the OT concept something that God still expects us to practice? Are we expected to return to a Friday night to Saturday night observance of physical rest from labor? Or is the OT Sabbath practice, like circumcision, dietary laws, and temple sacrifices, something that pointed NT believers to a deeper understanding and a different practice?

This project attempts to present a holistic view of the theology of the Sabbath and will identify “physical rest” for the body as only a shadow of the solution for the larger problem of a soul at work. It supposes that if pastors are distracted by trying to figure out, practice, and distribute rules and regulations of a one-in-seven day of physical rest, the Church will likewise be preoccupied. A church preoccupied with a type will rarely have enough organization and energy to see through the physical example and experience the spiritual truth that lies beyond. This project will encourage the Church to look past the particularity of “physical rest” to a deeper question. How is it that we work and find rest in the spiritual realm for our souls?

Hebrews chapters three and four not only address this deeper question, but also prescribes practical direction that can lead NT believers to appropriate application. In large part, the Church is missing the breadth, depth, and beauty of Christ’s easy yoke. If there were ever a time where resting was both counter cultural and spiritually needed, it is

now. It is time for a renewed interest in, teaching about, and living out a more practical perspective of God's Sabbath rest.

Part I

Understanding the Modern-Day Sabbath Within Evangelicalism

Chapter 1

The Believer's Relationship to the Mosaic Law

The fundamental issue, in regards to the question of the Sabbath, is how one views the OT Law of Moses¹ and to what extent it still applies to NT believers. Jesus said, “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill (Matt. 5:17-19).² This statement has led some in the church to conclude that all of the law applies to NT believers. Interestingly enough, Jesus’ “fulfillment of the law” has lead others to the exact opposite conclusion... that no part of the law applies today. Still others think the OT law contained different categories and that only certain parts of that law are applicable today. Williamson, a dispensational writer, explains his understanding this way:

Several Mosaic commands, including nine of the Ten Commandments, are repeated to the church, but their status has changed. When the New Testament repeats a law it thus becomes a commandment for believers, to be obeyed as a command of Christ. But the validity and authority as a command comes from the New Testament and not the Old Testament. When, however, the New Testament nullifies a command, it is still God’s word. As such, it still demands a response, a response that reflects the same principle, but expressed in a way appropriate to the new dispensation. The results have produced several different ideas about how we are to interact with the Sabbath.³

¹ When referring to the Law of Moses (Mosaic Law, Law) I reference the whole of the Mosaic legislation as contained in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. This was understood in the OT as one piece of legislation (1 Kings 2:3, 2 Kings 23:25, Ezra 3:2) even though it can also be described in smaller parts; Book of the Covenant (Ex. 24:3-7), the Deuteronomistic Code (Deut. 12-26), and the Holiness Code (Lev. 17-27). This understanding will apply to any mention of the OT Law throughout this project. J.I. Packer, Merrill Chapin Tenney, and William White Jr., *Nelson's Illustrated Manners and Customs of the Bible* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1997), 383.

² All Scripture quotations are taken from the *New American Standard Bible* version unless otherwise noted, The Lockman Foundation, 1995.

³ Joel T. Williamson Jr., “The Sabbath and Dispensationalism,” *Journal of Dispensational Theology* Volume 11, no. 32 (2007): 92.

Before tackling the specific question of the Sabbath, one of the fundamental choices believers face is how they are going to respond to the OT. Specifically, what relationship do Christians have to the Mosaic Law? It is an old question asked by each generation since the foundations of the NT Church. Schmidtbleicher follows the question back to the apostles, “The relationship of the NT to the Law of the OT is an important issue discussed and disputed by the church since the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15.”⁴

Individuals within the church may not understand the need for a consistent way to approach this genre, and often do not have any type of organization or process in place to apply to such passages. In general, the Church expects a method of interpretation that requires direction mostly (if not solely) from Scripture. It is in Scripture one should expect to find the answer even to the question at hand about the Mosaic Law. How should the Church understand its relationship to the OT law?

Even the most elementary of Bible students is faced with the reality of how much of the Law is quoted, discussed, and expounded upon in the NT. A simple Bible with good cross-references will show this. For lack of a broader understanding, one might attempt to examine each individual text as a stand-alone situation. This can lead to an uneven and inconsistent theological application. What seems to be an upholding of the law in one context, could be negated by another text that seemingly tears it right back down again. A brief look into different approaches people use to determine the role of the Law in the life of a believer reveals the complexity of attaining a unified understanding of the Sabbath in modern times. It is quickly understood that a general hermeneutic is needed to give

⁴ Paul R. Schmidtbleicher, “Law in the New Testament,” *Chafer Theological Seminary Journal* Volume 99, no. 2 (2003): 50.

guidance and structure when approaching the understanding of the Mosaic Law. With this in place we will be better equipped to approach our topic of the Sabbath, which is largely found within the Law. It will also help give a broader context to understand how the Sabbath is most often treated in modern evangelical settings.

Craig Blomberg, in his chapter in the book *Perspectives on the Sabbath*,⁵ suggests that there are generally five different ways believers approach the role of the Mosaic Law in their lives. None of these approaches are exclusive to any one denomination, although each could, at times, be “generally” associated with one or two larger groups. Each of these views have positive problem-solving aspects to help people negotiate many of the dilemma’s faced as they approach the OT Law. There is also a sense that most of the views fall short in some way. I will briefly describe each of Blomberg’s helpful distinctions.

The first approach suggests that the whole of the OT law does not apply to believers unless the NT either endorses it or somehow repeats its instruction.⁶ While this approach alleviates the Christian’s obligation to most of those seemingly obscure instructions in the OT, it does not allow for the continuation of other moral imperatives that are not repeated in the NT. In other words, this view would thankfully allow believers to plant beans and pumpkins in their garden right next to the corn (Lev. 19:19 with seemingly no repeat instruction in the NT), but would not specifically prevent us from putting a tripping

⁵ Craig L Blomberg, “The Sabbath as Fulfilled in Christ.” In *Perspectives on the Sabbath*. et al, (Nashville: B&H, 2011), chapter 7.

⁶ While it is not my intent to identify the origins and/or associations each of these views have with modern groups, I will footnote some possible thoughts along those lines. Blomberg, while he argues it’s not exclusively so, characterizes this approach as a dispensational approach to Scripture.

hazard in front of a blind person (Lev 19:14 again... but this was not specifically repeated in the NT).

In another approach to understanding the Mosaic Law, one might go to the opposite extreme and surmise that everything in the OT applies to believers today unless something in the NT invalidates it.⁷ As the pendulum seemingly swung all the way to one side in the first approach, this option swings it back all the way to the other. Given the similar, but opposite tactic, some of the same problems occur as with the first. As a quick example, while this view would seemingly lift the requirement of circumcision of males on the eighth day (Lev. 12:3 and Gal. 5:6), it would vastly change the clothing that we are able to put onto that same child (Lev. 19:19 with no apparent invalidation in the NT).

A third approach argues that the Mosaic Law should be divided into three distinct, but complementary, parts. It suggests that the “moral” portions of the law would remain for Christian observance, but the “civil” and “ceremonial” parts are not binding.⁸ Ceremonial laws are defined with those that deal with animal sacrifices, dietary laws, annual festivals, and similar things. Civil laws constitute those given to establish Israel’s governmental policies. Moral laws are the remaining commands that cover the more fundamental issues of what is generally right and wrong.

Bayes comments further clarify this distinction,

It teaches that the moral element in the law, focused in the ten commandments, is of permanent application, while the ceremonial and civil elements were for the

⁷ Blomberg links this to the Presbyterian and Reformed presentation of covenant theology.

⁸ While this approach seemingly has history that goes back to Thomas Aquinas, Bayes suggests, in contrast to Blomberg, that it has been described as “the cornerstone of Reformed orthodoxy”. Jonathan F. Bayes, *The Threefold Division of the Law* (Scotland: The Christian Institute, 2012), 3-4.

duration of the Old Testament economy only. The ceremonial was a shadow of Christ which became obsolete with his coming, and the civil a model of legal arrangements for any society, though not of such a status as to demand exact replication.⁹

While some parts of the presentation of the OT Law seem to organize instructions into these categories (Lev. 19:1-4 moral, vs. 5-8 ceremonial, and vs. 9-10 civil), the majority of passages lack such clarity. In fact, many of the laws would be difficult to categorize. Some say that all laws inherently have some amount of morality in them no matter what their context. For instance, the command in Leviticus 19:9-10 instructs that the corner of one's fields should be left unharvested, but are to be left for the needy and the stranger. At first, this might be easily be identified as a civil command, but it would be hard to argue that it is not also a moral instruction.

A fourth approach argues that the Ten Commandments, because they were written by the very finger of God, should be the only surviving commands carried over into the NT age. This seems to solve many of the problems that we've encountered with the other views. The genre of the commands seem to be of an everlasting moral nature. Some even recognize many of the commands are repeated, endorsed, and their teaching even expanded upon in the NT. But, this view might fall short with the fourth commandment regarding the Sabbath. Some amount of disagreement surrounds the way the Sabbath command is dealt with in the NT. While it is clear that a Sabbath rest remains for the people of God (Heb. 4:9), many of the NT teachings regarding the Sabbath do not seem to uphold it in the same way they uphold the other nine commandments. This view also

⁹ Bayes, 4.

seems to contradict Jesus' own reply, in Mark 12, when asked what commandment is the foremost of all. Jesus repeats two commands out of Deuteronomy 6:4 and Leviticus 19:18 respectively.

While the first four approaches to the Mosaic Law all have positive aspects to them, they each have faults that can not seem to encapsulate all that Scripture has to say on the issue. Blomberg suggests a fifth approach, incorporating the entire NT's witness to the abiding role of Torah. This view suggests that believers today live in the era of the fulfillment of everything to which the OT pointed. While the entire OT remains inspired text, it can only be understood and applied as one understands how the new covenant has fulfilled each particular nuance of that law. Jesus declared that he did not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets, but to fulfill them (Matt. 5:17). This concept of "fulfillment" is often used by the author in the book of Matthew when connecting Jesus to Scripture from the OT (Matt. 1:22, 2:15-17, 2:23, 4:14, 8:17, 12:17, 13:35, 21:4, & 27:9) and seems to be the key to answering the question at hand. In addition, as in Matthew 5:17, at times Jesus directly refers to himself as the fulfillment of OT Scripture (Matt. 3:15, 26:54-56, Mark 1:15, 14:49, Luke 4:21, 22:16). While Jesus did not come to "end the validity"¹⁰ of the Law... it also cannot be said that he came to uphold the law as unchanged. Barber gives one interpretation of these passages,

Jesus explains that certain aspects of the Old Testament were only imposed upon Israel as a response to their sin. In other words, the laws themselves pointed to Israel's failure to achieve God's standard of righteousness. However, the prophetic literature suggests that the eschatological age will involve a new order of righteousness that will transcend that required by the law. In Matthew, Jesus

¹⁰ William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 522.

proclaims that he has come to usher in this era. In this, he brings true fulfillment to the law. Even though certain elements of it are now “surpassed,” he does not “abolish” it.¹¹

This fulfillment carries with it the thrust of “bringing the Law to its designated end” and “showing it forth in its true meaning.”¹² Hurst also suggests it consists of elements of continuity as well as discontinuity,

...how then can it be said that Jesus fulfills it? Returning to Matthew 5:17, it is probable that the word fulfill here “includes not only an element of discontinuity (that which has now been realized transcends the Law) but an element of continuity as well (that which transcends the Law is nevertheless something to which the Law itself points forward”. Putting it another way, to say that the teaching of Jesus fulfills the Law is to say that his teaching “fills the Law full”—with new meaning.¹³

While this fifth approach of understanding the OT Law in NT times may contain some ambiguity and/or disagreement within its specific application, it is by its nature more holistic and inclusive of all of Scripture. Thomas Schreiner summarizes the situation,

The NT writings consistently teach that the Mosaic covenant is no longer in force for believers, or at least they fail to bind their churches with practices that distinguished Jews from Gentiles, such as circumcision, Sabbath, or purity laws. Another regular feature is that the law is seen to be fulfilled in Jesus Christ and points toward his death and resurrection. Such a standpoint is reflected whether we consider Matthew, Luke-Acts, Paul, Hebrews, and so on. The NT writers do not merely argue that the Mosaic covenant is set aside in Jesus Christ; they also teach that the law finds its terminus and goal in him, so that he fulfills what is adumbrated in the OT law. Even though the phrase “law of Christ” is found only

¹¹ Michael Patrick Barber, “Jesus as the ‘Fulfillment’ of the Law and His Teaching on Divorce in Matthew,” *Letter & Spirit: Christ and the Unity of Scripture* 9 (2014): 32.

¹² Arndt, et al., 828.

¹³ L. D. Hurst, “Ethics of Jesus,” ed. Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight, *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 221.

in Paul, it seems that such a phrase sums up nicely the NT witness regarding the law. The OT law is reinterpreted in light of the Christ event.¹⁴

It is these five views of how the Church proposes to deal with the Mosaic Law that will lay the foundation for evaluating the rest of the first part of this project. While these five views of the Law are by no means definitive, they do cover the majority of responses of people today. The responses the church has to the Law produce different understandings and applications of the Sabbath. It is that to which we now turn our attention. How does the church understand and implement the Sabbath today?

¹⁴ Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 672.

Chapter 2

Introduction to the Most Common Modern Views of the Sabbath

Having briefly viewed the different perspectives of the role of the Mosaic Law to the NT believer, we now move to a survey of the problem on which this project focuses, the modern application of the Sabbath. Does the Bible command any particular day for believers to accomplish the regular gathering of God's Church in the New Covenant? What exactly is the correct way believers are to understand and observe the Sabbath?

There are five views of Sabbath observance that most commonly play out within the doors of evangelicalism. These views do not necessarily correspond to the five hermeneutic approaches reviewed above, but they do have at least some overlapping ideas. The first view we will examine is a belief that Christians are called to return to the OT practice of observing a 24-hour day of physical rest that begins at sunset on Friday evening and continues until sunset on Saturday.¹⁵ The second believes the NT shows that the disciples began gathering on the first day of the week in remembrance of Christ's resurrection. In doing so, it supposes, that Sunday worship has replaced the OT Sabbath observance.¹⁶ A third view, that we can trace back at least as far as Martin Luther, suggests that the particular day of the week is of no importance. It suggests that a period of physical rest can be observed any day of the week as it fits into each believer's

¹⁵ For a more detailed discussion see: Skip MacCarty, "The Seventh-Day Sabbath." In *Perspectives on the Sabbath*. et al., (Nashville: B&H, 2011), chapter 1.

¹⁶ For a more detailed discussion see: Joseph A. Pipa Jr., "The Christian Sabbath." In *Perspectives on the Sabbath*. et al., (Nashville: B&H, 2011), chapter 3.

individual schedule.¹⁷ Fourthly, some feel the OT idea of the Sabbath has been replaced by a spiritual fulfillment in Christ. So while inwardly one can experience the spiritual reality of rest, outwardly believers are freed from the demands of observing a specific period of physical rest.¹⁸ Lastly, and unfortunately maybe the majority view of most today, is a total disregard of the Sabbath. Many within the church today do not really know how to understand or what to do with the Sabbath. People that hold this view may understand the Sabbath to be contained within the whole of Scripture, but are confused about the topic and thus refuse to develop any consistent doctrine about it.

The variety of understandings and practices within the church today shows that the Church lacks consensus on the Sabbath. As with many issues, it has a long way to go towards a unified conclusion and practice. While I will not take time to list comprehensive responses to each of these views,¹⁹ it is my hope that a closer glance at each will be helpful in better understanding the problem of modern-day evangelical Sabbath observance.

View One - Seventh Day Observance - The Jewish Sabbath

Those that believe in seventh-day Sabbath observance often attempt to track their argument back to the Sabbath's origin. They assume it was not a commandment only for

¹⁷ For a more detailed discussion see: Charles P. Arand, "Luther's Radical Reading of the Sabbath Commandment." In *Perspectives on the Sabbath*. et al., (Nashville: B&H, 2011), chapter 5.

¹⁸ For a more detailed discussion see: Blomberg, *Perspectives*, chapter 7.

¹⁹ Chapters 2, 4, 6, & 8 in *Perspectives on the Sabbath*, feature detailed responses from each of the other authors holding differing perspectives. This is a helpful discussion in understanding some of the current complex nuances of the Sabbath. Donato, Christopher John, Charles P. Arand, Craig L. Blomberg, Skip MacCarty, and Joseph A. Pipa Jr. *Perspectives on the Sabbath*. Nashville: B&H, 2011.

Israel during the OT period, but that it has a more permanent and universal application. While some would point to the Ten Commandments at Sinai (Exod. 20) as the institution of the Sabbath, really it could be said that just prior to that event, God gave Israel manna to eat and instructed them to gather a double-portion on the sixth-day so they could observe a Sabbath to the Lord (Exod. 16:22-30). The language within the commandment itself might even suggest that it was always supposed to be understood as a universal commandment. The Decalogue commands servants, traveling guests, and even cattle (Exod. 20:10) to observe the Sabbath.²⁰ Does this not suggest that the concept of the Sabbath extends past Israel, past mankind, even to creation itself? Why else would the command extend even to cattle?

Christians who observe a seventh-day Sabbath often refer back to the creation account and claim that the Sabbath was more than likely instituted on that day when God rested. The description of the creation week concludes with the seventh-day. For six days, God created the heavens and the earth, but on the seventh day, “God completed 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” (Gen. 2:2-3). While it is not specifically called a Sabbath, the day is certainly set apart as holy and for the purpose of rest.

MacCarty, a Seventh-Day Adventist, suggests that this is enough to assume more,

While Genesis 2:2–3 lacks an explicit Sabbath command, no command forbidding murder is recorded until Noah’s day (Gen 9:9–6), and none of the other Ten Commandments is recorded until they were issued at Sinai. Yet Cain was held

²⁰ Isaiah 56:6-7 also listed foreigners as included in the application of the Sabbath.

accountable for the murder of Abel, and Joseph knew that adultery was “sin against God” (Gen 4:6–11; 39:9). God may have included what later became the Ten Commandments when He said, ‘Abraham obeyed me and did everything I required of him, keeping my commands, my decrees and my instructions’ (Gen 26:5). Instructively, the early chapters of the Bible do not explicitly state that God loves people, is merciful or compassionate, or will forgive sins; that was all revealed in the covenant He made and the Law He gave at Sinai (Exod 20:6; 34:6–7). Those characteristics, as well as the continued observance of the Sabbath by God’s people, were all assumed in those early chapters of the Bible that cover at least 2,500 years of human history.²¹

While much of this logic might seem a bit too implicit for some, it does seem logical that the mention of Sabbath observance in regards to the gathering of manna in Exodus 16 comes with a certain preconceived understanding of the concept. Otherwise one might assume more instruction or explanation would be given. For this reason, some conclude that prior to the Mosaic Law at Sinai there was at least some prior knowledge of a Sabbath observance.

Seventh day observers also appeal heavily to Jesus’ observance of the Sabbath throughout the gospels. Luke records that when Jesus returned to His hometown it was His custom to worship on the Sabbath (Luke 4:16). While He was often criticized about the way He observed it, He was the one who originally sanctified it and set it apart. Jesus was just correcting errant doctrine enforced by the Pharisees. We even see several examples of the Apostles worshiping and preaching on the Sabbath in the book of Acts. Those who hold this view understand these passages to be not just descriptive of the life and times of Jesus, but also prescriptive for all those who worship in the church today. Zuck outlines a basic rule in determining how to apply different scriptures, “We must see

²¹ MacCarty, chapter 1.

if the principle in the passage is taught elsewhere. If what happened to someone in Bible times is considered normative for all believers, it must be in harmony with what is taught elsewhere in Scripture.”²²

View Two - Sunday Observance - The Christian Sabbath

For many within the Church, it is assumed that Sunday is the Christian Sabbath.

This was a dominant view in Protestant theology for some time. Pipa subscribes a recent shift away from this practice to several factors,

From the time of the Reformation until the mid-twentieth century, the great majority of Protestant Christians held fairly strict views regarding the use of Sunday. Most in practice would have fallen into the category [called] the “Christian Sabbath” view. With the encroachments of liberalism, the rise of dispensationalism, and the ubiquitous presence of the television, this practice has so declined that today only a small minority of Christians in the West hold to this position.²³

While the causes of this decline can certainly be debated, and the list certainly lengthened, the fact that the practice of a Sunday Sabbath is not what it was just a few decades ago.

For a look at some early foundations of the Sunday observance of the Sabbath one can easily turn to John Bunyan’s thoughts as organized and first published in 1685. In his publication, *Five Questions About the Nature and Perpetuity of the Seventh-day Sabbath*,²⁴ one can view a time capsule still caught in the wake of the reformation. In it

²² Roy B. Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation: A Practical Guide to Discovering Biblical Truth*. Edited by Craig Bubeck Sr. (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 1991), 285.

²³ Pipa, chapter 3.

²⁴ John Bunyan, *Five Questions About the Nature and Perpetuity of the Seventh-Day Sabbath*, vol. 2 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2006).

Bunyan argues that a one in seven day of rest was established at creation, but that the seventh day was specifically given to the Jewish nation in the Law of Moses. So, while the idea of a day of rest is certainly a moral requirement, the specific day given to the Jews in the Law of Moses is not. Bunyan also comments on the temporary nature of a seventh-day observance, “But for the ministration of it from Sinai, with the circumstances belonging to that ministration, they are not moral, nor everlasting, but shadowish and figurative only.”²⁵ For Bunyan, and subsequently the majority of church members over the next two-hundred and fifty years, the fulfillment of that shadowish seventh day was a different day of the week, the new Christian Sabbath. Bunyan reasons the administration of the Mosaic Law this way,

The time then of old was appointed by such a ministration of that law as we have been now discoursing of; and when that ministration ceaseth, that time did also vanish with it. And now by our new law-giver, the Son of God, he being ‘lord also of the Sabbath day,’ we have a time prefixed, as the law of nature requireth, a new day, by him who is the lord of it; I say, appointed, wherein we may worship, not in the oldness of that letter written and engraven in stones, but according to, and most agreeing with, his new and holy testament.²⁶

This physical rest is often viewed as symbolic of the special²⁷ rest that believers will enjoy for eternity.²⁸ A view towards eternity is acknowledged by many who practice a Sabbath rest. While NT believers may agree that the Sabbath ultimately points towards the future rest of Heaven, they tend to disagree on what is available to believers this side

²⁵ Bunyan, 367.

²⁶ Bunyan, 368.

²⁷ Special in the sense that our eternal rest is complete (both a physical and spiritual). The shadow of physical rest is only partial and temporary.

²⁸ D.A. Carson, *From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Investigation*, (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1999), 9.

of Heaven. Those who practice a 24-hour period of rest on Sunday believe that this physical rest is not only physically beneficial, but also serves as a weekly reminder of that ultimate rest we have in Christ. They conclude the promise of the future is the best practice this world has to offer a believer. Williams argues this way,

...there is sufficient reason given above for Christians to maintain the principle, although not slavishly, of one day in seven. It will be observed that the majority of reasons I have given are for Christians only. Hence just as the Sabbath provides a mark of covenant and distinction for Jews, it can do exactly the same for Christians, who have a new covenant with God.²⁹

While the rest of God in the OT was attached to the perfect creation, it was moved to Sunday to reflect the perfect work of redemption we have in Christ. Pipa describes this parallel between the work of creation and the work of redemption,

At the conclusion of creation, God rested on the seventh day to declare His work completed, to delight in that work, and to promise the eternal rest promised to Adam in the covenant of works. When Adam broke the covenant, God renewed the offer of eternal rest through a redeemer. The seventh-day Sabbath looked forward to that rest. God the Son rested from His work of redemption on the first day of the week as a sign that His work had objectively been accomplished and nothing remained to be done. In the resurrection He entered into the joy of His work and confirmed that eternal life had been purchased (cf. Isa 53:10–11; Heb. 12:2). By His example the day was changed.³⁰

In this way Sunday observance becomes a radical statement of faith in Christ. This shift happened despite no clear command in Scripture to do so. While many observations have been made about the early church meeting on the first day of the week, Martin and Davids conclude,

The evidence for or against a weekly commemoration of the resurrection in the apostolic age is ambiguous, especially when each passage is examined in

²⁹ David T. Williams, “The Sabbath: Mark of Distinction,” *Themelios* 14, no. 3 (1989): 101.

³⁰ Pipa, chapter 3.

isolation. Yet one hypothesis does fit comfortably over all the data and for that reason is to be favored. From a very early point, at least some believers recognized the “first day of the week” as a special day for the celebration of the Eucharist.³¹

This view promotes God’s call for believers to seek rest in Him as they contemplate His goodness in creation and His mercy in redemption. For now He has given us a picture of the eternal rest that belongs to believers. He promises the reality of, one day, experiencing His eternal rest. By Sabbath-keeping today, the believer celebrates that God’s works of creation and redemption are finished. They contemplate His works, are refreshed in Him, and anticipate eternal life with Him.³²

The Sunday Sabbath has become another extension of the moral law of God, as set out in creation. In the same way that Israel was given a specific extension of that moral law through Moses, NT believers have been given a different extension, Sunday observance, of the moral law through Christ’s redemptive work on the cross. The Westminster Confession, penned in 1648, tried to define the issue when it stated its pronouncements on the Sabbath (21.7-8),³³

As it is the law of nature, that, in general, a due proportion of time be set apart for the worship of God; so, in His Word, by a positive, moral, and perpetual commandment binding all men in all ages, He has particularly appointed one day in seven, for a Sabbath, to be kept holy unto Him: which, from the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, was the last day of the week; and, from the resurrection of Christ, was changed into the first day of the week, which, in

³¹ Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids, eds., *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 683.

³² Pipa, chapter 3.

³³ *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, 3rd ed. (Atlanta, GA: Comm. for Christian Ed. and Pub., PCA, 1990), 21.7-8.

Scripture, is called the Lord's Day, and is to be continued to the end of the world, as the Christian Sabbath.³⁴

It anticipates something better, but for now Sunday observance is the hope and practice God has given.

While Sunday has been the predominate view in the Christian church for some time, one can tell it was not always the only view. While holding Sunday up, Rordorf comments against those who hold to the next view held by some in the evangelical church,

In face of all this evidence we cannot take upon ourselves the responsibility of abandoning Sunday as the day of worship by saying that it does not much matter when we assemble for worship. This would irretrievably deprive us of a part of our Christian heritage which has its roots in the very midst of God's saving acts. If there is a problem about Sunday it can be stated in this question, "Are we willing to stand up for Sunday as the day of worship?" Sunday as the day for worship is nothing less than one of the central elements in the Christian life...³⁵

As this quote from the 1960's demonstrates, the question of Sunday Sabbath drew a significant theological line in the sand. With every line that's drawn, there eventually emerges one who will cross it. If Sunday is seen by some as a fulfillment of seventh-day worship then the next view takes it one step further.

View Three - Any Day Observance - Christian Freedom

Where our last view shifted the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday, we now briefly examine a theological position that moves the Sabbath to "any day" of the week.

Although held by many people over the years, most trace the foundations of this thought

³⁴ *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, 72–73.

³⁵ Willy Rordorf, *Sunday: The History of the Day of Rest and Worship in the Earliest Centuries of the Christian Church*, trans. A.A.K. Graham. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968) 205.

back to the reformations of Martin Luther. When dealing with the Sabbath, Luther exercised much freedom in how he understood it as a “day of rest” without assigning it to a specific day of the week. Luther did acknowledge that the day that made the most sense was Sunday as it was already a day the church was assembling,

However, this, I say, is not so restricted to any time, as with the Jews, that it must be just on this or that day; for in itself no one day is better than another; but this should indeed be done daily; however, since the masses cannot give such attendance, there must be at least one day in the week set apart. But since from of old, Sunday [the Lord's Day] has been appointed for this purpose, we also should continue the same, in order that everything be done in harmonious order, and no one create disorder by unnecessary innovation.³⁶

How did Luther end up there? He viewed the Mosaic Law as completely fulfilled in Christ and in so doing has often been viewed as an antinomian. Luther was not preaching that Christians are released by grace from the obligation of observing the moral law, but that they now had the freedom to interpret the OT law through the lens of Christ. Arand gives a picture of this from our modern observance of Christmas,

To confess that Christ is the end of the old covenant law does not render Christians antinomians, much less anarchists. To the contrary, it gives Christians the freedom to go back into the Old Testament and see what is there that they can use for their daily lives. It is a little bit like what happens on Christmas morning with the unwrapping of all the gifts. After all the gifts are opened, mom and dad want to clean up. But before just grabbing boxes, paper, and ribbons to toss in the trash, they sift through all the paper on the floor to make sure they do not throw away something valuable that might be hiding underneath.³⁷

In the larger context, Luther was probably reacting to what had become a rather large calendar of “holy days” ascribed to the church’s liturgical calendar during the

³⁶ Martin Luther, *Triglot Concordia: The Symbolical Books of the Ev. Lutheran Church: the large catechism*, trans f. Bente and W.H.T. Day (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921) 565-566.

³⁷ Arand, chapter 5.

medieval period. The church had ascribed practices of daily prayers (several times a day at the ringing of the town bell), weekly rounds of religious observance throughout the week, and a crowded annual cycle that included extra-liturgical or para-liturgical holy days. When Luther explained the Sabbath commandment, he translated it so as to not include the church's designated liturgical days, but rather as a general day of physical rest. This makes sense and gives perspective to the larger context of the reformation.

It is not necessary to observe the Sabbath or Sunday because of Moses' commandment. Nature shows and teaches that one must work now and then rest a day, so that man and beast may be refreshed. Moses also recognized in his Sabbath law, for he places the Sabbath under man, as also Christ does (Matt 12[:1ff.] and Mark 3[:2ff.]). For where it is kept for the sake of rest alone, it is clear that he who does not need rest may break the Sabbath and rest on some other day, as nature allows. The Sabbath is also to be kept for the purpose of preaching and hearing the Word of God.³⁸

While this view is still held by the Lutheran church, many Lutherans might not recognize it as taught by Luther. Over the last century, the church has paid less attention to its denominational distinctives. In fact, it has paid less attention to doctrine in general. So most have been shaped in their understanding of the Sabbath by a host of contemporary theologians that may not share their particular denomination's emphasis on the issue. Nevertheless, the freedom of Luther's Christocentric view of the Sabbath being "any day" set aside for physical rest, continues as a popular choice within our free American society.

³⁸ Jaraslov Pelikan, *Luther's Works* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1968), 40:98.

View Four - Spiritual Observance in Christ

One can find a spiritual observance of the Sabbath presented within the early foundations of the church. For the first few centuries after the resurrection, there was a great need for a clear distinction between the Jewish faith and the newly formed Christian worship. Justin Martyr suggested the Sabbath should be understood as something deeper than a superficial observance,

The new law requires you to keep perpetual Sabbath, and you, because you are idle for one day, suppose you are pious, not discerning why this has been commanded you: and if you eat unleavened bread, you say the will of God has been fulfilled. The Lord our God does not take pleasure in such observances: if there is any perjured person or a thief among you, let him cease to be so; if any adulterer, let him repent; then he has kept the sweet and true Sabbaths of God.³⁹

Origen suggested that keeping any day as holy over and above any other was the result of one not being able to keep every day as holy,

...but from being either unable or unwilling to keep every day in this manner, they require some sensible memorials to prevent spiritual things from passing altogether away from their minds. It is to this practice of setting apart some days distinct from others, that Paul seems to me to refer in the expression, "part of the feast;" and by these words he indicates that a life in accordance with the divine word consists not "in a part of the feast," but in one entire and never-ceasing festival.⁴⁰

It was after the legalization of Christianity, in the fourth century that these spiritual views of the Sabbath were quickly replaced by a regulated Sunday observance. Much later in the sixteenth century, the Protestant Reformation would allow for another change

³⁹ Justin Martyr, "Dialogue of Justin with Trypho, a Jew," in *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, vol. 1, The Ante-Nicene Fathers (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 200.

⁴⁰ Origen, "Origen against Celsus," in *Fathers of the Third Century: Tertullian, Part Fourth; Minucius Felix; Commodian; Origen, Parts First and Second*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, trans. Frederick Crombie, vol. 4, The Ante-Nicene Fathers (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 648.

of views, and some within the church returned to this early view of the Sabbath having a spiritual fulfillment in Christ.⁴¹ Those who hold this view often view the Mosaic Law, as discussed above, as having an abiding role in the NT witnesses. The fulfillment of the OT law then does not make it irrelevant to NT believers, but it does suggest that there may be a different practice or recognition of this law after the redemptive work of Christ is complete.

In his work examining the temple theme in the book of John, Kerr comes to this conclusion,

John has indicated how the Jewish Sabbath has been overtaken by the day of the Father's works through the Son and the Son's works through the disciples. In this sense the eschatological Sabbath has come and the disciples of Jesus live in it. But this does not rule out the possibility of a future dimension for a Sabbath rest.⁴²

Paul also seems to understand the law in this way as he writes to NT believers with encouragement on how to live. He presents pieces of the Mosaic Law through its fulfillment of what he calls the "law of love" as accomplished by walking "by the Spirit" (Gal. 5:14-16). When he applies OT ideas to NT believers he does so by filtering OT thoughts and practices through the teachings and sayings of Jesus.

At the conclusion of his chapter entitled, "The Sabbath as Fulfilled in Christ," Blomberg summarizes this perspective nicely,

Because Jesus fulfilled the Law, and thus fulfilled the Sabbath commands, He, not some day of the week, is what offers the believers rest. We obey the Sabbath commandment of the Decalogue as we spiritually rest in Christ, letting Him bear

⁴¹ Blomberg, chapter 7.

⁴² Alan Kerr, *The Temple of Jesus' Body: The Temple Theme in the Gospel of John*, vol. 220, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series (New York, NY: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 266.

our heavy burdens, trusting Him for salvation, and committing our lives to Him in service, then remaining faithful in lifelong loyalty to Him rather than committing apostasy. No special day each week for rest or worship could ever come close to fulfilling this grander and far more enriching and exciting vision of life to the full!⁴³

The main problem with this view is that it does not seem well enough defined for some in the church. There seems to be a lack of specific details as to how to live out the concept of rest in Christ other than just “believing in Him”. Many in the church prefer a more specific list of tasks to accomplish on the road of Christian formation. The last two sections of this project seek to answer at least a part of that objection. It attempts to give some specific, Biblically generated, actions and responses that NT believers can practically implement in their lives to observe at least a partial fulfillment of the spiritual understanding of the Sabbath.

View Five - No Observance

The four previous views have been presented in a logical progression that one might take through the different approaches a believer might have to the Sabbath. If one were to imagine different points on a line, the first was to return to the OT practice of a Friday evening to Saturday evening physical rest. While this has not been an option for the majority of Christianity, an attempt by some to return to and better understand the Hebrew roots of the Christian faith has some headed in that direction. The next point that one might see, on a linear spectrum, is the movement of the Sabbath from the Saturday to Sunday, the day of the Lord’s resurrection. In this view, one is still observing a 24-hour period of physical rest. The next step down the line is even more freedom for the believer.

⁴³ Blomberg, chapter 7

While it is still dealing primarily with physical rest, one could observe it on any day of the week... or even any part of any day. Seemingly, the last point on our Sabbath line would be to understand the Sabbath as having been spiritually fulfilled in Christ. In this way one does not see it as primarily pertaining to physical rest at all, but rather to the rest one's souls receives from the work of salvation.

While those views seem to cover the spectrum fairly well, there is unfortunately a last category that many who write on the topic do not present or discuss. It is this last view that may actually be shared by the majority of believers in the church today and is a growing trend especially among the younger generations. There are many in the church who have no particular view at all when it comes to the Sabbath. In fact, even that statement may give too much credit. While some are confused and do not know how to interact with the Sabbath, there is a large majority in the church today who do not even give it second thought.

Church attendance across America has been declining in recent years. According to a 2015 Pew Research Center report the decline in attendance is being felt across demographics of age and race, but is strongest among Millennials. While many complicating factors contribute to this decline, one of the most important is the declining practice of "generational replacement". According to the study, "As the Millennial generation enters adulthood, its members display much lower levels of religious

affiliation.”⁴⁴ At least one of the contributing factors is relevance. People just do not see the church answering the questions they are asking.

If church is not relevant, then it would make sense that the individual practices of the church are not making relevant sense either. Observing a Sabbath is one of those parts with which regular church-going people do not connect deeply. In a poll of sixty church-going graduate students that attended his class, Allender found that only four practiced any type of Sabbath observance. Of those who did not observe the Sabbath he reported, “Of the other fifty-six students, 90 percent viewed the concept of the Sabbath as simply another word for church. Seventy percent viewed the Sabbath as a day of rules and regulations that focus far more on what we are not to do.”⁴⁵

In previous generations, tradition seems to have held a greater influence in the decision-making process. It used to suffice that because one’s parents observed a Sabbath, their children would follow suit. Donato suggests this type of unquestioned behavior does not suffice in a world where everyone is used to making their own decisions multiple times a day. He summarizes, “Gone are the days of unquestioned trust and subsequent action based on that trust. Nothing, it seems, is so sacred as to be beyond criticism.”⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Pew Research Center, *America’s Changing Religious Landscape: Christians Decline Sharply as Share of Population; Unaffiliated and Other Faiths Continue to Grow*. (Washington, D.C. May 12, 2015), accessed October 14, 2016, <http://www.pewforum.org/files/2015/05/RLS-08-26-full-report.pdf>

⁴⁵ PLLC Dan B. Allender and Phyllis Tickle, *Sabbath—the Ancient Practices Series* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2010).

⁴⁶ Donato et al., introduction.

As proposed in the introduction to this project, lack of relevance and confusion in its definition have caused many within the church to lose any meaningful connection to or observance of a Sabbath. It is up to those within the church therefore to figure out what the author of Hebrews meant when he suggested that there remains relevance in the concept. A closer look at the complete theology of the Sabbath and the context in which it is presented throughout Scripture is not only warranted and beneficial but compulsory for the church moving forward. The remainder of this project is dedicated to a portion of that very task.

Part II

The Bible's Anticipation of Something Better than the OT Sabbath

Chapter 3

Sabbath Theology Expands from Creation

As discussed in part one of this project, much of the Sabbath thought in the modern church centers around physical rest and a day in which to observe that rest. Some of these thoughts may have their roots in the early foundations of the church and are, at least in part, due to the desire for an early distinction between the church and the Jewish faith. Unfortunately, in modern times, the focus on which particular day a believer's rest should be observed has diminished the scope of the theology as a whole. The current trend to separate and distinguish different aspects of Sabbath theology can leave one blind to the bigger picture. Carson points out how intricate modern scholarship has made the Sabbath question,

The Sabbath/Sunday question also touches many areas of theological study. I have already mentioned creation ordinance and moral law. Other areas include the relationship between the Old Testament and the New, the relationship among the covenants, the proper understanding of salvation history, the nature of prophecy and the fulfillment, biblical patterns of eschatology, and the normativeness of any particular biblical law.¹

While all these areas of study are important in one's understanding of the whole, this parsing often hides the Sabbath's interconnected and expanding development throughout Scripture. The Sabbath is consistently presented in the whole of Scripture as a topic that is much broader than the one-in-seven day of rest that has held much of the church's attention for the last century. The complete theology of the Sabbath should leave one

¹ Carson, 17.

expecting and wanting more than the temporary and the physical. It should create an expectation of something better and bigger in scope and magnitude.

In Section Two, I will present the Bible's complete and well rounded Sabbath theology. It is introduced at the end of the creation of the cosmos as a never-ending functional rule of God with his image bearers. That restful rule over creation, which is lost at the fall of man, is then explained throughout the rest of the OT using several types and shadows. The practice of Sabbath observance that begins as a day of physical rest each week is expanded and continually given new depth and breadth throughout the OT. I will present that the complete theology of the Sabbath is much bigger than the weekly day of physical rest on which the modern church has chosen to focus. Shead comments on the ever-expanding scope of the Sabbath, "The theme of the Sabbath is often contentious. Yet throughout Scripture Sabbath legislation and theology are reapplied to new circumstances, so providing a clear trajectory of interpretation."²

To outline this more clearly, while the perfect Sabbath rest is first introduced at creation, that perfection was corrupted by man's decision to leave that rest. From this unrestful and fallen state, the heavenly Sabbath reality is then explained to fallen man in terms of types and shadows. It starts as an observance of one day of physical rest each week and then is expanded within the Mosaic Law to encompass much more than any one day. This expanding typological observance of the Sabbath eventually includes not only the Israelites but also servants and foreigners living with them. The Sabbath within the Law applies to animals and eventually even the land itself. While it starts as what

² A. G. Shead, "Sabbath," ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner, *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 745.

seems to be one day in seven, it is expanded to one year in seven and culminates in a year of freedom unlike any the world had ever known. In this culminating year of the Sabbath, a picture of complete freedom is presented. It is this complete and expanded view of the shadow that best represents the restful Sabbath rule that man shared with God before the fall into sin.

The Sabbath in the OT Law presents itself as much bigger and broader than any one day. When the believers choose to focus on only a part of the whole theology, an incomplete understanding develops. An incomplete understanding of the topic has led to factions promoting different types of Sabbath observances. To correct this situation it is imperative for believers today to stop looking at the weekly Sabbatical “tree” in front of them, and back up to see the proverbial “forest” of Sabbath theology offered in Scripture. Only then can one begin to discover a understanding of the original rest that is more fulfilling and longer lasting than any given period of time. It is this restful existence, that man shared with God in the beginning, which Christ invites us to experience.

Creation Rest is Tied to the Believer’s Rest

The main premise of this project stems from the discussion of a believers’ rest in Hebrews 3-4. In those chapters, the author of Hebrews states there is a Sabbath rest that remains for the people of God. While I have yet to unpack what I believe this Scripture means, one basic premise seems simple enough: When it comes to the topic of the Sabbath, there is at least a part of, or a fulfillment of, the Sabbath concept that in some way still applies to NT believers. No matter how one finally interprets a practical

application of the Sabbath, this one point should be clear. It is not a valid option for NT believers to disregard the topic of Sabbath rest. Unfortunately, this is what many in the church are doing. They have disengaged with the concept. Believers must engage with the topic, at some level, if they are to experience the fullness of life that Christ offers. Ignoring the topic, or feeling it is somehow not relevant to modern day, is missing one of the benefits of Christ's ministry to the believer.

The author of Hebrews concludes his thoughts on the topic in chapter four, "So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His. Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience" (Heb. 4:9-11).

The rest available to believers is linked directly to the type of rest that God experienced at the end of creation. Guthrie makes further comment on this link,

It is quite clear that Gen. 2:2 functions to add information that the author of Hebrews wishes to access to help him define the "rest" into which the wilderness wanderers were not permitted to enter, and which, by contrast, remains open to the people of God. He draws from the Genesis passage on the basis of verbal analogy, an appropriation technique used extensively in Hebrews.³

God created for six days and then rested on the seventh. That concept seems simple and straight-forward enough and has lead many believers to think that the text suggests that one twenty-four-hour period of physical rest is all that God experienced at the end of creation. If a believer's rest is linked to God's rest, are believers to conclude that a short-term physical rest is what remains for them? In an attempt to answer this question, it is

³ George H. Guthrie, "Hebrews," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, UK: Baker Academic; Apollos, 2007), 958.

important first to examine the question of creation rest. What exactly did God experience on the seventh day and how does that relate to what believers today can expect from the Sabbath?

Creation as a Temple-Building Story

A popular modern view, that the creation account in Genesis one is one of material origins, might leave the reader wondering why the seventh day was included in the story at all. From this perspective, the last day of creation might seem like a strange appendage. Nothing really seems to happen on the seventh day. The creation is complete and everything is “very good”. Why not just end the story with the sixth day?

It is possible that the Biblical account is to be understood primarily as the functional creation of a temple. Several authors have written on different variations of this theme⁴, but maybe none more than Beale.

The first sanctuary was in Eden. But how could we possibly know this? There was no architectural structure in Eden, nor does the word “temple” or “sanctuary” occur as a description of Eden in Gen. 1–3. Such a claim may sound strange to the ears of many. A number of scholars recently have argued this from one angle or another.⁵

Beale goes on to explain Eden as having many temple-like characteristics. Following is an abbreviated list of some of his observations. He suggests that like later temples, Eden was the place of the unique presence of God. Adam’s charge to “cultivate and keep” Eden evoked the Hebrew words that are later used in scripture to describe priestly duties in the

⁴ For ancient parallels, see Jon D. Levenson. “The Temple and the World.” *Journal of Religion* 64 (1984): 275–298.

⁵ G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 617.

temple. The “tree of life” may have been the model for the lamp stand in later temples which also included wood carvings that gave them an Eden-like atmosphere. Eden’s entrance also faced east like all the subsequent temples.⁶

If we are to understand, as Beale suggests, that the creation is a temple-building story, then the seventh-day of rest may make a little more sense. Walton suggests that ancient Near Eastern literature supplies several examples where temples played a part in the cosmology stories,

Individual temples were designed as models of the cosmos, but in addition, and more importantly, the temple was viewed as the hub of the cosmos. It was built in conjunction with the creation of the cosmos. Gods took up their rest in the temple for a variety of reasons, one of which was the ruling of the cosmos as they continued to maintain the order that had been established and to exercise control of destinies.⁷

Understood within this ancient Near-Eastern context, the “rest” described on the seventh day of the Biblical creation describes God’s ruling His kingdom from the temple of Eden in his newly ordered cosmos. God’s “rest” then is maintaining the order and function that had been established in the creation story. This is a much different picture than God taking a day off from work. In reality, it is almost the exact opposite of that idea. God’s rest is his functional engagement and rule of the creation. Adam shared in this rest with God before the fall. Adam, as one in His image, was given the commission to fill, subdue and rule the earth (Genesis 1:26-28). These are kingly and priestly duties charged to Adam through which he was resting with God in Eden. Beale gives more depth to this connection,

⁶ Beale, *New Testament*, 617-622.

⁷ John H. Walton, *Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 119.

It also appears that God's making of Adam in his "image and likeness" is what enables Adam to carry out the particular parts of the commission... The "ruling" and "subduing" "over all the earth" expresses Adam's kingship and is plausibly part of a functional definition of the divine image in which Adam was made... Such a functional view of the image is suggested by images of gods in the ancient Near East, which neither represented the actual form of the god nor indicated primarily the attributes of the god (though this sometimes was included) but rather were the place through which the god manifested his presence and conveyed his blessings.⁸

This "rest" (the functional rule of God with Adam) in the newly created cosmos continued until the fall (Genesis 3) when the rest ended for Adam and Eve and they were expelled from the garden. How can one see the creation story as primarily an establishing of function and order in the cosmos instead of an account of the material creation of the same? In an attempt to better understand God's rest, and how a believer's rest mimics that rest, we will take a closer look at the creation story in the next section.

⁸ Beale, *New Testament*, 30.

Chapter 4

God Rested from His Creative Work

Moses' perspective of the creation account was likely very different from our modern understanding. The reader's task is to, as much as is possible, gain the eyes and ears of the original recipients of that account. When believers see rest from a Godly perspective, then the church will be more equipped to understand how that rest applies to them today.

There are two summaries in the beginning of Genesis of the creation account. The first is found in Genesis 1:1-2:3 and the second following in Genesis 2:4.⁹ The first account of creation sequentially runs through the days and ends with God resting on the seventh day. The concluding statement for this account is found in the first three verses of Genesis 2,

Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts. By the seventh day God completed 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 (Gen. 2:1-3).

The question that most in the church should ask is, "What exactly was God doing on day seven?" Was he tired? Did He take a nap? It does not seem appropriate to think the all-powerful God of the Universe got tired and so He needed to take a break. So what is He doing at the conclusion of the creation and why is it written using this language?

⁹ There are many theories as to why the creation narrative is told in two parts, I only wish to acknowledge their existence to locate the end of the first account in Genesis 2:3.

The Bible is written to a particular people group with a particular world-view and understanding of the cosmos. Readers today sometimes make the mistake of assuming that the original text was written directly to them. While it was written *for* the church throughout time and history, it was only originally written *to* a certain people group. This is possibly most easily understood in Paul's letters to the NT churches. In them, Paul addressed specific people and situations that were occurring in at a certain place and time. Any understanding of Paul's hortatory comments must then be understood first with that original context and with those original readers in mind. Then, and only then, should one attempt to apply those comments to modernity.

It is also important to acknowledge that in OT times, Moses and his audience likely had a very different cosmology than readers today. Their understanding of how the world functioned would have been fundamentally different. The first clue to this point is the words they use to describe the process. This point is brought out by Walton,

If we are going to understand a creation account from the ancient world we must understand what they meant by "creation," and to do that we must consider their cosmic ontology instead of supplying our own. It is less important what we might think about ontology. If we are dealing with an ancient account we must ask questions about the world of that text: What did it mean to someone in the ancient world to say that the world existed? What sort of activity brought the world into that state of existence and meaning? What constituted a creative act?¹⁰

When people in the twenty-first century look into the sky and see blue, they intuitively understand that they are looking at the atmosphere and then into space beyond. The original readers saw blue in the sky, noticed that water sometimes fell from the sky, and may have assumed there were waters up there with some sort of a structure to hold

¹⁰ John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 24.

those waters in place. How can one be more certain this is how they may have understood it? At least some of their views are made apparent by the vocabulary they used. The text speaks of “floodgates”, or “openings in the firmament”, which could be opened to allow water to come flooding down. The text also speaks of “fountains of the great deep bursting open” (Gen. 7:11). Heiser further develops the understanding of this ancient terminology,

The firmament dome surrounded the earth, with its edge meeting at the horizon —“the boundary between light and darkness” (Job 26:10). It was supported by “pillars” or “foundations,” thought to be the tops of mountains, whose peaks appeared to touch the sky. The heavens had doors and windows through which rain or the waters above could flow upon the earth from their storehouses (Gen 7:11; 8:2; Ps 78:23; 33:7).¹¹

One would not choose to use that same terminology today to describe the process of how water comes up from the ground. Modern readers understand more about the physical universe now. Although those familiar with the Biblical text have become accustomed to reading and even using some of this ancient Biblical terminology, they also understand that current science does not support its description of the cosmos.

Technological advancement in modern history has helped develop a more detailed understanding of the cosmos. So while approaching the text of Genesis 1, it is important to acknowledge that the concept of the cosmos in the mind of ancient readers was likely very different than one’s concept today. When interpreting the creation account, the modern reader should not be surprised if the text does not speak directly to modern questions and understandings. Wenham emphasizes this discrepancy,

¹¹ Michael S. Heiser, *I Dare You Not to Bore Me with the Bible*, ed. John D. Barry and Rebecca Van Noord (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press; Bible Study Magazine, 2014), 4.

Genesis is not dealing with the issues raised by twentieth-century science but with ideas current in the ancient orient over 3000 years ago. Over against the polytheistic world-view that held there were many gods and goddesses of varying wisdom and power, Genesis declares there is but one God of absolute power and holiness.¹²

While one may never fully understand the ancient reader's perspective of the cosmos, an attempt to understand what one can from the clues the text offers is essential.

This first becomes apparent in the first verse of Genesis. The creation account begins, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Modern readers might assume this is an ontological description of the creation of something from nothing. That would certainly answer questions about the creation of matter important to the scientifically based mind of the modern reader. By acknowledging that this creation account has a concluding summary statement in Genesis 2:1-3, this first verse could be understood as a introductory summary statement for the entire account that follows. This point is emphasized in the IVP Bible Background Commentary,

An Egyptian creation text from Thebes speaks of the god Amun who evolved in the beginning, or "on the first occasion." Egyptologists interpret this not as an abstract idea but as a reference to a first-time event. In the same manner, the Hebrew word translated "beginning" usually refers not to a point in time but to an initial period. This suggests that the beginning period is the seven days of chapter one.¹³

Based on other extra-biblical creation stories from the time, we might better understand creation as a process of giving order and function to the world instead of one primarily concerned with the creation of material. Ancient writings suggest that the

¹² Gordon J. Wenham, "Genesis," in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson et al., 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 61.

¹³ Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), Ge 1:1.

people of that time were not as concerned with material creation as much as they were with order and function. There are a number of creation accounts from the Sumerian, Egyptian (Memphis Theology), and the Babylonian (Atrahasis and Enuma Elish) traditions. They all follow a similar basic format because they all come from a similar general understanding of the cosmos. These stories show that different cultures had similar concepts regarding the shape of the cosmos, the role of deity in creation, the origins of the cosmos and deity, divine conflict, and creation being a movement from a nonfunctional chaos to a functional system.¹⁴ While these other stories may disagree on the order of events, character names, and principal reasons for the creation, they all approach the idea from a perspective of functional ordering.

These secular stories of creation often told of competing gods fighting to win control of the earth. As one god would eventually defeat the other gods, he would then have to contend with the god Chaos. After Chaos was defeated, then the winning god would put the pieces of the world together so it functioned properly. In so doing, that god would set up their cosmic temple. They would often finish by putting a statue of wood or stone of their image within their temple (the newly ordered heavens and earth). Then they would settle in and engage with the new creation. This is the idea of a god resting in a temple. With everything put in order, this new world could get on with the business of day to day life.

The creation narrative of Genesis is written using this same format. It uses the language of the day to display a familiar story, but with important distinctions. In the

¹⁴ Walton, *Lost World*, 29.

Biblical account there are not many gods. There is only one God who comes upon the world and finds it without form and void of other gods with which to contend. The NIV Commentary develops this further,

The account in Genesis is very different from the accounts familiar in the ancient world. God has no battle on his hands. Creation is not personified as somehow a rival to God. He speaks and effortlessly his commands are obeyed. He creates by the power of his word with his Spirit or breath standing by, ready to act.¹⁵

Then God began to give order and function to the earth, “darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters” (Gen. 1:2). This would have sounded very familiar to people of that time, but the absence of other gods with which to contend gave this version of creation its unique twist.

The spirit of this lone God was hovering over the surface of the waters and began to put everything in its place. This is like setting up a board game before playing the game. The board must come out of the box, the pieces put in place and the cards stacked in the middle of the board. With everything in its correct place, then the game is ready to play.¹⁶

The account in Genesis 1 can be confusing when one tries to fit it into a modern understanding of the universe. God starts by saying, “Let there be light” (Gen. 1:3). Then he separates light from darkness (Gen 1:4). It is difficult to understand what this means if one is reading this as an account of material creation. Scientifically speaking, there is

¹⁵ Paul J. Kissling, *Genesis*, The College Press NIV Commentary (Joplin, MO: College Press Pub. Co., 2004–), 99.

¹⁶ Dr. Chip Bennett, *Rest for the Weary Part 3: Sabbath & the Culture of Now*. Grace Community Church Sermon archive from Sunday August 23rd 2015, accessed October 20, 2016, <https://vimeo.com/137070129>.

either light or darkness. Separating them is an impossibility because they do not exist together. Walton explains this perspective, “They (light and darkness) cannot logically be separated, because by definition they cannot exist together in any meaningful scientific or material way.”¹⁷ In Genesis 1:5, God calls the light day. This is another clue we should consider a non-material understanding of this text. “Light” is not “day” in a material sense. Day is a “period of time where light prevails”. This is what God creates on the first day, a periods of time where light and darkness prevail. The description of what God is doing is a functional description. God is ordering time. As the IVP Commentary states,

The account of creation does not intend to give a modern scientific explanation of the origin of all natural phenomena, but rather to address the more practical aspects of creation that surround our experiences of living and surviving. In the course of this chapter the author relates how God set up alternating periods of light and darkness—the basis for time.¹⁸

The light is called day and the darkness is called night and the first day came and went. The function of time is in place even though the sun and the moon will not be discussed until day four. That might be a problem if we are trying to explain the creation of matter, but it is perfectly fine if we are reading the story functionally.

On day four, the sun and moon are put into place. The description of this event is not given in terms of just the objects themselves, but rather their function. They were put in place to govern the day and the night and they gave light. They also help govern the seasons of the year.

¹⁷ Walton, *Lost World*, 54.

¹⁸ Matthews, Gen. 1:5.

Over the creation account of Genesis 1, God takes something that is without form and void and gives it form and function so that He can rest. It is not because He needs to take a nap or because He is tired. God rests after putting things in order because everything works. This rest is His engagement with a functional and ordered creation.

Then the author records the summary statement to describe the seventh day. “Thus the heavens and the earth were completed and all their hosts. By the seventh day God completed 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” (Gen. 2:1-3). God was at rest because things now worked, and it was very good.

Several times in my ministry as a pastor, I have invited the youth of the church out to our property during the summer. As much fun as it was to have people over, the event itself was quite an undertaking. We have about an acre of grass that needed to be cut first. Then the games needed to be brought out of the garage and set up. The volleyball set fits nicely in the front yard. The basketball hoop was moved into place, the pickle ball net set-up in the driveway, and the tables set up for food. The whole event often took the better part of the day to prepare. If I was lucky, I would have just enough time to sit down and grab a bite to eat prior to the first van load of kids arriving from the church. Once everyone arrived, it was busy for sure, but I never considered that part work. It was fun to watch the kids enjoy the property and all the games that had been set up. My giving order and function to “the farm” in preparation for the student’s arrival was similar to God’s creation. He gave the earth function. He put things in order so they could be used.

If we are trying to understand the author's intent, we might understand that rest is the result of a resolved crisis or chaos. In this sense, creation was "at rest" when everything was set up properly and working. Rest becomes the opposite of unrest. Walton comments on the difference between a modern versus ancient understanding of rest,

What does divine rest entail? Most of us think of rest as disengagement from the cares, worries and tasks of life. What comes to mind is sleeping in or taking an afternoon nap. But in the ancient world rest is what results when a crisis has been resolved or when stability has been achieved, when things have "settled down." Consequently normal routines can be established and enjoyed. For deity this means that the normal operations of the cosmos can be undertaken. This is more a matter of engagement without obstacles rather than disengagement without responsibilities.¹⁹

People within the church today have several ideas about a believer's obligations to observe the Sabbath. Most conclude that the Sabbath is a period of physical rest, disengaged from the normal activities of life. Genesis presents God's rest as engagement after He had put the cosmos in functional order. This is an important distinction since the Hebrews passage suggests the believer's rest somehow mimics God's (Heb. 4:10). I would propose that believers are to understand the Sabbath as a state of functional readiness from which they are able to engage the creation. By definition, this is a state only attainable after one allows God to visit the chaos of life and establish function and order in its place.

This progression of chaos to function ultimately describes the sanctification of the believer's life. Paul, in Ephesians 4:17-32, describes this process in terms of a believer changing the clothes they are wearing. Piece by piece, the believer is to allow God to

¹⁹ Walton, *Lost World*, 71-72.

identify the “old self” where relational chaos resides. As believers lay aside each piece of that old self, they let God renew their spirit. This is the bringing of order and function into one’s life. Then the “new self”, which is in the likeness of God, is put on. This is functional engagement and rest.

Interestingly, some of the examples of this “new self” in Ephesians mimic the teachings of the ten commandments. In Ephesians 4:25, the believer is encouraged to stop lying to his neighbor. This closely echoes the commandment found in Exodus 20:16. The anger discussed in Ephesians 4:26-27 is the anger that could lead to the murder discussed in Exodus 20:13.²⁰ Paul also presents stealing (Eph. 4:28 compared to Exodus 20:15), unwholesome talk, bitterness, wrath, slander, malice, and grieving the Holy Spirit²¹ in his list of dysfunction. He then holds up being gracious, kind, tender-hearted, and forgiving as the actions that Godly order and function bring to one’s life. It is when God visits the places of dysfunction and unrest that He can create functionality and rest in one’s life. This is a picture of the Sabbath.

As I will show in the next section, God’s rest at the end of creation was not to be understood as only one day in length. His rest is presented as a complete rest that continued forever. Any representation of the creation rest which only lasts for a limited time ultimately falls short of the Genesis example. The creation account presupposes that

²⁰ Jesus also makes this connection (Matthew 5:21-22).

²¹ I would suggest that grieving the Holy Spirit is closely tied to “taking the Lord’s name in vein mentioned in Exodus 20:7, especially if this “taking His name” is viewed within the marriage motif of the NT.

believers should expect something more from the Sabbath than a temporary disengaging physical experience.

No Evening Nor Morning on the Seventh Day

While the picture of God's rest in Genesis is presented functionally, it is also presented as a complete and permanent rest. During the first six days of creation, Moses uses literary repetition to describe the completion of each day. At the conclusion of the first day he writes, "And there was evening and there was morning, one day" (Gen. 1:5). This phraseology is used again in verse eight to conclude the second day. "And there was evening and there was morning, a second day" (Gen. 1:8). The repetition is used again in verse thirteen for the third day, verse nineteen for the fourth day, verse twenty-three for the fifth day, and verse thirty-one for the sixth day. But when Moses describes the seventh day when God had completed His work and rested, there is no mention of an evening nor a morning. The seventh day was certainly different than the others. Unlike the others, God blessed the seventh day and set it apart from the other days of creation.

The use of this evening/morning/day literary repetition is significant. The lack of the evening and morning repetition on day seven has been seen as a suggestion that God's rest from creative work never ended. This significance was recognized even by the early church fathers. Augustine of Hippo includes two prayers in his Confessions that not only mention, but emphasize this point. In one prayer he prays for that rest that hath not evening,

O Lord God, give peace unto us: (for Thou hast given us all things;) the peace of rest, the peace of the Sabbath, which hath no evening. For all this most goodly

array of things very good, having finished their courses, is to pass away, for in them there was morning and evening.²²

Augustine's next prayer further develops this idea,

But the seventh day hath no evening, nor hath it setting; because Thou hast sanctified it to an everlasting continuance; that that which Thou didst after Thy works which were very good, resting the seventh day, although Thou made them in unbroken rest, that may the voice of Thy Book announce beforehand unto us, that we also after our works (therefore very good, because Thou hast given them us), shall rest in Thee also in the Sabbath of eternal life.²³

By not using the established literary device of “morning and evening” in regards to the seventh day, the author literarily comments about the type of rest God entered. It was a complete and unending rest. The author is not suggesting that the seventh day did not end, but that God's rest was on-going. He rested completely from that type of work and never went back. I often joke that this may be the only allusion to retirement in all of Scripture.

Why is it significant that God's rest seems to be presented as unending on day seven? In the NT, the author of Hebrews attempts to describe a Sabbath rest that remains for the people of God. In doing so he states that “the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His” (Heb. 4:10). He suggests that believers rest from their works in the same way that God did from the works of creation. If God did not return to work after He began resting, a true believer's Sabbath should be similar to that. Those that observe a day of physical rest each week are faced with the reality of going back to work on the eighth day. The alarm clock rings, hands reach up to

²² Saint Augustine Bishop of Hippo, *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, trans. E. B. Pusey (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1996), book 13, chapter 35.

²³ Augustine, book 13, chapter 36.

rub the eyes, the cobwebs break free, and the reality of another work week presents itself. That's not like the rest that God experienced at the end of creation. The fact that humanity is forced to return to work after observing a day of physical rest suggests that there is something more believers should expect. The weekly one day of disengaged physical rest should be seen as something that falls short of the nature of God's eternal rest.

One might argue that God is busy at work even to this day. God's Sabbath rest does allow for other types of work. His work of giving creative function and order to the cosmos came to an end and he did not return to that particular type of work, but God is certainly busy engaging His creation to this day. Hughes elaborates on the distinction that God is able to work even in His Sabbath-resting,

A key insight about the Sabbath comes from the second chapter of Genesis, which tells us that God created the earth in six days, but on the seventh he rested. Concerning the first six days Scripture tells us, "And there was evening, and there was morning, and it was the first day," and so on. But there is no mention of evening and morning on the seventh day. God entered into his Sabbath-rest, and he is still in that rest, even while he is upholding the earth by his power. He works *and* he remains in his Sabbath-rest.²⁴

Understanding God's rest in this way might suggest that there is a rest, from within which believers are expected to fully engage with the creation. The author of Hebrews suggests that at least a portion of that rest is available to believers in the NT era. The author of Hebrews encourages believers, "Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience" (Heb. 4:11). Some suggest that this rest should only be understood as an eschatological destination, that a believer's rest is only available on the other side of the grave. It is one intent of this

²⁴ R. Kent Hughes, *John: That You May Believe*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1999), 157.

project to persuade that the Bible presents true Sabbath rest as something more than a one-in-seven physical observance but rather available, spiritually, everyday to the believer prior to physical death. As Guthrie points out,

As we noted, in Gen. 1–2 all of the first six days of creation have an end; the seventh, however, is an “open-ended day.” This suggests that this rest must not be limited to a location and a point in time, and on this interpretation, God’s rest must be seen as a present reality. In favor of this interpretation, the present context, in which the author exhorts the listeners to respond “today” and emphasizes the current availability of this rest, seems to point to a present time of opportunity. Moreover, the author is concerned that some of those in the community perhaps have fallen short of this rest. How could this be so if it is only a future reality? Thus, the present appropriation of God’s rest must be considered an aspect of our author’s concern.²⁵

It is likely that this rest is of a “now and not yet” nature. That it is something that believers enter into and experience, to some degree, now and yet remains in its complete sense in the future. To this thought Field comments,

So here, finally, the two main strands of biblical teaching on the Sabbath meet. The promised fulfillment in heaven does not, of course, necessarily rule out the idea of a Christian Sabbath that can be observed in the world here and now as a pledge of the “real thing” (Col. 2:17) still to come.²⁶

An understanding of a now and yet future rest is compatible with the ideas put forth in the book of Hebrews. The Sabbath rest of which Hebrews speaks is, in part, available now and is so much more than a just a day of physical rest. The remainder of Scripture builds on this view as well.

²⁵ Guthrie, 959.

²⁶ Walter A. Elwell and Barry J. Beitzel, *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 1879.

Chapter 5

Sabbath Theology Anticipates Something More

Many today are unfamiliar with the entirety of the Sabbath teaching in the OT. There are several places, within the Mosaic Law, that give further definition and scope to the Sabbath concept. In the same way that I have looked further into the creation teaching of rest on the seventh day, a closer examination of the Mosaic Law's teachings will show an anticipation of something greater than a twenty-four hour period of physical rest.

One of the disputes within scholarship deals with the fact that the Sabbath, while clearly a part of the creation of all people, is also included in the Mosaic Law given specifically to the Israelites. There are at least two ways to look at the relationship of the Sabbath as a part of both creation and the Mosaic Law. Some conclude that because the Sabbath of the creation account precedes any teaching in the Mosaic Law, the general concept must apply for all time and to all people. Depending on one's view, the details given to Moses may or may not apply today, but the concept of the Sabbath still remains. In this way the Sabbath concept would supersede any cultural mandate and be included in the creation mandate. Those that hold to any of the views that practice a period of physical rest (Saturday, Sunday, or any day observance) often use this argument in defense of those positions. Saturday observers say that the creation account sets up the Mosaic understanding. Sunday observers use the creation account to keep the practice of a day of rest in place while being freed from the further constraints of the Mosaic Law.

Any day observers often follow this same line of reasoning, concluding that the Sabbath was never officially changed to Sunday.

Those that hold to a “fulfillment in Christ” view also acknowledge the beginning of the Sabbath concept at creation, but they would see the further development within the Mosaic Law to be a more detailed description of the shadowy precursor of the ministry of Christ. Girdwood and Verkruyse describe their version of this perspective in this stark and straightforward²⁷ manner,

God has canceled the OT as a covenant, i.e., the written code, nailing it to the cross of Christ. The Sabbath day is specifically named, along with foods and festivals and New Moon celebrations, as one of those things which has no value today (Col 2:13–17). These things are understood as mere “shadows” of the reality which is found in Christ. The “rest” promised in Hebrews four is the eternal rest with God when the labors of this life are finished.²⁸

With this view, the Sabbath concept still applies, but one is freed from the necessity of having to observe a period of physical rest as commanded in the OT. The Sabbath rest, a fully-functional rule instituted at creation, is reintroduced and demonstrated in the specific and expanding types and shadows of the Sabbath within the Mosaic Law. This expanded definition eventually gives Christ’s ministry more clarity.

Having already focused on the creation account of the Sabbath, I will now present an expanded view of the Mosaic Sabbath theology. This next section will focus only on that part of the Mosaic Law which further expands the understanding and practice of

²⁷ Some might even consider this an extreme position.

²⁸ James Girdwood and Peter Verkruyse, *Hebrews*, The College Press NIV Commentary (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1997), Heb. 4:9.

Sabbath rest. While some see this as a preview of only an eschatological rest, I suggest that the NT presents it as a rest available, at least in part, to believers in the here and now.

Manna as a Precursor to the Sabbath Commandment

Just prior to the giving of the ten commandments in Exodus 20, God gives a preview of the Sabbath command in His provision of manna in the wilderness. The sons of Israel complained that it was the Lord's intent to save them from slavery in Egypt only to die of hunger in the wilderness. The Lord responded with a daily provision of bread from heaven saying, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may test them..." (Exod. 16:4). On the sixth day, God instructed them to bring in twice as much. The Hebrews did this and "on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for each one. When all the leaders of the congregation came and told Moses, then he said to them, "This is what the Lord meant: Tomorrow is a Sabbath observance, a holy Sabbath to the Lord" (Exod. 16:22-23). Moses further instructed that for six days they were to gather it, but on the seventh day, the Sabbath, there would be none. Since the Lord had given them bread for two days, the people rested on the seventh day. Bailey comments on how the instructions given for the manna ultimately tie in with the Sabbath, "The theological significance of the manna, in which 'the people witnessed daily miracles' (Deut. 8:3), necessitated the repetition of the instructions for its gathering and preparation which are interwoven with the Sabbath law."²⁹

²⁹ Randall C. Bailey, *Exodus*, The College Press NIV Commentary (Joplin, MO: College Press Publishing Company, 2007), 184.

I will present in Part 5 of this project that those events that occur between the crossing of the Red Sea and the giving of the Mosaic Law, are directly connected to the instructions in Hebrews 3-4. These warnings and instructions are given to encourage NT believers to enter into their Sabbath rest. While some readers may choose to see the Exodus 16 Sabbath discussion as distinctly separate from the giving of the law in Exodus 20, I will argue that these two passages should be viewed as part of a progressive Biblical concept and ultimately understood as an expanding Sabbath theology.

The Sabbath in the Mosaic Law

The scope of the Sabbath in the Mosaic Law is much broader than the commandment in Exodus 20. Sabbath days are discussed throughout the presentation of the festivals in Leviticus 23. The idea is expanded even further in Leviticus 25 when it is applied to an entire year. In fact, the Sabbath year becomes a very important development in the concept of the Sabbath. It moves the concept past people and applies it to the land in which the Israelites live. Finally, the Sabbath theology of the Mosaic Law reaches its fullness in the description of the Year of Jubilee. What begins as a twenty-four hour period one day a week is expanded to multiple days each year, then an entire year of freedom from work and debt, then a crazy year of freedom from everything! I will now present, in more detail, each of these Sabbath parts that make up the whole.

The Sabbath within the Ten Commandments

The Sabbath commandment, in Exodus 20, is the longest of all the commandments. It is the longest in Hebrew, Greek and English. The New American Standard Updated

version of the Bible translates the command using ninety-eight words. In contrast the commands concerning murder and stealing use only four English words each. The only command that comes close in length is the prohibition of making idols. While one cannot assume that the number of words used to describe a command in any way signifies its importance, the vast difference in the number of words used is at least an interesting linguistic nuance that might suggest the complexity of the Sabbath commandment.

Whether word count matters or not, the order and position of the Sabbath command has garnered much theological discussion. Even a cursory reading of Exodus 20:1-17 shows that the commandments are divided into two main categories. Baker gives one interpretation of this distinction,

...the commandments may be divided into two groups, one of four and the other of six, respectively dealing with relationship to God and to one's neighbor (cf. Nielsen, 1965: 33–34). This was suggested by Augustine and has been the traditional division in the Catholic and Lutheran churches (though in their enumeration the division is actually between the first three and last seven commandments). This division of material is slightly more balanced, but the first group is still three times longer than the second.³⁰

The first three commandments (no other gods, no graven images, use of the Lord's name) all clearly deal with man's relationship to God. The last six (honor parents, do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not lie, do not covet a neighbor's possessions) also clearly deal with man's relationship to other people. Interestingly, the Sabbath commandment sometimes is individually separated out from both groups. Viewed this way it would divide those two groupings. Some say that it belongs equally in

³⁰ David L. Baker, "Ten Commandments, Two Tablets: The Shape of the Decalogue," *Themelios* 30, no. 3 (2005): 10.

both groups in that it regulates man's behavior to God (keep it holy) and with people (you or your son or your daughter, etc.) as well.

Possibly another way to understand it is as a continuation of the function and order idea presented in the Genesis account of creation. In the same way that Sabbath rest was possible for God when the world had been set in order and functioned properly, so too the Sabbath commandment of rest is possible only when one's relationship with God (commands one through three) and with others (commands five through ten) are in their place of order and functioning properly. Walton sees it this way,

If God's rest on the seventh day involved him taking up his presence in his cosmic temple which has been ordered and made functional so that he is now ready to run the cosmos, our Sabbath rest can be seen in a different light. Obviously, God is not asking us to imitate his Sabbath rest by taking the functional controls. I would suggest that instead he is asking us to recognize that he is at the controls, not us. When we "rest" on the Sabbath, we recognize him as the author of order and the one who brings rest (stability) to our lives and world. We take our hands off the controls of our lives and acknowledge him as the one who is in control.³¹

In this sense, it would be difficult to observe the Sabbath if one was worshiping a false idol and committing adultery with their neighbor. That behavior invites chaos into one's life. In contrast, when one is in right relationship with God and also with their fellow man, then their world has been functionally put in the right order and the Sabbath rest is available. In this way, the Sabbath commandment becomes a bridge that connects the two groupings together. While it is not the most important command of the ten, linguistically it was given the distinction of order (the position between the two categories) and number (the most words used). In this way it can be expected and

³¹ Walton, *Lost World*, 145–146.

understood to have unique qualities that distinguish it from the other commandments. These attributes of position and number help the reader anticipate something more than just another command.

Festival Days and New Moons

In Leviticus 23, Moses records the instructions given to celebrate the feasts of the Lord. The seven feasts listed in that chapter are Passover, Unleavened Bread, First Fruits, Weeks, Trumpets, Atonement, and Tabernacles. Each of these events had significant historical redemptive meaning between the Lord and His people. These were consecrated days celebrated each year by the Israelites that reminded them of the things that God had done for them. Each of these had a unique tie to and further developed aspects of Sabbath theology.

While it is not my intent to comment in any great detail on the meaning or context of each of these festivals, one can be assured that each of them had great symbolic significance in the history of Israel. These festivals, in one sense, reminded the people of God's faithfulness in times past. In another sense, they reminded the people of God's ongoing faithfulness and also previewed God's faithfulness for times yet to come. For the purpose of this project, emphasis here will be made on the expansion of the Sabbath theology within the festivals. Brand comments on the integration of the weekly Sabbath into the festival days,

Regular religious celebrations remembering God's great acts of salvation in the history of His people. Traditionally called "feasts" in the English Bibles, these can conveniently be categorized according to frequency of celebration. Many of them were timed according to cycles of seven. The cycle of the week with its climax on the seventh day provided the cyclical basis for much of Israel's worship; as the

seventh day was observed, so was the seventh month (which contained four of the national festivals), and the seventh year, and the fiftieth year (the year of Jubilee), which followed seven cycles each of seven years.³²

In the beginning of Leviticus 23, instructions are repeated for the weekly Sabbath. “For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there is a Sabbath of complete rest, a holy convocation. You shall not do any work; it is a Sabbath to the Lord in all your dwellings (Lev. 23:3). Then the instructions about the other “appointed times” are given. It becomes clear that these festivals are tightly linked to the Sabbath concept. For instance, the Feast of Unleavened Bread is discussed in Leviticus 23:6-8. This was a seven-day feast of which the first and seventh days were “holy convocations” in which no one was to do any laborious work.³³ The reckoning of the Feast of Weeks was a counting of Sabbaths. “You shall also count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day when you brought in the sheaf of the wave offering; there shall be seven complete Sabbaths. You shall count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall present a new grain offering to the Lord” (Lev. 23:15-16). The celebration of Weeks is described at a holy convocation in which one should do no laborious work (Lev. 23:21). Then in the seventh month Trumpets was celebrated as a holy convocation with no work. In the same month the Day of Atonement is described as a holy convocation with no work to be done. Later in verses 31-32 it is repeated that they were to do no work and that it was to be a Sabbath of complete rest. The last feast of the year was the Feast of Booths.

³² Chad Brand et al., eds., “Festivals,” *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 567.

³³ Given the various descriptions of these festival Sabbath days, many of the festival Sabbaths could not have been observed on the 7th day of the week. In this way the Sabbath concept was expanded beyond its original boundaries.

This was an eight-day feast that included holy convocations on both the first and the eighth days. The feasts of the Lord came with specific instructions that included additional Sabbath days to observe beyond the weekly Sabbath.

In addition to these days, the Israelites were to celebrate each new moon (at the beginning of each month) with special observances. Hebrew months were lunar, based upon the appearance of the thin right-leaning crescent in the sky. The start of the Hebrew month is always connected to the new moon. The Hebrew word for month *חֹדֶשׁ*, (*hodesh*) can also be translated “new moon”.³⁴ The new moons were marked by special sacrifices (Num. 28:11-15) and the blowing of trumpets (Num. 10:10). Although there were no specific work restrictions in the Law of Moses for the first day of each month (2 Kings 4:23), by the time of Amos (Amos 8:5) a Sabbath seems to have been observed on each new moon.³⁵

For an Israelite, the reality of the Sabbath was much more extensive than a one in seven day of rest. There were Sabbath days strewn throughout their yearly calendar on which they regularly observed a Sabbath rest of no labor. In the Mosaic Law, the Sabbath day took on greater meaning and form than only a reminder, one day a week, of God’s rest at the end of creation.

³⁴ Francis Brown, Samuel Rolles Driver, and Charles Augustus Briggs, *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 294.

³⁵ Kevin Howard and Marvin Rosenthal. *The Feasts of the Lord*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997. 36-42.

Sabbatical Year and the Year of Jubilee

In Leviticus 25, Moses records the instructions given to him by the Lord regarding how to more fully observe the Sabbath when they enter the Promised Land. The Lord told Moses to celebrate a Sabbatical year, and allow the land to have a Sabbath. “Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard and gather in its crop, but during the seventh year the land shall have a Sabbath rest, a Sabbath to the Lord; you shall not sow your field nor prune your vineyard (Lev 25:3-4). This is an interesting expansion of the Sabbath concept. Now the Sabbath not only applies to all kinds of people (Israelites, servants, sojourners in the land) and cattle... but it applies to the very dirt. Sloan agrees with this distinction, “The festival reminded the Israelites that the land on which they lived had been given to them by God in fulfillment of his covenantal undertaking to provide richly for their physical needs (cf. Deut. 8:7–10).”³⁶ It seems that anything attached to the Promised Land, are in some way subject to this concept of Sabbath Rest. Beyond the Sabbath years there was an even greater, and some would say outlandish, concept to come. The Baker Encyclopedia notes the jubilee year was also Sabbath based,

Still another feast based on the principle of the Sabbath was the year of jubilee or pentecostal year (Lev. 25:8–55; 27:17–24). As the sabbatical year was related to the concept of the 7th day, so the pentecostal (“50th”) year marked the completion of a cycle of 7 sabbatical years.³⁷

³⁶ Elwell and Beitzel, 785.

³⁷ Elwell and Beitzel, 785.

Under the command from God, every fifty years, something really radical was to happen. “You are also to count off seven Sabbaths of years for yourself, seven times seven years, so that you have the time of the seven Sabbaths of years, namely, forty-nine years.” (Lev. 25:8). One might notice that this sounds very familiar. The reckoning of the Jubilee year is used for that the Feast of Weeks, by counting seven groups of seven and then adding one. This fiftieth year was to be consecrated, or set apart, from all the other years. In it they were to “proclaim liberty through the land to all its inhabitants” (Lev. 25:10)³⁸. What did this mean? The first instruction was for everyone to return to the property originally given to them when they entered the land. If land had sold during the other forty-nine years, it was to be returned in the fiftieth year. This was also another Sabbath year for the land and the same rules applied as did in the forty-ninth year.

Sloan explains the Jubilee as an extension of the Sabbath concept,

The Jubilee year is best understood as an intensified Sabbath Year, announced on the Day of Atonement every fifty years as a “Sabbath year of Sabbath years.” The Sabbath Year legislation had three basic provisions, to which a fourth was added in a Jubilee Year: (1) the freeing of all slaves; (2) the cancellation of all debts; (3) the fallowing of the land; and (4) in a Year of Jubilee, the return of all land according to the original Mosaic distribution. The “release” of the land was the central provision of the Jubilee code. If, because of indebtedness, a Hebrew was forced to sell his property, the sale was not to be a permanent alienation of the land.³⁹

³⁸ The founders of the United States of America were somewhat familiar with this concept. As Youngblood explains, “The inscription on the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia-“Proclaim liberty throughout the land to all the inhabitants thereof” (Lev. 25:10)-is a modern application of the Year of Jubilee.” Ronald F. Youngblood, F. F. Bruce, and R. K. Harrison, Thomas Nelson Publishers, eds., *Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1995).

³⁹ R. B. Sloan, “Jubilee,” ed. Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight, *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 396.

Practically this meant that the Israelites would not be harvesting a planted crop until the end of the fifty-first year. That's nearly three full years of relying on God to provide. God proposed the question that He knew the people would be tempted to ask, "What are we going to eat on the seventh year if we do not sow or gather in our crops?" (Lev. 25:20). God's response was reminiscent of their time in the wilderness, "I will so order My blessing for you in the sixth year that it will bring forth the crop for three years. When you are sowing the eighth year, you can still eat old things from the crop, eating the old until the ninth year when its crop comes in." (Lev. 25:21-22). The remainder of the chapter continues with some specific details of how this Year of Jubilee would be practically implemented. Instructions regarding the sale of certain types of land inside and outside of the city are given.

Moses records the Lord's expectation of how to treat the poor and how a poor man could be redeemed by one of his relatives. In the midst of these regulations there are two statements, almost cryptic in nature, stuck in the midst of the Jubilee legal jargon. When describing treatment of the poor, the Lord says, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to give you the land of Canaan and to be your God" (Lev. 25:38). It is a reminder, in the midst of very practical humanitarian instructions, of how He had treated them when they were poor and enslaved. The chapter closes with a similar reminder, "For the sons of Israel are My servants; they are My servants whom I brought out from the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God" (Lev. 25:55). The Jubilee instructions of how to treat the poor and redeem the captives are interspersed with reminders of who God is and the redemption that he had accomplished for them when

they left Egypt. In a sense, God's redemption of the people from Egypt is a story so ingrained within the Israelite community, it becomes their identity. Their redemption out of the land of slavery and into the land of Promise becomes their story. It is a story that plays on even into the present era.

One might ask how this all played out for the Israelites once they entered the land. One might want to hear the stories of God's provision in the Sabbath years and might expect the stories of the fiftieth-year redemptions to fill the pages of Scripture and be reminders of the grace and mercy of God's provision for His people. A read through the pages of Israel's history does not reveal such stories. On the contrary, quite a different story is told.

In the next chapter of Leviticus the Lord outlines the blessings and penalties of following his law. The blessings of following his commands meant the Israelites would be given rains in their season and secure living with peace in the land. Moreover they would defeat their enemies and the Israelites would be fruitful and multiply (Lev. 26:1-13). Disobedience would produce quite a different response from the Lord. If disobedient, the Israelites would be struck down before their enemies. The Lord also warned,

I will make the land desolate so that your enemies who settle in it will be appalled over it. You, however, I will scatter among the nations and will draw out a sword after you, as you land becomes desolate and your cities become waste. The land will enjoy its Sabbaths all the days of the desolation, while you are in your enemies' land; then the land will rest and enjoy its Sabbaths. All the days of its desolation it will observe the rest which it did not observe on your Sabbaths, while you were living on it (Lev 26:32-35).

There is no direct evidence the Israelites ever completely and correctly observed a Sabbatical Year or a Year of Jubilee. They did not develop a practice of placing their trust in the Lord to provide for them while they lived in the Promised Land. Nor did they release the captives and return the land to its original owners the way the Lord had commanded. Eventually the Lord communicated their punishment through the prophets. Jeremiah 25:8-11 records the prophecy that Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon would utterly destroy Israel and take her into captivity for seventy years. At first glance, the seventy-years portion of this prophecy may seem somewhat random but other Scriptures shed light on why it was this exact number. The Chronicler records many of the details of the destruction of Israel by Babylon. An interesting explanatory note is added near the end of the account.

Those who had escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon; and they were servants to him and to his sons until the rule of the kingdom of Persia, to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed its Sabbaths. All the days of its desolation it kept Sabbath until seventy years were complete (2 Chronicles 36:18).

God had kept his word. The people did not observe Sabbath years or the Years of Jubilee while they inhabited the land. How long exactly was the time of their iniquity? They missed seventy years of Sabbaths. This is exactly the amount of time the Lord kept them in exile and is completely consistent with His warning in Leviticus 26.

The OT outlines a complex theology of the Sabbath. The concept is introduced at creation and becomes further developed as God's story unfolds with the Israelites. The Sabbath included one day a week, an additional day each month, several festival days scattered throughout the yearly calendar, one year every seven and an extraordinary

Jubilee year every fifty. The Sabbath is also applied to anything that was associated with the Promised Land. The Israelites, their servants, visiting foreigners, animals and even crops were all required to observe the prescribed Sabbath rest.

The Sabbath of the OT was much bigger and more complicated than any one day. To the extent modern believers reduce their conversation and debate about the Sabbath to one small aspect of the entire theology, they are in danger of missing the deeper significance that the Sabbath has to offer. Interest in the Sabbath has largely been lost for the modern generation of believers. This may in part be due to a reductionistic approach to the Sabbath theology. Yet, the Bible suggests the Sabbath is very relevant for today. At least part of the solution could be to begin teaching a more “forrest for the trees” wholistic view of the Sabbath. The Sabbath is so much more than one day. It is a Biblical concept that grows larger in scope and meaning as the Biblical story unfolds.

When believers are encouraged to expand their understanding to include the whole theology that the Sabbath provides, the practical applications contained within the Sabbath passages become more apparent. It becomes clearer that God desires to bring order and function to the world. That function and order is what made creation very good in the first place... the fact that everything worked as intended. God’s communication with His creation was unhindered. Then Adam failed to trust God’s word and an element of chaos was reintroduced. Chaos breeds unrest in the heart of man, but the order and function that God provides allows man to fully engage with those around him.

Everyone can identify areas of chaos in their lives. Areas that people have tried to control time and again through their own efforts, but have failed. The Sabbath is about

allowing God to restore the order and function to this world, one heart at a time. I suggest there is nothing more practical and relevant in today's world. The theology of the Sabbath outlines the complete creative and redemptive history of mankind, gives hope for restoration of function and order for today, and previews the completed redemptive work that will be one day fully available in a land defined by this rest. It is this understanding of the Sabbath that can once again become relevant for the followers of God.

The Promised Land as a Place of Rest

As this section of this project has shown, the concept of a Sabbath rest was not only demonstrated by God at creation, but it was then applied in many other ways, including through the Mosaic Law. The Israelites were first instructed to observe a rest from gathering manna in the wilderness. Eventually, at Sinai, they were given instructions to observe one day a week, several additional days each year, one year in seven and every fiftieth year in rest. The concept of the Sabbath expanded to cover much more than a day for the people of Israel. In fact, it eventually connected itself directly to the land in which they lived. The land promised to Abraham would eventually be described as a land of rest for his descendants. These expressions of Sabbath rest are not meant to be competing ideas that were to work independently of one another. Rather, they built upon each other in their complexity and magnitude. It finally presented the land of Israel as a place of rest in which the people, animals, and crops functioned. It tied all the pictures together into one comprehensive understanding. It becomes a state of being *and* a place to accomplish it. It is this understanding that O'Brien describes as making its way into the book of Hebrews where believers are encouraged to enter God's rest, "The resting place

(katapausis) they are to enter is God's own, where he celebrates his Sabbath rest (sabbatismos). Together the two terms describe both a place and a state."⁴⁰

In a recounting of the conquests of the Israelites (Deut. 3:16-20) the Lord gave specific instructions to the men in the tribes of Reuben and Gad (and eventually to apply also to the half tribe of Manasseh) to follow their brothers into the land beyond the Jordan and help them fight the inhabitants. "Then I commanded you at that time, saying, "The Lord your God has given you this land to possess it; all you valiant men shall cross over armed before your brothers, the sons of Israel... until the Lord gives rest to your fellow countrymen as to you and they also possess the land which the Lord your God will give them beyond the Jordan" (Deut. 3:18 & 20). The Promised Land is first described here as a place of rest. While this might seem like a rather loose connection with the concept of the Sabbath, as we will see this idea is further developed in Scripture.

In the beginning of the book of Joshua, as the camp of the Israelites is preparing to cross the Jordan and enter the land, the words of Moses are repeated by Joshua.

"Remember the word which Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, saying, "the Lord your God gives you rest and will give you this land"" (Josh. 1:13). Eventually, after taking the whole land, "Joshua gave it for an inheritance to Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. Thus the land had rest from war" (Josh. 11:21). Near the conclusion of Joshua's leadership, this idea of having "rest in the land" was again reiterated.

⁴⁰ Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 171.

So the Lord gave Israel all the land which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they possessed it and lived in it. And the Lord gave them rest on every side, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers, and not one of all their enemies stood before them; the Lord gave all their enemies into their hand (Josh. 21:43-44).

This idea is again repeated at Joshua's farewell address in Joshua 23:1. Earlier in the story, God had promised a land to Abraham and he set out from his homeland in search of it. The NT author gives us a backdrop to the reasoning behind Abraham's actions.

By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God (Heb. 11:8-10).

One might ask, what city was it that Abraham expected to receive? What city had been built by God? Whatever it was... all the other people of faith in Hebrews chapter eleven were also looking for it. It is a list that (at the very least) includes Abel, Enoch, Noah, Isaac, Jacob, and Sarah.

All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For those who say such things make it clear that they are seeking a country of their own. And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God; for He has prepared a city for them (Heb. 11:13-16).

The author of Hebrews describes this as a heavenly "country". The word can also be translated as "homeland" or "fatherland".⁴¹ Since Adam's son Abel is included in this

⁴¹ more specifically a... "geographical area associated with one's familial connections and personal life, *fatherland*, *homeland*." Arndt, 788.

list, one might be tempted to ask, “For what “fatherland” was it that Abel was looking”? If Adam was Abel’s father, might that land have been Eden? The Biblical account of the fall into sin in Genesis 3 records the retention of Eden as guarded by “the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life” (Gen. 3:24). Adam was removed and the garden was maintained. Short of a clearer understanding of a redeemed earth that would later be developed by the author of Hebrews,⁴² I would suggest that Abel was in search of the garden that his father and mother had told him about. I would also suppose that the tradition and the stories were handed down to subsequent generations of faithful believers. The first city that God built, Eden, was a place of rest. It was created in perfect function and order and existed that way until the fall caused its inhabitants to be removed.

It is into this context that God began to give the picture of the earthly Promised Land as a place of rest. It was not the perfect place of rest, and never would be, but it functioned as a type and shadow of the heavenly city that boasts the restored rest of Eden. Shead gives an overview of the expanding theology of the Sabbath,

The OT presents a consistent theology of the Sabbath, but one which moves with the flow of salvation history. The original goal of a perfect (complete) creation in which humankind would rule fruitfully under God was never abandoned. The promise to Abraham pointed in the same direction: the fruitfulness in offspring and the blessing of a covenant relationship with God were to find a locus of expression in the Promised Land. The sacred time of the Seventh Day becomes the sacred place of the land; each in its own way is an expression of God’s rest. The fourth commandment exhorted Israel to imitate God’s creative and

⁴² “The author of Hebrews wants to show that the attainment of the “heavenly πατρις” anticipated by the fathers (cf. v. 16) is first made accessible only in Christ’s own redemptive activity.” Horst Robert Balz and Gerhard Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1990–), 58.

redemptive aim by living for a goal which transcended daily toil through fellowship with their covenant Lord.⁴³

The author of Hebrews connects the concept of the Sabbath rest not with any particular Sabbath day observance but with the entrance of the Israelites into the land of promise. In chapters three and four, the author quotes a psalm written by David. That psalm looks back to the wilderness generation and the fact that they did not enter the rest that the Promised Land provided. God's rest is equated with the land in contrast to the unrest of unbelief in the wilderness. The author of Hebrews concludes with this reasoning, "For if Joshua had given them rest, he would not have spoken of another day after that. So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His" (Heb. 4:8-10).

While this passage certainly continues and even further expands the concept of the Sabbath, it also provides support for the main point I wish to make in this chapter. In the progressive revelation of the OT, the concept of the Sabbath eventually became equated with the Promised Land itself. It became a multi-layered theology that involved one day a week, several days a year attached to festivals (and possibly new moons), every seventh year, every fiftieth year, and even the land in which they inhabited. To reduce the Sabbath concept to one particular day is to misunderstand the original Sabbath of creation and focus unnecessarily on one small aspect of the whole theology. The fruitlessness of those discussions have largely caused the current generation to disregard the topic altogether.

⁴³ Shead, 748.

For the redeemed of this generation to fully interact with their salvation it will be important for them to more fully reconnect with the whole of Sabbath theology.

Part III

Jesus is That Which is Better

Chapter 6

Jesus is Greater than Temple, Priest and King

In this project I have discussed the major views in the church today regarding the Sabbath. Many of those views center around the observance of some sort of physical rest on a particular day of the week. In the preceding section, I discussed how the Sabbath theology, when understood in its entirety, is an ever-expanding concept that continually includes more and more. It always anticipates something greater. What starts as one-day-a-week observance ends up being a year of freedom in a land of rest. Current disagreements in denominational theology have caused moderns to focus so closely on one aspect of the Sabbath (the Sabbath day question), that believers have largely lost the landscape-view of the entirety of the theology.

The one view, presented in the first section, that more easily incorporates the whole Sabbath theology is the “Fulfillment in Christ” view. Throughout the NT Christ is viewed as the fulfillment of OT concepts. This is a well-supported line of thought. Jesus is often seen as being greater than all the types and shadows that preceded him. The NT applies this concept to not just people (prophets, priests and kings), but also structures (tabernacle, temple) and practices (sacrifices, festivals, other rules of the Law). When viewed in this light, the story of the Bible begins to have a centering effect. All of Scripture is quickly narrowed down and focuses on the person of Christ.

One major theme of the NT is that Jesus is better than everything that came before Him. When one understands how pervasive this thought is, viewing Jesus as a fulfillment

of the Sabbath seems more natural. This theme is presented in several ways. Jesus' words and actions garner support for this understanding. In addition, the NT authors often present Jesus as better over and against OT concepts. This project will now focus on a few of the Biblical examples that highlight Jesus' supremacy.

The NT invites readers to view Jesus as one better than several people, positions, and functions in the OT. While entire projects have been dedicated to such a study, I will take just a few pages here to give an overview of the idea and a few examples from the NT. This discussion is based on the idea that the OT types and shadows of Christ always leave the reader expecting something more. Inevitably, that expectation ends up being fulfilled by Christ in the NT.

In the last section I showed that the entire theology of the Sabbath built to the crescendo of the year of Jubilee where the concept was expanded so much that it symbolized a complete reset of functionality and order. In the year of Jubilee, forty-nine years of chaos and disfunction were reset. Land was returned, debts cancelled, and servitude was forgiven. It was a year Israel never correctly observed, but that was not the end of their interaction with the concept.

Now I would like to broaden the scope and show that this theme of expecting something bigger, better, and greater not only presents itself in the Sabbath, but plays throughout the whole of Scripture. God placed many types in the OT that were small and incomplete versions looking forward to the one that would come and fulfill everything. Jesus is that one. Matthew chapter twelve records three statements of Jesus that suggests to the reader that the Christ is greater than and thus fulfills OT icons.

The first of these statements is in Matthew 12:1-8. In this passage, the Pharisees watch Jesus closely to see if He will break one of the rules they had implemented regarding the Sabbath. Jesus' disciples had picked heads of grain and eaten them. The Pharisees charged Jesus of not correctly teaching His disciples. He then gives two OT examples that give a different perspective on what is permissible on the Sabbath. He points out that the priests in the temple break the Sabbath and are innocent. Then Jesus follows that with an interesting statement, "But I say to you that something greater than the temple is here" (Matt. 12:6). Jesus is speaking of himself saying that, in fact, He is greater than the temple. Implied within this statement is that He is also greater than the activities that happen within and those who serve in the temple. Keener suggests His logic would have had a unique twist,

This is a Jewish "how much more" argument: if acceptable for the guardians of the temple, how much more for one greater than the temple? The temple had become the central symbol of the Jewish faith, and the suggestion that a human being could be greater than the temple would have struck most ancient Jewish ears as presumptuous and preposterous.¹

In the same conversation, Jesus also suggests that he is greater than even the Sabbath itself, "For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath" (Matt. 12:8). There are many different theories about what Jesus might have meant when he said this. Blomberg suggests the logic of the argument was clear, "Verse 8 brings the dialogue to its logical climax. Jesus' sovereign authority will determine how the Sabbath is now fulfilled in the

¹ Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), Mt 12:5-6.

kingdom age.”² Some even suggest that these are not Jesus’ words at all but might be an editorial comment addressed to the reader by the author. Nolland shows how this would not significantly change the intended meaning, “With 12:8 taken as an editorial comment, the linking ‘for’ makes easier sense: from what is reported in this account, you may conclude, dear reader, that Jesus exercises authority as Lord over the question of God’s intention for the Sabbath.”³

Whatever Jesus (and the author) meant in this discussion about the Sabbath and the temple, the reader gets the sense that He expands the understanding of both. He has the authority and the ability to define what the Sabbath is and what it is not.

Later in the same chapter, Matthew records two more statements Jesus makes when speaking to the scribes and Pharisees. They were asking for a sign so they could trust what He was saying was from God. Jesus said they would receive the “sign of Jonah the prophet”, when after three days in the heart of the earth, He would return to the earth through the resurrection. Then Jesus said, “The men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment, and will condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here” (Matt. 12:41). In similar fashion to His statement about the temple, Jesus mentions Jonah the prophet, and concludes that His ministry is greater.

² Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*, vol. 22, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 197.

³ John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 2005), 485.

Jesus followed that statement immediately with a third “greater than” statement. “The Queen of the South will rise up with this generation at the judgment and will condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, something greater than Solomon is here” (Matt. 12:42). It was under Solomon that Israel experienced its greatest power, wealth and wisdom. Solomon expanded Israel’s borders to their greatest extent (1 Kings 4:21) and he gained wisdom and discernment beyond anyone of his day (1 Kings 4:29-31). Yet Jesus announces that something greater than Solomon has arrived. In this case, instead of speaking of himself, Jesus is probably speaking of some aspect of His superior ministry. Barbieri concludes that “something greater” in this context must refer to the superiority of Jesus’ kingdom, “for the word pleion [greater than] is neuter, not masc.”⁴ Everything that Jesus puts His hand to is better than its OT forerunner. Blomberg points out, whatever the referent of the “greater than” statements, “Matthew has now shown Jesus as greater than the priestly cult, prophets like Jonah, and kings like David and Solomon (cf. 12:3–8).⁵

These three comparisons cover the three offices (prophet, priest, and king) that were anointed by God in the OT. This was a physical anointing with oil that symbolized the choice and special favor that God gave those who were called to those positions. The Hebrew word for “anointed one” is מָשִׁיחַ⁶ transliterated “messiah” and in Greek it is

⁴ Louis A. Barbieri, Jr., “Matthew,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 47.

⁵ Blomberg, *Matthew*, 207.

⁶ James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains : Hebrew (Old Testament)* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), מָשִׁיחַ.

Χριστός⁷ transliterated “christ”. There were many “messiahs” in the OT, but they all imperfectly filled the positions to which they were called.

Nolland comments on the last two characters, Jonah and Solomon,

The two examples nicely balance a prophetic figure and a royal figure, a figure who went to his hearers with one who was visited by one from afar, and possibly the negative judgment preaching of Jonah and the positive availability of wisdom with Solomon. Jesus and his ministry correspond to all of these in a that-much-more manner.⁸

Matthew records and bundles these three “greater than” statements into the twelfth chapter of his gospel and uniquely summarizes Jesus’ teaching and ministry. The author is encouraging the reader to see Jesus as better than all those, anointed by God, who came before Him. In other words, Jesus is not “an anointed” but “The Anointed” to which all others pointed. Gage summarizes Matthew’s chapter this way,

The Lord Jesus, as recorded in the Gospel of Matthew, claims that His kingly office is greater than Solomon’s (Matt 12:42) and that His prophetic office is greater than Jonah’s (Matt 12:41). He also claims that His priestly office is greater than the temple’s (Matt 12:6). Each one of the anointed offices, the Christological offices, are included in these three claims. That is, Christ is greater than all of the kings, prophets, and priests who ever preceded Him.⁹

But there is something more readers can glean from these statements in Matthew.

Jesus is inviting the world to see the characters and icons of the Mosaic Law as typological of His ministry. God’s story of redemption with the nation of Israel is a story in and of itself, but it is also analogous of the larger story of redemption played out in

⁷ Arndt, 1091.

⁸ Nolland, 513.

⁹ Warren Austin Gage, *There Is No Greater Love: How Jesus Is Greater than All Who Came before Him* (Fort Lauderdale: St. Andrews House, 2013), 41.

Jesus. It is this perspective that allows one to see the OT Sabbath as a smaller version of a bigger spiritual reality. It also allows the NT church to understand their spiritual journey in terms of the physical journey of Israel in the exodus from Egypt. While the church is a continuation of that OT story... it can also learn from the mistakes that generation made in the wilderness. This premise will be further expanded in Part Four of this project.

Chapter 7

The Book of Hebrews Claims Jesus is Better

There are several places in the NT where Jesus is presented as someone who is a better version than something that preceded him. The Bible often communicates spiritual truth by comparing the characteristics of a visible earthly example to similar characteristics of an unseen spiritual reality. Jesus put a new twist to this communication. When Jesus took on human flesh, the unseen truth became visible and all the previous earthly examples quickly paled in comparison.

The book of Hebrews argues that Jesus is superior. Within its chapters, the author systematically presents many of the OT types and shadows and argues that Jesus has a better and more permanent ministry than all of them. One of those topics presented in Hebrews chapters three and four is the Sabbath rest. In the previous section of this project, I argued that the entire theology of Sabbath in the OT created an expectation of something more. The first example of this was the seemingly unending seventh day of creation (with no evening and morning) compared to the one-in-seven rest that continually returned people to work on the first day of the week. That picture left people wanting and desiring more. That one day a week then became many more days in the year, then an entire year of rest, then a crazy year of redemption where everything was reset back to its original state. In the final picture, it became associated with a land of rest. The Sabbath has always garnered expectations of something more, so the idea that one should look to Jesus as a possible fulfillment of that concept is not unreasonable. He

is certainly the most likely candidate. The author of Hebrews invites his readers to understand Jesus as offering a better Sabbath than the temporary rest of the OT.

Throughout Hebrews, the author compares Jesus to the heroes and icons of the OT. Each of the OT characters played a part, but Jesus' sacrifice, covenant, and ministry are by far greater than anything the others have to offer. In the first two chapters Jesus is presented as a better revelation of God. "In these last days (God) has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things..." (Heb. 1:2). Cockerill explains the theological significance of these opening lines of the book,

The Greek words behind the term last days occurred frequently in the Greek Old Testament (with which our author was familiar) as a description of the time when prophesy would be fulfilled. These days, the time since Christ has come, are the last days when the words of God's prophets are fulfilled. All earlier revelation has looked forward to what God has now revealed!¹⁰

Along the way Jesus is presented better than the angels because He is the divine King (Heb. 1:4-8). He is better than Moses because He was the Son of God instead of only a servant (Heb. 3:3-4). Jesus' ministry is better than Joshua's because He brings greater rest to the people of God (Heb. 4:8-9). He is a greater priest than Aaron, because he is sinless and immortal (Heb. 7:26-28). He ushers in a better covenant built on better promises with a better sacrifice, that is, Jesus Himself (Heb. 7:22, 8:6, 9:12). In similar fashion to Jesus' statements in Matthew 12, the writer of Hebrews invites the reader to see Jesus' ministry as analogous to, and superior than, all the types that preceded Him.

¹⁰ Gareth L. Cockerill, *Hebrews: A Bible Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Publishing House, 1998), 34.

Chapter 8

The Old Testament Shadows Point to Something Better

In this third section, the project is looking into the concept that Jesus is better than many characters and icons that preceded Him. I've shown how Matthew records three of Jesus' statements in chapter twelve of his gospel that suggest Jesus saw his ministry as tied to but greater than those of the OT. In the preceding chapter I outlined how the entire book of Hebrews argues this point as it presents Jesus' ministry as better than the ministry of all those who proceeded him. This progression of thought is important as one builds on the theology of the Sabbath. In following this pattern, there are other Biblical texts that invite one to understand Jesus as a fulfillment of the Sabbath. These passages suggest that He is not only better than the one-in-seven day of physical rest, but that He is to be seen as better than the entirety of the OT Sabbath theology. Jesus cancels debts, frees captives, and returns His followers to a better place of rest than anything this world currently offers.

There is one more way Jesus' superiority is presented in the NT. He is presented as the fulfillment of OT ministries that "foreshadowed" His ministry. The Greek term for shadow, σκιά (*skia*)¹¹, appears seven times in the NT, but only three times is it used in the sense of foreshadowing.¹² As with many Biblical terms, there are differing opinions on what ultimate conclusions one can derive from the use of this term. For the purposes of

¹¹ Arndt, 929.

¹² Spiros Zodhiates, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000), 4639.

this project, it is not necessary to solve these differences of opinion on the origin of the term, all the possible contexts, or even the appropriate referents. I do hope to show that in at least three of its uses, the word “σκιά” (*skia*) invites the reader to expect something more than that which is being called a “shadow”. While a difference of opinion exists on any final conclusions, it is easy to find agreement that when “σκιά” (*skia*) is used in the sense of foreshadowing, the “something more” is clearly Jesus the Christ and His superior ministry.

At its most basic understanding in the physical world, for a shadow to exist, there must be a substance, a source of light, and something on which to receive the shadow. When the light hits the substance, then a shadow is created. The shadow is a flat, one-dimensional representation of the substance that casts it. It has similarities to the substance but the shape and form might be distorted. Shadows also do not have color. They only exist in shades of gray. Substances, on the other hand, have so much more detail. They can exist in three dimensions and can have shape and substance.

Substance can also have function not available to its shadow. Substance can move other objects and accomplish tasks. Shadows can represent those tasks, but can not accomplish them by themselves. These basics that people understand between substance and shadow can perhaps be the basis for understanding when the term is used in the sense of “foreshadowing” in the Bible. While the shadow can give a representation of its substance, it will not ever be as significant as the substance itself. I will first examine the two uses of this term in the book of Hebrews and then consider the Colossians passage.

The Hebrews passages will hopefully help set the stage for how to better understand Paul's use of the shadows and the Sabbath.

The Use of Shadows in Hebrews

There are two times the term “shadow” is used in the book of Hebrews, first in chapter eight and then again in chapter ten. I will first examine these two uses and consider their context prior to looking into the use of the term in Colossians 2:17. As stated earlier, the entirety of the book of Hebrews presents Jesus as better than those who prefigured His ministry. It is into this context that the author twice employs “σκιά” (*skia*).

In the last section of this project, I will more closely examine Hebrews chapters three and four where the topic of a believers' rest is discussed. Following that discussion in Hebrews, in chapters five and seven, the author discusses the priestly office and how Jesus perfectly fulfills that position. Surprisingly, Jesus' priesthood is not explained in terms of Aaron's priestly line, but in one completely different priesthood. It is this context that leads to the first “shadows” comment.

The book of Hebrews argues that Jesus fulfills the ministry of high priest “according to the order of Melchizedek” (Heb. 6:19, 7:17). Melchizedek is an OT character that briefly appears in Genesis 14:17-20, is described as a priest of the God most high, and then disappears from the Biblical narrative¹³ until the author of Hebrews mentions his priesthood in comparison to Christ's. As insignificant as the priesthood of

¹³ Melchizedek is also mentioned in Psalm 110:4. This Psalm is quoted in Hebrews 7:21 applied to the ministry of Jesus.

Melchizedek seems in an initial reading of Genesis, the author of Hebrews uses him, and his position described as a priest-king, to contrast the ministry of Jesus and the Levitical priesthood of Aaron. Johnson summarizes the discussion in Hebrews this way,

The great theme of Jesus' priesthood begins by a return to the figure of the ancient priest and king Melchizedek. First named by citation of Ps 109:4 in Heb 5:6, the mysterious figure according to whose order Jesus has been designated as a high priest is now examined in some detail, through analysis of the only other scriptural passage that mentions him, Gen 14:17–20.¹⁴

The change in the type of priesthood that Jesus brought also necessitated a change in the law observed by that priesthood (Heb. 7:12). If Jesus is of a different order of priesthood, then the law He follows is also of a different kind. This is an important distinction described by Ellingworth and Nida,

If the statement in verse 12 is to make sense, priesthood must be understood as “the system of priests” or “the kind of priests.” Therefore when the priesthood is changed may be rendered as “when there is a change in the kind of priests,” or “when there are no longer the same kind of priests,” or “when the kind of priests is different.” The manner in which one renders the clause there also has to be a change in the law depends on the way in which the first part of verse 12 is translated.¹⁵

In this discussion of different priesthoods and laws, the author summarizes the Levitical priesthood on several points. One of these conclusions may speak directly to this discussion of the Sabbath. Hebrews concludes that the offerings of the Mosaic covenant were inferior because they continually needed to be offered on behalf of the people. The repetition proved them to be inefficient, and eventually ineffective to accomplish that to

¹⁴ Luke Timothy Johnson, *Hebrews: A Commentary*, ed. C. Clifton Black, M. Eugene Boring, and John T. Carroll, 1st ed., The New Testament Library (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 173–174.

¹⁵ Paul Ellingworth and Eugene Albert Nida, *A Handbook on the Letter to the Hebrews*, UBS Handbook Series (New York: United Bible Societies, 1994), 146.

which they were pointing. Jesus, who offered up a better sacrifice, Himself, once and for all time (Hebrews 7:27). Johnson comments on the contrast between the two examples,

He (the author of Hebrews) wants his hearers to appreciate the complete adequacy and singularity of Christ's self-offering, expressed by the adverb *ephapax* ("once for all"), which he will repeat in 9:12 and 10:10. Second, he wants them to acknowledge in contrast the multiplicity inherent in the Levitical priesthood—the plurality of priests, the plurality of sacrifices (for priests and for people), and the plurality of their temporal repetition.¹⁶

The author invites his reader to view the old system of perpetual sacrifices as a suggestion that there would one day be a better solution. It anticipated one priesthood and one sacrifice that would suffice for all time. This point, I would argue, also corresponds to the weekly practice of the Sabbath observance obtained within that same old Law. It was an inferior rest because it continually needed to be offered... but never truly gave what was needed. The OT Sabbath offered fleeting physical rest, but the people needed its spiritual equivalent. Jesus brings a new covenant, one better than that of Moses. Jesus' High Priestly ministry takes place in the true tabernacle, the heavenly one, after which the earthly example was fashioned. His priestly role is in the order of a better priesthood, one that precedes and supersedes the Mosaic covenant in its effectiveness.

It is into this discussion of the superiority of Christ's priestly ministry that the author employs "σκιά" (*skia*). He points out that Jesus ministers in the true tabernacle in heaven, not the earthly copy. Hebrews then makes this point,

Now if He were on earth, He would not be a priest at all, since there are those who offer the gifts according to the Law; who serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, just as Moses was warned by God when he was about to erect the tabernacle; for, 'See,' He says, 'That you make all things according to the pattern

¹⁶ Johnson, 195.

which was shown you on the mountain.’ But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises (Heb. 8:4-6).

The next several chapters of Hebrews discusses the superiority of the new covenant, of which Jesus is the perfect High Priest and Mediator.

While on Mt. Sinai, Moses was given specific instructions for how to build the tabernacle and its furniture. Many of these details are included in Exodus 25-28. In the midst of these instructions, Moses records this, “See that you make them after the pattern for them, which was shown to you on the mountain” (Exod. 25:40). One might ask why the attention to detail was so important. Did it really matter what type of wood was used? Would it really matter if the table of showbread was three cubits long instead of two? The author of Hebrews gives some insight to the reason God cared so much about the details. This is the context and content of the first use of the term “shadows” that the NT offers. The term “shadow” is used to describe the earthly tabernacle, the one Moses was given specific instructions to build. Those instructions were specific not because the physical structure was special in and of itself. The tabernacle was special because it was fashioned as a copy of a tabernacle that already existed in the heavenly realm. It was to be as close of an earthly representation to the spiritual reality as could be shown. O’Brien summarizes this thought well,

The tabernacle was to serve as a dwelling place for God in the midst of his people on earth. It would be entirely in keeping with contemporary practice that such an earthly tabernacle be a replica of God’s heavenly dwelling place. But within the divine purposes it was only a shadowy outline of the heavenly model. Our author substantiates this argument by citing Exodus 25:40, ‘See to it that you make them

according to the pattern (typos) shown you on the mountain' (also v. 9; 26:30; 27:8).¹⁷

The heavenly tabernacle was already operating and functional, and it was Moses' duty to correctly reflect the heavenly realm when he built the earthly copy. It was in this sense that the earthly tabernacle was a "shadow" of the true tabernacle in heaven.

Shadows can be understood in a number of ways in the Bible, but it becomes obvious that this use, in Hebrews 8:5, intends to present the shadow's referent as somehow incomplete. It is a visible copy of something that exists in the unseen world, and it is lacking in its ministry compared to the substance after which it is fashioned. This understanding is consistent with the two other uses of "shadow" presented below. All three uses of "σκιά" (*skia*) understood as a foreshadow suggest an incomplete and inferior representation of something in the heavenly realm.

The next use of "σκιά" (*skia*) is at the beginning of Hebrews chapter ten. Hebrews uses all of chapter nine to discuss the Old Mosaic Covenant in comparison to the New Covenant and ministry offered and administered by Jesus. This chapter continues to use the imagery of the earthly realm being a copy of the true instruments that exist in the heavenly realm. The reader gets the sense that there is a mirror image in heaven, but that the earthly is an inferior copy. This inferior mirroring anticipates something better. It invites the reader to imagine and expect the reality while looking at and interacting with the copy.

Therefore it was necessary for the copies of the things in the heavens to be cleaned with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than

¹⁷ O'Brien, 290–291.

these. For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us... (Heb. 9:23-24)

It is directly following this passage that the reader encounters the second use of “σκιά” (*skia*) by the author of Hebrews. “For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near” (Heb. 10:1). The mention of “Law” here seems to be a description of the entirety of the imperfect and repetitive law of the OT. Westcott comments on this repetitive nature,

The iteration, the inefficacy, the transitoriness of the services of the Law which culminated in that on the Day of Atonement, followed from the fact that it ‘had a shadow only of the good things to come.’ It could provide nothing more than symbolic, and therefore recurrent, offerings, which in different ways witnessed to an idea that they were inadequate to fulfill.¹⁸

What’s included in the Law? The ten commandments which include directions for repetitive seventh-day Sabbath observance. Also included in the Law are the instructions in Leviticus 25 for the seven festivals of the Lord that add many more Sabbath days to the yearly calendar. The Law also included the instructions in Leviticus 27 for the Sabbath year and the Year of Jubilee. Much of the Biblical theology of the Sabbath is included within the “Law”, and Hebrews presents the Law as only a repetitive shadow of the good things to come. What are those “good things to come”? It is the ministry of Jesus Christ. He brings the good things to His people. If that point is not entirely clear

¹⁸ Brooke Foss Westcott, ed., *The Epistle to the Hebrews the Greek Text with Notes and Essays*, 3d ed., Classic Commentaries on the Greek New Testament (London: Macmillan, 1903), 306.

here, the third mention of shadows in Colossians 2:16-17 will bring more clarity to the situation.

Colossians 2:16-17 is an Anticipation of Something Better

In Colossians, Paul is dealing with several complex topics. In fact, Colossians chapter two might be one of the more difficult passages to exegete in all of the NT. While the text is clear that there are false teachers trying to influence the church, most agree it is not entirely clear to which exact circumstances in Colossae Paul is speaking. Moo acknowledges this difficulty,

Although there is, then, universal agreement that the false teachers' insistence on observance of days was influenced by Judaism, dispute remains over the degree and nature of that influence... On the whole, then, it seems best to view the practices in v. 16 as basically Jewish in origin and perhaps even orientation while still recognizing that they have been taken up into a larger mix of religious ideas and practices.¹⁹

Acknowledging these difficulties, and without trying to solve all the problems the text presents, I will focus only on Paul's statement in Colossians 2:16-17, "Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day - things where are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ."

This passage is important because it not only uses the foreshadowing sense of "σκιά" (*skia*) but it also mentions the Sabbath. There is much debate whether this Sabbath reference refers to the weekly Sabbath day, the additional Sabbath days attached to the festivals, or possibly both. Those who argue for the NT continuance of the Sabbath

¹⁹ Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2008), 221.

argue that this passage only applies to those Sabbaths in addition to the weekly Sabbath of the decalogue. While the specific referent of Paul's instruction may not be clear, it is understood that at least some aspect of the Sabbath is to be understood as a foreshadowing of the ministry of Jesus Christ.

I have argued previously that in modernity, some theologians prefer to separate Sabbath theology in its individual components for purposes of debate. This dividing has certainly occurred with Colossians 2:16-17. Even if a specific aspect of the whole is being dealt with, I purpose that the theology of the Sabbath should be seen as the sum of its parts. To segregate the individual concepts of the Sabbath into its individual parts and ascribe different meanings to each is common, but certainly distracts from the understanding of the whole. The more common segments within any given culture will eventually gain more attention and the less common segments will fade and be forgotten. Eventually, the understanding of the whole theology becomes reduced to some of its lesser parts. Those who suggest that the seventh-day Sabbath of the decalogue can be partitioned off as a commandment not attached to the whole may be missing an important and intended understanding that only comes from focusing on the unpartitioned whole.

When sin entered the world, chaos was reintroduced to the creative order and function that God had established. The redemptive narrative of the entire Bible looked forward to the one who would come and fix the problem ushered in by the actions of the first Adam. The promise of Genesis 3:15 created an expectation of the last Adam who would succeed in the commission to fill, subdue, and rule the earth with God's presence. In the OT, the ministry of this unnamed character was often described and alluded to. The

NT clearly identifies Jesus as that highly anticipated character. The world wanted something better, and Jesus is that one who is better in every understanding. He is the Promised Seed that came to restore function and order once again to the world. Jesus is a better leader who shows us a way from the slavery of sin into the rest experienced when one is once again in right relationship with God.

Part IV

Jesus is the New Moses Leading a New Wilderness Community

Chapter 9

The Israelites & the Church Experience Analogous Journeys of Faith

The last section of this project is a detailed look at the longest and most detailed NT discussion of Sabbath theology, Hebrews chapters three and four. In this section I will argue that the entirety of Hebrews, and specifically those two chapters, rely on one main assumption that the author of the book never directly states in detail. It is the assumption that Israel in the wilderness and believers in the New Covenant are in analogous situations. The writer's point is that in the NT, similar to the Old, God's people are pilgrim people. Both groups have their essential identity as wanderers and exiles and the author finds certain factors therein that bear directly on the situation of his own readers.

The author of the book of Hebrews views the NT church as a wilderness community. Particular language in the last part of Hebrews brings this out more fully. In Hebrews 11, a list of faithful from the OT is presented. About half way through the chapter, a summary statement describes these faithful (Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Sarah). "All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth" (Heb. 11:13). The author describes the readers of his letter as a part of this same group and having this same identity as exiles.¹ The process of coming to faith in God is likened to an exodus out of slavery of this world and citizenship in the city

¹ This theme also presents itself in 1 Peter. Peter addresses his letter, "To those who reside as aliens" (1 Peter 1:1) who have obtained an inheritance "reserved in heaven" (1 Peter 2:4). Peter later instructs, "Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul." (1 Peter 2:11).

of Heaven. The author suggests that prior to entering their new country, believers are exiles, wandering on this earth, awaiting an exodus.

Ernst Käsemann published a book in the 1930's called, "The Wandering People of God". In it he argues that the major theme of the entire book of Hebrews is the church as a wandering community. He begins the opening chapter with this summary,

Hebrews intends to show the Christian community the greatness of the promise given it and the seriousness of the temptation threatening it. For this reason, it sets before its eyes the picture of Israel wandering through the wilderness. From such a type the possibilities of the Christian existence can be perceived. This assumes that type and antitype share a basic posture. Such a common posture does in fact exist in both.²

Käsemann's book has helped to highlight this theme in modernity. One of the main topics in this discussion is the nature, timing and availability to enter the NT version of the rest that God offers. As Attridge points out, "one of the most controversial questions in the study of the Epistle to the Hebrews is the nature of the eschatological perspective which it represents, and a focal point of the debate about this issue is the passage on the 'rest' which awaits the addressees (4:1-11)."³

Opinions about the nuances of this rest are divided among theological and denominational circles. Gaffin, one who leans towards Käsemann's position, argues that the motif of entering the promise land presupposes that the rest spoken of is an entirely yet future experience,

² Ernst Käsemann, *The Wandering People of God: An Investigation of the Letter to the Hebrews*, trans. Roy A Harrisville and Irving L Sandberg. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Pub. House, 1984), 17.

³ Harold W. Attridge, "'Let Us Strive to Enter That Rest': The Logic of Hebrews 4:1-11," *Harvard Theological Review* 73 (1980): 279.

Realized eschatology,” then, undoubtedly has an integral place in the message of Hebrews.... in keeping with his eschatology as a whole, the writer could have spoken of rest as present. But does he, in this passage (chapters 3-4) or elsewhere, either expressly or by implication? That he has a realized eschatology does not mean that the rest in chapters 3-4 must somehow be present, no more than Jesus’ statements that the kingdom is present mean that he cannot also, in other places, only speak of it as future.⁴

In contrast to this view, Lincoln views the time of entering God’s rest as coincident with the “today” of Psalm 95:7 (as quoted in Heb. 3:7, 15; 4:7). He argues that God’s rest is not entirely future and that the original readers of Hebrews are being exhorted to enter God’s rest “now”, “According to Hebrews 11:1 faith makes real in the present that which is future, unseen, or heavenly. This is why those who have believed can be said to enter the rest already.”⁵

I believe that the wholistic view of the Sabbath presented in part two of this project and the practical exegesis of Hebrews 3 and 4 presented in next section supports this latter position. While the completely restored Sabbath is yet future, Christ’s fulfillment of that rest began in His first advent and is available, in part, “today”. Earlier I argued that many believers have largely abandoned the topic of the Sabbath. This is the response of a people who have lost relevance for “today”. It is when this rest is seen as practical and life changing, in the present, that the concept of the Sabbath will become important once again for the people of God. I would argue that Käsemann’s (and Gaffin’s) wholly

⁴ Richard B. Gaffin, “A Sabbath Rest Still Awaits the People of God”, in *Pressing Toward the Mark: Essays Commemorating Fifty Years of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church*, edited by Charles G. Dennison and Richard C. Gamble. (Philadelphia: Committee for the Historian of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 1986), 33, 44.

⁵ A. T. Lincoln, “Sabbath, Rest, and Eschatology in the New Testament,” in *From Sabbath to Lord’s Day: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Investigation*, ed D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 211.

futuristic understanding of rest has been easily pushed aside by the tyranny of the urgent. It is easy for believers to lose interest in a concept that seems so far in the distant future. Faced with the dysfunction of sin on a daily basis, believers have become disinterested in the temporary and flat shadowy observance of the Sabbath. When the people of God recognize the chaos that sin has brought to their world and that Jesus offers a functional and orderly release from that bondage now, they may once again desire to reengage with the theology of the Sabbath. As Lincoln argues, it is the focus on the urgency of “today” from the text that emphasizes this point. I will discuss this premise in more depth in the final section of this project.

When presenting this “wandering people” motif, the author of Hebrews assumes the reader understands the physical journey, challenges, and failures of Israel in the first exodus. This story must be understood before one can apply any analogous emphasis to an additional context. The Israel of old traveled from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the Promised Land via the leading of a mediator sent from God. A believer’s spiritual journey today follows a similar path from slavery to freedom. Believers also have a mediator sent from God to lead the way in our exodus journey. To help establish the foundation of this analogy, it will be helpful to first examine how Jesus is presented in scripture as the new Moses figure leading an exodus journey out of slavery for those who believe in Him. Then I will summarize the exodus story of the OT including the wilderness wandering events in seven stages. I propose that it is these seven stages of their OT journey that are somewhat analogous to the spiritual journey of the NT faithful.

Chapter 10

Jesus is the New Leader Like Moses & Joshua

In several places, the NT encourages believers to learn from the unfaithful examples of those Israelites that left Egypt and wandered in the wilderness. Believers today can find similarities in their own spiritual journey. One obvious similarity is that both groups had one who acted as a mediator between God and man. In the OT that man was Moses. Jesus fulfills that role for believers today. Examples of this “Moses typology” is seen throughout the NT. Complete works, like Allison’s “The New Moses; a Matthean Typology”⁶ have been written suggesting a pervasive attempt by the NT authors and the early church to connect the ministries of Moses and Jesus. Allison summarizes this thought, “... of all the Jewish figures with whom Jesus is implicitly or explicitly compared in Christian literature of the first few centuries, Moses, both in terms of frequency and significance, holds pride of place.”⁷

It is clear also that Paul’s understanding of the wilderness community in the OT also involved a linking of Moses and Jesus,

For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and all ate the same spiritual food; and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ. Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness. Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved (1 Cor. 10:1-6).

⁶ Dale C. Allison, *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013).

⁷ Allison, 96.

Paul goes on to warn his readers not to follow the wilderness community in their idolatry, immorality, testing of the Lord, and grumbling. I will now comment, in more detail, on two gospel accounts that lend support to this connection of Moses and Jesus. These will help further the connection of Jesus' ministry to this project's greater conversation about the Sabbath.

Moses and Elijah Talking to Jesus About His Exodus

In Luke 9:18 (see also Matthew 16:13, Mark 8:27), Jesus asks his disciples for the latest gossip on what role people were suggesting He was playing. Some of the proposals were, John the Baptist (come back from the dead), Elijah, or maybe one of the other OT prophets. When Jesus asked Peter directly, he responded, "You are the Christ of God." Jesus then warned and instructed the disciples not to tell this to anyone." This is important in what happens next.

It was Moses that set up in the OT the expectation of an "anointed one" that would one day be sent of God. "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him" (Deut. 18:15). Of this prophet, God said,

I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. It shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him (Deut. 18:18-19).

The book of Acts twice (Acts 3 & 7) features this Scripture and applies it directly to the ministry of Jesus. Allison identifies this as an early attempt in the church to link these two figures, "In these two speeches Jesus is the prophet like Moses (Acts 3:22; 7:37), he bears Mosaic titles, and his experience is parallel to that of Moses: both worked miracles

and then are rejected by Israel (Acts 7:35-40).”⁸ It is this Deuteronomy passage to which many other “prophet” references in the NT (Matt. 21:11; Luke 2:25–34; 7:16; 24:19; John 1:21, 25; 4:19) might be linked.

At the time of Jesus, God’s faithful were expecting a prophet like Moses. Köstenberger points out one additional passage, John 1:45, that clearly links this expectation to Jesus, "It is Philip’s testimony that the one of whom Moses wrote in the law and of whom the prophets wrote as well is Jesus."⁹ He refers to John's presentation of the gathering of several disciples early in His ministry, "Phillip found Nathanael and said to him, 'We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote- Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.'"

The next story in Luke’s gospel, Luke 9:28-36 (see also Matt. 17:1 & Mark 9:2), is the transfiguration of Jesus. Eight days later, Jesus is up on a mountain with Moses and Elijah (Luke 9:30). Jesus must have been encouraging his disciples to take notice that He was not who people were saying that He was, like Elijah, since he was right there. Jesus was also not a prophet from the OT because one of those was right there with them as well. Luke alone records that they start talking about the “departure” that Jesus was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. The Greek word is “ἔξοδος” (exodus). Some understand this as a only a euphemism for his death.¹⁰

⁸ Allison, 97-98.

⁹ Andreas J. Köstenberger, “John,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, UK: Baker Academic; Apollos, 2007), 424.

¹⁰ Arndt, 350.

They were discussing much more than Jesus' death. It was a whole movement of people that He was working on. Moses led his people out of the slavery of Egypt. Jesus' exodus was to be accomplished at Jerusalem. Gage clearly sees a literary link back to the ministry of Moses,

At the end of his days, after all of his great redemptive work was done, Moses' work was still not finished. He had led the people in their exodus out of Egypt, but he could not bring them into the paradisaal land of promise. The work of Jesus was not left undone. Moses himself, along with Elijah, spoke with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration about the "exodus" that Jesus would accomplish in Jerusalem (Luke 9:31, Gk. exodos).¹¹

Jerusalem had become a place of spiritual slavery¹² for those under the leadership of the temple.

The next event in the transfiguration story is when a cloud forms at the top of the mountain and everyone walks into it. This scene should sound familiar when one realizes that Jesus' name is really Joshua. It is a confusing set of circumstances that contributed to how we translate Jesus' name into the English language... but his name in Greek is "Ἰησοῦς" which is the same as Joshua, the OT successor of Moses.¹³ That should make this whole transfiguration scene a little more familiar. In Exodus 24:12-15, Moses is commanded to go up on Mt. Sinai to receive the stone tablets and the law and the

¹¹ Gage, *There Is*, 39.

¹² Some theologians argue the Jews of the first century had never fully accomplished an exodus from their bondage in Babylonian exile. Even though a remnant had physically returned to the land of Israel, they had failed to carry out the complete deliverance prophetically described in several OT passages. See: G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 57 & 104; N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God; Christian Origins and the Question of God 2* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996); and Bruce K. Waltke, *The Minor Prophets: An Exegetical and Expository Commentary*, ed. Thomas Edward McComiskey (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1993), 679.

¹³ Arndt, 471.

commandment that God had written for the instruction of the Israelites. Moses takes Joshua with him (vs. 13). Then a cloud covered the mountain (vs. 15). Then they received the law. The scene at the transfiguration could be understood as a typological retelling of that story.¹⁴ Moses is up on a mountain with Joshua (Jesus) they are enveloped by a cloud. What should one expect next? If the script follows suit, one could expect to have God give the law. But instead of receiving stone tablets as in the Old Covenant, they heard a voice (Luke 9:35) coming out of the cloud saying, “This is My Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him!” The Law in the NT is not the words of God written on stone tablets... but it is the very voice of Jesus. Gage summarizes the ministry of Jesus this way,

Jesus takes us out of Egypt, but He also takes us into the Land of Promise. Because he never accomplished the task of bringing God’s people into their promised rest, Moses could never say that all of his work was done (cf. Psa 90:17). But Jesus, our True Moses and our True Joshua, speaks triumphantly when He says, “It is finished!” (John 19:30).¹⁵

Luke chapter nine is a great reminder of the power and ministry of Jesus. He was the Prophet of God, one like Moses and Joshua, whose ministry is an exodus of a new wilderness community.

Jesus Fulfills the Jubilee Year

In section two of this project, I presented the theology of the Sabbath as a whole. I argued that it progresses from one day, to a year, and culminates in the year of Jubilee

¹⁴ A retelling that obviously does not enjoy exact correspondence on every level. For instance, Elijah was not a character in the original meeting on Mt. Sinai, but he was predicted to appear as a signal of the arrival of the “day of the Lord” (Mal. 4:5). A role in which John the Baptist also typologically plays a part (Mat. 11:14, 17:10-13, Mark 9:11-13, Luke 1:17, John 1:21).

¹⁵ Gage, *There Is*, 39.

where debts are cancelled, captives are set free, and the land is returned to its original owner. In section three of this project I showed how the book of Hebrews presents Jesus as better than all the types and shadows that came before him. This current section argues that Jesus is fulfilling the role of Moses leading His people on a spiritual exodus of sorts. There is one NT passage that rather covertly ties these three concepts together. As the new mediator from God, like Moses, Jesus is passing along the new law to the people of God. Luke 4 tells of one such time. Jesus had returned to his hometown and was teaching one Sabbath in the synagogue. He read from the book of Isaiah,

The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord (Luke 4:18-19).

Jesus then shocked everyone with the statement, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:21). There are several things happening in this passage on which one could comment. One important item to note is that this is a “Messianic” passage. The “anointed” in the Isaiah 61:1-2a passage that Jesus quotes is “*מָשִׁיחַ*” (*messiah*) in the Hebrew text. While this reference originally referred to the prophet Isaiah, in this text Jesus applies it to himself and takes on the role of The Messiah. Secondly, this particular Isaiah passage is referencing the year of Jubilee. Jesus was anointed to “preach the gospel to the poor”. The gospel is the “good news” in the OT passage. What is the best news that a poor person can receive? The news that their debts are cancelled! Jesus then says that he had been sent “to proclaim release to the captives”. As discussed earlier, this is another of the provisions of the Jubilee year, giving freedom

to those who are oppressed. Even though a portion of the Jews had physically returned to the land of Israel from the Babylonian exile, they were still an oppressed and occupied people. In the first century, Rome is an obvious example of the political occupation and control the Jews experienced. Jesus' own words reveal that control of true worship at the temple had also been lost. The majority of temple leadership did not believe in God, and refused to accept Jesus when He presented himself as the Son of God.¹⁶

The last thing Jesus reads from the scroll is that he had been sent to “proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.” This is the language of the year of Jubilee. Jesus was there to guide God's people into the fulfillment of the year of Jubilee. Pao and Schnabel confirm the convergence of several themes in this passage,

...the Jubilee connection does highlight the social, economic, and political impact of the arrival of the eschatological era. As in Isa. 61 (and 40–55), this Jubilee theme is one among many that contribute to the wider prophetic paradigm of the second exodus.¹⁷

There is no evidence, Biblical or extra-Biblical, that Israel ever celebrated a Jubilee year prior to this.¹⁸ In contrast to the seeming lack of the Jubilee ministry in the OT, many people were set free during Jesus' earthly ministry, and souls continue to be released even to this day. Unfortunately, there was a large portion of first century Israel that refused to celebrate even the fulfillment of this festival when Christ proclaimed it. While they all spoke well of Him initially, just a few verses later, in Luke 4:28-29, all the

¹⁶ The “woes” recorded in Matthew 23:13-36 emphasize this point well.

¹⁷ David W. Pao and Eckhard J. Schnabel, “Luke,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, UK: Baker Academic; Apollos, 2007), 290.

¹⁸ Bryan C. Babcock, “Year of Jubilee,” ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016). Year of Jubilee entry.

people in the synagogue were filled with rage and they drove Jesus toward a high cliff to push Him off and kill him. Jesus ministry was better than Isaiah the prophet's because Jesus proclaimed not just an observance of, but *the very fulfillment of* the Year of Jubilee.

Chapter 11

The Analogous Stages of the Faith Journeys

If the Christian experience is analogous to experience of Israel in the wilderness, then it would be helpful to summarize the route of those who came out of Egypt and compare it to the journey of faith of NT believers. When one understands the basics of the wilderness journey, then that story can be used as a backdrop for the NT believer's journey.

In 1 Corinthians 10:1-11, Paul suggests that the experiences of the "fathers" in the wilderness is typological of the NT believer's experience. He specifically comments on these seven points: the fathers... were under the cloud (vs.1), passed through the sea (vs. 1), were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea (vs. 2), ate spiritual food (vs. 3), drank spiritual drink supplied by Christ (vs. 4), craved evil things, were idolaters, and acted immorally (vs. 5-8), were laid low in the wilderness (vs. 5).

In this passage, Paul lays the groundwork for an analogous (typological) situation of comparison, but the Bible suggests the analogous situation extends to more points than just those he mentions in this passage. For instance, Paul mentions nothing in this particular passage about the similarities of the two groups being freed from the bondage of slavery. Nor does he mention anything about the similarities surrounding the reception of a law or the ultimate destination of both being a land associated with rest. But Paul, and other NT authors, do make all of these extended points in other passages scattered throughout the NT. The author of Hebrews extends this analogy to include the Sabbath by

specifically referring to a part of that same wilderness journey in his instruction to NT believers about how to observe the Sabbath rest.¹⁹ This extended analogy becomes a theological framework echoed several places in the NT. Bruce helps tie together several of these thoughts,

Jesus' redemptive work on the cross is referred to as a new "exodus" (exodos [Luke 9:31]), and he himself is the Passover lamb (1 Cor. 5:7; 1 Pet. 1:19; John 1:29, 36; 19:33–36). His followers, moreover, spiritually parallel Israel in the wilderness (Acts 7:38), having passed through baptism, as the OT people of God passed through the Red Sea (1 Cor. 10:1–2). Christ is the guide through the wilderness, as a spiritual rock (1 Cor. 10:4).²⁰

In the OT, Israel traveled a physical journey that started in slavery in Egypt and finished in the Promised Land. Believers today share a similar journey. Understanding the similarities will be an important part of understanding the Sabbath rest that God offers.

A survey of the map of the wilderness journey will suggest that there is no real consensus in regards to the geography of the physical route the Israelites took. While the traditional sites may bring spiritual comfort to those who visit, they also can cause many problems in regards to identifying the actual locations of the exodus events.²¹ A quick internet search produces a vast array of maps with different suggestions as to the exact route the exiled community traveled over their forty-year journey from Egypt to the Promised Land. The fascination with finding the true physical locations may sometimes

¹⁹ Interestingly, Paul's mention of the "spiritual food" and "spiritual drink" in the Corinthians passage refer to the giving of Manna (Ex. 16:1-21) and water from the rock (Ex. 17:1-7). These two events literally surround the first observance of the Sabbath in the wilderness (Ex. 16:22-36).

²⁰ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 96-97.

²¹ "Jebel Musa is the mountain traditionally identified as Mt. Sinai. There was construction in this area by Queen Helena, mother of Constantine the Great (4th century C.E.). However, scholars propose several other possible candidates." *The Biblical World in Pictures; BAS Biblical World in Pictures* (Washington D.C.: Biblical Archaeology Society, 2003).

distract believers from seeing their spiritual significance. The NT authors seem to emphasize the latter with little regard to the former. Thankfully finding the physical location of a Biblical event is not crucial for a modern believer to understand the spiritual significance to which that location points.

The scriptural events of the journey give the reader all one needs to know. With the events of the OT journey identified, the NT believer can place themselves in the analogous journey and pace their own progress out of bondage towards the rest that God offers. I will now identify seven stages in the story of the Israelites leaving Egypt and arriving in the Land of Promise. These stages highlight what I have identified as some of the pivotal points of their journey that will aid in our understanding of how believers are to understand and practice the Sabbath today. I will also suggest how each of these stages may also correspond to the analogous faith journey of modern believers and suggest possible NT spiritual equivalence for each. The importance of each stage of the analogy becomes more clear as one understands that the lessons learned on the journey (from slavery to a land of rest) are applicable to both groups.

#1 - Out of Bondage

The people of Israel begin their journey in bondage and slavery to Pharaoh in Egypt. In comparison to their ultimate destination of rest, this was a place of work. They worked on their own behalf and they earned their own food and water. This is something to which the community refers when they meet several challenges in the wilderness (Exod. 16:3, 17:3, 20:3). When Moses and Aaron ask Pharaoh for freedom to go three days' journey into the wilderness to sacrifice to the Lord, Pharaoh responded, "Moses and

Aaron, why do you draw the people away from their work? Get back to your labors!” (Exod. 5:4). Pharaoh can not conceive why this group should cease from their labors. He sees them as lazy and complaining and decides to increase work by requiring them to supply their own straw to make bricks (Exod. 5:7-8).

The Lord makes it clear that He wishes to be known as the Lord who brought them out from under the burdens of the Egyptians and to the land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Over the course of the next few chapters, through a miraculous display of his power and strength, the Lord frees the people from their slavery to Pharaoh and sets them on a course out of Egypt.

If the Hebrews of the OT began in slavery, and the NT believer’s spiritual journey follows a similar route, we would expect to find “slavery” and “bondage” language in the NT. In fact, that is the case. In Romans chapter six, Paul presents the NT believer as having once been in slavery to sin but having moved from that slavery to one of obedience.²²

Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness (Rom. 6:16-18).

As we will see, the lack of obedience of the wilderness generation is the particular aspect that the author of Hebrews equates to unfaithfulness. Paul also uses the idea of slavery in an analogy of Old and New Covenants in Galatians chapter four.

²² It should be noted that Paul presents this as a move from slavery to slavery. The “freedom” one has in Christ is also a type of slavery. This is an understanding echoed in other NT passages as well. (James 1:1, Jude 1:1, Titus 1:1).

For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the bondwoman and one by the free woman. But the son by the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and the son by the free woman through the promise. This is allegorically speaking, for these women are two covenants; one proceeding from Mount Sinai bearing children who are to be slaves; she is Hagar. Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother (Gal. 4:22-26).

Paul suggests that those who attempt to produce salvation results under their own efforts are under the law. Campbell comments on this distinction,

One son, Isaac, was born of Sarah, the free woman; the other, Ishmael, was born of Hagar, the slave woman. According to ancient law and custom the status of a mother affected the status of her son. A second contrast concerned the manner in which the sons were conceived. Ishmael was born in the ordinary way, that is, in the course of nature and requiring no miracle and no promise of God. Isaac, on the other hand, was born as the result of a promise.²³

Paul suggests that being under the law is analogous to slavery as compared to the freedom we have in Christ. He continues his thought at the beginning of the next chapter, “It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery” (Gal. 5:1).

In the same way that the Hebrew people began their exodus in slavery and bondage to a master that required them to work, the NT believer begins their spiritual journey in a similar bondage to a spiritual master. Sin encourages each of us to work for our salvation. While our efforts may seem to provide for some basic necessities, they cannot gain our freedom.

²³ Donald K. Campbell, “Galatians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 603.

In the wilderness everyone is tempted to think back to aspects of their slavery as being better than freedom with God in the wilderness. It is easy to forget that one is unable to keep up with the work that slavery demands and the quota it requires. It is easy to forget the source of our freedom. “For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed” (1 Cor. 5:7). Keener comments on this redemption, “The Jewish people were expecting a new redemption, like their first exodus from Egypt, when the Messiah came; Paul believes that the Messiah has come, and that this Messiah was himself the new paschal lamb.”²⁴ It was (and is) the redemptive work of the Passover Lamb, Jesus himself, that opened the door to freedom from the slavery to sin.

#2 - The Crossing of the Red Sea

As the Israelites departed the land of Egypt, Pharaoh began to chase them. He was attempting to recapture them. That’s what slavery does... it chases the one trying to break free. During their departure, the Israelites were lead into an impossible situation, pinned in on all sides. With the Red Sea before them, and the Egyptian army behind them God gave instructions to Moses to accomplish an incredible passing through the sea on dry ground. “But Moses said to the people, “Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the Lord which He will accomplish for you today...” (Exod. 14:13). Moses lifted his staff over the waters and God caused the waters to part. The Israelites passed through on dry ground. God then caused the sea to return and Pharaoh’s army was overthrown in the midst of the sea. Never to be seen again. In this way the power that Pharaoh had over the people was removed. Moses records at the end of this event, “When Israel saw the great

²⁴ Keener, 1 Co 5:7–8.

power which the Lord had used against the Egyptians, the people feared the Lord, and they believed in the Lord and in His servant Moses” (Exod. 14:31). He recorded that passing through the Red Sea was attached to a faith experience by those who passed through.

In the NT, Paul suggests that when the Israelites passed through the sea they experience a type of baptism into Moses. This physical baptism was an emblematic death-like experience that pictured a new life for the Israelites. They were leaving the old life of slavery and entering a new life of freedom from Pharaoh. Paul uses the baptism language to describe this experience, “For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea...” (1 Cor. 10:1-2). Winter comments on the similarities between the wilderness generation and the experience of NT believers,

They (the OT wilderness generation) had experienced the clear guiding hand of God and witnessed the miraculous deliverance through the sea (Ex. 13:21; 14:22). The children of Israel entered into the experience of Moses as the agent of Israel’s deliverance, and in the same way Christians enter into the experience of Christ as their deliverer.²⁵

The crossing of the Red Sea is presented as a deliverance of a people through the judgment symbolized by a body of water. The Israelites passed through that judgment safely and were given new life on the other side of the sea. This new life is seen as a type of resurrection. The army of Pharaoh was judged differently and did not receive that new life. There is a well-recognized pattern in scripture of presenting deliverance from

²⁵ Bruce Winter, “1 Corinthians,” in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson et al., 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 1176.

judgment as the deliverance from bodies of water. Gage highlights the tie some OT stories have with the NT believer's experience,

Deliverance through the waters is also made emblematic of "resurrection" in the New Testament. The apostle teaches that the church was "buried" with Christ through baptism unto death and "raised" from the waters of death to walk in newness of life (Rom 6:3–10). So Peter understood that the eight souls in the ark delivered from death were "baptized" unto Noah (1 Pet 3:20–21), and so Paul regards Israel, delivered from death at the hand of pharaoh at the sea, to have been "baptized" unto Moses (1 Cor 10:2).²⁶

Mark records Jesus' use of the baptism analogy to describe the physical death that he was to experience on the cross. "Jesus said to them, 'You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?'" (Mark 10:38). Jesus was speaking of his physical death but chose to describe it in terms of baptism.

When one comes under the salvation of Jesus they experience a baptism. This baptism was anticipated and discussed by John the Baptist, Jesus, and others in the NT (Matt. 3:11, Mark 8:7-8, Luke 3:16, John 1:33, Acts 1:5, Acts 11:16, Rom. 6:3-7, 1 Cor. 12:13, Gal. 3:27, Eph 4:4-6, Col. 2:9-12, 1 Peter 3:18-22). While there are many disputes as to the specifics of when, why, and how this baptism occurs, its existence is not challenged within evangelicalism.²⁷ Camp and Rosner comment on Paul's wish for his NT audience to see the similarities in these spiritual journeys, "The Israelites' experience of redemption, idolatry, and destruction is used as a lens through which the Corinthians

²⁶ Warren Austin Gage, *Return from Emmaus: The Resurrection Theme in Scripture* (Ft. Lauderdale, FL: Warren A. Gage, 2011), 9.

²⁷ The author fully acknowledges the great divide within evangelicalism as to the different interpretations of this "baptism". It is not within the scope of this project to unpack those differences. I only wish to acknowledge this baptism's existence within scripture and the attempt therein to link it to the Israelites crossing the Red Sea in the OT.

are to view and understand their own situation. The reference to “baptism into Moses” is evidently formulated by Paul in order to make the metaphorical parallel as clear as possible.”²⁸

This spiritual death and resurrection which believer’s experience in Christ is also described as a “new birth”. It was this “new birth” process that so confused Nicodemus in John chapter three. Jesus, speaking of a spiritual process said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). But Nicodemus thought Jesus was talking about a physical process, “How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born, can he?” (John 3:4).

Believers experience a rebirth after the death of our old nature. This is presented Biblically in the picture of judgment and the waters of baptism. The crossing of the Red Sea is an emblem of the wilderness community’s baptism under the leadership and supervision of Moses. In a spiritually analogous situation, the NT believer is baptized under the leadership and supervision of Jesus.

#3 - First Tests of Faith

After passing through the Red Sea, the Israelites headed towards Mt. Sinai, but not before they experienced their first tests of faith in the wilderness. From Exodus 15-19, Moses records a series of events that include God leading the people into a place of need and giving them an opportunity to trust in Him to be their provider. The three events on

²⁸ Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, “1 Corinthians,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, UK: Baker Academic; Apollos, 2007), 723.

which I will focus are the events at Marah (Exod. 15:22-27), in the wilderness of Sin between Elim and Sinai (Exod. 16:1-36), and at Massah and Meribah (Exod. 17:1-7). All three of these events are presented as tests of faith (Exod. 15:25, 16:4, 17:2).

There are several places in the NT where the authors, either directly or indirectly, refer to the events that occur in this stage of the wilderness wanderings. The author of Hebrews quotes Psalm 95 in his discussion of a believer's rest. It is that section of Psalm 95 that specifically refers to Massah and Meribah (Exod. 17:1-7) as the ultimate example of how not to respond when one hears the voice of God. In another NT scripture, Paul refers to two events from this stage of the journey, when comparing the wilderness generation to NT believers,

... our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and all ate the same spiritual food; and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ (1 Cor. 10:1-4).

The "spiritual food" that Paul mentions is the manna (and quail) that God began providing in Exodus 16:1-36. The "spiritual drink" that came from the "rock" of Christ refers to the events at Massah and Meribah in Exodus 17:1-7.

The three synoptic gospels record the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1-11, Mark 1:12-13, Luke 4:1-13). This story of Jesus has been interpreted as a replaying of the tests of faith that Moses and corporate Israel faced as they were in the wilderness. Blomberg elaborates on this connection,

Just as Moses had to lead the Israelites during forty years of wandering in the Sinai wilderness as punishment for their sin (Deut. 8:2-3), so Jesus is driven by the Spirit into the Judean wilderness for forty days to be tempted by the devil (4:1-2). The exact phrase "forty days and nights" may allude to the period of time

Moses spent fasting on Mount Sinai to prepare to confirm God's covenant with his people (Exod. 24:18; Deut. 9:9). The temptation to turn stones into bread might also echo Moses' rebellion in striking the stone to make it bring forth water (Num. 20:1–13). But where in both instances Israel as a people or Moses as a leader failed the test, Jesus passes his. In fact, in each of the three specific temptations that Matthew depicts (this time paralleled in Luke 4:1–13), Jesus confounds the devil by citing Scripture.²⁹

A closer look at the scriptures Jesus quotes shows that they have specific ties to this stage of the wilderness journey. When Satan tempts Jesus with the making of bread, Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 8:6 which discusses the faithfulness of God in the giving of the manna. While the manna was provided for the entire time in the wilderness, it was first given in the wilderness of Sin between Elim and Sinai (Exod. 16:1-36). When Satan encourages Jesus to throw Himself off the temple, Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 6:16, “Do not put the Lord your God to the test.” In its entirety, that verse reads, “Do not put the Lord your God to the test, as you tested Him at Massah” (Deut. 6:16). Massah specifically refers to the first water from the rock incident described in Exodus 17:1-7.

The events between the crossing of the Red Sea and the receiving of the Law at Mt. Sinai are often referred to by those who penned the NT. Paul's reference of these events, in 1 Corinthians 10, is to a specific end. Paul hopes his NT audience will see for those who came out of the slavery of Egypt, their faith was immediately tested. More importantly, Paul wanted to emphasize that his readership was in a similar situation. Paul points out that that OT group of people failed their tests of faith and experienced various consequences (1 Cor. 10:5-10). During this discussion, he twice mentions (1 Cor. 10:6 & 11) that these events happened as examples (Greek “τύπος”) meaning “an archetype

²⁹ Blomberg, Matthew, 14.

...serving as a model, type, or pattern given by God as an indication of the future, in the form of persons or things.”³⁰ For many NT authors, the experiences between the Red Sea and Mt. Sinai served as typological of the journey of faith for believers in NT times. I will elaborate, in the next section of this project, on how the lessons learned in these stories are also seen by the author of Hebrews as essential elements in the understanding of the Sabbath now available to believers in Christ.

#4 - Receiving of the Law

From Exodus 19-32, Moses records the events and information that happened at Mt. Sinai. As a summary, I will refer to these chapters as the giving and receiving of the Law written on stone tablets. Moses received the Law, and through a series of events, presented it to the people for their acceptance. “Then he took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people; and they said, ‘All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient!’” (Exod. 24:7). This reading of the Law and acknowledgement by the people is an important step in the covenantal process. In regards to the Old Covenant, the requirements were revealed and acknowledged by the parties involved. If the NT equivalent is at all similar, we would expect some sort of correspondence to these events.

The Bible has much to say about the New Covenant provided in Christ. As suspected, its presentation has many similarities to the Old Covenant. Jeremiah gave a preview of the New Covenant in his prophetic voice when he told of a day in his future when God would bring a new covenant unlike the old which He, “made with their fathers

³⁰ Arndt, 1020.

in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them” (Jer. 31:32). One of the distinguishing characteristics of this new covenant is where it would be written. God said, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it” (Jer. 31:33). The new law would not be written on stone tablets, but on the very heart of the people.

Paul applies this understanding to the NT believer in his second letter to the Corinthians when he says,

You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men; being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. Such confidence we have through Christ towards God. Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. But as the ministry of death, in letters engraved on stones, came with glory, so that the sons of Israel could not look intently at the face of Moses because of the glory of his face, fading as it was, how will the ministry of the Spirit fail to be even more with glory? (2 Cor. 3:2-8).

It is this New Covenant, written on the hearts of believers, that comes to mind every time the Lord’s table is shared. Christ himself instructed members of the New Covenant to be reminded often of the parameters of that covenant. “In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me” (1 Cor. 11:25). When believers drink the cup of the Lord’s supper, I believe they are, in essence, repeating the NT equivalent of the scene from Exodus 24. The Law is being read and they are acknowledging their ongoing acceptance of it. Camp and Rosner nicely tie several of these pictures together,

Jesus' statement that the cup "is the new covenant in my blood" fuses together the language of Jeremiah 31:31 ("a new covenant") and Exodus 24:8 ("the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you"). The latter text refers to the establishment of the covenant at Sinai, while the former consists of God's promise to establish a new covenant in the time of postexilic restoration. By fusing the two texts together, Jesus interprets his impending death as the sacrifice that establishes the new covenant associated with the second exodus.³¹

One could picture a NT believer, just before drinking the cup of communion, saying, "All that the Lord has spoken... and will speak through His Spirit... I will do and we will be obedient." In this way they would echo the language used in the confirmation of the Old Covenant and are reminded of their membership in the New Covenant.

Traditionally the events recorded at Sinai are associated with the celebration of Pentecost (Feast of Weeks). When the Jewish people celebrate Pentecost they are remembering the giving of the Law at Sinai. Marshall outlines the progression of this thought,

The occasion of the coming of the Spirit is the day of Pentecost, otherwise known as the Feast of Weeks (Exod. 23:16; 34:22; Lev. 23:15–21; Num. 28:26; Deut. 16:9–12). In the OT this feast was simply a celebration of the wheat harvest. By this time, however, the festival was associated with the renewal of the covenant made with Noah and then with Moses (Jub. 6:17–18), and in second-century Judaism it was regarded as the day when the law was given at Sinai.³²

It is by no coincidence that the Lord chose this very day to fulfill the law by the giving of the Holy Spirit in Acts chapter two. The journey of those who left Egypt and NT believers share another similarity in their journeys; the receiving of God's Law through a mediator (Heb. 9:15).

³¹ Ciampa, 736.

³² I. Howard Marshall, "Acts," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, UK: Baker Academic; Apollos, 2007), 531.

#5 - Wandering in the Wilderness

After the events at Kadesh Barnea (Numbers 13-14), the first wilderness generation wanders for the remainder of their lives. During this time, God does not abandon them. He continues to be faithful to them and provide for them on a daily basis. He continues to lead them with the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night (Neh. 9:19). For the generation that left Egypt, the years in the wilderness become a time of unrelenting dependence upon God. It is characteristic of the continued grumbling of unfaithfulness despite God's faithfulness. Eventually everyone (except Joshua and Caleb) from that first generation dies and their children replace them as a new generation in the wilderness. There are many events that happen during the 40 years of wandering. For reasons which will be expanded on in Part 5 of this project, I will choose to focus on only one event documented in Numbers 20. In that chapter, there is an event that sounds very familiar, but has quite a different setting and outcome. Most importantly, in the larger discussion of the Sabbath, the events of Numbers 20 are linguistically linked to Psalm 95. It is Psalm 95 that the author of Hebrews quotes to help guide his readers into the Sabbath that still remains for the NT people of God. A reminder of these events now will help better understand the application of the Sabbath as discussed in Hebrews.

In Numbers 20, Moses is leading a new generation of Israelites. They are the children of those who refused to enter the land at Kadesh Barnea. Once again, nearly 40 years after the events in Exodus 15-17, the Lord led the congregation to a place with no water. In similar fashion, the people gathered against Moses and Aaron. They even repeat the, "Why have you made us come up from Egypt..." (Num. 20:5), response that they

had evidently learned from their parents. This is a possibility suggested by Naylor, "The desert years ended as they began, with complaining. It is possible now that the second generation was copying the ways of the first."³³

Moses and Aaron then received instruction from the Lord as to what to do. The Lord said, "Take the rod; and you and your brother Aaron assemble the congregation and speak to the rock before their eyes, that it may yield its water" (Num. 20:8a). But Moses seemed to get angry with the crowd and took credit himself for the provision. He also did not exactly follow directions. He struck the rock twice with his rod (Num. 20:11). What was the result? It seems that the people may not have realized anything was wrong, because God's provision flowed from the rock just like it had for their parents almost forty years prior and they drank to their fill. Because of Moses and Aaron's disobedience, they heard from the Lord, "Because you have not believed Me, to treat Me as holy in the sight of the sons of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them" (Num. 20:12). Then the text simply says, "Those were the waters of Meribah..." and it is thus connected to the Events of Exodus 17 not only because of the similar storyline, but also because of the name attributed to the location. Duguid and Hughes suggest it is not by accident that these similarities exist,

The primary event recorded in Numbers 20, the miraculous provision of water from the rock, was a mirror image of a similar event that had taken place in the very first year of their wandering (Exod. 17). The similarity does not mean that these two events are identical. Rather, these comparable events invite the reader to set them side by side and discern their similarities and differences. The placement

³³ Peter John Naylor, "Numbers," in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson et al., 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 188.

at the beginning and end of the wanderings fittingly characterizes the whole period in between as complaining against the Lord.³⁴

How does this fit in with a discussion of the Sabbath? In Hebrews 3, the author quotes part of Psalm 95. That Psalm specifically mentions the place name Meribah and Massah as a place where the people became hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. This hardened condition, with the disobedience that accompanied it, prevented the OT wilderness wanderers from entering into God's rest. The Meribah of Numbers 20 is very similar to the Meribah and Massah of Exodus 17, and I will further discuss, in the next section, conclusions that believers can draw from the comparison of these two events. For now the events of Numbers 20 become the backdrop for the "Wandering in the Wilderness" stage of the journey.

#6 - Baptism in the Jordan River under Joshua's Leadership

The wilderness community eventually accepted Joshua as their new leader. He quickly brought them to the edge of the Jordan river to prepare for their entrance into the Promised Land. Previously, we saw that the crossing of the Red Sea (event #2) was a type of baptism for the generation that entered the wilderness. This crossing of the waters of the Jordan serves the same purpose for the new generation of Israelites. The Jordan is at flood stage and by carrying the ark of the covenant into the waters, a way is made through what is a certain death through drowning. The people land on the other side having been delivered once again by a faithful God.

³⁴ Iain M. Duguid and R. Kent Hughes, *Numbers: God's Presence in the Wilderness*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2006), 249–250.

Prior to the crossing, Joshua speaks to all of Israel about the upcoming crossing of the Jordan and says that it is, “by this you shall know that the living God is among you...” (Josh. 3:10). This is interesting language, because it is this very question the first generation brought before Moses at Meribah and Massah in Exodus 17. “He named the place Massah and Meribah because of the quarrel of the sons of Israel, and because they tested the Lord, saying, ‘is the Lord among us, or not?’” (Exod. 17:7).

In their spiritual journey, believers have a first “baptism” at initial faith. This is a dying of the old self and a birth of a new creation in Christ. Every believer also experiences a second baptism³⁵, that of physical death, on their way to their ultimate rest. In the OT journey from slavery to freedom there are two baptisms (emblematic death-like experiences) and the same is true in the life of the believer. Gage comments on the similarities of these baptisms,

Israel’s crossing of the Red Sea under the authority of Moses is reenacted at the Jordan under Joshua. The Lord assured Joshua that just as He had been with Moses, so He would be with him (Josh 3:7; 4:23). So Israel crossed the liminal threshold of the Jordan in a time of flood (Josh 3:15) in order to receive the “rest” of the inheritance. The crossing represented the emergence into a new life after entering into an emblematic death, just like the “baptism” of the people unto Moses at the sea.³⁶

In the faith journey, one first dies a spiritual death from their old identity of bondage to sin into faith in Christ. Secondly, the believer dies a physical death into the promise of physical resurrection in Christ.

³⁵ I acknowledge the terminology I’ve chosen here may be confusing to some. This “second baptism” is not intended to be confused with the “second work of the Holy Spirit” characteristic in many pentecostal and holiness denominations.

³⁶ Warren Austin Gage, *Theological Poetics: Typology, Symbol and the Christ* (Fort Lauderdale, FL: Warren A. Gage, 2010), 139.

#7 - Entrance Into the Land of Rest

The last stop on the journey for the OT wilderness community was the Promised Land. The first generation who left Egypt did not get to enter the land, but their children did. Under the leadership of Joshua, they took possession of it. As noted in Part 2 of this project, this land was often described as a place of rest. It was a land with fortified cities already prepared for God's people. It also had vineyards and fruit trees in abundance.

The New Jerusalem is described similarly in the book of Revelation. Heaven is described as a fortified city with a great and high wall (Rev. 21:12-13). It has what seems to be an active garden with an abundance of water and several types of fruit trees (Rev. 22:1-3). The OT destination of rest and the NT destination of rest seem to have many similarities. One glaring difference is that the gates of the New Jerusalem never close (Rev. 21:25). This is an interesting description and may seem somewhat confusing at first. Why would there be all the fortifications if the gates never close? In the end, when the New Jerusalem is inhabited by the people of God, there is no sin, no darkness, and no reason to fear. All the enemies of God have been defeated. While the city is described in terms of ultimate protection and safety, ironically those fortifications are not needed because the enemy has been defeated. In fact, one could begin to recognize New Jerusalem as not only a fortified city, but a temple-like structure. It is a place of ultimate safety and rest in the very presence of God. Beale reads much symbolism into the description of this new city,

The last vision of Revelation is a magnificent view of the new creation, which is, we will argue, portrayed as equivalent to the new Jerusalem, the eschatological cubic temple, and to end-time Eden, the eternal home of God's people. This

cordoning off of the city guarantees protection for God's end-time community and especially guarantees that its walls will provide eternal protection, in contrast to old Jerusalem's walls, which were broken through by God's enemies.³⁷

While there are many more points one could focus on in the physical journey of the OT wilderness generation, these particular seven points of interest can also be seen to correspond to the spiritual journey on which Christ leads believers in NT times. It is a journey out of slavery, through the waters of baptism, and to a wilderness where one's faith is allowed to be tested. A functional set of relational rules is given and practiced. There is a chance to enter into rest, a small taste of the final destination. Most importantly, the leader of this wilderness community is one who communicates with and is the very voice of God. That leader is none other than Jesus of Nazareth.

Conclusion

The wilderness community that followed Moses out of Egypt is involved in a considerable part of the Bible's overall story. Their passage from slavery to a place of rest in the Promised Land is a remarkable journey of faith. The NT authors rely heavily on this OT community and their experiences to warn the readers of the NT of the potential pitfalls and blessings of the faith journey. It is also tied directly to the concept of the Sabbath. In the next section, this project will explore in more detail one of those passages.

I have shown, while the time and location of the two communities are not the same, the journeys do follow a similar route. To be sure, the journey of faith is only possible

³⁷ G. K. Beale and Sean M McDonough, "Revelation," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, UK: Baker Academic; Apollos, 2007), 1150, 1172.

with a strong leader who communicates the very words of God. In the OT, Moses served that purpose well, but His lack of faith late in the journey at Maribah (Num. 20) prompts the reader to anticipate a greater Prophet to follow. Jesus is that which is greater in every way. He is a better leader who leads the new community of faith out of slavery towards the ultimate Sabbath rest.

Part V

Sabbath Rest in Hebrews 3 & 4 - Exegesis and Application

Chapter 12

Introduction & Overview of the Sabbath in the Gospels

Introduction to Part V

In the previous sections of this project, I have presented a general overview of the Sabbath concerning the whole of Scripture. Like a fly-over at 30,000 feet, I've attempted to point out general themes and areas of interest that the whole purview of Scripture affords on the topic. In this last section, I abruptly land that proverbial plane, disembark, and begin digging into one particular Sabbath passage. It is a Scripture, often passed over without much notice, where a bit of digging beneath the surface reveals very fertile ground. The excavating will be a bit of work, and things get exegetically muddier than they've been thus far in the project, but it is all towards the goal of unearthing a deeper understanding of the Sabbath contained therein.

Following a brief overview of the Sabbath in the NT (specifically the Gospels, Paul's writings, and Hebrews) I will present a somewhat technical examination of one particular Sabbath passage, Hebrews three and four. In the exegesis of this Scripture, I specifically focus on the context of and inherent problems found within the process of translation. More specifically, I examine the situation in which the NT authors found themselves when quoting OT passages in their NT writings. While still seeking clarity on the topic of the Sabbath, admittedly this last section is of a different genre. In the end, I propose even this technical discussion will prove to be extremely practical and reveal one specific way to understand and apply the Sabbath rest available today.

As I have suggested, the major portion of this last section will focus on the attention given to a believer's rest in Hebrews chapters three and four. While these chapters are certainly one of the major theological discussions on the Sabbath in the NT, it is by no means the only passage that speaks to the topic. Several other NT Scriptures hold significant theological comment on the "rest" available to those who believe. So before venturing into the Hebrews passage, I will present a short survey of several of the other NT passages that specifically comment on the topic.

The Context of the Sabbath in the Gospels

There are many places in the Gospels that contain mentions of the Sabbath. Many of these show Jesus interacting with the topic in the context of first-century Judaism. The Sabbath certainly held a great deal of social and historical importance to the Jews of Jesus' day. Their history with the Sabbath included not only the events and teachings of the OT, but also the events of the intertestamental period. History suggests that great numbers of Jews lost their lives because of their refusal to respond to military attacks made against them on the Sabbath. In contrast, other Jews decided to ignore the Sabbath requirements and defend themselves in such circumstances. Sacchi gives more specific context to this history,

The figure of Mattathias is tied to the decision to not respect the Sabbath in military operations, a decision made after many had already joined his cause and which therefore must have been widely shared. The soldiers of Antiochus and Menelaus, who did not observe the Torah had attacked and massacred the rebels without resistance on the day of the Sabbath (1 Macc. 2:29–41). Hence Mattathias's practical decision. Such rigid respect for the Sabbath was already a

part of the Judaic tradition, since Apollonius, Antiochus IV's general, waited until the Sabbath to attack Jerusalem (2 Macc. 5:24–26).¹

This intertestamental context is an important backdrop to the cultural conversation within the first-century Jewish community. The Sabbath was a highly relevant and culturally complex topic by the time Jesus entered the conversation.

Jesus confronted the Jewish leaders several times over their observance of the Sabbath, but He also conformed to some of the practices of the day. He regularly went to the synagogue, read from the Scripture, and taught on the Sabbath (Luke 4:16, Mark 1:21, & Luke 13:10). There were non-biblical traditions that had become standards of practice which Jesus did not defend. He would often challenge the spiritual leadership to conform to the Biblical standards when they had strayed. In Mark 2:23-26, Jesus defended his disciples, who had picked grain on the Sabbath, by appealing to Scripture. In this instance, He directly challenged the authority of the temple leadership (Matt. 12:1-13), and stated one of the most challenging statements about this special day, “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.”

He healed many people on the Sabbath: a lame man (John 5:1-18), a demon possessed man (Mark 1:21-28), Peter's mother-in-law (Mark 1:29-31), a man with a deformed hand (Mark 10:14), a blind man (John 9:1-16), a crippled woman (Luke 13:10-17), and a man with dropsy (Matt. 27:35). Each of these healings was considered a Sabbath-breaking violation by the temple leadership. He challenged the tradition that

¹ Paolo Sacchi, *The History of the Second Temple Period*, vol. 285, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 239.

"healing" someone could be considered work by healing many on the Sabbath and asking the Jewish leadership to come to terms with their conclusions in light of Scripture (Mark 3:4-5, Matt. 12:7). According to Westerholm, "The basic line of Jesus' defense as portrayed in the Gospels shows a different approach to the understanding of the divine will. No more than Jesus allows the terminology of Deuteronomy 24:1-4 to define the propriety of divorce (Mark 10:1-12) or the terminology of scriptural Law to define norms for oaths (Matt. 5:33-36), does he allow that the divine will for the Sabbath rests in the proper interpretation of the word 'work.'"²

The healings Jesus performed (whether on the Sabbath or not) could be understood as physical visuals of his spiritual ministry. This may also have something to say about the idea of living in God's rest. Unlike the parable stories Jesus told, these healings certainly happened to real people in real time. But like Jesus' parables, they could be understood as real life stories displayed in the physical world that give a glimpse into His spiritual ministry and kingdom. In part two of this project, I purposed that God's ministry in the world could be understood as one of bringing order and function to non-functional chaos with rest following. God's rest, the true Sabbath, happens when one is able to be functionally engaged with the creation. During his ministry, Jesus encountered people at various stages of physical dysfunction and healed them. He restored function to people physically as a visual example of what He is able to do spiritually.

The accounts of Jesus healing the paralytic (Matt 9:2-8; Mark 2:3-12; Luke 5:18-26) dramatically emphasizes this truth. Jesus brought function and order to the man

² S. Westerholm, "Sabbath," ed. Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight, *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 719.

spiritually first (forgave his sins) but when the reality of that non-visual and spiritual restoration was questioned He said to those who questioned Him, “But, so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins,” — He said to the paralytic— “I say to you, get up, and pick up your pallet and go home” (Mark 2:10-11). He brought function back to the man’s legs that had been crippled. Jesus’ ministry is about bringing function and order to places of dysfunction so that people can properly engage with God and His creation. The pharisees of first-century Palestine were teaching that it was a sin to restore physical function on the Sabbath, and they challenged Jesus’ ability to restore spiritual function as well. While people are not always physically restored to functionality, it is the restoration of spiritual function to sinful people that ultimately allows one to experience God’s rest. This is the true Sabbath.

Jesus claimed that He was the true fulfillment of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28, Matt. 11:27-30, Matt. 12:5-8, Luke 4:16-21). There are many ways that Jesus challenged His contemporaries to return to God’s intention for the Sabbath, and He also challenged them to move past their tradition and see the Sabbath as defined in Him. The Scripture says it was this challenge of authority that caused the Pharisees to conspire against Jesus in an attempt to destroy him. Ewell and Beitzel give perspective to Jesus’ claims,

He claimed that the Sabbath, God’s great redemption sign-post, was pointing straight at him! He, the man from heaven, was Lord of the Sabbath. The great OT Scriptures which forecast the good news of man’s redemption in the language of Sabbatical release had reached their fulfillment in him, the redeemer of the world.³

³ Ewell and Beitzel, 1877–1878.

If this perspective is correct, Jesus' fulfillment of the Sabbath would not include just one small part of the OT practice, but would apply to the entirety of the theological concept. Jesus' Sabbatical fulfillment incorporates every part of the framework discussed in Part 2 of this project.

Chapter 13

The Sabbath in Paul's Writings & the Book of Hebrews

It is not just the gospels that speak a modern understanding of the Sabbath. Paul, who traveled and often visited synagogues on the Sabbath (Acts 13:14-16, 17:2), challenged his readers to see many of the OT practices as defined by Christ (Rom. 14:5-13, Gal. 4:8-11, 21-31). As I discussed in more detail in part three of this project, Paul presented the Sabbath as a shadow. “Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day - things which are a *mere* shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ” (Col. 2:16-17). Sometimes “shadows” in the OT are referred to positively as a place where one receives the protective shade of the Lord (Ps. 17:8, 91:1). In contrast, when used in the sense of foreshadowing, they are a flat representation of an idea that has substance. The substance is fuller in its scope and meaning. The substance of the Sabbath’s shadow in the NT is Christ. Lincoln suggests in Christ, the shadow is no longer relevant, “That Paul without any qualification can relegate Sabbaths to shadows certainly indicates that he does not see them as binding and makes it extremely unlikely that he could have seen the Christian first day as a continuation of the Sabbath.”⁴

Regarding the confusion surrounding the Sabbath, it is important to remember that shadows in the OT are not the end of the theological truth... they are only something

⁴ A. T. Lincoln, “From Sabbath to Lord’s Day: A Biblical and Theological Perspective,” in *From Sabbath to Lord’s Day*, 368.

supposed to lead people to that which has theological substance. Moo reiterates this thought with these comments on the Colossians 2 passage,

With the coming of Christ, the new era of fulfillment has dawned. The old era and the law have now been brought to their “culmination” (Rom. 10:4). Believers who belong to the new era through their incorporation into Christ therefore experience the reality to which the OT and its law pointed. And they are no longer compelled to follow the laws of that earlier era. The Colossian Christians should not let anyone insist on their observing the rules and ceremonies of the earlier era that has now passed.⁵

This truth is echoed by the author of Hebrews who also uses this “shadow” idea to describe the high priest’s service in the tabernacle (Heb. 8:3-5) and even the Law itself (Heb. 10:1). The Law’s purpose was to lead us to the heavenly substance that was casting the shadow (Heb. 8:5). Jesus is clearly identified as the substance that casts the shadow. To find the fulfillment of the Sabbath rest... one needs to begin by looking to Christ and the spiritual rest He offers. Many congregations, while acknowledging the Substance has come, still prefer to walk in the familiar comfort of the restful shadow. The church will continue to be confused about the Sabbath if it attempts to walk in the presence of the Substance, but keeps tripping on the shadows.

While there is much discussion and parsing of the exact meaning of the passages that speak in terms of shadows, one thing is obvious. The New Testament authors collectively saw the OT story as fulfilled in Christ. Jesus was the fulfillment of the story and everything before Him was pointing to His ministry and work (Gal. 3:16-29).

Possibly more than all the other NT passages that speak to the Sabbath, Hebrews chapters three and four speak most loudly to the modern reader. It is the one passage that

⁵ Moo, 223.

explains the most about the Sabbath of creation and redemption. Ewell and Beitzel comment on the full scope of the Sabbath in Hebrews,

It is left to the writer of the letter to the Hebrews to explain just how the twin biblical “Sabbath themes” of creation and redemption find their joint fulfillment in Christ. He does so by linking together the ideas of God’s rest after creation and his redemptive act in bringing Israel to her “rest” in Canaan; and by showing how both relate to the present and future rest that Christians can and do enjoy in Jesus (Heb 4:1–11).⁶

It is this all-encompassing view of the Sabbath that many in the church are missing today. It is an important concept that the Sabbath of creation finds its ultimate fulfillment in the redemption of Christ. All of the NT passages that mention the Sabbath point to this truth. It is in Christ that our ultimate rest is realized.

The question remains, “What does that rest look like?” If it is *not* a set of rules around how to manage and regulate physical rest, then what exactly is it? How is it that a believer practically seeks and finds this rest in Christ? Hebrews chapters three and four lead one to the answers to these questions. It is through a maze of OT reasoning and logic, that the Hebrews passage sets forth the example of practical rest in Christ.

Resting in Peace

Having taken a brief glimpse at other NT passages dealing with the Sabbath, the remaining portion of the exegetical inquiry of this project will be limited to a discussion of believer’s rest as presented in Hebrews chapters three and four. I believe these two chapters in Hebrews present the principal NT theology on the subject. While Hebrews acknowledges the origin of the Sabbath going back to creation, even this argument hints

⁶ Ewell and Beitzel, 1878–1879.

at a spiritual fulfillment beyond a physical observance. One focus will be to track the confusion created by the Biblical author's use of the Septuagint when quoting OT passages. This confusion is caused mainly when, instead of transliterating the place names Meribah and Massah (Ps. 95:8), the author of Hebrews used the translated meaning in Hebrews 3:8 ("in the provocation" and "trial" or "test") of those words. By the time these words are brought into the English language, the direct connection to the events of Meribah and Massah (Exod. 17:2-7 and Num. 20:13) is largely lost. I will argue that the events of Exodus 17 hold a context that brings a specific application to the concept of rest.

In American culture the phrase "rest in peace" is often used when someone dies. There is an assumption that there is some sort of a rest that the dead receive at the end of this life. At best this is viewed as a type of eternal bliss. At worst it is just an end of the struggles of this world. The use of this phrase is so pervasive that it crosses social/economic and even racial barriers. It promotes the idea that the person who had troubles in this life is now finally at peace and resting. Hebrews chapter three and four suggest that there is a rest that's available to believers. It is the Biblical answer to the cultural concept. One of the major questions is, when does that rest become available? Is it available only after we die or is there some type of spiritual rest that we can experience this side of the grave? The context of the passage will give us clues along the way.

Chapter 14

The Difficulties of Translation & Transliteration

Before diving straight into the text of Hebrews, I wish to lay some groundwork for this study. While there is no need to go into any great detail on the inherent problems that arise when translating a text from one language to another, I do wish to mention some issues that will relate to the key passage I will be examining. The struggle of conveying meaning via translation is well understood and documented by people in many fields of study.⁷ While man's attempts to translate meaning across languages are good, they are never perfect. The language and context of any text has nuances that are nearly impossible to fully replicate across time, culture, and languages. This study will point out some of these difficulties as they relate to Hebrews chapters three and four.

First, I will address the language of the Bible. In first century Palestine, the common language was Greek. It was used in commerce and was the only shared language across the entirety of the Roman Empire. The author of Hebrews wrote using the Greek language. This same author, possibly more than any other NT author, relied on quotations and allusions from OT passages to build his theological argument in favor of Jesus. According to Guthrie, "Based on the treatment of the OT in Hebrews that follows, I count roughly thirty-seven quotations, forty allusions, nineteen cases where OT material

⁷ For a general overview of the issues involved in Bible translation see: Metzger, Bruce M. "Persistent Problems Confronting Bible Translators." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 150 (1993) and Porter, Stanley E., Richard S. Hess, eds. *Translating the Bible: Problems and Prospects*. Vol. 173. *Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series*. Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999.

is summarized, and thirteen where an OT name or topic is referred to without reference to a specific context.”⁸

In contrast, the OT was originally written in the Hebrew language. So when any NT author, including the author of the book of Hebrews, wrote in Greek, and quoted the Hebrew OT, he was already having to deal with many of the inherent difficulties that come with translation.

Many Jews in the first century, especially those of the Diaspora, used a widely accepted Greek translation of the OT called the Septuagint. In some places where Jews lived, neither Aramaic nor Hebrew was understood. This demanded a form of the Scriptures presented in Greek, the vernacular tongue of the day.⁹ The name Septuagint, or LXX¹⁰, refers to the story of the “seventy” Alexandrian scholars who began the process of translating the Pentateuch from the Hebrew text in the third century B.C. The process of translating the entire OT into the Greek Septuagint created several variations of this text. Jobes points out this was a fairly fluid process,

Soon after the first Greek translation was made, various revisions and perhaps even other new translations, began to appear. By the time Jesus was born, at least one Greek version of the Old Testament was widely available throughout the Roman Empire wherever Jewish synagogues of Greek-speaking people were found.¹¹

⁸ Guthrie, 919.

⁹ Stanley E. Porter, “Septuagint/Greek Old Testament,” ed. Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter, *Dictionary of New Testament Background: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 1101.

¹⁰ Septuagint (Greek for 70) and LXX (Roman numerals equal to 70) both referring to the number of the Jewish translators purported to be responsible for translating the first five books of the Hebrew Old Testament.

¹¹ Karen H. Jobes, *Letters to the Church: A Survey of Hebrews and the General Epistles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 67.

The LXX was not the only Greek translation available, but it was the most widely used Bible of the Hellenistic Jews around the world for more than six centuries.¹² The Septuagint was the principal source the NT writers used when quoting the OT.¹³ One might wonder how is it that readers can be confident knowing the author of Hebrews was quoting the LXX rather than making his own translation of the Hebrew text, or possibly just summarizing the Septuagint from memory? Jobes speaks to this very question,

It is clear that the New Testament writers often used the Septuagint instead of the Hebrew Bible, because the New Testament rendering of an Old Testament verse often agrees with the Septuagint rather than with the corresponding Hebrew verse. This is why sometimes in our English Bible a quotation of the Old Testament in the New actually might not match the corresponding Old Testament verse when we flip back to it. The New Testament writer is quoting an ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament, and our English Old Testament is translated from the Hebrew.¹⁴

This is important to understand as we head for a closer look at the book of Hebrews. The English translation of the book of Hebrews is already one language removed from the original (Greek to English). But when it comes to the OT quotations in the book of Hebrews, it could be argued that the English translation is two languages (two translations) removed (Hebrew OT to Greek NT to English).

With the inherent difficulties of translation, the reader can expect some gaps in understanding to arise from this process. It is good to acknowledge a bit of a “translational storm” when approaching the English translation of the book of Hebrews.

¹² Alan Cairns, *Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Belfast; Greenville, SC: Ambassador Emerald International, 2002), 414.

¹³ Henry Barclay Swete, *An Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914), 392.

¹⁴ Jobes, *Letters*, 67.

The readers of the English translations at times must rely on footnotes and cross references to find safe harbor. This is specifically the case with Hebrews three and four. The author's choice of how to present OT text in the Greek written letter, ultimately influences how some important details are brought into the English translations.

Translation versus Transliteration

Instead of translating the meanings of words, for various reasons translators sometimes choose to transliterate a word from one language to another. Transliteration is the process of changing letters from one language into similar-sounding characters of another language. Sometimes Hebrew words are written in transliteration using English letters so that those who do not speak Hebrew can sound out the words. For example, the word for “peace,” which is written in Hebrew with the letters shin, lamed, vav, and mem, is written in transliteration as “shalom.”¹⁵ Interestingly, the very topic of this project, the Sabbath, derives from a whole string of transliterations¹⁶. “Sabbath” is an English transliteration of the Greek *σάββατον* which is a transliteration of the Hebrew *שַׁבָּת*.

Where translation conveys the meaning from one language to another, transliteration simply conveys the sounds of a word into another language. Both are valuable tools used in the process of passing text from one language to another.

¹⁵ Joyce Eisenberg and Ellen Scolnic, Jewish Publication Society, *The JPS Dictionary of Jewish Words* (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 2001), 174.

¹⁶ Webster's traces the line of transliterations this way “Middle English *sabat*, from Anglo-French & Old English, from Latin *sabbatum*, from Greek *sabbaton*, from Hebrew *shabbāth*, literally, rest.” Inc Merriam-Webster, *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*. (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2003), sabbath.

Readers of the NT English versions interact with transliterations, sometimes without even realizing it. One example that highlights how familiar, and yet how complicated of a process this is, comes from the calling of the first disciples in the book of John. There we read about two of John the Baptist's disciples finding Jesus and then bringing others to Him. In John 1:41-42, the English text explains the actions of Andrew this way,

He found first his own brother Simon and said to him, 'We have found the Messiah' (which translated means Christ). He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, 'You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas' (which is translated Peter).

This passage is filled with a very complicated string of transliterated names, some originally Hebrew, some Aramaic, others Greek. It even includes some Greek transliterations of Hebrew (or Aramaic) words.¹⁷ Finally all the names are transliterated into the English Bible translation with some footnotes supplied to explain the translated meanings behind the names.

There are several reasons a translator might want to transliterate a word instead of translate it. Translators have developed rules that have become generally accepted practice for when to use transliteration instead of translation. This method is usually only used for one or two words of a text at a time. For example, proper nouns (people and place names) are usually, in modernity, transliterated from one language to another. The Hebrew names of people and places sometimes have significant meaning. For this reason, in English translations Biblical names are often transliterated with the meaning of the

¹⁷ Κηφᾶς, which is the Greek transliteration of Aram. *kēpā'*, was used along with the tr., → Πέτρος, which came to be preferred in Greek-speaking Christianity. Balz and Schneider, 292.

name sometimes supplied in a footnote. How to convey the significance of a name is one of the difficult subtleties in translation. Sometimes the name carries so much significance in the story that transliterating the word, while protecting the sound, does not completely convey an important aspect of the story's meaning. A good example of this is found in the first verse of the book of Ruth. The author tells us, "Now it came about in the days when the judges governed that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the land of Moab with his wife and his two sons." The irony of this opening statement might be missed if one does not understand the famine in the land had reached even to a place (transliterated: *Bethlehem*) that means the "House of Bread." Many a sermon has used the theme, "no bread in the house of bread". That's an understanding that could be easily missed in transliteration.

While there has been some discussion about what rules modern translators could choose to follow, there was really no such attempt in ancient times. The way names were spelled and when to translate versus transliterate a word was much more subjective. As Sailer points out, "A survey of proper names in ancient Jewish translations of the Bible shows that in antiquity uniformity of name forms was not so high an ideal as in recent times. Especially the LXX surprises us with diversity regarding transliteration or translation as well as the forms of transliteration."¹⁸

¹⁸ Jozef Krasovec. "Prepisovanje Ali Prevajanje Lastnih Imen v Pre Vodih Svetega Pisma (Transliteration or Translation of Proper Names in Bible Translations)." *Bogoslovi Vestnik* 63, no. 2 (2003): 165–192. in Sailer, William, J. Creighton Christman, David C. Greulich, Harold P. Scanlin, Stephen J. Lennox, and Phillip Guistwite. *Religious and Theological Abstracts*. (Myerstown, PA: Religious and Theological Abstracts, 2012).

So in the process of translating the Septuagint, the decision to translate versus transliterate was highly dependent on the cultural traditions of a certain area and personal preference of the people involved. This is important because it has been suggested that the writers of the Septuagint were likely a diverse group of people from different cultures over hundreds of years. Sailer continues,

The greater attention to the original in modern times explains why the consistency in transliterating or translating proper names in modern translations has been greater than in ancient ones. In ancient times tradition seems to have had a stronger dominance over the biblical text and context than in modern critical times.¹⁹

A study of Hebrews brings specific relevance to this information about translation, the use of the Septuagint, and transliteration. In the book of Hebrews, most scholars agree that the author's writing was at least influenced by some version of the Septuagint translation.²⁰ While it is difficult to determine to what extent the author relied on the LXX, or even which version he had available, its general influence is widely recognized. Several issues surrounding this idea go beyond the scope of this project. For the arguments set forth herein, an acknowledged influence of the LXX is sufficient.

In the passage upon which I am about to focus, Hebrews chapters three and four, the author quotes Psalm 95:7-11. This particular section of the Psalm in the Hebrew text contains two proper nouns, the place names Meribah and Massah. As with many Hebrew names, these place names have significant meaning. The author's handling of these

¹⁹ Krasovec, 165-192.

²⁰ Jobes, *Letters*, 30. A point that Jobes makes when discussing the original audience of the letter, "Moreover, the exclusive use of the Septuagint and the high literary style of the Greek may also weigh against Jerusalem as the original destination, though there is increasing evidence that Greek was in common use even in first-century Jerusalem.

names is worthy of more detailed attention later in this section, but first a look at the context of the first two chapters of Hebrews will adequately set that stage.

Introduction and Context of Hebrews 1 & 2

In section three I suggested that the book of Hebrews argues that Jesus is better than all the OT shadows that preceded him. While this claim is made in several places in the NT, Hebrews is the one book that presents this theological argument most completely. The first two chapters of Hebrews present Jesus as a better revelation of God. Jesus is the one whom God has spoken through in these last days (Heb. 1:2). He is the radiance of God's glory (Heb. 1:3), a Son of the Father (Heb. 1:5), the firstborn worthy of worship (Heb. 1:6), called God by God (Heb. 1:8-9), with a throne never offered to the angels (Heb. 1:13), who became like his brethren in all things so that he might appropriately rule as high priest (Heb. 2).

The first two chapters of Hebrews is a beautifully constructed theological tapestry blending the revelation of old to the superiority of Jesus. It lifts Jesus up higher than the heavenly angels and brings him down to earth as a humble servant. Having established Jesus as superior to all that is unseen, the author then compares Him to Moses, the greatest prophet the nation ever knew. It is into this argument that the discussion naturally flows to the story of the exodus and the promise of a rest better than Moses or Joshua could offer.

Chapter 15

The Sabbath Rest of Hebrews 3 & 4 - Exegesis & Application

The book of Hebrews presents Jesus as better than everything that came before Him. He is better than the angels, Moses, high priests, sacrifices, and temple. He is the fulfillment of all the shadows in the OT that prefigured Him as the substance. Also among the long list of things Jesus trumps is rest. He even offers a better Sabbath rest than that spoken of in the shadows of the OT. In chapters three and four of Hebrews, the author discusses a rest, available to his readers, that goes beyond the weekly physical rest prefigured in the types of the OT. This rest goes beyond even the coveted entrance to the Promised Land of Canaan. It is a spiritual rest realized when the believer responds to tests of faith with faithful responses. This rest will be perfected one day, but is available in part today, to those who diligently seek it (Heb. 4:11).

One clue to uncovering that rest is found in and among that generation of people led by Moses out of Egypt. Scripture often presents that group, who wandered for forty years in the wilderness, as an example for believers today to heed. They were a people who had the Promised Land of “rest” available to them, but failed to enter into that rest (1 Cor. 10:1-6). The book of Hebrews specifically focuses on these “wilderness wanderers” through an appeal to Psalm 95. This reference to the warning in Psalm 95 would have been familiar ground for the original readers of the book of Hebrews. As Guthrie points out,

Some researchers believe that Psalm 95 was used liturgically in the preamble of synagogue services in Hebrews’ era; if so, the first hearers of our book would

have been thoroughly familiar with it. Furthermore, the “exodus” and “wilderness” motifs form a prominent network of images appropriated by the writers of the NT.²¹

Hebrews presents a rest, available today, that goes beyond the entrance to the Promised Land of the OT. It defines this rest as similar to the rest that God modeled for us in the creation (Gen. 2). It is a rest where God, having redeemed function and order out of the chaos of sin, allows believers to interact with the world the way they were originally intended.

When writing the book of Hebrews, and referencing these OT examples, the author was likely influenced by a Greek Septuagint translation of Psalm 95. Why is this important? The Greek version of this passage has translational differences from the Hebrew version of the text. Law suggests that these types of differences often go beyond simple stylistic changes,

We have also seen that the differences between the Septuagint and the Hebrew Bible are not merely stylistic, unlike the differences one finds between modern English versions where often the divergences are matters of English expression. Rather, the theological outlook of the Hebrew and the Greek versions of many of the books are on different trajectories and thus lead to different conclusions.²²

To what degree or extent the differences between the Hebrew and Greek versions of the OT reflect an earnest attempt by the authors of the LXX to create different trajectories can be debated. Leschert, acknowledges there are likely some deviations from that LXX to improve its literary style or theological emphasis, but acknowledges, “it is difficult to

²¹ Guthrie, 953.

²² Timothy Michael Law, *When God Spoke Greek: The Septuagint and the Making of the Christian Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 85–86.

determine which departures from the septuagintal texts that we have were actually in (the author's) form of the Greek text and which were his own adjustments."²³

While the intent of the original translators may be difficult to determine, the conclusions reached by those interpreting these texts can be greatly influenced by those differences. Specifically in regards to Hebrews 3-4, the differences between the Hebrew text of Psalm 95 and the Greek translation of that text as presented in the book of Hebrews have lead some commentators to interpretive conclusions they may not have arrived at had the two versions been more similar.

The discussion regarding the believers' rest is found in Hebrews 3:7-4:11. It will be beneficial to quickly recap the major points of this section as an overview. The verses directly preceding this section presents Jesus as one better than Moses (Heb. 3:1-6), who was faithful to lead the people out of Egypt. Then, in Hebrews 3:7b-11, the author quotes a version of Psalm 95:7-11 that closely resembles an LXX rendering. The Hebrews text says God showed that generation many miraculous works and instead of *trusting* God, that generation *tested* God (Heb. 3:7-9). God was angry with them and prevented them from entering into His rest (Heb. 3:10-11). The author of Hebrews then appeals to the believers reading his letter, warning that they should not respond with the same type of unbelief. He reminds them that they have an opportunity to respond in faith when they hear the voice of God (Heb. 3:12-19). The believers' rest is available when the words of God are responded to in faith (Heb. 4:1-2). There is a Sabbath rest from a believer's

²³ Dale Leschert, *Hermeneutical Foundations of Hebrews: A Study in the Validity of the Epistle's Interpretation of Some Core Citations from the Psalms*. Vol. 10. National Association of Baptist Professors of Religion Dissertation Series. (Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 1994), 245-47.

works that resembles God’s rest from His creative works (Heb. 4:3-5). Let the reader pay heed to the example of the wilderness generation, who did not enter the Promised Land. Instead, let them be diligent to enter the ultimate rest that God offers. Believers do not have to wait to experience this rest... it is available today (Heb. 4:6-11). Guthrie summarizes the argument this way,

Rather than being primarily concerned with the wilderness generation, the author uses that generation as an exemplar on how people should not respond to God and his revelation... It is clear how the author of Hebrews understood Psalm 95:7c–11 at 3:7–11 from his explication in 4:3–11, which constitutes one of the most tightly knit arguments in the book. For him, the fact that God, through David, generations after the wilderness wanderers failed to enter the land of Canaan, set a “day” for entering the “rest” (i.e., “today”) gives assurance that this rest was not limited to entrance into Canaan (4:6–9). Rather, the author reasons, in light of Genesis 2:2, that God’s rest is a spiritual reality in which one ceases from one’s own work (4:10). Nevertheless, we must strive to enter that rest and keep from falling short of it (4:11).²⁴

Those who penned the pages of the NT often chose to be influenced by one of many available versions of the Greek Septuagint instead of referencing the Hebrew version of the OT. Exactly why the NT authors relied so heavily on the LXX has been the source of many debates. Jobes suggests that it is this very reliance that has led to an entire field of study,

There is a whole field of study called Septuagint studies that examines and debates why the ancient Greek translation appears somewhat different in places from the Hebrew Scriptures we know today. But the point for our purposes is that the writer of Hebrews is clearly using a Greek translation, not the original Hebrew, when he quotes Scripture.²⁵

²⁴ Guthrie, 953.

²⁵ Jobes, *Letters*, 68.

For the purposes of this paper, this brief introduction to Septuagint studies serves as a backdrop to the following discussion about the specific differences found in Hebrews 3-4. Some might assume that the author of Hebrews was naturally a native speaker of the Hebrew language. If he was not a native speaker, one might conclude he was at least familiar enough with the Hebrew language to interact with the Hebrew OT. But some think the linguistic breadth of the author may have been more limited than what seems to be apparent by the depth of his theological arguments. Jobes, who has examined the linguistic nuances of other NT authors²⁶ seems to have come to a different conclusion, “Of course, it is likely that the author of Hebrews could not even read the Hebrew text, and therefore his use of the Greek... may not reflect a deliberate decision; he simply may have used the text available to him.”²⁷ While this may seem to push the boundaries of conventional thought on the topic²⁸, Jobes points to her study of the use of Psalms in the book of Hebrews, “Psalms is the book most quoted or alluded to in Hebrews, with almost fifty references. Eleven different psalms are quoted, all from their ancient Greek translation.”²⁹ For the purposes of this discussion, the questions surrounding the linguistic prowess of the author do not need to be answered. It is more important to acknowledge

²⁶ For more context regarding the potential validity of Jobes thoughts about the author of Hebrews, one can review the methods she uses to conclude, “the author of 1 Peter was probably a native Semitic speaker for whom Greek was a second language.” Jobes, Karen H. “The Syntax of 1 Peter: Just How Good Is the Greek?” Edited by Craig A. Evans. *Bulletin for Biblical Research*, Vol. 13 (2003).

²⁷ Jobes, *Letters*, 68.

²⁸ For an extended discussion that includes a full range of opinions on this topic see Guthrie’s summary of modern scholarship in: Guthrie, 919-923.

²⁹ Jobes, *Letters*, 68.

the audience to which the author was writing. Jobes shows that this too is the subject of some discussion,

...very likely... the author is addressing Christian converts from Judaism who would most appreciate the substantial exposition of the Old Testament... But because the Hebrew Scriptures had existed in Greek translation (the Septuagint and others) long before Jesus was born, there would have been no reason why Gentile Christians could not have read and studied the Old Testament, especially since that was the Bible of the church before the New Testament books were brought together. Access to the Septuagint and knowledge of the Old Testament would have been available especially in areas with a substantial Jewish population.³⁰

While some who would first read the book of Hebrews may have had a knowledge of the Hebrew language, it is important to note that, for those who only spoke Greek, the use of a Septuagint translation was likely their only contact with the OT. To lend even more context to this perspective, Law suggests that there was a potential shift in the first century A.D. away from the Hebrew text even in Palestine,

We know that many people in Palestine in the first century CE were able to speak Greek and that Hebrew was beginning its transformation to a strictly liturgical and academic language; even Palestinian Jews were using the Scriptures in Greek, whether by aural encounters at the synagogue, at oral performances among themselves, or in few cases through the visual medium of reading them directly.³¹

No matter how the author of Hebrews arrived at his decision to consider the version of the LXX at his disposal, there is no debate that he clearly believed in the divine inspiration of the OT and he was not hesitant to be influenced by a translation of Scripture (the LXX) to aid in his argument of that inspiration. Jobes points out, “It is instructive to observe which quotations of the OT are ascribed to the Holy Spirit. The

³⁰ Jobes, *Letters*, 28.

³¹ Law, 91.

Holy Spirit is understood as the speaker in Hebrews 3:7 of the warning found in Psalm 95.³² This is interesting since the same passage is also ascribed to David in the next chapter (Heb. 4:7).

This project will now examine, in more detail, the differences between the Hebrew MT and the author's presentation of that material for the passages found within Hebrews 3:7-4:11. I will now focus mainly on the author's presentation of Psalm 95. The author's recitation of Psalm 95 differs from the MT in two significant points. First, instead of transliterating the Hebrew place names, *Meribah* and *Massah* (Ps. 95:8) he translates the meanings of the names respectively as παραπικρασμός (*parapikrasmos*) meaning "provocation" or "rebellion", and πειρασμός (*peirasmos*) meaning "testing" or "trial".³³ This is significant because in all of the English OT translations (based on the Hebrew MT) these names are transliterated and it is obvious that the example being referenced is unique to a certain place, "Meribah" and "Massah" in the wilderness³⁴. Those familiar with the OT story will recognize these names as associated with the events at Rephidim (Exod. 17:1-7) when the people grumbled and where the Lord provided for them by allowing Moses to bring water from the midst of a rock.

³² Jobes, *Letters*, 70.

³³ Girdwood and Verkruyse, Heb 3:8.

³⁴ All modern English OT versions, based on the Hebrew MT, are consistent to transliterate these names in both Exod. 17:7 and Psalm 95:8.

Psalm 95:7b-8, ESV³⁵ (English version based on the MT)

Today, if you hear his voice,
do not harden your hearts, as at **Meribah**,
as on the day at **Massah** in the wilderness,

Hebrews 3:7-8, ESV (English version influenced by the LXX)

Today, if you hear His voice,
do not harden your hearts as **in the rebellion**,
on the day **of testing** in the wilderness,

While the place names (and in turn the specific Exodus 17 reference) are obvious when reading the English translation of the Hebrew MT of Psalm 95:7b-8 (because those names are transliterated in both places), those not familiar with the meanings of the translated Hebrew words easily become confused when reading the rendering in the book of Hebrews as to exactly which story they should refer to find the “rebellion” and “testing” of God. This, combined with one other difference, has led to even more confusion. O’Brien summarizes the second variation this way,

In both the Hebrew (MT) and the LXX of Psalm 95, the words ‘for forty years’ are attached to what follows, and speak of God’s anger with Israel for this period. The author of Hebrews, however, inserts the particle “that is why” (in the NIV. “Therefore” in other versions) before the words I was angry (NIV). This has the effect of altering the punctuation so that the forty years is attached to the preceding and speaks of the time when the wilderness generation tested God and saw his judgments and gracious works.³⁶

Psalm 95:7b-8, ESV (English version based on the MT)

Today, if you hear his voice,
do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah,
as on the day at Massah in the wilderness,
when your fathers put me to the test
and put me to the proof, though they had seen my work.
For forty years I loathed that generation

³⁵ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2016.

³⁶ O’Brien, 143.

Hebrews 3:7-8, ESV (English version influenced by the LXX)

Today, if you hear His voice,
do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion,
on the day of testing in the wilderness,
where your fathers put me to the test
and **saw my works for forty years.**
Therefore I was provoked with that generation,

While O'Brien suggests that this difference is the result of an editorial change (made by the author of Hebrews) this discrepancy's origin may not be as easily identified as that. Since there were several variations of the LXX in use at the time, it could be that the author of Hebrews was actually staying true to His particular version of the LXX. In fact, there is no way to be completely certain of the origin of either of the differences discussed above. While they create some confusion, it is important to note that they may not have been an intentional departure created by the author of Hebrews. He may have just been passing along changes that had previously been made by the translators of his version of the LXX. This possibility creates a bit of unstable ground for commentators, like in the example noted above, who might assume otherwise on their way to an interpretive conclusion.

The "forty years" was originally connected, in the Hebrew version of the Psalm, with the amount of time God "loathed that generation" which makes sense if the testing was at Meribah and Massah, well within the first year of their wandering. The author has (possibly encouraged by the influence of the LXX) taken away the transliterated reference to Meribah and Massah and (either intentionally or unintentionally) diverted the focus of the "forty years" to refer to how long the people saw God's works. The author's rendition of the Psalm could be, and has been, interpreted by many commentators, as

understood as the people's "testing" of God lasting the entire forty years. Interestingly, this conclusion is a true statement. The people did see God's works for all forty years in the wilderness. God supplied manna for the entire time they were wandering and only stopped on the day after they had eaten some of the produce of the land of Canaan (Josh. 5:12). This conclusion, while a true statement, may not have been the intended communication the author of Hebrews wished to convey. This is an important distinction because Hebrews uses this argument to refer to an example of how NT believers can observe the Sabbath.

While it may seem obvious at first reading, it is difficult to tell for certain the intent of the author of Hebrews. By choosing to include the translated meanings of the place, and also link the "forty years" with how long Israel witnessed God's works, it inherently became a more difficult path for the readers of English translations to find their way back to Exodus 17:1-7 and the story of Meribah and Massah. This difficult path only exists for modern readers of English translations. It leads to logical questions for English readers like, "If the author of Hebrews wanted to refer to those specific places, why would not he have just transliterated "Meribah" and "Massah" to make it more obvious?" This is a question that only makes sense in a situation where Meribah and Massah are transliterated in the OT translation being used. While this is the case for readers of modern English translations, it was not the case for those Greek readers who were already using one of the LXX translations as their OT scripture. The LXX tradition had established a pattern of translating those names, in both Exodus 17 and Psalm 95. A Greek-reading LXX audience (not familiar with the Hebrew language) could not have

recognized a transliterated version of these Hebrew words, because they did not exist anywhere in the LXX. The author of Hebrews, by following the tradition of the LXX, and translating the meaning of the names, actually made the best decision at his disposal if he was hoping to direct the readers of his day to the events in Exodus 17. As this example shows, the process of translating the text into English has brought more complexity to understanding the Sabbath as discussed in Hebrews three and four.

To explain this situation in slightly different terms, one of three circumstances could have existed regarding what OT texts the author had available as he wrote the book of Hebrews. First, he could have been reading Psalm 95 exclusively from a Hebrew text where the sounds and meanings of the words “Meribah” and “Massah” were inherently identical. Secondly, the author could have been relying solely on an LXX version of the OT that had already established a tradition of translating the meaning of those names instead of transliterating them. Thirdly, the author could have been working with some version of both of these texts. Ultimately, I would argue that it does not matter what texts he may have had at his disposal. The author would have understood that a large portion of his intended audience (those who only spoke Greek and were already relying on a version of the LXX as their scriptures), could not have understood the referent of a transliterated “Meribah” and “Massah”. In fact, transliterating those names would have caused great confusion for those readers. Understanding the transition to the LXX for many Jews and Christians of his day, the author of Hebrews made the best translational choice he could, to serve his intended audience. Of course, there is no way he could have anticipated today’s English translators using a more reliable Hebrew MT and making the choice to

transliterate the place names. The fact that readers of English translations do not recognize the translated meanings of Meribah and Massah in Hebrews 3:8 is not the fault of the author of Hebrews. The modern practice of translating the text into English has created a discrepancy that did not exist for the original Greek speaking audience. This is a complex situation that has largely gone unnoticed by many modern commentators.

One may wonder if tracing the specific reference back to the events of Exodus 17 is ultimately essential to understand the meaning of the believer's rest. Commentators often conclude that the "rebellion" and "testing" mentioned in the Hebrews passage specifically refers to the rebellion story at Kadesh Barnea from Numbers 13-14. This is a conclusion likely encouraged by the changes to the Psalm mentioned above. But can this conclusion be assumed to be the intent of the author, or is it a misguided conclusion made by those not considering the context mentioned above? To the degree the author of Hebrews may have been relying on the tradition of the LXX when he recited Psalm 95, any theological conclusions one derives directly from these changes can remain as only speculative.

At first glance it does seem like all the needed elements are present for a "Kadesh Barnea" application. There is grumbling (Num. 14:2), a warning against rebellion (Num. 14:9), a mention about all the signs God had performed in their midst (Num. 14:11 & 22), the people testing God (Num. 14:22), and the oath that none (besides Joshua and Caleb) would enter the land (Num. 14:30). With all these elements, it has been easy for many to conclude, from the Hebrews rendition, that the Psalmist (and subsequently the author of Hebrews), must have been referring to the events at Kadesh Barnea.

Many commentators, like Hodges, present this perspective, “To drive home his call to fidelity and to warn of the consequences of unbelieving infidelity, the author referred to the classic failure of Israel at Kadesh Barnea which led to their 40-year detour in the wilderness.”³⁷ At best, this choosing of one specific wilderness event, however pivotal Kadesh Barnea may have been for that generation, includes a bit of speculation regarding intent.

Cockerill, who, despite understanding and describing the “Meribah/Massah” & “rebellion/testing” discrepancy between Psalm 95 and Hebrews 3, ends with a conclusion that also leads to the events of Numbers 13-14, “What happened at Meribah/Massah was typical of the rebellion against God which characterized their time in the wilderness and reached a head when the wilderness generation arrived at Kadesh Barnea and refused to enter the Promised Land.”³⁸

In an even looser interpretation, Owen does not feel the need to tie the reference to any particular story. Regarding the translation “in the rebellion” from Hebrews 3:8 he concludes, “Their sin was a rebellion. It would appear that one particular sin is not in mind here, but the whole way of life of those people is intended. And it is not for any particular time, but for their whole lives.”³⁹

O’Brien also understands the translational situation but stays neutral as to which option is best,

³⁷ Zane C. Hodges, “Hebrews,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 786.

³⁸ Cockerill, 89–90.

³⁹ John Owen, *Hebrews*, Crossway Classic Commentaries (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998), 64.

The psalmist recalls the disobedience of the desert generation at Meribah and Massah, where Israel rebelled against God because of the lack of water (Exod. 17:7). The LXX, which our author has used, translates the Hebrew place names as ‘rebellion’ and ‘testing’ rather than to transliterate the Hebrew names. The net effect of this is that the text is less closely tied to the ‘particular place in the desert and can be more easily applied to the ongoing contentiousness of the people’.⁴⁰

It is easy to see that the use of the translated meanings of Meribah and Massah has moved English reading commentators to a more general interpretation of the “rebellion” in the wilderness. It would be difficult to show that this same nuance existed for the original Greek-speakers who read the Greek version of Hebrews. The book of Hebrews uses the genitive noun *πειρασμοῦ* (*peirasmou*) for “Massah” and the dative noun *παραπικρασμῶ*, (*parapikrasmo*) for Meribah when quoting Psalm 95.⁴¹ These two words match our current versions of the LXX of the Psalm⁴² exactly.⁴³

Interestingly the connection in the LXX from Psalm 95 back to Exodus 17 is not as clean of a match, but there is a connection. In Exodus 17, the LXX uses the nominative noun *Λοιδόρησις* (*Loidoresis*) for a translation of Meribah, which differs from Psalm 95, but the nominative noun *Πειρασμὸς* (*Peirasmos*) for a translation of Massah is the same lemma as Psalm 95 and Hebrews. The same information in a transliterated linear format follows.

⁴⁰ O’Brien, 142.

⁴¹ Randall Tan. *The English-Greek Reverse Interlinear New Testament New American Standard Bible*. (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2009), Heb. 3:8.

⁴² In the Greek and Hebrew versions this is Psalm 94.

⁴³ Confirmed in the following modern versions: *Septuaginta: With Morphology*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1996. Tan, Randall, and David A. deSilva, Logos Bible Software. *The Lexham Greek-English Interlinear Septuagint*. Logos Bible Software, 2009.

Exodus 17

Hebrew -	Massah	Meribah
LXX -	<i>Peirasmos</i>	Loidoresis
English -	Massah	Meribah

Psalm 95 (94 in LXX)

Hebrew -	Massah	Meribah
LXX -	<i>peirasmou</i>	parapikrasmo
English -	Massah	Meribah

Hebrews 3

Greek -	<i>peirasmou</i>	parapikrasmo
English -	day of trial	when they provoked

One might ask, why is there not more congruity in the Greek between these three scriptures? It easily makes sense that the Greek quote of Psalm 95 (in Hebrews) and the LXX of the same match exactly. One can imagine the author of Hebrews checking this detail before writing his letter. So why do not the translations (of Meribah and Massah) in the LXX version of Psalm 95 and Exodus 17 match? One possible answer is that the books of Exodus and the Psalms were translated by different people, in a different place and time without an apparent editor to correct such a problem. While this specific translational discrepancy is unfortunate, one can see how it happened. Jobes gives more details about the various translators,

The Septuagint, or Old Greek (OG), was the first translation to be made of the Hebrew Scriptures, starting in the third century before Christ with the translation of the Pentateuch, most likely in Alexandria. All the other Old Testament books were translated sometime before the end of the first century BC, though we do not know by whom, when, or where.⁴⁴

The historical context of the creation of the LXX could explain the discrepancy between Psalm 95 in the LXX and Exodus 17 in the same.

⁴⁴ Jobes, *Letters*, 67.

All this to say that the English reader may be more apt to generalize the “testing” and “trial” spoken of in Hebrews 3 to be applicable to the entire 40 years in the wilderness. In contrast, a native first-century Greek reader would have more easily recognized the events mentioned in Hebrews 3 to be referring directly to the same events in Psalm 95 with a linguistic connection back to Exodus 17. From this example, one can begin to imagine the translational difficulties the authors of the NT faced as they incorporated OT passages into their NT writings. Given the translation options available to the author of Hebrews, I propose that he made the best translational choice possible if his purpose was to point his Greek speaking readers back to the particular circumstances of Exodus 17. It is unfortunate that this nuance does not similarly extend into the English versions of the Bible as well. Their reliance on a more recent (and reliable) Hebrew MT seems to have distracted readers of English translations from this conclusion.

Psalm 95 in the Hebrew MT clearly directs the reader back to the events of Exodus 17 and specifically the story of Meribah and Massah found there. Assuming the Greek reader of Hebrews was more likely to make this connection, one must ask, “Why this particular story?”. Are there details found within that are uniquely different than the rest of Israel’s experience in the wilderness? What is it about Meribah and Massah that could be unique and worthy of mention and how might it give an example that involves the NT fulfillment of the Sabbath?

There is one detail about that story that makes it unique among all the other events in the forty years in the wilderness. It is this detail that might speak to a NT believer’s understanding of the Sabbath. While the events of Exodus 17:1-7 do not portray the first

time the people grumbled⁴⁵, it *is* the first time they tested God. They would go on to test God many more times in their wanderings (Num. 14:22), but the test at Meribah and Massah was the first. Perhaps a quick review of the story is necessary to see the overall significance of how this might apply to the believer's rest.

In the story of the Exodus, the Hebrews in Egypt are introduced to God through a series of plagues sent upon the Pharaoh who enslaved them. They escaped Egypt through the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea (Exod. 14) and the text says that having seen these things, the people feared the Lord, and they believed in the Lord and in His servant Moses (Exod. 14:31). After singing a song to the Lord praising Him (Exod. 15:1-21), Moses leads them three-days out into the wilderness of Shur and found no water. They found water at Marah, but it was undrinkable. The people grumbled, Moses cried out to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a tree. Moses threw the tree into the waters and they became drinkable. Then there is a very interesting statement. In the last part of Exodus 15:25 it says that there "the Lord tested the people." Then Moses encouraged them to "heed the voice of the Lord."

They then traveled to Elim where there were twelve springs and they camped beside the waters. They moved from there to the wilderness of Sin (on their way to Mt. Sinai). Again the whole congregation grumbled, this time because they were hungry. The Lord provides bread from heaven (and eventually quail too) and says something very interesting about His instructions. The people were to go out and gather a day's portion

⁴⁵ As we will see, the wilderness generation first grumbled in their travels at Marah (Exod. 15:24) then again in the wilderness of Sin (Exod. 16:8).

every day... “that the Lord may test them” (Exod. 16:4). Similar to the grumbings at the waters of Marah, the Lord again sets up a test for the people.

Twice, in a short amount of time, the people have grumbled. Both times the Lord has responded to the grumbings (without rebuking the people or Moses at all) and He identifies these opportunities as a “tests” for the people. Then God ordains the Sabbath. As I discussed in Part 2 of this project, the Sabbath was originally instituted, for this generation, with the collection of a double portion of manna on the sixth day, and rest from work on the seventh (Exod. 16:30).

The next story is Meribah and Massah, the story that the Psalmist suggests holds the key. It is the specific example referred to by the author of Hebrews to help one understand how to enter into the Sabbath rest that awaits believers today. In Exodus 17:1, the whole congregation leaves the wilderness of Sin and camps at Rephidim... and there was no water for the people to drink. In similar fashion, the people grumble, Moses cries out to the Lord, and the Lord again responds faithfully. Moses struck the rock and water came forth. Then the text says something very interesting. It says that Moses “named the place Massah and Meribah because of the quarrel of the sons of Israel, and because they tested the Lord...” (Exod. 17:7). Where previously God set up circumstances to “test the people”, this time it is pointed out that here, the people “tested the Lord.”

It is important to ask why this event represents a testing of God. What changed? The people grumble the same way, Moses petitions God the same way, the Lord is faithful the same way. Yet this time it is a test *not of* “God to the people”... *but of* “the people to God.” There is a subtle change that makes all the difference in the world. It is

this detail that Psalm 95 warns believers against when the Psalmist says, “do not harden you hearts” the way they did at Meribah and Massah.

At Marah... the people grumble and the Lord proves himself faithful by providing water. In the Wilderness of Sin... the people grumble and the Lord proves himself faithful by providing food. Then at Rephidim... the people are faced with an old issue. Once again, they do not have water to drink. They had grumbled about water before, and when they did God had proven himself faithful. Now they have a decision to make. Will they respond again with a grumble (a response of unbelief) or will they remember God’s faithfulness, with this same issue, and discover what a faith response looks like. Moses records their response as, “Is the Lord among us, or not?” (Exod. 17:7). They grumbled in unbelief and in so doing, they tested God. Their hearts were hardened in this process and similar responses over the next year hardened their hearts even more. Eventually, they had developed a grumbling habit and could not even respond in faith when it was time to enter the Promised Land.

Chapter 16

Practical Application to the Sabbath & Other Considerations

Some practical applications for believers today may begin to peak out from behind this translational curtain. What believer has not grumbled to the Lord about the events and circumstances of their life only to have the Lord meet them in that place and provide for their every need? It is God's nature to be the provider, and it is a part of people's fallen nature to grumble. In contrast, the new nature given believers at their conversion to faith in Christ, is based on faithful responses to God. This is especially true when God uses the circumstances of life to test a believer's faith.

If the example of Meribah and Massah is truly a key in understanding how to experience the Sabbath, what should one expect? How would that practically look for a believer today? First, a believer should correctly view their faith as a journey from slavery in sin to ultimate rest in heaven. After coming to faith, one should expect their faith to be tested. They should also understand that they may not always appropriately respond to these tests of faith, but that God will still prove himself faithful. The real crux of the Sabbath issue then comes into play when God presents a second test in a similar area of life where he has proven himself faithful before. How it is that one responds in those circumstances determines whether or not they experience the true Sabbath rest.

A response of grumbling unbelief comes from the unrest of our old nature. That is the response of one with some lingering romance of slavery still in his heart. A harkening back to the days of familiar chaos that had become somewhat comfortable, while yet

completely dysfunctional. A grumbling response to the tests of life ultimately says that God, and the Kingdom of rest that He is restoring, is not to be trusted. While one may not respond correctly every time, glimpses of His kingdom's restful rule are available today, whenever one hears His voice and chooses not to harden their hearts with another faithless response. Responding in unbelief is a system of dysfunction and chaos in terms of how God intended His creation to live everyday. This is why the author of Hebrews also links the Sabbath back to God's never-ending rest in Genesis, which He shared with His creation until the fall of man. The author of Hebrews links this reality with the concept of the Sabbath currently available to believers. The author does not speak of returning to the observance of any period of physical rest (or worship) to experience the Sabbath. The argument in Hebrews leads its readers to a very practical, boots on the ground, way of responding to life that is directly connected to the Sabbath that God provides when one responds in faith.

For a more specific and practical application I present the following hypothetical situation. Imagine a family of faith that finds themselves in a financial crisis through the sudden and unexpected loss of a job. This same family had trouble making financial ends meet some time ago. Their response to that situation, early in their marriage, included times of panic, depression, and seeking comfort in dysfunctional worldly ways. Back then they were so embarrassed they failed to seek support from their friends at their church. Although they talked about the situation often, and it dominated almost every waking thought, they strangely did not spend time praying to God for help. They did assume the solution was entirely their responsibility and attempted to pull themselves up

by their financial bootstraps. Interestingly, without warning God supplied an unexpected and undeserved solution. They were surprised by God's faithfulness.

Now, some time later, the problem of financial stability revisits their home. It is at this moment that they have a choice to make that involves how they experience the Sabbath that God offers. Do they respond the same way they did last time and slip into the habitual response that sin encourages, or do they revisit the previous situation of which this new circumstance has unpleasantly reminded them? Remembering God's faithfulness, they choose to go to Him in expectant prayer waiting for direction. This is a deliberate decision... because everything within them wants to hit the panic button again. They choose to share some details with their small group at church and together the group expectantly waits for God's direction and provision. More than anything they are able to stay away from the panic and dysfunction that had visited their lives the last time they dealt with financial insecurity. It is in this process that they experience the Sabbath that Jesus offers.

The practicality of this application is not limited to just a financial crisis in one's life. Where else might it apply? A list of potential applications can be found by asking one simple question, "Where have I experienced chaos and dysfunction in my life?" This is one question everyone can answer, probably with many examples. The Sabbath can be applied to the chaos experienced in several kinds of relationships (marriages, families of origin, and workplace). It is applicable to parents making decisions about how to raise their children. It applies to health challenges one might experience and major career decisions.

This principle applies not only to major life events, but also the seemingly mundane situations that visit daily living and steal one's peace. In the sermon on the mount Jesus speaks directly to some of these everyday concerns. In Matthew 6:24 He reminds his listeners, "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other or he will be devoted to one and despise the other." The mention that believers can only serve one of two masters involves the language of slavery. It is a reminder of the believer's spiritual journey spoken of in Part 4 of this project. Jesus then instructs his listeners not to worry about the most basic things in life, food and clothing. These are the daily reminders in everyone's life that help more clearly define their loyalty. Later in the same passage Jesus says, "Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' ..." (Matthew 6:31). Interestingly, these are the very questions the wilderness community asked and failed to respond properly to in Exodus 15-17.

When can one experience this Sabbath? Today, in fact, every time one hears the voice of God speak into the chaotic situations that life presents, believers can choose to remember God's faithfulness. If they let that soften their hearts, and respond in faith knowing that His ways bring stability and rest, they have observed the Sabbath.

The Meribah of Moses and Aaron

Interestingly, Exodus 17 is not the only place in scripture that speaks of a place named Meribah. A quick check of cross references in Psalm 95 will also produce a listing for Numbers 20:1-13. This text tells of the events in the Wilderness of Zin directly following the death of Moses' sister, Miriam. While this location does not share the "Maribah and Massah" double name given in Psalm 95, the similarities of the two events

and the repetition of the “Meribah” name is worthy of a brief inquiry. I will suggest that the events in Numbers 20:1-13 reinforce the spiritual principle developed in the preceding section of this project.

It is important to understand the timing of this episode (Numbers 20:1-13) to see if it adds any further understanding to the concept of the rest that God has to offer. Where the events at Rephidim in Exodus 17 happened shortly after leaving Egypt, the events at Kadesh in Numbers 20 occur nearly 40 years later.⁴⁶ A journal of the whole journey in the wilderness is recorded in Numbers 33:1-49. In verse fourteen the text says, “They journeyed from Alush and camped at Rephidim; now it was there that the people had no water to drink”.⁴⁷ This is a reference to the events recorded in Exodus 17. Numbers 33:36 reads, “They journeyed from Ezion-geber and camped in the wilderness of Zin, that is, Kadesh”. This is a reference to the events of Numbers 20.

By the time of Numbers 20, the first generation of Israelites that left Egypt had passed away and their children had taken their place as the people of Israel. After Miriam was buried, the text says that there was no water for the congregation and they again came before Moses (Num. 20:2). The question that begs to be asked by this episode is, would this generation respond in unbelief like their parents, or would they choose to respond in faith? The answer comes quickly. In the next verse the people contend with Moses and grumbled. They had learned well from their parents and put together a string

⁴⁶ A point confirmed by Num. 33:36-38 that first mentions Kadesh (vs. 36) and then mentions the death of Aaron the priest in the “fortieth year after the sons of Israel had come from the land of Egypt...” (verse. 38).

⁴⁷ Interestingly, the entry for Rephidim (Num. 33:14) is the only entry in the list that has any mention of the events that happened at that location. I believe this is another indication that the events of Exodus 17 are to be distinguished apart from the rest of the wilderness wanderings.

of complaints that shows they had been paying attention their whole time in the wilderness.

If only we had perished when our brothers perished before the Lord! Why then have you brought the Lords assembly into this wilderness, for us and our beasts to die here? Why have you made us come up from Egypt, to bring us in to this wretched place? It is not a place of grain or figs or vines or pomegranates, nor is there water to drink. (Num. 20:3-5)

This is where the story really begins to sound like the events of Exodus 17. There is no water, the people grumble, Moses and Aaron appealed to the Lord on behalf of the people. Then the Lord gave them instructions. “Take the rod; and you and your brother Aaron assemble the congregation and speak to the rock before their eyes, that it may yield its water” (Num. 20:8). Moses and Aaron were probably a little frustrated at this point. They scold the people but then Moses, against the directions of the Lord, strikes the rock twice with his rod. Despite Moses unfaithfulness in following directions, the Lord still provides abundant amounts of water. What the Lord says next is a little surprising, “Because you have not believed Me, to treat me as holy in the sight of the sons of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them” (Num. 20:12). Then the place gets its name, “Those were the waters of Meribah, because the sons of Israel contended with the Lord, and He proved Himself holy among them” (Num. 20:13). One interesting point that comes out of this story is that Moses and Aaron are the only ones who receive punishment. This group of people, who lacked water, and grumbled (contended... Meribah) with the Lord does not receive any correction from God. It is Moses and Aaron who are reprimanded. This is the incident that prevents the brothers from leading God’s people into their rest, the Land of Promise.

The reprimand of Moses and Aaron with no correction of the people helps build on the principle proposed in the last section. The events of Numbers 20 show a similar progression of provision and testing that we saw from the earlier generation in Exodus 15-17, except this time it is Moses and Aaron. At Marah (Exod. 15) the people grumble about a lack of water but Moses and Aaron respond in faith and the Lord proves himself faithful. Again at Meribah and Massah (Exod. 17) the people grumble about a lack of water but Moses and Aaron respond in faith and the Lord proves himself faithful. Then, 40 years later, a new group of people grumble about a lack of water. This is the first time this group has dealt with a shortage of water. Their parents had... but this generation was not making the decisions then. In this instance, Moses and Aaron are the ones that had seen the Lord provide under very similar circumstances in the past. They are the ones that had a decision to make and for whatever reason, they did not believe the Lord (Num. 20:12). Their response of unbelief prevented them from entering the rest that God was offering.

The Great Faith of Moses and the Wilderness Generation

Before discussing any further devotional conclusions that one might come to regarding the Sabbath, it would be good to try and reconcile some statements made in Hebrews 11 with what has been discussed. The author of Hebrews takes specific care to warn his readers to not follow the example of unbelief shown by the wilderness generation. Hebrews 3:12-19 is the strongest warning passage that the letter offers at the expense of that unfaithful, hard hearted, sinful, unbelieving group that God saved from slavery in Egypt. In similar fashion, the story in Numbers 20 of Moses and Aaron's

unbelief becomes a strong warning throughout the OT of an improper response of unbelief to God.⁴⁸ These warnings are well documented.

It might surprise some readers that Moses, Aaron, and the first wilderness generation, who failed to enter the Promised Land, due to their lack of faith, are also presented as people of great faith. It is also interesting that their great faith is commended just a few chapters later by the author of Hebrews. Hebrews chapter eleven is often referred to as the “Hall of Faith” because it lists several examples from the OT of people of great faith. Among the list are Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah and Joseph. All these people “died in faith” seeking a city prepared by God (Heb. 11:13-16).

Given the events of Numbers 20, it might be surprising that the one character that receives the most attention in this “hall of faith” is Moses. While most in the list just get a quick mention in one or two verses, Moses is lauded for seven verses. At the end of these seven verses, something interesting happens. When the author presents the faith of Moses he also mentions those that left Egypt with him. “By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood, so that he who destroyed the firstborn would not touch them. By faith they passed through the Red Sea as though they were passing through dry land...” (Heb. 11:28-29). As this chapter points out, Moses and the people who left Egypt with him obviously had great faith and are examples for every believer to emulate.

The irony of these two very different depictions is worthy of more attention than I am able to give here. Nevertheless, I find reason to note it before I present my conclusions about the Sabbath. The mention of Moses and the exodus generation in

⁴⁸ The incident is either directly mentioned or alluded to several other times in the OT (Num. 20:24, 27:14, Deut. 1:37, 3:26-27, 4:21, Ps. 81:7, 95:8).

Hebrews 11 is a great reminder of the paradox of faith. People of great faith can also respond miserably in unbelief given certain circumstances.

The Dimmer Switch of Faith

The Bible talks a lot about faith. Some people have it. Some do not. Often times, as we have seen, the people that have it in one circumstance, seem to lose it in another. Theological systems have tended to deal with faith as an “all or nothing” commodity. Faith is the stuff of salvation and in turn is highly regulated and defined in theological structures. The question of whether someone has faith is often presented as a “yes” or “no” question. In one sense, that is a proper way to look at faith, but it is also much more complicated than that. The Bible talks about faith in terms, not only of existence, but of quantity and quality as well.⁴⁹

Some prefer to view faith like a light switch with two options, “on” or “off”. The Bible presents faith more like a dimmer switch. There are several types of dimmer switches on the market. Most dimmer switches have two operations. There is a built in on/off switch and then there is a dimmer on a slide that regulates the amount of light at varying levels. When the toggle portion of the switch is turned off, the dimmer switch does not do anything. When the toggle switch is turned on, then one can regulate the amount of light in the room by moving the dimmer switch up and down. Push it all the way up and the light can be very bright. Push the dimmer switch all the way down and there might not be any light at all... even though the toggle switch is on.

⁴⁹ Jesus often spoke of faith in terms of quantity, both little (Matt. 6:30 8:26, 14:31, 16:8, 17:20) and great (Matt. 8:10, 15:28).

Viewing faith in these terms would certainly allow one to explain the behavior of Moses and the wilderness community. At times they acted in great faith with the dimmer switch all the way up. At other times the dimmer switch was pushed all the way down and they acted in unbelief. All the while, the toggle switch of faith was on. One sees this type of behavior in the disciples of Jesus as well. The story of Peter comes to mind. At times he acted in great faith, but at other times he seemed to be completely out of faith. While these types of characters are often hard to fit into a theological box, they also seem quite familiar. The journey of faith follows a similar road for all who experience it. The life of faith is unpredictable and unfortunately, at times, inconsistent. This is how the author of Hebrews can spend so much time speaking about the faithful obedience and unfaithful examples of the same characters.

This speaks loudly to the Sabbath experience available to believers today. The rest that God offers is found in the response of faith. Unfortunately, the lack of rest is a very real option for those who have faith but fail to exercise it. The true Sabbath is more about learning and practicing a trust response than lying in a hammock.

Conclusion

The influence of the Septuagint on the NT authors brings many questions of Biblical interpretation to the table. A reader of the English Bible, not as familiar with the OT stories and meaning of the words, could easily miss the references to Meribah and Massah in the book of Hebrews. One might assume the author was referring to the general testing and unbelief that became characteristic of that wilderness generation. The decision to translate the meaning of Meribah and Massah in the Greek versions of the OT, and subsequently in the NT, can distract the modern reader of English translations away from the Exodus 17 story. It is this story (Meribah and Massah), and those that directly precede it, that provides unique and practical details of the wilderness community's journey. It is these details that more specifically guide believers to the Sabbath rest that remains.

While the ultimate Sabbath rest will be experienced when sin is completely eradicated, Hebrews 3 & 4 suggests there is a bit of that rest that believers can experience "today". Shead tracks the progression of thought,

Psalm 95 referred to the Promised Land and the temple as the place of God's rest. But in Hebrews these copies have given way to the heavenly realities within which Christ now dwells (e.g. 9:11–12, 23–28). Secondly, and crucially, after centuries in which people failed to enter God's rest, one man now has entered his rest and ceased from his works as God did from his (4:10). And it is because Christ has already gone before that the writer can speak of Christians' present possession of this rest (4:3: 'we who have believed enter that rest').⁵⁰

Individually, each believer has the opportunity to respond to life's circumstances in faith or in unbelief. Collectively, the church has an obligation to encourage its members

⁵⁰ Shead, 749.

to grow in this way too. To be sure, God will test His people time and again in similar areas and topics. While a lack of water may not be the issue in this place and time, there are plenty of other parts of life that challenge our faith. God can test people in any number of areas of life, like finances, or relationships, or children, or parents, or jobs, or a marriage. Chaos can visit all of these topics... but God can bring order and functionality to chaos. When God shows Himself faithful, it is important to learn from that faithfulness. It is essential that believers allow God to be the one to give perspective to life. He will teach what will last and what will ultimately fade away. In this way He brings order to life and guides us through situations that we can not negotiate ourselves. God will be faithful. That is His nature, and when He is, what will the church's response be the next time? A faith response allows for the work implements to be surrendered and a Sabbath to be entered.

It is one thing for the book of Hebrews to present a warning for what "not to do." Do not respond the way they did in that circumstance. One might ask if the Bible provides a positive example of Sabbath observing behavior. How is it that one should respond when God allows us to enter a place of chaos and need? While there are several examples of God's people responding in faith throughout the Scriptures, there is one example that is better than all. It is a story I mentioned in Part 4, but will revisit again here for this specific purpose. Where the OT community failed to respond in faith to the trials in the wilderness, Jesus responds much better. In Luke 3 we see Jesus passing through the waters of baptism in the Jordan. Immediately following that, he is lead around by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days. By including these events, Luke

mimics the experience of that first wilderness community who also were baptized (in the Sea) and then were tested in the wilderness for forty years.

We would expect to see Jesus respond better than they did, and He does. Jesus is challenged with physical hunger, and He responds in faith by repeating the promises of God. He answered, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live on bread alone.’” He is then offered dominion and authority over all the earth. While it was Jesus’ rightful claim, He is willing to wait and receive it in the proper way and timing of God. Jesus answered in faith, “It is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.’” He is lastly challenged to test God’s promise of protecting His very life from death. Jesus responds once again in faith by quoting Scripture, “It is said, You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.” Interestingly, He is quoting a passage from Deuteronomy 6:16. The full passage reads, “You shall not put the Lord your God to the test, as you tested Him at Massah.” While Jesus did not complete the sentence, arguably it can be assumed that both He and Satan understood the context (associated with the failures of Israel in the wilderness at Massah) and the spiritual irony of the moment.

Jesus passed the test that the wilderness community could not. In so doing, He has given NT believers a very practical and positive example to follow when their wilderness wanderings put them to the test. The Scripture says that the devil, having been responded to in faith, left him for a more opportune time. One might assume that believers today, who respond the same way to the test of faith in their lives can expect a similar response from the Adversary. This story becomes a very specific, positive example to counter the example one is to not follow in Exodus 17.

Application of Sabbath Rest to the Community of Faith

This project has taken a close look at the topic of the Sabbath. In the church today there are several different opinions people hold in regards to the Sabbath. Many view it as a day of physical rest and feel obligated to keep some sort of an observance around that type of understanding. While some wish to return to an OT Saturday observance of physical rest, others think a believer in Jesus has the freedom to move the observance to either another day of the week or just a part of one of those days. Due to a lack of clear understanding on the topic, apathy surrounding the Sabbath has crept into the church and threatens the next generation of believers. Many in the church today have lost interest in and have no real connection to the Sabbath at all. Those who continue to pursue a day of physical rest and expect that to care for the spiritual exhaustion that ails mankind can only expect ultimate disappointment in their observance. This project has argued that all of these views fall short of the spiritual understanding the Scripture teaches. It is time for the church to abandon its persistence that a weekly observance of physical rest is somehow the fulfillment of this concept. It must take another look at the Sabbath. While physical rest is essential to maintain one's health and the regular assembling with other believers is crucial for the church,⁵¹ neither of these practices correctly fit the Biblical presentation of the Sabbath rest that is available today. It is time for renewed interest in and understanding of this ancient concept.

⁵¹ The instruction, given in Hebrews 10:25, to not forsake "our own assembling together, as is the habit of some..." may be another indication that the early church did not view the fulfillment of the Sabbath as a gathering for worship on Sunday. If Sunday was understood as the new Sabbath, this reminder to assemble would have likely been given using Sabbath context and terminology. The fact that it is not connected to the extensive Sabbath discussion (Heb. 3-4) is certainly worthy of further inquiry.

Any observance of physical rest as a fulfillment of the Sabbath is only a shadow. The theology of the Sabbath throughout the Bible continually invites the followers of God to anticipate something more than just a one-in-seven day of physical rest. This is first seen in the creation account of Genesis 2. Today's culture of enlightenment often chooses to read the story of creation as explaining the material creation of the world. God did create everything out of nothing. That fact is not in dispute. But when one compares the Biblical creation account against other extra-Biblical accounts from that era many similarities are found. Those accounts were wholly descriptions of functional creation. When the Biblical account is understood as a description of functional instead of a strictly material creation, it opens new possibilities for the Sabbath understanding. Once God put the world in order, functioning correctly, He rested from that work and began interacting with that creation in a relational way. When sin eventually introduced chaos back into the system, God set about a plan to redeem the original order and function he had created. When readers see God bring order to chaos in the creation story, they can begin to anticipate order amidst the chaos of their own lives. They can begin to anticipate order brought back to a world caught in the grip of sin.

How are we to understand God's rest on day seven of the creation? God certainly did not take a day off because he was tired. The lack of an evening and morning on day seven is a clue to the type of rest discussed. Literarily, Moses omission of the evening/morning/day repetition on the seventh day suggests that God's rest never ended. If the creation is to be understood functionally, God's Sabbath rest at the end of creation then becomes a never-ending functional engagement with that creation. It is an engagement

that is still functioning correctly in heaven, but that Kingdom has yet to fully make it's way back down to earth. One can then understand the work of Christ as a redemption of the function and order lost when sin entered the creation. With the victory of Jesus over Satan in the wilderness and on the cross, the weekly shadowy observance has passed from use and true glimpses of the eschatological rest to come have become available today. With every one of these experiences, people naturally begin to anticipate a time when they would be able to engage in a fully redeemed creation.

Throughout Scripture, the Sabbath theology anticipates something more than a day. It is not just the “never-ending day” at the end of creation that suggests something more from the Sabbath. When the Sabbath was introduced as part of the law, a spattering of Sabbath days were added to the yearly calendar as well. These additional days were tied to specific dates on the calendar and had no direct connection to the weekly Sabbath. The inclusion of the Sabbatical year and the year of Jubilee were also clues that the concept of the Sabbath anticipated something more than just a day of physical rest. Even though it was commanded, no explicit evidence exists that Israel ever chose to observe the Sabbatical year. Israel's disobedience anticipates the One who would come that would faithfully observe and fulfill the Sabbath. The theological culmination of all the Sabbath years was the Year of Jubilee that demanded even more of the people. It is a year where all debts are cancelled, slaves are set free, and the homeland is returned to its original owner. The year of Jubilee is part of this growing theological framework that anticipates the redeemed creation under Christ.

The OT eventually presented even the Promised Land as a Sabbath Land. The OT Sabbath theology not only included rules that allowed man to fellowship with God, but it also included a physical location. It was an anticipated location where the rules of function and order would have the opportunity to work perfectly. The Promised Land of the OT is a picture of an inherited order and function. It anticipates the restored creation of Genesis 1. But history proves that the Promised Land was not the final rest for the people of God. This is one of the main points made by the author of Hebrews in chapter 4:8-9. While this ultimately points to the final City of God anticipated by so many of the faithful throughout time (Heb. 11:13-16), there is a taste of that function and order available today. God fixes a certain day, today, for His people to enter the functional order that God supplies.

In the same way that a bigger and better rest is anticipated, the Bible also anticipates a better leader than all the OT examples. One of the main arguments of the book of Hebrews is that Jesus is better than everything that came before Him. His arrival, as the Prophet like Moses, was clearly articulated and highly anticipated, even by those who opposed him (John 1:19-27). This new Moses would eventually lead His spiritual children, as exiles, through the wilderness of this world to their own country, a place where the physical and relational function and order between the Creator and the creation have been restored. Jesus is the new Moses and those that follow Him are the new wilderness community. Believers in Christ are on the journey out of slavery to an ultimate Promised Land of rest. It is in this line of reasoning that Jesus corrects the people's understanding of the Sabbath. He shows that restoring function and order to

people's lives is his work to do and it ultimately allows people to experience a true Sabbath. This is how Jesus is able to say that He is Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:23).

The ultimate rest that Jesus promises is not only a final destination, but glimpses of that restored function and order can be experienced while still on the journey. The author of Hebrews speaks of this "rest" in great detail in chapters three and four. In these chapters Jesus is presented as one better than Moses who speaks the words of God more clearly. These chapters encourage believers in Christ, at the moment they hear His voice, to respond in faith and obedience to that call. Believers are encouraged to this obedience by contrasting them against the circumstances and responses of the first wilderness community. It was those wilderness wanderers that Hebrews references by quoting a portion of Psalm 95. "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as when they provoked me, as in the day of trial in the wilderness, where your fathers tried me by testing me and saw my works for forty years" (Heb. 3:8-9).

While this may sound like a summary of the entire wilderness experience, the original readers would have been linguistically drawn to a different nuance the passage offers. The specific response of the people at Meribah and Massah (Exod. 17) is the original focus of warning in Psalm 95. It is this event where the people first tested God. It was the first of many tests they would give. The Psalm identifies this first test as the example to not follow. By the events of Exodus 17, God had shown Himself faithful in many ways to this group who had once been in slavery to Pharaoh. He had redeemed them from the work of Egypt. He had brought them through the baptism of the Red Sea.

God had also provided for their physical needs in the wilderness by providing water and food in miraculous ways when they needed it most.

According to Hebrews, the events at Meribah and Massah bring to light a lesson to be learned for the new wilderness community of God. This example reminds us that God will be faithful to supply all our needs, but He also sometimes leads us to familiar places of need. It is in those times that we have a choice as to how to respond. We can refuse to remember God's previous faithfulness and respond with the grumbling and complaining of unbelief. Or we can choose a response of faith, learning from God's previous faithfulness in our lives and trusting Him to respond the same way yet again. This is the way we are supposed to relationally function with God, by trusting Him with all details of our lives. Faith allows us to respond to life with the functional order that God originally intended. It is a relationship of trust and faithfulness.

How is it that believers today are to respond to the Sabbath? The church must move past the idea that the Sabbath is about one day of physical rest each week. It is much more than that particular shadowy prefigure. Christ offers a deeper and more practical understanding of rest. Believers are to stop working, but it is the work of fighting God's plan from within the non-functional chaos of sin. That is the work from which Jesus frees us. That is our unrest as a creation. As life brings a believer face to face with tests of faith, in whatever topic of life that may present, he or she can trust that Jesus has already done the work to correct it and choose to engage the situation from that functional and orderly perspective. The Lord is trustworthy, both in His work, and in His timing. God's people must be diligent to enter that rest, daily, through following the faithful example of

the Savior. In this way, better than all the shadows of rest the OT once demanded, there remains a more superior Sabbath rest for the people of God.

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VITA

Gregory Hall, son of Larry and Eleanor Hall, was born February 25, 1969 in Seattle, Washington. He is the youngest of two children. He comes from a family of educators. His mother, father and sister, Jodi, all spent a significant number of years teaching in the public school system. Upon graduation from Pacific Lutheran University (Tacoma, Washington) Greg too spent time teaching in the public setting. Later, he also worked as a real estate broker and small business owner. During his time in real estate, he attended Faith Evangelical Seminary, graduating with a Masters of Arts in Theological Studies (MATS) degree.

In 2008, he took the title of minister for the first time. For eight years he served the youth of his church in Salem, Oregon. He now leads at the church as Pastor of Christian Education and Young Adults. Under his ministry, the church remained about the same size as before. Gregory Hall is married to his high-school sweetheart, and 1989 Keizer Junior Miss, the former Lisa Chandler. They have two talented and very good looking children, Jacob and Nathan.

