

Honoring Jesus as Sabbath King: Historical-redemptive arguments for a Sunday-Sabbath

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Introduction

Using a model from Warfield, to do justice to the whole counsel of God in feeding the flock of God *we must give priority to exegesis and biblical theology so that systematic theology may have preeminence*¹ because “the systematic theologian is preeminently a preacher of the gospel.”²

Accordingly, this paper will attempt to work from specific exegetical concerns with an eye on the history of redemption in order to formulate a systematic theology of the Sabbath.³ This is challenging but promising⁴ and given the important logical dimension of systematic theology⁵ we must utilize “good and necessary consequence.”⁶ For Jonathan Edwards, this is the way we come to know “we are obliged to obedience” even “without a particular precept” regarding the change of the Sabbath.⁷

Thus we have a multi-disciplinary opportunity to sharpen iron with iron regarding this topic: “Honoring Jesus as Sabbath King: historical-redemptive arguments for a Sunday-Sabbath.” These arguments are summarized in the following compressed form: the weekly Sabbath remains for all time as a duty and a promise in honor to Jesus who became Sabbath king by the resurrection; it therefore remains under His Lordship as the Christian Sunday Sabbath.

1A. First, the weekly Sabbath remains for all time.

It is a duty and promise calling man to emulate a divine six and one pattern from the foundation of the world to its consummation.⁸ Biblical revelation follows the historical unfolding of God’s eternal purpose⁹ that takes account of the fall of man and anticipates the coming of the kingdom realized now and still to come. Thus every part of Scripture, every scroll to use the words of Schnittjer, reeks with interrelations “to a network of previous and later biblical texts which necessarily impose on the rhetorical effect of the scroll itself.”¹⁰ Interpreting Scripture we must “consider multiple contexts simultaneously”¹¹ to develop “reader competency” that involves “thinking outside of the boundaries of the scroll.”¹² In this way we do justice to the divine authorship of the sixty-six books of the Bible as a contextual unit; and we are guided here in large measure by the restless dialogue of the biblical texts with one another that is indicated by allusions and echoes.¹³ But we must interpret with patience and thoughtfulness avoiding parallelomania.¹⁴ Still we must at times cross the scroll’s edge “to read the narrative in relation to other biblical writings which can be ‘heard’ in it.”¹⁵

Applied to the present discussion, the prologue to the book of Genesis stands at the center of a canonical interconnectivity that is cited in support of a Sabbath for all time.

1B. Genesis 1:1-2:3

On what basis can we refer to the days of creation as a covenantal six and one, a promise regarding human destiny that impacts the very fabric of history from start to finish?¹⁶ From the text of Genesis itself it is reasoned that the divine blessing of the seventh day (Gen. 2:3) implies that man, God’s image bearer, is to follow His Maker’s example by working six days and resting on the seventh. Opponents of a Sabbath that remains for all time emphasize that no duty is

explicitly stated, no precept is given, and man is not even mentioned!¹⁷ Of course, all of these complaints argue from silence. What is the argument here that needs to be addressed? It is the precise point that the sanctification of the seventh day must have some bearing on man, the image of God.

Calvin refers to the Sabbath as something that was “*commanded* to men from the beginning that they might employ themselves in the worship of God” and therefore “it is right that it should continue to the end of the world.”¹⁸ His evidence¹⁹ comes mainly from the sanctifying of the seventh day: “God always had respect to the welfare of men.”²⁰ Turretin says: “since *blessing and sanctification are not done with respect to God, but to man*, it is hence plain that God for no other end sanctified that day... than that it might be religiously observed by man.”²¹ Edwards follows suit: God “did not bless and sanctify it with respect to himself, or that he within himself might observe it: as that is most absurd.”²²

There is something intuitively reasonable about this line of argument. The idea is that God in fact worked six days, rested on the seventh day, blessed the seventh day, and gave us a written record of His action “that the practice of mankind in general might some way or other be regulated by it.”²³ The divine “blessing and sanctification are not done with respect to God, but to man” so that “the sanctified day... might be observed by man.”²⁴ Of course, though man is the apex of creation his existence serves the chief end of glorifying God.²⁵ Thus, “to engage us” the “benediction is nothing else than a solemn consecration, by which God claims for himself the meditations and employments of men on the seventh day.”²⁶

More recently, Wenham acknowledges that the word Sabbath is not mentioned in Genesis 2:2-3. But he finds the idea of the Sabbath “near at hand”²⁷ because of the following things: 1) God’s extraordinary work that leads to His rest is described unexpectedly by use of the “ordinary word for human work”²⁸ suggesting a bearing of the work and rest model for man, 2) the striking use of blessing a day implies that “those who observe the Sabbath will enjoy divine blessing in their lives,”²⁹ 3) the unusual use of sanctifying a day, “emphasizes the sacredness of the Sabbath”³⁰ that God’s image bearer is to acknowledge and emulate, 4) And finally since all “the other parts of creation were designed for man’s benefit, so too was the Sabbath.”³¹

Therefore, it is unwarranted to conclude that the Sabbath was inaugurated in the days of Moses.³² Instead, there is good evidence from which to draw the reasonable inference that the inauguration of the Sabbath is not only in view in Genesis 1:1-2:3 but that it is in view as a promise of rest with God because His rest is always out in front of man’s work. Thus as a paradigm of history (as history in miniature) the original six and one promises rest at the end of man’s labors on earth. By emulating the divine example of work and rest, man acknowledges his place under the authority of his sovereign Lord while at the same time he hears the promise of the love of his Father.³³ The Sabbath that is blessed for man from the beginning is not only a model for God’s image to emulate but it is also a continuous promise of eschatological rest.³⁴

2B. Isaiah 66:1-2

Echoes of the creation account are clearly evident in Isaiah 66 (cf. heavens/earth and rest, v. 1; God making all things and bringing all things into being, v. 2a). In this call to humility before the Maker of the heavens and the earth (v. 2b), God’s rest is defined as a royal rest because, though He rested by sitting down, He is pictured sitting on a throne (of the heavens) with His feet propped up on a footstool (of the earth, v. 1). This picture of God depicts the creation of the heavens and the earth as the making of a house for God’s dwelling place.³⁵

At the least, the fact that God’s rest is *a royal rest* informs us that the seventh day was the unique time when God began to rule over all that He created. Resting on the seventh day was a divine ascent to the throne of the universe as Sabbath king.³⁶ It is reasonable to conclude

therefore that the Sabbath day was blessed and set apart because it was the inauguration of God's reign from heaven. Understandably then, the seventh day has a significance that impacts every week in the unfolding of history from the foundation of the world to its consummation.

3B. Exodus 20:11

That the Sabbath remains for all time is confirmed by the commentary on Genesis 2:3 given in Exodus 20:11. Kline sets forth this "commentary" argument in the following way:

As the ground for the requirement to sanctify the weekly Sabbath, Exodus 20:11 appeals to Genesis 2:3, citing the fact that there at the beginning the Creator had sanctified the Sabbath day. It is especially by substituting the term "the Sabbath day" (which is clearly the ordinance of the Sabbath in the Decalogue context) for "the seventh day" of Genesis 2:3 that Exodus 20:11 shows that the subject changes in Genesis 2:3 from the divine seventh day of the creation week (the subject of Gen. 2:2) to the ordinance of the weekly Sabbath.³⁷

However, rejecting this argument, Dressler and Lincoln suggest that Exodus 20:11 provides "an explanation of a present institution, the Mosaic Sabbath, by reference to a past event, God's seventh-day rest after the creation, utilizing the terminology of Genesis 2:3 and a play on words to make its point."³⁸ But what tells against Dressler's view is the weakness of claiming that "therefore" in Exodus 20:11 indicates an analogy between something that happened in the past (God's blessing of the seventh day in 11a) and something new that happened in Israel at Sinai (11b).³⁹ He notes that the connective ("therefore") should be translated "consequently now" because in the majority of cases it is used in the Pentateuch "to connect causally an event in the past with a situation some time later."⁴⁰ However, his examples are less than convincing⁴¹ and even if they were convincing it could still be argued that Exodus 20:11b falls outside of the majority of cases he cites. But more significantly, Dressler misconstrues the analogy that is presented by focusing on the second connective ("therefore") and neglecting the first connective that introduces verse 11 ("for"). When the first connective is duly noted an analogy becomes evident between the Israelite Sabbath in a six and one pattern (Ex. 20:8-11) and the six and one pattern of Genesis 1:1-2:3. All of Genesis 1:1-2:3 is summarized in Exodus 20:11 ("For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy"). What we have is the fact that what Israel is obligated to do now is grounded in what God did when He worked six days (11a) and blessed the Sabbath (11b). The context (not the connectives *per se*) indicates that working back then *and blessing the Sabbath back at creation* grounds Israel's working and remembering the Sabbath (Ex. 20:8-10).

The Exodus commentary on Genesis 2:3 therefore confirms the conclusion already derived from Genesis 2:3 that the Sabbath is a duty incumbent on man from the beginning of history. Because God's rest (Gen. 2:2) that grounds man's Sabbath (Gen. 2:3) was a royal rest (per Isa. 66, an ascent to the throne of universal sovereignty) then man's duty of weekly Sabbath observance must include honoring God by honoring the day of His enthronement as Sabbath king.

4B. Hebrews 3:7-4:11

When the book of Hebrews reaches back to the seventh day (4:3-4, quoting Gen. 2:2) it does so in the context of the redemptive work of Christ (1:3) in order to exhort the brothers of Christ to persevere in faith and obedience (2:11-12; 3:1, 6, 12-14; 4:11, 14). This broad context must not be forgotten when an argument for the perpetuity of the Sabbath focuses on 4:9, "So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God."⁴²

What is meant by the term translated "Sabbath rest" (4:9)? Although this is its only occurrence in the New Testament, it is unmistakably a reference to weekly Sabbath observance.⁴³ To do justice to the use of this term here, we must understand it in light of the

interconnectivity with Genesis (and thus with Exodus and Isaiah) that the author of Hebrews cites in 4:4. In this light, the Sabbath observance that remains (4:9) is reasonably taken as a reference to the Sabbath instituted at creation. Let's see how this is confirmed by the two reasons that the writer uses to support the conclusion that a "Sabbath remains."

1) First, what the weekly Sabbath promised from the foundation of the world, entry into God's rest, has been continually out in front of man to be entered within history as a promise of the final rest that will come at the end of history. The point of 4:3-4 is that God's rest has been available for man to enter by the obedience of faith (those who believe enter, 4:3a; the disobedient and unbelieving do not, 4:3b, 3:18-19). Thus 4:3c (although his works were finished from the foundation of the world) explains that even though God's rest has been available to man but has not been entered, it is still provided. Because those of the rebellion did not enter God's rest (even though it was provided), and because that rest was offered to those of David's day (today, 4:7) and because that rest was not given to those of Joshua's day (or David would not have spoken of another day as "today"), the writer concludes in 4:9 that a Sabbath remains. The point must be that the Sabbath promised God's rest since creation week (whether not entered by disobedience or entered by obedience *but only provisionally* in Joshua's day, ⁴⁴cf. Josh. 11:23; 24:31) so the weekly Sabbath remains as a continuing promise of that rest. There are difficulties here but this much seems clear: the Sabbath remains because it continues to promise entry now into God's rest (within history, i.e., "today"). Moving down from 4:3 to 4:9 we have: because the rest is continually promised (4:3-8), the weekly Sabbath that promises it remains (4:9).

2) Verse 10 presents the other reason that the weekly Sabbath remains: it remains because the people of God have not yet rested from their works. The Sabbath promised final rest at the end of history for the people of God⁴⁵ on journey until the consummation. Because the consummation has not yet been reached and the people of God still have much work to do especially the work of perseverance (cf. Rev. 14:13), then the weekly Sabbath that has promised consummation rest since the foundation of the world remains for the people of God to keep. Consequently, in the larger context of the call to perseverance (3:1, 6, 12-14; 4:1) the writer summons the church to obedient striving to enter God's rest (4:11).

Thus the weekly Sabbath remains and continually promises God's rest both now and yet to come to those who believe and obey. It goes without saying therefore that keeping a weekly Sabbath is not disjunctive with resting in Christ by faith (cf. Matt. 11:28-30) because there is both a now and a not yet to entering (having believed *we enter*, Heb. 4:3 with 4:1 and we are to *strive to enter* through persevering faith, 4:11; cf. Heb. 10:36-39 w/ 12:1-2).

Therefore, if the Sabbath abides from creation to consummation in a new wineskin form in the time of fulfillment in Christ (Matt. 5:17⁴⁶), if that new form is not the Jewish Sabbath (because of Col. 2:16-17), and if we still have a six and one pattern that is set in place by the specialness of a particular day each week (implied by having a weekly Sabbath), then we must cross the edge of the scroll and begin to think what the writer of Hebrews implies, that the Sabbath that remains is Christ's Sabbath shaped by His resurrection; it is a Christian Sabbath, the new wineskin Sabbath, and the fulfillment form of the Sabbath observed on Sunday, the first day of the week. To that precise point we now turn.

2A. Second, the weekly Sabbath remains under the Lordship of Christ over Sunday

1B. The book of Hebrews

Having established the point that the weekly Sabbath remains as a promise of entering God's rest both now (3:12; 4:1) and not yet (4:11), the writer gives another exhortation, namely, "let us hold fast our confession" (4:14b) that is grounded in the fact that we have a great high

priest “who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God” (14a). In the larger argument, a connection is established between the Sabbath that grounds “let us strive” (v. 11) and “our high priest who has passed through the heavens” that grounds “let us hold fast” (v. 14). A connection is established between the weekly Sabbath and our Lord’s ascension to the right hand of the Father “as our transcendent Lord.”⁴⁷ Hence the Sabbath that remains is Christ’s Sabbath: He is Lord of the Sabbath in a way shaped by His resurrection.

Warrant for using the idea of Sabbath Lordship in this connection is found in the descriptions of the exaltation of Christ that echo God’s Sabbath Lordship presented to us in Isaiah 66:1-2 (along with Genesis 1-2:3 and Exodus 20:8-11). Jesus “sat down” having completed His redemptive work assigned to Him by the Father (1:3; Jn. 17:1-2), to Him it was said, “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever” (1:8), to Him was given a footstool for His feet (1:13), He is the man (the second Adam) under whose feet everything is put in subjection for He is crowned with glory and honor (2:5-9), He is the one to whom the saint is to look for strength in preserving (3:1, 6, 4:1, 11; 12:1-3) in light of the Sabbath that remains (3:7-4:11) as the “great high priest who has passed through the heavens (4:14), He is the one who by death and resurrection became the source of eternal salvation (5:5-9⁴⁸), it is Jesus who is seated at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven (8:1) and has obtained a ministry that is more excellent than the old covenant that is vanishing away (8:13) before His new and better covenant (8:6), and He has thus become the author and perfecter of our faith as the priest-redeemer-king on the throne (12:1-2; cf. 4:16).

Therefore, the Sabbath that remains (while the old vanishes, 8:6, 7, 13) is eminently tied to the enthronement of Jesus as Lord of the Sabbath by means of the resurrection because the writer speaks of Jesus who *became* superior to the angels (1:4) *became* the source of eternal salvation (5:9), and *became* the begotten Son, (1:5) after he suffered in the days of his flesh (5:7-8) and after he made purification for sins (1:3) when He was raised from the dead (1:5; cf. Acts 13:32-33) and seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high (1:3; 12:2). From this we may safely conclude that Jesus became Lord of the weekly Sabbath that remains through His resurrection-exaltation and the seeds are sown that direct us to cross the scroll’s edge to view the Sabbath as the Lord’s resurrection day (cf. Rev. 1:10); the Sabbath that remains from creation to consummation takes on a new wineskin form because Jesus has provided the new wine of a better covenant (cf. Matt. 5:17; 9:14-17; Mk. 2:18-28; Lk. 5:33-6:11).⁴⁹

2B. The Gospel narratives

Although Jesus was acknowledged as the Son in whom the Father was well pleased (Matt. 3:17), it was required that He learn obedience through suffering. Although equal to the Father in glory (I and the Father are one), surely the emphasis during the days of His earthly ministry was on His submission as a son. During His life on earth, Jesus was Sabbath king *in humiliation*, afterward He *became* Lord of the Sabbath *in exaltation*. In His arrest, trials, crucifixion, and resurrection the Son of Man *became* universal sovereign (Dan. 7:14) seated at the right hand of Power (Lk. 22:69). That Jesus became Lord of the Sabbath Day by means of the resurrection is a profound fact that *implies a Sabbath Day* for the new covenant people of God *after the resurrection and shaped by it*.⁵⁰

The appearances of the risen Savior recorded in the Gospels reveal that resurrection day, the first day of the week (Sunday) is the day of Christ’s ascension and enthronement. Again, we are caused to think beyond the boundaries of the scroll: because Jesus became Lord of the Sabbath by the resurrection and inaugurated His reign as universal sovereign *on the first day* of the week, then His day, His rule over the Sabbath that remains is the Lord’s Day (Rev. 1:10) and therefore Sunday is the Christian’s Sabbath.

In the Gospel of Luke, the recorded post-resurrection events are presented as taking place on the first day of the week though we know they are separated chronologically by forty days (from Luke in Acts 1:3). Luke is not being inconsistent; instead, he is being purposely ambiguous. We get an important impression: the resurrection and ascension make up a single historical-redemptive event *that happened on the first day of the week* (24:1).

Thus, Luke 24 becomes more and more precise as events unfold (“the first day of the week,” v. 1, “that very day,” v. 13, “that same hour,” v. 33, and “as they were talking,” v. 36) then it continues from that point forward with the narration of events one after another in quick and uninterrupted succession: *and* Jesus said to them (v. 38), *and* when he showed them His hands and His feet (v. 39), *and* while they still could not believe He took the fish and ate it (vs. 41-43), *and* He explained the Law (v. 44), *next* He opened their minds (vs. 45-49), *and* He led them out as far as Bethany (v. 50), *and* it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven (v. 51).

The impression is created that on resurrection Sunday all these things took place, including the ascension! This does not teach that these things in fact took place on that first day but it causes us to see all that Jesus did *on that day* as part and parcel of His ascension glory. Put another way, resurrection day is a day of ascension; it is Christ’s exaltation to glory. His resurrection sealed and guaranteed His ascension; all that Christ has as ascended Lord He has from the day of the resurrection (Acts 2:36).⁵¹

Therefore, Jesus was given universal sovereign rule over all things and that rule was inaugurated on a day in history, a day that bears that mark on it for the rest of human history. Indeed, He was already Sabbath king when He literally ascended to the throne on high.

Resurrection and ascension are part of the same theological point (the historical-redemptive fact of Christ’s exaltation); thus presented by Luke as if they took place on the first day. In principle, they *did* take place on the first day because resurrection day inaugurated the kingly reign of Christ over all things in the most comprehensive sense. He became “ascended” sovereign and Sabbath Lord “seated” on the throne of the universe by the resurrection. That rule was *inaugurated on the first day of the week* and continues to the end of the age.

The Gospel of Matthew also distinguishes the first day, resurrection day, by compressing the post-resurrection appearances into it. All that happens is forcefully presented as a continuation of the first Sunday: “*after* the Sabbath, *toward the dawn of the first day of the week*,” (28:1), *and* (an earthquake, v. 2), *and* (fear, v. 4), *go quickly* (v. 7), *so* (they departed quickly, v. 8), *and* (Jesus met them, v. 9), *then* (Jesus said go to Galilee, v. 10), *while* they were going (v. 11), *now the eleven went to Galilee* (v. 16) *and* (Jesus gave the Great Commission).

The book closes with these words, “to the end of the age.” The ascension is not recounted. Still Jesus is identified as Sabbath king because absolutely universal authority was given to Him: all authority in *heaven* and all authority on *earth* (28:18; cf. Isa. 66:1-2). It is as if the story ends on the first day of the week, on resurrection day, and all the remaining days of history to the very end depend on what happened on that day. The day after the Jewish Sabbath, the first day of the week or Sunday, is the day that set the rest of history in motion because on that day Jesus was exalted to the throne of the heavens and given a footstool under His feet.

Similarly, the Gospel of John reports the resurrection appearances with a distinct accent on the first day (“on the evening of that day, the first day of the week,” 20:19). John also fixes the memory of the church on the first day of the week by drawing special attention to the next Sunday (20:26).⁵² The accented point that we should not miss is that Jesus did certain things on resurrection Sunday, on the evening of resurrection Sunday, and specifically on the next Sunday. And this specific and accented day is the day of His ascending (Jn. 20:17).⁵³

Sabbath keeping continues on earth. But because Christ completed His work and secured eternal Sabbath rest for His covenant people, the Sabbath that continues on this side of glory must reflect the newness brought by His accomplishment. As Lord of the Sabbath, Jesus gave specialness to the first day of the week by His resurrection appearances, by redemptive deed. By the Spirit's testimony the Sabbath Lord impresses that specialness on our memories every time we read the Gospels.

Conclusion

Therefore we should give a special place to Sunday as the Christian Sabbath. It is the Sabbath that is ruled by Christ. And we worship Him as Sabbath king and Sabbath redeemer because it is by His blood we are restored from the fall and will attain eternal Sabbath rest that has been promised since the foundation of the world. Because Jesus is Head over all things to the church⁵⁴ (Eph. 1:22), we cannot separate Sabbath from Sunday in Christian worship. After Jesus completed His work of redemption, He became both Lord and Christ by the resurrection (Acts 2:36). As a man He was appointed judge of all men by the resurrection (Acts 17:31), as the seed of David He was declared, that is appointed⁵⁵ to be the Son of God with power by the working of the Spirit in His resurrection (Rom. 1:3-4). In other words, on resurrection day Jesus entered into a royal rest. He ceased from the redemptive work of humiliation and began His redemptive rule of exaltation. He became universal sovereign redeemer on that unique day in history.⁵⁶ The first day of the week, Sunday, was set apart by redemptive deed because it was the inaugural day of Christ's kingly rule. It became His holy day (the Lord's Day, Rev. 1:10; cf. Ex. 20:10; Isa. 58:13) that we are to remember and keep holy in honor to our Redeemer as Sabbath king. Therefore, the Sabbath should be understood in terms of the history of redemption cited and expressed theologically in the Westminster Shorter Catechism:

From the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, God appointed the seventh day of the week to be the weekly Sabbath; and the first day of the week ever since, to continue to the end of the world, which is the Christian Sabbath (A, 59).

¹ Benjamin B. Warfield, "The Idea of Systematic Theology" in *Studies in Theology* (Carlisle, Pa: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1988), 63-71.

² Warfield has some valuable comments in this regard that are worth reflecting on in their fullness, *Ibid.*, 80; 86-87.

³ The concern is pastoral and the idea is that a pastor must be a cross disciplinarian; more like an MD than a PhD.

⁴ Cf. Matthew 13:52. This is the profound task for the new covenant interpreter of the law who is trained in kingdom truth and thus may serve the household of God by teaching the newness of NT fulfillment in continuity with the oldness of OT promise. His work cannot be restricted to the NT; nor can he be a specialist in any exclusive sense.

⁵ As John Murray says, "Systematic theology is to be distinguished from the discipline that has come to be known as biblical theology. This does not mean that the latter is more biblical. It is true that systematic theology deals with the data of general revelation insofar as these data bear upon theology, and general revelation does not come within the province of biblical theology. But, since the principal source of revelation is Holy Scripture, systematic theology must be concerned to be biblical not one whit less than biblical theology. The difference is merely one of method. Biblical theology deals with the data of special revelation from the standpoint of its history; systematic theology deals with the same in its totality as a finished product. The method of systematic theology is logical, that of biblical theology is historical," *WTJ* 26:1, p. 33.

⁶ "The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture," *Westminster Confession of Faith*, 1:6.

⁷ Jonathan Edwards, "The Perpetuity and Change of the Sabbath," *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, ed., Edward Hickman (Carlisle, Pa: The Banner of Truth Trust: 1976), 2, 94. Thus he says, "God is sovereign as to the manner of

speaking his mind, whether he will speak it in express terms, or whether he will speak it by saying several other things which imply it, and from which we may, by comparing them together, plainly perceive it," Ibid.

⁸ As indicated by the title of the sermon by Edwards it is the Sabbath that has perpetuity and that has undergone change: "The Perpetuity and Change of the Sabbath," Ibid.

⁹ Herman Bavinck, *In the Beginning* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 24, "The realization of the counsel of God begins with creation."

¹⁰ Schnittjer, "Narrative Multiverse," *WTJ*, Fall 2002, 250.

¹¹ Ibid., 251.

¹² Ibid., 252.

¹³ Ibid., 231.

¹⁴ Ibid., 233.

¹⁵ Ibid., 231.

¹⁶ Cf. Kline, "The heavenly, eschatological arena of God's glory comes down from above into the midst of the creation history and leaves its analogical imprint on the very fabric of the cosmos," *The Genesis Debate: Three Views on the Days of Creation* (Mission Viejo, CA: Crux Press Inc., 2001, ed., David G. Hagopian) 253.

¹⁷ Cf. Dressler in *From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Investigation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982, ed., D. A. Carson) 28; Walter Zimmerli, *Old Testament Theology in Outline* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1978) 34.

¹⁸ John Calvin, *Commentary on Genesis* 107, italics mine.

¹⁹ The argument here is unaffected by Calvin's ambivalence regarding the Sabbath elsewhere. A profitable discussion of that ambivalence and its implications for an abiding Sabbath is given by Richard Gaffin, *Calvin and the Sabbath* (Bristol: J. W. Arrowsmith Limited, 1998); cf. R. J. Bauckham, *Sabbath to Lord's Day*, fn17, 335.

²⁰ Thus Calvin says, "God therefore sanctifies the seventh day, when he renders it illustrious, that by a special law it may be distinguished from the rest. *Whence it also appears, that God always had respect to the welfare of men.* I have said above, that six days were employed in the formation of the world; not that God, to whom one moment is as a thousand years, had need of this succession of time, but *that he might engage us* in the consideration of his works. *He had the same end in view in the appointment of his own rest,* for he set apart a day selected out of the remainder for this special use. *Wherefore, that benediction is nothing else than a solemn consecration, by which God claims for himself the meditations and employments of men on the seventh day,*" *Genesis* 105, italics mine.

²¹ Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Publishing, 1994, trans. George Musgrave Giger, ed. James T. Dennison, Jr.) 2, 80.

²² *Works* 2, 95. In the full quote he has: "It is unreasonable to suppose any other, than that God's working six days, and resting the seventh, and blessing and hallowing it, was to be of general use in determining this matter, and that it was written, that the practice of mankind in general might some way or other be regulated by it. *What could be the meaning of God's resting the seventh day, and hallowing and blessing it, which he did, before the giving of the fourth commandment, unless he hallowed and blessed it with respect to mankind? For he did not bless and sanctify it with respect to himself, or that he within himself might observe it: as that is most absurd.* And it is unreasonable to suppose that he hallowed it only with respect to the Jews, a particular nation, which rose up above two thousand years after. So much therefore must be intended by it, that it was his mind, that mankind should, after his example, work six days, and then rest, and hallow or sanctify the next following; and that they should sanctify every seventh day, or that the space between rest and rest, one hallowed time and another, among his creatures here upon earth, should be six days. So that it hence appears to be the mind and will of God, that not only the Jews, but men in all nations and ages, should sanctify one day in seven: which is the thing we are endeavouring to prove."

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Turretin, *Institutes*, Ibid. cf. Meredith G. Kline, "the sanctifying of the seventh day ought not to be interpreted as God's own celebrating of the day by a holy resting (a divine keeping of holy-day as it were) because in *Genesis* 2:3 and emphatically in *Exodus* 20:11 the divine resting on the seventh day is distinguished from the divine sanctifying of the Sabbath, the former being cited as the ground for the latter, *Kingdom Prologue* (Unpublished Notes, 1981) 1, 120-21.

²⁵ cf. Edwards, "The End for which God Created the World," *Works*, 1, 94-121.

²⁶ Calvin, *Genesis* 105.

²⁷ Gordon J. Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary*, (Waco, TX: Word Book Publishers, 1987) 1, 35.

²⁸ Ibid., 35-36.

²⁹ Ibid., 36 Likewise Kline, "throughout the creation narrative, God's act of blessing has to do with things within the sphere of his creatures' experience, imparting to them fruitfulness, impregnating them with felicity," *Kingdom* 120.

³⁰ Wenham, *Ibid.*, 36.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 38. This reflects a Christian reading of the OT Sabbath accenting the point made by Jesus that the Sabbath was made for man not man for the Sabbath; thus it may be better to understand Jesus per Mk. 2:27 to be referring to the Sabbath in Genesis because of what is said in Genesis rather than the reverse. Thus we hear the echo of the prologue to Genesis in relation to the ten sections of Genesis in the claim of Jesus to be Lord of the Sabbath: in other words, what the Sabbath promised per the entry of sin is coming to fulfillment in Christ as Sabbath king.

³² Dressler, *Sabbath*, *Ibid.*, 34, italics mine.

³³ God's love is shown in providing a marvelous place for man to live and putting all things under his feet, but all things are not now under his feet because of sin (cf. Heb. 2:8); thus the promise continues despite the entrance of sin into the world, cf. the relation of the prologue to the ten sections of Genesis that teaches that the promise will be attained through a redeemer, the seed of Eve and Abraham, the Lord Jesus Christ, Gal.3:16.

³⁴ In summary, the weekly cycle is set apart by God by means of the setting apart of the seventh day as an example for man to follow; like God, the image of God is to set the seventh day apart in a weekly cycle. But as a paradigm of history, as a divine demonstration in miniature of what history is designed to be, the six and one pattern shows that history is a movement from work to God's rest. Thus all the weeks of history, all the 6-1's (6-1-6-1-6-1-6-1) move from work to rest with God showing (promising) that history as a whole moves from work to ultimate rest with God.

³⁵ Resting on a throne, God inquires about a house in which to dwell. Kline says of Isaiah 66 that here the "Scriptures in effect interpret God's Sabbath rest at the completion of his cosmic house as an enthronement when they present the converse of this idea by portraying God's enthronement in his microcosmic house as a Sabbath rest, *Kingdom Prologue*, 54; furthermore, he notes that "When God's seventh day resting is referred to in the Sabbath commandment in the Decalogue (Exod. 20:11)...the term used for God's temple enthronement in these passages (such as 1 Chron. 28:2 where David speaks of building a "house of rest...for the footstool of our God"; also, Ps. 132:7-8, 13-14; 2 Chron. 6:18) is employed in the place of the verb [to rest] used in Genesis 2:2, *Ibid.*, 54-55.

³⁶ Therefore, there is a convergence between God's Lordship of a particular day and His Lordship of all days because being *Sabbath* Lord means that He is ruler of all time.

³⁷ *Kingdom* 120.

³⁸ Lincoln on Dressler's view, *Sabbath*, *Ibid.*, 329. Dressler interprets Genesis 2:3 proleptically, a view interestingly that was criticized by Turretin, *Institutes* 2, 79; cf. Kline's arguments in support of the claim that 2:3 has immediate reference to the Covenant of Creation, not to the Sinaitic Covenant, *Kingdom* 120-121; applicable to the prolepsis argument is his point that "an incidental allusion to a ceremonial observance in a remote redemptive era would be altogether out of place at the climax of the drama of the creation of the original covenantal order, so simply and sublimely narrated in the Genesis prologue."

³⁹ Dressler, *Sabbath*, *Ibid.*, fn43, 38, "we interpret the statement in verse 11b as an explanation of God's blessing activity in connection with the *new institution* of the Sabbath on the analogy of God's blessing activity with regard to the seventh day at creation."

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ For example, in Genesis 2:24 ("therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother") do we not have an *immediate implication* stated that is based on the preceding event of the creation and naming of Eve? No time need be inferred; it is not necessary to derive "some time later" from the particle. We have to wonder if distance in time is stressed at all in Exodus 20. And any time that may intervene need not be "long after"; it could be the case in Exodus 20:11 (as far as the particle is concerned) that the Sabbath was blessed *immediately after* the seventh day of rest.

⁴² Structurally I am reading the argument as giving two premises, one before 4:9 (4:3-8) and one after 4:9 (4:10). The premise in Genesis 2:2 grounds the conclusion in Genesis 2:3 and it appears that the author of Hebrews in effect fills out the premise of 2:2 in 4:3-8 and 4:10 and he fills out or replaces the conclusion of 2:3 with 4:9. The effect is that just as God's rest grounded the Sabbath in creation week, likewise, God's rest promised at creation still stands at the time of the wilderness, in Joshua's day, and in David's day as a continuing "today" grounds the Sabbath that remains: because what the Sabbath promised is still there, then the Sabbath remains ever pointing to it.

⁴³ Cf. Lincoln, *Sabbath* 213-14: "the exact shade of meaning" is Sabbath observance. So he asks, "What is the Sabbath rest that the New Testament people of God must observe? His answer is, "the New Covenant people of God discharge their duty of Sabbath observance, according to this writer, by exercising faith"; his support is based on taking "works" in 4:10 in a negative sense (as being justified by one's own works in Paul and by dead works in the book of Hebrews, 9:14).. Lincoln argues that weekly Sabbath is transformed to such an extent that the duty of Sabbath observance by the new covenant people of God is discharged "by exercising faith" though there is a future

discharging of the Sabbath in a future “Christian Sabbath-keeping” in the consummation and “realization of everything that God had intended by His own Sabbath rest.” He therefore is surprised at Jewett’s claim that Christians have “a literal day of rest—a type and sign of that final rest” that is grounded in a present possession, which is “*also an earnest of a future hope*” (italics mine). Lincoln thinks that if any literal day of rest is in view then it would have to be the Jewish Sabbath rather than the first day of the week but that “begs too many questions.” In brief reply contrary to Lincoln, it can be said that to argue against a Christian Sabbath because it is not observed on the seventh day is to simply discount the impact of new wine on the old wineskin (if there can be a future new wineskin “Christian Sabbath-keeping” without preserving the seventh day, why can there not be a present new wineskin Christian Sabbath-keeping without preserving the seventh day?). Moreover, there is surely merit in the line of thought that recognizes that as far as a six and one pattern is concerned if there is a regular setting aside of a day to the Lord weekly then six days regularly precede *the* seventh day in that cycle. Thus both before and after the resurrection and despite the change of the day in contrast to the Jewish calendar the seventh day remains as a promise centered on God as Sabbath king and now on Jesus as Sabbath king. Then all the theology of the OT Sabbath of creation is part and parcel of the theology of the NT Sabbath of the new creation in Christ (cf. the impact of Deut. 5:15 that shows how both creation and redemption ground the Sabbath for the Israelite people of God; this suggests an *a fortiori* argument for a Sabbath today that is flooded with the theology of both creation and redemption but on a new level due to the accomplishment of Christ of His appointed mission).

⁴⁴ The writer of Hebrews does not say that those of Joshua’s day were unbelieving and did not enter God’s rest as was the case for those in the wilderness. And the book of Joshua says they were obedient (24:31) and the facts cited in 11:23 (Joshua took the whole land, gave it to Israel, and the land had *rest*) surely indicate that Israel *did* experience God’s rest by faith in the conquest of Canaan. The writer of Hebrews cites Psalm 95 to show that even though Israel entered God’s rest the promise of entering still remains or there would not be “another day” of entering “later on” from Joshua’s time (v. 8) and “so long afterward” (v. 7) from the rebellion in the wilderness. The Israelite experience of God’s rest in Canaan was provisional and not the ultimate rest that has been promised since creation. Thus the rest promised since creation (by the Sabbath) is still out in front of the people of God. Therefore, Sabbath observance, defined by the creation six and one, remains. The rest promised in the Sabbath of creation is still to come at the end of history; therefore the Sabbath observance remains ever pointing ahead. Accordingly, our circumstance is analogous to Joshua’s: we have entered God’s rest but there is still another day. Ultimate eternal Sabbath rest is still out in front of us. So though we possess the land of our inheritance (now) we are called to take possession of it by striving to enter final glory (that is not yet). But our present possession of rest is superior to that of the old covenant because we have a high priest who is enthroned as Sabbath king (he has passed through the heavens, 4:15); therefore, we are to draw near with confidence to the *throne* of grace. This access to the throne of our Sabbath king is surely a present entering into Sabbath rest. Although Israel in the wilderness “becomes the paradigm that the addressees must seek to avoid conforming to” (as in 1 Cor. 10:1-11), it seems a bit overstated to compare the readers of Hebrews to Israel in this way, “the Israelites were God’s people possessing the divine promise so long as they would persevere *in their quest for Canaan*” (*WTJ*, Spring 2003, 86, 88), because the wilderness warning is not the whole story developed by the writer of Hebrews.

⁴⁵ Reference is not being made to the entry into God’s rest at death individually; the people of God journey until consummation entry at the end of history.

⁴⁶ Matthew 5:17 applies to all the law, to the Ten Commandments, and therefore to the Fourth Commandment. Centrally, Jesus tells us how not to think and how to think regarding His relation to the law: “do not think I came to abolish it rather think that I came to fulfill it,” which surely means that despite the obvious changes He has brought, we are to think continuity rather than discontinuity looking for the fulfillment forms of the law. Thus, in the illustration of the new wine, when it comes there is still a wineskin albeit a new one. For example, the new wineskin form of the Passover is communion (the Christian Passover), of the OT washings is baptism (Christian baptism), and of the Sabbath is the Lord’s Day (the Christian Sabbath).

⁴⁷ Philip E. Hughes, *Hebrews*, 170.

⁴⁸ Salvation involves eternal Sabbath rest secured by redemption.

⁴⁹ Cf. Lincoln, Sabbath, 364 on the association of Sabbath with the new wine and wineskins. If we grant the principle of discontinuity (as done in the non-Sabbath Sunday view) then how can the discontinuous nature of observing the seventh day on the first day be used as an objection to a Christian Sabbath? The OT Sabbath continues in a new form because of the new wine of the resurrection. It does so by the redemptive deeds of Christ and by God’s exaltation. Who is better to do this than the Son of Man and what better way than by redemptive deed?

⁵⁰ We need perspective on the transitional and veiled nature of the Lord’s earthly ministry, cf. Lincoln, *Sabbath* 364.

⁵¹ Not surprisingly then, NT writers speak of the resurrection of Christ as His exaltation to the throne on high. Thus Peter says that He became Lord and Christ and was exalted by God when God raised Him from the dead (Acts 2:36).

⁵² If John had simply said that Jesus appeared to them "on the evening of that day" we would have no difficulty understanding that He was referring again to the first day of the week. The flow of thought from 20:1 forward to 20:19 is sufficiently clear. But if there is any doubt, John counters it emphatically by *adding* the words: "the first day of the week." This is somewhat cumbersome and even redundant. But *John is emphatic*. He is drawing attention to the fact that these evening events took place on the first day of the week. He places an accent on the first day. It is important to him to stress that this is the day of the resurrection appearances, first to Mary and then to the disciples on the evening of that day that is like no other. It is as if he had said, "Don't miss the point: that day like no other is the first day of the week, that day like no other is Sunday."

⁵³ John tells us that it was "eight days later" (v. 26) when Jesus appeared again to all the disciples *including Thomas* who was absent when Jesus first appeared to them (vs. 24-25). The eighth day refers to the next "first day of the week," the next Sunday. It is important to the writer of the Gospel to narrate the Lord's interaction with Thomas as he reports all the things that Jesus did in the *presence* of the disciples (20:30). It is all recorded for the time to come *when Jesus will no longer be present* or seen (v. 29). So how does the writer direct the thoughts of those who trust in Christ during the time between His comings while He is "not seen"? The church in the time between is specifically directed to remember that this interaction with Thomas took place on the first day of the week. Clearly it is not the unique first day of the week that is in view (the *first*, first day of the week, the one that is superior to all first days, namely, resurrection day or resurrection Sunday). Nonetheless, *John fixes the memory of the church in this way* by drawing special attention to the next Sunday. To be sure, he does not expound on why he places this accent on the first day but without question the accent is clearly and firmly placed on that day. Specifically, he tells us that "eight days later [on the next Sunday]...Jesus came and stood among them" (v. 26). *The accented point that we should not miss is that Jesus did certain things on resurrection Sunday, on the evening of resurrection Sunday, and specifically on the next Sunday*. There is then a shift by the writer toward closing the Gospel (vs. 30-31) followed by a narration of the appearance of Jesus to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias (21:1). This is simply introduced by the words, "after this" (v. 1) with no accent on the first day and this appearance is called the "third time that Jesus was revealed to the disciples" (21:14). We know from other NT materials that Jesus did not restrict His appearances to the first day of the week. So our attention is focused on the things recorded. The temporal indefiniteness of the appearance at the Sea of Tiberias does not remove the definiteness and specialness placed on the first day of the week in chapter 20. *Given the highly selective nature of the Gospels we have to conclude that the indefiniteness highlights the definiteness of the first day. The first day is highlighted*. The things recorded in chapter 20 fix our attention on resurrection day by telling us what Jesus did on the first day of the week.

⁵⁴ Head over all things means that He rules heaven from a throne He rules the earth as the footstool under His feet. The fact that God puts all enemies under His feet (Heb. 1:13) reflects the fact that the Sabbath promised since creation week must be attained by redemption because of sin. Thus our Sabbath king is our great high priest appointed to be such when He became the begotten Son by the resurrection (Heb. 5:5-6).

⁵⁵ Gaffin helpfully establishes the point that the translation "declared" versus "appointed" has been wrongly adopted because "Son of God" has been viewed with strictly ontological significance. But when seen as a messianic designation of exaltation then the resurrection "has a declaratory significance "which is constitutive in nature": by the resurrection Jesus was adopted as the second Adam, *The Centrality of the Resurrection: A Study in Paul's Soteriology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978) 117-18.

⁵⁶ He ascends to "my Father and *your* Father" (Jn. 20:17); it is with authority over all mankind that Jesus gives eternal life to those given to Him by the Father (Jn. 17:2). There must be a prospective element in the giving of all authority to Christ cited in John 17:2 since the glory is future and sought "in your presence" (17:5). Jesus seeks the glory He had with the Father before the foundation of the world but this is not simply "going back" to what He had because now it is based on the accomplishment of all He was given to do. At this point in the shadow of the cross, He is referring to a historical-redemptive exaltation, something that comes about through His death-resurrection-ascension.