

Let Freedom Ring!

8. A Hunger for Wild Places and a Temple Carved in Time



Scripture: Genesis 2:1-3

Introduction

“What is the nearest way out of town?” John Muir asked a stranger on the street of San Francisco in the year 1868. “But where do you want to go?” inquired the passerby. “To any place that is wild!” replied Muir.

The surprised stranger directed the seeker of wild places to the Oakland ferry. From there John Muir and a companion made their way on foot through the waist high wild flowers of the great central valley of California, walled in on the east by the mighty Sierra mountain range.

They passed through the deep Sierra canyon in snows still so deep that all blazed trails were covered. After many adventures they reached their goal, the famous Yosemite Valley. Here the natural world Muir came to love seemed super-sized:

- **The mighty granite face of El Capitan soars 3,593 feet from the pines and meadows below, the single largest exposed face of rock in North America.**
- **Great waterfalls spill from the heights, including the two connected Yosemite falls with their cascade, which drop a total of 2,425 feet in a rumbling thunder of spray.**
- **Glacier Point, the valley overlook where one can look down 3,214 feet to the valley floor below.**
- **Three groves of giant sequoias at Wawona, Mariposa and Tuolumne—including the Grizzly Giant, one of the largest giant sequoias in the world by sheer volume.**

John Muir's love of wild places had found a central focus. Here was a place his awed spirit could find rest. Later this famous naturalist, explorer, writer and conservationist would write:

“Climb the mountains and get their good tidings, Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you and the storms their energy, while cares will drop off like autumn leaves.”

How did Muir come to his profound appreciation of the wild places of the world that influenced so many in his own day and beyond? His early history may give some clues.

John Muir was born April 21, 1838 in Dunbar, Scotland. Until the age of 11 he attended the local school in the small coastal town. In 1849, the Muir family emigrated to the United States. During his teenage years on the Hickory Hill Farm near Portage, Wisconsin, Muir's stern father worked his family from dawn until dusk clearing the forest, holding a plow to a straight furrow behind a team of oxen, digging wells through hard bedrock, and taking an adult's part in subduing wild nature.

When Muir was allowed a short time away from plow and hoe, he and his younger brother roamed the fields and woods of the countryside. Muir became a more and more loving observer of the natural world.

At age 29, while working in a carriage parts shop, Muir suffered a blinding eye injury that would change his life. The point of a file pierced one eye. The other went dark from the shock of the injury. For a month, Muir was blind in both eyes. When he regained his sight in his remaining eye, he determined to turn his gaze toward the fields and woods he had so missed during the time of his injury.

There began his years as a wanderer of wild places. He walked a thousand miles from Indianapolis to the Gulf of Mexico. He sailed to Cuba, then to Panama, where he crossed the Isthmus and sailed up the West Coast, landing in San Francisco in 1868. While Muir would travel around the world in years to come, California would become his home. It was the Sierra Nevada mountain range and Yosemite Valley that claimed him. He wrote of the high country:

"Then it seemed to me the Sierra should be called not the Nevada, or Snowy Range, but the Range of Light...the most divinely beautiful of all the mountain chains I have ever seen."

During his first summer that he made his home in Yosemite, Muir herded sheep. This was simply a means of being able to support himself, and his true interest lay in the wilderness itself. By 1871 he had found living glaciers in the Sierra and conceived his controversial theory that Yosemite Valley was formed by the process of glaciation. Through his writings he began to become well known throughout America. Many famous people of the time made their way to the door of his pine cabin. His series of articles titled "Studies in the Sierra" brought him great success as a writer.

Muir ranched successfully for seven years near Martinez, California where he married and raised two daughters. But his early wanderlust was still with him. Muir began traveling again, seeking the wild places of the world and writing of them. He went to Alaska, Australia, South America, Africa, Europe, China, and Japan. But always the Sierra Nevada and Yosemite Valley drew him back again.

He wrote:

“Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where nature may heal and give strength to body and soul alike...”

“Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find out that going to the mountains is going home; that wildness is a necessity; and that mountain parks and reservations are useful not only as fountains of timber and irrigating rivers, but as fountains of life...”

“All the wild world is beautiful, and it matters but little where we go, to highlands or lowlands, woods or plains, on the sea or land or down among the crystals of waves or high in a balloon in the sky; through all the climates, hot or cold, storms and calms, everywhere and always we are in God's eternal beauty and love. So universally true is this, the spot where we chance to be always seems the best...”

I. A Temple in Time: Seven Scenes

Muir's keen appreciation for nature as a healer of body and spirit finds a deeper echo in the Word of God. Here too we find a call to remember both creation and its Creator, and in doing so to find rest and restoration for mind, body and spirit. In God's Word we are called to an eternal temple carved by God in time itself. This temple is the Sabbath.

The Sabbath stands eternal as time moves on. We will step into this temple on seven different occasions as they are recorded in the Word of God. Each scene we will visit is drawn from one of the great eras of human history. Here we will seek many of the same blessings Muir found in creation, and for the same reason: both the creation and the Sabbath which memorializes it come from the same Creator God.

A. Scene One: the Sabbath's Beginnings

What is the Sabbath and where did it come from? To find the answer we must turn to the Bible's book of beginnings, the book of Genesis. The temple of the Sabbath is carved on the seventh day of the creation week. The Creator has spoken all things concerning our world into existence in six days, creating Adam and Eve in His own likeness. The Maker looks on all He has made and declares it very good.

Genesis 2, verses 1-3 say:

“Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.”

Here is the Sabbath's beginning, as the memorial celebration of God's work in the creation of our world and all that is in it. Some have called the Sabbath “the Birthday of the World”. This time was unlike any other. God set it apart. He rested on it. He blessed it above all other days. He made it holy, setting it aside among the other days in special relationship to Himself. Before sin ever entered, when the world was new from the mouth and hand of the Maker, the Sabbath was established by Creator God Himself.

The Sabbath is the Great Artist signing His masterpiece. It is the Eternal Singer taking His bow. It is the Master Builder dedicates His building. The existence of the Sabbath reveals both that we have a Creator, and also that this Creator is not a part of His creation.

The regularly recurring weekly Sabbath is unique among the measures of time. The day and its subdivisions arise from the rotation of the earth on its axis in relationship to the sun. The month marks the moon's regularly recurring waxing and waning of visible light due to its relationship to the sun and the earth. The longest and shortest days which mark the extremes of the seasons mark earth's orbit around the sun.

But the seven day weekly cycle, of which the Sabbath is the conclusion, is attached to no natural phenomenon. It stands apart from the other

measures of time, even as the Creator God Himself stands apart from His creation. It exists solely because God instituted it at the end of the creation cycle. It is a temple carved into time itself that points to the God who is other than and greater than His creation.

So long as the Sabbath were remembered, man would not forget his Maker. He would know who he was as a creature of the great Creator of all. He would find his center again. Creation's conclusion is the first scene in the story of the Sabbath.

B. Scene Two: The Manna Miracle

But mankind fell. Our race turned its face away from the Creator. Wickedness, struggle, pain, and death God never intended came in. The face of nature and the image of God in mankind was marred. There was only violence. The hearts of humanity were turned always to evil. God determined to destroy the world by a flood to wash it clean and give mankind a fresh start. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Among all men, he walked with God.

Some Bible students have seen in the regularly recurring intervals of seven days in the story of Noah and the flood evidence that Noah was a keeper of the seventh day Sabbath of creation. It was seven day from the time Noah's family entered into the ark and the door was shut until the rain began to fall. Noah also timed the release of the raven and the dove at seven day intervals to mark the lowering of the water. As we only hear of any seven day interval as a part of the Sabbath memorial of creation prior to Noah's day, it is good evidence that this sole remaining worshipper of the true God was indeed an observer of the Sabbath.

Abraham too is said to have been an observer of the laws, decrees and ordinances God gave him, though the exact nature of those laws is not specified. We do know that by the time the Israelite nation was taken from Egyptian slavery, the Sabbath had been largely forgotten. It is difficult to be a slave under the lash tromping bricks in Pharaoh's mud pits and an observer of the Sabbath at the same time.

After delivering His people from Pharaoh's hand by the Ten Plagues and bringing them through the Red Sea to safety, God began to restore to them what they had lost during their four long centuries of Egyptian

captivity and slavery. Even before the Ten Commandments were given from Mount Sinai, the Sabbath was affirmed in the Miracle of the Manna.

This story is found in the 16th chapter of Exodus. The Bible says:

“The whole Israelite community set out from Elim and came to the Desert of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had come out of Egypt. In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The Israelites said to them, "If only we had died by the Lord's hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death."

A hungry nation delivered from slavery, brought through the Red Sea, remembers the food they'd been fed in Egypt—the fuel that allowed them strength to build Pharaoh's empire. They forget the lash. They forget their babies being thrown into the Nile. They forget. And they accuse Moses and Aaron of bringing them out to the wilderness to starve them to death. But the same God who saved them by miracles in the past would preserve them by a miracle in the wilderness. This miracle involved the seventh day Sabbath of Creation. The Bible says:

“Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions. On the sixth day they are to prepare what they bring in, and that is to be twice as much as they gather on the other days.’

“So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, "In the evening you will know that it was the Lord who brought you out of Egypt, and in the morning you will see the glory of the Lord, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we, that you should grumble against us?" Moses also said, "You will know that it was the Lord when he gives you meat to eat in the evening and all the bread you want in the morning, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we? You are not grumbling against us, but against the Lord."

“Then Moses told Aaron, 'Say to the entire Israelite community, 'Come before the Lord, for he has heard your grumbling.' ”

“While Aaron was speaking to the whole Israelite community, they looked toward the desert, and there was the glory of the Lord appearing in the cloud.

“The Lord said to Moses, ‘I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Tell them, “At twilight you will eat meat, and in the morning you will be filled with bread. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God.”’ ”

“That evening quail came and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. When the dew was gone, thin flakes like frost on the ground appeared on the desert floor. When the Israelites saw it, they said to each other, ‘What is it?’ For they did not know what it was. “

“Moses said to them, ‘It is the bread the Lord has given you to eat. This is what the Lord has commanded: “Each one is to gather as much as he needs. Take an omer for each person you have in your tent.”’ ”

Further instructions were given concerning this miraculously provided food. First, they were to gather it each day for that day’s use. If any were left over, it bred maggots and began to smell. Second, while they were to gather the newly fallen manna only for the day and early in the morning before the sun grew hot and melted it, on the sixth day, Friday, they were to gather a double portion.

The Bible says:

“On the sixth day, they gathered twice as much—two omers for each person—and the leaders of the community came and reported this to Moses. He said to them, ‘This is what the Lord commanded: “Tomorrow is to be a day of rest, a holy Sabbath to the Lord. So bake what you want to bake and boil what you want to boil. Save whatever is left and keep it until morning.’ ”

“So they saved it until morning, as Moses commanded, and it did not stink or get maggots in it. ‘Eat it today,’ Moses said, ‘because

today is a Sabbath to the Lord. You will not find any of it on the ground today. Six days you are to gather it, but on the seventh day, the Sabbath, there will not be any.”

“Nevertheless, some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather it, but they found none. Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘How long will you refuse to keep my commands and my instructions? Bear in mind that the Lord has given you the Sabbath; that is why on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days. Everyone is to stay where he is on the seventh day; no one is to go out.’ So the people rested on the seventh day.”

So the Israelites ate the manna for forty years until they came to the settled land on the border of Canaan. During all those years God performed a three-fold miracle. He gave manna that lasted only one day on Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. On Friday, He provided manna that didn’t spoil, and the people took up enough for two days. On Sabbath, the seventh day of the week, the day God Himself had rested at the end of Creation’s week, no manna fell.

So God trained an entire nation in the observance of the weekly Sabbath by providing emergency food supplies that required their preparation for that day and their resting during its hours. Notice that the Miracle of the Manna affirming the seventh day Sabbath began *before* the Ten Commandments were given, in the 16th chapter of Exodus. The Ten Commandments are not given until later, in chapter 20. Plainly the Sabbath was in effect between Creation and the giving of the Ten Commandment law. The Miracle of the Manna makes that evident.

C. Scene Three: The Sabbath at the Heart of the Ten Commandment Law

Not long after the giving of the manna, God’s people arrived at Mount Sinai, the place the Great I AM who called Moses at the burning bush led them. Through Moses God gave instructions that the people were to wash their clothes and to refrain from normal martial relationships for three days in preparation for a special meeting with God. He would come down on top of Mount Sinai and enter into covenant with His

people. A boundary was set around the base of the mountain to keep man and animals from touching it.

The Bible says:

“On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled. Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the Lord descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like the smoke from a furnace, the whole mountain trembled, violently, and the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder. Then Moses spoke and the voice of the Lord answered him.”

What a fearful scene! The austere wilderness with the great granite peak rising above... Lightning and thunder... A thick cloud... A mighty trumpet blast... Smoke billowing up from a flaming mountain top... The entire mountain trembling violently... The sound of the unworldly trumpet growing louder and louder! There was nothing God could do to impress the importance of the occasion on the nation He had redeemed from slavery more fully. The Creator had brought an entire nation into the scenes of nature and revealed Himself to them in the stupendous workings of nature.

Then God called Moses up the mountain into the cloud. There with His own finger I AM wrote the Ten Commandments on stone. At the heart of those eternal laws was included the Fourth Commandment, the Commandment concerning the Sabbath.

Exodus 20, verses 8 through 11 record what was written:

"Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”

Notice certain things about the Sabbath commandment. It begins and ends with a reminder that this isn't the first time it is showing up in human history. God says, "Remember the Sabbath day..." You cannot remember something that hasn't occurred yet. It ends with a direct reference for its observance to the Creation week of which it would ever remain a memorial. "For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy."

For 400 years the Israelites had been commanded to work for Pharaoh. Now they have a new Master, a new Ruler, and new King. And He commands them to rest! Why? Because He himself had rested from His work of creating them. They were not only to rest, but to provide rest to their children, the stranger within their gates and even the animals that bore the burdens and dragged the plow.

The proper relationship between work and rest is essential to the happiness, health and holiness of man. John Muir once noted this in his writing. He said:

"Our crude civilization engenders a multitude of wants, and law-givers are ever at their wit's end devising. The hall and the theater and the church have been invented, and compulsory education. Why not add compulsory recreation? Our forefathers forged chains of duty and habit, which bind us notwithstanding our boasted freedom, and we ourselves in desperation add link to link, groaning and making medicinal laws for relief. Yet few think of pure rest or of the healing power of Nature."

The need Muir notes for relaxation and rest is addressed in the Fourth of the Ten Commandments. The Sabbath was a day to remember the Creator. What better way to do that than to spend at least a portion of that time in nature? It is not enough to be "human doings". We must also learn to be "human beings". That requires not doing. It requires leisure. It requires rest and relaxation and a chance to strengthen relationships and to recuperate from the weariness of the work week. The rest of the Sabbath grants us rest and lifts our eyes to our Maker in gratitude for all His many gifts. The Sabbath is as timeless as earth itself, of which it is a reminder of its origins and its Creator.

Also we should note here that knowing which day is the Sabbath of Creation is not a thing of any great mystery. The Jewish people have been keeping that day as their weekly day of rest ever since Moses brought it down from Sinai in all the many places in the world where they have been scattered. The seventh day Sabbath is the same day we call Saturday—the same day it has ever been, the only day ever blessed, sanctified, or set apart by God in all of the Scriptures.

We have seen the Sabbath as the Memorial of Creation, in the Miracle of the Manna and written into imperishable stone in the very heart of God’s Ten Commandment law. Now let us look at the Sabbath in its truest and purest form, as revealed in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ.

D. Scene Four: Jesus, the Customary Sabbath Keeper

The apostle John lays down three basic principle concerning Jesus we should consider here.

1. First, Jesus is the Creator.

He says of Jesus:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made...

“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” *John 1:1-3, 14*

2. Second, Jesus is the same I AM God who wrote the Ten Commandment Law with its seventh-day Sabbath on tablets of stone that day when Mount Sinai flamed, the ground shook, and the great trumpet of God roared.

In John 8 Jesus says:

“Before Abraham was, I AM!”

Jesus is not only the Creator God who created the world in six days and rested on the seventh, making it holy and setting it apart, He is also the I AM God who wrote “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy...” into the heart of His eternal law along side other eternally binding and universally applicable moral absolutes as “Thou shall not murder”, “Thou shall not commit adultery” and “Thou shall not steal”.

3. The third principle from the life of Jesus concerning the Ten Commandment law and touching the Sabbath is that He not only wrote these laws, He also lived them while He was among us. In doing so, He gave us an example that we should follow. He Himself honored the temple that He had carved in time. I John 2, verses 3 through 6 say of Jesus:

“We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. The man who says, ‘I know him,’ but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.”

So what did Jesus do about the Sabbath? How did He keep it holy? Is there a pattern we may find in His life to follow? Yes. Luke 4, verse 16 tells of Jesus' first sermon in His old hometown of Nazareth after the beginning of His ministry. It says:

“He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read.”

Jesus was a customary Saturday, seventh day, Sabbath keeper. In the course of a 33 year life of 52 weeks the one who lived a sinless life kept the same Sabbath of Creation He had instituted at the end of making the world and written into the heart of the Ten Commandment law a total of something over 1,700 times.

Jesus was sometimes falsely accused of breaking the Sabbath because He ignored the many man-made additions that had made the Sabbath a burden. But He defended His actions by an appeal to the Ten Commandment law. “It is therefore lawful to do good on the Sabbath”. And again, Jesus said of Himself, “The Son of Man is Lord of the

Sabbath.” Of course He is! The Lord of the Sabbath is the Creator. The Lord of the Sabbath is I AM who wrote it with His own finger on Sinai. Jesus is both Creator and I AM. He kept the Sabbath and gave us a pattern to do the same.

E. Scene Five: Paul, the Sabbath-keeping Apostle to the Gentiles

Jesus was not the only customary Sabbath keeper we find in the New Testament, however. After His death, burial, resurrection and ascension, the early Christian church was launched by the power of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. That church was bitterly persecuted by a ruler of the Pharisees named Saul of Tarsus. But Saul met Jesus on the road to Damascus and became Paul, the apostle assigned by God with the specific task of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles. It was Paul’s missionary journey’s that planted Christianity across the face of the Roman empire. He told those who converted to faith in Christ under his teaching, “Follow me as I follow Christ.”

How did Paul follow Christ? One of the ways he followed Jesus’ example was in his customary keeping of the seventh day Sabbath. In Acts 17, verses 2 and 3 it says:

“As his custom was, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures...”

Elsewhere in the book of Acts the same Saturday Sabbath Jesus kept is noted as being observed by Jewish and Gentile believers with apostolic participation a total of 84 times. There is a single passage in Acts 20 that notes a service held on the first day of the week in which Paul preached all night because he was about to leave a particular group of believers. At midnight, a young man fell asleep and fell from a window to his death. Paul raised the young man to life and sometime in the early hours of the morning, broke bread with those who had gathered. The next morning, the apostle left to catch up with a ship that was due to dock at a port 17 miles away.

Some have suggested this sole passage outweighs the 84 instances of seventh-day Saturday observance and Paul’s customary Sabbath participation in worship. There are problems with this view in addition to its scarcity. Either the meeting occurred on a Saturday night or

Sunday night. If it were a Saturday night meeting, we find the apostle Paul hiking 17 miles to catch his ship during worship time on Sunday morning. If it were on a Sunday evening, the boy didn't fall out of the window until midnight. That would mean the breaking of bread—even if it were more than the breaking of bread that Acts says occurred every day within the fellowship of believers—occurred on a Monday morning. Either way, there are problems for making a strong case for anything other than Paul's usual custom of the Sabbath participation in worship from that sole passage.

Jesus was a customary Sabbath keeper. So was Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles. Both are good examples for us to follow today in our choice of day of worship. Plainly the temple of carved in time, the Sabbath of the Bible was still standing and in regular use by the most devout followers of Christ this side of the cross.

F. Scene Six: Jesus Prophecy of Sabbath Observance Among His Followers in the Church Age

An important scene from the life of Jesus deals with the Sabbath in the era of the Christian church, the time in history between His resurrection and His Second Coming. Would the temple in time still be applicable in this period of history? Who better to ask than Jesus Himself!

Once when Jesus was coming from the temple in Jerusalem, crossing the Kidron Valley and climbing up the slope of the Mount of Olives that looked down on the great white marble and shining gold temple below, His disciples pointed out the splendor of the place of worship.

Matthew's 24th chapter says:

“Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings. ‘Do you see all these things?’ he asked. ‘I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.’

“As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. ‘Tell us,’ they said, ‘when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?’”

In Jesus' day, the Jewish nation held that the great temple in Jerusalem would stand unmoved until the end of the world itself. So when Jesus declared it would be torn stone from stone, His disciples assumed that He referred to the end of the world as well. They asked two questions, thinking they were one:

- 1) When will the temple be torn down?**
- 2) What will be the sign of Your coming and of the end of the age?**

Jesus answered in such a way that both questions were addressed at once. The destruction of the temple, which would occur in only 40 more years under the siege of the Roman general Titus was a fit symbol of those things leading up to the end of the world and events the preceded Jesus return to planet earth. Matthew 24 deals with both events prophetically, detailing many things that applied to both Jerusalem's destruction and the end of the age. In this prophecy is found a prayer that His followers were instructed to pray on both occasions.

Matthew 24, verse 20 says:

“Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath.”

Flight during the winter would be a physical hardship. Flight on the Sabbath would be a spiritual hardship. Why? Because Jesus expected His followers—both at the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. and also in the troubled days just before Second Coming—to still be observing the Sabbath of which He had declared Himself the Lord.

At the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. this prayer of no flight in the winter or on the Sabbath was fulfilled. The Christians fled the city on a Thursday, making their way down to a place of safety near the Dead Sea. Not one Christian was killed in the destruction of the city when the temple was burned, the gold melted and ran down between the stones, which were pried apart by the Roman conquerors.

But remember this is a two part prophecy. One part deals with believers attitudes as expected by Jesus in 70 A.D. at the beginning of the Christian era. The other deals with exactly the same concern for proper seventh-day Sabbath observance at the other end of the Christian era—

in those troubled end times just before our Lord's return. The Temple in Time first erected in Eden will still be standing and open for worship then, too.

VII. The Sabbath Observed in the New Earth

We have seen the Sabbath was first instituted in Eden at the end of the Creation week, before any sin had entered. We have noted that it was in effect in the Miracle of the Manna which began before the giving of the Ten Commandment law on Mount Sinai. We have seen it was enshrined among the other nine eternally binding, universally applicable moral precepts on the tablets of stone given to Moses—and that we may easily know which day this is by simply asking any of history's timekeepers—the Jewish people which day the synagogue will be open for weekly worship. We have seen both Jesus and the apostle Paul were customary Sabbath keepers, and that Jesus' comments in His prophecy concerning the destruction of the temple and the end of the world affirm His expectation of an ongoing reverence for the day at either end of the Christian era.

There is really only one scene left in the Bible's story of the Sabbath. What of that time that lies beyond the end of the age? What will be happening in the New Heaven and New Earth when sin has been eliminated forever? Will the Temple in Time still be standing then? Will it be in use? Can we know this one way or another?

The answer is as clear in the seventh scene as in the first six. In Isaiah chapter 66, verses 22 and 23 God says:

""As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me,' declares the Lord, 'so will your name and descendants endure. From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before me,' says the Lord."

In His famous Sermon on the Mount Jesus said:

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest

letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”

So long as there is a heaven above us and the earth beneath our feet, so long as El Capitan rises over John Muir’s beloved Yosemite Valley, so long as the water falls thunder down and the great redwoods rise like pillars holding up the sky, so long will God’s Law, and the seventh day Sabbath of Creation enshrined in its heart be in effect. But the Bible makes the matter even more certain. It declares that when the New Heaven and the New Earth are recreated, that the same seventh day Sabbath will still serve as God’s Temple in Time.

The Bible’s story of the Sabbath is not a jagged one with uncertain writing and faded ink. It unfolds in seven scenes, one following the other in majestic simplicity, all saying exactly the same thing. God has given us the seventh day Sabbath. It is made for our good. It provides for health, happiness, and holiness. It directs our minds to our Creator and to the Great I AM—our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. It invites us to walk with Him, to love His creation and to look forward to the time when the face of our planet will be recreated and renewed in even more splendor than it now possesses. If we love the Lord of the Sabbath, we will love the Sabbath of the Lord.

Conclusion and Appeal

In his book on Yosemite, John Muir spoke pityingly of “time poor” persons who never spare enough of their scanty store to wander leisurely in the world’s wilderness. He sensed from direct contact with nature, the Word of God specifically addresses. We need time not only to do, but to be. God’s gift of the Sabbath, the memorial of the Creation itself, meets this need. Who can be “time poor” who will receive the gift of the Sabbath—that evening to evening 24 hour vacation break from all the duties and responsibilities of life?

King Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath. What a kindly King! He orders us to rest. He orders us to take it easy. He orders us to come apart for a little while every seven days and rest. Tonight will you receive Jesus and the Sabbath He offers? If you will, we have something practical to give to you before you leave this evening. It is a calendar that notes the sunset dates for Friday evening through Saturday evening, the specific hours set aside as sacred in Scripture. This will allow you to clearly identify God's temple in time.

**Tomorrow evening, our subject will be _____.
Come and bring a friend!**

Let's pray:

Dear Father in Heaven,

Thank your for sending us Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath. Grant us its rest we pray.

Amen.

Note: Be certain you have a sunset calendar prepared and enough copies for those who are likely to be present. You may wish to extend a specific invitation to attend a Sabbath service on the day the Lord Jesus Christ Himself worshipped. Give out a ticket, and make plans to emphasis nature in some way. Also have available a sunset calendar marking the sunset times for the year.

Presentation Note: The seven eras of history where the Sabbath appears may be illustrated visually by writing each on sign large enough to be seen by those in the room where the presentation is given and place across the front of the stage as each occurrence of the “Temple in Time” is made in the course of the talk. This allows the progression of this presentation to be visible as well as simply listened to. It also visually displays the importance of the Sabbath in every era of salvation history.

Here are the titles for each of the seven sign displays:

- 1. Creation*
- 2. Manna*
- 3. Ten Commandments*
- 4. Jesus Example*
- 5. Paul’sExample*
- 6. Church Era*
- 7. New Earth*
