

The Sabbath More Fully

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The subject of the feast days and the Sabbath is one that is causing a fair amount of confusion and generating many questions lately. To some, the feast days are really appealing for they see in them a way to proclaim “the Sabbath more fully”. To bolster this claim they quote generously from Ellen White.

We want to examine this particular claim in this short study. Is the preaching of the feast Sabbaths indeed proclaiming the Sabbath more fully? Is there a link between the seventh-day Sabbath and the annual Sabbaths of the feast days?

Other Sabbaths

When God instituted the feasts and instructed Moses about them He indicated certain “Sabbath” days as part of the feasts. These were different to the seventh-day Sabbath instituted at creation. There were 7 such Sabbaths commonly referred to as annual Sabbaths or “ceremonial Sabbaths”. These Sabbaths could occur on any day of the week as they were based on the feasts calendar. Each of these Sabbaths would only occur once a year, hence the term “annual Sabbaths”. These seven Sabbaths are briefly listed here:

1. The first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Leviticus 23:6-7).
2. The last day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Leviticus 23:8).
3. The day of Pentecost (Leviticus 23:15, 16, 21).
4. The feast of Trumpets (Leviticus 23:24, 25).
5. The day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) (Leviticus 23:27, 28).
6. The first day of the Feast of Tabernacles (Leviticus 23:34, 35).
7. The Last Great Day of Tabernacles (8th day) (Leviticus 23:36).

These seven annual Sabbaths were “Beside the sabbaths of the LORD” (Lev.23:38). In other words, God made a clear distinction between His weekly seventh-day Sabbath of creation and the annual Sabbaths given to Moses. There were also land Sabbaths (Exo.23:10, 11; Lev.25:4) occurring every seven years leading up to the Jubilee year occurring every 50th year (Lev.25:8-10). This is a brief summary of the different biblical Sabbaths.

The Claim

Some have felt that the truth about the seventh-day Sabbath is not complete on its own. They feel that the other annual Sabbaths provide a fuller understanding and application of it. This claim is offered in a variety of versions. They all amount to the same thing, namely: The annual Sabbaths (with their feasts) should be kept along with the seventh-day Sabbath as this would be keeping the Sabbath more fully. To bolster this claim they use the following quote from Ellen White:

“And at the commencement of the time of trouble, we were filled with the Holy Ghost as we went forth, and **proclaimed the Sabbath more fully.**” (*Broadside* 3, April 7, 1847).

The claim is that proclaiming the “Sabbath more fully” means proclaiming the annual Sabbaths in addition to the weekly Sabbath. Is this really what Ellen White meant by that statement? Was she hinting at the need to keep the annual Sabbath days?

Examining the claim

The same statement was published a month later in *A Word to the Little Flock* then later in *A Sketch of the Christian Experience and Views of Ellen G. White* (1851) for wider circulation. Ellen White actually explains what she meant by that statement, and it has nothing to do with the annual Sabbaths:

“This view was given in 1847, **when there were but very few of the Advent brethren observing the Sabbath**, and of these, but few supposed that its observance was of sufficient importance to draw a line between the people of God and unbelievers. **Now, the fulfillment of that view is beginning to be seen.**” {*Experiences and Views*, p. 54} **1851**

At that time there were probably not more than one hundred Sabbath keeping Adventists in the United States. It is clear to see what Ellen White meant. The Sabbath truth would grow and expand. She indicated the fulfillment of that view was already happening by **1851**. The Sabbath was beginning to be

proclaimed more fully from that time. She was not hinting at the annual Sabbaths in anyway. You see, this was never part of the teaching on the Sabbath truth. You cannot preach something “more fully” if you have never preached it before!

It would be really good if we knew what the brethren were teaching about the Sabbath during the period leading up to 1851 and following. This would serve as an illustration of how to proclaim the Sabbath more fully. Thankfully, we have such information readily available to us. As a matter of fact, the teaching regarding the feasts and annual Sabbaths at the time was very plain. They were shadowy types that were no longer binding:

“The law was the shadow, and the Gospel is the body, that cast the shadow; and as all shadows reach to their body, and no farther, **it is very clear that the sacrifices and oblations, new-moons, feast days, and Sabbaths of the Jewish law ceased, when the precious body and blood of the Lamb of God was sacrificed on the cross.** This is what Paul calls “nailing it to his cross.” {James White, *The Present Truth*, August 1849, p.9}

“**The Sabbath of the Lord our God was instituted at the creation, before the fall, when the earth and man were holy, and Eden bloomed on earth. The convocation sabbaths of the Jews were given at Mount Sinai, more than twenty-five hundred years after, and were a portion of the hand-writing of ordinances of the law of Moses, which was nailed to the cross, at the death of the Messiah.**” {James White, *The Present Truth*, August 1849, p.9}

“All that the Apostle has mentioned; such as new-moons, **and sabbaths, were shadows, which ceased when they reached their body, at the introduction of the new covenant.**” {James White, *The Present Truth*, August 1849, p.10}

“Finally, the fact, that the early church was troubled with those who taught them that they must keep the law of Moses in order to be

saved, shows that Col.ii,16, directly applied to the church in the apostle's day. It is therefore wrong to apply this text to those who are now keeping the Sabbath, **for none of us are contending for the sabbaths, new-moons, etc. of Moses' law.**" {James White, *The Present Truth*, March 1850, p.53}

It should be quite obvious that what James White was teaching was also what Ellen White believed and taught¹. His writing is representative of the early belief of Adventists when it came to the Sabbath and the annual Sabbaths. This belief continued to be proclaimed in years to follow:

"That the hand-writing of ordinances containing the feasts, new moons and the associated **annual sabbaths of the Jews, has been abolished and taken out of the way, we do not doubt.** This was not the moral law of God; but was merely the shadow of good things to come." {J. N. Andrews, *The Perpetuity of the Royal Law*, 1854, p. 2}

"The annual sabbaths were designed especially for dwellers in the land of Canaan, and were not kept till the Jews reached Palestine (Ex. 12:25, etc.); but the seventh-day Sabbath was made for the race, and was kept long before the Jews saw Canaan. The annual sabbaths were shadowy and typical, pointing forward to Christ; but the seventh-day Sabbath is a memorial, pointing back to creation, was made before man needed types, and will exist in the new earth, when all types and shadows shall have vanished away." {Daniel T Bourdeau, *Refutation of Forty-Four So-Called Objections Against the Ancient Sabbath*, 1887, p. 19}

The Advent believers maintained this view and understanding as they proclaimed the weekly Sabbath more fully. From 1851 and for many decades following, they never taught the need to keep the annual Sabbaths. Ellen White says that from 1851 the prophecy of proclaiming the Sabbath more fully was beginning to fulfill. Part of proclaiming the Sabbath more fully is to

¹ For more information see the article [Feast Days & The Present Truth](#) by the same author.

distinguish it from the expired annual Sabbaths and feast days! Those who try to blend the two today are directly contradicting the prophecy of Ellen White.

Truth is Truth – Then and Now

The position of truth, especially the Sabbath truth, was plain and clear. Years after the initial fulfilment of the above mentioned prophecy Ellen White made this interesting statement:

“We have no doubt, neither have we had a doubt for years, **that the doctrines we hold today are present truth**, and that we are nearing the judgment.” {2T 355.1} **1870**

They had the truth and were ready to face the judgment. What was the doctrine they held regarding the annual Sabbaths and feast days? They believed that they were obsolete shadows – not to be observed anymore! Thus it is conclusive. The keeping of the feasts and annual Sabbaths was not a present truth – and never will be! New truth does not contradict old truth.

My Sabbaths ye shall keep

Another claim closely connected with the one we are examining is the use of the plural word “Sabbaths” in some verses (Exo.31:13; Ezek.20:12, 20). The claim is that there is more than just the weekly Sabbath meant. The annual Sabbaths are included as part of the sign between God and His people. As such, they are part of the seal of God and need to be kept. This claim is largely based on one word only. Upon examination this claim collapses very quickly:

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily **my Sabbaths** ye shall keep." **Some, who have been anxious to make of none effect the law of God, have quoted this word "Sabbaths," interpreting it to mean the annual sabbaths of the Jews.** But they do not connect this positive requirement with that which follows:--

"For it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you. **Ye shall keep the Sabbath therefore**; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work

therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. **Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord:** whosoever doeth any work in the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel forever: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed."

There are those who hold that the Sabbath was given only for the Jews; but God has never said this. He committed the Sabbath to his people Israel as a sacred trust; but the very fact that the desert of Sinai, and not Palestine, was the place selected by him in which to proclaim his law, reveals that he intended it for all mankind. The law of ten commandments is as old as creation. **Therefore the Sabbath institution has no special relation to the Jews, any more than to all other created beings. God has made the observance of the Sabbath obligatory upon all men.** "The Sabbath," it is plainly stated, "was made for man." Let every one, therefore, who is in danger of being deceived on this point give heed to the word of God rather than the assertions of men. {RH, August 30, 1898 par. 9-11}

To Ellen White there was a clear and marked distinction between the creation Sabbath and the annual Sabbaths of the Jews. In this she shows complete harmony with her husband and brethren. Not only that, but when the Bible uses the word "Sabbaths" in the verses referred to, she correctly understood it to mean the creation Sabbath (as the context plainly shows). Let us not add to the Word lest we be found liars.

A Consistent Line of Truth

We have quoted samples from 1849 – 1887 on how the Sabbath was preached. This was so certain that by 1870 Ellen had no doubt about the present truth. And by 1898 (ten years post 1888) she still maintained the same distinction between the creation Sabbath and Jewish Sabbaths. These samples show a clear and consistent teaching that the annual shadowy Sabbaths were made obsolete when the reality came about in Christ. This was how the brethren

were proclaiming the weekly Sabbath more fully, according to Ellen White. This is how the Sabbath will continue to be proclaimed fully till Christ comes a second time.

Conclusion

It is clear that Ellen White did not say what many would like her to say. She explained what “proclaimed the Sabbath more fully meant” as beginning to fulfill from 1851. It is not preaching the need to keep the feast days (with their annual Sabbaths). James and Ellen White both believed that these annual Sabbaths were shadows that ceased at the cross of Christ! This was the belief of all the Sabbath keeping Adventists. The weekly Sabbath will be preached more fully right up to the close of probation. Not a shred of evidence suggests that we are to encumber the Sabbath with the obsolete annual Sabbath. To do so would be disastrous to the cause of present truth. Don’t forget, new truth does not contradict the old.

There seems to be such an incessant need to use Ellen White in support of feast keeping that many misunderstand and misuse her words. They promote teachings that are directly contrary to what she believed and practiced. Another error, the Lunar Sabbath theory, seeks to use that very same quote to bolster its claims! The conclusion drawn uses very similar reasoning to the feast keeping theory. Brethren, let us be honest in our use of the writings of Ellen White. Her conduct and practice is a standing rebuke to those who seek to twist her writings to teach something she never ever believed (be it feast days, lunar Sabbaths etc.). No reasonable mind can accept that some people today understand her writings better than she did!

It seems that evidence for feast keeping is so lacking that many resort to the writings of a non-feast keeper (Ellen White) to prove feast keeping! Such efforts reveal the weakness and flimsiness of that theological structure. The feast keeping position is as a sinking ship full of holes. And the more Ellen White is quoted to support feast keeping, that ship sinks lower and lower. ✍

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