

# **How Do We Know God Exists?**

**Kelly McDonald, Jr.**



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Written/authored by: Kelly McDonald, Jr.  
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## **Introduction**

Many people today wonder whether or not there is a God. Some people think that we can never know for sure. Others are convinced no god exists at all. There are also many religions in the world. Some religions focus on belief in one deity while others focus on belief in more than one god.

With so many views about religion in the world, could there be one belief system that is the source of truth and guidance for all humanity? In this booklet, we will examine whether or not God exists and how we can know the truth.

# Chapter 1

## How Do We Know God Exists?

There are many different religions on earth today. One thing that many of them have in common is the belief that the deity or deities they worship are the proper avenue to attain truth and receive instruction. However, the beliefs of these religions are often contradictory to each other. For instance, some say that there is only one deity; others say that there are multiple ones. The lifestyle expectations also differ from religion to religion.

One common feature of many religions is that they attempt to explain the question of origins. They try to answer the question: “How did everything on earth (or the universe) come to be?” This also entails a narrative or story about how their deity or deities initiated the beginning of creation and guided its development.

But there are also people who do not believe in a deity at all. They tend to think that random events and gradual evolution are responsible for the development of the universe from its origins to where it is today. Typically, theories such as the big bang form their explanation for origins.

There are three basic building blocks of the universe. The first is physical matter. This refers to the physical items around us – the things we see, feel, touch, and experience. A second aspect of the universe is space. Simply, this refers to the distance between objects and their interrelationship with each other. A third aspect of the universe is time. For humans, this is how we experience time as we know it – the passing of days, months, seasons, and years.

Of these, we will focus on one aspect of creation – time. A review of this subject will provide clarification to the issues reviewed thus far.

On earth, we experience time based upon three main factors: the rotation of the earth, the revolution of the earth around the sun,

and the rotation of the moon around the earth. This is the basis for days, months, seasons, and years. One day is about 24 hours. This is one complete rotation of the earth. It takes about 27.3 days for the moon to go around the earth, but 29 days, 12 hours, 44 minutes make up a lunar cycle to be completed (new moon to new moon). It takes 365.25 days for the earth to completely orbit the sun.

But there is one aspect of time we experience that is not connected to any heavenly body such as the sun or moon: the continuous seven-day weekly cycle. No cycle of the sun corresponds to the divisible number of seven. The moon's monthly cycle is not evenly divisible by seven either from its orbit or from new moon to new moon.

How can it be that the seven-day cycle exists? It has been followed by varying numbers of people throughout the centuries. However, much of the world (presently) follows this cycle. Various cultures over the millennia, both ancient and modern, have tried different forms of a weekly cycle. Most of them have disappeared.

How do we know if and which religious system should be trusted for its explanation of origins? Whichever belief system can account for the origin of creation **and** the seven day week from first day through the seventh. And there is only one text that can explain creation and the seven-day week as we experience them today: the Holy Bible. In the book of Genesis, we learn about Creation. I have an excerpt from chapters 1 and 2 below:

“1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 And the earth was waste and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep: and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. 3 And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. 4 And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. 5 And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day...14 And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days and years: 15 and let them be for lights in the firmament of heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. 16 And God made the two great

lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also. 17 And God set them in the firmament of heaven to give light upon the earth, 18 and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good. 19 And there was evening and there was morning, a fourth day. 20 And God said, Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven. 21 And God created the great sea-monsters, and every living creature that moveth, wherewith the waters swarmed, after their kind, and every winged bird after its kind: and God saw that it was good. 22 And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth. 23 And there was evening and there was morning, a fifth day. 24 And God said, Let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind, cattle, and creeping things, and beasts of the earth after their kind: and it was so. 25 And God made the beasts of the earth after their kind, and the cattle after their kind, and everything that creepeth upon the ground after its kind: and God saw that it was good. 26 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. 27 And God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them...31 And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day” (Genesis 1:1-5, 14-27, 31, ASV).

“1 And the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. 2 And on the seventh day God finished his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. 3 And God blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it; because that in it he rested from all his work which God had created and made” (Genesis 2:1-3, ASV).

In these verses, we have the answers of origin resolved, including causation. God created everything, including matter, space, and time. We learn that days begin and end at sunset (evening and then morning or day). We learn that months are determined by the passage of the moon (also, sacred times). It is incredible to think that earth is the only planet in our solar system with the exact dis-

tance from the sun and its moon to sustain life and human civilization. It is also the only planet in the universe with intelligent life (out of 100 billion other planets).

The first six days of this first week involved physical creation by God, but the seventh day marked the rest from that creation by that same God. This day was set apart as holy and blessed. In other words, time itself was blessed on the seventh day in a way that can never be changed. The same God who made the creatures which have not changed kinds also made time.

This continuous seven-day cycle was understood in the early days of mankind. In Genesis chapters 6 through 8, we learn about the world-wide flood that happened in the days of Noah. He was instructed to take his family along with some of all animals, including seven pairs of clean animals and two pairs of unclean animals, onto an Ark or large boat. God gave him the instructions to construct this boat so that it would house them all.

Noah also understood the concept of the original seven-day week. This is evident in the flood story. We have some examples below:

“For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights...And it came to pass after the seven days, that the waters of the flood were upon the earth” (Genesis 7:4, 10, KJV).

“6 and it came to pass at the end of the forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made: and he sent forth a raven, and it went forth to and fro, until the waters were dried up from off the earth. 8 and he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters were abated from off the face of the ground; 9 but the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him to the ark; for the waters were on the face of the whole earth; and brought her in unto him in the ark 10 And he stayed yet other seven days; and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark; 11 and the dove came in to him at eventide; and, lo, in her mouth an olive-leaf plucked off: so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth. 12 And he stayed yet other seven days, and sent forth the dove; and she returned not again unto him any more” (Gen 8:6-12, KJV).

After the flood, there were only three families that started the process of repopulating the earth: the three sons of Noah (Shem, Ham, and Japheth) and their wives. The first immediate generations of these three families would have also been familiar with the seven-day cycle. A recent study on human mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) sequences found that all humans on earth come from three women (Jeanson 2016).

Many ancient cultures have a flood story, including the Babylonians, Sumerians, Greeks, Chinese, Indians, and even Native American cultures. Their stories have similarities and differences compared the original flood story from Genesis. What about the seven-day week? In the next chapter, we will look at archaeological evidence for the seven-day week and how it continued from the flood to the present.



## Chapter 2

### Archaeological and Historical Evidence

As discussed in the last chapter, the continuous seven-day week was originally established by the Creator God as described in the book of Genesis. The original seven-day week ended with the Sabbath as a memorial of creation. This weekly cycle continued for hundreds of years; it was re-affirmed in the days of Noah and the flood. This means that after the flood, the entire world would have initially only been exposed to this reckoning of the week.

The Biblical account informs us that peoples were scattered from a central location in the Middle East (Genesis chapter 11; other cultures have similar stories about this event as well). This means that they started traveling in other directions and developed their own language. Moreover, they developed stories about creation and the flood. As mentioned in the last chapter, many ancient cultures had some form of a flood story. These were deviations from the original one that occurred in the days of Noah.

There is evidence that the immediate post-world flood knew something of the seven-day cycle. We will look at two archaeological findings that discuss the seven-day weekly cycle in a manner similar to the account of Noah and the flood. They both date to a time not long after the flood (between 2100-1900 BC).

The first account comes from Sumer, which was an ancient civilization between the Euphrates and Tigris rivers in Iraq. In their account, the flood lasted seven days and nights.

“All the windstorms, exceedingly powerful, attacked as one, At the same time, the flood sweeps over the cult-centers. After, for seven days (and) seven nights, The flood had swept over the land...” (Pritchard, p 44).

The next ancient reference comes from the Epic of Gilgamesh, which is the oldest recorded epic in history. It tells the story of a

man named Gilgamesh. He was on a quest to find Utnapishtim, who survived the great flood by boarding a ship. Gilgamesh wanted to learn the key to eternal life.

In the story, there are three references to the seven-day cycle. In the first reference, the flood lasted subsided on the seventh day. In the second reference, Utnapishtim released a dove on the seventh day (just like in the story of Noah). In the third reference, Utnapishtim asked Gilgamesh to stay awake for seven days. On Tablet 11, we read the following:

“Six days and [six] nights Blows the flood wind, as the south-storm sweeps the land. When the seventh day arrived, The flood (-carrying) south-storm subsided in the battle... On Mount Nisir the ship came to a halt. Mount Nisir held the ship fast, Allowing no motion. One day, a second day, Mount Nisir held the ship fast, Allowing no motion. A third day, a fourth day, Mount Nisir held the ship fast, Allowing no motion. A fifth, and a sixth (day), Mount Nisir held the ship fast, Allowing no motion. When the seventh day arrived, I sent forth and set free a dove...The dove went forth, but came back; Since no resting-place for it was visible, she turned round. Then I sent forth and set free a swallow. The swallow went forth, but came back; Since no resting-place for it was visible, she turned round. Then I sent forth and set free a raven. The raven went forth and, seeing that the waters had diminished, He eats, circles, caws, and turns not round. Then I let out (all) to the four winds And offered a sacrifice....That the life which thou sleekest thou mayest find? Up, lie not down to sleep For six days and seven nights.”...Up, bake for him wafers, put (them) at his head, And mark on the wall the days he sleeps.” She baked for him wafers, put (them) at his head, and marked on the wall the days he slept. His first wafer is dried out, the second is gone bad, the third is soggy; the crust of the fourth has turned while the fifth has a moldy cast, the sixth (still) is fresh-colored; the seventh—just as he touched him the man awoke” (ibid, pp 94-95).

These two ancient findings illustrate how the seven-day week at one time had universal exposure after the global flood. They are located in a region many historians call “the cradle of civilization.” It was among the first places that the descendants of Ham, Shem, and Japheth settled. Indeed, all humans would have been

in close proximity to each other for a time immediately after the flood. They were all closely related! The uses of the seven-day cycle in these flood stories mirrors the Genesis account (Gen. 7:4,10; 8:10-12).

One major difference is that the Sumerian and Babylonian accounts never connected the seventh day to the deities of their culture. But remember that they also did not worship the God of the Bible. They worshipped multiple gods.

At some point after the flood, ancient cultures tried to establish their own weekly cycles. Some of them were tied to the heavenly bodies. However, they failed to supplant the seven day weekly cycle (we will review some of these examples in the next chapter). How do we know that the seven-day weekly cycle continued from that time until now?

According to the Biblical narrative, God revealed Himself to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and set their family apart from other peoples on earth. Jacob and his sons eventually traveled down to Egypt where they stayed for four hundred years. While in that land, they were enslaved for a time. However, God delivered them through the hands of Moses and Aaron. He also revealed to them the original seven-day weekly cycle; we learn this in Exodus chapter 16.

“4 Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day’s portion every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or not. 5 And it shall come to pass on the sixth day, that they shall prepare that which they bring in, and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily.... 22 And it came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for each one: and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. 23 And he said unto them, This is that which the LORD hath spoken, Tomorrow is a solemn rest, a holy sabbath unto the LORD: bake that which ye will bake, and boil that which ye will boil; and all that remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning... 26 Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day is the sabbath, in it there shall be none...” (Ex. 16:4-5, 22-23, 26, KJV).

Not long after these events, God affirmed that the weekly cycle ending with Sabbath was a memorial of the original week from the beginning of Creation.

“8 Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: 10 But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: 11 For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.” (Exodus 20:8-11, KJV).

In Exodus 31:13, 17, this was also affirmed: “13 Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: 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...17 It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed” (KJV).

Notice in these passages that God never ascribed a name to any day of the week except the Sabbath. This is one practice that helped the children of Israel maintain the understanding of the original seven-day week throughout the centuries. The first six days of the week are as follows: first day, second day, third day, fourth day, fifth day, and sixth day. The seventh day of the week is named Sabbath or in Hebrew *shabbat*.

After their sojourn in the desert, the Israelite nation conquered the Promised Land (which includes modern-day Israel and the land around it). After a few centuries, they became a united Kingdom. This arrangement did not last long.

We learn from the Biblical account that the nation of Israel eventually split into two Kingdoms: Israel in the north and Judah in the south (I Kings chapters 11-12). While the Kingdom of Israel went into apostasy and abandoned the religion of their forefathers, the Kingdom of Judah continued to follow the original weekly cycle over the centuries. The people from the southern Kingdom were eventually called Jews.

Archaeological finds from the ancient world that confirm their knowledge of the seventh-day Sabbath, which is the ending day of the original weekly cycle.

### **Mesad Hashavyahu Ostrakon**

The Mesad Hashavyahu Ostrakon is a piece of pottery dating to the time of King Josiah (seventh century BC). It is the oldest archaeological finding that references the Sabbath! An English translation of the text is found below. Some of the writing is not completely legible, so the translation of those parts is put in brackets and parenthesis.

“...Let my lord commander hear the case of his servant! As for thy servant, thy servant was harvesting at Hazar-susim. And thy servant was (still) harvesting as they finished the storage of grain, as usual before the Sabbath. While thy servant was finishing the storage of grain with his harvesters, Hoshiah son of Shobai came and took thy servant’s mantle. (It was) while I was finishing with my harvesters (that) this one for no reason took thy servant’s mantle. And all my companions will testify on my behalf—those who were harvesting with me in the heat (?) [...] all my companions will testify on my behalf! If I am innocent of all gui[It, let him return] my mantle, and if not, it is (still) the commander’s right to take [my case under advisement and to send word] to him [(asking) that he return the] mantle of thy servant. And let not [the please of his servant] be displeasing to him...” (ibid, p 568).

The overall theme of this ostrakon is a person (the author) who was pleading with someone of authority for justice. As part of this discussion, the author mentioned that he finished his work before the Sabbath began. He described this as his usual behavior.

The author of the message also pleaded with the person of authority for the return of his mantle. The Torah allowed someone to lend their cloak as a pledge, but it was supposed to be returned to them by evening (Ex. 22:26-27, Deut. 24:10-15). This part of the Torah is called “the judgments” or *mishpatim*. The author also referenced witnesses that could defend him and help his case, which is a provision allowed in the judgments (Deut. 19:15-21).

In 2 Kings chapter 22, we learn that the book of the Law was read

aloud to King Josiah. He then realized the idolatry and sin that the nation had fallen into and repented. In the next chapter, we learn that he had the Torah read to the people and renewed their covenant with God. He then removed idols, pagan priests, and other abominations from the land. He turned the nation back to God and obedience to His law.

Since Josiah enacted reforms to restore obedience to the commandments of God, we would expect to find evidence detailing both Sabbath observance and an appeal to the judgments in the Law of God. The Mesad Hashavyahu Ostrakon is a reminder of three things 1) the Sabbath of the Lord our God has been observed for thousands of years; 2) The Sabbath was not introduced to the Jewish people while in Babylonian exile (as some have suggested); and 3) by extension the seven-day weekly cycle was observed at that time.

The Jewish nation was eventually conquered by the Babylonians and scattered (about 586 BC). Some stayed in the land of Israel while others were scattered to places such as Egypt. They had descendants that continued to recognize the Sabbath in some form or fashion for many years beyond their existence as an independent kingdom.

### **The Elephantine Ostrakon**

The Elephantine Ostrakon is a series of pottery shards found on Elephantine Island in the early twentieth century. Some of them date to about 475 BC and belong to a Jewish community who migrated there sometime beforehand (likely in connection with the Babylonian conquest of Judea, which happened not long after Josiah's reign). Elephantine Island is located in modern-day southern Egypt. Several pieces of pottery reference the Sabbath.

“Greetings Yedanyah! She has been put in jail, and orders have been given that she is not to be provided with bread and water. [...] Ahutab has [...] to me, except [...] the Sabbath day. If Natan has not been taken captive there, let him come over to where I am, so I can go grind [meal (?)]. Also send me [...]. And I will write [...]. Do not (?) [...] (Lindenberger, p 40).

“Greetings Ahutab! About this bread – eat it until tomorrow (Friday).\* There is still an ardab of flour left here.” \*The text note

says that the Aramaic word used is *'rwbh* and it can mean the eve of the Sabbath (ibid, pp 41, 51).

“Greetings Yislah! Look, I’m sending you the vegetables tomorrow. Get there before the boat comes in – on account of the Sabbath – so they won’t be spoiled. I swear to God, if you don’t, I’ll kill you! Don’t trust Meshullemet or Shemayah to take care of it. Trade the barley for me. Try to get a lamb...I swear to God, if you don’t, you’ll have to pay the bill yourself!

As for the...you sent in exchange for the wine, I have sent it all on to them (?). If Meshullemet doesn’t get here, what will you say? May we see each other soon!” (ibid, p 46)

“To [...]yah: Greetings! May YHH [of hosts] bless you at all times. When the [shipment] or Wahpre son of [...] arrives, send me [...] and a lamb (?), and some salt [...] before the Sabbath. [I am having] Meshullam [bring you] some fish [...], and [having] Beadi [bring] three big (?) [...]. I am giving it to him today [...] cut up (?) [...]” (ibid, p 49).

Bezalel Porten describes a fourth ostrakon that reads, “I am going and will not come until the eve (of the Sabbath)” (Porten, 117). He also noted that the name Shabbethai was used at that time; this name refers to a baby born on the Sabbath. At the very least, these findings show that the Jewish people at Elephantine kept track of the Sabbath and by extension the original weekly cycle.

## **Zenon Papyri**

A papyrus is a form of paper made from a plant in Egypt. It was commonly used for personal or business writings. The oldest papyrus that mentions the Sabbath is part of a group of papyri called the Zenon Papyri. This particular finding dates to the mid-third century BC (about 250 BC) and was discovered in Egypt. This was during the Greco-Egyptian Ptolemaic kingdom. Many Jewish people lived in Egypt during that era.

On one particular piece of papyri, CPJ 1.10, we have an account of bricks being received and stored (chart on next page). On it are recorded the quantities of bricks received every day from the 5<sup>th</sup> through the 11<sup>th</sup> of the month called *Epeiph* on the Egyptian calendar. The seventh day of this month was marked *Sabbata*, which means the Sabbath fell on that day. No bricks were received on

that day. This find provides evidence that Jewish people in the Ptolemaic Kingdom were allowed to keep the Sabbath and still kept track of the weekly cycle.

**Column I.**

Epeiph	
5 <sup>th</sup>	I have on hand bricks from Phileas 920
6 <sup>th</sup>	1000
7 <sup>th</sup>	Sabbath (Greek: Sabbata)
8 <sup>th</sup>	1000
9 <sup>th</sup>	1000
10 <sup>th</sup>	2000, of which Demetrios has brought 1000 those of Tanis 1000
11 <sup>th</sup>	936; of which Demetrios has brought 888 those from Tanis 48

**Nash Papyrus**

The Nash Papyrus was found in Egypt and dates to the mid to late second century BC (150-100 BC). This was in the waning period of the Ptolemaic dynasty. It is a short papyri containing a list of the Ten Commandments followed by the Shema prayer (Deut. 6:4) and the beginning part of the V'ahafta (Deut. 6:5-9, Num. 15:40-41). It is important because it is one of the oldest surviving papyri which listed the Ten Commandments.

Translation from Burkitt, pp 392-408:

- 1 [ . I am Jahwe thy God that [brought] thee out of the land of E [gypt:]
- 2 [thou shalt not hav]e other gods be[fore] me. Thou shalt not make [for thyself an image]
- 3 [or any form] that is in the heavens above, or that is in the earth [beneath,]
- 4 [or that is in the waters beneath the earth. Thou shalt not bow down to them [nor]
- 5 [serve them, for] I am Jahwe thy God, a jealous God visiting the iniquity]
- 6 [of fathers upon sons to the third and to the fourth generation unto them that hate me, [and doing]

7 [kindness unto thousands] unto them that love me and keep my  
 commandments. Thou shalt [not]  
 8 [take up the name of Jahwe] thy God in vain, for Jahwe will not  
 hold guiltless [him that]  
 9 [taketh up his name in vain. Remember the day of the Sabbath  
 [to hallow it:]  
 10 [six days thou shalt work and do all thy business, and on the  
 [seventh day,]  
 11 a Sabbath for Jahwe] thy God, thou shalt not do therein any  
 business, [thou]  
 12 [and thy son and thy daughter,] thy slave and thy handmaid,  
 thy ox and thy ass and all thy [cattle,]  
 13 [and thy stranger that is] in thy gates. For six days did Ja[hwe  
 make]  
 14 [the heaven]s and the earth, the sea and all th[at is therein,]  
 15 and he rested [on the] seventh day; therefore Jahwe blessed  
 [the]  
 16 seventh day and hallowed it. Honour thy father and thy moth-  
 er, that]  
 17 it may be well with thee and that thy days may be long upon  
 the ground [that]  
 18 Jahwe thy God giveth thee. Thou shalt not do adultery. Thou  
 shalt not do murder. Thou shalt [not]  
 19 [st]eal. Thou shalt not [bear] against thy neighbour vain wit-  
 ness. Thou shalt not covet [the]  
 20 [wife of thy neighbour. Thou shalt] not desire the house of thy  
 neighbour, his field, or his slave,]  
 21 [or his handmaid, or his o]x, or his ass, or anything that is thy  
 neighbour's. [Blank]  
 22 [(?) And these are the statutes and the judgements that Moses  
 commanded the [sons of]  
 23 [Israel] in the wilderness, when they went forth from the land  
 of Egypt. Hea[r]  
 24 [0 Isra]el: Jahwe our God, Jahwe is one; and thou shalt love]  
 25 [Jahwe thy G]o[d with al]l t[hy heart ... .].

Beyond the Nash Papyrus, there are many findings from the Dead  
 Sea scrolls that discuss the Sabbath in the late BC period and early  
 AD period. This includes many books of the Old Testament  
 which mention this day. In the New Testament, we learn that Je-  
 sus and the early disciples also kept the seven-day weekly cycle  
 ending with the Sabbath (for some examples, see Matthew 12:1-

8, Mark 2:27-28, Luke 4:16, Acts 13:13-48, 16:11-15, 17:1-4, and 18:1-4).

In the first few centuries AD, several Roman historians noted which day of the week that the Jewish people rested. We have some of them listed below:

Frontinus (30-103 AD) wrote: “The deified Vespasian Augustus attacked the Jews on the day of Saturn, a day on which it is sinful for them to do any business, and so defeated them” (*Strategems*, book 2).

The Roman historian Cassius Dio wrote that the Jewish people rested on the day that the Romans called the day of Saturn. “As it was, they made an excavation of what are called the days of Saturn and by doing no work at all on those days afforded the Romans an opportunity in this interval to batter down the wall... They build to him a temple that was extremely large and beautiful, except in so far as it was open and roofless, and likewise dedicated to him the day called the day of Saturn, on which, among many other most peculiar observances, they undertake no serious occupation” (*Roman History*, 37.16.2; 37.16.3).

At least fourteen writers from the Early Roman Empire attest that the Jewish people honored the Sabbath; most of them wrote that they rested on the day. There are also a number of ancient writers that described the prevalence of the Sabbath in the ancient Mediterranean world. The practice had a widespread appeal to both monotheistic and polytheistic peoples. For more information on this subject, download our free booklet *Prevalence of the Sabbath in the Early Roman Empire* from our website [www.sabbathsentinel.org](http://www.sabbathsentinel.org) on the **Free Resources** page).

Frontinus, Cassius Dio, and others linked the Sabbath to the day of Saturn, which is the name that the Romans gave to the day of the week we presently call Saturday. The Sabbath was so widespread in the Roman world that they developed a word in their language (Latin) for the day (*sabbata* or *sabbatis* are the most common forms). In ancient koine Greek, the words *sabbata* and *sabbaton* were developed to refer to the seventh-day Sabbath (koine Greek was spoken approximately 300 BC to 300 AD).

The Hebrew word for Sabbath is *Shabbat*. In many current and ancient languages, the word for Saturday is a variation of the phonetic sounds relating to Shabbat or *sabbat*. Some of these languages are over one thousand years old! To read more about these languages, see **Appendix A** in the back of this work.

In modern Greece, Friday is called *paraskevi* or Preparation day. It comes from the ancient Jewish and Christian custom of preparing on Friday to keep the Sabbath. One reason why this happened is because the Sabbath begins Friday at sunset. Saturday is named *Savatoh*.

These archaeological and historical findings confirm that the Jewish people have kept track of the seven-day weekly cycle from ancient times until the present. Most Christians also observed the Sabbath for at least four hundred years after the time of Jesus (see Appendix A in *Sabbath and Sunday Laws in the Roman Empire*). Between Judaism and Christianity, the seven-day week has once again spread to the entire world and become the most common form of reckoning weeks. This truly reflects the days of Noah.

In the next chapter, we will examine other forms of the week from ancient and modern times. They each failed to supersede the seven-day week.

## Chapter 3

### Failed Attempts to Change the Seven-Day Cycle

After the flood, most peoples began to worship other gods, including the heavenly bodies. Many of these cultures looked to the heavenly bodies as deities or powers that had control over their daily lives. Some cultures allowed this to influence their practice of the week.

One way that God's people were set apart from other nations is that they did not worship the heavenly bodies, but the God who gave them. We will take a look at some alternative forms of the week that were practiced by various people groups, both in ancient times and modern times.

Among the first attempts to break with the seven-day weekly cycle was by the ancient Babylonians and Assyrians. They observed lunar weeks. This means that they waited for the new moon to appear and re-started their week accordingly. They kept a sort of lunar Sabbaths with periodic sabbaths every seventh, fourteenth, nineteenth, twenty first, and twenty eighth days of the month (Sayce, *The Higher Criticism and the Verdict of the Monuments*, p 74).

Due to the use of Accadian expressions and other references in the current archaeological record of this calendar, its use can be dated back to about the 1600s BC (Sayce, *Records of the Past*, p 158). At some point, the Babylonians and Assyrians eventually went back to the seven-day week.

Another attempt to deviate from God's original weekly cycle occurred in ancient Egypt. The Israelites dwelt there for four hundred years; they were enslaved during that time. During their stay, they became acclimated to some Egyptian ways, which included a 10-day week (Fagan, p 476). This was yet another attempt to connect the weekly cycle to the moon, which from new moon to new moon is about 29.5 days (still not evenly divisible by 10). Eventu-

ally, the Egyptians went back to the seven-day week.

One way that we know the Exodus story is correct is that the Israelite and Jewish people kept track of the seven-day cycle given by God after the Exodus despite previous exposure to the ten-day week.

*The Praeger Encyclopedia of Ancient Greek Civilization* notes that the ancient Greeks (at least as far back as the 400s/500s BC) had months of either 29 or 30 days on their Calendar. They also tried to break down the month into three decades or ten-day weeks (*idem*, p 106). This method of calculating the week did not last either as they eventually accepted the seven-day week.

Going back as far as the eighth century BC, the ancient Romans used the eight-day week. Every eighth day was called *nundinae* or market day. By the first century BC, the seven-day week increased in popularity. They had a dual system of reckoning weeks for a time! By the fifth century, only the seven-day cycle was used.

Other cultures had similar forms of the weekly cycle. As Judeo-Christian values spread across the world, the seven-day cycle replaced or displaced other systems of weekly reckoning. However, attempts to change the weekly cycle are not limited to ancient peoples.

In modern times, humanity has tended to look upon ancient peoples with condescension. To sober ourselves from such thoughts, I will provide you with some modern examples where humans tried to deviate from the seven-day cycle.

In the late eighteenth century, many changes took place in France. Among them was a movement to change the calendar! In 1788, the Frenchman Pierre-Sylvain Marechal developed a new calendar with a much different reckoning of time than the Gregorian calendar. He recommended a ten-day week with three weeks making one month. Each month was renamed to fit the season in which it occurred. It was instituted in 1793 and is commonly called the French republican calendar. It lasted until Napoleon was proclaimed Emperor in 1806. At this time, the seven-day week was reinstated.

**Note:** The French word for Saturday is *Samedi*; it comes from the vulgar Latin word *sambati dies*, meaning Sabbath day.

In 1929, the USSR instituted a five-day work week. The goal was two-fold. First, the Soviets wanted to maximize their work force and keep machines running non-stop. People were assigned random rest periods during these five days. The second goal was to make religious adherence to any Sabbath impossible. Neither goal was met. The machines broke down and people were not always off work at the same time as other family and friends. People began to experience a social disconnect and thus a type of social disintegration began. Furthermore, it resulted in decreased productivity. After two years they moved to a six-day work week. By 1940, they abandoned the project and reinstated the original seven-day week (Frost).

**Note:** The Russian word for Saturday is *subbota*, which means Sabbath.

There are other examples of cultures who held to a different form of the weekly cycle, but this gives us an adequate sample of the alternatives found in ancient and modern times. These historical examples show attempts by mankind to disconnect humanity from our Creator. Some of these attempts were based upon economics. Others tried to connect the week to the lunar cycle despite the fact that the lunar month is not equally divisible by either seven or ten (roughly 29.5 days). This contributed to their failure.

It should be noted that there are some cultures where the seven-day week is observed alongside another weekly cycle, such as some modern places in West Africa (who simultaneously observe a seven and six-day week). Nonetheless, the seven day week is still observed.

## Conclusion

Many arguments concerning the existence of God and origins involve biological and cosmological perspectives. But an overlooked aspect of creation is time. The one aspect of time that is not explained by astronomical cycles is the continuous seven-day week.

The book of Genesis explains the creation of space, matter, and time including the seven-day week. The Creator God worked for six days and rested on the seventh day. This set apart the seventh day and by extension established the continuous seven-day cycle. In the days of the global flood, we learn that Noah observed this cycle. Archaeological finds from just after the flood confirm that other cultures had knowledge of it.

After the children of Israel spent generations in Egypt, they lost track of the seven-day week. They were also enslaved by the Egyptians, who followed a ten-day cycle at that time. After their incredible escape from Egypt through God's intervention, the original cycle was restored unto them.

The original seven-day cycle was from ancient times until now preserved by the Jewish people despite trials and severe persecutions. Though they have at times been a very small group among all the others on earth, they have still held onto this cycle. This is true despite exiles in lands where alternative cycles were practiced. Many martyrs have suffered to uphold this truth. Its survival has been truly miraculous.

Starting in the first century of our current era, Christianity also became a promoter of this cycle. It has survived among Christian groups despite persecution (from inside and outside factors) and theological attempts to alter it.

By returning to a seven-day cycle, the world has unknowingly upheld a major witness to the existence of God. While this weekly cycle is practiced by most of the world, not every country fol-

lows the same order to the days. By our reckoning of time, the Biblical order of the original week is Sunday through Saturday (first day through seventh or Sabbath). Some cultures follow an alternative order to the days of the week such as Monday through Sunday and others follow Saturday through Friday.

While groups deviate from the original cycle given by God, they still follow a continuous seven-day cycle that includes the original Sabbath day. Despite having the wrong order of the days, the opportunity to observe the Sabbath still exists (and by extension, the original cycle).

Languages around the world are a reminder of which day is the Sabbath (despite the order of their culture—see Appendix A). Most of humanity has easy access to the knowledge of the Creator’s weekly cycle. Those who follow a different order of the days than the original one are simply out of rhythm.

Any other form of the week, such as the ten-day, eight-day, or lunar cycles (see chapter 3), cause people to become disconnected from the concept of time established by the Creator God. Other forms of the week have been practiced since the global flood, but most of them have disappeared. Some still exist, but they are usually secondary to or observed beside the seven-day cycle.

The historical record shows that humanity will never be able to completely separate from the original cycle even if only a remnant at times observes it. God will not allow us to forget that He created all things. The Sabbath commandment is the only one which begins with “Remember.” Every Sabbath we are reminded that God created all things, including time itself. The existence of the continuous seven-day cycle, in its original order by some and in another order by others, is proof of the existence of God.

## Appendix A

### Short List of Languages Around the World That Mention The Sabbath

The Hebrew word for Sabbath is *Shabbat*. One of the proofs that the Sabbath is from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset is that many different languages call Saturday some version of Sabbath, sabado, saptu, etc... Let's take a look at a short list:

**Indonesian** – *Sabtu*

**Tagalog (Philippines)** – *Sabado*

**Latin** – *Sabbatum* (ancient Latin also used *Sabbata*, *Sabbatis*, and *Sabbatarium*)

**Italian** – *Sabato*

**Spanish** – *Sabado*

**Portuguese** – *Sabado*

**Greek** – *Savatoh*

**Koine Greek** – *Sabbata* and *Sabbaton* (*koine* Greek was spoken from about 300 BC to 300 AD)

**Russian** – *Subota*

**Polish** – *Sobota*

**Arabic** – *Al Sabt*

**Somali (East Africa)** – *Sabti*

**Mandingo also called Mandinka (West Africa)** – *Sibiti*

**Ormo or Galla (East Africa)** – *Sanbata tenna*

**Kisii, also called Gusii or Ekegusii (Africa)** – *Esabato*

In modern Greece, Friday is called *paraskevi* or preparation day. It comes from the ancient Jewish and Christian custom of preparing on Friday to keep the Sabbath. One reason why this happened is because the Sabbath begins Friday at sunset. In fact, this is when all Biblical days occur.

We can see that on different continents and different countries, one thing remains constant: the Sabbath is preserved by language.

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## **More Materials (Page 1 of 2)**

Below are listed more short books by Kelly McDonald, Jr. available for FREE download on [www.sabbathsentinel.org](http://www.sabbathsentinel.org) and [www.biblesabbath.org](http://www.biblesabbath.org) Look at the **Free Resources** page.

### **A Beginner's Guide to the Sabbath**

The Sabbath is a weekly celebration from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset. This delight was given to mankind to help us spend more time with God and our family. In this booklet, you will learn answers to basic questions such as “What is the Sabbath?”; “When is the Sabbath?”; and “How Do We Keep the Sabbath?” You will also learn important reasons to keep this holy day. You will also learn important ways to practice this special day so that you can be in tune with God’s Sacred Rhythm.

### **A Beginner's Guide to Understanding the Bible**

This booklet will help you understand the Bible on a very basic level. It will give you practical tips to help you get the most out of your Bible. These simple tips will transform your view of the Bible and your walk with

### **Defending the Ten Commandments**

There is a general hostility towards the commandments of God (see Matthew 24:12). Many people believe that the Law of God is done away with, including the Sabbath. In particular, there are verses from Paul and Jesus people use to try and explain them away. This booklet will explain these verses and other questions people have about God’s Law. This resource will teach you to defend your faith. It is also a way to reach out to other believers and help them understand the truth of God’s Word.

### **How Do We Know Jesus Really Lived?**

Imagine for a moment that you did not have a Bible to learn about Jesus. How would you know that He ever lived on earth? Would it be possible to prove His existence? In modern times, there has been skepticism about the historical validity of Jesus’ existence and the New Testament account. In this book, we will address the historical, archaeological, and textual evidence to see if Jesus and His earliest followers ever existed.

## **More Materials (Page 2 of 2)**

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### **A Brief History of the Sabbath in Early Christianity**

The majority of people who attend Church today meet on Sunday. In the New Testament, the early Church met on Sabbath, which is from Friday sunset through Saturday sunset. Did you know that most Christians 400 years after Jesus still honored the Sabbath? In this informative booklet, you will learn the seven major historical factors that affected the Sabbath in the early Church.

### **Sabbath and Sunday Laws in the Roman Empire**

In the Roman Empire, a series of laws were passed concerning the Sabbath. Hundreds of years later, Sunday laws were also passed. These laws help us to understand the protection of Sabbath observance in broader Judaism and Christianity as well as the development of Sunday as a day of rest in the Roman Church.

### **Prevalence of the Sabbath in the Early Roman Empire**

When the Gentiles heard the early gospel message, how did they respond as it relates to the Sabbath? Were Gentile converts persuaded to keep the Sabbath like their Jewish counterparts? Did they seek to abandon it? In this work, the author reviews two Jewish, two Christian, and fifteen Gentile primary sources as well as the New Testament to examine the prevalence of the Sabbath in the early Roman Empire.

### **How Did Sunday Become the First Day of the Week?**

How did the first day of the week, which does not have a name in the Bible, come to be called Sunday? How did the other days of the week come to have their names? In this work, you will learn about the history of two seven-day cycles in the early Roman Empire: The Biblical week and the pagan week. This study will also reveal insight into early Church history in the development of Sunday as a day of gathering among certain groups in early Christianity.

## **What Is the Bible Sabbath Association?**

The Bible Sabbath Association, also called the BSA, is a group of believers from all Sabbath keeping backgrounds who have a common belief in three things:

- 1) Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation.
- 2) The Ten Commandments are God's guiding principles for the Christian Life.
- 3) The Sabbath is from Friday Sunset to Saturday Sunset.

Founded in 1943, the purpose of the BSA is not to bring all churches under an umbrella. Instead, we serve as a support group to all Sabbath keeping groups.

We have a wide variety of materials to help you defend and affirm your belief in the Sabbath. Additionally, we provide materials to help churches reach their communities.

Our main purpose is to promote fellowship and cooperation between Sabbath-keepers of various groups; to promote Sabbath observance on a nondenominational basis; to restore respect and honor for the Ten Commandments as a whole, with special emphasis on the Fourth, which has been forgotten by most of the world; to encourage the repeal of laws which enforce the keeping of Sunday (or any day) by any unit of man's government; and to defeat the adoption of any calendar which would disrupt the seven-day weekly cycle.

Residents of the United States can deduct the offerings from their income, for tax purposes.



Consider the world around you. Did it come about by chance or by divine intervention? This work will examine the question of origins—how did everything that is come to be? In other words, how do we know God exists? We will approach these questions from the perspective of time and the existence of the seven-day weekly cycle.



**K**elly McDonald, Jr. is an ordained Evangelist at Hungry Hearts Ministries in Jackson, TN. He is also President of the Bible Sabbath Association (BSA). He has written a combined total of over 40 books and booklets on Church history and pursuing Jesus Christ. He has been preaching since 2007 and is available to speak at your church upon request.