

May 2011

Dear Brethren:

Greetings to you all in this new month of May, providing the chance in a letter to again confirm our love and appreciation for all of you who share that love of God's revealed truth originally delivered. Your continued faithfulness is part of the very fulfillment of God's promise that the gates of hell would never prevail against God's true church.

This month's letter will be devoted to what Mr. Armstrong taught about God's church neglecting to keep God's Sabbaths as they should. We need to review and wake up to the real seriousness of keeping God's Sabbaths holy.

Do you keep God's Sabbaths holy? Do you find God's weekly and annual Sabbaths a real delight and joy? Or is it a type of yoke or bondage to you? Are you sometimes glad when the Sabbath is over? Does time seem to drag endlessly or incessantly for you on God's Sabbaths? Do you have to force yourself to be in a right attitude about keeping God's Sabbaths holy? Do you pursue your own ways or find your own pleasures or speak your own words on God's Sabbaths? Any of these troublesome pitfalls, as Mr. Armstrong taught, can keep you out of God's Kingdom. Many times God's Sabbaths can become so familiar and commonplace to us that we do not realize we are becoming careless about them.

Within that body of critically important Old Covenant prophecies, God stressed and emphasized only three of the Ten Commandments—warnings against idolatry, graven images and Sabbath-breaking. He said, "Ye shall make you no idols nor graven image . . . for I am the Eternal your God. Ye shall keep my Sabbaths [plural] . . . I am the Eternal."

Then He promised, "If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; Then I will give you": unprecedented material prosperity, victory over your nation's enemies and the assurance that I will walk among you in the land (Leviticus 26:3–4, read verses 1–13).

"But if ye will not hearken unto me, and will not do all these commandments; And if ye shall despise my statutes, or if your soul abhor my judgments, so that ye will not do all my commandments, but that ye break my covenant: I also will do this unto you": I will bring upon you the curses of national chastisement involving terror, disease, conquest by enemies, drought, barrenness, wild beasts, pestilence, invasion and captivity—the promised fruit of disobedience (Leviticus 26:14–39).

Why stress and emphasize just these three commandments? It is because these three, more than others, were given to keep us in close contact with God! In actuality, we cannot see God! We are far more prone to lose contact with God, whom we do not see, than with close human beings we can see. Truly, it is easier to obey the commandments that regulate our relationship with human associates, whom we see and with whom we talk, than to keep a close and right relationship with God, whom we cannot see or hear.

Having our minds and interests set too closely upon material cares, duties, obligations, interests and responsibilities—unaccompanied by sufficient prayer, Bible study, meditation and fasting—becomes a form of idolatry, putting material and physical things before God in our minds, hearts and affections! The pride of life can hinder our keeping God's Sabbaths properly—really keeping them as God intended. Neglecting to keep God's Sabbaths as we should is no light thing. It is our most important called responsibility.

On the very seventh day of what we call Creation week, God Himself rested on the Sabbath day. He delighted in it! He greatly enjoyed that Sabbath day! He rested from His great accomplishments, drinking in the joy that comes from achievements, something we likewise ought to do every Sabbath. We should have accomplished worthwhile things like earning an income by our week's labor. And what can be more satisfying than the thrill of accomplishment?

On that seventh day of Creation week God set that day apart for holy use and purpose. He sanctified it from the other six days by resting. He made that interval of time, between what is now called Friday sunset and Saturday sunset, holy time. He made future time holy. Then in the fourth commandment he required us to: "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy . . . wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it" (Exodus 20:8–11). We cannot hallow a day, but we can keep holy a day God hallowed. One cannot keep as holy, time not made holy by God. No one can keep Sunday holy as the weekly Sabbath. No one can keep a Sunday Pentecost holy as an annual Sabbath. God never made them holy! To keep holy these holy times that belong to God means that God wants our time and our minds on His Sabbaths.

If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage [eternal life in God's Kingdom] of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it (Isaiah 58:13–14).

Three Facets to Keeping God's Sabbaths

Here are three important facets to keeping God's Sabbaths as we should. Let us analyze and examine them in detail.

1. Your ways. This means course of life or mode of action, that is: your employment, firm, company, practice, finances—the more serious business of making a livelihood. You should not involve yourself in doing what you normally do during the week, those things by which you feed, clothe and care for yourself and family, physically. This includes working at your job or business, working around the house, sewing, heavier cooking and cleaning, mowing the lawn, washing vehicles—all the things that pertain to your physical maintenance during the normal course of the week. This is the day to be about God's ways! You rest from doing your ways. Devote this time to God's business of eternal life. The Sabbaths give you extra time to pray, study and meditate on the things of God—His conversion process and mode of action—to increase the earnest of your inheritance. You will need all the spiritual knowledge about God's business you can acquire if you hope to be an active and living part of God's spiritual family one day.

2. Your pleasure. Your desire or delight, that which you take extra pleasure in doing. Some examples: hunting, fishing, golfing, swimming, hiking (a leisurely walk is okay), cards, movies (including TV movies), boating, four-wheeling, biking, snowmobiling, skiing, hobbies—those things which take up the majority of your leisure time. Whatever your pleasure or leisure time activity is, you should not engage in it on the Sabbath, neither in your thoughts. You should engage in God's pleasure on the Sabbath. What is God's pleasure? God has pleasure in those who separate themselves from this world (Ezra 10:11). God has pleasure in our uprightness (1 Chronicles 29:17). The Eternal takes pleasure in them that fear him (Psalm 147:11). The Eternal takes pleasure in His people (Psalm 149:4)—His begotten children, and so should we in each other. God's will (pleasure; *Strong's* #7522) is to have His law in action in our minds (Psalm 40:8). David said, "Teach me to do thy will [pleasure; *Strong's* #7522] for thou art my God." God has given us His Sabbaths to learn to have an interest and pleasure in His way of life. His good pleasure is to give us the Kingdom (Luke 12:32). "But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever" (Daniel 7:18).

3. Your words. This is the spiritual application of the first two principles. "... for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matthew 12:34). We talk about what we are thinking. "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7). Our words show what is going on in our minds and hearts. This is obviously the most difficult of all pitfalls. We may cease from our ways and our pleasures, but it is much more

difficult to cease thinking or talking about them. Really, it is no problem just to rest and do no physical exertion on the Sabbath. Some people do this regularly seven days a week! Those who cannot, will not, or do not control their minds call God's Sabbaths bondage, because they cannot wait until sunset to be about their ways and pleasures which they have been thinking about all day anyway.

It behooves us to pay close attention to what we discuss in fellowship on God's holy Sabbaths. We can defile, profane, make irreverent and unholy God's Sabbaths by not practicing proper fellowship, but instead speaking our own words. We must all be united on this. God is recording the names of those who properly worship Him by dwelling on His will, pleasures and objectives, and discussing them with fellow members of His *God family in embryo*. Our Sabbath conversations are of the utmost interest to God. "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name" (Malachi 3:16). One of God's names is TRUTH. To think upon God's name is to meditate on His revealed truth or doctrine as it was originally delivered. Effective fellowship requires that we have our minds on the things of God: His master plan, His work, His long-term conversion process in our lives, His desires for us to be a part of His future family, Kingdom, and His intervention in our lives when we cry out for help.

True Christian fellowship is a desire to share God's mind with one another as it was originally revealed to us in His word through His end-time servant. Once you are able to get your minds and thoughts upon God's pleasure and God's ways on God's Sabbaths, you will find out what a real delight and joy the Sabbath can be. "Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord" (Isaiah 58:14). How do we accomplish this?

How to Find Delight in the Sabbath

Firstly, we should never fellowship with brethren in the attitude that we are responsible for pointing out their errors. None of us is perfect (Matthew 7:3)! Secondly, review church literature on the revealed truth, listen to Sabbath messages and discuss them with one another. Thirdly, devote your Sabbath time to extra Bible study, extra prayer and especially extra meditation! This is your one time in the week when you do not have to worry about getting to the job, paying bills, working out schedules, cleaning house and all the other things you do that takes away from your study, prayer and meditation during the week. This is God's time! Free from all your daily cares and worries. Free to be completely absorbed in God and His Word.

However, there is one more basic element necessary to make all this possible. It revolves around the preparation day. Many do not or cannot properly observe the Sabbath because they have not understood how to prepare for it. The preparation day is any day which precedes immediately the weekly or annual Sabbaths. The preparation day is the time to get everything ready for the keeping of God's Sabbaths so you will not even be tempted to do it on the Sabbath. But, remember, the preparation day is only one day. Do not make the mistake of letting everything go—housecleaning, baking, cooking, grocery shopping, vehicle washing, sewing, mowing the lawn, household chores, doing laundry, etc.—until that day! Do this and you will find the Sabbath a day of total collapse, lacking enough energy to communicate with God, rather than a peaceful day of rest and relaxation! It is to be a day to prepare for the Sabbath, not a day to catch up on what you should have been doing all week. Also, do not work such long hours during the week that you short yourself on proper and adequate sleep and rest. Do that and you will find yourself an exhausted, dull, apathetic sleepyhead on the Sabbath—nodding, dozing and lethargic during services. I have seen many fall into this pattern week after week, defiling God's Sabbaths.

God wants us to plan to have everything in readiness to truly greet God's Sabbaths—making sure there are no other things pressing on our minds or schedules. Only when we have everything done and out of our minds can we really become absorbed in the Sabbath as we should. Plan it this way and you will be amazed at how much more you will delight in the Sabbath. Remember, God wants your time and your mind on His Sabbaths—not your endless trivialities which can clutter your mind, thoughts and words during a normal work week. The Sabbath is the day to completely put all that away from you. Read Mr. Raymond Cole's article in the June 1951 *Good News*, "How to Observe the Sabbath." It will answer your most perplexing questions. Is it important to God that we properly keep His Sabbaths? Go back and review the blessings for obedience and the curses for Sabbath-breaking in Leviticus 26.

Notice what God said to Judah through Jeremiah: "But if ye will not hearken unto me to hallow the sabbath day . . . then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched" (Jeremiah 17:27)! This was Judah's last warning before their plunge into slavery! They did not bear in mind the consequences of Sabbath-breaking. They did not think that Sabbath-keeping was that important to God. What were the results and consequences? "Now in the fifth month, in the tenth day of the month, which was the nineteenth year of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, came Nebuzaradon, captain of the guard . . . into Jerusalem, And burned the house of the Lord [Solomon's multimillion-dollar temple], and the king's house; and all the houses of Jerusalem, and all the houses of the great men, burned he with fire" (Jeremiah 52:12–13).

More than one hundred years before, the northern kingdom, Israel, had been driven out of their land by the Assyrians as slaves because of Sabbath-breaking (Ezekiel 20:10–25). Is the proper keeping of God's Sabbaths important? It sure is! In fact, failing to do so can keep you out of God's Kingdom!

What Has God Said to Us TODAY?

Let us review what Mr. Armstrong taught in his article from the May 1967 *Good News*, "Have We of All People, Been Neglecting God's Sabbath?" Mr. Armstrong makes plain from the New Testament how important it is for us, TODAY, not to be neglecting God's Sabbath:

I want all in God's church to NOTICE how God says this carelessness about His Sabbath can KEEP YOU FROM BEING BORN INTO GOD'S KINGDOM! It is JUST as important to US, *TODAY*, as to Judah, *then*.

The Book of Hebrews is the Book of the LIVING Christ, *TODAY*!

I want you to see, now, what this world's theologians have never SEEN!

I want to take you, quickly and brief, through the first four chapters. This was written for GOD'S CHURCH, for *TODAY*! And you will *see* why I keep emphasizing that word "*TODAY*!"

". . . God . . . has spoken to us by a Son—a Son whom he has appointed heir of the universe, as it was by him that he created the world. He, reflecting God's bright glory and stamped with God's own character, sustains the universe with his word of power . . ." (Hebrews 1:1–3, *Moffatt* translation). In the *King James Version* the "all things" in verse 3 means the entire universe. This introduction to the book of Hebrews shows us just how great is the living Christ. He is the reflection of God the Father's glory. He sustains the universe by the mighty power of His Word.

The following verses of chapter one show the glory of angels, but the far superior glory of the living Christ. "Are they [angels] not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs [or inheritors] of salvation" (Hebrews 1:14). "We [the inheritors of salvation] must therefore pay all the more attention to what we have heard [the truth once delivered], lest we drift away" (Hebrews 2:1, *Moffatt*). Has that not happened to most all of God's called? It certainly has! Pitiful scholarly reasoning. "How shall we [God's Spirit-begotten children] escape, if we neglect so great salvation . . . For

unto the angels hath He not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak" (Hebrews 2:3–5).

When the Apostle Paul spoke of "so great salvation," he was speaking of "the world to come"—Thy Kingdom come—to be ruled by Christ and God's Spirit-born saints. It has not been put in subjection to angels. To whom then? But David in a certain place (Psalm 8:4–8) testified, saying: "What is man [created with the nature and mind of Satan, the Devil], that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man [son of Adam], that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little [for a little while—*Revised Standard Version*] lower than the angels. . . ." Man is now, for a time, lower—but man in God's Family Kingdom to come will judge the world, including angels (1 Corinthians 6:2–3).

. . . Thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the work of thy hands [all that God has created]: Thou hast put all things [the universe] in subjection under his feet. For in that he [God] put all in subjection under him [man], he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things [the universe] put under him (Hebrews 2:7–8).

Our future salvation revolves around ruling with Jesus Christ in the Millennium, the White Throne Judgment period, and over the entire universe for all eternity. But what do we see now? "But we see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels [NOW], crowned with glory and honor. . . ." (Hebrews 2:9, *RSV*).

Jesus is now, already, in His glory as a Spirit God being, crowned and ruling the universe. His eyes flashed like fire, His voice spoke the word of God, His facial appearance like the radiant sun at high noon (Revelation 1:14–16). He is called the pioneer of our salvation (Hebrews 2:10, *RSV*). He is the trailblazer, the first of the firstfruits, spearheading the way for us as His CO-HEIRS. He has already succeeded to God's Family Kingdom! That is how great a salvation we could neglect if we are failing to keep God's Sabbaths as we should.

Wherefore, holy brethren [those who are keeping God's Sabbaths holy], partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; Who was faithful to him [the Father] that appointed him [Israel of the spirit], as also Moses was faithful in all his house [Israel of the flesh]. For this man [Christ, by whom all things were created] was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he [Christ] who hath builded [created] the house [nation of Israel] hath more honour than the house [the nation itself, of which Moses was only a part]. For every house [family household] is builded by some man; but he [Christ]

that built [created] all things [universe] is God [or of the Family of God]. And Moses verily [truly] was faithful in all his house [Israel of the flesh], as a servant, for a testimony [witness] of those things which were to be spoken after [of Christ]; But Christ as a son [of God] over his own house [Israel of the spirit]; whose house are we [God's church—His Kingdom in embryo], if we hold fast the confidence [bold trust in the faith once delivered] and the rejoicing of the hope [of our calling] firm unto the end (Hebrews 3:1–6).

Now, as Mr. Armstrong taught, we come to the heart of the message to us, TODAY. It revolves around a Sabbath Psalm. "Wherefore (as the Holy [Spirit] saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation [rebellion], in the day of temptation [trial] in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted [tested] me, proved me [what I could do], and saw my works [miraculous wonders] forty years" (Hebrews 3:7–9). These verses are quoted from Psalm 95. As David said to the congregation of Israel in his time, ". . . To day if you will hear His voice, Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness" (Psalm 95:7–8). The marginal references render the word "provocation" as "at Meribah," meaning rebellion, strife or contention and "temptation" as "Massah," meaning trial or testing. The *RSV* translates it: "Harden not your hearts, as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness." The *Moffatt* translation also renders it "Meribah" and "Massah."

Mr. Armstrong says that this ninety-fifth Psalm on which virtually the entire third and fourth chapters of Hebrews is based, is a Sabbath Psalm. It records what David said, or preached, to the congregation of Israel on a Sabbath day. It begins the Sabbath service: "O come, let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation! Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to him with songs of praise!" (Psalm 95:1–2, *RSV*). Mr. Armstrong taught that the congregation of Israel came before the Eternal in assembly on the Sabbath. David's message, or sermon, on that Sabbath begins in verse 7: "To day [and that "today" was a Sabbath day], if you will hear His voice. . . . " God inspired the third and fourth chapters of the book of Hebrews—His message to God's church today—around this same Sabbath message.

Mr. Armstrong taught that as David preached to the congregation of Israel then, so God inspires the warning to His church today. "Harden not your hearts, as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness" (Psalm 95:8, *RSV*). Mr. Armstrong taught that this rebellion was rebellion against God's Sabbath.

The ancient Israelites under Moses had come to the wilderness of Sin (Exodus 16:1). It was on the fifteenth day of the second month, a Sabbath, after leaving Egypt.

They left Egypt on "the morrow after the Passover" on the fifteenth day of the first month. That year the Passover fell on a Wednesday, and they left on a Thursday (Wednesday night). These Israelites had griped, grumbled, complained, doubted God and blamed Moses ever since they had left Egypt, in spite of the stupendous miracles God had performed in saving and preserving them. Now they "murmured" and blamed God and Moses because they were hungry.

Then said the Lord unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law or no And it came to pass, as Aaron spake unto the whole congregation of the children of Israel [on the Sabbath day], that they looked toward the wilderness, and, behold, the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, I have heard the murmuring of the children of Israel [on the Sabbath]: speak unto them, saying, At even [after the Sabbath is over] ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning [upon the first day of the week, Sunday] ye shall be filled with bread; and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God. And it came to pass, that at even [after the Sabbath was over] the quails came up, and covered the camp: and in the morning [upon the first day of the week—Sunday] the dew lay round about the host (Exodus 16:4, 10–13).

Now the children of Israel had food provided. But they still grumbled and complained and doubted God and demanded of Moses,

. . . Wherefore is this that thou hast brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst? And Moses cried unto the Lord, saying, What shall I do unto this people? they be almost ready to stone me. And the Lord said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the ROCK. (Exodus 17:3–6, emphasis mine).

. . . for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased Neither let us tempt [test] Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall (1 Corinthians 10:4–5, 9–12).

. . . and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. And he called the name of the place Massah [trial or testing], and Meribah [rebellion], because of the chiding [contention] of the children of Israel, and because they tempted [tested] the Lord, saying, Is the Lord among us, or not (Exodus 17:6–7)?

If we compare these scriptures in Exodus and 1 Corinthians, with Psalm 95 and Hebrews 3 and 4, we will get the message for us TODAY!

Joshua and Caleb, of that generation, were the only ones permitted to enter into the promised land of Palestine—a type of our entering into the Kingdom of God. "Today [on the Sabbath day in assembly], when you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing [the Sabbath was the test (Exodus 16:4)] in the wilderness, where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works [miracles] for forty years (Hebrews 3:7–9, *RSV*). Wherefore I was grieved [angry] with that generation, and said, They do alway err [go astray] in their heart; and they have not known [chosen to practice] my ways. So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest" (Hebrews 3:10–11, *KJV*). These passages are cited from Psalm 95:7–11.

Those Israelites under Moses were on their way to the Promised Land, even as we today are on our way, striving to enter into God's Kingdom. The word "rest" in verse 11, according to *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon*, denotes the fixed and tranquil abode promised to the Israelites in the land of Palestine. Entering the Promised Land would be a rest from the rigorous lifestyle of the wilderness. This is a type of a spiritual rest for God's called, who qualify at Christ's return to be born as spirit beings into the Family Kingdom of God—made immortal, incorruptible.

Because ancient Israel hardened their hearts by choosing not to practice, but to neglect, God's commands, profaning God's Sabbaths when He made that the very testing point to enter the Promised Land, God said of that generation, "They shall not enter my rest." And none but Joshua and Caleb of that generation did! But their children, who were born along the way in the wilderness, did enter under Joshua. God had promised this land to Abraham's seed because of his unquestioned obedience to Him. Regardless of the sins of Israel, God was bound by His promise to Abraham.

As Israel was preparing provisions for their journey across the Jordan River into Palestine, Joshua reminded the two-and-a-half tribes which were to settle east of the Jordan of the words Moses spoke earlier. "The Lord your God hath given you rest, and hath given you this land" (Joshua 1:13). The day they went over Jordan was the tenth day

of the first month (Joshua 4:19). According to Mr. Armstrong's article, this was the weekly Sabbath just before the Passover, which came the fourteenth day of that same first month. This Passover was also likely on a Wednesday. They entered that "rest," into Palestine—on a Sabbath day. Crossing the Jordan into Canaan would have been a short "Sabbath day's journey."

How significant! In the year 31 A.D., the Sabbath before the Passover day on which Jesus was crucified, was the day of His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. That entry was on the Sabbath, also the tenth day of the first month, and that year, again, the Passover came on a Wednesday.

Under Joshua, God's people were reminded upon entering the Promised Land, a type of our entering God's Kingdom, not to "harden their hearts" as their forefathers had done, profaning God's Sabbath; which prevented that generation from entering this "rest,"—the Promised Land. Later, in the days of King David, during a Sabbath-day service before the congregation (church) of Israel, David said: "To day [and it was the Sabbath day] if ye will hear his voice [those of King David's generation], Harden not your heart," as at Meribah [rebellion], and as in the day of Massah [trial and testing] in the wilderness (Psalm 95:7–8).

The New Testament command to keep the Sabbath for our generation in these last days, and for entry into God's Kingdom, comes to us through the living Christ, our High Priest.

Wherefore as the Holy [Spirit] saith [through the inspiration of His chosen servants, which makes them the words of God Himself], To day, if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation [contention], in the day of temptation [testing] in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted [tested] me, proved me, and saw my works forty years (Hebrews 3:7–9).

Most of God's people today—after the initial forty years—have turned away from the revealed truth about God's annual Sabbath of Pentecost. They rebelled in the moment of trial and testing. "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief [due to pagan principles, human scholarship or complacency], in departing from the living God." The Greek word for "departing" is the source of our word, "apostasy," which is a deliberate departure from God's originally-revealed truth. Paul's warning here is for us, because he knew it would happen—an apostasy from the living God. "But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin (Hebrews 3:12–13). Since the apostasy in 1974, most all of

God's people have had their minds hardened through the deceitfulness of complacency, compromise and watering down of the truth as it was originally revealed, to make it easier to live life in the flesh.

Notice, the word "To day" in verses 7 and 13 begins in your Bible with a capital "T." That is because, according to Mr. Armstrong, it is speaking of the holy Sabbath day. The *Moffatt* translation has it: "So long as this word "To-day" is uttered." It is printed with a capital "T" and in italics in this case for emphasis. It is put in quotes in a number of other translations. The Protestant churches and the theologians of this world have been blinded to this. But this is a message for God's True Church. "For we [the called of God] are [have become] made partakers of Christ [His Holy Spirit (Hebrews 6:4)], if we hold the beginning of our confidence [our faith in the doctrine once delivered] steadfast unto the end" (Hebrews 3:14).

Ancient Israel, who hardened their hearts, were under Moses. *We* have become partakers of Christ. We have God's Holy Spirit. They did not! We are without excuse! "While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice . . . So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief" (Hebrews 3:15, 19). The Greek word for "unbelief," according to *Thayer's*, indicates obstinate and rebellious disbelief, self-willed—the exact characteristics of God's apostate people today.

"Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest [God's Kingdom], any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us [God's called] was the gospel preached, as well as unto them." Ancient Israel had national promises of a physical land flowing with milk and honey. But we have eternal life in the Kingdom of God. The New Covenant for us is established on far better promises (Hebrews 8:6). "For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world." Here God speaks of the completion of the physical creation in six days by work. The next verse shows plainly He is speaking of God's Sabbath rest after the "works were finished from the foundation of the world." "For he spake in a certain place [Genesis 2:1–3] of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works" (Hebrews 4:1–4). Verse 4 refers directly back to the first weekly Sabbath day, as the type of the "rest" of which chapters 3 and 4 are speaking. The Sabbath day was the type of ancient Israel's "rest" by entering into the Promised Land. The Sabbath day and the Promised Land are types of our entering into the Kingdom of God. And we enter the Kingdom after six millennial days, at the end of six thousand years since Adam. The Millennium shall be a rest from Satan's enticement to sin for the whole mortal world, as well as for us who become immortal spirit beings in God's Kingdom. "And in this place again [again God spoke of the Sabbath day] they shall not enter into my rest." Here again

quoting from Psalm 95, which is David's weekly Sabbath-day message on a weekly Sabbath:

Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief [obstinate and rebellious disbelief]: Again, he limiteth [designates, points out, specifies, sets apart] a certain day [the Sabbath], saying in David, TO DAY [the Sabbath day], after so long a time [about five hundred years after the Israelites were shut out of Canaan, God was still using the word "To day"]; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts (Hebrews 4:5–7, emphasis mine).

The *certain day* God limited or set apart was that weekly Sabbath day, the type of the "rest" of our entering God's Kingdom. If we despise or profane or defile or neglect to keep God's Sabbath as we should, we shall lose out on the promised rest as those Israelites did! Keeping the Sabbath command as we should is of utmost importance. "For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he [God] not afterward have spoken of another day" (Hebrews 4:8).

The *Adam Clarke's Commentary* does surprisingly well in explaining properly this verse. "The Apostle shows that, although Joshua did bring the children of Israel into the Promised Land, yet this could not be the finally intended rest, because long after this time, the Holy Spirit by David, speaks of this rest." The "rest" of Israel entering the Promised Land was the type of the Kingdom of God, even as the Sabbath-day rest is a type of the Kingdom, God's millennial rest. The Apostle Paul concludes, "There remaineth, therefore, a rest [Greek: keeping of the seventh-day Sabbath] to the people of God" (Hebrews 4:9).

There are two Greek words in this chapter which are indifferently translated "rest": *katapausis* and *sabbatismos*. *Katapausis*, meaning a "cessation from labor" so that the weary body is rested and refreshed. *Sabbatismos*, meaning not only a rest from labor, but a keeping of a seventh-day Sabbath! This is a plain, direct New Testament command for God's church to keep God's Sabbath. In the plainest of language, rightly translated, this verse says the seventh-day Sabbath remains for God's people TODAY. "For he that is entered into his [God's] rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his" (Hebrews 4:10). How did God cease from His works? Genesis 2:1–3 shows it was by resting on the day He sanctified and made holy, which was the weekly Sabbath day. Plainly, to enter that *rest*—God's Kingdom—we also must cease from our six days' work, our own pleasure and speaking our own words on the Sabbath day.

Let us labour therefore [exertion of body and mind] to enter into that rest [millennial rest], lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief [indicating an obstinate, self-willed, complacent, rebellious disbelief in the truth as it was originally revealed] (Hebrews 4:11).

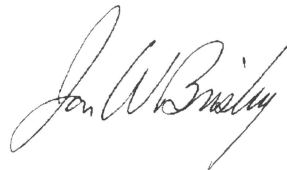
God wants us to labor six days to enter His Sabbath-day rest, as a type of our laboring against sin, deception, complacency and what we are by nature, to enter God's millennial rest in His Family Kingdom. Let us all unitedly be especially careful in fulfilling the spiritual application of seeking God's ways and His pleasure by not speaking our own words on the Sabbath. God wants our time and our minds on His Sabbath. God wants our delight to be in His word, His pleasures and His ways on His day of rest. If we do that, Christ lives in us. Then, when we fellowship with one another, we are fellowshipping with Christ.

May God bless you in your endeavor to strive to keep His day holy.

Your devoted servant in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Robert J. Litz".

Robert J. Litz

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jon W. Brisby".

Jon W. Brisby