

Why This Book?

Thirty-five years ago, in the first edition of this book, I answered this question by saying:

By far the majority of New Testament references to the Sabbath occur with regard to Jesus' Sabbath miracles of healing. Therefore these passages should especially interest Seventh-day Adventists. Interestingly, however, Adventists have written but little about them. Most references to these miracles of healing emphasize that Jesus' actions did not abolish the validity of the fourth commandment. Very few Adventist authors write of the positive significance of these miracles.

There is probably good reason for this. When we go to Scripture for references to the

Sabbath, we usually want to find passages that serve our apologetic purpose—that is, verses to help us prove the abiding validity of the Sabbath commandment. Since the passages describing Jesus' Sabbath miracles do not much serve for apologetic purposes, we tend to ignore them. But in doing so we have neglected a gold mine for revealing the meaning and experiential significance of the Sabbath.

Fortunately that situation has now changed, for several Adventist authors have addressed the Sabbath miracles. For example, Sigve Tonstad devotes a whole chapter to these miracles in his unparalleled work on the Sabbath.¹ Kendra Haloviak Valentine speaks to the meaning and literary beauty of the two Sabbath miracles recorded in John (chapters 5 and 9) in her scholarly and inspiring study of the seven miracles, or “signs,” in John.² Others include Herold Weiss³ and Skip MacCarty.⁴

Since these miracles have so much to offer to our understanding of the meaning of the Sabbath, I am grateful that Pacific Press has agreed to republish the present work after thirty-five years. Of the few things I have written, this is the one I receive the most inquiries

about. This edition has minor revisions and the addition of a final chapter.

This book does not attempt to prove the Sabbath to the one who is not already convinced. Rather, I have written it for Sabbath keepers. Jesus' Sabbath healing miracles have much to teach us about the Sabbath and its meaning for our lives today.

Before we turn to the miracles themselves, however, we need to survey two preliminary topics by way of background. First, we must know how the Sabbath was observed in Jesus' day. Then we can understand His actions against the backdrop of their historical setting. Second, we need to see the purpose and significance of Jesus' healing ministry in general. Once we do that, its relationship to the Sabbath will become clear. The following two chapters will treat these topics in turn.

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1. Sigve K. Tonstad, *The Lost Meaning of the Seventh Day* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2009), 181–203.
 2. Kendra Haloviak Valentine, *Signs to Life: Reading and Responding to John's Gospel* (Victoria, Australia: Signs Publishing Company, 2013), 41–52, 63–74.
 3. Herold Weiss, *A Day of Gladness: The Sabbath Among Jews and Christians in Antiquity* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 86–97.
 4. Skip MacCarty, "The Seventh-day Sabbath," in *Perspectives on the Sabbath: Four Views*, ed. Christopher John Danto (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2011), 20–23.