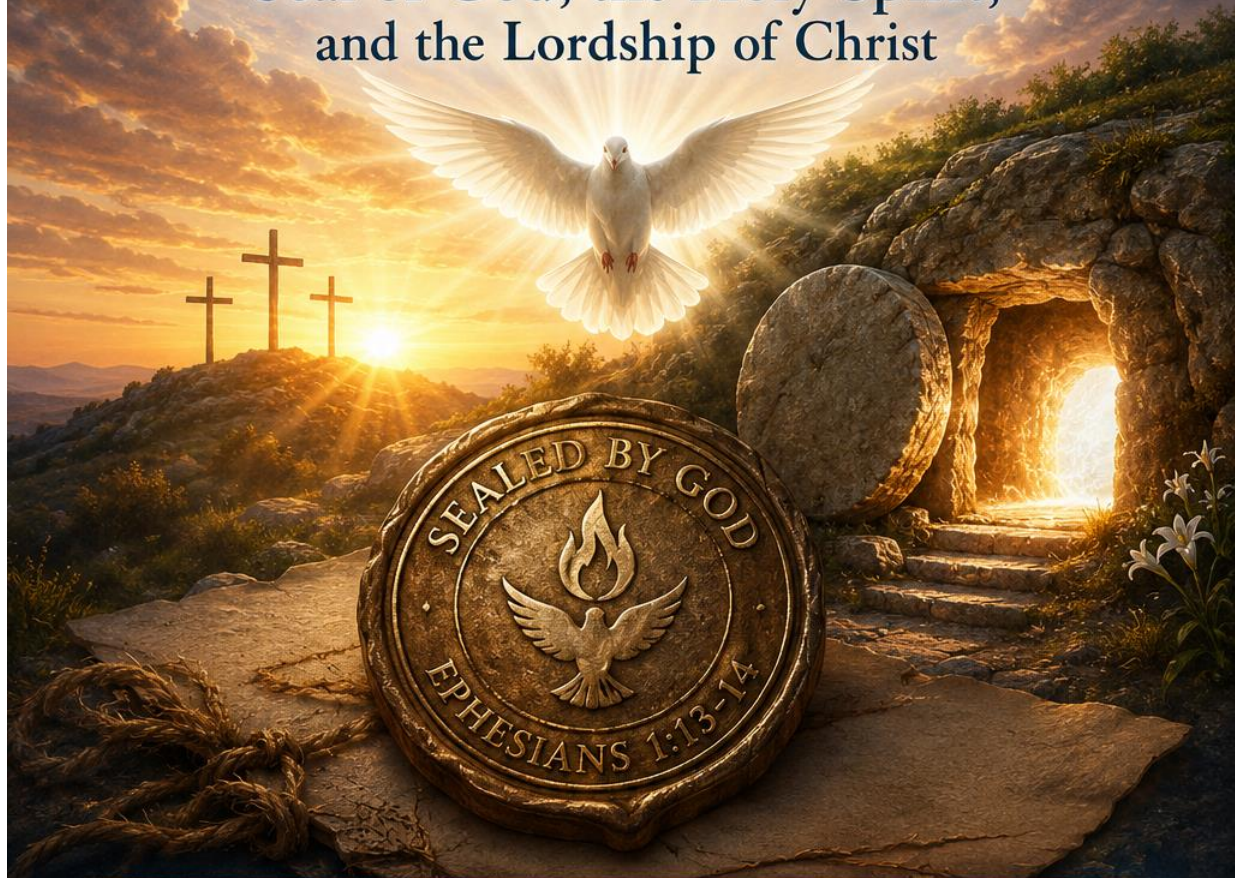


BEYOND *the* SABBATH SEAL

An Adventist Exploration of the
Seal of God, the Holy Spirit,
and the Lordship of Christ



CHRIST
OUR LORD



THE HOLY SPIRIT
OUR SEAL

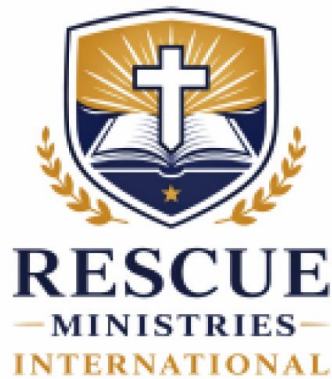


THE WORD
OUR GUIDE



TO GOD BE
THE GLORY

RESCUE MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL



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Beyond the Sabbath Seal

*An Adventist Exploration of the Seal of God,
the Holy Spirit, and the Lordship of Christ*

Rescue Ministries International

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Introduction

A Question Worth Asking

Why does the New Testament repeatedly identify the Holy Spirit as God's seal while many Christians identify a day as the final sign of loyalty?

This book was written with love, respect, and a sincere desire to examine Scripture together. It is addressed especially to our Seventh-day Adventist brothers and sisters, whose passion for the Word of God and the return of Christ is deeply admired. Yet love demands honesty — and honesty demands that we ask hard questions together.

The apostle Paul offers us a guiding principle that must govern all theological exploration:

"That you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written." —1

Corinthians 4:6

This is our commitment throughout these pages. We will not go beyond what is written. We will not assume what Scripture does not state. We will follow the biblical text wherever it leads — even when it challenges long-held traditions.

The central question of this book is not whether the Sabbath is biblical — it clearly is, rooted in creation and the covenant with Israel. The central question is this: Does the New Testament teach that the Sabbath is the seal of God for the New Covenant believer, and that Sunday observance constitutes the mark of the beast?

We believe the answer, when examined carefully and honestly, is no. And the reason matters enormously — because the true seal of God is the Holy Spirit, freely given to all who trust in Jesus Christ.

This is not a book against Adventists. It is a book for the gospel of Christ — which is greater than any calendar.

Chapter 1

The Seal of God in the New Testament — What Does Scripture Actually Say?

The Biblical Meaning of a Seal

In the ancient world, a seal was not merely decorative. It was an instrument of ownership, authority, and security. Kings sealed documents with their signet rings to authenticate them. Merchants sealed goods to mark them as their property. A seal communicated three things: identity (whose it is), authority (who placed it), and protection (it is secure under that authority).

When we ask "What is the seal of God?" we must ask what the New Testament — the covenant document of the church — actually teaches. The answer is striking in its clarity.

Ephesians 1:13–14 — The Promised Holy Spirit

"In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory." —

Ephesians 1:13–14

Paul could not be more explicit. The seal is the Holy Spirit. It is received at the moment of faith — not through calendar observance, not through Sabbath-keeping, but through hearing the gospel and believing. The Holy Spirit Himself is God's mark of ownership upon every believer.

2 Corinthians 1:21–22 — God's Ownership

"Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee." —2 Corinthians 1:21–22

Again, the seal and the Spirit are identified together. God seals believers by placing His Spirit within them. This is not a future event awaiting the mark of the beast crisis — it is the present, ongoing reality of every genuine Christian.

The Difference Between a Covenant Sign and a Covenant Seal

An important distinction must be made between a covenant sign and a covenant seal. In the Old Testament, the Sabbath functioned as a sign between God and Israel:

"Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever." —Exodus 31:16–17

This was a sign given specifically to Israel — not to all nations, not to the church, but to the children of Israel. The Sabbath identified who belonged to the Mosaic Covenant community.

In the New Covenant, the sign has not been upgraded to a seal — the seal has been transformed entirely. The New Covenant is ratified by the blood of Christ, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and written on the heart. The Spirit does not merely mark a day; He marks a person.

The New Testament never calls the Sabbath the seal of God. It never calls Sunday the mark of the beast. It consistently, repeatedly, and explicitly identifies the Holy Spirit as God's seal upon believers.

Chapter 2

Resurrection Morning and the Triumph of Christ — The Day Death Was Defeated

Christ's Resurrection on the First Day

All four Gospel writers are unanimous: Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week.

- Matthew 28:1 — "Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn..."
- Mark 16:2 — "Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb..."
- Luke 24:1 — "Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning..."
- John 20:1 — "Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early..."

This fourfold witness is not coincidental. It is covenantal. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the foundation event of the Christian faith — and God chose the first day of the week as the stage upon which it occurred.

The Significance of the Empty Tomb

The empty tomb on the first day of the week announced several profound realities simultaneously:

- Death has been conquered — the last enemy is defeated (1 Corinthians 15:26)
- The old has passed away — a new creation has begun (2 Corinthians 5:17)
- The first day echoes the original creation — when God said "Let there be light" (Genesis 1:3)
- Christ is declared to be the Son of God with power (Romans 1:4)

If Sunday is truly the mark of the beast, one is forced into an impossible conclusion: the day on which God's greatest redemptive act occurred — the resurrection of His Son — was stamped with the mark of Satan. This is not merely unlikely. It is theologically incoherent.

Jesus Appeared to His Disciples on the First Day

On the very day of His resurrection, Jesus appeared multiple times:

- To Mary Magdalene at the tomb (John 20:11–18)
- To the women on the road (Matthew 28:9–10)
- To the two disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13–35)
- To all the disciples gathered together (John 20:19–23)

It was on this day that Jesus breathed on them and said "Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22). The first impartation of the Spirit to the disciples was on Sunday. The first commission of the new covenant community was on Sunday. The first proclamation of peace — "Peace be with you" — was on Sunday.

The Centrality of the Risen Christ

The resurrection is not a detail of Christian faith — it is its very heartbeat. Paul declares:

*"If Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!" —1
Corinthians 15:17*

Every time believers have gathered on the first day of the week throughout history, they have been bearing witness to this: our Lord is risen. The day of resurrection gathering is not an act of rebellion against God — it is a proclamation of the gospel itself.

Chapter 3

Pentecost and the Birth of the Church — When the Spirit Was Poured Out

Understanding the Timing of Pentecost

The Feast of Pentecost (also called the Feast of Weeks) was commanded to be celebrated fifty days after the Feast of Firstfruits. Leviticus 23:15–16 gives the calculation:

"And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall be completed. Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath."

—Leviticus 23:15–16

Counting fifty days from the day after the Sabbath (Sunday) brings us to the first day of the week — Sunday. This is not a minor detail. It means that Pentecost — the day God poured out the Holy Spirit upon the church — fell on Sunday.

The First-Day Connection

Consider what God chose to do on Sunday:

- The resurrection of Jesus Christ — Sunday
- The post-resurrection appearances and the gift of the Spirit — Sunday
- The outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost — Sunday
- The birth of the New Covenant church — Sunday
- The first proclamation of the gospel to all nations — Sunday

This pattern of divine activity is not random. God has repeatedly chosen the first day of the week to accomplish the most decisive acts of New Covenant redemption. If Sunday carried the mark of the beast, then the entire foundation of New Covenant history was laid on a satanic day. This conclusion is not permitted by Scripture.

Acts 2 and the Coming of the Spirit

The events of Acts 2 are staggering in their scope:

- The Spirit was poured out on 120 disciples (Acts 2:1–4)
- Peter preached the first gospel sermon in church history (Acts 2:14–36)
- Three thousand souls were saved and baptized (Acts 2:38–41)
- The church began its common life of teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer (Acts 2:42)

All of this took place on Sunday. The Church was not born on Saturday. The Spirit was not poured out on Saturday. The first converts were not baptized on Saturday. The New Covenant community began its existence on the first day of the week.

The Formation of the New Covenant Community

The birth of the church was not a revision of Israel's institutions — it was the fulfillment and transformation of them. Just as Israel was constituted as a nation on the day the law was given at Sinai (which Jewish tradition places at Pentecost), so the new covenant people were constituted on Pentecost Sunday when the Spirit was given — not on tablets of stone, but written on the heart (2 Corinthians 3:3).

The Church was not established in spite of Sunday. It was established on Sunday, by the sovereign choice of God Himself.

Chapter 4

Shadow and Substance — The Sabbath in Light of Christ

The Purpose of Old Covenant Shadows

The Old Covenant was rich with types, shadows, and symbols — all pointing forward to their fulfillment in Christ. The sacrificial system pointed to the cross. The priesthood pointed to Christ's high priesthood. The temple pointed to the body of Christ and the indwelling Spirit. The Passover lamb pointed to the Lamb of God. Every element of the Mosaic system was a shadow designed to prepare God's people for the substance that was coming.

The Sabbath was no exception.

Colossians 2:16–17 Examined

"So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ." —Colossians 2:16–17

This passage is often discussed in Adventist theology, with various arguments made about which sabbaths are meant. But the plain reading of the text is clear: Paul includes sabbaths in a list of Old Covenant observances that are shadows. The substance — the reality to which they pointed — is found in Christ.

The weekly Sabbath, as a covenant sign, pointed to the rest that God provides for His people. That rest has been fully provided in Christ. He is the substance. The shadow remains a shadow.

The Sabbath as a Sign Between God and Israel

It is crucial to note what God Himself said about the Sabbath and its intended audience. In Exodus 31:16–17, God explicitly states:

"Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath... It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever." —Exodus 31:16–17

The Sabbath was a sign between God and Israel. The New Testament never transfers this sign to the church as the covenant community's defining mark. Instead, the defining marks of the new covenant people are faith in Christ, baptism, the Lord's Supper, and above all, the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Christ as the Fulfillment of Covenant Symbols

Jesus declared: "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill" (Matthew 5:17). The fulfillment of the law in Christ does not mean the law continues as an obligation upon believers — it means the law has reached

its intended destination. The arrow has hit the target. The shadow has given way to the reality.

The Sabbath was an arrow pointing to rest in God. Christ is that rest. Hebrews 4 makes this explicit, as we will explore in Chapter 7. To insist on the continuation of the shadow after the substance has arrived is to prefer the lesser thing — the finger pointing to the moon rather than the moon itself.

Christ did not come to confirm our shadows. He came to be our Substance.

Chapter 5

Paul's Warning About Religious Calendars — Days, Months, Seasons, and Years

Galatians 4:10–11 in Context

In writing to the Galatian churches, Paul confronts a serious doctrinal crisis: believers are being taught that faith in Christ is insufficient and that they must also observe the works of the law to be fully acceptable to God. His response is passionate and direct:

"But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? You observe days and months and seasons and years. I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain." —

Galatians 4:9–11

Paul calls the observance of days, months, seasons, and years a turning back to "weak and beggarly elements" — the elementary principles of the old covenant that were intended for a season of spiritual immaturity. Returning to calendar-based religion after receiving Christ is, in Paul's understanding, a regression — not a sign of faithfulness.

The Danger of Returning to Covenant Bondage

The Galatian problem was not merely cultural or calendrical — it was soteriological. It was about salvation. The false teachers insisted that certain covenant practices were necessary for full standing before God. Paul's response makes clear that adding any requirement beyond faith in Christ to the basis of acceptance before God is a corruption of the gospel itself (Galatians 1:6–9).

When Sunday-worship is condemned as the mark of the beast, and Sabbath-keeping is elevated as the seal of God, the logical implication is that one's standing before God is connected to which day one observes. This is precisely the kind of calendar-based religion Paul warns against.

Romans 14 and Liberty of Conscience

"One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it." —Romans 14:5–6

Paul here explicitly places day-observance in the category of matters of conscience — areas where Christians may differ without one being condemned by the other. He does not say "Sabbath-observance is mandatory" nor "Sunday-worship is forbidden." He treats the entire question as a matter of personal conviction before God.

This passage is difficult to reconcile with the idea that a specific day is the eschatological seal of God or mark of the beast. If one day were truly the seal of eternal loyalty and another were the mark of damnation, Paul could not treat the question with such freedom of conscience.

Justification by Faith Versus Calendar Observance

The heart of Paul's theology — and the heart of the Reformation — is justification by faith alone, through grace alone, in Christ alone. No day, no ritual, no observance contributes to one's standing before God. The sinner is declared righteous on the basis of Christ's perfect righteousness, received through faith.

You are not sealed by a day. You are sealed by the Spirit of the living God, received through faith in Jesus Christ.

Chapter 6

The Seal of the Spirit or the Sign of Sinai? — Examining Competing Claims

The Adventist Understanding of the Seal of God

In Seventh-day Adventist theology, the seal of God in the last days is identified with Sabbath observance. The argument proceeds roughly as follows: The Sabbath is God's sign of creation and covenant authority. In the final crisis, those who remain loyal to God will be identified by their Sabbath-keeping, while those who receive the mark of the beast will be identified by Sunday observance, especially under civil and religious compulsion.

This is a carefully constructed theological system, and those who hold it do so with sincerity. Our purpose is not to mock it but to examine it honestly in the light of Scripture.

Comparing Old Covenant Signs and New Covenant Realities

The central problem with identifying the Sabbath as the end-time seal of God is that it bypasses the explicit New Testament teaching on the seal entirely. The New Testament does not say "you were sealed with the Sabbath of promise." It says you were sealed with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13–14; 2 Corinthians 1:21–22; Ephesians 4:30).

To identify the seal of God with a day rather than the Spirit is to substitute an Old Covenant sign for the New Covenant reality. It is to choose the shadow over the substance — precisely the move the book of Hebrews warns against repeatedly.

The Ministry of the Spirit Versus the Ministry of the Letter

Paul's second letter to the Corinthians contains one of his most profound contrasts between the old and new covenants:

"But if the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which glory was passing away, how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious?"

—2 Corinthians 3:7–8

Paul calls the Mosaic covenant — the ministry of the letter engraved on stones — glorious but passing away. The new covenant is the ministry of the Spirit — more glorious, not passing away. The Sabbath commandment was engraved on stone. The Spirit is written on the heart. To prefer stone over Spirit, letter over life, is to misunderstand the entire trajectory of redemptive history.

Hebrews and the Superiority of Christ

The book of Hebrews was written to believers who were being tempted to return to the old covenant system. Its entire argument is the superiority of Christ:

- A better covenant (Hebrews 8:6)
- Better promises (Hebrews 8:6)
- A better sacrifice (Hebrews 9:23)
- A better High Priest (Hebrews 7:26)
- A better rest (Hebrews 4:9–10)

The author of Hebrews does not say "return to Sabbath-keeping as your covenant sign." He says "fix your eyes on Jesus" (Hebrews 12:2) and "let us draw near" to the throne of grace through the blood of Christ (Hebrews 10:19–22). The new covenant confidence is not calendar-based; it is Christ-based.

Where believers place their confidence matters eternally. We place ours not in a day, but in the One who conquered death on the first day of the week.

Chapter 7

Resting in Christ Every Day — The Greater Rest of the New Covenant

Hebrews 4 and God's Rest

The book of Hebrews presents its theology of rest in chapter 4 with remarkable depth. The author draws on three layers of rest: the creation rest of God (Genesis 2:2), the Promised Land rest of Israel (Numbers 14), and the rest that remains for the people of God.

"There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His." —Hebrews 4:9–10

The author's argument is not that the literal weekly Sabbath continues as the required rest for Christians. His argument is that all the earthly rests — creation rest, Canaan rest, Sabbath rest — were pointing forward to a greater rest: the rest of completed redemption in Christ.

The Believer's Continual Rest in Christ

When Jesus said "Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28), He was not speaking of Saturday afternoon rest. He was offering the rest that the Sabbath had always pointed toward — the rest of a conscience made clean by forgiveness, of a soul made right with God through His grace.

This rest is not one day per week. It is every day. The believer who has trusted in Christ rests in His finished work continuously — not only from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday, but in every moment of every day. "He who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works" — past tense, completed action. We have entered rest.

The Finished Work of the Cross

The great cry from the cross — "It is finished!" (John 19:30) — was the declaration that everything required for human redemption had been accomplished. The debt was paid. The sacrifice was made. The wrath was exhausted. The work was done.

The Sabbath, as a day of rest from labor, was a weekly rehearsal of a truth yet to come: there would be a day when all of God's redemptive work was finished, and His people could rest in that completion. That day came on Calvary. The rehearsal is over. The reality has arrived.

"For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified." —Hebrews 10:14

The Spirit's Ongoing Ministry

The Holy Spirit who seals every believer at the moment of faith does not seal them for one day per week. He seals them permanently, completely, and unconditionally until the day of redemption (Ephesians 4:30). The Spirit is not a weekly visitor; He is a permanent resident in the heart of every child of God.

This is the glory of the new covenant. We are not sealed by an outward observance. We are sealed from within, by the very Spirit of the living God. We carry the seal everywhere — not because of the day we observe, but because of the Person who lives within us.

Living Under Grace Rather Than Fear

One of the most troubling aspects of the Sunday-as-mark-of-the-beast teaching is the fear it produces. Believers who worship on Sunday are told they are in danger of receiving the mark of the beast. This fear, built not on explicit Scripture but on an elaborate system of deduction, has caused tremendous anguish, division, and confusion in the body of Christ.

The gospel of Jesus Christ does not call believers to fear a calendar. It calls them to "approach God's throne of grace with confidence" (Hebrews 4:16), knowing that they are sealed by His Spirit, justified by His grace, and accepted in the Beloved.

Where God has spoken freedom, let no one bind fear. Where God has given the Spirit as our seal, let no one substitute a day.

Conclusion

Christ Above Every Shadow

The Holy Spirit as God's Seal

We have traced the biblical evidence through seven chapters, and the conclusion is consistent throughout: the New Testament identifies the Holy Spirit — not a day, not a calendar observance — as the seal of God upon every believer. This is not a peripheral point; it is the heart of New Covenant theology.

Every believer who has trusted in Jesus Christ is sealed. Not provisionally. Not contingently upon future calendar compliance. Sealed — with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of their inheritance (Ephesians 1:13–14).

Christ as the Believer's Rest

The Sabbath was a beautiful shadow. Like all shadows, it pointed to something greater than itself. The greater thing is Christ — His person, His work, His resurrection, His ongoing priestly ministry, His indwelling Spirit. He is the rest that the Sabbath always anticipated.

To our Seventh-day Adventist brothers and sisters: we do not ask you to abandon reverence for Scripture or love for God. We ask you to consider whether the system you have been taught — particularly the claim that Sunday is the mark of the beast — is actually found in the Bible, or whether it is a theological construct that has been read into the Bible.

The Resurrection as the Center of Christian Faith

The first day of the week is not a threat to Christian faith — it is its proclamation. Every Sunday gathering of believers around the risen Lord is a living sermon: Death has been conquered. The tomb is empty. The Christ is risen. The Spirit has been poured out. The church is alive.

These are not the marks of a corrupted system. These are the marks of a redeemed people.

The Unity of the Gospel

The gospel unites all who trust in Christ — Jew and Gentile, Sabbath-keeper and Sunday-worshiper, those who esteem one day and those who esteem every day alike (Romans 14:5). What unites us is not a calendar; it is the cross of Christ, the empty tomb, and the indwelling Spirit.

We appeal to all believers: let us not divide the body of Christ over shadows. Let us together fix our eyes on the Substance — Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8).

Why Salvation Is Found in a Person Rather Than a Day

The final affirmation of this book is simply this: salvation is not found in a day. It is not found in Saturday observance or Sunday observance. It is not found in any calendar, any ritual, any tradition, or any system built by human hands.

Salvation is found in a Person — Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who died for sinners, rose on the third day, ascended to the Father's right hand, poured out His Spirit upon His church, and is coming again in glory.

Trust in Him. Be sealed by His Spirit. Rest in His finished work. And let no one judge you by a day.

Final Affirmation

"We are sealed by the Holy Spirit, justified by faith, saved by grace, and united to Christ. Our confidence rests not in a calendar, but in the risen Lord who conquered death and poured out His Spirit upon His people."



Rescue Ministries International

Truth Matters. Scripture Speaks. Christ Is Sufficient.