THE QUESTION

# Did the early church expect an end-time leader to bring back the seventh-day Sabbath?

*Asked by a THF member on May 9, 2026 · published November 9, 2026 · 10 numbered quotations · the 28 early Christian passages and 101 Bible verses we kept are listed at the back, each with a link.*

Read it online: thehistoricfaith.com/early-church-questions/did-the-early-church-expect-an-end-time-leader-to-bring-back-the-seventh

## The short answer *Interpretation: our reading of the passages, not their words*

No. These early writers never describe an end-time leader restoring the seventh-day Sabbath for all. Instead, they read the Sabbath as a picture of Christ's coming kingdom and final rest, which begins when the Lord returns and defeats the Antichrist. They taught Christians to keep a spiritual Sabbath and honor the Lord's Day.

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POINT 1 OF 8

## The Sabbath pictures Christ's coming kingdom

***Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say***

Hippolytus reads the seventh day as a sign of the future kingdom, when the saints reign with Christ after he comes from heaven. For him the end-time Sabbath is that kingdom, not a weekly law brought back.

**1** "For the Sabbath is the type and symbol of the future kingdom of the saints, when they will reign with Christ, when He comes from heaven, as John says in his Apocalypse."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Hippolytus,** *Exegetical Fragments* 1 (c. 200–236 AD) **Source 14, page 7** Read it in the library ›
*THF's updated English*

POINT 2 OF 8

## The true rest comes when the Son returns

***Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say***

Barnabas says God's rest on the seventh day points ahead to the return of his Son, who will judge the ungodly and renew creation. Only then will God truly rest.

**2** "This means that when His Son returns, He will destroy the time of the wicked, judge the ungodly, and change the sun, moon, and stars, then He will truly rest on the seventh day."

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Barnabas,** *Epistle of Barnabas* (c. 70–132 AD) **Source 1, page 6** Read it in the library ›
*THF's updated English*

POINT 3 OF 8

## The seventh day follows the Antichrist's defeat

***Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say***

Irenaeus describes an end-time ruler, the Antichrist, who will reign for a short time. The Lord then destroys him and brings the kingdom, which Irenaeus calls the rest and the sacred seventh day. He links the Sabbath to Christ's reign, not to this ruler.

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**3** “But when this Antichrist has devastated everything in this world, he will rule for three years and six months, and sit in the temple at Jerusalem; and then the Lord will come from heaven in the clouds, in the glory of the Father, sending this man and those who follow him into the lake of fire; but bringing for the righteous the times of the kingdom, that is, the rest, the sacred seventh day; and restoring to Abraham the promised inheritance, in which kingdom the Lord declared that “many coming from the east and from the west will sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.””

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Irenaeus,** *Against Heresies: Book V* (c. 175–202 AD) **Source 10, page 6** **Read it in the library ›**
*THF's updated English*

POINT 4 OF 8

## The true Sabbath of the righteous

***Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say***

In another place Irenaeus says the rewards Christ promised will come in the kingdom, which he calls the true Sabbath of the righteous. The Sabbath he expects is a gift from God to his people at the end.

**4** “These are to take place in the times of the kingdom, that is, on the seventh day, which has been sanctified, in which God rested from all the works He created, which is the true Sabbath of the righteous, during which they shall not be engaged in any earthly work; but will have a table prepared for them by God, providing them with all kinds of dishes.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Irenaeus,** *Against Heresies: Book V* (c. 175–202 AD) **Source 9, page 6** **Read it in the library ›**
*THF's updated English*

POINT 5 OF 8

## The last ruler seeks worship for himself

***Our note · compiled by machine learning · Interpretation: our reading of the passages, not their words***

Justin points to the ruler Daniel foretold, who speaks against the Most High. Lactantius says the evil king of the last days will call himself God and demand worship. Neither writer says this ruler will restore the Sabbath.

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**5** “the one Daniel foretold would rule for a time, times, and half a time, is already at hand, about to speak blasphemous things against the Most High”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Justin Martyr,** *Dialogue with Trypho* (c. 130–165 AD) **Source 7, page 6** Read it in the library ›
*THF's updated English*

**6** “He will appoint himself and call himself God, and will order that he himself be worshipped as the Son of God.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Lactantius,** *Divine Institutes* 17 (c. 290–320 AD) **Source 27, page 7** Read it in the library ›
*THF's updated English*

POINT 6 OF 8

## Isaiah's sabbath for all flesh fulfilled in Christ

***Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say***

Isaiah speaks of all flesh coming to worship from sabbath to sabbath. Tertullian reads this as fulfilled when every nation came to worship the Father through Jesus Christ, not as a future law for the world.

**7** “We understand this to have been fulfilled in the times of Christ, when all flesh—that is, every nation—came to worship God the Father in Jerusalem through Jesus Christ His Son, just as was predicted through the prophet: “Behold, proselytes through me shall go to You.””

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Tertullian,** *An Answer to the Jews* 4 (c. 196–220 AD) **Source 12, page 7** Read it in the library ›
*THF's updated English*

POINT 7 OF 8

## Christians kept a spiritual Sabbath now

***Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say***

Ignatius urges believers to keep the Sabbath in a spiritual way, by meditating on God's law, and then to honor the Lord's Day as the day of resurrection. Justin speaks of a Sabbath kept all the time.

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**8** “But let each of you keep the Sabbath in a spiritual manner, rejoicing in meditation on the law, not in relaxation of the body, admiring the craftsmanship of God, and not eating things prepared the day before, nor using lukewarm drinks, and walking within a prescribed space, nor finding delight in dancing and applause which have no sense in them.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Ignatius of Antioch,** *Epistle to the Magnesians* (c. 98–117 AD) **Source 2, page 6** Read it in the library ›
*THF's updated English*

**9** “The new law requires you to keep a perpetual Sabbath, and you, because you rest for one day, think you are pious, not understanding why this has been commanded to you: and if you eat unleavened bread, you say the will of God has been fulfilled.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Justin Martyr,** *Dialogue with Trypho* (c. 130–165 AD) **Source 5, page 6** Read it in the library ›
*THF's updated English*

POINT 8 OF 8

## Some honored both Sabbath and Lord's Day

***Our note · compiled by machine learning · From the text: says what the passages say***

The Apostolic Constitutions tell Christians to keep both days as feasts: the Sabbath for creation and the Lord's Day for the resurrection. This is church practice, not a prophecy about the end.

**10** “But keep the Sabbath and the Lord's Day as a festival, because the first is the memorial of creation, and the second is the memorial of the resurrection.”

EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITER **Apostolic Constitutions** (c. 250–380 AD) **Source 23, page 7** Read it in the library ›
*THF's updated English*

THE LIMITS

## What these passages don’t tell us

- None of these passages ties the end-time ruler to any law about the Sabbath, for or against.
- The writers differ on details, such as how the seventh day should be kept by Christians in their own time.
- A word-for-word match shows that a quotation really is in our text. It does not show that our reading of it is right, or who wrote each work.

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WHERE EVERY QUOTE CAME FROM

# The Sources

The 28 early Christian passages and 101 Bible verses we kept for this question (repeats and weak or off-topic search hits were left out): early Christian passages first (sources 1–28, grouped by writer, earliest first), then Bible verses in The Faith Once Delivered Bible (sources 29–73, in Bible order), then 56 more verses THF links to these passages, by reference. **Quote 1, page 2** beside a source shows where the study quotes it. Passages are in THF's updated English unless marked "1885 English" (the Roberts–Donaldson translation, public domain). "… [continues online]" marks a passage the library gave only in part. **On paper?** At **thehistoricfaith.com**, Bible verses are in the **Audio Bible** and early Christian writings in the **Library** (search for the title).

## EARLY CHRISTIAN WRITERS *28 passages from 10 writers*

### **Barnabas**, *c. 70–132 AD · source 1*

**1** *Epistle of Barnabas* **Quote 2, page 2** "He says to them, "Your new moons and your Sabbaths I cannot… [continues online] **read ›**

### **Ignatius of Antioch**, *c. 98–117 AD · sources 2–3*

**2** *Epistle to the Magnesians* **Quote 8, page 5** "after the observance of the Sabbath, let every friend of Christ keep the Lord's Day as a festival, the resurrection day, the queen and chief of all the days… [continues online] **read ›**

**3** *Epistle to the Trallians* (1885 English; on point 8) "Sabbath embraces the burial; the Lord's Day contains the resurrection… [continues online] **read ›**

### **Justin Martyr**, *c. 130–165 AD · sources 4–8*

**4** *Dialogue with Trypho* (1885 English; on point 5) "one shall arise after them; and he shall surpass the first in evil deeds, and he shall subdue three kings, and he shall speak words against the Most High, and… [continues online] **read ›**

**5** *Dialogue with Trypho* (1885 English) **Quote 9, page 5** "new law requires you to keep perpetual sabbath, and you, because you are idle for one day, suppose you are pious, not discerning why this has been commanded you: and… [continues online] **read ›**

**6** *Dialogue with Trypho* (1885 English) "sirs," I said, "it is possible for us to show how the eighth day possessed a certain mysterious import, which the seventh day did not possess, and which was promulgated… [continues online] **read ›**

**7** *Dialogue with Trypho* (1885 English) **Quote 5, page 4** "indeed happens from the time that our Lord Jesus Christ ascended to heaven, after He rose again from the dead, the times now running on to their consummation… [continues online] **read ›**

**8** *First Apology* (on point 8) in one place. The memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits. Then, when the reader has finished, the leader verbally… [continues online] **read ›**

### **Irenaeus**, *c. 175–202 AD · sources 9–10*

**9** *Against Heresies: Book V* **Quote 4, page 3** "are to take place in the times of the kingdom, that is… [continues online] **read ›**

**10** *Against Heresies: Book V* (1885 English) **Quote 3, page 3** "bringing in for the righteous the times of the kingdom, that is, the rest, the hallowed seventh day… [continues online] **read ›**

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**Tertullian**, *c. 196–220 AD · sources 11–13*

**11** *Against Marcion* 12 of the city of Jericho, carrying the Ark of the Covenant around the walls for eight straight days, and therefore on a Sabbath day, actually annulled the Sabbath by the… [continues online] **read ›**

**12** *An Answer to the Jews* 4 **Quote 7, page 4** "that Melchizedek, in his priesthood, received the law of the sabbath… [continues online] **read ›**

**13** *An Answer to the Jews* 4 (1885 English) "seven days, whencesoever they may have commenced, must necessarily include within them a sabbath-day… [continues online] **read ›**

**Hippolytus**, *c. 200–236 AD · sources 14–15*

**14** *Exegetical Fragments* 1 **Quote 1, page 2** "then, in six days God made all things, it follows that 6,000 years must be fulfilled… [continues online] **read ›**

**15** *Treatise on Christ and Antichrist* 1 (1885 English; on point 5) "9:27 By one week, therefore, he meant the last week which is to be at the end of the whole world of which week the two prophets Enoch and… [continues online] **read ›**

**Origen**, *c. 215–254 AD · sources 16–19*

**16** *Against Celsus* 61 (1885 English) "imagining the expression, He ceased on the seventh day, to be the same as this, He rested on the seventh day, he makes the remark: After this, indeed, he is… [continues online] **read ›**

**17** *De Principiis (On First Principles)* 4.1 "as in His coming now He fulfilled that law which has a shadow of good things to come, so also by that future glorious… [continues online] **read ›**

**18** *Commentary on John* 2 "it is not possible that the rest after the Sabbath should have come into existence from the seventh of our God… [continues online] **read ›**

**19** *De Principiis (On First Principles)* 4.1 (1885 English; on point 7) "the celebrated observance of the Sabbath also he thus speaks: You shall sit, everyone in your dwellings… [continues online] **read ›**

**Apostolic Constitutions**, *c. 250–380 AD · sources 20–23*

**20** *Apostolic Constitutions* (1885 English; on point 8) "Sabbath day excepting one, and every Lord's day, hold your solemn assemblies, and rejoice: for he will be guilty of sin who fasts on the Lord's day, being… [continues online] **read ›**

**21** *Apostolic Constitutions* (on point 8) "bounds around them, as within a holy circle, for the sake of instruction and for rejoicing on the seventh period. For this reason, one week was appointed, and seven weeks… [continues online] **read ›**

**22** *Apostolic Constitutions* (1885 English; on point 8) "shall observe the Sabbath, on account of Him who ceased from His work of creation, but ceased not from His work of providence: it is a rest for meditation of… [continues online] **read ›**

**23** *Apostolic Constitutions* (1885 English) **Quote 10, page 5** "there is one only Sabbath to be observed by you in the whole year, which is that of our Lord's burial, on which men ought to keep a fast… [continues online] **read ›**

**Archelaus**, *c. 270–300 AD · sources 24–25*

**24** *Disputation with Manes* 1 (on point 7) "from secular things and not to do any worldly kind of work at all. And this is called our Sabbath. He also added this in the law: that nothing senseless… [continues online] **read ›**

**25** *Disputation with Manes* 1 (1885 English) "this, the law's relation to the Sabbath, was like the servant who has charge of the bridegroom's chamber, and who prepares the same with all carefulness, and does… [continues online] **read ›**

**Lactantius**, *c. 290–320 AD · sources 26–28*

**26** *Divine Institutes* 14 (on point 1) "This is the Sabbath day, which in the language of the Hebrews received its name from… [continues online] **read ›**

**27** *Divine Institutes* 17 (1885 English) **Quote 6, page 4** "the close of the times draws near, a great prophet shall be sent from God to turn men to the knowledge of God, and he shall receive the power of… [continues online] **read ›**

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28 *Divine Institutes* 2 (1885 English) “God had determined, as the last time drew near, to send from heaven a great leader, who should reveal to foreign nations that which was taken away from a perfidious… [continues online] **read ›**

## THE BIBLE *45 verses, The Faith Once Delivered Bible (Old Testament from the Septuagint), in Bible order*

29 **Exodus 16:26** Six days you shall gather it; but on the seventh day there is a Sabbath, because there will be none on it.” **read ›**

30 **Exodus 16:29** See, the Lord has given you this day as the Sabbath; for this reason he gave you bread for two days on the sixth day. Each of you shall stay in your houses; let no one go out of his place on the seventh day.” **read ›**

31 **Exodus 16:30** So the people kept the Sabbath on the seventh day. **read ›**

32 **Exodus 20:8** Remember the day of the Sabbath, to keep it holy. **read ›**

33 **Exodus 31:15** Six days you shall do work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath, a holy rest to the Lord. Whoever does work on the seventh day shall be put to death. **read ›**

34 **Exodus 31:16** The children of Israel shall keep the Sabbaths, to observe them throughout their generations. **read ›**

35 **Exodus 35:2** Six days you shall do work, but on the seventh day there shall be rest: a holy Sabbath, a rest for the Lord. Whoever does work on it shall die. **read ›**

36 **Leviticus 16:31** It shall be to you a Sabbath of Sabbaths, a rest, and you shall humble your souls; it is a perpetual ordinance. **read ›**

37 **Leviticus 23:3** Six days you shall do work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath, a rest, a holy convocation to the Lord. You shall do no work; it is a Sabbath to the Lord in all your dwellings. **read ›**

38 **Leviticus 23:32** It shall be a Sabbath of Sabbaths for you, and you shall humble your souls. From the ninth day of the month, from evening to evening, you shall keep your Sabbaths.” **read ›**

39 **Leviticus 23:36** For seven days you shall offer whole burnt offerings to the Lord, and the eighth day shall be a holy convocation for you, and you shall offer whole burnt offerings to the Lord. It is the closing festival; you shall do no regular work. **read ›**

40 **Leviticus 23:39** And on the fifteenth day of this seventh month, when you have finished gathering the produce of the land, you shall keep a feast to the Lord for seven days. On the first day there shall be a rest, and on the eighth day a rest. **read ›**

41 **Leviticus 24:8** On the Sabbath day they shall be set out before the Lord continually, before the children of Israel, as an everlasting covenant. **read ›**

42 **Leviticus 25:6** The Sabbaths of the land shall be food for you, and for your manservant, your maidservant, your hired servant, and the temporary resident who stays with you, **read ›**

43 **Leviticus 26:34** Then the land shall enjoy its Sabbaths all the days of its desolation, **read ›**

44 **Numbers 28:25** And the seventh day shall be a holy convocation for you; you shall do no regular work on it. **read ›**

45 **Numbers 29:35** On the eighth day there shall be a closing festival for you; you shall do no regular work on it. **read ›**

46 **Ecclesiastes 10:8** He who digs a pit will fall into it; and a serpent will bite him who breaks down a hedge. **read ›**

47 **Isaiah 66:23** And it will be, from month to month and from Sabbath to Sabbath, that all flesh will come to worship before me in Jerusalem, said the Lord. **read ›**

48 **Ezekiel 44:24** And in a case of bloodshed they shall stand to decide it; they shall carry out my ordinances rightly, and judge my judgments, and they shall keep my laws and my statutes in all my feasts, and they shall sanctify my Sabbaths. **read ›**

49 **Daniel 7:25** And he will speak words against the Most High, and he will wear out the saints of the Most High, and he will intend to change times and law; and it will be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time. **read ›**

50 **Daniel 8:14** And he said to him, “Until evening and morning, two thousand four hundred days; and the sanctuary will be cleansed.” **read ›**

51 **Daniel 9:27** And one week will make a covenant strong for many; and in the half of the week my sacrifice and drink offering will be taken away; and upon the temple will be an abomination of desolations; and until the end of a time, an end will be set upon the desolation.” **read ›**

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52 **Micah 6:3** O my people, what have I done to you? Or how have I grieved you? Or how have I troubled you? Answer me. **read ›**

53 **1 Esdras 1:58** until the land has enjoyed its Sabbaths; all the time of its desolation it shall keep Sabbath, until the completion of seventy years. **read ›**

54 **1 Esdras 5:52** and after that, the continual offerings, and the sacrifices of the Sabbaths and of the new moons and of all the holy feasts. **read ›**

55 **1 Maccabees 1:45** and to forbid whole burnt offerings and sacrifice and drink offering in the sanctuary, and to profane Sabbaths and feasts, **read ›**

56 **1 Maccabees 2:41** So they took counsel on that day, saying, “If any man comes against us in battle on the Sabbath day, let us fight against him, and we shall certainly not all die as our brothers died in the hiding places.” **read ›**

57 **2 Maccabees 10:8** They decreed by public statute and vote that the whole nation of the Jews should keep these days every year. **read ›**

58 **2 Maccabees 15:4** And when they declared, “There is the living Lord himself, a Sovereign in heaven, who ordered the seventh day to be observed,” **read ›**

59 **3 Maccabees 7:23** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

60 **1 Enoch 53:6** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

61 **1 Enoch 60:6** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

62 **1 Enoch 82:18** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

63 **1 Enoch 91:12** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

64 **1 Enoch 91:14** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

65 **1 Enoch 93:4** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

66 **1 Enoch 93:6** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

67 **1 Enoch 93:9** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

68 **1 Enoch 93:10** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

69 **1 Enoch 108:2** Open the verse to read it. **read ›**

70 **Matthew 8:11** I tell you that many will come from the east and the west, and will sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, **read ›**

71 **Mark 2:28** Therefore the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.” **read ›**

72 **Hebrews 4:9** There remains therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God. **read ›**

73 **Revelation 10:7** but in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God is fulfilled, as he announced the good news to his slaves the prophets. **read ›**

## ALSO LINKED BY THF TO THESE PASSAGES *56 verses, by reference*

*Partly machine-linked: related to the passages, not always quoted in them. Each reference links to the verse in our audio Bible.*

**Genesis** 2:1

**Joshua** 6:2

**1 Samuel** 21:3

**Psalms** 90:4 · 110:1

**Isaiah** 1:13 · 1:14

**Jeremiah** 17:16

**Lamentations** 4:20

**Daniel** 7:9 · 7:13

**Matthew** 5:8 · 5:17 · 5:32 · 6:20 · 7:12 · 7:15 · 8:10 · 10:10 · 12:8 · 12:32 · 18:21 · 19:29 · 23:27 · 24:30

**Mark** 2:19 · 12:41

**Luke** 6:1 · 6:5 · 6:7 · 6:9 · 6:37 · 14:12 · 14:33 · 18:29

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**John** 3:36 · 5:17
**Acts** 2:4 · 2:42 · 10:42
**Romans** 2:29 · 12:3
**1 Corinthians** 7:18
**2 Corinthians** 13:3
**Galatians** 3:13 · 4:8 · 5:1
**Colossians** 1:26
**2 Thessalonians** 1:6
**1 Timothy** 1:4 · 1:9
**Hebrews** 1:2 · 4:15
**2 Peter** 3:8
**Revelation** 14:6 · 17:8

*Searched: Ante-Nicene Fathers volumes 1–9 and the Bible, including the Septuagint.*

## ABOUT THIS STUDY

A THF member asked “Did the early church expect an end-time leader to bring back the seventh-day Sabbath?” on May 9, 2026. The Historic Faith answered it as a public study on November 9, 2026.

**Library only.** This study was written only from The Historic Faith’s library of early-Christian writings and the Bible, never from the web. Every passage we kept from what the library gave is listed above, with a link to read it.

**How it was made.** Compiled by machine learning from The Historic Faith’s library of early-Christian writings and the Bible only. Every quotation was matched word for word against our stored text. Not yet reviewed by The Historic Faith.

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THE END OF THIS STUDY