

Whether this passage refers to the New Covenant gospel age, or to the eternal state, is not our discussion here. What we’re looking at is the *spiritual* nature of the prophecy. And this reference to “the Jewish priesthood” without any doubt is to be seen in a *spiritual* light. Following which in this immediate context we have two more Jewish institutions—the “new moon” celebration and the “Sabbath.” And as you can clearly see, these two are tightly interwoven together. They’re inseparable. Whatever interpretation one receives, the other is sure to follow. **They stand or fall together.** Honesty demands that both the new moon and the Sabbath be taken either *literally*, or *spiritually*. Anyone who has a problem with that simply needs to read the verse again and see that those two things that I’ve underlined in the text are *both* going in the exact same direction, and ending up in the exact same place!

Many things “Jewish” which were relevant in Old Testament times have no significance in this New Testament age. They have “passed away.” Isaiah, being an Old Testament prophet, was given things through his own understanding, which was an understanding saturated in the Jewish religion, the Old Covenant. Therefore, we ought not to count it strange that Isaiah’s prophecy of **the age to come** was colored with a Jewish tint, and included things right out of the Jewish religion. We should understand that these things are not to be taken literally, and carried over into the New Covenant age. They were merely used as vehicles to convey spiritual truths.

**THE SDA LEADERS & THOSE “NEW MOONS”**

If it was possible for the **SDA** leaders to remove these “new moons” from Isaiah’s prophecy, they would. But they can’t. So they’ve chosen to use it as it is. Even though their *literal* interpretation of it makes them look silly and creates confusion, they want it for the strength it gives to their Sabbath argument. In their Statement of Faith, **SDABelieve** (2006 ed.), they clearly state on page 274 that **“new moons”** have **“come to an end.”** Right along with Pentecost and Passover, they’re **“abolished.”** That’s their official stance. Yet on page 287, they give us a completely different picture. They not only have us keeping *the Sabbath* “throughout eternity,” but we’re right there *in glory* keeping the **“new moons”** as well! Take a look:

God intended that His people should observe the Sabbath throughout eternity: “As the new heavens and the New Earth which I will make will remain before me,” says the Lord, “so shall your descendants and your name remain...from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, all flesh shall come to worship before Me,” says the Lord (*Isaiah 66:22,23*).

This makes me wonder if the **SDA** readers are really paying attention. This is nothing but **confusion**, to say the least. It’s **“abolished”**—but there it is **“throughout eternity!”** If I was an Adventist, I’d surely be scratchin’ my head on that one! Then they further reinforce this confusion in their catechism, *Bible Answers*, by asking: “What seasons of worship will be observed in the new earth?” (*p75*). They then quote this passage in Isaiah: “...from one new moon to another, and from one

sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord.” **“What seasons?”** (plural)! But didn’t the new moon celebration **“come to an end”**—or did it? Here they have it continuing throughout the endless ages of eternity! Makes me wonder if Adventists are allowed to ask questions!

Because this **SDA** “contradiction” is so glaring—*abolished* yet *continuing!*—the **SDA** leaders generally choose to keep it *out-a-sight*. That’s right, they **are** uneasy about it; it’s just too “awkward” to be comfortable with. In two of their popular “Sabbath” tracts (*Light Bearers Ministry*), they eliminate the problem altogether by sweeping these “new moons” completely *under the rug!* See for yourself in **Rest For All** (*col 2*):

...when Eden shall bloom on earth again, God’s holy rest day will be honored by all beneath the sun. “From one Sabbath to another” the inhabitants of the glorified new earth shall go up “to worship before Me, saith the Lord” (*Isaiah 66:23*).

They vanished! Those new moons that were giving so much trouble *have disappeared!* Then in **Sabbath Rest** (*col 5*):

Having...entered into His rest, you will be privileged to worship Almighty God...from Sabbath to Sabbath through all eternity. For that “from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before Me, saith the Lord” (*Isaiah 66:23*).

Again, they’re gone! All of what you’re seeing here: half-quotes, contradiction, confusion, concealment—these are the type of things that usually come out of a *literalized* Old Covenant prophecy that should have been seen through New Covenant *spiritual* eyes! But in spite of all this, the **SDA** leaders will never let go of this passage! They’re desperate to get their hands on anything in the Bible they can use to support their Sabbath doctrine—even if it means *half-literalizing* Isaiah’s prophecy! As long as they don’t get caught! If nobody really notices, and it doesn’t cause a stir, and people generally accept it, then let it stand! They got away with it! This is one of their *key* Sabbath proof-texts. And don’t you agree, it makes for a *powerful weapon* to enforce their message!—“Why, how stupid can people be! Look! We’ll be keeping the Sabbath in heaven. How ridiculous to say we’re not supposed to keep it now!” That’s a *big* stick! They pack their assemblies this way!

But for every **“honest” SDA** who’s reading this tract, there **is a problem**. A spiritually enlightened conscience *cannot* be at ease with this. Both the new moon and the Sabbath *must* be taken either literally or spiritually. Just **one** cannot exist in this New Covenant age. It doesn’t work that way. You know that! And you also know that the **SDA** Church is using this passage in a *half-literal* way. They won’t come right out and say that; but by demanding that people observe the Sabbath *today*, but not the new moon celebration,—that’s *half-literal*. And when **YOU** do the same—use this text to persuade people to keep the Sabbath—with *full knowledge*, you’re “handling the Word of God deceitfully” (*2 Cor 4:2*). If **Isaiah 66:23** proves that the Sabbath is relevant in a *literal* sense for today, then new moons are to be kept *literally* right on to the end of time. This text does not support Sabbath doctrine. □



**P**aul directly states that the Sabbath was abolished. With other Jewish ordinances, the Sabbath day was blotted out and nailed to the cross. “Therefore,” he says, “do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a new moon celebration or a Sabbath day” **Col 2:16** (*NIV*). This passage of Paul refutes without question Sabbath doctrine. Adventists get around it by claiming that Paul is *not* speaking about “the Sabbath day.” Instead, they assert that “the sabbaths here referred to are the ceremonial sabbaths of the Jewish annual festivals...” **SDABelieve** (*p287*). Let’s take a look at it and give it a fair assessment.

**“SABBATH” — “SABBATHS”**

The word Sabbath is translated in the singular **and** plural in **Col 2:16**; for example: “sabbath” (*RSV, AMP*); “sabbath day” (*NIV, NASB*); “sabbaths” (*NKJV, NLT*); “sabbath days” (*KJV, NET*). All are proper, and all refer to the weekly Sabbath. In Scripture, both the singular and plural are used for the weekly Sabbath: “My *sabbaths* [plural] shall ye keep for *it* [singular] is a sign between me and you” (*Exod 31:13*); “I gave them my *sabbaths*” (*Ezek 20:12*); “Is it lawful to heal on the *sabbath days*?” (*Mat 12:10*); “On the *sabbath days* [plural] the priests in the temple profane the *sabbath* [singular]” (*Mat 12:5*); “Let no man judge you...in respect of the *sabbath days*” **Col 2:16** (*KJV*). These all refer to the weekly Sabbath—singular or plural, there’s no difference.

**THE PLURAL SABBATON**

The **SDA** leaders say that because “sabbaton” in **Col 2:16** is **plural** it cannot refer to a “weekly” Sabbath, but that it must refer to the “annual” ceremonial sabbaths. This objection is easily overturned. Just because sabbaton is plural does not mean that it cannot have a singular meaning. All three of the following verses have sabbaton, plural, and they all refer to the weekly Sabbath: “In the end of *the sabbath*” (*Mat 28:1*); “Jesus went on *the sabbath day*” (*Mat 12:1*); “Do not let anyone judge you...with regard to...*a sabbath day*” **Col 2:16**. These use the exact same word, sabbaton, plural, and they’re all translated singular. On “Sabbaton,” the Exegetical Dictionary of the NT says (*PC Study Bible*): “Of 68 NT occurrences, 24 are plural. Both in singular and plural, sabbaton invariably refers to the Sabbath.” That’s the point we’re making here—**“Both in singular and plural, ‘sabbaton’ invariably refers to the Sabbath.”** Now hear this: Of the **68** occurrences of sabbaton in the NT, the **SDA** says that only **one** refers to “annual” sabbaths. **One!** That’s right! **Only Col 2:16!** Just this one occurrence where Paul says the Sabbath has been **“nailed to the cross”** (*v14*), they throw up a red flag, and *insist* that “the Sabbath day” is **not** referred to. Only in this one instance! But **“24 sabbatons are**

**plural”**—**24!** But they pick out **this one alone**, and say that because it’s “plural” it cannot mean the weekly Sabbath! Does that make sense? What about *all the other* plural occurrences? *They* didn’t get a red flag. But this one *has to be tagged* “annual festivals.” Now tell me that doesn’t smell fishy! It’s a classic example of an interpretation driven by an agenda!

**THE SAME FORM OF THE WORD!**

**“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy”** (*Exod 20:8*). Paul not only uses the *same word* that’s used in **Exod 20:8**, but he uses the exact *same form* of the word that’s used right there in the 4th Commandment! **Sabbaton, genitive plural!** That’s right! In the Septuagint (the Jewish translation of the OT into Greek) the **Sabbath day** of **Exod 20:8** is the exact same **Sabbath day** of **Col 2:16!**—letter for letter! Paul surely meant that very Sabbath day. Also in the 4th Commandment, each time the word Sabbath occurs (*vv8-11*), it’s *plural* in Greek. So if the use of the plural in **Col 2** shows anything, it shows that **the Sabbath** of the **“Ten Commandments”** is meant!

The *form* of the word Paul used in **Col 2:16** is often used in other texts for the *weekly* Sabbath. The following examples all use sabbaton, genitive plural, and all refer to the weekly Sabbath: “Kindle no fire...upon *the sabbath day*” (*Exod 35:3*); “Every *sabbath*...set it in order” (*Lev 24:8*); “Gathered sticks on *the sabbath day*” (*Num 15:32*); “Keep *the sabbath day*” (*Deut 5:12*); “Turn away thy foot from *the sabbath*” (*Isaiah 58:13*); “In the end of *the sabbath*” (*Mat 28:1*); “He went into the synagogue on *the sabbath day*” (*Luke 4:16*); “Do not let anyone judge you...with regard to...*a sabbath day*” **Col 2:16**. Same word! Same form of the word! Same **seventh-day Sabbath** in every single text!

**A “BRAINLESS” NOTION!**

“Do not let anyone judge you...with regard to a religious festival, a new moon celebration or a Sabbath day” **Col 2:16**. Focus on these three things: festivals, new moons, sabbaths, and think about this: The “festivals and new moons” included **all** the holy days of the Jews—**except** the weekly Sabbath. Did you get that? Now, by Paul referring to the “festivals and new moons,” what did that leave for him to bring up? Only one thing—**the weekly Sabbath**. Are you still with me? This is not complicated. **The weekly Sabbath** was all that was left for Paul to mention. Where he has sabbaton, nothing else will fit! This sabbaton has to be **the weekly Sabbath!** Now let’s listen to a view of **Col 2:16** that doesn’t make any sense at all, taken from **SDABelieve** (*p287*):

Paul made clear that Christians were under no obligation to keep these yearly rest days...Said he, “Therefore 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” (*Col 2:16,17*). Since the context of this passage deals with ritual matters, the sabbaths here referred to are the ceremonial sabbaths of the Jewish annual festivals...

Does anyone besides *me* see a “problem” with this? Evidently, in their zeal for the Sabbath, **SDA** readers have all missed it.

What we have, listening to Paul, is sound and sensible. See it in their quote: **(1)** festivals **(2)** new moons **(3)** sabbaths. Paul follows right through covering **all** the Jewish holy days. But what we have listening to them is totally the opposite. In fact, it makes Paul look “brainless.” That’s right! Instead of him covering these holy days in order, with Scriptural precision, he blunders the whole thing by unthinkingly *repeating himself*! They have him saying: festivals, new moons, festivals! See the last word of the quote. They’re saying that the sabbaths here are “festivals!” But he’s *already mentioned* the “festivals.” This man of God, led and inspired by the Holy Spirit, is *not* going to make a joke of himself in such a manner! The **SDA** leaders may, and they prove it here. These are *their* words, not Paul’s! This is characteristic of the **SDA**—just another attempt to save their Sabbath at any cost! *even* if it makes the learned apostle look stupid! It’s nothing but an **SDA** nonsensical notion!

**DAILY, WEEKLY, MONTHLY, YEARLY!**

What settles it beyond a reasonable doubt that **Col 2:16** refers to the *weekly* Sabbaths is the fact that exactly the same list of holy days given by Paul is given time after time in the OT, where we *know* it means the seventh day. Numbers 28 & 29 lists just what offerings shall be made on each day of the whole year. The first were the **daily offerings** of “two lambs” for a continual burnt offering. One lamb in the morning and the other in the evening (*vv3,4*). Then the offerings on the **weekly Sabbath**: “On the sabbath day two lambs of the first year without spot” (*vv9,10*). Then the **new moons**: “In the beginning of your months ye shall offer a burnt offering unto the Lord” (*vv11-15*). Next the **annual feast days**: “In the fourteenth day of the first month is the passover of the Lord” (*v16*). Then follows a complete list of all the annual feast days, closing with these words, “These things shall ye do unto the Lord in your set feasts” (*29:39*). These are the **daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly** offerings. Notice in the following texts that we find almost the same words Paul used in **Col 2:16**.

**1 Chron 23:30,31**—“To stand every morning [**daily**] to thank and praise the Lord, and likewise at even; and to offer all burnt sacrifices unto the Lord in the sabbaths [**weekly**], in the new moons [**monthly**], and on the set feasts [**yearly**]...” As plain as can be, the “weekly” Sabbaths are here meant.

**2 Chron 2:4**—“...for the burnt offerings morning and evening [**daily**], on the sabbaths [**weekly**], on the new moons [**monthly**], and on the solemn feasts [**yearly**]...” The same list again, and in the same order, hence the weekly Sabbaths are the ones named. Besides, it would be absurd to suppose that Solomon would name all the other holy days, but say nothing about the chiefest of all Jewish days, the weekly Sabbaths.

**2 Chron 31:3**—“The morning and evening burnt offerings [**daily**], and the burnt offerings for the sabbaths [**weekly**], and for the new moons [**monthly**], and for the set feasts [**yearly**].” If these Sabbaths are not the *weekly* Sabbaths, then the Lord names the daily, monthly and yearly offerings, but **skips** the **weekly** offerings! That could never be! But it has to

be—if the **SDA** is right about **Col 2:16**! for it’s the same as all these. As these texts detail what service is to be performed on each of the holy days, it’s silly to suppose that all the other sacred days in the whole year would be carefully mentioned, while *no reference* is made to the **weekly** Sabbaths, the most important and most numerous of all the sacred days.

**Neh 10:33**—“...for the continual burnt offering [**daily**], of the sabbaths [**weekly**], of the new moons [**monthly**], for the set feasts [**yearly**].” Either the *weekly* Sabbaths are meant here, or reference to worship on the Sabbath is always studiously avoided, while all the rest is carefully mentioned.

**YEARLY, MONTHLY, WEEKLY, & PAUL!**

**Ezek 45:17**—“Offerings in the feasts [**yearly**], and in the new moons [**monthly**], and in the sabbaths [**weekly**].” Here are named exactly the *same days* that Paul gives in **Col 2:16**, and in exactly the *same order*!—yearly, monthly, weekly!

**Hosea 2:11**—“I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days [**yearly**], her new moons [**monthly**], and her sabbaths [**weekly**].” Here again, the exact *same order* that Paul gives in **Col 2:16**!—yearly, monthly, weekly!

**Col 2:16**—“Let no man therefore judge you...in respect of a feast day [**yearly**] or a new moon [**monthly**] or a sabbath day [**weekly**]” (*Asv*). There it is!—yearly, monthly, weekly! Paul was a “**master**” in the Scriptures! It is not even thinkable, that as he penned **Col 2:16**, these two texts, **Ezekiel & Hosea**, were not perfectly in line in his mind!—**yearly** feast days, **monthly** new moons, and **weekly** Sabbath days!

What we’re doing here is *crucial* to arriving at a proper interpretation of this text!—“rightly dividing the Word of truth” (*2 Tim 2:15*)—comparing Scripture with Scripture. Any one who cannot see that Paul includes the **weekly** Sabbath in **Col 2:16**—as part of that entire Jewish system that’s *over* and *done with*—is willfully blinded by their own prejudice!

Consider this: Nowhere in all of Paul’s instructions to the churches does he say *one word* in favor of keeping the Sabbath. Time and again he instructs in every other duty, but never a word about keeping the Sabbath in *all* of his epistles. Most of those to whom he wrote were Gentiles who had never kept the Sabbath at all; thus, they *needed instructions* in keeping it! But not a word—**not one word**! But we do find him giving instructions about “the first day of the week” (*1 Cor 16:1,2*).

**“HO, HO, HO” — AN EMPTY OBJECTION**

The **SDA** leaders contend that in **Col 2:16** “the sabbath days” cannot refer to the *weekly* Sabbath because the definite article “the” is not in the text. This word “the” is **ho** in Greek. So where the KJV has “the sabbath days,” it’s actually just “sabbath days”—no **ho**. Again, though, all that is needed to dismiss this flimsy objection is simply to look at a few other verses where **ho** is not used. In each of the following passages, there is no **ho**—“the” is not there in the original—yet all of them refer to the *weekly* Sabbath! **Matthew 28:1**—“In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the

week.” **John 5:9**—“Immediately the man was made whole, and...on the same day was the sabbath.” **Verse 10**—“The Jews therefore said...It is the sabbath day.” **Verse 16**—“Jesus...had done these things on the sabbath day.” **Col 2:16**—“Let no man therefore judge you in...the sabbath days.” That’s five straight passages with no **ho** in the text. If the first four can refer to the *weekly* Sabbath, as they do, then **Col 2:16** can just as well!

**THE SABBATH POINTS BOTH WAYS!**

One of the huge arguments of the **SDA** on **Col 2:16** is that they say “the Sabbaths” of this text are “a shadow of things to come” (*v17*); that is, they *point forward*. Adventists are taught that that’s *not* true of the “seventh-day Sabbath.” They have been instructed, that because it’s a memorial of creation, it *points back* to the beginning, not forward. And this is a vital part of their **SDA** training—that the Sabbath *cannot* point both ways. But this is an assertion without any proof. How do we know that it cannot point both ways? The “**passover**” was a Jewish memorial of their deliverance from Egypt, and always pointed *back* to that event—“This day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations” (*Exod 12:14*). Yet we know that the passover was one of the “annual feasts” of **Col 2:16** that Paul in **v17** clearly identifies as “a shadow of things to come,” How gloriously does it prefigure Jesus! “Christ our passover is sacrificed for us” (*1 Cor 5:7*). All of the annual feasts were types of Christ in some way, and yet all were memorials also of past events! If then, these feasts could be *both* memorials looking *back* and types pointing *forward*,—so can the Sabbath!

“These are a **shadow** of the things that were to come; the *reality*, however, is found *in Christ*” (*v17 NIV*). The Sabbath was a **shadow** that was fulfilled in Christ—the reality! When a type and shadow is fulfilled in a person, you no longer focus on the shadow. Lambs were slaughtered under the Old Covenant; but when Jesus, the fulfillment, came and offered himself, the sacrificing of animals *ceased*. The same truth applies to the Sabbath! Sabbath-keeping is *over and done with* since Christ has come. Jesus is the *reality* of “rest” for the believer! “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and *I will give you rest*...and ye shall find *rest* unto your souls” (*Matt 11:28*). This is the *rest* so often spoken of in Scripture: *in Isaiah*, “His rest shall be glorious” (*11:10*); and *in Jeremiah*, “Ye shall find rest for your souls” (*6:16*). The *Sabbath* “rest” of the OT prefigured the *salvation* “rest” that we have by faith in Jesus, and the *eternal* “rest” that we shall have in glory! Jesus is the fulfilling reality of the Sabbath rest of the Old Covenant; and once the reality comes, the type/shadow is discontinued.

The passage we saw in **Hosea** is a clear-cut prophecy that all the Jewish holy days would end (*2:11*): “I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her **feast days**, her **new moons**, and her **sabbaths**.” They met their end in Christ, and have ceased!

—Dan Shanks

*Grateful acknowledgment to D.M. Canright for portions of this tract*

**DOMINICA FREE PRESS** Box 2168, Roseau, Dominica, West Indies

**“From one NEW MOON to another, and from one SABBATH to another”**  
**Isaiah 66:23**

This passage in Isaiah ranks as one of the most popular verses used by Seventh-day Adventists (**SDA**). They are taught that it refers to special seasons of worship on the new earth. Thus, they see it as a powerful argument they can use to convince people that they should be keeping the Sabbath *now*. Let’s consider this prophecy and see if our friends of the **SDA** Church are really standing on solid ground here. The “new moons” that Isaiah speaks of were an important Jewish festival—“At your times of rejoicing—your appointed feasts and new moon festivals—you are to sound the trumpets...” (*Num 10:10 NIV*). “I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, and her sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts” (*Hosea 2:11*). It is this Jewish festival that Isaiah *links side by side* with the Sabbath. To accurately interpret Isaiah then, we’ll have to think “Sabbath **and** new moon,” or “new moon **and** Sabbath”—or else, we’re *undoing* this passage! Isaiah has these two things yoked together. If they’re not joined in our presentation of this verse, we’re not in tune with Isaiah.

**“FROM ONE NEW MOON TO ANOTHER, AND FROM ONE SABBATH TO ANOTHER”**

To help us find the true meaning of this text we need to understand something about the other verses leading up to it. Otherwise, we’ll probably be giving this passage whatever kind of meaning we want to. Briefly, in the latter half of Isaiah 66, particularly following **verse 15**, “Behold, the Lord will come with fire,” Isaiah is prophesying of a day when all nations will see the glory of the Lord (**v18**), and will declare his glory among the Gentiles (**v19**), and will come to his holy mountain Jerusalem (**v20**). Following which, in this prophecy of **an age to come**, Isaiah has, “**I will also take of them for priests and for Levites, saith the Lord**” (**v21**). What are we supposed to do with that? The Levitical priesthood, which served under the Old Covenant, was superseded by the New Covenant and the ministry of Christ (*Heb 5:7*). It has no relevance for this gospel age. It was purely Jewish, and served only for a time. So this passage, which speaks of the Old Testament priesthood, cannot be taken *literally* as something that would exist in New Testament times. This is a *spiritual* reference to New Covenant believers—that “holy priesthood who offer up *spiritual* sacrifices” (*1 Peter 2:5*). And this, briefly, is the context of our verse under consideration, **verse 23**:

**And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord.**