

*Judging the Sabbath: Discovering What Can't Be Found in Colossians 2:16*, by Ron Du Preez. Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2008.

Ron du Preez is a South African scholar residing in the United States, who received two doctorates in the fields of ethics and missions and works on his third in the field of the New Testament. His book, *Judging the Sabbath* is divided into two parts. Part one addresses "educated lay persons and seminary-trained pastors" while part two is oriented "to the professional scholar of biblical studies and languages" (p. x). Each of these parts concludes with a review. At the very end, the reader finds four appendices that bring more depth into selected fields. Here can be found a comparison of different translations in regard to their rendering of the Greek words for Sabbath, linguistic markers (Hebrew and Greek) for the Sabbath, as well as a list of references and further notes.

Chapter one commences with a review of literature in regard to Col 2:16. The center of the discussion is the interpretation of what Paul meant with *sabbata*. The majority of scholarship is found to be interpreting *sabbata* as the seventh day, it is also understood that this passage is one of the hardest to understand in the NT. Du Preez concurs with F. F. Bruce's challenge, "the onus probandi lies on those who argue that weekly sabbath is not included in the reference" (p. 10).

Du Preez begins his research in the Old Testament, showing that the word *šabbāt* is used to designate the ceremonial as well as the 7th-day Sabbath. The difference is made clear by OT writers, using either particular linguistic markers or through the context. Thus, he concludes, that the Old Testament perspective allows the Greek *sabbata* to be ceremonial.

The next step is taken into the LXX, which is introduced by a "pro-Sabbath" argument. This specific view argues for a strict and consistent rendering of *šabbāt šabbātōn* as well as a consistent usage of *sabbata*. Yet, Du Preez explains that the rendering of this Hebrew expression is not uniform. Leviticus 16:31, which translates *šabbāt šabbātōn* with *sabbata sabbatōn anapausis* (using three words), is one example.

Du Preez then analyzes the use of the term *sabbata* and *sabbatōn* in the New Testament. This is motivated by the argument that *sabbata* is never ceremonial. However, a closer look into the NT shows 69 occurrences of *sabbatōn* that are accompanied by linguistic and contextual markers in order to evidence either the seventh day or the week. The only one reference without these markers is to be found in Col 2:16 which makes it important to look closer at the immediate and broader context.

Chapter five addresses the argument of Ratzlaff, that the single word *šabbāt* is never used by itself to indicate anything else but the 7th-day Sabbath. Du Preez presents in his following discussion that the "free-

standing Hebrew word *sabbat*" is used for the Day of Atonement (Lev 23:32) and the sabbathical year (Lev 25:2,4,6). Furthermore, also the Day of Trumpets is called a *šabbātôn* and rendered by the Greek as a form of *sabbata*. Therefore, from a linguistic perspective, it is very possible to understand Col 2:16 similarly.

In the following chapter, Ron du Preez presents a broad review of 110 Bible commentaries, none of which really engage in an exegetical discourse when it comes to the vital terms of the calendar sequence. Discussing the argument of the calendar sequence, i.e., *heortē* (yearly feasts), *neomēnia* (beginning of the month), and *sabbata* (weekly holy day), and the OT parallels most often quoted, he sees some problems. Contrary to the Colossian text, the OT passages referred to focus not on the time, but rather on the sacrifices. Furthermore, they exhibit a different order and number than Paul used in Col 2:16. The author's conclusion is, that the proposed OT references could not have been the source for Paul.

Chapter seven follows the claim that the holydays (*heortē*) "include all the feast-sabbaths" (p. 71) wherefore *sabbata* specify the weekly Sabbaths. Du Preez's examination, however, demonstrates that the Hebrew word *ḥag*, a technical term that referred to the three great annual feasts, i.e., Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Harvest, was quite consistently rendered as *heortē* in the LXX and so used in the NT. Du Preez summarizes that, in order to cover all "annual as well as septennial occasions," Paul had to use both terms *heortē* (for the three great feasts) and *sabbata* (the three additional religious observances). Further discussion includes the Greek words *skia* and *sōma*. The meaning of these finds a wide agreement by scholars, namely, that we have the reality "of which the sacred observances were a prefigurement" of Christ (p. 84). This contextually ceremonial overtone, so Du Preez, makes it necessary for *sabbata* to be part of the cultic laws of ancient Israel.

Chapter ten examines Paul's use of the OT. While he foremost used the LXX as basis, there are texts that are obviously taken from the Hebrew. Du Preez, furthermore, attests that the passages most often cited to be the origin of Col 2:16 are in books not referenced by Paul. Thus, the author concludes, the most probable source for Paul is Hosea 2:11.

Chapter eleven looks at the linguistics of Hosea 2:11. Du Preez notes several similarities, such as the three main terms (all singular), the same sequence, the focus on time, etc. He continues with another close look at all three terms and concludes that Paul understood the prophecy of Hosea 2:11 to be directed to the time after Jesus' death at the cross. After having looked at the linguistics, the author turns to the literary structure of the book of Hosea. Hosea 2:11 presents an augmented parallelism with the new moons (as time measurement) in its center. The pilgrimage festivals and sabbaths complement each other. The suggested literary form of Hos

2:11 is thus: prologue - annual feasts - lunar feasts - annual/septennial feasts - epilogue.

The author finishes his discourse about the meaning of Col 2:16, with taking a final look at the literary structure of the letter to the Colossians. First of all, du Preez introduces us to three recognized chiasms, Col 1:15-20; 2:6-19; and 2:21. It is again pointed out that the consideration of the literary features of the text is vitally important to the correct understanding of the message. The repetitive use of Hebrew literary features in Colossians as well as the similarities in form and meaning with Hosea 2:11 substantiates the author's conclusion: Col 2:16 represents an augmented inverted parallelism, in which the Greek *sabbata* adds on and completes the three pilgrim festivals.

The book is written in a clear but not too scholarly way. Terms such as "augmented parallelism" are explained so that non-theologians will be able to follow the analysis and pace of the author. The enlarged spacing of the text (1.5 space) provides relaxed reading. However, the endnotes at the close of each chapter make the reading somewhat complicated because one has to keep going back and forth. One of the outstanding features of the book is the literature involved. The arguments are not only well-taken but profoundly supported. However, at some places the word of the author is rare and hidden by too many the quotations. The structure of the book shows educational interest. The many inserted tables bring much clarity in the matter and the reviews after each section serve as evaluation. However, at times, the repetitions seem to be too many. For instance, the concept of *heortē/hag* is being explained and repeated at too many places (pp. 72, 75-76, 93, 106-109, 120, 129, 146, etc.).

This book is one of the best resources on the issues of Col 2:16 and will, therefore, be of profit for everybody who is interested in the topic of Sabbath/Sunday. Though written by a Sabbatarian, it is held objective and based on the text, making the arguments relevant for everybody who holds to the Bible as the word of God. After having read this volume, one will not look at the text discussed as a strong fortress in favor of Sunday observance

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