

# The "Sabbath Rest" According to the Early Church

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**Epistle of Barnabas** (Late 1st Century)

"And God made in six days the works of His hands, and made an end on the seventh day, and rested on it, and sanctified it." Attend, my children, to the meaning of this expression, "He finished in six days." **This implieth that the Lord will finish all things in six thousand years, for a day is with Him a thousand years.** And He Himself testifieth, saying, "Behold, to-day will be as a thousand years." **Therefore, my children, in six days, that is, in six thousand years, all things will be finished.** "And He rested on the seventh day." This meaneth: when His Son, coming [again], shall destroy the time of the wicked man, and judge the ungodly, and change the-sun, and the moon, and the stars, **then shall He truly rest on the seventh day.**" (Epistle of Barnabas, XV)

**Irenaeus:** (AD. 120-202)

"[He gives this] as a summing up of the whole of **that apostasy which has taken place during six thousand years.**\* "For in as many days as this world was made, **in so many thousand years shall it be concluded.** And for this reason the Scripture says: "Thus the heaven and the earth were finished, and all their adornment. And God brought to a conclusion upon the sixth day the works that He had made; and God rested upon the seventh day from all His works." This is an account of the things formerly created, **as also it is a prophecy of what is to come. For the day of the Lord is as a thousand years; and in six days created things were completed: it is evident, therefore, that they will come to an end at the sixth thousand year.**" ... **the whole apostasy of six thousand years, and unrighteousness, and wickedness, and false prophecy, and deception;**\* for which things' sake a cataclysm of fire shall also come [upon the earth]. (Against Heresies V. XXVIII, 3)

**Commodianus:** (AD. 240)

"This has pleased Christ, that the dead should rise again, yea, with their bodies; and those, too, whom in this world the fire has burned [martyrs], **when six thousand years are completed**..." (Instructions of Commodianus, LXXIX)

**Methodius:** (AD. 260-312)

"For a thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday: seeing that is past as a watch in the night." For when a thousand years are reckoned as one day in the sight of God, and from the creation of the world to His rest is six days, **so also to our time, six days are defined,** as those say who are clever arithmeticians. **Therefore, they say that an age of six thousand years extends from Adam to our time. For they say that the judgment will come on the seventh day, that is in the seventh thousand years.**" (Extracts From The Work on Things Created. IX)

**Lactantius:** (AD. 260-330)

"Therefore let the philosophers, who enumerate thousands of ages from the beginning of the world, **know that the six thousandth year is not yet completed, and that when this number is completed the consummation must take place,** and the condition of human affairs be remodeled for the better ... Therefore, since all the works of God were completed in six days, **the world must continue in its present state through six ages, that is, six thousand years.** ... And again, since God, having finished His works, rested the seventh day and blessed it, **at the end of the six thousandth year all wickedness must be abolished from the earth,\* and righteousness reign for a thousand years;** and there must be tranquility and rest from the labors which the world now has long endured. ... **For six thousand years have not yet been completed, and when this number shall be made up, then at length all evil will be taken away, that justice alone may reign.**" (The Epitome of the Divine Institutes, Chapter 70)

**Biblical Support:** Romans 8:18-25; 2 Peter 3:1-9; Hebrews 3:1 – 4:13; Revelation 20:1-4

\* The 6,000 years are not counted from creation, but from when sin entered the world, and the expulsion from Eden (Gen. 3).