

What's on Second? Who's on First?

Deuteroprōtō in Luke 6:1

by J. D. Myers

The most discussed textual problem in the Gospel of Luke is the phrase *sabbatō deuteroprōtō* in Luke 6:1.¹ Though by the standard rules of textual criticism the second word should be considered original, most critics favor removing the term because it is considered too difficult.² The phrase has confounded scholars from as early as the fourth century A.D., when Jerome, in a letter to Nepotianus, confesses that he consulted his master St. Gregory of Nazianzus, and was unable to determine what the word meant.³

And the difficulties are numerous. Aside from the textual variants, the word is found nowhere else in all extant Greek literature (source), so even if the word is considered original, there is no certainty on what the term means or how it should be translated. The following article summarizes the textual variants and major translation theories before proposing a new understanding on this phrase based on a study of Jewish background and Rabbinical sources.

The Textual Variants

There are two primary textual options. The first, followed by the UBS Greek New Testament, does not retain *deuteroprōtō*. This reading is supported by some of the earlier manuscripts, such as p4 (3rd century), Sinaiticus, and Vaticanus (both 4th century texts). Additional manuscript support comes from a few of the Byzantine texts and several Minuscules. This variant is further supported with decent geographical distribution from some of the Italian, Syriac, Coptic, and Ethiopian text families.

Alternately, the longer reading is also supported by some of the earlier manuscripts, such as the Alixandrinus (5th Century) and other 5th and 6th century texts. It is favored by the majority of the Byzantine texts, and also has decent geographical distribution as evidenced by Italian, Syriac, and Slavonic text families. Further support of this reading is found in the Latin Vulgate and comments by other Church Fathers of the 4th and 5th centuries, such as Epiphanius, John Chrysostom, and Ambrose.

Overall, the textual evidence is about equal, leading the editors of the UBS Greek New Testament to give it a "C" rating, which means that the "committee had difficulty deciding which reading to place in the text."⁴

From a manuscript transmission perspective, it seems that the more difficult reading, that of retaining *deuteroprōtō*, is likely original. Though there are theories as to how a scribe may have added such a word to the text (see below), they are based on pure speculation. If a scribe was

¹ Darrell Bock, *Luke: Volume 1: 1:1-9:50*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker), 522.

² See Maurice A. Robinson, "The Recensional nature of the Alexandrian Text-Type: A Response to the Selected Criticisms of the Byzantine-Priority Theory" *Faith and Mission* 11:1 (Fall 1993), 61-62.

³ *Haydock's Catholic Bible Commentary*, 1859 edition. <http://haydock1859.tripod.com/id70.html>. Last Accessed November 29, 2010.

⁴ Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, et. al., *The Greek New Testament*, 4th ed. (Stuttgart, Germany: UBS), 3.

going to add a word to help explain a text, why would he add a word that made no sense? It seems more likely that since the word is so difficult to understand or translate, it would have simply been removed. As Lonsdale Ragg argues, “the proverbial difficulty of the word itself constitutes an argument for its retention. It is *a priori* more likely that a phrase so obscure—even to St. Jerome and his contemporaries—would be omitted if original than inserted later.”⁵

The approach of this article will be that the word was in the original autograph, and though the word is not found anywhere else in Scripture or extant Greek literature, the surrounding literary context and the Jewish cultural context which the passage is about will help determine the meaning of the word. But prior to looking at this contextual solution, some of the other proposed theories about this word will be summarized.

Scribal Error Theories

The first set of theories are not really theories about what the word means, but are theories based on the idea that the word is not original, but was added later by a scribe. But even these theories, though they do not believe the word is original, must still attempt to explain why the scribe may have added such a confusing word to the text.

Scribal Additions

There are two main theories as to how a scribe may have added *deuteroprōtō* to the text, both of which come from Metzger’s Commentary on the Text of the Greek New Testament.⁶ The first is that a scribe noticed the reference to “another Sabbath” in Luke 6:6, and so decided to add the differentiate the Sabbath in 6:1 by adding the word “first” (*prōtō*). Later, another copyist may have come along, and noting that the true first Sabbath in Luke is in 4:31. Therefore, if we’re counting Sabbath’s in Luke, the Sabbath in Luke 6:1 is actually the second. This scribe then theoretically deleted the *prōtō* of 6:1 by using dots of the word—which was the customary way at that time of correcting errors in a manuscript—and then wrote in *deutero*, “second.” A third copyist then came along, and not noticing the dots over *prōtō*, or not knowing what they signified, mistakenly combined both words into *deuteroprōtō*.⁷

The other theory mentioned by Metzger, which he attributes to Skeat, is that the scribal addition was dittography, where a word or part of word is accidentally copied twice. In this case, the last four letters of *sabbatō*. So in this theory, the scribal addition would have resulted in *sabbatō batō*. A later scribe, not recognizing what happened, tried to make sense of *batō*, and decided that the *b*, as the second letter of the Greek alphabet, represented the ordinal *deutero*, and the *a*, as the first letter of the Greek alphabet, represented the ordinal *prōtō*. The remaining *tō* would have been understood as an adjectival suffix so that it agreed with the noun it modified (*sabbatō*) in gender and number.

The primary problem with both of these theories is that they are based completely on speculation. With a word like *deuteroprōtō* that does not occur anywhere else, some speculation may be necessary, but pure guesswork based on imaginative scenarios about what a scribe may have been thinking stretches the bounds of good scholarship. There are several other theories that

⁵ Lonsdale Ragg, *St. Luke: With Introduction and Notes* (London, Methuen: 1922), 77.

⁶ Metzger’s note in his Commentary on the Text of the GNT.

⁷ Bock, 534-535.

are based on the historical, cultural, and grammatical contexts which make them much more likely candidates than these two scribal addition theories.⁸

Scribal Transmission Error

A scribal transmission error differs from a scribal addition in that there was an original word or words where we now have *deuteroprōtō*, but somewhere in the transmission process, the word was changed to what we now have in some manuscripts. While speculation is still involved in guessing what the original word(s) might have been, contextual factors are often required in trying to determine what might have been in the original. In the case of our present difficulty, there is really only one Scribal Transmission theory, but it has more credibility than the scribal addition theories.

The theory in this category is that the original was *sabbatō deuterō prōi*, “early in the morning on the second Sabbath.”⁹ It is easy to see how a copyist might have substituted *prōtō* for *prōi*, especially if a faded papyrus was being used. However, there is no evidence in any manuscripts for the existence of *prōi*, and even if the word did exist, this still does not explain the existence of *deuterō*, or why Luke is specifying a particular Sabbath for the events that follow.

Original Autograph Theories

Arguing that the word *deuteroprōtō* is original is not the easiest option. After all, if it was in the Lukan autograph, we then have the difficult task of trying to figure out what the word means. And among those who believe the word must be retained, the theories about what it means are numerous. Before these theories that retain the word are considered, the background and side issues which many of these theories have in common must be summarized.

The first of these background issues relates to the fact that Luke was writing in Greek about a Hebrew holiday, and was trying to do so as a Roman Gentile to another Roman Gentile. Maybe the term *deuteroprōtō* is actually a rough translation of a Hebrew term or idea. Those who recognize this have proposed numerous theories as to what Hebrew term or idea Luke had in mind.

The second issue relates to the various calendars in use at the time. The Gregorian calendar, which we use today, was not officially in use until the time of Pope Gregory XIII in 1582. Prior to that, and especially during the life of Jesus, there were numerous ways of calculating the days and years, which makes date setting for that time and calendar synchronization almost impossible.

The two calendars which concern us the most are the Julian calendar and the Jewish calendar. Initially, the Julian calendar was called the Roman calendar and started in the spring, around March, and had 304 days. For whatever reason, the days of winter were not “counted.” Later, in 46 B.C., Julius Caesar made reforms to this calendar. Among other things, he began the year on January 1, added two months bringing the year to 355 days, and devised a plan to add an extra month every few years to keep the calendar in step with the seasons. As a result, the revised

⁸ Most surprising to this author is that of all the possible theories that exist, these are the only two mentioned by Metzger in his *Textual Commentary on the New Testament* (Stuttgart, Germany: UBS), 116.

⁹ Ragg, 77, cites Levertoff as holding this view.

Roman calendar became known as the Julian calendar. The Gregorian calendar is a further revision of the Julian calendar.¹⁰

The Jewish calendar was altogether different. First, it is difficult to talk about the “beginning” of the Jewish year since there are four “New Year celebrations” every single year. The official first month of the year is Nisan, which is generally in our March or April. But the year count does not advance by one until Rosh Hashanah in the month of Tishri, which is actually the seventh month of the year. On top of these two “New Years” there is also the New Year for harvest, which is in Elul, and the New Year for Trees in Shevat.

The significance of the various New Years is that they are the days when tithes of “first fruits” were offered in the Temple. So, Nisan 1 is considered the New Year for Kings, Festivals, and Months. It begins the year, even though the yearly count does not advance. Next, Elul 1, is the New Year for Animals. It is when people began bringing the firstborn of their animals to the Temple as offerings. Rosh Hashanah, on the 1st of Tishri, is the New Year for Years. It is when the calendar year advances by one, and is treated like a Sabbath, meaning that the people “offer” their time to God. Finally, the fourth New Year, on the 15th of Shevat, is the New Year for Trees. It is when fruit begins to ripen, and so tithes of the first fruits of trees are brought in for the Levites.¹¹ Such a calendar causes great confusion by those who are not familiar with it, and Luke and his audience were probably no different. So some of the theories revolve around this calendrical confusion.

The Jewish people used the Jewish method of counting days for their holidays and festivals, but since the modern mathematically calculated calendar was not fully developed until the 9th century, they utilized various other means of knowing when certain Holy Days and Fast Days occurred, and how to relay this information to other Jews around the world. Typically, prior to the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D., the set days were determined by the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem, and then announced by fire signals or other such methods to outlying areas.¹² Therefore, only the Jewish people in and right around Jerusalem could be certain about which day a holiday fell on, and so the custom arose to celebrate the holidays on two days. This custom is still in use today, even though the mathematically calculated calendar has been in use for over 1000 years. So some have based theories for *deuteroprōtō* based on this two-day observance of certain holidays.

Related to this, there were also different ways of calculating the days. The Jews had their twenty-four hour day begin and end at sunset, while the Romans typically used midnight. However, when you are talking about the “day” portion of the twenty-four hour period, both generally began their “days” at 6 am. This factor plays in to some of the theories.

Also, the criteria for determining the validity of these theories must be presented. The baseline criteria are simple. Luke was no haphazard writer. He did not include words just to fill up space. Though all biblical writers are accurate, Luke seems to write with literary precision. When a word is written, especially a word as rare as *deuteroprōtō*, it was for a very specific purpose. Therefore, any theory that attempts to explain why Luke wrote *deuteroprōtō* must show how that words helps explain the actions of the disciples, the accusations of the Pharisees, and the defense of Jesus in the wider passage of Luke 6:1-5. If including the word does not help amplify or illuminate the significance of the rest of the passage, then the theory is probably

¹⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_calendar Last Accessed December 25, 2010.

¹¹ <http://www.angelfire.com/pa2/passover/jewish-calendar-hebrew.html> Last Accessed December 25, 2010.

¹² <http://www.askelm.com/doctrine/d911001.htm> Last Accessed December 25, 2010.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew_calendar Last Accessed December 25, 2010.

incorrect because the meaning of the passage does not change whether the word is included or not.

For example, many teach that the actions of the disciples and the explanation by Jesus show that Jesus was not in favor of the traditional rules of the Jewish religious leaders for the Sabbath. It is usually taught from this passage that while Jesus was in favor of keeping the Sabbath, He was opposed to the way in which the Pharisees kept it, that is, according to the traditions of the Oral Torah.¹³ And so why the disciples broke the traditions of the Oral Torah, they did not break the Law of God, and specifically, the law of the Sabbath, as written in the Written Torah, the Five Books of Moses. The problem with this explanation is that such a teaching could have taken place on any Sabbath. If this is what Jesus was teaching, there is no reason for a particular Sabbath to be singled out by Luke.

For a theory to have validity, it must not only explain the meaning of *deuteroprōtō*, but also explain (1) the significance of the actions of the disciples in plucking the grain and rubbing them in their hands, (2) why the Pharisees were so incensed, and (3) how the defense by Jesus when He points to the actions of David all make sense on *this particular* Sabbath. As will be seen, there is only one theory that fits the requirements.

With a summary of the background issues and judgment criteria out of the way, the various theories that include the term *deuteroprōtō* as original can be presented and assessed. The theories will go in ascending order, beginning with those that are considered (by this author) to be least likely.

1. Any Sabbath

The most common view is that any Sabbath will do. This view was briefly mentioned above in the discussion about criterion. Most commentators seem to think that it doesn't matter which Sabbath Luke is referring to, and the events could have happened on any Sabbath of the year. This view notes that in the account that follows, the disciples of Jesus violate several of the 39 prohibited acts on the Sabbath as contained in the Oral Torah, and based on this, the point of the passage is to show that Jesus followed the written Torah (the Pentateuch) but not the Oral Torah (the Mishnah). If Luke was not referring to any particular Sabbath, he would not have included the word *deuteroprōtō*.

2. Two Calendars

A second theory is based on the incongruence between the Hebrew calendar and the Julian calendar, especially in regard to when days begin and end. In this theory, the emphasis is not so much on a particular Sabbath, but on the fact that in Roman thinking, a Sabbath went for two days (Friday-Saturday) which in Hebrew thinking, it was all only one day. So Luke is using a term here for his Roman reader to explain that this was the second day of the Sabbath (Saturday), which in Jewish thinking, is still only the first.

3. Hebrew Translation Guesses

Third, based on the theory that Luke was translating a Hebrew word or idea, there are numbers guesses as to what this Hebrew phrase might have been. These are "guesses" because for most of these theories, there is no Hebrew to Greek translations in extant literature to back

¹³ For a discussion on whether Jesus kept the Oral Torah, see Reb Yhoshua, "The Oral Torah and the Messianic Jew" <http://messianic613.files.wordpress.com/2009/03/yhoshua-e28094-the-oral-torah-and-the-messianic-jew1.pdf>. Last Accessed December 25, 2010.

them up. For example, some take *deuteroprōtō* as “2-1,” and read it as “twenty-first.” Based on this, they believe Luke intends to refer to the twenty-first Sabbath in the Jewish year. And then, of course, deciding which twenty-first Sabbath depends on which of the four New Years you count from. Most begin with either Rosh Hashanah or Nisan 1. The twenty-first Sabbath after Rosh Hashanah would put the events of Luke 6 near the end of Shevat, our January-February. Interestingly, this would be right near Tu b’Shevat, the New Year for Trees. If one counts from Nisan 1, generally considered to be the actual first “New Year,” the twenty-first Sabbath falls near the end of Av, our July-August.

The main problem with this third category of views is that *deutero* never means “twentieth” but always “second.” Of course, the argument is that Luke may have mistranslated the Hebrew equivalent of “twenty.” This is extremely unlikely. The Hebrew phrase for “twenty-first” is *le’achad va’asherim* (Exod 12:8; 1 Chr 24:27; 25:28). In the Septuagint, this is never translated as *deuteroprōtō*, but in various other ways, such as *mias kai eikados*, “first and twenty” (cf. LXX Exod 12:8; Hag 2:1). The closest one gets is *eikostos prōtos*, “twenty-first,” in 1 Chronicles 25:28. Furthermore, even if one could prove that this is what Luke meant, it still does not explain the significance of such a Sabbath for the events that follow.

4. Counting the Omer

Related to this third view is the “Counting of the Omer.” The omer was the offering of barley that took place in the temple on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. From the day of that offering, they would count off 49 days, or seven weeks of days. The next day, the fiftieth day (Pentecost), would be the Feast of Weeks. This counting of 49 days was called the counting of the omer. This counting was traditionally performed using specific terminology. For the first six days, only the days are counted: “Today is the second day of the omer.” But once a week has passed, both the days and weeks are counted: “Today is thirteen days, which is one week and six days of the omer.” So based on this counting, some think that Luke is referring to a counting of the omer, either the twenty-first day, which is the third week and zero days, or the fifteenth day, which is the second week and first day of the omer. These days, of course, would have to fall on a Sabbath to fit with Luke 6:1. To make it fall on a Sabbath day, some have suggested that Luke is referring to the first Sabbath after the second day of the feast of Unleavened Bread.¹⁴ Others have simply stated that since there are seven Sabbaths during the seven weeks of counting the omer, this is the second of the seven Sabbaths.¹⁵

This theory is a stretch in translation, as there are no places where *deuteroprōtō* is used in counting the omer, and furthermore, there is no certain evidence that this Jewish tradition was even practiced at the time of Jesus.

5. Other Sabbath Counting Theories

Some think maybe Luke is not referring to the twenty-first Sabbath, or to some omer counting day, but to either the first Sabbath after the second New Year, or the second Sabbath after the first New Year, or some even think that *prōtō* should be understood as “New” or “of

¹⁴ Barnes’ Notes on the Bible. Luke 6:1. <http://bible.cc/luke/6-1.htm> Last Accessed December 1, 2010. Dr. Francis Nigel Lee cites several sources for this, including Delitzsch. See *The Covenantal Sabbath*. http://www.dr-fnlee.org/docs3/covsab/Covsab_chap6a.html Last Accessed November 11, 2010.

¹⁵ Dr. Whitby in *Clarke’s Commentary on the Bible*. <http://bible.cc/luke/6-1.htm>. Last Accessed November 9, 2010.

first importance” and so Luke is referring to the second Sabbath of the New Year.¹⁶ Some argue that this was the first Sabbath in the second year of a seven year cycle.¹⁷ Some support to this view comes from the fact that Exodus 40:17 describes a celebration of the construction of the Tabernacle. The Septuagint translation of this verse uses both *deuteron* and *prōtō* to say that this celebration took place on the first day of the second year at Mount Sinai. Other than that, there is really no basis for any of these guesses, and none are considered to have much scholarly merit. Also, as with the other theories, such explanations still do not explain why such a Sabbath would be significant enough for Luke to specify it in his account.

6. Monthly Sacrifice

Another theory, which has a bit more merit, is based on the observation that a special offering was made in the Temple on the first Sabbath of every month (Num 28:11-15). So maybe Luke is referring to the second Sabbath of the first month (Nisan), or the first Sabbath of the second month (Iyyar) and the actions of Jesus with His disciples in the field have something to do with this offering.¹⁸ Those who hold this view do not explain what this significance might be.

7. The Second after the Great Sabbath

Some understand *prōtō* not as “first” but as “foremost, prominent, most important” and note that Nisan 10 is referred to as “the Great Sabbath” (Heb. *shabbat ha'gadol*) due to the miracles that took place on this day in Hebrew history (cf. Exodus 12). Nisan 10 is a holiday Sabbath before the Passover celebration. Some years, this Sabbath is the second Sabbath of Nisan, or maybe Luke is referring to the second Sabbath after the Great Sabbath. The primary problem with these views is that in the Septuagint, *ha'gadol* is never translated as *prōtō*, but as *mega*.

8. The Second Great Sabbath

Related to the seventh view, some point to the instructions in Numbers 9:6-14 that if someone is traveling or is impure during the Passover, they should observe the holiday in the following month, the month of Iyyar (cf. 2 Chr 30:1-27). In this thinking, it has been suggested that Jesus was traveling on the “Great Sabbath” of Nisan 10 this year, and so was observing the “second Great Sabbath” opportunity on Iyyar 10. The primary problem with this view is that while the Passover could be celebrated a month later, there is no record of anyone celebrating or observing “the Great Sabbath” a month later. If someone missed “the Great Sabbath” there was no “second Great Sabbath.” This view suffers from simple ignorance of Jewish practice.

9. The Second High Sabbath

The ninth view is similar to the seventh, but understands *prōtō* not as referring to “the greatest” but to “highest, most holy, or of first importance.” Based on this premise, those who hold to this view believe that Luke may be referring to the second of seven Holy Days which were treated like Sabbath days. This is somewhat related. There are seven holidays through the Jewish Year on which no work is to be done. Three occur in the spring, the first and last days of

¹⁶ For some of these theories, see *Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible* at <http://bible.cc/luke/6-1.htm>. Last Accessed November 9, 2010.

¹⁷ Bock, 534. Dr. Francis Nigel Lee cites Scaliger, Ewald, Keim, and Clement of Alexandria as proponents of this view. See *The Covenantal Sabbath*. http://www.dr-fnlee.org/docs3/covsab/Covsab_chap6a.html Last Accessed November 11, 2010.

¹⁸ Bock 534. Dr. Francis Nigel Lee cites Wetstein as a proponent of this view. See *The Covenantal Sabbath*. http://www.dr-fnlee.org/docs3/covsab/Covsab_chap6a.html Last Accessed November 11, 2010.

Pesach (Passover), and Shavuot (Pentecost), and the final four occur in the fall, Rosh Hashanah (Feast of Trumpets), Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement, the Sabbath of Sabbaths), and the first and last day of Succoth (Feast of Tabernacles). In this theory then, *deuteroprōtō* could be the second of these Holy Days, which would be the last day of Pesach. The main problem with this is that while the words used to describe these Holy Days are frequently translated into Greek, they are never translated into anything remotely similar to *deuteroprōtō* (Heb. *miqra qodesh*; Gk. *klētē hagia*; cf. Lev 23:3, 7, 8, 21, 24, 27, etc.).

A subset of this eighth view focuses not on the seven Holy Day Sabbaths of the Jewish year, but rather on the three that require pilgrimage to Jerusalem every year: the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Tabernacles (Deut 16:16-17). Based on this, some point out that *deuteroprōtō* could refer to the second Sabbath of the first feast¹⁹ (there were two Holy Day Sabbaths for the Feast of Unleavened Bread—the first and eighth days), or it could refer to the first (and only) Holy Day Sabbath of the second feast, the Feast of Weeks.

10. *The Second Sabbath but First Weekly Sabbath*

Tenth, some have pointed out that during the Jewish year, there are two kinds of Sabbaths. “Sabbath” really just means “rest” and so although every Saturday Sabbath is designated as a rest day, there are various other Holy days (or religious holidays) during the Jewish year which are also designated as “rest” days, even if they don’t land on a Saturday. Because of the two types of Sabbaths, it sometimes happened that two Sabbaths would occur back to back in one week.²⁰ The holiday Sabbath might fall on a Friday, immediately followed by the regular weekly Sabbath on Saturday. Some believe this is what is happening Luke. If so, Luke is saying that this was the second Sabbath of the week, but really the first actual weekly Sabbath. Supporting this view is the fact that the parallel account in Matthew 12:1 says they were going through fields on “the Sabbaths” (Gk. *tois sabbasin*) and here in Luke, in the Greek Majority Text, when the Pharisees question Jesus about the Sabbath (v. 2), they use the plural “the Sabbaths” (Gk. *tois sabbasi*). So although this view doesn’t really help explain the significance of the actions of Jesus on this particular Sabbath, it does explain the terminology of Luke in 6:1 and the question of the Pharisees in 6:2, and possibly why the disciples were so hungry: if they forgot to prepare food on Thursday, they hadn’t eaten in two days. The defense of Jesus, of course, includes the fact that David and his men were quite hungry also, and just as they ate the bread normally reserved for priests, so also, the followers of Jesus could eat grain on the Sabbath to satisfy their hunger. This is a possible option, but does not specify *which particular Sabbath* is in view.

11. *Sabbath of the Feast of Unleavened Bread*

One likely possibility is that the events of Luke 6:1-5 occur during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. But even here, there are various options, but understanding the options requires some understanding to the instructions for observing Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread (see Exod 12:1-20; 13:3-10; Lev 23:5-21; Num 9:1-5; 28:16-31; Deut 16:1-11).²¹

¹⁹ This was the view of Maldonatus. See *Haydock’s Catholic Bible Commentary*, 1859 edition. <http://haydock1859.tripod.com/id70.html>. Last Accessed November 29, 2010. See also *Clarke’s Commentary on the Bible*. <http://bible.cc/luke/6-1.htm>. Last Accessed November 9, 2010.

²⁰ St. John Chrysostom and Theophylactus seem to have held a position similar to this. See *Haydock’s Catholic Bible Commentary*, 1859 edition. <http://haydock1859.tripod.com/id70.html>. Last Accessed November 29, 2010.

²¹ For other presentations of this view, see the following articles: Tim Hegg, “Counting the Omer: An Inquiry into the Divergent Methods of the 1st Century Judaisms” *TorahResources*, 2009. <http://www.torahresource.com/EnglishArticles/CountingTheOmer.pdf>. Last Accessed December 25, 2010; and J.

People opt for this view because it allows the actions of Jesus and His disciples to become enormously significant in relation to the offering of the first fruits of barley in the temple. On the day after the Passover Sabbath, the temple priests would go into a particular field, harvest some barley, grind it into flour, and mix it with oil (Lev 23:13). Until this offering was made, neither bread nor grain from that year's harvest could be eaten (Lev 23:14). Though typically such actions would violate Sabbath restrictions, the priests were allowed to do so if they were performing vital temple functions, and especially those that helped prepare food for the priests and their families (cf. Exod 12:16).

If Jesus is replicating the priesthood, temple, and nation of Israel within Himself and His disciples, then He is not "violating the Sabbath" but rather, is making a significant point about the existing priesthood, temple, and nation of Israel. So this theory attempts to fit these events into the Feast of Unleavened Bread. But as we will see before, there are many difficulties in doing so.

The first difficulty is that the events in Luke 6:1-15 take place on a Sabbath day, but the offering described in Leviticus 23 is for the day after the Sabbath. But there are ways around this, based on how Leviticus 23 is understood. The Eve of the Passover is always Nisan 14. It was a day of preparation for the Passover. That night, after sundown, when Nisan 15 had begun, the Jewish people would the Seder meal, the Passover supper. Nisan 15 is one of the Jewish holy days which could fall on any day of the week, but is treated like a Sabbath. It was a day on which no regular work was to be done. Later that week, there would be the regular weekly Sabbath on Saturday.

Leviticus 23:9-14 indicates that on the day after the Sabbath, the Feast of Unleavened Bread should begin, and it is initiated by bringing an offering of the first fruits of the barley harvest to the temple. It was also on this day that they would begin "Counting the Omer" which means they would begin counting off seven weeks until they arrived at the fiftieth day, on which day they celebrated the Feast of Weeks, also known as "Pentecost."

There were, however, numerous issues surrounding the instructions in Leviticus 23. The main question was in regard to which Sabbath God meant. All He says is "the day after the Sabbath." Is this the Passover Sabbath of Nisan 15, which could be any day of the week, and so the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread would always fall on Nisan 15, no matter which day of the week it was? Or did God mean the regular weekly Sabbath, Saturday, so that the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread would always fall on a Sunday? During the days of Jesus, the Pharisees argued for Nisan 15, while the Sadducees argued for the first day of the week, the Sunday. As a result of this controversy, there were "first days" of the Feast of Unleavened Bread every year in Jerusalem, the first day for the Pharisees and the first day for the Sadducees.

So all of this raises several possibilities for what Luke might have meant by *deuteroprōtō*.

First, some believe that Jesus may be endorsing the Sadducean interpretation of Scripture, and observing the first Day of Unleavened Bread on Sunday, the day after the weekly Sabbath. It must be pointed out that during the ministry of Jesus, when He sides with either the Pharisees or Sadducees, it is always with the Pharisees. If He sides with the Sadducees in this instance, it would be the only case where He does so. It should also be pointed out that as Christian tradition has come down to us, we always observe Pentecost on a Sunday, which means that we always start counting fifty days on a Sunday. This is the Sadducean method.

But this doesn't fit the text of Luke 6:1, where Luke describes Jesus and His disciples going through the grain fields on a Sabbath, not the day after the Sabbath. In this instance, if Jesus were following the Sadducean interpretation, He would be going through the grain field on Sunday, the first day of the week. There would still be a controversy with the Pharisees, but it would have nothing to do with the Sabbath. The only way some people can force this viewpoint on Luke 6, is by saying that *deuteroprōtō* should be translated "the second day after the first Sabbath," or in proper English, "the day after the Sabbath." This of course doesn't fit the rest of the text, since the Pharisees challenge Jesus about his actions "on the Sabbath" (6:2). So Jesus is not following the Sadducean method.

Therefore, it is argued that Luke is referring to the second Sabbath of that week, which is actually the first weekly Sabbath, the Saturday. In other words, when the Pharisaical method is followed, the week that has Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread contains two Sabbaths, Nisan 15 (whatever day of the week it fell on) and Saturday. *Deuteroprōtō* would then be a reference to the second Sabbath of the week, which is actually the first (and only) weekly Sabbath. Those who argue for this view point to the LXX translation of Leviticus 23:11, which renders the Hebrew *m'mochorat ha'Shabbat*, "the day after the Sabbath" as *tē epaurion tēs prōtēs*, "the day after the first." They understand "first" as a reference to the first day of Unleavened Bread, which is Nisan 15, which is also the first day of "counting the omer" until the Feast of Weeks. Therefore, the day after the first day is Nisan 16. Also, it is easy to see how this day became a popular view for the interpretation of *deuteroprōtō* as *tē epaurion tēs prōtēs*, "the day after the first" could possibly be summarized by *deuteroprōtō*, "the second [after] the first."

The primary problem with this view is that if the actions of Jesus and His disciples reflect those of the temple priests offering the first fruits of barley in the temple, He is too late. The Pharisees always made the offering on Nisan 16, which is typically not a Sabbath. If Jesus waited until the Saturday Sabbath to pick this grain and "make the offering," he is too late by at least a day, and possibly longer. He is offering it on the wrong day. The offering was not made on the Sabbath, but on Nisan 16, the day after the holiday Sabbath of Nisan 15.

Some try to solve this by saying that in the year of these actions, Nisan 15 fell on a Friday, which means that Nisan 16, the day of the required offering, was Saturday, the weekly Sabbath. This would mean that the two Sabbaths, the holiday Sabbath and the weekly Sabbath, were back to back. This did occasionally happen during the Jewish year, and when it did, the Pharisees had decided that the barley offering must still take place. They had special a special ritual and ceremony that took place out in the grain field to make sure that everybody knew that although they were harvesting grain on the Sabbath, it was only to fulfill the law of God regarding the offering of the first fruits of barley. Though it was more complex than this, the ceremony in the field essentially involved one priest who was going to pick the grain yelling out loud several times, "I'm going to harvest grain on the Sabbath! Is this okay?" and the other priests would stand around him, and shout back, "Yes, on this Sabbath it is okay!"²²

Could this be what Luke is referring to? Jewish Rabbinical scholars Isaac Salkinson and David Ginsburg, in their Hebrew translation of the New Testament, support this view by pointing point out in Luke 6:1 that the Sabbath in question was related to the waving of the grain offering (Heb. *tenuphet ha'omer*) which took place on Nisan 16.

The primary difficulty with this view is that according to modern calculations of the Jewish first century calendar, Nisan 16 did not fall on a weekly Sabbath (Saturday) any time between 20 and 40 A.D. But of course, as indicated earlier, the modern mathematically calculated calendar

²² This, of course, is a summary of what was said. For the full discourse, see Mishnah Menachot 10:3.

was not put into effect until the 4th century A.D. Prior to the scientific method of calculating the holy days, “rabbinic literature indicates that the intercalation of the year was based on upon practical rather than astrological factors. This being the case, all attempts at pinpointing the exact year of Yeshua’s crucifixion by astrological calculations are doomed to failure.”²³ This is especially true considering the fact that the years were calculated according to seven different factors, only one of which is astronomical.²⁴

So although the current Jewish calendars is scientifically calculated and even considered to be retroactive prior to the date of its development, the other six factors could have easily changed any of the dates of the Jewish calendar on any particular year. Therefore, it is possible that on this year, Nisan 15 fell on a Friday, making Saturday, Nisan 16, the day of the required barley offering. According to Hoehner, some believe that an identical situation took place a few years later during the final week of Jesus’ ministry.²⁵

This view—that *deuteroprōtō* refers to one of the Sabbaths of the Passover week, probably the second Sabbath of the week which is the first weekly Sabbath—has a lot in favor for it. But of course, for Jesus to be teaching something significant to His disciples about the Temple, the Priesthood, and the sacrificial system, Nisan 16 of that year *must* fall on a Saturday. The mathematically calculated calendar denies that this ever happened during the ministry of Jesus, but since this calendar was not developed until several hundred years later, it is possible that Nisan 16 did fall on a Saturday of that year.

If this is indeed what happened, Jesus would be teaching His disciples that through Him, He is fulfilling the purpose of the Temple, the Priesthood, and the sacrificial system. Such things are no longer the intermediary between God and man. Instead, in Jesus, a renewed nation is being raised, a kingdom of priests, each of whom can approach God, not on the basis of their own personal merit, but based on the merit and mediation of one man, Jesus Christ.²⁶ Of course, although this retains the significance of the events in Luke 6:1-2, and helps explain the meaning of *deuteroprōtō*, it is still difficult to fit the explanation of Jesus for the actions of His disciples into this theory, and is also dependent upon a mistake in the mathematical calendar. There is one final option that removes both of these difficulties.

12. Sabbath of the Feast of Weeks

²³ “Counting the Omer: An Inquiry into the Divergent Methods of the 1st Century Judaisms” by Tim Hegg. TorahResources. 2002. Ed. 2009. <http://www.torahresource.com/EnglishArticles/CountingTheOmer.pdf> Accessed 12/6/2010.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Harold Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977), 50-55, 65-93. This issue relates to the chronology of the last week of Jesus, especially in relation to the Last Supper of Jesus and His disciples in the upper room. The synoptic Gospels (Matt 26:17; Mark 14:12-16; Luke 22:1, 7-8) indicate that this meal was the Passover meal, generally eaten on the night of Nisan 15. However, the fourth Gospel (John 18:28; 19:14) indicates that Jesus died before the Jews had eaten the Passover meal, which means He died on Nisan 14 when the Passover lamb was being slaughtered. For explanations of this problem, see Frank E. Gaebel, ed., *Expositors Bible Commentary*, Vol. 8 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 528.

²⁶ Those who hold to this view often point to the renewal of the covenant that is done by Joshua before the second generation of Israelites enter into the Promised Land (cf. Josh 5:10-11). One of the things they do is celebrate Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Joshua is showing the people that before they enter their new land, they must renew themselves as a people and renew their commitment to following God. It is often noted as well that the people work on the Passover Sabbath to prepare the meal, just as Jesus and His disciples do here in preparation for their Passover Meal, if this view is correct.

The final theory is that the Sabbath in question is the Sabbath of Shavuot, the Holy Day that commemorates the Feast of Weeks.²⁷ The evidence for this theory is not so much on the meaning of *deuteroprōtō*, but on the actions of the disciples and the defense of Jesus.

The explanation for this view is similar to the previous one. According to the instructions in the Torah, the Feast of Weeks (Shavuot) Sabbath, like the Passover Sabbath, is not a weekly Saturday Sabbath, but is a holiday Sabbath, and can fall on any day of the week (Lev 23:21). This was the second of three Feasts which required pilgrimage to Jerusalem (Deut 16:16-17).²⁸ During this feast, somewhat similar to the Feast of Unleavened Bread, an offering of the first fruits was to be presented before the Lord in the Temple. At the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the offering consisted of the first fruits of the barley harvest. There are numerous first fruit offerings at the Feast of Weeks, the most prominent of which is the wheat offering.

This is significant because in Luke 6, the text says that the disciples were plucking ears of grain (Gk. *stachus*, lit., “ears, stalks”). While this word can be used to refer to any kind of plant that produces stalks or ears, such as corn, barley, or wheat, in the New Testament, it always refers to wheat.²⁹ If the events in Luke 6 took place during the Feast of Unleavened Bread and Jesus was trying to teach His disciples something significant about the renewed Israel, He would have had the disciples pluck barley, for this is what was required as the first-fruits offering during that feast. But they do not pluck barley (Gk. *krithē*, cf. John 6:9, 13; Rev. 6:6); they pluck wheat. Certainly, there is a more specific word for “wheat” (Gk. *sitos*) that could have been used, but Luke is not as concerned with the wheat as he is with what the disciples are doing with the ears of wheat, that is, rubbing the ears between their hands, and the significance for this particular Sabbath festival.

On Shavuot, the fiftieth day after Passover, the Feast of Weeks would be celebrated. Pilgrims would arrive in Jerusalem from all over Israel, bringing with them seven different kinds of first fruit offerings: wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives, and dates (Deut 8:8). Several special ceremonies were conducted as these offerings were brought in to the temple and presented before the Lord.³⁰

But there was another offering for this day that was prepared and brought specifically by the temple priests. It was twin loaves made from new wheat flour. These loaves were specially made and prepared by the priests, and most curious of all, they were the only loaves ever brought into the temple that contained leaven. And to prepare these loaves, a special ceremony was conducted.

On the day of Shavuot, the priests would enter a field specifically chosen for this ceremony, and would harvest three seahs (about 24 liters) of stalks of wheat. After harvesting the wheat stalks, the wheat had to be prepared in a way that differed from the usual way of separating wheat from the chaff. Usually, when wheat was harvested, the grain and chaff were separated through the process of threshing and winnowing. But the preparation of the wheat for the twin loaves used a special procedure known as “rubbing and beating.” The wheat that had been harvested was rubbed in the palm of the hands and then beaten with the fist in the other hand, though some

²⁷ For a concise description of this view, see *Haydock's Catholic Bible Commentary*, 1859 edition. <http://haydock1859.tripod.com/id70.html>. Last Accessed November 29, 2010.

²⁸ Witham says that the first of these feasts was referred to as the “first-first,” the second as the “second-first,” and the third as the “third-first.” See *Haydock's Catholic Bible Commentary*, 1859 edition. <http://haydock1859.tripod.com/id70.html>. Last Accessed November 29, 2010.

²⁹ Johannes Louw and Eugene Nida, eds. “*stachus*” in *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (New York, UBS: 1988).

³⁰ See <http://www.templeinstitute.org/shavuot.htm>

say the beating could be done with the foot on the ground.³¹ Later tradition required that the wheat be rubbed 300 times and beaten 500 times, but this was probably not in practice at the time of Jesus. These actions were performed, even though it was the Sabbath.³²

These actions clearly resemble the actions of the disciples in the field on the Sabbath where Luke writes that the disciples, after plucking the grain, rubbed it in their hands (6:1). Though this could be just a description of what they did with the grain, it seems more likely that Luke points out their actions because of the symbolism of these actions on this particular day. The actions they performed were parallel to those that the priests would perform as they prepared the wheat for the temple sacrifice.

After the Pharisees challenged Jesus about the actions of His disciples, Jesus appealed to the precedent of David and his men when they ate bread that was normally reserved only for priests (cf. 1 Sam 21:1-7; 22:9-10). The loaves for the priests were made from the offerings of the first-fruits (which were stored in temple storehouses to last for the entire year), and any priest who had kept himself clean could eat of this bread (Num 18:11-13; 1 Sam 21:4-5). This bread for the priests was referred to as *Terumah* (or *Terumah Gedolah*) and is usually a food item given to the Priests as a gift. It is listed as one of the twenty-four priestly gifts.

The consumption of *Terumah* is guarded by numerous Torah-based restrictions and could be eaten by priests, their families, and their servants, as long as those who ate of these gifts were in a state of ritual purity. Interestingly, *Teumah* gifts were given to Elisha in 2 Kings 4:42, who gave them to other people who were in more need than he. While in this instance the loaves were made from barley, the point is still made that while the *Terumah* were generally reserved for priests, they could also be given to others who were in need.

The argument of Jesus is that if the priest could give away the bread which was normally reserved for priests to David and his men due to their hunger—for the purpose of the bread was to help meet the needs of those who had no other way of obtaining food—then Jesus and His disciples could also eat of the grain that was normally reserved for the priests in order to satisfy their hunger (cf. Matt 12:1).

Furthermore, doing such “work” on the Sabbath was not prohibited, for the priests not only performed similar work every Sabbath in making the showbread, and they did so without profaning the Sabbath, but also on the Shavuot Sabbath, they harvested grain, rubbed and beat it, ground it into flour, kneaded it into dough, and baked it into bread. Jesus and His disciples were performing similar actions to show that Jesus was instituting a renewed Israel with a priesthood of all believers who did not require the mediation of temple or its sacrifices of sheep, bulls, and goats. Jesus was foreshadowing a means of direct access to God through Himself.

So in this context, what does the term *deuteroprōtō* mean? As stated, both the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the Feast of Weeks included offerings of the first-fruits. In Hebrew, the seven first fruit offerings of Shavuot are referred to as *bikkurim*, which is translated in the Greek Septuagint as *prōtogenēmatōn* (lit., “first ones”).³³ It is during the Feast of Weeks that the second first-fruits offering is brought into the temple (cf. Exod 23:19; 34:22; Lev 2:14; 23:17, 20; Neh 10:35; Ezek 44:30). So this seems to be the most likely explanation of *deuteroprōtō*. *Deuteroprōtō* is an abbreviated form of *deuteron prōtogenēmatōn*. The first first-fruits offering is the day after the first Sabbath of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and the second first-fruits offering is fifty days later on the Sabbath of the Feast of Weeks.

³¹ Maimonides, Laws of Things Forbidden for the Altar 7:5 and Maimonides on the Mishna, Menachot 6:5.

³² Mishnah Menachot 11:1-3.

³³ Cf. Mishnah Bikkurim 1:6; 3:2.

Conclusion

All of the evidence seems to point to the events of the Sabbath in Luke 6:1-5 as taking place on the holiday Sabbath of the Feast of Weeks. The term *deuteroprōtō* was probably coined by Luke—or was a term in existence that has since been lost—and was a Greek way of explaining the Hebrew ritual of bringing the second first-fruits offering into the temple on Shavuot Shabbat, the Sabbath of the Feast of Weeks. Through such actions, the following exchange between the Pharisees and Jesus show that He was acting as a priest in providing food for His followers and had precedent for doing so in the Torah and in the example of David in providing similar food for His men. Furthermore, by having the disciples pick the grain and rub it in their hands, Jesus was foreshadowing the renewal of Israel and the creation of a Kingdom of Priests.

Jesus was not simply trying to provoke an argument with the Pharisees about the nature and restrictions of the Sabbath. Rather, He was trying to teach an important lesson to His disciples about the His own nature, and the purpose behind His mission. Jesus is saying that in Him are fulfilled the Temple worship, the dwelling place of God with man. In Jesus and His followers are the new priesthood, the new sacrificial system, and new center for the worship of God. The identification of the *deuteroprōtō* Sabbath leads to this conclusion.

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