

Keeping the Sabbath

Introduction

Creation

It was Creation week – everything was completed, including the debut of Adam and Eve as beings in “*God’s Image*.”

- Then – “*By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work*” (Genesis 2:2 – NIV).
- The Hebrew word for “*rested*” is *Shabbat*, meaning that He ceased from His “*work*” – from creating.

Another new “creation” regarding that seventh day is recorded:

- “*Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done*” (Genesis 2:3 – NIV).
- The same word for “*rested*” takes on a different meaning. Since time is now holy, it suggests that He now keeps (likely with Adam and Eve) the day as holy.
- It was a day in which His “work” had ceased.

In summary:

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| 1. God ceased from His work | } | God did that? Yes! |
| 2. He observed its holiness | | |

Israelites

It didn’t take long for the Hebrew people leaving Egypt to be reminded of the Sabbath.

- They ran out of food one month into their journey.
- It was a time of crisis for two to three million people.
- Then each night God sent them food called “*manna*” (Exodus 16:14-15, 21-31).
- No manna fell on the Sabbath (the seventh day). But, surprisingly, twice as much fell on Friday.

Three months into their journey they came to Mount Sinai.

- Mountains have many meanings in prophecy.
- Here, it was the place where God met and taught man.

On the heights of this mountain, with Moses present, God wrote in stone with His finger (Exodus 31:18) these words:

1. *“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy”* (Exodus 20:8).
2. *“Holy” (qadash)* means consecrated, sacred, set aside.
3. *“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God. On it **you shall not do any work**, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns.”* (Exodus 20:8-10 – NIV).
4. That time is to recall that Creation week and God as the Creator. God then noted that it was so sacred that we should cease our secular work on that day!
 - *“The seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it **thou shalt not do any work**, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates”* (Exodus 20:10).
 - Business transactions weren’t even permitted (buying/selling) (Nehemiah 13:15-22).
 - The gates of Jerusalem were closed during the Sabbath hours.

When in Palestine

Over time the Israelites turned to other gods and against the Sabbath. By 700 B.C. so many people misunderstood what that day meant, God told Isaiah the prophet to clarify the real meaning of the Sabbath:

- *“If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from **doing thy pleasure on my holy day**; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour him, not **doing thine own ways**, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the **mouth of the LORD hath spoken it**”* (Isaiah 58:13-14).
- It was not to be a day for pleasure seeking, business, regular work – though it was to be a day for pleasure and delight in the Lord.

By now you may be wondering, “What then can I do? I suddenly feel I’m a prisoner! Help!”

- This is one of the most exciting issues!
- Do you ever wish you had a break from your routine?
- The Sabbath was meant for that.
- What can we do? More on that shortly.

You protest: “The Sabbath was done away with when the law was fulfilled.”

Let’s look deeper into God’s wishes. First, He wrote the law in stone – with His finger. It sounds as though He wanted His law to be permanent.

1. *“Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law”* (Romans 13:8).
 - *“Fulfilled”* is *pleroa* in the Greek.
 - It means that *“love”* brings God’s law ***to its highest purpose.***
2. No wonder Jesus said: *“If ye love me, keep my commandments”* (John 14:15).
3. Paul even noted: *“For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified”* (Romans 2:13).

We elevate the character of God and His ideals for man when we keep the law.

When does Sabbath begin?

- *“And the **evening** and the **morning** were the fifth day”* (Genesis 1:23) – a “day” example).
- *“It shall be unto you a sabbath of rest ... **from even unto even**, shall ye celebrate your sabbath”* (Leviticus 23:32; cf. Mark 1:32).
- The Bible “day” begins at sunset and ends the following day at sunset.

That means that those sacred hours begin Friday evening at sunset and end Saturday evening at sunset.

- The sun goes down at different times each day and the time depends on where you live.
- There are charts that tell us when this is for each Sabbath.
- One doesn’t follow Jerusalem time – just your own personal time, depending on where you are.

Intriguingly, that means Friday is a “preparation day” for the Sabbath.

- “And now when the even was come, because it was **the preparation**, that is, the day before the sabbath” (Mark 15:42).
- What does this mean? For most true Sabbath keepers:
 - All food preparation for Sabbath use is completed before Sabbath.
 - All cleaning is completed on Friday (or before).
 - All clothes, and all things, are readied in anticipation of the Sabbath.

Remember – you’re helping God create a break in your routine.

Does that sound too restrictive? Can you imagine what a vacation day with God might be like?

How did Jesus keep the Sabbath?

- He regularly worshiped on the Sabbath; took part in the services
- He gave religious instruction (Mark 1:21; 3:1-4; Luke 4:16-27; 13:10)
- He fellowshiped with others (Mark 1:29-31; Luke 14:1)
- He spent time outdoors (Mark 2:23)
- He went about doing holy deeds of mercy
- He healed the sick and afflicted (Mark 1:21-31; 3:1-5, 13:10-17; 14:2-4; John 5:1-15; 9:1-14) Jesus: “*It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath*” (Matthew 12:12).

“Every working of Christ in miracles was essential, and was to reveal to the world that there was a great work to be done on the Sabbath day for the relief of suffering humanity, **but the common work was not to be done**. Pleasure seeking, ball playing, swimming, was not a necessity, but a sinful neglect of the sacred day sanctified by Jehovah. Christ did not perform miracles merely to display His power, but always to meet Satan in afflicting suffering humanity. Christ came to our world to meet the needs of the suffering, whom Satan was torturing.”¹

The Sabbath in the New Testament

Jesus said that when you have to flee the abomination that will lead to desolation, “*pray ye that your flight be not ... on the Sabbath day*” (Matthew 24:20).

Paul talked about a physical rest as Christ’s rest (Hebrews 3–4). He then spiritualized this as a profound reminder: “*There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God*” (Hebrews 4:9) – that word “*rest*” was the Sabbath.

¹ *Selected Messages*, vol. 3, p. 258.

What can I do? Let's put it another way: "How can I keep those hours sacred and honor God?"

- Read, visit, worship, fellowship, walk, hike, eat, phone, listen to sacred music, preach, teach, help others, hospital work, nature study, Bible study, attend church, having friends over, watch religious videos/programming, go for a ride, having a picnic, rest.
- God wants us to enter into special activity that keeps our minds/hearts looking to Him or His service.
- Buying, selling, doing secular things like watching secular TV takes the mind off of Christ, His sacred purpose for those hours.
- Plan ahead.

PS: For those who choose to keep the Sabbath, it will be discovered that there is enough time in the other six days to do everything one needs for one's self and for others – guaranteed. **And** – God will bless you in a special way!

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