

## Seventh-Day Sabbath

Many wonder why someone in the twenty-first century would observe the seventh-day Sabbath? This article will address the Biblical reasons for worshipping God on the seventh day of the week.

God created the heavens and earth in six days “and on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.” (Genesis 2:2-3). God created the seventh-day Sabbath by ending his work, resting on the seventh-day, and thus setting it apart as a separate, holy day.

The next instruction of the Sabbath from God is around 1450 BC. In Exodus 16 after 430 years of slavery in Egypt, God through Moses freed the Israelites. One month after leaving Egypt, they complained to God, and God gave them "bread from heaven, manna". It is through this food God supplied that he confirmed again the seventh day Sabbath. They were to gather manna every morning according to their need, "one omer for every person", no more, no less, and they were not to leave any till morning. (Ex. 16:16-18) On the sixth day they were told to gather twice as much because "tomorrow is a Sabbath rest, a holy Sabbath to the Lord." (Ex. 16:23) When they left manna over from the first five days of the week, against the instruction from God, it stank and bred worms, but when they saved it over on the 6th day, for the Sabbath, it was fine. There was no manna from heaven on the Sabbath. This manna was given to them for 40 years while they were in the desert. God again taught and reinforced his command to observe the seventh day Sabbath to the Lord.

God then instructed in the Ten Commandments, “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work...for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.” (Exodus 20:8-11) Since the time of the creation, God has set apart the seventh day in honor of Him, the Creator. We are to remember the Creator God, and give honor to Him by resting from our work on that day, and using it to honor and glorify Him as our Creator, and Sustainer of all life.

God restated to Israel the importance of the Sabbath when He gave them His Feast days to observe. And the Lord said, “The feasts of the Lord which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, these are My feasts. Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work on it, it is the Sabbath of the Lord in all your dwellings.” (Leviticus 23:1-3) The Sabbath is to be a day we rest from our work and we join together in a holy assembly as the people of God.

So serious was this command from God that it was punishable by death. “Now while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering sticks on the Sabbath...then the Lord said to Moses, The man must surely be put to death;” (Numbers 15:32-36).

Blessings are promised to those who choose to honor God on the Sabbath instead of seeking their own desires. “If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of the Lord honorable, and shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own

words. Then you shall delight yourself in the Lord: and I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the Lord has spoken.” (Isaiah 58:13-14)

### **Jesus and the Sabbath**

When Jesus came, His instruction was that we should live by God’s commandments also. “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets, I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 5:17-19). Jesus gave us a living example of God’s law through His life. We are to follow in his footsteps, and strive to live as He lived.

Jesus said the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath and that the son of man is Lord of the Sabbath. (Matthew 12:8, Mark 2:27) The religious leaders of Jesus’ day, the scribes and Pharisees, often condemned Jesus for what he did on the Sabbath because of their lack of understanding of the purpose for the Sabbath. They had a list of their own laws regarding the Sabbath in addition to God’s instruction. However, Jesus gave clarity to the Sabbath day in the way he lived and taught. “There was a man who had a withered hand. And they asked Him, saying, ‘Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?’—that they might accuse Him. Then He said to them, ‘What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.’” (Matthew 12:10-12)

Jesus’ example on the Sabbath was to go to the synagogue and teach. “And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read.” (Luke 4:16, also Mark 1:21, 6:2, Luke 4:31, 6:6, 13:10).

### **Paul's Sabbath Observance**

It was also the custom of Paul and those with him to go to the synagogue on the Sabbath to read the word of God and discuss it. “Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures”. (Acts 17:2, also Acts 13:14, 27, 42, 44; Acts 18:4).

Paul taught we too should be obedient to God’s law. “Do we make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law”. (Romans 3:31)

The Sabbath day was established as the seventh-day of the week at creation by the Creator God. God’s instruction has always been to remember to keep the Sabbath day holy. Jesus was obedient to honor God on the seventh-day Sabbath as were Paul and the other early Christians. The scriptures do not show a change from this instruction or a tell us to move the “holy day” to another day of the week. Therefore, it is our custom to continue in the instruction of God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ to “Remember to keep the Sabbath day holy”. We come together as God’s people on the seventh-day Sabbath to worship and honor Him.

