

## **Lesson 9: Covenant Sign**

Why did God rest on the seventh day? When God finished his work, He was not tired as we are after a week of hard work. “Hast thou not known? has thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary?” (Isaiah 40:28). There is another reason why He rested, and it was not merely as an example to us who do get tired easily.

God had done something He had never done before. He had made man “in his own image” with complete freedom of choice to love Him loyally or to rebel against Him and hate Him, even eventually to murder his Son. To be created “in the image of God” does not mean simply in bodily appearance. It means with the capacity for perfect freedom of thought and choice. Every father and mother knows something of the risk that God took, because our children can obey us or rebel against us, as they choose. God could not be happy in finishing his creation unless He gave that full freedom to man. And yet with that freedom, God knew that a cross could come for Him as well!

The seventh day Sabbath was God’s covenant from creation with mankind. When God finished his work on that “sixth day,” He “rested” by submitting Himself into the hands of his created children. When Adam and Eve sinned against Him, the shadow of a cross arose over the Garden of Eden, and Christ became “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world!” (Revelation 13:8). The Sabbath is the true sign of that cross.

What day of the week was it when they nailed Jesus to that tree, when He cried out those triumphant words, “It is finished”? That day was the sixth day of the week, which we call Friday, the same day of the week when God “finished” his original work of creation. What day was it when Jesus rested in the grave after He finished his work of redemption? It was the Sabbath day, the same seventh day on which God had rested in the beginning.

The Son of God who died on that cross was Himself the Creator who made this earth and ourselves. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God, All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made” (John 1:1-3). Who is the “Word”? “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory of as the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (verse 14). Jesus is “the image of the invisible God, the first born of every creature: for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, that are in earth, visible and invisible, . . . all things were made by him and for him” (Colossians 1:15-17).

This means that since the world itself was created by Christ, the seventh-day Sabbath was also made by Him. It is therefore the true Christian Sabbath. And just as all things that He had made in the beginning were “for man,” so Jesus says, “The Sabbath was made for man” (Mark 2:28). “And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made” (Genesis 2:3). That is the reason people have kept the Sabbath since the very beginning of the world; and even after they forgot the sacredness of the Sabbath, they still kept the seven day week!

It is easy to understand why we have a month—this is the period of time marked out by the moon, and the word month reveals this; and likewise the year is the time marked out by the sun and the yearly seasons. But there is nothing in nature that divides time into weeks of seven days. Who invented the week?

Search every encyclopedia or history book in every great library in the world. You will find that there is no scientist or historian who can give you an answer to this question except the answer you find in the Holy Bible: God created this earth in six days and rested on the seventh day. Long ago, all mankind knew this truth.

The seven-day-week was observed in far-away Hindustan, by the Brahmans of India, by the Arabs, by the people in China, among the Greeks and the Romans, the Egyptians, even among the Saxons, ancient barbarians of northern Europe—people who had not been known by the Hebrews. Seven was the honored number among these nations. Hesiod (B.C. 900), a pagan Greek poet, declared the seventh day to be holy, as did Homer and Callimachus, ancient Greek writers. Traces of the week have also been found among the old Indians of the North American continent.

The origin of the week is clearly mentioned in the Ten Commandments: “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God . . . For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it (Exodus 20:8-11).

Please note the three things that Christ did in the beginning when He made the Sabbath:

(1) He rested on it. And since “the Sabbath was made for man,” He intends that man shall enjoy it. The same Jesus says, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). What kind of “rest” is this? “There remaineth therefore a rest for the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his” (Hebrews 4:9,10). Our “own works” are works of sin, of selfishness, of pride, of worry and fear, of keeping up with the world, our anxious concern for getting ahead in the world—this “heavy laden” burden that a sinful, materialistic world lays upon us. Salvation in Christ is release from this heavy load. Therefore “the Sabbath was made for man” as a sign of rest and freedom from our “own works” that kill us.

(2) God blessed the seventh day. The word “bless” means to give happiness. “Rest” from sin and selfishness is the only foundation of happiness. “Unto you first, God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities” (Acts 3:26). The purest, truest happiness man can know is bound up with the Lord’s day, the Sabbath.

(3) “And God . . . sanctified it.” To “sanctify” something is to set it apart for a special use. The same word is used to describe the setting apart of the priests, the tabernacle and all its sacred furniture for a special, holy work (see Leviticus 8:10, 11, 12, 15, 30). The tabernacle and all its sacred furniture were not to be hidden away in a museum but to be used continually—that’s what “sanctify” means. Therefore it is clear that the Lord did not hide his holy Sabbath away

from mankind for thousands of years, as some have said in their efforts to disregard it. When He “sanctified it” He gave it to “man” as a precious gift. He meant for all of us to keep the Sabbath and to enjoy it. Some people would tell us that the Sabbath was “made” only for the Jews. No, “the Sabbath was made for man” (Mark 2:27). The Sabbath is a blessing meant for the whole world!

**SECOND QUARTER 2021**  
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**“COVENANT SIGN”**

**The Sabbath the Sign of the Everlasting Gospel**

When God created the world in six days, He rested on the seventh day Sabbath. This was a sign that His work was complete, perfect in every way. There was nothing more He needed to do. That first Sabbath was Adam and Eve’s first day of life and they started off their lives with everything they needed and began by resting even though they had not yet worked. Thus, in the pre-fall Eden, Sabbath was a sign of Christ’s completed work of creation. It was a gift, a sanctuary of time given to humanities first parents.

Genesis 2:1-3 “Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. 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.”

Exodus 20:8-11 “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: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who *is* within your gates. 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.”

After the Exodus, the Sabbath became a memorial not only of creation, but also of deliverance from Egypt. Israel was delivered not by any works of their own, but redeemed by the blood of the Passover lamb that pointed forward to

Christ's atoning sacrifice and delivered by God's amazing miracles on their behalf such as providing a pillar of fire and opening the Red Sea.

Deuteronomy 5:12-15 "Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you.<sup>13</sup> Six days you shall labor and do all your work,<sup>14</sup> but the seventh day *is* the Sabbath of the LORD your God. *In it* you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your cattle, nor your stranger who *is* within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you.<sup>15</sup> And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day."

In Jesus' day, the Sabbath had been turned into a legalistic formal ceremony that had largely lost its significance. It was particularly followed by the religious class (Pharisees) who added so many obligations and rules that it had become a burden to the average Jew. In Jesus' day the physical need and suffering was overwhelming and compelling. With no good health care, the physical needs were great. Implied by the religious establishment of the day, was the sense that illness was the result of sin and that it brought with it the curse of God. Afflicted people were often outcasts. In Ancient Israel the priests served as healer, a responsibility they had little interest in. Hence Jesus was moved with compassion to meet the need. Not just to relieve suffering, but to show that the whole premise that God rejected the outcast or infirmed was wrong. To do so on Sabbath especially made the case that God is not far off from the sinner. This presented an incredibly strong picture of what God was like for all who saw the healing. The Sabbath healings performed by Jesus, were not missed by the religious leaders who saw it as a direct attack on their whole paradigm – that they were righteous and therefore blessed. (See DA 287).

At the cross, Jesus finished His work of redemption on Friday and rested in His finished work on the Sabbath. Spiritually God has delivered us out of the land of Egypt. Now, after the cross, the Sabbath remains a sign not only of Christ's completed work of creation, but His completed work of salvation and deliverance. Thus, the Sabbath is a sign of creation, deliverance and redemption. In a time when we will be tempted to save ourselves by our own good works, He reminds us that He is the One Who sanctifies, He is the One Who redeems. Sabbath speaks of God's commitment to redeem His people at any cost to Himself.

Sabbath then, is actually the sign of Righteousness by Faith and in the last days before Christ returns the Sabbath will take a central role. It will be the sign of those who keep the commandments of God by the faith of Jesus (Revelation 14:12). In contrast, Sunday is a sign of righteousness by works and undergirds the belief that Gods law cannot be kept. Isaiah tells us that in the Earth made new, the Sabbath will still be a sanctuary in time, set apart, in order to come together to worship God. (Isaiah 66:23) In a time when we will be tempted to save ourselves by our own good works, He reminds us that He is the One Who sanctifies, He is the One Who redeems. Sabbath speaks of God's commitment to redeem His people at any cost to Himself.

As we can see from the brief foregoing discussion, in the beginning the Sabbath was a sign of Christ's completed work of Creation. In a modest evaluation of His work, God said it is very good and He rested in His completed, finished and perfect work. Similarly, when Christ's work of redemption was complete, He said "it is finished" and rested on the Sabbath day. Thus, He gave the Sabbath additional significance, adding to creation, redemption. The Sabbath is a sign of Christ's completed work of creation and His completed work of Salvation and necessarily is the sign of righteousness by faith.

On Sabbath we rest from our labors trusting in His complete salvation. Sabbath is a day of rest not works. We rest in the One Who created us and we rest in the One Who redeemed us. From this perspective Sunday is a sign of accepting a human substitute in the place of the divine plan. In a time when we will be tempted to save ourselves by our own good works, He reminds us that He is the One Who sanctifies, He is the One Who redeems. Those who make up the final generation will live by faith and observe God's Sabbath day as a memorial of His sustaining power to deliver from sin and as a memorial of creation. It is not a legalistic relic of the old covenant but rather the Everlasting sign of the Everlasting covenant. Sabbath is the sign of Righteousness by Faith and not of works as Sunday worship will be revealed to represent in the end. Sabbath then, is actually the sign of Righteousness by Faith and in the last days before Christ returns the Sabbath will take a central role. It will be the sign of those who keep the commandments of God by the faith of Jesus (Revelation 14:12). In contrast, Sunday is a sign of righteousness by works and undergirds the belief that Gods law cannot be kept.

*"Those who, from whatever cause, are obliged to work on the Sabbath, are always in peril; they feel the loss, and from doing works of necessity they fall into the habit of doing things on the Sabbath that are not necessary. The sense of its sacredness is lost, and the holy commandment is of no effect. A special*



*effort should be made to bring about a reform in regard to Sabbath observance.” CH 422*

Stated another way its actually the Sabbath that protects us. It's that Sanctuary in time that we escape too, so that we can be recharged to serve during the week. By ceasing our labors on the Sabbath and heeding God's instruction to 'remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy', we recognize that we are dependent on Him for our very existence and our salvation.

The Sabbath in Christ's day had been turned into a legalistic observance that prevented the Jews from experiencing true Rest and Restoration.

*“In the healing of the withered hand, Jesus condemned the custom of the Jews, and left the fourth commandment standing as God had given it. ‘It is lawful to do well on the Sabbath days,’ He declared” DA 287.*

In our day the very opposite condition may exist, where Sabbath has become a day of recreation, often in pursuit of our own interests while the sacredness has often been lost. We can easily become careless or self focused in our observance.

We do not have the spiritual maturity of Jesus, the Master Healer. He often awoke “a long while” before daybreak seeking His Father's blessing and needed wisdom and power for the day. After a long day of ministry, including healing, He would often withdraw with His disciples for rest. In fact, after healing whole villages after the Sabbath hours, He would retire to the mountains to spend the rest of the night in prayer.

We must recognize our frailty and, thus, our need for rest and regeneration on the Sabbath. We can demonstrate how to truly keep Sabbath from a faith response and in doing so demonstrate to the world the importance of God's law.

Isaiah tells us that in the Earth made new, the Sabbath will still be a sanctuary in time, set apart, in order to come together to worship God. (Isaiah 66:23). Let us join together in keeping the sign that will symbolize those who have the Faith of Jesus and keep all His commandments.

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Why was the Sabbath made? “The Sabbath was made for man.” 2 It is *for* him, in the sense that it is *not against* him. It is not an arbitrary thing imposed upon man, something for him to keep simply because God says so, - but something that is given him for his help. It is a blessing that God has bestowed upon him. It is among the “all things that pertain unto life and godliness,” 3 which His Divine power has given unto us. GOSC 153.2

Why was the Sabbath given? The Lord, through the prophet, gives the answer in these words: “And hallow My Sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between Me and you, that ye may know that I am the Lord your God.” 1 Mark, it is a sign by which the people are to know God. Therefore, there is no room for the supposition that the Sabbath was simply for the purpose of distinguishing the Jews from other people. It was made before the Jews had any existence. It was that they might know God; and that which would serve to make them know God, would serve the same purpose for all other people. It was given to Adam in the beginning for the same purpose, - that He might know and remember God. GOSC 153.3

The Sabbath is for the purpose of keeping in mind the creative power of God, which is His distinguishing characteristic. But creative power is the power of the Gospel, so that that which celebrates creation also celebrates redemption. Christ is the Redeemer, because in Him were all things created. He bestows the grace of God to men by His creative power. The power that saves men is the power that created the heavens and the earth. So, when the Psalmist says that the Lord has made a memorial for His wonderful works, he immediately adds, “The Lord is gracious and full of compassion.” In Christ the grace of the Father is revealed. “And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth.” 1 He imparts His grace, which affords help in time of need, by the same mysterious and mighty power by which He created the earth; by the same power by which the sun’s rays impart life to the plants on the earth. GOSC 156.1

Note how inseparably Christ is connected with the Sabbath. It is by Him that all things were created, and that they all are upheld. But the works of God reveal His eternal power and Godhead; and Christ is the power of God, and in Him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. Therefore, the works of creation show the power and Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Sabbath is the great memorial of the wonderful works of God in Christ, and so it is the great sign of the Divinity of Christ. To keep the Sabbath as God appointed it at creation is to acknowledge the Divinity of Christ. Just to the extent that one fails to keep the Sabbath of the Lord in spirit and in truth, does he fail to

recognize the Divinity of Christ, and to receive the benefit that comes from the fact of His Divinity. GOSC 157.1

This is indicated in the words of Christ to the Pharisees who unjustly accused Him and His disciples of breaking the Sabbath, because they satisfied their hunger on that day, and because He healed a man on the Sabbath. Said He, "The Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath day." 1 It is no small thing that He is Lord of the Sabbath day. To be Lord of the Sabbath day means that He is the Creator of the heavens and the earth - that He is Lord of all. GOSC 158.1

There is a special blessing connected with the Sabbath. It is true that very many who profess to keep the Sabbath do not receive that blessing; but that is because they do not really know of it. The statement of the Scripture is, that God blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it. He blessed *the day*. There is no day of the week when *men* may not be blessed by the Lord. Indeed, both good and bad are alike the subjects of the blessings of God every day. Not only so, but those who seek the Lord may find special blessings at any time. **The Lord is always near at hand, and lies always ready to bless; but there is a blessing that goes with the Sabbath day that cannot be found anywhere else. It is the Sabbath blessing. God has put His blessing upon the Sabbath, and the Sabbath blessing goes only with the Sabbath.** Nobody can find a thing where it is not. The Sabbath blessing has not been placed upon any day except the seventh; therefore it cannot be found anywhere else. GOSC 158.2

What is this blessing for? It is for the same purpose that all the blessings of God are given. "Unto you first God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." 1 God blesses men, not because they are good, but in order that they may become good. All His blessings are for the purpose of turning them away from sin to Himself. If men do know the Lord, then the blessings that He bestows are for the purpose of drawing them still closer to Him. So it is with the Sabbath. It is to turn men to God, by reminding them of His goodness and of His gracious power. The power of creation is the power of Christ. Christ is of God, "made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." The power by which He gives us these things is the power by which He created the worlds. Therefore we find a deeper meaning in the words of the Lord, "Moreover also I gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between Me and them, that they might know that I am *the Lord that sanctify them*." 1 The blessing of the Sabbath is the blessing of sanctification. As the Sabbath is the memorial of God's creation, so is it to make known to us the power of God, to make us entirely new creatures in Christ. GOSC 159.1

A practical lesson may be learned right here in regard to Sabbath legislation. If the Sabbath were merely for the purpose of giving men physical rest, in order that they might be able to begin the next week's pursuit of wealth the more eagerly, it would be possible for the Government to require all men to keep the Sabbath. But since **the rest of the Sabbath is a spiritual rest**, the impossibility of compelling anybody to keep the Sabbath must be apparent. Spiritual pertains to the Spirit of God. The rest of the Sabbath, being spiritual, is the rest which only the Spirit of God can give, and the Spirit of God is not subject to acts of Parliament, or the decrees of courts. Even though the seventh day, the day which the Lord Himself blessed and sanctified, were the day sought to be enforced, the result would be the same. God does not use compulsion, and He has not authorized any man or body of men to use it in His place. The Sabbath is *for* man; it is the greatest blessing that God has for man. It is that which shows him the power by which he may be saved. To compel men, therefore, to keep the Sabbath, would be the same as to compel them to be saved. **Christ says that He will *draw* men to Him, but He does not *drive* them.** He is the Good Shepherd; as such He goes before His sheep, and leads them by His voice, but He does not drive them with a club. GOSC 164.1

It is clear that mere bodily recuperation is not the object of the Sabbath day, and that merely refraining from bodily toil does not at all constitute the sum of Sabbath-keeping. Yet entire cessation of our own work, of whatever kind it may be, is enjoined on the seventh day. This not alone for the purpose of giving us time to contemplate the works of God without interruption, but to impress a much-needed lesson of trust in God. As we cease all our labour by which we earn our living, we are reminded of the fact that God supplies us not only with spiritual blessings, but also with all temporal necessities. GOSC 165.1

We thereby acknowledge that although, in obedience to His command, we labour for our daily bread, we are as dependent upon Him as though we did nothing. GOSC 166.1

**The very idea of Sabbath observance is that of perfect trust in God, Whose power brought the universe from nothing, and upholds it, and Whose love for His creatures is equal to His power to do them good.** GOSC 166.2

**So as the Sabbath is the sign of a perfect creation, it is the seal of a new creature in Christ.** It is therefore the seal of God, ministered by the Spirit of God. As it came from Paradise, and is a part of the rest of Paradise, so it shows that those who keep it in spirit (not in form merely) are, through the mighty

power of God, destined for a place in Paradise. And thus, it will come to pass that, in the ages to come, when Eden is restored, all flesh shall come together from Sabbath to Sabbath to worship God, whose love and power and kindness in Christ have brought them to share the glories of His presence. And as they assemble on those thrice-blessed Sabbath days they will sing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." But the redeemed host will not be alone in their praises. All the works of God praise Him even now, while groaning, and waiting for the redemption; but then, when every trace of the curse will have been removed, and the Gospel has brought back the original creation, "Every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them," will in perfection unite as with one voice in saying, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." 1 GOSC 175.1