

In Search of the Sabbath

Exodus 20:8-11

In Search of the Sabbath

- Sabbath (sæbæθ) (verb Shavath) is the seventh day of the Hebrew calendar week, first mentioned in the Creation narrative
 - Gen. 2:2-3 - “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. 3 Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.”

In Search of the Sabbath

- Observation of Sabbath is one of the Ten Commandments (the fourth).
 - Ex. 20:8-11 - “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 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. 11 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.”

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- Ex. 31:13-17 - “Speak also to the children of Israel, saying: 'Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you. 14 'You shall keep the Sabbath, therefore, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people. 15 'Work shall be done for six days, but the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. 16 'Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. 17 'It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever; for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed.’”

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- Neh. 13:19 - “So it was, at the gates of Jerusalem, as it began to be dark before the Sabbath, that I commanded the gates to be shut, and charged that they must not be opened till after the Sabbath. Then I posted some of my servants at the gates, so that no burdens would be brought in on the Sabbath day.”

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- Shmita - Hebrew: שְׁמִטָּה , Strong's shemittah, literally “release,” also called sabbatical year, is the seventh year of the seven-year agricultural cycle mandated by the Law for the Israel. The land is left fallow, and all agricultural activity, including plowing, planting, pruning and harvesting, is forbidden. Whatever fruits grow on their own during that year are deemed hefker (ownerless), not for the landowner but for the poor, the stranger, and the beasts of the field; these fruits may be picked by anyone.

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- When the year ended, all debts, except those of foreigners, were to be remitted - Deut. 15:1-11
- A slave who had worked for six years was to go free in the seventh year - Lev. 25

In Search of the Sabbath

- Contemporary observation
 - Eastern Orthodox Christianity
 - English-speaking Protestants

In Search of the Sabbath

- A Sabbath observation has been practiced worldwide since ancient days
 - Rome: “Venerable Day of the Sun”
 - Zoroastrianism, the Babylonian rest days: Sapattu
 - Buddhist rest day: Uposatha
 - Cherokee: rest days empty moon days, called "un-time" or "non-days"
 - Wicca: Esbat

In Search of the Sabbath

- Folk tradition in English is the use of Sabbath as a synonym of midnight-to-midnight Saturday (literally, Saturn's day in 14 languages).
- In 38 other languages, the common name for this day in the seven-day week is a cognate of Sabbath. Sabbatini, Sabbadini, in Italian and other Mediterranean languages; Sabbatos in contemporary Greek, sâbotnichavi in Bulgarian
- This speaks of a single origin
 - Gen. 2:3 - “Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.”

In Search of the Sabbath

- Muslims replace Sabbath rest with jumu'ah. Also known as Friday prayer, jumu'ah is a congregational prayer (salat) held every Friday just after midday, in place of the otherwise daily (dhuhr) prayer; it commemorates the creation of Adam on the sixth day, glorifying the man on Friday, as opposed to glorifying God on the Sabbath
- The Quran states: “When the call is proclaimed to prayer on Friday, hasten earnestly to the Remembrance of Allah, and leave off business: That is best for you if ye but knew. When the prayer is ended, then disperse in the land” (62:9).

In Search of the Sabbath

- The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) believe the Lord has commanded them to continue to observe the Sabbath.
- Founder Joseph Smith claimed revelation in 1831: “That thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day; for verily this is a day appointed unto you to rest from your labors, and to pay thy devotions unto the Most High.” (D&C 59:9-10)

In Search of the Sabbath

- The Ten Commandments:
 - The first four deal with man's relationship with God
 - The last six deal with man's relationship with man
 - They illustrate the highest commands of loving God and loving neighbor as oneself - Matt. 22:36-40

In Search of the Sabbath

- The Rule for Israel to Observe the Sabbath
- The Reasoning of God in Establishing the Sabbath
- The Relevance of the Sabbath Then and Now

The Rule For Israel To Observe The Sabbath

- Ex. 20:8 - “Remember the Sabbath to keep it holy”
- Sabbath is resting from labor for a specific purpose
 - Ex. 20:9 - “Six days you shall labor and do all your work”

The Rule For Israel To Observe The Sabbath

- From Creation, God commanded man to work
 - Gen. 2:15 - “Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it.”
 - Gen. 3:17-19 - “Then to Adam He said, Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life. 18 Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field. 19 In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread Till you return to the ground...”

The Rule For Israel To Observe The Sabbath

- From Creation, God commanded man to work
 - Eph. 4:28 - “Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.”
 - 2Thes. 3:10 - “For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat.”

The Rule For Israel To Observe The Sabbath

- But God also commanded that one rest; even the earth is to rest
 - Ex. 20:10 - “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.”
 - This rule is true not only for the wealthy, but for their children, common laborers, slaves, and even the animals.
 - The poor could not claim necessity as an excuse to work on the Sabbath

The Rule For Israel To Observe The Sabbath

- God only gave them manna for six days each week
 - Ex. 16:23-26 - “Then he said to them, This is what the LORD has said: 'Tomorrow is a Sabbath rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD. Bake what you will bake today, and boil what you will boil; and lay up for yourselves all that remains, to be kept until morning.' 24 So they laid it up till morning, as Moses commanded; and it did not stink, nor were there any worms in it. 25 Then Moses said, Eat that today, for today is a Sabbath to the LORD; today you will not find it in the field. 26 Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, which is the Sabbath, there will be none.”
- One could not even gather firewood to keep warm - Num. 15:32-36

The Reasoning Of God In Establishing The Sabbath

- Ex. 20:11 - “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.”
- Man ought not to go beyond God and do for himself things that God did not do for Himself.

The Reasoning Of God In Establishing The Sabbath

- The Sabbath demonstrated God's love for man.
 - Ecc. 2:22-24 - “For what has man for all his labor, and for the striving of his heart with which he has toiled under the sun? 23 For all his days are sorrowful, and his work burdensome; even in the night his heart takes no rest. This also is vanity. 24 Nothing is better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that his soul should enjoy good in his labor. This also, I saw, was from the hand of God.”
 - Ecc. 5:18 - “Here is what I have seen: It is good and fitting for one to eat and drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labor in which he toils under the sun all the days of his life which God gives him; for it is his heritage.”

The Reasoning Of God In Establishing The Sabbath

- Jesus proved that the Sabbath is a manifestation of God's love when He healed on the Sabbath
 - Matt. 12:5-12
 - Mark 2:23-28
 - Luke 6:1-9

The Reasoning Of God In Establishing The Sabbath

- Matt. 12:5-12 - “Or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless? 6 Yet I say to you that in this place there is One greater than the temple. 7 But if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. 8 For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath. 9 Now when He had departed from there, He went into their synagogue. 10 And behold, 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. 11 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? 12 Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.”

The Reasoning Of God In Establishing The Sabbath

- Mark 2:23-28 - “Now it happened that He went through the grain fields on the Sabbath; and as they went His disciples began to pluck the heads of grain. 24 And the Pharisees said to Him, Look, why do they do what is not lawful on the Sabbath? 25 But He said to them, Have you never read what David did when he was in need and hungry, he and those with him: 26 how he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the showbread, which is not lawful to eat, except for the priests, and also gave some to those who were with him? 27 And He said to them, The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. 28 Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.”

The Reasoning Of God In Establishing The Sabbath

- Luke 6:1-9 - “Now it happened on the second Sabbath after the first that He went through the grain fields. And His disciples plucked the heads of grain and ate them, rubbing them in their hands. 2 And some of the Pharisees said to them, Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath? 3 But Jesus answering them said, Have you not even read this, what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: 4 how he went into the house of God, took and ate the showbread, and also gave some to those with him, which is not lawful for any but the priests to eat? 5 And He said to them, The Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath. 6 Now it happened on another Sabbath, also, that He entered the synagogue and taught. And a man was there whose right hand was withered. 7 So the scribes and Pharisees watched Him closely, whether He would heal on the Sabbath, that they might find an accusation against Him. 8 But He knew their thoughts, and said to the man who had the withered hand, Arise and stand here.” And he arose and stood. 9 Then Jesus said to them, I will ask you one thing: Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy?”

The Relevance Of The Sabbath Then And Now

- Is the fourth commandment still binding on God's children today?
- Many want to say that the Sabbath day is still binding, but that Sunday is now the Sabbath.
- Some insist that Saturday is still the Sabbath and must be observed: Seventh Day Adventists, Mormons, Eastern Orthodox

The Relevance Of The Sabbath Then And Now

- The Ten Commandments as originally given were only for the nation of Israel
 - Ex. 34:27-28 - “Then the LORD said to Moses, Write these words, for according to the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel. 28 So he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he neither ate bread nor drank water. And He wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.”

The Relevance Of The Sabbath Then And Now

- The Ten Commandments as originally given were only for the nation of Israel
 - Deut. 5:1-3 - “And Moses called all Israel, and said to them: Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your hearing today, that you may learn them and be careful to observe them. 2 The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. 3 The LORD did not make this covenant with our fathers, but with us, those who are here today, all of us who are alive.”

The Relevance Of The Sabbath Then And Now

- The covenant was made with Israel; it was never binding on righteous Gentiles in any dispensation
 - Acts 15:23-24, 28-29 - “They wrote this letter by them: The apostles, the elders, and the brethren, To the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia: Greetings. 24 Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, "You must be circumcised and keep the law" --to whom we gave no such commandment... 28 For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: 29 that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.”

The Relevance Of The Sabbath Then And Now

- We are under a different, far better covenant
 - Heb. 8:6, 13 - “But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises... 13 In that He says, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.”
 - Heb. 10:9 - “...He takes away the first that He may establish the second.”

The Relevance Of The Sabbath Then And Now

- We are under a different, far better covenant
 - Col. 2:13-17 - “And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, 14 having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. 15 Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it. 16 So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, 17 which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.”

The Relevance Of The Sabbath Then And Now

- We are under a different, far better covenant
 - Gal. 5:1-4 - “Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. 2 Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. 3 And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. 4 You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.”

The Relevance Of The Sabbath Then And Now

- The fourth commandment regarding remembering the Sabbath is not binding on anyone today
- At the same time, Paul respected the customs of the Jews to observe it as a day of rest to accommodate tender consciences (1Cor. 9:19-23)
 - Rom. 14:5 - “One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind.”

The Relevance Of The Sabbath Then And Now

- The first day of the week was never the Sabbath day.
 - Christians in the first century worshiped upon the first day of the week.
 - Jesus arose from the dead on the first day of the week - Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:2, 9; John 20:1
 - The day of Pentecost when the church was established was on the first day of the week, Sunday - Acts 2
 - The church ate the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week - Acts 20:7
 - They took up the contribution on the first day of the week - 1Cor. 16:1-2
 - This isn't the Sabbath day, but the Lord's Day - Rev. 1:10

The Relevance Of The Sabbath Then And Now

- Ultimately the Sabbath is symbolic for the rest of God's people in eternity.
 - Heb. 4:9-11 - “There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. 10 For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His. 11 Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.”
- Today we honor the Sabbath by working for the Lord and waiting for the day of eternal rest