

Sabbath Bondage & Knowing the Joys of Christ's Rest on This Side of the Cross

Genesis 2; Exodus 16-20

How did the 7th day of Creation become the Sabbath Day and the central focus of so much of the legalistic, spiritual bondage religion of the Pharisees and Saduccees in New Testament Judaism? What is the plan God had for Saturday in the Creation Week, and the Sabbath regulations given by God to Moses for the nation of Israel?

THE ORIGIN OF THE 7TH DAY

To understand the 7th Day we need to first open to Genesis 2.

After the wonders of Genesis 1, God crowned the creative week with a memorial to His amazing work of Creation in Genesis 2. God elevated Saturday as a day to always reflect upon how amazing it was that he created everything we will ever discover in the universe around us in only six days.

Think about it as science continues to uncover more complexities in the vast reaches of outer space: God did all of that in just part of those six days. Then think about all of the intricacies of the varied forms of life all around us, beneath and above us, residing on this pale blue perfectly tuned habitat called earth: God made all of that in those six days.

Then God says pause each week with gratitude and worship for such an Almighty God who did so much in just six days. Join me reading Genesis 1:31-2:3.

Genesis 1:31-2:3 (NKJV) Then God saw everything that He had made, **and indeed it was very good.** So the evening and the morning were the sixth day. ^{2:1} Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. ² 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.

Pray

A THEOLOGY OF THE 7TH DAY

For just a few minutes lets just do an inductive Bible Study and note just exactly where we are and what God says in this part of His Word.

Genesis 2:1-3 & The Seventh Day

No Rest Command.

What does God say? There is no commanded day of rest here or anywhere else in all 50 chapters of Genesis. No one does until Moses.

Creator Reminder.

What does God mean? God made every Saturday a perpetual memorial to the fact that He created everything in 6 days.

The word used is “holy” first time in Bible, which elevates the remembering of God as Creator to be the first named act of worship. God tells us 11 times (7 in the Old and 4 in the New) that He made everything, and did so in six days. The Bible even ends with a vivid reminder of this in Rev. 14:7.¹

His Signature.

What does God start? A seven-day week. God left His signature on the world (is there any other possible way such an obtuse measurement of 7 is used instead of 10? God made the seven-day week to observed all throughout humanity as a weekly signpost to Him as the Creator God, so humans could be grateful and worship Him. Remember the indictment of humanity that God makes in Romans 1?

Romans 1:20-25 (NKJV) **20** For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, **21** because, although they knew God, they did not glorify *Him* as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. **22** Professing to be wise, they became fools, **23** and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. **24** Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, **25** who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

God Rests.

What does God stop? Only God rests from creating, no hint at mankind being asked to rest in this passage or anywhere else in Genesis.

So, Genesis has no commanded day of rest for anyone but God.

From Genesis 2 through Exodus 15 there is no Patriarch that worshipped on the Sabbath, none is there any command to rest on the Sabbath anywhere in God’s Word the Bible.

God’s rest gets cut short at the Fall of Man, because since the fall of the Universe into sin God is at work.

In Hebrews 1 we find that He is now upholding all things. In Colossians 1 God makes all things continue, apart from God holding everything together it would dissolve. So God is at work from Genesis 3 onward but still has no commanded rest for mankind until Exodus.

A THEOLOGY OF THE SABBATH DAY

Turning onward to Exodus 20, we need to see exactly what God instituted for the Sabbath Day.

¹ Ex. 20:11, 31:17; 2 Chr. 2:12; Ps. 134:3, 136:7; Jer. 33:2; Jonah 1:9; Acts 4:24, 14:15, 17:24; Rev. 14:7.

Exodus 20:10 & The Sabbath Day

Rest Commanded.

God institutes a mandatory day of rest for Israel to be observed every seventh day as a part of an entire Sabbath cycle for their national calendar.

Fallenness Memorial.

God made every Saturday a memorial to the fact of sin, our utter fallenness, ongoing moral failures and many imperfections. The Sabbath came packaged in the Law of God that condemns us all as guilty.

God is Law Giver, because we are sinners, we need help.

Redeemer Reminder.

God continues to make Saturday a day of sacrificial worship that is the way to deal with sin. The weekly focus of Saturday was for a time of contrition over our sinfulness and a time of repentance from those sins.

We are in need of a Redeemer.

God No Longer Rests.

Because of sin, God no longer rests from His work. No He is upholding a cursed and dying Universe.

God actually encloses the Sabbath Day ceremonial law Sabbath command, inside as the 4th commandment. It sits in the midst of the other nine expressions of His unchanging moral law of the Ten Commandments.

This is how we are to see the Ten Commandments:

Numbers 1-3 expresses the truth that God is Holy.

Then the fourth commandment is for Israel to pause and look at God as Holy (1-3) and at how sinful we are as humans (5-10).

So the Sabbath Day was a central point to think between two truths: God is Holy & Man is Sinful.

Now, what exactly did God command for the Sabbath Day?

THE MOSAIC LAW: SABBATH RULES

As we turn back to Exodus 16 we find the very first command to rest in the Sabbath Day for anyone in God's Word. These words were from God, through Moses, for the nation of Israel. These regulations stretch from the Book of Exodus through the Book of Jeremiah.

There are ten major areas impacted by God's rules about the Sabbath Days. The limitations are astounding to us today:

- 1. No Cooking.** (Exodus 16:23, NKJV) 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.”

2. **No Gathering.** (Exodus 16:26, NKJV) Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, the Sabbath, there will be none.”
3. **No Going Out.** (Exodus 16:29, NKJV) See! For the Lord has given you the Sabbath; therefore He gives you on the sixth day bread for two days. Let every man remain in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day.”
4. **No Working by Anyone on the 7th day = 14.25% of life.** (Exodus 20:10, NKJV) 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.
5. **No Crops or work the 7th Year = 14.25% of life.** (Exodus 23:11, NKJV) but the seventh *year* you shall let it rest and lie fallow, that the poor of your people may eat; and what they leave, the beasts of the field may eat. In like manner you shall do with your vineyard *and* your olive grove.
6. **No Fire Building.** (Exodus 35:3, NKJV) You shall kindle no fire throughout your dwellings on the Sabbath day.”
7. **No Work on the 7 Feast Days = 9.3% of life.** (Lev. 23:7-8, NKJV) On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall do no customary work on it.⁸ But you shall offer an offering made by fire to the Lord for seven days. The seventh day *shall be* a holy convocation; you shall do no customary work *on it.*”
8. **No Work the 50th Year = 2% of life.** (Lev. 25:10, NKJV) And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout *all* the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a Jubilee for you; and each of you shall return to his possession, and each of you shall return to his family.
9. **No Buying or Selling.** (Neh. 10:31, NKJV) *if* the peoples of the land brought wares or any grain to sell on the Sabbath day, we would not buy it from them on the Sabbath, or on a holy day; and we would forego the seventh year’s *produce* and the exacting of every debt.
10. **No Carrying.** (Jer. 17:21, NKJV) Thus says the Lord: “Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the Sabbath day, nor bring *it* in by the gates of Jerusalem;

So from Sundown on Friday until Sundown on Saturday there was to be:

No cooking of food; no gathering of food; no getting out of the house (except for going to the Tabernacle or Temple), on Sabbaths.

No work by anyone attached in any way to the household including animals; no planting crops the 7th years; and no building of fires on Sabbaths.

No work during the days of the 7 Annual Holy Convocation feasts; no work or crop planting the 50th Jubilee Year; no buying or selling on Sabbaths; and no carrying outside or inside your home on Sabbaths.

THE BURDEN & BONDAGE OF THE SABBATH

All I can say is: Wow.

That was an amazing burden that the Law placed upon the people of Israel. What for? To remind them that their Creator God, was also the absolute Law Giver who found everyone guilty of sin.

The Sabbath was a time to stay home and do nothing but think about God: either you loved Him more and more, or hated Him more and more for all His rules. They were to be acutely aware of their sins and humbly contrite seeking God’s forgiveness.

Sadly, no one could keep all the rules. It was impossible to perfectly fulfill all of God’s rules. , The goal of the Law was to lead each person to the awareness of their helplessness. As Paul said, the Law was a school master that pointed helpless and hopeless rule breakers to the only One who could save, forgive, and give them righteousness unearned and undeserved.

Realizing that each person faced an impossible standard. Only Christ could perfectly keep the Law and fulfill the Law.

THE CONTRAST OF THE 7TH DAY & THE SABBATH DAY

Genesis 2:1-3 & The Seventh Day	Exodus 16-40 & The Sabbath Day
No Rest Commanded Anyone	Rest Commanded to Israel
Saturday: Creator Reminder	Saturday: Fall into Sin Reminder
God’s Signature as Creator	God’s Offer as Redeemer
God Rests	God No Longer Rests

THE BLESSINGS OF THIS SIDE OF THE CROSS

Now think of the two sides of the Cross. As we review this list think of how wonderful it is to know Christ who died in our place, was punished for our sins, and lavishes His grace upon us.

Before the Cross/Old Covenant of Law	After the Cross/New Covenant of Grace
Leviticus 26:18 (NKJV) ‘And after all this, if you do not obey Me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins.	John 8:10-11 (NKJV) When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, “Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?” ¹¹ She said, “No one, Lord.” And Jesus said to her, “Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.”
Deuteronomy 11:28 (NKJV) and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside from the way which I command you today, to go after	2 Corinthians 5:21 (NKJV) For He made Him who knew no sin <i>to be</i> sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

other gods which you have not known.	Galatians 3:13 (NKJV) Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”),
Isaiah 59:2 (NKJV) But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden <i>His</i> face from you, So that He will not hear.	Romans 8:38-39 (NKJV) For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Bound by Sin	Christ Liberated Us
Punished for Sin	Christ does not Condemn Us
Cursed by Sin	Christ was Cursed for Us
Separated from God	Christ Opens the Way
Un-Ending Sacrifices Needed	Christ Sacrifice was Sufficient for All

CONCLUSION

Sunday has become for us a reminder of our Savior.

On Saturday (and every day): we remember our amazing Creator who made everything in six days.

On Saturday (and every day): we remember that we have fallen so short of His glory, and are convicted sinners.

On Sunday (and every day): we remember our Savior, our Redeemer, and our Friend.

Jesus was hung on a tree and cursed for us by the Law.

Jesus became our sin, and suffered God’s punishment for each of our sins.

Jesus places upon us His perfect obedient life we never could live, and makes us righteous forever in God the father’s sight.

What a wonderful Savior, and what a blessing to be free from the bondage of the Law, the bondage of sin, and the bondage of the Sabbath rules.

Join me in expressing that blessing by these words:

Wonderful Merciful Saviour

Song by [Selah](#)

Wonderful, merciful Savior
Precious Redeemer and Friend
Who would have thought that a Lamb
Could rescue the souls of men
Oh you rescue the souls of men

Counselor, Comforter, Keeper
Spirit we long to embrace
You offer hope when our hearts have
Hopelessly lost the way
Oh, we hopelessly lost the way

Chorus: You are the One that we praise
You are the One we adore
You give the healing and grace
Our hearts always hunger for
Oh, our hearts always hunger for

Almighty, infinite Father
Faithfully loving Your own
Here in our weakness You find us
Falling before Your throne
Oh, we're falling before Your throne