

"God So Loved The World" Bible Study

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." John 3:16 (NIV)

Study #15: The Sabbath Rest

One of the main reasons Christ came to our world as the Savior of mankind was to bring rest to human restlessness. Sin has not only separated us from God but has inflicted guilt and shame on the human race, causing much stress and restlessness. That's why Christ gave this invitation to the discouraged Jews of His day: "Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

Since the Fall, that divine rest which Christ came to give sinful humanity is linked with the Sabbath. That is why it was included in the Ten Commandments as part of the covenant God made with Israel. Unfortunately, many Christians limit this Sabbath commandment, requiring God's people to keep the Sabbath holy, to only the Old Covenant. However, you will not find this taught in Scripture. The Sabbath is vitally linked with the New Covenant.

As we saw in our study of the two covenants, the difference between the Old and the New Covenants is that the former offered salvation on the basis of man's obedience to the law, while the latter was based on God's promise to meet the law's demands for the human race in Christ.

The New Covenant does not do away with the law, as some teach, but writes it in our hearts (see Hebrews 8:7-10). In this study we will examine what the Bible teaches regarding the Sabbath, as part of the New Covenant of salvation by grace, in the redemption that is ours in Christ.

1. According to the fourth commandment, to whom does the Sabbath belong?

Exodus 20:10 _____

Note: All through the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, we find that the Sabbath belongs to God and not man. Yes, it was made for man but it does not belong to him (see also Exodus 31:13).

2. According to the prophet Isaiah, whose holy day is the Sabbath?

Isaiah 58:13 _____

3. What promise does God make to those who keep His Sabbath holy?

Isaiah 58:14 _____

4. Why did God rest on the seventh day of creation and sanctify it?

Genesis 2:1-3 _____

Note: There are two reasons why God rested on the seventh day of creation. The first was because all that He had created was "very good," i.e., absolutely perfect (see Genesis 1:31). The second was because "the heavens and the earth were finished" (Genesis 2:1). Therefore, the reason God rested (the meaning of Sabbath) and set aside (the meaning of sanctified) the seventh day was to commemorate a perfect and finished work.

5. For whom did Jesus say the Sabbath was made?

Mark 2:27 _____

Note: Please note, Jesus did not say that the Sabbath was made for the Jews but for man, i.e., mankind. It was at creation that the Sabbath was set aside (sanctified) for man. The reason for this will be answered in the next two questions.

6. Upon which day of the week were Adam and Eve created?

Genesis 1:26, 27, 31 _____

Note: Adam and Eve were created at the end of the sixth day. This means that God's Sabbath was really their first whole day. Therefore, while the Sabbath is God's seventh day it is our first day, since the human race was created in Adam (see Acts 17:26). Consequently, when we consider the Sabbath from God's point of view, we begin by resting on God's Sabbath and then work the other six days. This order becomes significant when we consider the Sabbath in the light of redemption.

7. What did God give mankind after He created us in Adam?

Psalm 8:4-8 _____

Note: God created man to have dominion over all of creation. But he himself was to be totally God-dependent. Adam made no contribution to creation but was only its recipient. The Sabbath was therefore made or set aside (sanctified) for man to be a constant reminder of this fact. When we live independent of God we are really breaking the Sabbath covenant.

8. What did God say to Adam after the Fall?

Genesis 3:19 _____

Note: When Adam and Eve sinned, they turned their backs on God and became self-dependent. That is why, after the Fall, God said they would eat their bread by the sweat of their brow. At the Fall, the Sabbath covenant was broken since our first parents were no longer God-dependent.

9. According to the New Testament, who actually created our world?

John 1:3 _____

Note: Jesus is the Word by whom God created all things. He was the spokesman for the Godhead when this world of ours was created. That is why He could claim to be the Lord of the Sabbath (see Mark 2:28).

10. What was the Word made in order to save fallen mankind?

John 1:14 _____

Note: At the incarnation, Jesus, who created the world, became one of us in order to be the Savior of the world. By His perfect life and sacrificial death He redeemed mankind and restored the Sabbath rest.

11. What reason did Jesus give the Jews of the Exodus for keeping the Sabbath day holy?

Deuteronomy 5:15 _____

Note: According to 1 Corinthians 10, the Exodus is a type of salvation from our bondage to sin. By commanding the Jews of the Exodus to keep His Sabbath, God gave the Sabbath a redemptive significance. This is how we must consider the Sabbath under the New Covenant.

12. Why did the majority of the adult Jews who were delivered from Egypt never reach Canaan?

Hebrews 3:18, 19 _____

Note: Unbelief is deliberately turning one's back on God. In spite of all the miraculous evidence God gave the Jews of the Exodus concerning His saving power, it is sad to say that the majority turned their backs on Him.

13. What is God's rest linked with in the book of Hebrews?

Hebrews 4:1, 2 _____

Note: In these verses, entering into God's rest is linked with believing the gospel. This is because Jesus, who created this world, is also the source of our redemption. As Adam and Eve entered into God's rest at creation, so also must we enter by faith into the rest God has obtained for us in Jesus Christ.

14. Why is this divine rest of the gospel linked with the seventh day?

Hebrews 4:3, 4 _____

Note: Our salvation was planned in Christ before the foundation of the world (see Ephesians 1:4). Just as Jesus created a perfect and finished world by the end of the sixth day and rested in the seventh, He finished our redemption in the sixth day (Friday) and rested in the tomb on the Sabbath (Saturday).

15. What still remains for the people of God to do?

Hebrews 4:9 _____

Note: Since the epistle to the Hebrews was addressed to the First Century Jews, the phrase "the people of God" refers to the Jewish nation. The word "rest" in this text is Sabbatismos, a keeping of the Sabbath. Even though the Jewish nation was keeping the seventh-day Sabbath, in God's eyes this was meaningless as long as they rejected Jesus Christ, the Lord of the Sabbath.

16. What happens when the people of God do enter God's rest?

Hebrews 4:10 _____

Note: When we, by faith, enter into God's rest and depend totally on Christ's perfect and finished redemption for our salvation, we will cease trying to add our own works of the law towards that salvation (see Galatians 5:4). The keeping of the Sabbath as a day of rest reminds us of this fact.

17. What did Christ cry out on the cross regarding our salvation?

John 19:30 _____

Note: When Jesus cried out "it is finished," He was proclaiming to the world that His saving mission had been accomplished. This took place at the end of the sixth day (Friday) just before the Sabbath had begun (read Luke 23:44-56).

18. When Jesus eradicates sin and ushers in everlasting righteousness in the earth made new, what will the redeemed do every Sabbath?

Isaiah 66:22, 23 _____

Note: When we consider the Sabbath in the light of the full and complete plan of redemption, we discover that the Sabbath, God's seventh day, points to three important facts. First, it points to a perfect and finished creation which sin has marred and ruined. Secondly, it points to a perfect and finished redemption realized on the cross of Christ. Finally, it points forward to a perfect and finished restoration.

19. Of what is the Sabbath a covenant sign?

Exodus 31:13 _____

Note: After the Fall the Sabbath was given a redemptive significance. It was made a covenant sign that God would step into our shoes in the person of Christ and make us holy and blameless in Him. All those who enter God's rest and keep the Sabbath (not as a means of salvation but as their confession of faith in Christ) are guaranteed the salvation which Christ has obtained for everyone at the cross (see Hebrews 10:14).

Conclusion: The Sabbath rest was not merely given exclusively for the Jews, but was made for man (see again Mark 2:27). In fact, you can search the Scriptures from now until the end of the world and you will not find even one text making the seventh-day Sabbath exclusive only to the Jewish people. Regarding the fantastic good news of our salvation and rest in Christ, it can be truly said that the Sabbath is the outward sign of our inward experience of again becoming totally dependent on God's salvation in Christ and resting from our own futile efforts to save ourselves through legalistic attempts to earn salvation through works of the law. In light of this truth, Sabbath keeping becomes a delight and a joy which beautifully represents the fact that we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone and not of works, lest any man should boast (see Ephesians 2:8-9).

Isn't it wonderful to know that God's special blessing is promised to those who remember to appreciate and observe His holy day?

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