

29.5.2021 COVENANT SIGN

“Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant.” Exodus 31:16

When God made a covenant with His people at Sinai, He also gave them a covenant sign – the Sabbath.

The Hebrews were already familiar with the Sabbath. God wanted them to understand that **a sign is an outward witness to an inner spiritual reality**. That spiritual reality is evident when we study the events associated with the Sabbath – creation, redemption and restoration to God’s image.

Origins

And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested (sabat) on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. Genesis 2:2

On the 7th day, God rested (ceased) His work. Man was created on the 6th day. So the 7th day of Creation was man’s first full day. **It is God’s seventh day.**

Sabbath before Sinai

God delivered His people from Egyptian bondage and brought them to the Wilderness of Sinai. Here He provided ‘angels’ food’ for them – manna from heaven. The Sabbath is mentioned in relation to the provision of manna.

Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no. And it shall come to pass, that on the sixth day they shall prepare that which they bring in; and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily.

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, the Sabbath, there will be none.”

27 Now it happened that some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather, but they found none. 28 And the Lord said to Moses, “How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My laws? Exodus 16:4, 5, 23-28

This story clearly informs us that the 6th day of the week is preparation day. The seventh day of the week is the Sabbath.

The Sabbath is a day of rest. God provided manna for the Sabbath on the 6th day so that there should be no unnecessary work on the Sabbath. IT is a holy day unto the Lord; a day ‘set apart’.

Covenant Sign

As stated earlier, **a sign is an outward witness to an inner spiritual reality**. That spiritual reality is evident when we study the events associated with the Sabbath – creation, redemption and restoration to God’s image.

Sine God calls it a perpetual sign, today we are also called to demonstrate blessings of the Sabbath in our lives.

1. The Sabbath is a day of Rest.

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 2:3

Man is called to rest on the Sabbath as a sign that he is resting in the perfect work of God on his behalf. He physically rests on the Sabbath day as a witness to the world that he has ‘rest for his soul’ Matthew 11:28-30; that he has been created by God and is a recipient of His perfect work in Creation.. He is resting in the finished

work of Christ's salvation every Sabbath. And then, throughout the remainder of the week, he claims the salvation of God daily: the blood and intercession of Christ, the gift of the in-dwelling Spirit to make salvation real in his experience.

2. The Sabbath Rest: Creation

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labour 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.** Exodus 20:8-11

Rest before Sin. Adam and Eve were created on the 6th day. At the end of the 6th day, God looked upon His creation and declared it 'very good'. On the 7th day, God rested (as a sign that He had completed a perfect creation). God invited Adam and Eve to rest with Him.

The 7th day was actually Adam and Eve's FIRST day. So the first thing Adam and Eve did after they were created was to rest. This was a sign that they were resting in the finished perfect work of God, and that they could do nothing to add to the perfection of God's work.

Note the timeline for God: God works and then rests. Note the timeline for Man: Man first rests in the finished work of God and then goes forth rested and refreshed to work.

Every Sabbath is a celebration of the fact that God is our Creator, that He knows each of us personally (Psalm 139). It is a celebration of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of mankind.

3. The Sabbath Rest: Salvation (Redemption and Restoration to Holiness)

Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God... 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.** Deuteronomy 5:12-15

The Sabbath is a sign that God has delivered us from the bondage of sin. At Calvary, Christ delivered us from SATAN WITH A MIGHTY HAND AND AN OUTSTRETCHED ARM. After the entrance of sin, mankind lost its rest in God. The consequence of sin was labour and restlessness. Rest is closely allied to peace. It is when we have true peace, the peace of God, that we can have rest for spirit, mind and body. When we live in a relationship with God, we have rest (see Exodus 33:14). Separation from God leads to a loss of peace, and therefore, to a life of restlessness. Psalm 38:3 is an example of the above. David has sinned and is here describing the heavy burden of his sin. The word 'rest' here also has the meaning of health and peace. Like David, a sinner who is aware of his guilt, loses peace, rest and health. *'There is no soundness in my flesh because of Your anger, nor any rest (health, peace) in my bones because of my sin.'*

Sign of Sanctification

"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. Exodus 31:13

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. Ezekiel 20:12

This is one of the greatest blessings of the Sabbath rest. If we claim God's promise that He will sanctify us, thank Him that He will do it because of the mighty name of Jesus and surrender ourselves to His Spirit daily, we are assured that the Spirit will sanctify us.

And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it. 1 Thessalonians 5:23, 24

We often look upon the Sabbath as a sign of sanctification, and it assuredly is this. (See [Eze. 20:12, 20.](#)) **But the Sabbath is also a sign that we have entered into God's rest, and have ceased to rely upon our own works for salvation. (See [Heb. 4:1-10.](#))** While it is possible to make the Sabbath a badge of legalism, it can also become a beautiful sign that we are resting with Christ in His finished work. Having accomplished our salvation on the cross, Christ ascended to the right hand of the Father, where "He reverently presents at the mercy-seat His finished redemption for His people." Ellen G. White, —*Review and Herald*, Oct. 17, 1893.

Conclusion:

'No other institution which was committed to the Jews tended so fully to distinguish them from surrounding nations as did the Sabbath. God designed that its observance should designate them as His worshipers. It was to be a token of their separation from idolatry, and their connection with the true God. **But in order to keep the Sabbath holy, men must themselves be holy. Through faith they must become partakers of the righteousness of Christ. When the command was given to Israel, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy," the Lord said also to them, "Ye shall be holy men unto Me." Exodus 20:8; 22:31. Only thus could the Sabbath distinguish Israel as the worshipers of God.**

As the Jews departed from God, and failed to make the righteousness of Christ their own by faith, the Sabbath lost its significance to them.' *Desire of Ages: p 283*

God calls us today to continue in His Sabbath rest (Hebrews 4:9-11). From week to week, we pause to thank Him and worship Him for His perfect work in creation, in redemption and the assurance that He is perfecting us in faith and love (Hebrews 12:1, 2, 1 John 1:1-3, Philippians 1:6) until that Day when He comes to claim His own.

The Sabbath is our weekly reminder that God calls us to remember what we were created for: Holiness, Health and Joy. His purpose has not changed despite the Fall. Every Sabbath we are called to rest in Him; to rest and acknowledge (remember) His perfectly finished work on earth at Creation, in redemption and sanctification. We rest every Sabbath confident in the sure and certain hope of our glorification at His second coming. This is indeed the rest of God – rest for our souls. And when we enjoy the eternal rest of heaven, we shall meet every Sabbath to declare His praise and worship Him who created, redeemed and re-created us; and Who gave us eternal life and immortality. It will be an everlasting celebration of the God of the everlasting covenant who, when we fell, undertook to restore us to righteousness and eternal life and saved us from eternal death.

'The children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. 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.'" Exodus 31:16, 17

*There remaineth therefore a rest (a keeping of the Sabbath) for the people of God. **For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His. Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience. Hebrews 4:9-11***
