

The Seventh Day God Rested

October 28, 2007

Should the church revisit its teachings and practice of the Sabbath?

Today we will reconsider our understanding of the teachings of the Sabbath. The Sabbath is found at the very beginning of creation, and it is consummated at the end of Revelation. It is the first thing to be ‘hallowed’ in scripture. It is the fourth commandment of the Ten Commandments.

Has the failure of the church to honor the Sabbath led to the secularization and corruption of our nation, and will it eventually bring about our downfall?

2:1-3 The Sabbath is established for All Time

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.

The Bible affirms the Sabbath to be of utmost importance. It is the first thing to be ‘hallowed’ in scripture. It is found in the fourth commandment, and it is the longest commandment (Ex 20:8-11). The Sabbath confirms the Covenant at Sinai (Ex 31:12-18) as circumcision confirmed the Covenant with Abraham (Gen 17:9-14). The Promised Land is the place for Sabbath rest for Israel. Yet Israel still awaits the final Sabbath. When we are born again by faith, we are said to enter into God’s Sabbath rest (Hebrews 4:1-13). But we also await the final Sabbath.

The Sabbath is intimately associated with God’s provision of ‘manna’ in the wilderness. As we honor the Sabbath, the Lord provides for our needs (Matt 6:25-34).

Ex. 16:22-30 On the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers each. And when all the leaders of the congregation came and told Moses, he said to them, “This is what the LORD has commanded: ‘Tomorrow is a day of solemn rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD; bake what you will bake and boil what you will boil, and all that is left over lay aside to be kept till the morning.’ ” So they laid it aside till the morning, as Moses commanded them, and it did not stink, and there were no worms in it. Moses said, “Eat it today, for today is a Sabbath to the LORD; today you will not find it in the field. Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, which is a Sabbath, there will be none.” On the seventh day some of the people went out to gather, but they found none. And the LORD said to Moses, “How long will you refuse to keep my commandments and my laws?”

See! The LORD has given you the Sabbath; therefore on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days. Remain each of you in his place; let no one go out of his place on the seventh day.”

So the people rested on the seventh day.

It is found in the fourth and longest commandment. (Ex 20:8-11; Deut 5:12-15).

Ex. 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 a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates.

For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

Deut. 5:12-15 “ ‘Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you.

Six days you shall labor and do all your work,

but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter or your male servant or your female servant, or your ox or your donkey or any of your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you.

You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.

In Exodus the Sabbath is to be honored because God rested on the 7th day, and blessed and hallowed it. In Deuteronomy it is to be honored because Yahweh delivered Israel from slavery in Egypt. As we come to God through faith we are rescued from our own slavery to sin.

The Sabbath confirms the Covenant at Sinai (Ex 31:12-18), as circumcision confirmed the Covenant with Abraham (Gen 17:9-14).

Ex. 31:12-18 And the LORD said to Moses,

“You are to speak to the people of Israel and say, ‘Above all you shall keep my Sabbaths, for this is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the LORD, sanctify you.

You shall keep the Sabbath, because it is holy for you. Everyone who profanes it shall be put to death. Whoever does any work on it, that soul shall be cut off from among his people.

Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day shall be put to death.

Therefore the people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout their generations, as a covenant forever.

It is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed.’ ”

And he gave to Moses, when he had finished speaking with him on Mount Sinai, the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God.

The teaching of the Sabbath must have been good news to the Hebrew slaves. They never had a day off in Egypt. The Orthodox Jews still take it very seriously today.

The Promised Land is the place for Sabbath rest for Israel. Yet Israel still awaits the final Sabbath. When we are born again by faith, we are said to enter into God’s Sabbath rest (Hebrews 4:1-13). But we also await the final Sabbath.

Heb. 3:7-11 Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says,

*“Today, if you hear his voice,
do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion,
on the day of testing in the wilderness,
where your fathers put me to the test
and saw my works for forty years.
Therefore I was provoked with that generation,
and said, ‘They always go astray in their heart;
they have not known my ways.’
As I swore in my wrath,
‘They shall not enter my rest.’ ”*

*Heb. 3:12-19 Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart,
leading you to fall away from the living God.*

*But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be
hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.*

For we share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end.

As it is said,

*“Today, if you hear his voice,
do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.”*

*For who were those who heard and yet rebelled? Was it not all those who left Egypt led
by Moses?*

*And with whom was he provoked for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned,
whose bodies fell in the wilderness?*

*And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who were
disobedient?*

So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.

Heb. 4:1-11 Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us fear lest any of you should seem to have failed to reach it.

For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened.

For we who have believed enter that rest, as he has said,

“As I swore in my wrath,

‘They shall not enter my rest,’ ”

although his works were finished from the foundation of the world.

For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way:

“And God rested on the seventh day from all his works.”

And again in this passage he said,

“They shall not enter my rest.”

Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience,

again he appoints a certain day, “Today,” saying through David so long afterward, in the words already quoted,

“Today, if you hear his voice,

do not harden your hearts.”

For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on.

So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God,

for whoever has entered God’s rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.

Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.

Heb. 4:12-13 For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

Israel was taken into captivity in Babylon for 70 years, to give the physical land of Israel its Sabbath rest (2 Chron 36:20-21; Jer 25:1-10; Lev 25:1-12).

2Chr. 36:11-21 Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem.

He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD his God. He did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet, who spoke from the mouth of the LORD.

He also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God. He stiffened his neck and hardened his heart against turning to the LORD, the God of Israel.

All the officers of the priests and the people likewise were exceedingly unfaithful, following all the abominations of the nations. And they polluted the house of the LORD that he had made holy in Jerusalem.

The LORD, the God of their fathers, sent persistently to them by his messengers, because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place. But they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words and scoffing at his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD rose against his people, until there was no remedy.

Therefore he brought up against them the king of the Chaldeans, who killed their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary and had no compassion on young man or virgin, old man or aged. He gave them all into his hand. And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king and of his princes, all these he brought to Babylon.

And they burned the house of God and broke down the wall of Jerusalem and burned all its palaces with fire and destroyed all its precious vessels.

*He took into exile in Babylon those who had escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and to his sons until the establishment of the kingdom of Persia, to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed its Sabbaths. **All the days that it lay desolate it kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years.***

Jer. 25:1-11 The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah, king of Judah (that was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon), which Jeremiah the prophet spoke to all the people of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem:

“For twenty-three years, from the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon, king of Judah, to this day, the word of the LORD has come to me, and I have spoken persistently to you, but you have not listened.

You have neither listened nor inclined your ears to hear, although the LORD persistently sent to you all his servants the prophets,

saying, ‘Turn now, every one of you, from his evil way and evil deeds, and dwell upon the land that the LORD has given to you and your fathers from of old and forever.

Do not go after other gods to serve and worship them, or provoke me to anger with the work of your hands. Then I will do you no harm.’

Yet you have not listened to me, declares the LORD, that you might provoke me to anger with the work of your hands to your own harm.

“Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts: Because you have not obeyed my words,

behold, I will send for all the tribes of the north, declares the LORD, and for Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants, and against all these surrounding nations. I will devote them to destruction, and make them a horror, a hissing, and an everlasting desolation.

Moreover, I will banish from them the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the grinding of the millstones and the light of the lamp.

This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.

Lev. 25:1-12 The LORD spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, saying,

“Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, When you come into the land that I give you, the land shall keep a Sabbath to the LORD.

For six years you shall sow your field, and for six years you shall prune your vineyard and gather in its fruits,

but in the seventh year there shall be a Sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a Sabbath to the LORD. You shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard.

You shall not reap what grows of itself in your harvest, or gather the grapes of your undressed vine. It shall be a year of solemn rest for the land.

The Sabbath of the land shall provide food for you, for yourself and for your male and female slaves and for your hired servant and the sojourner who lives with you, and for your cattle and for the wild animals that are in your land: all its yield shall be for food.

“You shall count seven weeks of years, seven times seven years, so that the time of the seven weeks of years shall give you forty-nine years.

Then you shall sound the loud trumpet on the tenth day of the seventh month. On the Day of Atonement you shall sound the trumpet throughout all your land.

And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you, when each of you shall return to his property and each of you shall return to his clan.

That fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you; in it you shall neither sow nor reap what grows of itself nor gather the grapes from the undressed vines.

For it is a jubilee. It shall be holy to you. You may eat the produce of the field.

Failure to keep the Sabbath leads to a multitude of other sins (Isa 56:1-7; 58:13 – 59:15). Even as blessings are promised to the ones who keep the Sabbath, so curses come upon those who do not. This section of Isaiah recounts the cascade of consequences and sins that come from the repudiation of the 4th commandment.

Is. 56:1-7 Thus says the LORD: “Keep justice, and do righteousness, for soon my salvation will come,

and my deliverance be revealed.

Blessed is the man who does this,

and the son of man who holds it fast,

who keeps the Sabbath, not profaning it,

and keeps his hand from doing any evil.”

Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the LORD say,

“The LORD will surely separate me from his people”;

and let not the eunuch say,

“Behold, I am a dry tree.”

For thus says the LORD:

*“To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths,
who choose the things that please me
and hold fast my covenant,
I will give in my house and within my walls
a monument and a name
better than sons and daughters;
I will give them an everlasting name
that shall not be cut off.*

*“And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD,
to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD,
and to be his servants,
everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it,
and holds fast my covenant—
these I will bring to my holy mountain,
and make them joyful in my house of prayer;
their burnt offerings and their sacrifices
will be accepted on my altar;
for my house shall be called a house of prayer
for all peoples.”*

*Is. 58:13-14 “If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath,
from doing your pleasure on my holy day,
and call the Sabbath a delight
and the holy day of the LORD honorable;
if you honor it, not going your own ways,
Or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly;
then you shall take delight in the LORD,
and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth;
I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father,
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”*

*Is. 59:1-17 Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save,
or his ear dull, that it cannot hear;
but your iniquities have made a separation
between you and your God,
and your sins have hidden his face from you
so that he does not hear.
For your hands are defiled with blood
and your fingers with iniquity;
your lips have spoken lies;
your tongue mutters wickedness.
No one enters suit justly;*

*no one goes to law honestly;
they rely on empty pleas, they speak lies,
they conceive mischief and give birth to iniquity.
They hatch adders' eggs;
they weave the spider's web;
he who eats their eggs dies,
and from one that is crushed a viper is hatched.
Their webs will not serve as clothing;
men will not cover themselves with what they make.
Their works are works of iniquity,
and deeds of violence are in their hands.
Their feet run to evil,
and they are swift to shed innocent blood;
their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity;
desolation and destruction are in their highways.
The way of peace they do not know,
and there is no justice in their paths;
they have made their roads crooked;
no one who treads on them knows peace.*

*Therefore justice is far from us,
and righteousness does not overtake us;
we hope for light, and behold, darkness,
and for brightness, but we walk in gloom.
We grope for the wall like the blind;
we grope like those who have no eyes;
we stumble at noon as in the twilight,
among those in full vigor we are like dead men.
We all growl like bears;
we moan and moan like doves;
we hope for justice, but there is none;
for salvation, but it is far from us.
For our transgressions are multiplied before you,
and our sins testify against us;
for our transgressions are with us,
and we know our iniquities:
transgressing, and denying the LORD,
and turning back from following our God,
speaking oppression and revolt,
conceiving and uttering from the heart lying words.
Justice is turned back,
and righteousness stands afar off;
for truth has stumbled in the public squares,
and uprightness cannot enter.
Truth is lacking,
and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey.*

*The LORD saw it, and it displeased him
that there was no justice.*

After Israel's return from captivity in Babylon the Sabbath was neglected once again. Nehemiah had to bring the people back to their senses. After Nehemiah's day the Jews have never failed to take the Sabbath seriously. The importance of the Sabbath, although wrongly understood, was a major point of contention between the Pharisees and Jesus. Jesus had to show them that *the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath*, and that he was the Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:27-28).

Neh. 13:15-22 In those days I saw in Judah people treading winepresses on the Sabbath, and bringing in heaps of grain and loading them on donkeys, and also wine, grapes, figs, and all kinds of loads, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. And I warned them on the day when they sold food.

Tyrrians also, who lived in the city, brought in fish and all kinds of goods and sold them on the Sabbath to the people of Judah, in Jerusalem itself!

Then I confronted the nobles of Judah and said to them, "What is this evil thing that you are doing, profaning the Sabbath day?"

Did not your fathers act in this way, and did not our God bring all this disaster on us and on this city? Now you are bringing more wrath on Israel by profaning the Sabbath."

As soon as it began to grow dark at the gates of Jerusalem before the Sabbath, I commanded that the doors should be shut and gave orders that they should not be opened until after the Sabbath. And I stationed some of my servants at the gates, that no load might be brought in on the Sabbath day.

Then the merchants and sellers of all kinds of wares lodged outside Jerusalem once or twice.

But I warned them and said to them, "Why do you lodge outside the wall? If you do so again, I will lay hands on you." From that time on they did not come on the Sabbath.

Then I commanded the Levites that they should purify themselves and come and guard the gates, to keep the Sabbath day holy.

Although the Book of Revelation does not speak of the Sabbath by name, the description of heaven and the final state of the believer is the true and final Sabbath.

Rev. 21:1-8 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.

And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.

He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."

Rev. 22:1-7 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him.

They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads.

And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

And he said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show his servants what must soon take place."

"And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book."

Rev. 22:12-17 "Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay everyone for what he has done.

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."

Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates.

Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and the sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

"I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you about these things for the churches. I am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star."

The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.

As we fall away from the foundations of our faith the Sabbath is neglected, the blue laws are rejected, we work harder for less profit, sins multiply in our society, God is forgotten or relegated to the irrelevant, and ultimately the nation fails. 25

The government has a strong vested interest in doing away with the Sabbath. If we all work more hours the government gets more revenue. An added day of work means 1/7th more tax revenue. But the family loses. We become more materialistic and begin to concentrate on acquiring things rather than acquiring knowledge of what is good. There is less time for the family to be together. Mothers and fathers are away from their children more. There is less oversight of the children's activities. There is less time to study the scriptures and to teach them to the children (Deut 4:5-10; 6:4-9).

Deut. 4:5-10 See, I have taught you statutes and rules, as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.'

For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is to us, whenever we call upon him?

And what great nation is there, that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law that I set before you today?

"Only take care, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. Make them known to your children and your children's children—

how on the day that you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, the LORD said to me, 'Gather the people to me, that I may let them hear my words, so that they may learn to fear me all the days that they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children so.'

Deut 6:4-9 "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.

You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.

You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.

You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Israel was taken from her land for 70 years. She lost her sovereignty from 586 BC until 1948 AD. What will happen to western Christian society and to our country, and to the church for its failure to take the Sabbath most seriously?

Can you think of other ramifications of our neglect of the Sabbath?

Can the church and then the nation recover the honoring of the Sabbath?

What would you change in your own life after this review of the teachings on the Sabbath?