

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).

A perpetual covenant

Here we see that the Sabbath is a perpetual covenant. This means that it is going to continue forever.

Reflecting the ongoing existence of the Sabbath even after Christ returns to this earth, God inspired the prophet Isaiah to write:

“For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before Me,’ says the LORD, ‘So shall your descendants and your name remain.

The Sabbath is a perpetual covenant. It is going to continue forever ... even after Christ returns to this earth.

And it shall come to pass that from one New Moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, all flesh shall come to worship before Me,’ says the LORD” (Isaiah 66:22-23).

When Christ came to earth, He observed the seventh-day Sabbath (Luke 4:16), as did His disciples and the first-century Christians (Acts 13:42-44; 17:1-3; 1 Corinthians 11:1; 1 John 2:6).

Through the ages there have always been people who continued to obey God’s commandment to keep the seventh day holy, and this practice continues to identify them today.

Is the Sabbath Only for Jews?

Is the Sabbath a command that only Jews are expected to keep? Or is it much more—a blessing that God wants all people to enjoy?

Opinions abound on whether the Sabbath commandment is still in effect for Christians today. Some believe it is no longer necessary to keep this commandment. Some think it is only for Jews. Others think the day has been changed from the seventh day, Saturday, to the first day, Sunday. Some think the New Testament calls keeping the seventh-day Sabbath bondage and that Christians are now free to observe any day of their choosing.

The truth is, the Sabbath of the Bible is on Saturday. It has never changed.

The Sabbath is a gift

In giving the children of Israel manna to eat, God instructed them to gather a sufficient amount to eat each day since it would spoil if kept overnight.

On the sixth day, however, they were to gather twice as much because on the seventh day there would be none, and on this night, unlike the other nights, the manna would not spoil. God said that this was a test to see if Israel would walk in His law (Exodus 16:4-5).

When some of the people went out to try to gather it on the seventh day, “the LORD said to Moses, ‘How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My laws? See! For the LORD has given

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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” (Exodus 16:28-29, emphasis added throughout).

From this passage we see that God gave them the Sabbath. It was a gift! Jesus Christ added, “The Sabbath was made for man” (Mark 2:27). The Sabbath is a gift for all people—not just the Israelites.

Listed among the feasts of the Lord—the days upon which God’s people are to assemble to worship Him—we note that the seventh day is “the Sabbath of the LORD” (Leviticus 23:3). It is God’s day—not

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the exclusive day of a single group of people during a particular time.

The fact that God intended the Sabbath to be a blessing for all is illustrated in that God told the Israelites that the Sabbath was to be a day of rest for all the members of their households, their servants, the foreigners living with them and even their animals (Exodus 20:10).

So the Sabbath is clearly a gift from God that was intended for everyone!

The Sabbath is a command

In addition to being a gift, the Sabbath is also a command. In Exodus 20:8, God told the ancient Israelites and us today: “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor 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).

While some may bristle at the idea that God commands us to do anything other than love Him, the Bible reveals that God gives us these commands for our good. As God explained to ancient Israel: “Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the LORD your God will set you high above all nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the LORD your God” (Deuteronomy 28:1-2).

Obeying God is how we show our love for Him. As Christ said, “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14:15). The apostle John added: “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome” (1 John 5:3).

Jesus, who is in complete agreement with the Father (John 10:30), said, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven” (Matthew 7:21). Obeying God is not optional for those who wish to be in His Kingdom.

In summary, the Sabbath is both a gift and a command. Because keeping the Sabbath shows love to God, it is an enduring expectation of God for those who seek Him.

Is the Sabbath a Sign of God’s People?

Exodus 31 records a special covenant God established with His people Israel. Does the Sabbath command have meaning for those who want to be known as His people today?

In explaining one reason He expected His people to observe the Sabbath, God told Moses: “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).

Set apart

Worship of the true God on the seventh day of the week distinguished the ancient Israelites from everyone else.

God also said that worship on this day was to remind His people that God was the One who sanctified them. “To sanctify means commonly to make holy, that is, to separate from the world and consecrate to God” (*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, “Sanctification”).

Being considered sanctified—separate and holy—by God is a wonderful blessing. As Isaiah 56:2 explains, “Blessed is the man who does this, and the son of man who lays hold on it; who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, and keeps his hand from doing any evil.”

Continuing His teaching about the Sabbath through Moses, God added, “Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath