

Keeping the Sabbath Holy

The Sabbath rest is so important to God that He established it on the seventh day of creation. It was actually a part of His creation. God made the Sabbath. It just didn't happen by chance. By this creative act, the Great Sustainer of all that exists concluded the beginning of man's extraordinary journey on this planet. He also indelibly stamped this day with a "mark" of spiritual perfection. The Bible reveals that this mark will have a profound effect on God's people and their ultimate destiny.

The Sabbath was designed to be a weekly memorial of God's physical as well as His spiritual creation. In a very real sense, it is a continual reminder of the Creator and His plan for man. Because of this, God made the Sabbath *holy*. The book of Genesis reveals that when doing so, He integrated spiritual properties into this day – properties that would make this day unique. Notice what God's word says about the creation of the very first holy day, the Sabbath.

On the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day and *sanctified* it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made. (Gen. 2:2)

The word "sanctified" in this verse is very interesting. Literally translated it means "to consecrate" or "to purify." In other words, God set this day apart from all other days and when doing so He placed His blessing on it. He made it HOLY!

The Bible declares the Sabbath is a sacred day – and not one to be taken lightly. God Himself "hallowed" it. Notice what He revealed about His Sabbath when introducing the fourth commandment to His servant Moses:

For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and *hallowed* it. (Ex. 20:11)

When God created the Sabbath He elevated it to a special state – He made it HOLY. Only God has the power to make something HOLY, and when He does, it is SACRED and PURE. It reflects the qualities of God Himself. At this point, man can do one of two things: he can honor what God has set apart as HOLY, or he can PROFANE it.

Why Did God Sanctify the Sabbath?

The Bible makes it absolutely clear that God set the Sabbath day apart from all other days – He "blessed" the Sabbath and "hallowed" it. But why would He do such a thing? What purpose could God possibly have for making one day of the week different from every other day? And why would He make this day *holy*? Why would the Great Creator place His blessing on it? God's word answers these questions and in doing so reveals why His people should have such a profound respect for this day.

When speaking to the children of Israel, God declared that His Sabbath was a sign between Him and His people. Notice what He says about this sign.

Verily my Sabbaths you shall keep: for it is a **sign** between me and you throughout your generations... (Ex. 31:13)

The word “sign” in this verse is used several times throughout the Bible when describing the Sabbath. It comes from the Hebrew word *owth* and can be translated as “**signal**,” “**beacon**,” “**evidence**,” or “**mark**.” It is a term of profound strength and significance. Here God is saying that His Sabbath is a link between His people and their God. Additionally, the Great Creator reveals that He made the Sabbath so that man would know Him. But there is more to this extraordinary day. Later in this same verse, God states that His Sabbath points to a remarkable hope regarding God’s plan for mankind. Notice what He says.

...that you might know that I am the God that doth **sanctify you**. (Ex. 31:13)

Notice the power of these words. Here, God is revealing that He made the Sabbath holy because it is to stand as evidence that He intends to do the very same thing to His earthly family. God’s plan for mankind is that they will also be holy. God set apart the Sabbath so that man could know that He has also set apart His people.

Ultimately, the fulfillment of this holy purpose will take place when God’s children are born into His Family as literal sons and daughters. When describing this birth, the apostle John proclaimed that God’s family would be just like Him.

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, *we shall be like him*; for we shall see him as he is. (1Jn. 3:2)

Imagine being like the God who made the universe. Imagine possessing His love, His virtue, and His wisdom. But that is exactly what is going to happen to those who yield to His authority. The apostle Peter wrote that we are to be partakers of the very nature of God himself (2Pe. 1:4). This is the destiny that awaits all of God’s people. Furthermore, it is a destiny pictured by His Sabbath.

A Gateway to Holiness

The Bible reveals that God wants His people to be holy even as He is holy (1Pe. 1:15-16). The Sabbath is a gateway into that holiness. It is a link between corruptible man and an incorruptible God. It stands as proof that God will deliver on His promise to bring a great Kingdom to this earth. God has also promised that His saints will rule with Jesus Christ in that Kingdom (Dan. 7:18).

When God’s people honor His Sabbath, they are not simply obeying a command, they are declaring their desire to be the recipients of that promise. In other words, by keeping the Sabbath holy, every child of God is not only saying, “Thy kingdom come,” but also, “Your will be done in me.”

This being the case, every true believer should show great deference to the day that points to their part in eternity itself. Their conduct on the Sabbath should reflect a dignity befitting a king or priest commissioned to serve in that Kingdom (Rev. 5:10). That behavior should not be common or profane, but rather filled with virtue and godliness. Every future leader in God’s Kingdom should reflect a great respect for the wisdom that imagined this day at the very beginning. Their conduct should make it clear that the Sabbath is different. It is not a worldly day. It is a Godly *sign*.

Remember the Sabbath

The scriptures reveal that while the descendants of Israel were in the Sinai Desert, God commanded them to “remember the Sabbath” (Ex. 20:8). However, equally important to God is that His people know HOW to “remember the Sabbath.” God wants us to HONOR and RESPECT this day, not simply be aware of when it takes place. After all, most Bible scholars know that God’s Sabbath falls on the seventh day, they simply do not keep that day holy. They profane the day God “sanctified.”

However, God’s people must be different and their conduct on the Sabbath must also be different. That conduct should reflect an understanding that the Sabbath is unique. It is a day with great purpose, a HOLY purpose.

The Sabbath Belongs to God

The Bible makes it clear that the Sabbath is God's day. It is called the Sabbath of the Eternal. God repeatedly refers to it as "My Sabbath" (Ezk. 20:12-24). The point here is that the seventh day belongs to God and as such it is not to be contaminated by man. Everything we do on this day should be directed toward our Father in heaven and His purpose for us.

At this point, it is important to understand a profound truth about God's Sabbath day. Contrary to popular belief, this day is *not* about relaxation and comfort. It is *not* about personal pleasure. The Sabbath is about connection and spiritual rejuvenation. It is about *holiness*. God's word is clear and direct: His Sabbath is HOLY.