

specific reasons. The first reason cites God's finished work.

We read the creation account in the book of Genesis. In the beginning, God said, "Let there be light" and there was light. God made the firmament. He called the earth to bring forth living creatures. He commanded the waters to teem with fish and other life, and the skies to be filled with birds of every kind. All creation came into being at the utterance of His spoken word.

After all these things were accomplished, He said, "Let us make man in Our image." It is important to notice that man was made on the sixth day, not the first, or second, or third. Man was nowhere to be found when God created the world. Mankind did not have a hand in God's creation. There was nothing of which man could say, "There, do you see that? God and I did that together." All of the credit, the glory of creation, is God's alone.

Then, after God created mankind on the sixth day, He was done. With the creation of man, God's work was finished. Then what did God do?

"Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. 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 2:1-3, NKJV).

God then set aside the seventh day and blessed and sanctified it. The first work of mankind, therefore, the first action that God called mankind to do, was to rest in all that God had done without him. This is what the Sabbath is all about. It is a continual reminder to us of what God has accomplished for us without us. It is a continual, weekly call to rest in what God has done for us, without our slightest involvement. This is why it is a vital part of the

clarion call of the three angels' messages which carry the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ to the world.

The Creative Power of God

The second gospel theme we want to consider in relation to the Sabbath is that the plan of salvation is the plan of re-creation. God is re-creating us in His image. This is why the apostle Paul uses creation terminology when speaking of the change the gospel brings to the human heart.

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a *new creation*; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17, NKJV, italics supplied).

The truth of the Sabbath also calls us back to the creation act of God. In the beginning, in the creation of this world, God spoke and it was done. The Word of God has the creative power to give us new hearts. God can re-create any sinner. He can sanctify even the lowest of the low. Whoever will believe will find rest from the guilt of sin.

Re-creation, sanctification, salvation, rest, and eternal life—every aspect of the redemption plan is connected to the Sabbath. For example, the Sabbath of Genesis chapter 2 reminds us of God's creative power, pointing directly to the gospel promises throughout His Word: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. . . . Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me by Your generous Spirit" (Psalms 51:10, 12, NKJV, italics supplied).

This creative power promises to give us new hearts, hearts that love the things we once hated and hate the things we once loved. The gospel also promises deliverance from the slavery of sin. The Sabbath is a sign of God's delivering power:

"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 5:15, NKJV).

The Sabbath: A Sign of Salvation

Third, the Sabbath is a sign of sanctification, of the fact that God alone is able to make us holy. Sanctification comes through the grace and power of God.

"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, NKJV).

What we are seeing here is a pattern that follows us from the book of Exodus all the way to Revelation's everlasting gospel where we are called to worship God. The gospel is God's plan of salvation and the Sabbath is God's sign of that plan. This truth is made powerfully clear in the prophecy of Isaiah chapter 56 which describes Gentiles, non-Jews, foreigners and strangers who take hold of God's New Covenant plan of salvation:

"Thus says the Lord: 'Keep justice, and do righteousness, for My salvation is about to come, and My righteousness to be revealed. 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.' Do not let the son of the foreigner who has joined himself to the Lord speak, saying, 'The Lord has utterly separated me from His people;' nor let the eunuch say, 'Here I am, a dry tree.' For thus says the Lord: 'To the eunuchs who keep My Sabbaths, and choose what pleases Me, and hold fast My covenant, even to them I will give in My house and within My walls a place and a name better than that of sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off. Also the sons of the foreigner who join

themselves to the Lord, to serve Him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be His servants—everyone who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, and holds fast My covenant—even them 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 nations” (Isaiah 56:1-7, NKJV).

This Old Testament prophecy is speaking of the New Covenant experience. The New Covenant invites us to enter into a relationship with God based on His promises to us, rather than our

speaking of the salvation-rest, not the Sabbath-rest (see Matthew 11:28-30). The Jews kept the Sabbath; and yet they still did not enter into salvation-rest.

Why? Two reasons are given:

1. lack of faith
2. unbelief

Hebrews chapter 4 makes a distinction between entering into God’s salvation-rest and keeping the literal, seventh-day Sabbath creation-rest. The two are different. Keeping the Sabbath is not salvation, though the Jews came to view it that way. They substituted the Sabbath and the law *for* salvation, making it the means rather than the

enter into rest” (Hebrews 4:3).

If you believe the gospel, your heart will enter into rest. Your mind will enter into rest. The gospel-rest calls us to trust in Jesus. We are no longer relying upon ourselves. We are no longer relying upon what we can do. We are no longer relying upon the flesh. We are now waiting on the promises of God.

“For He spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, ‘And God did rest the seventh day from all His works.’ And in this place again, ‘If they shall enter into My rest’” (Hebrews 4:4, 5).

In these last two verses, God

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faulty promises to Him (see Hebrews 8:6-12). And the Sabbath is a symbol of the spiritual rest the New Covenant brings. Chapter 4 of Hebrews speaks to this in a powerful way:

“Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it” (Hebrews 4:1, 2).

The subject of these verses is the gospel. This gospel was preached in the Old Testament to the Jews. That is why, as we studied earlier, Revelation 14 refers to the “*everlasting* gospel.” The gospel is the only way anyone ever has been or ever will be saved. The text makes a connection between the gospel and entering into His rest. This is

end. In doing this, they did not enter into salvation-rest. They lacked faith and were filled with unbelief. Trusting in their obedience to the law for salvation led them to reject the gospel embodied in Jesus Christ. The Sabbath, being part of the Ten Commandment Law of God, was never given as the means of salvation. The Sabbath is a type or a sign of salvation. It springs from the re-created heart of the forgiven sinner—not as a work to earn salvation, but as a desire to remember and honor that unmerited gift. True Sabbath observance was and is to be a constant reminder that our re-creation is through the finished sacrifice of Christ, not through our own works. Jesus rested in the tomb on the Sabbath to remind those who believe to rest in what He has accomplished on the cross.

“For we which have believed do

draws a contrast between the spiritual salvation-rest and the weekly Sabbath-rest. The Sabbath is a sign of salvation-rest. The call to lay aside our temporal work each week is a call to cease trusting in our works for salvation. We rest in Jesus Christ as our Savior. We rest from our works, just as God did from His creation-work on the seventh day, as a reminder that salvation is in Jesus Christ alone. Fallen human nature needs to be reminded of this essential gospel truth continually.

The Gift of Salvation

The last message of mercy to the world brings us back to creation and the fact that God accomplished this creation without us. And then He gave His beautiful creation to us as a gift. We didn’t earn the animals. We

didn't earn the trees, the birds, the seas, or the hills. We didn't merit any of it. But God gave us His creation to utilize and enjoy because that is the kind of God He is. He is a God of love. And He has, through the plan of salvation, bestowed the gift of life upon all of us.

He hasn't changed. Sin has not made a difference in the mind of God.

"For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed" (Malachi 3:6).

"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8).

"Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief" (Hebrews 4:6)

"So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His" (Hebrews 4:9, 10, NAS).

In these last three verses we have the grand conclusion. Yes, there "remains" a Sabbath rest, that is, a weekly keeping of the Sabbath. Why does the keeping of the Sabbath remain? It remains because God is the same. Jesus is the same. The gospel is the same. The way of salvation is the same. And fallen human nature is the same. The Sabbath, then, as a sign of that salvation, is also the same.

The Sabbath is a continual, weekly, unchanging reminder that our salvation is totally and one hundred percent in the doing and dying of Jesus Christ. We rest from our labors "as God did from His" (Hebrews 4:10). How did God rest from His labors? In the first work of creation, He rested on the Sabbath. In His work of re-creation or salvation, He rested in the tomb on the Sabbath. Why do we then keep the Sabbath? As a sign that we, by faith, believe in the completed, finished work of Jesus Christ for our

salvation and we are not trusting in creature merit to make it to heaven. We are trusting in the power of the gospel of God. So listen to the call:

"And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the *everlasting gospel* to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people. Saying with a loud voice, 'Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come: *and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters*'" (Revelation 14:6, 7, italics supplied).

God quotes directly from the fourth commandment in this last message of mercy to the world. The harvest of the earth is to be reaped. Every nation and kindred and tongue is to hear the loud, clear call of the gospel, proclaiming salvation for the chief of sinners through the Lamb of God. Those who reject this glorious gospel reject salvation-rest and they have no rest, day or night.

"And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name" (Revelation 14:11).

The Sabbath will be kept by all the redeemed through the ceaseless ages, ever reminding us that our eternal life is a gift to us through Jesus:

"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. 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, NKJV).

Picture the scene when we come to worship the Lord in heaven on the Sabbath; when we gather together as a great multitude that no man can number. At that glorious time, when the reality of the gift of salvation is ours, what will be our song?

"After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb'" (Revelation 7:9, 10).

Our song will be of salvation to the Lamb—not to our works, not to our obedience, not to our righteousness—but unto God and to the Lamb. This is the beauty of the fourth commandment. The Sabbath is a reminder of the whole plan of salvation because it contains a principle found in no other commandment. The principle is *resting in Jesus*—accepting what God has accomplished for us, without us; ceasing from our labors and resting in His finished work.

Summary

The Sabbath points us to the gospel. And if you think about it honestly, no one can give this message to another; no one can receive this message unless he or she first understands the gospel. If we do not first understand and share the gospel, the Sabbath loses its significance. It becomes a legalistic precept, merely a doctrine that we teach or a binding obligation. Why? To appease God? To curtail His judgments? To make Him happy with us? To make Him love us? The only way the Sabbath can be truly preached, fully preached, is in the context of the gospel; because, when everything is said and done, that's exactly what the Sabbath is. It is the clearest, clarion sign of the everlasting, glad tidings of Jesus the Christ. Amen.



Printed in the USA by
Light Bearers Ministry
PO Box 1888 • Malo, WA 99150
(509)779-4444 • www.Lightbearers.com