



SABBATH REST

December 13, 2025 | *Genesis 2:1-3; Hebrews 4:3, 9-10*

Manna and Sabbath

Yesterday, we reviewed God's provision of manna, bread from heaven to sustain His people during the exodus. Closely related to the manna were God's instructions for collecting it.

God said in *Exodus 16*, "I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may test them, whether or not they will walk in My instruction. On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather daily" (v.4-5).

When the leaders of the congregation came to Moses, he said to them, "'Tomorrow (the seventh day) is a sabbath observance, a holy sabbath to the Lord. Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, the sabbath, there will be none. He will give you bread for two days on the sixth day. Remain every man in his place. Let no man go out of his place on the seventh day.' So, the people rested on the seventh day." *Exodus 16:23-30*

Later, when God met Moses at Mount Sinai, He included the sabbath in the Ten Commandments. "Remember the sabbath day," He said, "to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall not do any work..." (*Ex. 20:8-10*).

Then, the sabbath day became a permanent part of the law (*Ex. 35:2-3; Lev. 23:3*). Thus, Sabbath would be observed by the Israelites perpetually.

Creation and Sabbath

While we've established the practice of observing the sabbath day, we have yet to identify its purposes. Why did the Lord expect for the sabbath to be observed?

There are two reasons mentioned in Scripture. First, God used the sabbath to test the people, to see whether or not they would obey Him (*Ex. 16:4*). Second, God linked the commandment regarding sabbath day to creation.

In *Exodus 20:11*, He said, “For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the Lord blessed the sabbath day and made it holy.”

The word for sabbath is the Hebrew word *sabat*, which means to rest or stop or cease from work. *Genesis 2* tells us that, after six days, “the heavens and the earth were completed,” and “God rested on the seventh day from all the work which He had done” (*v.1-2*).

Then, “God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested (stopped) from all His work...” (*v.3*). In other words, the seventh day of the week was set apart from the other weekdays, made holy by God Himself, to be observed as a day of rest.

Jesus and the Sabbath

When Adam and Eve rebelled against God in *Genesis 3*, God handed down several consequences. To Adam He said, “Cursed is the ground because of you. In toil (labor) you will eat of it all the days of your life. By the sweat of your face (labor) you will eat bread until you return to the ground...” (*v.17, 19*).

In other words, our work was greatly intensified because of sin. We will labor all the days of our lives. Nothing in this life will come easily to us. We must work for it.

But, in His mercy, God established a sabbath day for us to rest from our labor, like He did. That day of rest is a foreshadowing of another rest that is to come, a time in which we will be freed from the curse of sin.

Noah’s father, Lamech, understood this truth. In *Genesis 5*, “He named his son Noah (which means rest), saying, ‘This one will give us rest from our work and from the toil of our hands, from the ground which the Lord has cursed’” (*v.29*).

In other words, Lamech was hopeful that his son would be the Promised Seed, the Messiah, who would free humanity from the curse of sin. Although Noah was not the Promised One, one of his descendants — Jesus — would be. He would be the rest, or the sabbath, for which all men longed.

When God gave Moses the Law for the people of Israel, it was overwhelming (613 laws, at least). Those laws hung on the frame of the Ten Commandments. But even with just ten commandments, the people could not follow them perfectly. Their sinful nature was incapable of perfect obedience. Thus, God instituted a sacrificial system to atone for their sins.

The Old Testament sacrificial system (called the ceremonial law) was also quite complicated and laborious. Day after day, month after month, year after year, the people and the priests

offered sacrifices to the Lord on their behalf, trusting that He would forgive their sins against Him. But none of these sacrifices were permanent (*Heb. 10:1-4*).

In other words, the laborious effort to atone for their sins was continuous, never ceasing. There were no chairs in the tabernacle or the Temple for priests to sit down because their work was never finished (*v.11*).

But when Jesus arrived, having lived a sinless life (abiding by and fulfilling the Law of Moses), He laid down His life on the cross as a sacrifice “once for all and sat down at the right hand of God” (*v.12*).

In fact, at the moment of His death, He uttered those epic words, “It is finished,” meaning no more sacrifices were needed (*Jn. 19:30*). The curse of sin was broken! Mankind could now and forever find rest from their labor in Him.

The writer of *Hebrews* highlighted this glorious work, which the Lord has done on our behalf. He wrote, “For we who have believed (in Christ) enter that rest... So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has entered His rest has himself rested from his works, as God did from His” (*Heb. 4:3, 9-10*).

The Lord Jesus said Himself, “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest” (*Matt. 11:28*).

What Child is this in the manger? He is our Sabbath Rest, the one who frees us from the laborious curse of sin.

Ponder and Pray

Review how the Lord has freed you from your labor. What does that mean exactly? Are you living in that rest, or are you still trying to work for your salvation?

Thank God for Christ, your Sabbath. Then, rest in Him today.

**Have you missed some days?
Click [here](#) to access previously emailed devotions.**

The reading plan and devotions were developed by Aaron Ferguson, one of our Elders and author of the *Study Guide and Daily Reflections for the One Year Chronological Reading of the Bible and the New Testament*. For more details, visit his website at BiAY.org.

