

The Sabbath Watchman

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The Holy *Blessed Day*

Part 1

WORLD IN BRIEF

- COLOMBIA
- CANADA
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- ANGOLA

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Introduction

“The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God.” Exodus 20:10.

When God created the earth and placed human beings upon it, He divided time into seven periods. Six He gave to us for our own use, to employ in secular business; one He reserved for Himself. Having rested on the seventh day, He blessed and sanctified it. Henceforth, the seventh day was to be regarded as the Lord’s rest day and to be sacredly observed as the memorial of His creative work. It was not the first, second, third, fourth, fifth, or sixth day that was sanctified, or set apart to a holy use; neither was it a seventh part of time and no day in particular; but it was the seventh day, the day upon which God had rested....

When the law was given at Sinai, the Sabbath was placed in the midst of moral precepts, in the very bosom of the Decalogue. But the Sabbath institution was not then made known for the first time. The fourth commandment places its origin at Creation. The Creator’s rest day was hallowed by Adam in holy Eden and by the people of God throughout the patriarchal ages. During Israel’s long bondage in Egypt, under taskmasters that knew not God, they could not keep the Sabbath; therefore the Lord brought them out where they could remember His holy day....

A threefold miracle was wrought in honor of the Sabbath, even before the law was given on Sinai. A double quantity of manna fell on the sixth day, none upon the Sabbath, and the portion needed for the Sabbath was preserved sweet and pure, when if any were kept over at any other time, it became unfit for food. Here is conclusive evidence that the Sabbath was instituted at Creation, when the foundations of the earth were laid, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy. And its sacredness remains unchanged, and will so remain even to the close of time. From the Creation, every precept of the divine law has been obligatory on mankind and has been observed by those who fear the Lord. The doctrine that God’s law has been abolished is one of Satan’s devices to compass the ruin of the race....

The holy oracles were especially committed to the Jews; not to be an Israelite was not to belong to the favored people of God.... Now the prophet declares that the stranger who will love and obey God shall enjoy the privileges that have belonged exclusively to the chosen people.—*Signs of the Times*, February 28, 1884.

Ellen G. White.

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Beacon of hope, faith, and truth in a confused world.

We believe:

- The all-wise, loving God created all things in the universe by His Son, Jesus Christ; He is its Owner and Sustainer.
- He met the challenge to His loving leadership and authority by reconciling the world to Himself through the life, death, and resurrection of His Son, the Word made flesh.
- The Holy Spirit, Jesus’ representative on earth, convicts of sin, guides into truth, and, when abiding in man, overcomes all unrighteousness.
- The Bible is the record of God’s dealings with mankind and the standard of all doctrine; the Ten Commandments are the transcript of His character and the foundation of all enduring reform.
- His people, in harmony with God’s Word and under the direction of the Holy Spirit, call all men everywhere to be reconciled to God through faith in Jesus.
- Bible prophecy reveals that earth’s history will soon close with the visible return of Jesus Christ as King to claim all who have accepted Him as the world’s only Redeemer and their Lord.

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Watchman

The Holy Blessed Day

By Antonino Di Franca

The Lord did more than simply “rest” on the seventh day. The Creation record is that the seventh day became a special day because God “blessed” it. Genesis 2:3. The seventh day was not a creation such as man, who could sense the benefit of such a blessing. God “rested” on the seventh day, and for this reason He *blessed* it, meaning that it was a source of blessing for man, benefiting him in many ways—physically, morally, and spiritually.

God gave this great blessing when man was in his innocent condition, before he sinned. Thus, it was not something that was demanded to cope with certain crisis. The divine blessing was placed on the holy Sabbath day to contribute to the first couple’s perfect harmony and happiness. As the Lord at the beginning blessed man and marriage (Genesis 1:28; 2:18, 21-24) and that blessing extended to all people of all time, so the Sabbath was given at the same time and under the same conditions. When the Lord blessed someone or something, unless there was a need to change it, that blessing remained forever, and there was no doubt concerning it. Cf. Genesis 27:33; Numbers 22:12; 1 Chronicles 17:27.

Despite the fact that on every day of the creation the Lord made and accomplished great things—and each one could be a memorial day in itself—only about the seventh is it written, “God blessed the seventh day.” Genesis 2:3. On every day of the earth’s creation, new, amazing things came into existence through God’s creative power. On the first day light was created (Genesis 1:3); on the second, the firmament (verses 6-8); on the third, dry land, plants, and vegetation (verses 11-13); on the fourth, the sun, moon, and stars to rule day and night and for the delineation of years, days, and seasons (verses 14-19); on the fifth, the creatures of the sea and the birds of the air (verses 20, 21); and on the sixth, land animals and man, the latter being made in God’s image. Verses 20-27. If it was God’s intention to honor the day of man’s birth, as millions of people do today, He could have blessed the sixth day; but He did not do this. Despite new miracles occurring every day, God did not single out any of the

other days; He placed the Edenic blessing on the seventh day alone.

During the days of creation, the Lord blessed all living things—the animals, human beings, and the first couple’s marriage. Genesis 1:22, 28; 5:2. Although the day of rest was neither a person nor a living thing, the Lord placed a special blessing upon it so that its blessing would flow to man. Therefore, for God’s faithful, obedient people, the hours of the seventh day are still blessed today. This is the message that we receive from its origin. Mankind’s first parents were in the garden of Eden when “God blessed the seventh day” (Genesis 2:3), and thus He blessed them and all humanity. How wonderful!

The special Sabbath blessing did not come about through human desire or declaration, nor by man’s request or decision, which can change according to circumstances, but only through to God’s decision and action. The Lord saw that it would be especially beneficial to man, and He “blessed the seventh day” of rest. Genesis 2:3. Because the blessing of the Sabbath institution was based on human need, independent of human will, its observance does not depend on momentary circumstances or man’s mood. Still today, its blessing does not depend on human opinion but is preserved by the divine purpose and desire.

Meaning of the blessing

What does the “blessing” that was pronounced on the seventh day mean? What are its consequences and benefits for man? “Blessing” is the promising and bestowing of divine graces, such as God’s presence, guidance, assistance, goodness, spiritual prosperity, and divine favor upon His children. Numbers 6:25, 26; Deuteronomy 7:13; Psalm 29:11. Pouring out His “blessing” on the seventh day, the Lord grants unique goodness to those who recognize and respect Him, His will, and His work; this means that the Lord showers special benefits to His faithful people who follow His example by faith. The Lord blesses those who keep His unique day. When

God grants His “blessing,” He gives divine benefits, favor, help, and spiritual prosperity, as well as physical and material wellbeing according to man’s ability to handle it. Isaiah 58:13, 14. The original blessing of the seventh day included all of these things and has been in force ever since. Those who keep it holy show that they respect the will of Him who instituted the sacred day, and they receive the blessings He promised.

Adventist writers have explained what the blessing of the seventh day means for creation and God’s creatures, as shown in the following comments.

“The blessing on the seventh day implied that it was thereby declared to be a special object of divine favor and a day that would bring blessing to His creatures.” –*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 220, comments on Genesis 2:3.

Leviticus 26:2-6, 9-13 and Deuteronomy 28:1-14 present the blessings that the Lord gives to those who believe and obey Him. Exodus 23:12; Deuteronomy 5:14; Isaiah 56:4-7; 58:13, 14; and Jeremiah 17:25, 26, relates the blessings that redound to those who joyfully observe the Sabbath by faith in Him and His promises. Such gracious blessings include holiness, peace, trust, freedom, security, knowledge, refreshment, delight, commitment, and communion with the Lord.

Even non-Adventist writers, who are quoted below, tell about the blessings that are connected with God’s favor that is shown to all who honor the seventh-day Sabbath.

“To bless, as it refers to God, means not just to speak words of kindness, but also to make one prosperous, strong and happy. So the seventh day appeared as particularly full of strength and heavenly joy.” –*La Bible Annotée. Le Pentateuque, Neuchâtel*, comments on Genesis 2:3.

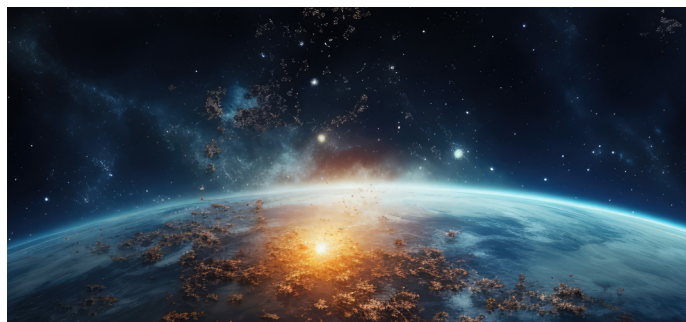
“God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it.’ God can bless the seventh day only by making it a blessing to man. Insensate time cannot feel the benedictions of Deity. Man’s blessing is a prayer, but God’s blessing is an act. He alone can give the blessing He pronounces. The Sabbath serves man’s whole nature, and thus is to him a blessing.” –George Elliot, *The Abiding Sabbath: An Argument for the Perpetual Obligation of the Lord’s Day*, p. 27.

In connection with the Biblical promises, some Adventist writers share additional concepts.

“In the beginning, speaking of the creation of man, the word says, ‘And God blessed them.’ When it came to the seventh day, and God in Christ rested from His work, He then blessed the seventh day. Now, there is the blessing upon man, and that blessing has continued for everyone who will receive it until the present time; there is a blessing upon the day, and that blessing has continued upon that day, and is there now.” –W.W. Prescott, *Christ and the Sabbath*, p. 20.

“‘God blessed the Sabbath.’ In the creation narrative God is described as blessing the seventh day. That probably means, as suggested by the use of the same verb in Exodus 20:11, that ‘through it He [God] mediates the divine blessing to the person who keeps it.’... The blessing itself is undefined, and that has led some to conclude that what defines it is the next verb in the sentence, God ‘sanctified it.’... That is to say, the blessing is to be understood in terms of holiness in the sense of separation and election.... But the combination of the two verbs found in the text is unique in the Old Testament; and unless there are very compelling reasons to consider them to be synonyms, it is better to keep them apart as expressing two different actions.... If the verb ‘to bless’ (*brk*) expresses the basic idea of bestowing benefits upon something or someone,... then when God blessed the Sabbath, He bestowed it with benefits that would be enjoyed by those who will keep it. A day that is not blessed is a day deprived of positive content for human beings. Jeremiah 20:14. The blessing pronounced by God on the seventh day was not for the benefit of God but for those who were present with Him, enjoying communion and fellowship with Him, within the fraction of time called the seventh day.” –Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, *The Biblical Sabbath: The Adventist Perspective*, p. 2.

“God blessed the Sabbath. When in Scripture God blesses a thing or a being, that thing or being is imbued



with the power of fruitfulness and prosperity, providing life, happiness, and success. The Lord of life, who in His creative work had blessed fishes and birds (see Genesis 1:22) and then Adam and Eve (see verse 28), also blessed the Sabbath as the day of rest, thus equipping it with enlivening, vitalizing, and beneficial power. This blessedness of the Sabbath is to enrich mankind's existence and life." –Gerhard Hasel, "God's Perpetual Gift to man," in *Ministry*, September 1982.

"When Scripture records that God 'blessed' the Sabbath day in conjunction with His creational activity, it obviously cannot mean that God spoke meaninglessly into a vacuum. His blessing of this day had a significant effect on the world. Furthermore, the reference to God's blessings on the day should not be interpreted as meaning that God blessed the day with respect to Himself. It was with respect to His creation, and with respect to man in particular, that God blessed the Sabbath day.... Because it was for the good of man and the whole of creation, God instituted the Sabbath." –O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants*, p. 68, as quoted by Steve C. Halbrook, *God Is Just: A Defense of the Old Testament Civil Laws*, p. 213.

"Thus, the Sabbath was a gift to our first parents, and on reflection we can see that this gift that God gave us was a gift of Himself. It was a day that He and they could spend together without distraction. It was their special time for each other." –Frank W. Hardy, *The Sabbath in Genesis 2:1-3*, p. 8.

"It follows, therefore, from this passage that if Adam had remained in the state of innocence, he nevertheless would have held the seventh day sacred. That is, on this day he would have given his descendants instructions about the will and worship of God; he would have praised God; he would have given thanks; he would have sacrificed, etc. On the other days he would have tilled his fields and tended his cattle. Indeed, even after the Fall he kept this seventh day sacred; that is, on this day he instructed his family, of which the sacrifices of his sons Cain and Abel give the proof. Therefore, from the beginning of the world the Sabbath was intended for the worship of God." –Martin Luther, *Luther's Commentary on Genesis*, vol. 1 Chapters 1-21; Martin Luther, "Lectures on Genesis 2:3," in *Luther's Works*, 1:79-80; see 3-82 (217), as quoted in John L. Thompson, *Reformation Commentary on Scripture: Old Testament*, vol. I, Genesis 1-11, p. 65.

Made Holy by God

At the very end of His creative work, the Lord not only rested and blessed the seventh day; He also "made it

holy." Genesis 2:3. In the moment when He "made it holy" or "sanctified" it, He gave it a quality that no other day of the week has. What do the terms "hallowed," "consecrated," or "made it holy" mean, as some versions translate it? What is the original Hebrew word, and what does it mean?

A Biblical note explained the meaning of the Hebrew verb *qiddesh*.

"The verb is usually translated 'and sanctified it.' The Piel verb (*qiddesh*) means 'to make something holy; to set something apart; to distinguish it.' On the literal level, the phrase means essentially that God made this day different. But within the context of the Law, it means that the day belonged to God; it was for rest from ordinary labor, worship, and spiritual service. The day belonged to God." –*New American Standard Bible*, The Lockman Foundation, 1995, note to Genesis 2:3.

In a similar manner, another scholar added that "The basic meaning of the Hebrew term translated 'hallowed' or 'sanctified' (from *qādaš*, to be holy) is a 'separating' or 'setting apart' for something in fulfillment of a divine purpose and/or command. Thus the statement that God 'hallowed' the seventh day not only distinguishes this day from the other six, but also reinforces the idea of a continuing special meaningfulness of this day for the human beings whom God had created. Something 'set apart' has to be more than simply a memory relic of the past; it must have an ongoing significance. This hallowedness of the Sabbath is reiterated in various later Pentateuchal references (e.g., Exodus 16:23; cf. 31:14-16; 35:2), and the basic language of the entire statement in Genesis 2:2, 3 reappears in the Sabbath commandment. Exodus 20:8-11." –Kenneth A. Strand, "The Sabbath," in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, p. 495.

On the seventh day of the creation week, God "rested" (Genesis 2:3), not because He was weary or tired (Isaiah 40:18), but to contemplate His work, which was perfect and wonderful. He further rested on the seventh day to make the Sabbath a gift for human beings, and Jesus affirmed that the Sabbath was "made for man." Mark 2:27.

To think that God did not give the Sabbath to man until the time of Moses would mean that the Lord made the Sabbath "for man" but waited thousands of years until Israel arose to give it to him. No. God rested at the beginning, He blessed the Sabbath at the beginning, He hallowed it at the beginning, and at the beginning it was "made for man." All of this shows that at the beginning He gave it to man for a blessing and sanctification. What sense would His blessing have if He did not give it to man? What sense would its sanctification have if man knew nothing about it and did not observe it? Would it impart sanctification if man profaned it? Could he receive the blessing if he did not observe it?

The Lord had no need to make Himself holy, for He is holy by nature. Leviticus 11:44, 45; 19:2; 20:26; 21:8. The purpose of the seventh day was for man to be sanctified through observing it (Exodus 31:13); therefore, as with the other gifts, at creation He granted the Sabbath to human beings for their sanctification. It is a matter of fact that, when God rested on the very first Sabbath, He blessed and made holy every Sabbath day that followed and every person who kept it holy.

The sanctification of the Sabbath is not an option, and the Lord did not tell Adam and Eve to choose one day of the seven to worship Him. He established one day, the seventh day of the week (Genesis 2:3; Exodus 20:11; 31:17), and gave it qualifications and blessings that other days do not have. As the consequence of trying to choose a different day, as many people do on Sunday, they demean the holy day that God created and receive neither blessing nor sanctification.

“There can be no reason for God’s blessing a day for His own use. His blessing and sanctification must of necessity be for someone else’s sake. God is holy; He is always holy; He is no more holy at one time than at another. His holiness does not admit of degrees. But this is not so with men and places. They are holy in proportion to their nearness to God.” –M.L. Andreasen, *The Sabbath. Which Day and Why?* p. 18.

“God *sanctified* the Sabbath. This divine act of sanctifying, and thus dividing the Sabbath from the remaining days of activity, imbues it with a holiness not possessed by any other day. ‘This division between the day of rest and the working days is to prove itself as much of a benefit to man as the division of light from darkness.’ We must also note that holiness is an act of God’s bestowal and not of man’s doing. Holiness for the day of rest is derived, not from man keeping this day holy, but from a prior divine action.” –Gerhard Hasel, “God’s Perpetual Gift to Man,” in *Ministry*, September 1982.



“If we had no other passage than this of Genesis 2:3, there would be no difficulty in deducing from it a precept for the universal observance of a Sabbath, or seventh day, to be devoted to God as holy time by all of that race for whom the earth and all things therein were specially prepared. The first men must have known it. The words, ‘He hallowed it,’ can have no meaning otherwise. They would be a blank unless in reference to some who were required to keep it holy.” –John Peter Lange, *A Commentary on the Holy Scripture*, vol. I, pp. 196, 197, comments on Genesis 2:3.

What did its blessing and sanctification at creation imply?

The clear verses of Genesis 2:2, 3, begin the Biblical history of the Sabbath. Nevertheless, some Sabbath opponents base their objections on these verses; not finding a command or precept that requires its observance, they believe that it “was not delivered to man until it was given to Israel in the wilderness.” This is a very questionable thesis. It implies that, at creation, the Lord sanctified and blessed the Sabbath, but it was nothing but a theory for centuries and He was not interested in man’s sanctification or blessing during those centuries. Is this believable?

Considering sanctification, the question of a “command” is not the crucial element. Even Sunday-keeping authors are convinced of this, as shown in the following paragraphs.

“The Lord separated it from common use, and dedicated it to His own sacred service, that it should be accounted *holy* and spent in His worship, and in other religious and holy duties. It appears evident by this that the observance of the Sabbath was not first enjoined when the law was given, but that it was an ordinance of God from the creation of the world and, of course, is obligatory on all the posterity of Adam, and the indispensable duty of everyone to whom this divine appointment is made known.” –*Joseph Benson’s Commentary on the Old and New Testaments*, comments on Genesis 2:3.

“The solemn act of blessing and hallowing is the institution of a perpetual order of seventh-day rest: in the same manner as the blessing of the animals [Genesis 1:22] denoted a perpetuity of self-multiplication, and the blessing of man [Genesis 1:28] indicated further a perpetuity of dominion over the earth and its products. This present record is sufficient proof that the original institution [of seventh-day rest] was never forgotten.” –James G. Murphy, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, p. 77.

“If the divine command was actually delivered at the creation, it was addressed, no doubt, to the whole human species alike, and continues, unless repealed by some subsequent revelation, binding upon all who come to the knowledge of it.” –William Paley, *The Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy*, p. 92.

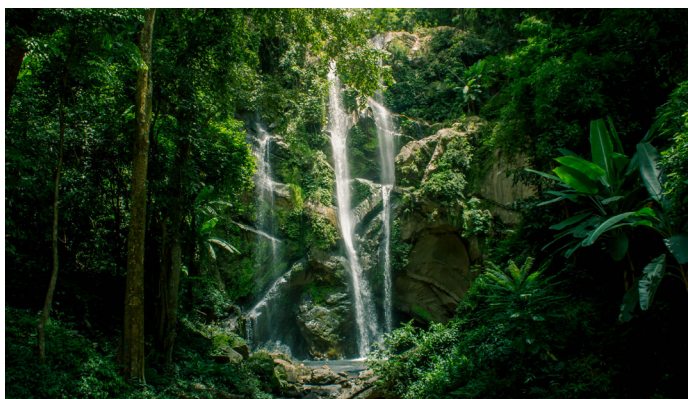
While Genesis does not contain an explicit command to observe the Sabbath, there is also no denial that refutes the giving of a command. The Bible gives no evidence that without a command the institution of the Sabbath did not exist. There are very interesting elements that shed light on this concept that are worth considering. The first is the creation record itself. All of the verbs are in the past tense, thus referring to creation, not to the time of the wilderness wandering.

“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.” Genesis 2:1-3, emphasis supplied.

The creation record uses verbs that are all in the past tense (“finished,” “rested”), including those that reference the blessing and sanctification of the seventh day (“blessed” and “made it holy”). This is evidence enough that the institution of the day of rest for man is not a recent one, but was simultaneous with the creation.

The same is true of the verses in Exodus that tell what happened at Mount Sinai; the Sabbath provision is not given as something recent and new but as a known institution that goes back to and memorializes the creation.

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.... For in six days the Lord *made* heaven and 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*.” Exodus 20:8, 11, emphasis supplied.



The third evidence shows Sabbath keeping with verbs in the past tense. The Lord said, “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*.” Exodus 31:17, emphasis supplied.

“All the blessings in Genesis 1 obviously have Creation and humanity in view and become operative from the time that they are pronounced. Accordingly, it is only to be expected that it would be ‘with respect to His creation, and with respect to man in particular that God blessed the Sabbath day, and that the blessing would be operative from the first seventh day onward.’ However, the clearest evidence in favor of the Sabbath as a Creation ordinance comes from a close study of the statement ... (‘and He sanctified it [the seventh day]’) in Genesis 2:3....

“A grammatical analysis of the statement ... (‘and He sanctified it [the seventh day].’ Genesis 2:3) thus provides persuasive evidence in favor of the Sabbath being presented here as a Creation ordinance.... At the exegetical level, literary structure suggests that the divine blessing and sanctification of the seventh day is pictured as occurring at Creation. The blessings of Genesis 1 all have an immediate human focus, so there is a presumption that the blessing of the seventh day would be the same. However, the clearest evidence in favor of the Sabbath as a Creation ordinance comes from a close study of the statement ... (‘and He sanctified it [the seventh day].’ Genesis 2:3).” –Ross Cole, *The Sabbath and Genesis 2:1-3*.

According to other writers, this is an undeniable reality.

“God rested from His creational labors on the seventh day. Then in [Genesis, chapter 2] verse 2 we learn that He rests from His creational labors on the 7th day, and we’ll learn from the New Testament that He does that for our benefit.... Here [Hebrews 3:7-4, 11] it is stressed that God’s Sabbath was not only a gift for man, but it is a promise for believers for a rest which we experience in part now and which we look for in the future, in the new heavens and the new earth.... Because of His resting, which He did for our benefit, God favored, He blessed the seventh day, and He hallowed, He made holy that seventh day. When I say that He blessed that seventh day, that Sabbath day, I mean that He made it an effective means of blessing for all those who sanctify it by rest and worship and service. He made it a means of grace, and He sanctified it. When I say sanctified it,

I mean that He consecrated and set it apart for a holy use as a day unto the Lord. And so the Sabbath is a memorial of God's blessing to us in creation. And of course it's a memorial also of the rest that we will have in redemption.... There [Exodus 20:8-11] Moses stresses this. '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, and therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.' In other words, there Moses says the reason why we're to remember the Sabbath day is because the Lord established this in creation. This is what He did in creation." –J. Ligon Duncan, *The First Things: The Creation Sabbath*, June 7, 1998.

"The meaning of the Sabbath institution comes to light against the background of several key facts. First, Exodus 20:8-11 makes a clear connection between the Sabbath day and the seventh day on which God the Creator rested. Sabbath observance therefore involves the affirmation that God is Creator and Sustainer of the world.... If the Creator stopped His creative activity on the seventh day, then those who share in His creative work must do the same. Sabbath contravenes any pride that may accompany human mastery and manipulation of God's creation. In ceasing from labor, one is reminded of one's true status as a dependent being, of the God who cares for and sustains all His creatures, and of the world as a reality belonging ultimately to God." –Craig J. Slane, *Sabbath*, in *Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*.

Also important were the observations of a Sabbath-keeping writer.

"The Sabbath was hallowed at the creation. As ordained for man, it had its origin when 'the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.' Job 38:7. Peace brooded over the world; for earth was in harmony with heaven. 'God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good;' and He rested in the joy of His completed work. Genesis 1:31.

"Because He had rested upon the Sabbath, 'God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it'—set it apart to a holy use. He gave it to Adam as a day of rest. It was a memorial of the work of creation, and thus a sign of God's power and His love. The Scripture says, 'He hath made His wonderful works to be remembered.' 'The things that are made,' declare 'the invisible things of Him since the creation of the world,' 'even His everlasting power and divinity.' Genesis 2:3; Psalm 111:4; Romans 1:20, *Revised Version*." –Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 281.

"The Creation story does not contain a command for human beings to observe the Sabbath. But neither does it contain commands to abstain from idolatry, adultery, murder, or any of the other Ten Commandments (cp. Exodus 20)." –Roy Gane, "Sabbath and the New Covenant," in *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 10/1-2, p. 315.

As noted by the author just quoted, the Sabbath is not the only Biblical teaching for which there is no commandment in Genesis. Cain presented the "fruit of the ground" to the Lord; and Abel, the "firstborn of his flock." Genesis 4:3, 4. Where in the previous pages of Genesis did the precept appear that man was commanded to worship God with that kind of offering? Nowhere. Where do we find in Genesis the first, second, or third commandments textually written as we have them in the Decalogue? Nowhere. Nevertheless, there are many examples showing that people knew and observed these precepts. In a similar way, while Genesis does not present the literal fourth commandment, the record of the Sabbath institution is clearly given, which is sufficient.

Where in Genesis do the commandments written on the second stone tablet of the law with God's own finger appear in Genesis? Nowhere. Or where, for example, is the commandment, "You shall not kill"? It is not there, but Cain was condemned for violating it! Genesis 4:9-12. Where is the commandment in Genesis, "You shall not commit adultery"? It is not there either, but Joseph knew it and resisted the temptations of Potiphar's wife, telling her that he could not commit such a "great wickedness." Genesis 39:9. Where do we find the commandment, "You shall not lie," or "You shall not bear false witness"? This also is not given textually in Genesis; but after Sarah denied what she had done, she was clearly disproved. Genesis 18:15. So it is with the other commandments.

Those things were not written in Genesis. But the interesting reality is that the people knew the commandments. How? As the apostle Paul stated, they knew them because the Lord at the beginning had written all of the Ten Commandments and much more in their consciences. "For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them." Romans 2:14, 15.

The commandments to the letter are not found in Genesis. But something is found there—the examples of people observing God’s commandments. Similarly, the Sabbath precept as a command is not found; but the record of its institution when God blessed and hallowed it does appear. Just as the Lord had engraved in the consciences of the people the other commandments, so He did with the seventh-day precept. This should not be surprising, because under the new covenant the Lord does the same; He writes His law in the consciences of believing people. Jeremiah 31:31-34.

A Protestant author, in harmony with what we have found concerning the existence of the moral law in the patriarchal age, wrote the following.

“All Ten Commandments had been part of the Law of God previously written on hearts instead of stone, for all ten appear, in one way or another, in Genesis.

“The first, Genesis 35:2

‘Get rid of the foreign gods.’

“The second, Genesis 31:39

Laban to Jacob: ‘But why did you steal my gods?’

“The third, Genesis 24:3

‘I want you to swear by the Lord.’

“The fourth, Genesis 2:3

‘God blessed the seventh day and made it holy.’

“The fifth, Genesis 27:41

‘The days of mourning my father are near.’

“The sixth, Genesis 4:9

‘Where is your brother Abel?’

“The seventh, Genesis 39:9

‘How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?’

“The eighth, Genesis 44:4-7

‘Why have you stolen my silver cup?’

“The ninth, Genesis 39:17

‘[Joseph] came to me to make sport of me, ... but ... he ran....’

“The tenth, Genesis 12:18; 20:3: ‘You are as good as dead because of the woman you have taken; she is a married woman.’” –Bob Deffinbaugh, *An Overview of the Ten Commandments* (Exodus 20:1-17).

In the time of the patriarchs, the society was not wholly without moral and spiritual principles; there were standards and moral commandments. This is why it is

reported that “Enoch walked with God” (Genesis 5:22), Noah was “a righteous man, blameless” (Genesis 6:9), and God knew that Abraham would “command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice.” Genesis 18:19. With good reason, another writer wrote the following confirmation.

“... The fact that certain precepts were not found in Genesis is no evidence that they were not obligatory upon the patriarchs. Thus, the book does not command men to love God with all their hearts, and their neighbors as themselves; nor does it prohibit idolatry, blasphemy, disobedience to parents, adultery, theft, false witness or covetousness. Who will affirm from this that the patriarchs were under no restraint in these things? As a mere record of events, written long after their occurrence, it was not necessary that the book should contain a moral code. But had the book been given to the patriarchs as a rule of life, it must of necessity have contained such a code. It is a fact worthy of especial notice that as soon as Moses reaches his own time in the book of Exodus, the whole moral law is given. The record and the people were then contemporary, and ever afterward the written law is in the hands of God’s people, as a rule of life, and a complete code of moral precepts.” –John Nevins Andrews, *History of the Sabbath and First Day of the Week*, p. 28.

It is a fact that the Lord blessed the Sabbath in the creation, not just later in the wilderness or on Mount Sinai. He blessed and sanctified it from the time of Adam, not just later in the time of Israel; no one can refute this. Now, if the blessing was first given at the creation, not later, there must be a reason. The reason is that the Sabbath was to be a blessing from then on, to benefit humanity starting at the very beginning. Certainly a theoretical blessing, without a practical application, would have no benefit.



A text to understand correctly

If it is true that God gave mankind the Sabbath in Eden, how can the words of Nehemiah be understood when he said that the Sabbath commandment was given to Israel on Mount Sinai? “You came down on Mount Sinai and spoke with them from heaven and gave them right rules and true laws, good statutes and commandments, and You made known to them Your holy Sabbath and commanded them commandments and statutes and a law by Moses Your servant.” Nehemiah 9:13, 14.

What did Nehemiah’s words mean—“You came down on Mount Sinai,” and “You made known to them Your holy Sabbath”? Had they not known the holy Sabbath before? Reading superficially, one might get the impression that these words meant that it was at Sinai where for the first time the Lord made known His holy Sabbath to Israel and commanded its observance. But that is not what Nehemiah meant.

The giving of the manna every day and its connection to the observance of the Sabbath places the commandment to keep the Sabbath holy not at Sinai, but some time before in the wilderness of Zin. Exodus 16:1-30. Was Nehemiah not aware of that? His words cannot mean that it was on Mount Sinai that the Lord for *the first time* made His Sabbath known to Israel.

In the light of Exodus 16, the one who *spoke to the people* regarding the holy Sabbath day in the desert of Zin was Moses, while later on Mount Sinai the Lord Himself spoke the fourth commandment and inscribed it on the stone tablets as one of the Ten Commandments. In the time of Nehemiah, the question was not about who first gave the commandment to Israel and where. Rather, Nehemiah described how the Lord condescended to come down and speak directly to the people from the Mount Sinai. There is no contradiction between Exodus 16 and Nehemiah 9:13, 14. The first time, Moses spoke to the people; and the second time it was the Lord. Therefore, Nehemiah was not saying that it was on Sinai that Israel was informed of the Sabbath for the first time, but that God directly came down and spoke to them.

Why was it necessary for the Lord to speak directly to them? The following quotations will explain that under Egyptian slavery, Israel to a great degree lost the knowledge of Sabbath keeping; and to avoid every doubt or excuse, there was a great need for them to be reinstructed, not only by Moses but also directly by the Lord.

“... In Egypt,” Ellen G. White wrote, “the Israelites were forced by their taskmasters to violate the Sabbath, and to a great extent they lost the knowledge of its sacredness....”

“While they were still in bondage, their taskmasters had attempted to force them to labor on the Sabbath by increasing the amount of work required each week.... But the Israelites were delivered from bondage and brought to a place where they might observe unmolested all the precepts of Jehovah.” –Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 336, 180, 181.

According to some Bible commentators, how is the phrase, “You made known to them Your holy Sabbath,” to be understood?

Following are some answers to this question from *Pulpit Commentaries*, as well as from Adam Clarke.

“‘Madest known unto them Thy holy sabbath.’ The anterior existence of the Sabbath to the law is here implied, which accords with Genesis 2:2, Genesis 2:3, and Exodus 20:11.” –Henry Donald Maurice Spence-Jones, Joseph S. Exell, *The Pulpit Commentary*, 9:14.

“‘Madest known unto them Thy holy Sabbath. They appear to have forgotten this first of all, in the commandments of God, during their sojourning in Egypt.’” –*Adam Clarke Commentary on the Bible*, comments on Nehemiah 9:14.

Relevant quotations

Some insights presented by the following writers are very interesting.

“By sanctifying it God placed it permanently apart for a particular religious use. Since according to the creation narrative Adam and Eve had been created on the sixth day, they experienced the holiness of the seventh day with God. When the Creator made the seventh day holy by separating it from the six workdays, He ‘provided a gift for the whole of mankind for all time. The person who keeps the seventh-day Sabbath holy follows the Exemplar’s archetypal pattern (Genesis 2:3) and meets with Him on that day of rest.’... It is important to emphasize that ‘the seventh day is the very first thing to be hallowed in Scripture, to acquire that special status that properly belongs to God alone. In this way Genesis emphasizes the sacredness of the Sabbath. Coupled with the threefold reference to God resting from all His work on that day, these verses give the clearest of hints of how man created in the divine image should conduct himself on the seventh day,’” –Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, *The Biblical Sabbath: The Adventist Perspective*, p. 3.

“The first commandment of the Sabbath was no more than first given when it was pronounced from heaven by the Lord, than any other one of the moral precepts, nay, that it hath so much antiquity as the seventh day hath being; for, so soon as the day was, so soon was it sanctified, that we might know that, as it came in with the first man, so it must not go out but with the last man; and as it was in the beginning of the world, so it must continue to the end of the same; and, as the first seventh day was sanctified, so must the last be. And this is that which one saith, that the Sabbath was commanded by God, and the seventh day was sanctified of Him even from the beginning of the world; where (the latter words expounding the former) He showeth that, when God did sanctify it, then also He commanded it to be kept holy; and, therefore, look how ancient the sanctification of the day is, the same antiquity also as the commandment of keeping it holy; for they two are all one.” –Nicholas Bound, *True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, page 7, as quoted by James N. Andrews, *History of the Sabbath and First Day of the Week*, pp. 13, 14, note 11.

“*Sanctified it.*—That is, separated it from ordinary uses, and hallowed it.... This blessing and sanctification were given prior to any covenant with man.... The weekly rest, therefore, is universal, permanent, and independent of the Mosaic law.” –*Ellicott’s Bible Commentary for English Readers*, vol. 1, comments on Genesis 2:3.

“After six days, God ceased from all works of creation. In miracles, He has overruled nature, but never changed its settled course, or added to it. God did not rest as one weary, but as one well pleased. Notice the beginning of the kingdom of grace, in the sanctification, or keeping holy, of the Sabbath day. The solemn observing of one day in seven as a day of holy rest and holy work, to God’s honor, is the duty of all to whom God has made known His holy Sabbaths. At this time none of the human race were in being but our first parents. For them the Sabbath was appointed, and clearly for all succeeding generations also.” –*Matthew Henry Concise Commentary*, comments on Genesis 2:1-3.

“God *blessed* the Sabbath. When in Scripture God blesses a thing or a being, that thing or being is imbued



with the power of fruitfulness and prosperity, providing life, happiness, and success. The Lord of life who in His creative work had blessed fishes and birds (see Genesis 1:22) and then Adam and Eve (see verse 28), also blessed the Sabbath as the day of rest, thus equipping it with enlivening, vitalizing, and beneficial power. This blessedness of the Sabbath is to enrich mankind’s existence and life.” –Gerhard Hasel, “God’s Perpetual Gift to Man,” in *Ministry*, September 1982.

“God *sanctified* the Sabbath. This divine act of sanctifying and thus dividing the Sabbath from the remaining days of activity imbues it with a holiness not possessed by any other day.... We must also note that holiness is an act of God’s bestowal and not of man’s doing. Holiness for the day of rest is derived, not from man keeping this day holy, but from a prior divine action.” –Gerhard Hasel, “God’s Perpetual Gift to Man,” in *Ministry*, September 1982.

Martin Luther, the great reformer, taught what the goal of the Sabbath was since its origin.

“... From the beginning of the world the Sabbath was intended for the worship of God.” –Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works*, 1:80; see 3-829.

“Hence, you can see that the Sabbath was before the Law of Moses came, and has existed from the beginning of the world. Especially have the devout, who have preserved the true faith, met together and called upon God on this day.” –*Luther’s Works*, XXXV, p. 330.

In addition, Martin Luther believed and taught about the Sabbath.

“It follows therefore from this passage, that, if Adam had stood in his innocence and had not fallen, he would yet have observed the ‘seventh day’ as sanctified, holy and sacred.... Nay, even after the fall he held the ‘seventh day’ sacred; that is, he taught on that day his own family. This is testified by the offerings made by his two sons, Cain and Abel. The Sabbath therefore has, from the beginning of the world, been set apart for the worship of God.... For all these things are implied and signified in the expression ‘sanctified.’...”

“Although therefore man lost the knowledge of God by sin, yet God willed that this command concerning the

sanctifying of the Sabbath should remain. He willed that on the seventh day both the word should be preached, and also those other parts of His worship performed which He Himself instituted.” –Martin Luther, *Commentary on Genesis*, translation by Professor J.N. Lenker, D.D., vol. I, pp. 139-140; *The collected Works of Martin Luther*, 2018, eBook.

“... Every seventh day has been especially selected for the purpose of supplying what was wanting in daily meditation.... He dedicated every seventh day to rest, that His own example might be a perpetual rule. The design of the institution must be always kept in memory: for God did not command men simply to keep holiday every seventh day, as if He delighted in their indolence; but rather that they, being released from all other business, might the more readily apply their minds to the Creator of the world. Lastly, that is a sacred rest.... For God cannot either more gently allure, or more effectually incite us to obedience, than by inviting and exhorting us to the imitation of Himself. Besides, we must know, that this is to be the common employment not of one age or people only, but of the whole human race.” –*Calvin’s Commentary on the Bible*, pp. 104, 105, comments on Genesis 2:3.

“... God forthwith appointed the day to be observed in some fashion by mankind, whom He had just created.... So, what Genesis 2:2, f. implies, when read in the light of this commentary supplied by Exodus, is that at the creation God commanded man to imitate His Maker by ‘doing work’ for six days and ‘resting’ on the seventh. Since man had been ‘made in the image of God’ (Genesis 1:26, f.), imitation of his Maker was no inappropriate vocation. Man’s work was to rule the animal creation and tend the vegetable creation. Genesis 1:26; 2:8, 15. And after his work, there followed rest.” –Roger T. Beckwith, Wilfrid Stott, *This is the Day*, pp. 2, 3.

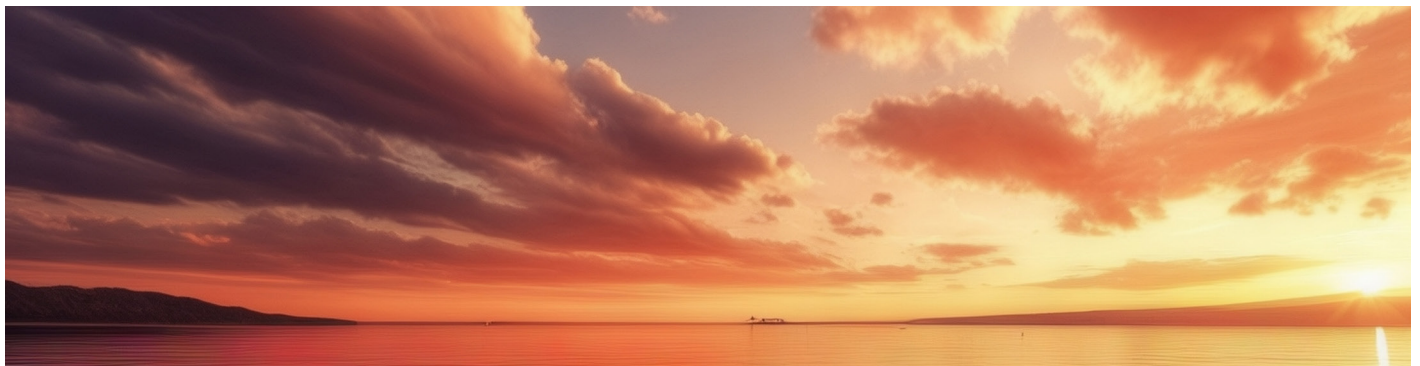
“... On those occasions when God ‘blesses’ a thing, He does good to it and good to men through it. Genesis 27:27; Exodus 23:25; Deuteronomy 7:13; 28:5, 12;

33:11, 13; Job 1:10; Psalm 132:15; Proverbs 20:21. Hence, for God to ‘bless’ the Sabbath implies that He makes that day a blessing to men.... Again, when God ‘sanctifies’ a thing, He sets it apart as holy, to be treated as such by men. Exodus 29:43, f.; 1 Kings 9:3, 7; 2 Chronicles 7:16, 20; 30:8; 36:14. He is not elsewhere said to ‘sanctify’ a day, but the meaning is doubtless the same as when He sanctifies anything else, namely, that He sets it apart to be observed as holy.” –Roger T. Beckwith, Wilfrid Stott, *This is the Day*, pp. 145, 146.

“... Unlike Exodus, Genesis is not a legal document featuring laws and detailed instruction concerning them. Genesis deals with origins. Since specific mention is not made of any other commandment, the silence regarding the Sabbath precept is not exceptional. Yet there is considerable evidence that the weekly observance of God’s creation Sabbath influenced the life of man at seven-day intervals well before the time of Moses.

“For example, the frequent use of the seven-day week (*Hebrew shebah*) in early portions of the Scriptures implies the existence of the Sabbath as well. The following periods of seven days are mentioned:

- Four times in the account of the Flood (Genesis 7:4, 10; 8:10, 12)
- At the end of Jacob’s festivities (Genesis 29:27)
- Laban’s pursuit of Jacob (Genesis 31:23, 24)
- For the duration of mourning at his death (Genesis 50:10)
- Job’s friends’ period of condolence (Job 2:13)” –Gary Hullquist, *Sabbath Diagnosis: A Diagnostic History and Physical Examination of the Biblical Day of Rest*, p. 50.





AMERICA

COLOMBIA



Conference in Quinchia, Colombia from June 21 to July 4, 2024 with the General Conference Youth Department at the Missionary School headquarters



Youth Conference

Pastor W. Kang, Leader of the General Conference Youth Department, together with Pastor B. Alejos



WORLD IN BRIEF

NEWS

CANADA



Conference in Toronto

Canadian Youth Orchestra



New Canadian field officers



Baptisms



WORLD IN BRIEF

NEWS

PERU



Pastor Gustavo Castellanos, GC Leader of the Canvassing Department, was conducting a seminar that ended with 4 baptisms



AFRICA



Activity of the GC Family Department,
by Pastor Adalicio Fontes de Souza

ANGOLA



The Sabbath

Wachman

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