

Sabbath Not a Shadow

There are those who reason that the weekly Sabbath was one of the types and shadows in the Mosaic dispensation, and that although the other nine commandments remained in force after the cross, this particular one passed away. This reasoning usually seems to be based upon the following statement of the Apostle Paul, in Col. 2: 14-17:

'Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross.... Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.'

But the seventh day weekly Sabbath was not a shadow. As we have learned in former chapters, the shadows of the Old Testament were ordinances that had to do with the offerings and sacrifices pertaining to the sanctuary services, all of which typified the death of the Son of God upon the cross for the sins of men. It was a way by which God's people might express their faith in a Savior to come, just as through baptism and the sacrament we today express our faith in a Savior who has come.

True, there were some shadowy Sabbaths. In the ceremonial law governing the sacrifices, there were several yearly Sabbaths. Upon these days special sacrifices were offered. Of one of the annual Sabbaths we read:

“And this shall be a statute for ever unto you: that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, whether it be one of your own country, or a stranger that journeys among you. For on that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that you may be clean from all Your sins before the Lord. It shall be a Sabbath of rest unto you, and you shall afflict your souls, by a statute for ever.” Lev. 16: 29-31.

This day of atonement, like all other annual Sabbaths enjoined in the law of Moses, came only once a year. They were, of course, “shadows of good things to come”; because they were days of offering sacrifices that pointed forward to Christ's death. At His death they would naturally cease, just as all the other shadows did. This, then, is what Paul refers to when he says: “Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.” Col. 2: 16, 17.

But the seventh day weekly Sabbath belongs to another code of law entirely. The command enforcing it says nothing about offering sacrifices. It does not point forward. It points backward. It is a memorial. It is not a shadow. The command enjoining its observance is set up to be an eternal reminder of a great event in the past. That event was the creation of the world in six days by the God of heaven. (Ex. 20:11; Gen. 1: 1-3.) It was intended to form a barrier forever against the worship of other gods and against such theories as evolution.

Just as baptism is a memorial of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, so the Sabbath is a memorial of the fact that Jehovah Christ is this world's Maker; that the earth did not come into being by chance, as many religious teachers today believe. It is the handiwork of God.

The Sabbath Before Sin

The sacrificial system was instituted after sin entered, and by pointing forward to the Lamb of God, the true Sin Bearer, it was to serve as a means of avoiding the penalty of sin. The Sabbath, on the contrary, was instituted before sin entered and, therefore, was not created because of sin. The ceremonial law, which included these yearly shadowy Sabbaths, was added because of transgressions,” and only till the seed should come to whom the promise was made.” (Gal. 3: 19.) But the weekly Sabbath was instituted before transgression, and is to remain for all time, even into the new earth, the eternal home of the redeemed. (Isa. 66: 22, 23.)

“Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily 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 that does sanctify you. You shall keep the Sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defiles it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever does any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord: whosoever does any work in the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested, and was refreshed. And He gave unto Moses, when He had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God.” Ex. 31:13-18.

Thus, the Sabbath is a sign of the true God. That is the reason God commanded men to remember it and to keep it holy. That is the reason He placed the Sabbath commandment in the very heart of the moral law, or Decalogue. It was to be of perpetual obligation. It stretches from Paradise before man fell into sin to Paradise regained. It will be His holy, blessed rest day throughout eternity and will be kept by His children in the coming kingdom of glory.

“For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before Me, said the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before Me, said the Lord.” Isa. 66: 22, 23.

Bible Study Summary

What is one of the outstanding, distinguishing features between the living God and the gods of the heathen?

God alone can create.

“But the Lord is the true God, He is the living God, and an everlasting king: at His wrath the earth.

shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide His indignation. Thus shall you say unto them, The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens. He hath made the earth by His power, He hath established the world by His wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by His discretion." Jer. 10: 10-12.

How did our earth come into existence?

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Gen. 1:1.

Who made the heavenly bodies?

"God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: He made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good." Gen. 1:16-18.

"Thus said God the Lord, He that created the heavens and stretched them out." Isa. 42:5.

What was man's origin?

"So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them." Gen. 1:27.

"I have made the earth, and created man upon it." Isa. 45: 12.

What great memorial did God give to man of His creative power?

The seventh day Sabbath. "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shall thou labor, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shall not do any work.... For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore [for this reason] the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it." Ex. 20: 8-11.

NOTE - These verses show clearly that the weekly Sabbath was instituted for the purpose of giving men a constant reminder of the fact that God was their Creator and also the Maker of all things. It was meant to protect them from being led away after false gods.

Of what is the Sabbath a sign?

It is a sign of the true God.

"And hallow My Sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between Me and you, that you may know that I am the Lord your God." Eze. 20:20.

NOTE - When people observe the true Sabbath, it serves as a sign that they are worshippers of the Creator, the true and living God. It is also a sign to the world that they are His people.

When was the Sabbath made?

It was made at the end of creation week, the first week of this earth's history.

"Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And 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: 1-3.

Out of what did God make the Sabbath?

Out of a day, the seventh day: "But the seventh day is the Sabbath. . . . Wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it." Ex. 20: 10, 11.

How did God make the Sabbath?

After spending six days creating the earth and man, He rested on the seventh. Thus, it became God's rest day. After resting, He blessed the seventh day (for all future time), and this day became God's blessed rest day. Then He sanctified it (set it apart for a holy and religious use by them), thus making it God's blessed, sanctified, rest day. (See Gen. 2: 1-3.)

What kind of day is the seventh day Sabbath?

It is a holy day. "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day." Isa. 58:13.

Which day of the week is the seventh day?

The day commonly called Saturday.

For whom was the Sabbath made?

“The Sabbath was made for man.” Mark 2: 27.

NOTE - No distinction is made here of race, color, or nationality. The word man is used here in the generic sense, meaning for the human race as a whole. The Sabbath was made for all men of all ages and races. All who are of God's creation need this weekly reminder of His omnipotence.

What is man asked to do with the Sabbath?

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.” Ex. 20: 8.

It is to be a day of physical rest and worship of God. No ordinary business nor work should be done upon the Sabbath. “In it thou shall not do any work.” Ex. 20: 10.

How long is the Sabbath to remain in force and be observed?

Throughout all time and eternity.

“For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before Me, said the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before Me, said the Lord.” Isa. 66: 22, 23.