

Lord of the Sabbath



SABBATH—FEBRUARY 11

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Genesis 2:1–3; Exodus 20:8–12; Deuteronomy 5:12–15; Matthew 12:1–13; John 9; John 19:30.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘The Sabbath day was made for man. Man was not made for the Sabbath day. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath day’ ” (Mark 2:27, 28, NlrV).

KEY (IMPORTANT) THOUGHT: The seventh-day Sabbath points us to Jesus, our Creator and our Redeemer (Savior).

“IN THE BEGINNING, THE WORD [JESUS] WAS ALREADY THERE. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. All things were made through him. Nothing that has been made was made without him. Life was in him, and that life was the light for all people. The light shines in the darkness. But the darkness has not understood it. A man came who was sent from God. His name was John. He came to give witness about that light. He gave witness so that all people could believe. John himself was not the light. He came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. The Word was in the world that was made through him. But the world did not recognize him. He came to what was his own. But his own people did not accept him. Some people did accept him. They believed in his name. He gave them the right to become children of God. To be a child of God has nothing to do with human parents. Children of God are not born because of human choice or because a husband wants them to be born. They are born because of what God does” (John 1:1–13, NlrV).

These verses point to Jesus as the One who made “all things” and to Jesus as the One who gives salvation to those who “believe on his name.” That is, they point to Jesus as Creator and Jesus as Savior. And, as the Bible shows us, both of these important parts of what Jesus has done are found in the Sabbath commandment.

SUNDAY—FEBRUARY 12**THE SABBATH IN GENESIS
(Genesis 2:1–3)**

One of the strongest truths of the Bible is that back in Eden, God created a perfect world. And He set apart and made holy the seventh day from the rest of the week. That is how far back, and basic, the seventh-day Sabbath is. Even from this world's point of view, you cannot get much further back than that. With the Sabbath, we are dealing with one of the strongest foundations of all Bible truths.

What four actions of God are recorded (listed) in Genesis 2:1–3 as He created the Sabbath?

God's four actions here are: He created a day, rested on that day, blessed it as the seventh day, and sanctified it (made it holy). This means that God made the seventh day holy or set it apart for holy use. How interesting it is that God Himself "rested" on the seventh day. It shows how much God wants us to keep His Sabbath holy. After all, God Himself rested on it!

Genesis 2:3 also explains that the Creator "blessed" the seventh day, just as He had blessed animals and man the day before (Genesis 1:22, 28). God speaks of this blessing of the Sabbath in the fourth commandment of His law. This forever connects the Creation Sabbath with the weekly Sabbath.



The Sabbath is one of the most important foundations of Bible truth.

Notice how many times the words "the seventh day" are listed in Genesis 2:1–3. What might this mean?

Three times this special day is listed. This shows the importance of the seventh-day Sabbath. It clearly sets the seventh-day Sabbath apart from the rest of the week. It also should always remind us that God did not make the first day special, or any other day. The special blessing is for the seventh day and no other.

With the creation of the seventh-day Sabbath, God ends His creative work. Then God takes the seven days together and makes them into a week. This weekly schedule is honored throughout the rest of the Bible and history. By creating the week, God shows His power over both space and time. None of us can control an hour, or even a minute, of time. Time goes on, no matter what. So, it is very important that we learn to trust the Lord with the little amount of time that we have here on earth.

Think about the march of time and how it sweeps us along moment by moment, day by day, and year

by year. We have no control over time itself. But what we can control, in some small part, is what we do with time. How well do you use your time? What things use up your time? How might you use your time, the little bit you have here, better?



It is important to trust the Lord with the little amount of time we have on earth.

MONDAY—FEBRUARY 13

THE SABBATH IN EXODUS (Exodus 20:8–11)

What does the Lord tell us to do in Exodus 20:8–11? For what reason are we told to do it?

The entire family household, including servants, the working class, and the “boss,” are to rest together. This means that the Sabbath is for everyone, rich or poor. It makes everyone equal. This is because, before God, all humans are equal, and the Sabbath is a special way of showing this important truth.

This commandment is also carefully explained as follows:

- A. Introduction: “ ‘Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy’ ” (verse 8, NKJV).
- B. Command: “ ‘Six days you shall

labor [work] and do all your work’ ” (verse 9, NKJV).

- C. Reason: “ ‘but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God’ ” (verse 10a, NKJV).
- B1. Command: “ ‘In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor . . .’ ” (verse 10b, NKJV).
- C1. Reason: “ ‘For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, . . . and rested . . .’ ” (verse 11a, NKJV).
- D. Conclusion: “ ‘Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it [made it holy]’ ” (verse 11b, NKJV).

(A) holds the important principle (rule) of the Sabbath commandment in its opening sentence.

(B) gives the positive command to work during six days.

(B1) adds the command to not do any work on the Sabbath day, and includes the entire family in this command. Even the work animals and guests in the home are included.

(C) and (C1) give the reason for the commands.

(C) informs the people of the time factor in the six-days/seventh-day series by pointing to the fact that “the seventh-day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God.”

(C1) gives the formal reason for resting, beginning with the word “for” or “because.” It lists the detailed reasons for the Lord’s six days of work and His resting on the seventh day. It gives proof that the seventh day of rest is established in the first Sabbath of Creation week.

(D) is a sentence starting with “There-

fore” and also forming the conclusion of the commandment. The last words of the commandment, “ ‘and made it holy’ ” (NirV), agree with the words of the opening principle in (A), “to keep it holy.” Both are connected with the holiness that God gives to the Sabbath in Genesis 2:3.

TUESDAY—FEBRUARY 14

THE SABBATH IN DEUTERONOMY (Deuteronomy 5:12–15)

As Seventh-day Adventists, we all know the Sabbath commandment as it is written in the book of Exodus. But the Lord gave it again (and all the other commandments) in the book of Deuteronomy. What is interesting is that the commands seem almost the same. But the language is not exactly the same. The commandment in Deuteronomy gives another reason for keeping the Sabbath, a reason not found in Exodus.

Compare¹ Deuteronomy 5:12–15 with Exodus 20:8–11. How are the commandments the same? How are they different? Why are those differences important?

Much is the same between the two commandments, but there is a new addition to the one in Deuteronomy. Both commandments talk about the servants resting on the Sabbath day, but Deuteronomy makes that point in stronger language. The verse reads that God’s people should keep the

Sabbath “ ‘so that your manservant and maidservant may rest, as you do’ ” (Deuteronomy 5:14, NIV). Here we find what was discussed the other day: how the Sabbath helps to bring master and servant together on the same level. Both are to rest on the same day. This means that the Sabbath offered servants some protection from the master who would make them work overtime. This was a protection built right into a commandment that had its beginnings in Creation itself.

So, this raises an interesting question. When the Sabbath was first set in place, it was to be a reminder of Creation in a perfect world without sin. It had nothing to do with manservants or maidservants and certainly nothing to do with slaves in Egypt. This new addition had been added onto the commandment *after* the Fall. This means that the commandment now showed something that the original did not have at first.

So, the Sabbath was a symbol of Creation. After sin, it became a symbol of both Creation and salvation. Salvation is itself an example of re-creation (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15; Revelation 21:1). Creation and salvation are closely connected (related) in the Bible. Only God the Creator could be God the Savior. And we have them both in Jesus (read John 1:1–14). The commandment in both Exodus and Deuteronomy shows that the seventh-day Sabbath is the symbol of the work of Jesus, our Creator and our Savior.

Think about the slavery that Christ

1. compare—to show how two or more things are the same or different.

has promised to free you from. What promises of freedom do you have in Jesus? How can you learn to claim them and then let the Lord make them real in your life?



The Sabbath is the symbol of the work of Jesus, our Creator and our Savior.

WEDNESDAY—FEBRUARY 15

JESUS AND HIS SABBATH: PART 1 (Matthew 12:1–13)

Books have been written, and are still being written, to show that Jesus, when on earth, was pointing people away from the seventh-day Sabbath. They either point toward Sunday worship or toward the idea that the seventh day has been removed and replaced with a more general “rest” in Christ.

Neither choice seems to be found in any of the Gospel stories of Jesus and the Sabbath. The reason for such books is a need to defend most Christians’ refusal to accept the seventh-day Sabbath. They argue that Christ’s healing people on the Sabbath means the removal of that commandment.

What should we think about these arguments? A careful study of what

Jesus did on Sabbath does not agree with this idea that the Sabbath has been removed.

Read Matthew 12:1–13 and study carefully the part about the Sabbath healing. As you read it, ask yourself: What is behind the healing? Why would Jesus have done it on that day? And what is the important point that Jesus is clearly making?

Perhaps the most important verse, the one that explains it all, is verse 7. This shows what this parable is all about: it is about people, mercy, kindness, and loving others. The Sabbath gives us more opportunities to show kindness and mercy to those in need than do the other days of the week when we are working to earn a living. The problem shown in this verse was that the Sabbath day had become burdened with too many man-made rules. These rules led people away from the goal of showing love to God and to other people. The Bible says that love is the fulfillment of the law. Anything that turns the law against love is something that must be removed. Under the Jews, the Sabbath had become law without love, which is legalism.² This is what Jesus was fighting against with His Sabbath healing.

The hardness of the Jewish system is also shown in the healing of the man blind from birth in John 9. Read carefully verse 16 of John 9. Talk about law without love!

Suppose Jesus were using His Sabbath healing in Matthew 12:13 and

2. legalism—the belief that a person can be saved by keeping the law and doing good works.

John 9:6 to start pointing people away from the real seventh-day Sabbath. If so, this was a strange way to do it.

What are other ways a person can show the law without love? How might you be guilty of doing the same thing?

THURSDAY—FEBRUARY 16

JESUS AND HIS SABBATH: PART 2 (John 19:30)

Through His Sabbath miracles, Jesus showed what the Sabbath is really about. It is a day for healing and re-connection (relating again to) with God. But Jesus also planned for the Sabbath to help people to remember God's creative power. So, the Sabbath is the day when Jesus sets people free (Luke 4:31–37). It is the day when He makes the lame walk (Luke 13:10–17; John 5:1–9). And it is the day that He gives sight back to the blind (John 9).

For Jesus, the Sabbath was more about people than about rules. This is no doubt partly why Jesus made His famous speech about the Sabbath being made for people and not people for the Sabbath. (Read Mark 2:27, 28.) At the same time, as we read in our lesson earlier in the week, people were protected if they followed the rules properly.

While He was alive on earth, Jesus restored the importance of resting on the Sabbath. But He also did it in death. Read Matthew 27:57–28:1; Mark 15:42–16:1; Luke 23:52–24:1; and John 19:31–20:1.

What is the one common point that all four Gospel writers make here? More important, what does this tell us about the Sabbath and whether it is still valid (true) or not?

After Jesus cried out, "It is finished!" (John 19:30, KJV), what did He then do as our Savior?

He rested on the seventh day. Where have we already noticed that? Here Jesus rested just as the sun was setting on the sixth day. In Genesis 2:1–3, after God's work of Creation, He also rested on the seventh day. Now, after His work of salvation, Jesus does the same thing.

Remember the argument about Jesus' moving people away from the seventh-day Sabbath? Jesus' example of resting in the tomb on the Sabbath is really another strange way of showing that Jesus never removed the Sabbath. What is more, Jesus resting in the tomb on the seventh-day Sabbath makes it very difficult for us to understand the reasons that many Christians give for believing that the Sabbath commandment was removed after the Cross. If the Sabbath was removed, then why would resting on Sabbath be the first thing that Jesus did after the Cross?



The Sabbath is the day when Jesus made the lame walk.

So, both in life and in death, Jesus showed us that the Sabbath still stands and is very important.

FRIDAY—FEBRUARY 17

ADDITIONAL STUDY: “Should God forbid the sun to do its work upon the Sabbath and cut off its rays from warming the earth and growing crops? Must the solar system [planets] stand still through that holy day? Should God command the rivers to stop watering the fields and forests, and order the waves of the sea to stop their ceaseless [continual] ebbing [retreating] and flowing? Must the wheat and corn stop growing, and the ripening grapes keep from blooming? Must the trees and flowers put forth [make] no bud nor blossom on the Sabbath?”

“In such a case, men would miss the fruits of the earth, and the blessings that make life enjoyable. Nature must continue her unchanging course. God could not for a moment stop working, or man would faint and die. And man also has a work to do on the Sabbath. The needs of life must be taken care of, the sick must be cared for, the poor must be given help. A person who fails to help people who suffer on the Sabbath will be held guilty for not helping. God’s holy rest day was made for people, and acts of mercy are in perfect keeping with the principles [laws] of the Sabbath. God does not desire His creatures to suffer an hour’s pain that may be relieved upon the Sabbath or any other day.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pages 206, 207.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

① It is easy today to criticize the hardness and coldness of those religious leaders who attacked Jesus for His Sabbath healing. And God certainly will judge them for their actions. At the same time, try to put yourself in their sandals (shoes). Their man-made rules had been around for so long that these leaders thought that the rules were a very important part of Sabbath keeping itself. So, they truly believed that Jesus was breaking the Sabbath. How would we feel if someone were to come along today and claim great light and truth but broke the fourth commandment? How might we respond? What important lesson can we learn from this example that can help us know how to separate truth from tradition?³ Why is it not always easy to do?

② In class examine more this idea that God rested after His work of Creation and His work of salvation. How are we to understand the importance of this wonderful fact?

③ Place yourself in the shoes of someone who believes that Jesus’ miracles on the Sabbath showed that He was removing it. Compare what the Bible teaches that Jesus said and did with what He might do if He were really making this change. What do you think He would have done differently?

SUMMARY: The Bible shows the Lord as the Lord of the seventh-day Sabbath. It is the most basic sign of Him as Creator and Savior.

3. tradition—rules and beliefs of people that have been in practice for a long, long time.