



## **The Seventh-Day Sabbath—the Sign of a Finished Work**

When God created our world, He did so with intricate care and precision. At the end of each day He looked at His work and pronounced it to be good. Day by day He built upon His labors of the previous day, and was pleased with what He had done. Finally, when He had finished His work of creating and embellishing the world as a beautiful home for mankind, He created Adam and Eve and placed them in the garden which He had prepared for them. Then God set aside the seventh day as a weekly memorial of all He had done for them to give them happiness, peace and joy. And best of all, the weekly Sabbath would ever be the day when He would join His obedient and faithful children to rejoice with them and bring them blessings from heaven by His angels and the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

In the biblical record of the creation of the world, the character of our Creator and the purpose of the Sabbath is revealed:

"God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

"Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.

"By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done." Gen. 1:31-2:3.

The first thing to observe about God in this narrative is that He always finishes what He starts; and the result of His work is perfection. After every day of the creation week, God looked at what He had done and pronounced it good. Then, when His work of creation was finished on the sixth day, He stated that it was very good! But there was one more act in God's work of creation that would put a seal upon His perfect work. That act was to set aside a whole day to rejoice together with His created beings and consider the works that He had done as a memorial and constant reminder of His love.

"When the foundation of the earth was laid, the foundation of the Sabbath was made also.... When the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy, God saw that a Sabbath was essential for Adam and Eve, even in paradise. In giving them the Sabbath, God considered their spiritual and physical health." Ltr. 31, 1898.

Nestled in the heart of the law of God, the Sabbath commandment shines out as a covenant between us and God. God's command to remember the Sabbath is an invitation to remember who we are and who God is to us. We are His children, coming forth from His hand on the sixth day of the creation week. We have been created in the very image of God and as such we need to be in constant communion with Him in order to maintain the relationship that He gave to us at our creation. In the Sabbath commandment is outlined our whole existence on a practical basis, with the Sabbath being the highlight of our lives.

The true understanding of the Sabbath involves not only what we are to do on that day, but contains the outline of our activities and purpose on all the other days of the week leading up to the Sabbath. The true understanding of the Sabbath encompasses our entire relationship to God and what we are to do in cooperation with Him throughout the week preceding the Sabbath as well.

The Sabbath is a state of mind as well as an activity. This is why God says at the beginning of the commandment, "Remember." The other nine precepts of the Decalogue are stated as commands to be obeyed in order to maintain harmony and a positive relationship with God and others. But when God says, "Remember the Sabbath," He is indicating that throughout the week we are to have the Sabbath in mind. This dovetails with the command to do all our work on the other six days, which necessitates remembering the Sabbath all week long as we are doing our daily tasks.

When God created the world, He finished perfectly each day everything He had purposed to do on that day. Thus the Sabbath, coming at the end of the six days of His labor, is ultimately the sign of the finished work of God in creating the world and everything in it. We also should consult with God concerning what He wants us to do each day so that we can know that what we have done that day is what God has asked us to do. Then when the Sabbath comes, it will be a day of rejoicing with our Lord and others of like faith that we have obeyed the leading of the Lord throughout the week and can now celebrate what God has done in our lives.

But what does it mean to keep the Sabbath holy? In order to understand this more clearly, we need to understand what holiness is. Ellen White states that "Holiness is agreement with God." 5T 743. And Paul says in Hebrews 12:14, "Without holiness no one will see the Lord." This indicates that we will not be able to keep the Sabbath in holiness if we are not in agreement with God in the other areas of lives. Therefore we are to search our hearts in cooperation with the Holy Spirit, to see if there is anything in which we are living in opposition to God's law.

Some Seventh-day Adventists feel that keeping the Sabbath assures them of a place in the kingdom of heaven. But keeping the Sabbath will not atone for a life of worldliness on the other six days of the week. Also, many feel that when the Sunday law comes, they will surely keep the Sabbath and not succumb to the pressure of the apostate churches to worship on Sunday. Unfortunately, if we have sins in our lives at that time, we will not have the ability to stand against all the forces of evil and Satan himself, for he will taunt us with our sins and bring them up to discourage and abuse us. On the other hand, Ellen White saw the true people of God

during the time of persecution, and they were preaching the Sabbath more fully than we have understood before:

"I saw that God had children who do not see and keep the Sabbath. They have not rejected the light upon it. And at the commencement of the time of trouble, we were filled with the Holy Ghost as we went forth and proclaimed the Sabbath more fully. This enraged the churches...as they could not refute the Sabbath truth. And at this time God's chosen all saw clearly that we had the truth, and they came out and endured the persecution with us." EW 33.

Beloved, I believe that the preaching of the Sabbath more fully during the time of trouble which enrages Satan and the rest of the Christian world, is that the Sabbath is a sign of perfection--the sign of a finished product in the characters of God's people. Through a close and intimate communion with Jesus, His people will be brought into complete agreement with Him on everything in their lives. Jesus will not allow the end of time and persecution to come until His people are ready. Then, like Him when He was upon this earth, they will have the strength to stand against all the wrath of Satan and his followers, because they have the law written in their hearts [Ps. 40:7, 8], and the Sabbath as the sign or seal of the heavenly perfection of character that comes from an intimate, moment-by-moment walk with Jesus.

Ellen White States:

"In order to keep the Sabbath holy, men must themselves be holy." DA 283.

In other words, if we are in disagreement with God on any other point of the Decalogue, it will show up in our characters and keep us from keeping the Sabbath holy in our hearts. We might have an outward show of obedience, but God is looking for inward holiness on all points of our lives. Then the Sabbath will truly be a sign of our constant connection with Jesus until we reflect His character in our lives.

"That law of ten precepts...is the voice of God from heaven speaking to the soul in promise, 'This do and you will not come under the dominion and control of Satan.'" 1 BC 1105.

"[God] has built a hedge--the Ten Commandments--about His subjects to preserve them from transgression. In requiring obedience to the laws of His kingdom, God gives His people health and happiness, peace and joy. He teaches them that the perfection of character He requires can only be attained by becoming familiar with His Word." 3 BC 1143.

"The creative energy that called the world into existence is in the word of God.... Every command is a promise; accepted by the will, received into the soul, it brings with it the life of the Infinite One. It transforms the nature and recreates the soul in the image of God." Ed 126.

As we consider these things, it becomes apparent that holiness is the result of a lifelong journey of faith and obedience. No half-hearted attention to religious things will recreate our fallen nature into a reflection of Christ's character. If we try to mix religion with the sentiments and

activities of the world, we will surely fail of attaining to the whole will of God for our lives. Paul understood this when he wrote to the Corinthian church of his day:

"Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever? What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. And God has said: 'I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.'

"Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you and you will be my sons and daughters,' says the Lord Almighty.

"Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God." 2 Cor. 6:14 - 7:1.

This scriptural passage makes very clear that the goal of God for His people in every age has been perfection of character and holiness of mind and heart. But especially at the end of time, God will perfect a people during the worst time in history to show that He can finish what He has begun.

"We are nearing the judgment, and those who bear the message of warning to the world must have clean hands and pure hearts. They must have a living connection with God. The thoughts must be pure and holy, the soul untainted, the body, soul, and spirit be a pure, clean offering to God or He will not accept it." TM 426.

"I also saw that many do not realize what they must be in order to live in the sight of the Lord without a high priest in the sanctuary through the time of trouble. Those who receive the seal of the living God and are protected in the time of trouble must reflect the image of Jesus fully.

"I saw that many were neglecting the preparation so needful and were looking to the time of refreshing and the latter rain to fit them to stand in the day of the Lord and to live in His sight. Oh, how many I saw in the time of trouble without a shelter! They had neglected the needful preparation; therefore they could not receive the refreshing that all must have to fit them to live in the sight of a holy God....

I saw that none could share the refreshing unless they obtained the victory over every besetment, over pride, selfishness, love of the world, and over every wrong word and action. We should, therefore, be drawing nearer and nearer to the Lord and be earnestly seeking that preparation necessary to enable us to stand in the battle in the day of the Lord. Let all remember that God is holy and that none but holy beings can ever dwell in His presence." EW 71.

This is why the Sabbath becomes the primary issue at the end of time. God did not stop creating our world in the beginning until everything was perfect and complete. The Sabbath

was the sign that His work was finished and a time to reflect and rejoice in recognition of that fact. After Adam and Eve sinned, the Sabbath was given to take with them beyond the gates of Eden as a reminder and a promise that God would restore mankind back to their original state of obedience and perfection.

"I gave them my Sabbaths as a sign between us, so they would know that I the Lord made them holy." Eze. 20:12.

"Keep my Sabbaths holy, that they may be a sign between us. Then you will know that I am the Lord your God." Eze. 20:20.

To God's ancient people, the Sabbath was a continual reminder that they had been chosen out of all nations of the earth to represent Him, and to stand as a beacon to the world of God's requirements in order to return to the original purpose of God in our creation.

God's requirement of Sabbath keeping was a life-and-death matter to the Israelites. This may seem harsh, but it was a continual reminder of the reality for all mankind that without the weekly dedication of that special holy day with God, the behavior and wickedness of fallen man would lead to ultimate death.

"Say to the Israelites, 'You must observe my Sabbaths. This will be a sign between me and you for the generations to come, so you may know that I am the Lord, who makes you holy.

"Observe the Sabbath because it is holy to you. Anyone who desecrates it must be put to death; whoever does any work on that day must be cut off from his people. For six days, work is to be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day must be put to death. The Israelites are to observe the Sabbath, celebrating it for the generations to come as a lasting covenant. It will be a sign between me and the Israelites forever, for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth and on the seventh day he abstained from work and rested." Ex. 31:16, 17.

Most of the Christian world believes that the promises given to Israel passed away after the death of Christ, and that we are now living in a new dispensation of time where the Sabbath is no longer the sign of a special relationship with God. This transition happened during the early centuries, as the Sabbath was gradually displaced by Sunday and the truths of the Bible were lost as the man of sin prospered and controlled the masses. Paul predicted that this would happen:

"Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day [the coming of Christ] will not come, until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshipped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple proclaiming himself to be God....

"And now you know what is holding him back, so that he may be revealed at the proper time. For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who holds it back will

continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming. The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved." 2 Thess. 2:3-10.

In the days of Paul the long years of apostasy were yet ahead. But now only a slip of time remains before the coming of our Lord. The climax of history is just before us. Satan and his angels are preparing for the last great battle with people of God. And again, the Sabbath of the Lord will be the pivotal point in the controversy. Satan is determined that no one will reach character perfection. His case against God hangs on the allegation he made in heaven, that the law of God was unfair and should not be binding upon created beings. Therefore, God has allowed six centuries to pass since the fall of man as a demonstration of what happens when God's law is not kept. But God needs a generation of His people to demonstrate that the requirements of His law are holy, just and good, and can be kept through a constant relationship with Jesus and the infilling of the Holy Spirit to guide and direct our lives in accordance with the perfect pattern of Jesus' life. And just as God finished His perfect work of creation in six days, so He will finish His perfect work of redemption in six thousand years, for to God, a thousand years is as a day, and a day is as a thousand years, as Peter has said in the scriptures:

"But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

"But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.

"Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming." 2 Pet. 3:8-12.

Do you see the consistency of the scriptures in emphasizing the importance of the holiness of God's people throughout time, and especially at the coming our Lord Jesus Christ? A special seal is to be placed upon the foreheads of those who are loyal to Him in the time of the end just before He comes:

"Then I saw another angel coming up from the east, having the seal of the living God. He called out in a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm the land and the sea: do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God. Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel." Rev. 7:2-4.

Jesus is our example of what it takes to be sealed by the seal of God. When He was on this earth He said:

"Do not work for a food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval." John 6:27.

"I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me. The one who sent me is with me; and he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him." John 8:28, 29.

Using the information in these two texts as our guide, we can see what the seal of God will indicate for those who receive it at the end of time. God's people at the close of earth's history will receive the seal of God's approval because they always do what pleases Him. Keeping the Sabbath will be an outward sign of an inner relationship with God that has brought them to perfection of character. Thus, keeping the Sabbath at the end of earth's history will be the outward sign of God's finished work in His people, just as the Sabbath was given in the beginning as the sign of His finished work of creation.

"The seal of the living God will be placed upon those only who bear a likeness to Christ in character. As wax takes the impression of the seal, so the soul is to take the impression of the Spirit of God and maintain the image of Christ." 7 BC 970.

Dear friends, do you see the winds of strife being let go around the world? This is a sure indication that God has a people who are coming into agreement with His law and His character. Only a little slip of time is left before the door of the ark is closed and Jesus makes this announcement:

"He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

"I am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." Rev. 22:11-14, KJV.

"Then they that have kept God's commandments shall breathe in immortal vigor beneath the tree of life; and through unending ages the inhabitants of sinless worlds shall behold, in that garden of delight, a sample of the perfect work of God's creation, untouched by the curse of sin--a sample of what the whole earth would have become, had man but fulfilled the Creator's glorious plan." PP 62, 63.

What a glorious future we have ahead of us! Let us not grow weary as we experience the trials that we must endure now and through the time of trouble before Jesus comes. He will keep us in the ark of His protection as He did for Noah and his family during the flood. For us, this ark of safety is found in the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary where God's ten commandment law is kept. Jesus, our great high priest, is now inviting us to come into this

place of safety, for as we learn to keep His law in our daily walk with Him, we become qualified by His righteousness to receive the promise of His protection.

"Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain." Isa. 26:20, 21, KJV.

"What are the chambers in which they are to hide?--They are the protection of Christ and holy angels." 4 BC 1143.

"I saw a covering that God was drawing over His people to protect them in the time of trouble; and every soul that was decided on the truth and was pure in heart was to be covered with the covering of the Almighty." EW 43.

"The observance of God's rest day is the mark of distinction between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not....

"The seal of the living God will be placed on those only who bear a likeness to Christ in character....

"As wax takes the impression of the seal, so the soul is to take the impression of the Spirit of God and retain the image of Christ." 7 BC 970.

"We are to copy no human being. There is no human being wise enough to be our criterion. We are to look to the man Christ Jesus, who is complete in the perfection of righteousness and holiness. He is the author and finisher of our faith. He is the pattern man. His experience is the measure of the experience that we are to gain. His character is our model. Let us, then, take our minds off the perplexities and the difficulties of this life, and fix them on Him, that by beholding we may be changed into His likeness. We may behold Christ to good purpose. We may safely look to Him; for He is all-wise. As we look to Him and think of Him, He will be formed within, the hope of glory.

"Let us strive with all the power that God has given us to be among the 144,000." 7 BC 970.

"Then I looked, and there before me was the Lamb, standing on Mount Zion, and with him 144,000 who had his name [character] and his Father's name written on their foreheads [the decision-making part of the brain].... These are those who did not defile themselves with women [apostate churches], for they kept themselves pure [from false doctrines]. They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They were purchased from among men and offered as firstfruits to God and the Lamb. No lie was found in their mouths; they are blameless." Rev. 14:1, 4, 5.

Then will begin the thousand-year Sabbath with our heavenly Father and Jesus and the saved of all ages.



"I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge.... They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or in their hands.... They will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years." Rev. 20:4, 6.

At last the great controversy between Christ and Satan will be finished. Every lie will be uncovered, every truth will be revealed. Perfection and holiness will reign in every heart, and harmony will be restored. And in the earth made new, we will come before the Lord and worship Him from one new moon to another and from one Sabbath to another throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity. Isa. 66:22, 23. Thus perfection will be restored in the universe, and the purpose of the Sabbath will be fulfilled.

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