

[IN GOD'S IMAGE 19 – THE SABBATH SIGN]

We have been focusing on the sign aspect of the Mosaic Covenant, which was the Sabbath day.

- ◆ Last time we discussed the fact the Sabbath was a command given to the Israelites as a test of their allegiance in the same way God tested Adam and Eve not to partake of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden.
- ◆ We need to look at the sign of the Mosaic Covenant in the same light, as it was a sign that pointed backwards as well as forwards.
- ◆ The Sabbath day sign, although a test of allegiance for the children of Israel, pointed to something much more significant.
- ◆ It was never God's intention for the sign to become the object of worship. Rather it was to direct peoples' worship to what the sign pointed to.
- ◆ We learnt it was a sign that pointed both backwards as well as forwards.
- ◆ ***Exodus 20:8-11 "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work,10 but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates.11 For in six days THE LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.***
- ◆ It pointed backwards in that the day was to remind them to remember God their Creator (v.11).
- ◆ One day each week was set aside to worship their Creator and the God who had redeemed them from Egypt.
- ◆ So in this respect it pointed backwards to God's creative and redeeming work.

But the Sabbath sign had a future significance as well and it revolved around three key words also found in this section of scripture.

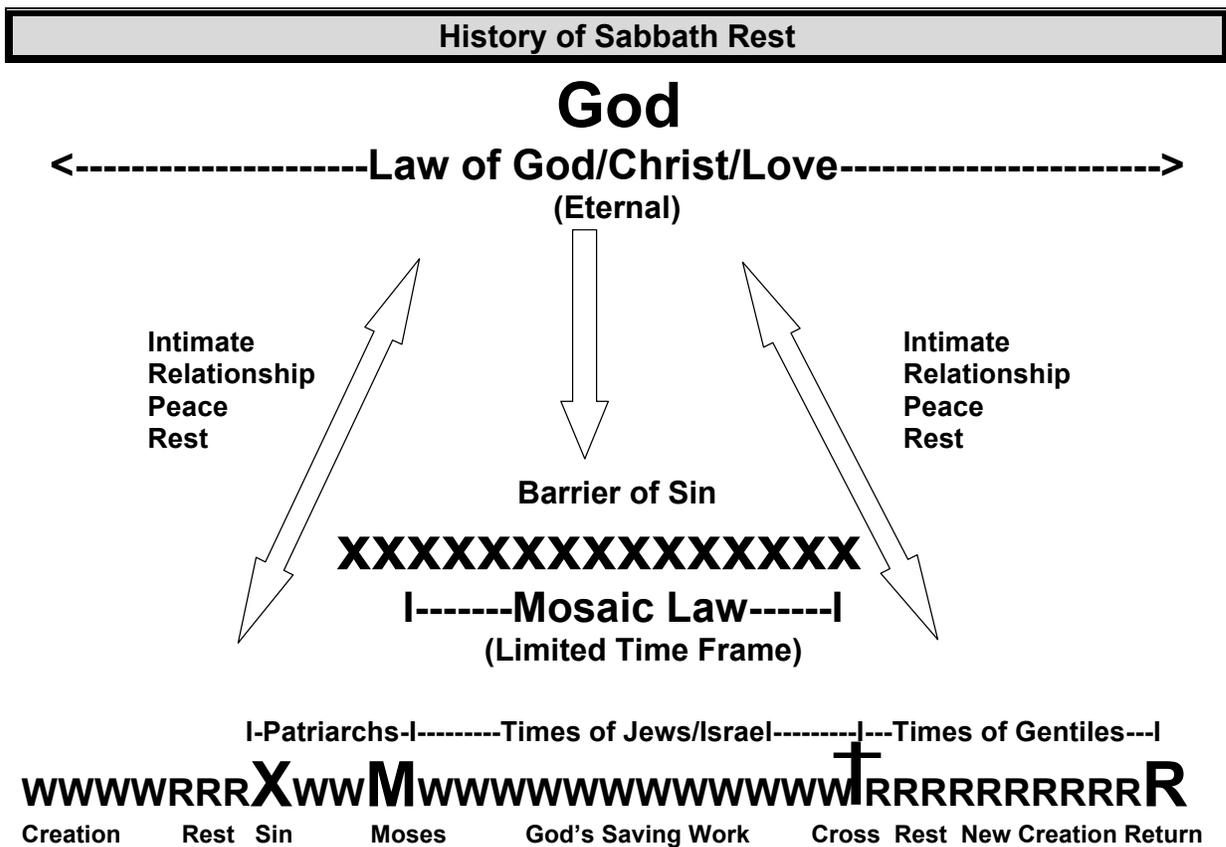
- ◆ They are, "remember", "work" and "rested."
- ◆ Let's look at these words to understand why they are important.
- ◆ In Bible usage, the word "rest" is contrasted with "work."
- ◆ This is how the Bible starts out, God working – creating the physical order.
- ◆ ***Genesis 2:1-3 Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished.2 And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done.3 Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.***
- ◆ For six days God worked, then He rested and hallowed the seventh day.
- ◆ What did this rest signify? Did God need a rest; was He worn out from all His work?
- ◆ No! God could sit back and look at His handiwork, the beautiful aspects of his creative genius, but most importantly He enjoyed perfect communion with his most important handiwork, the man He had created in his image.
- ◆ There were no rituals, no ceremonies, no religion – just a simple loving relationship between God and the humans he had created.
- ◆ This is important to understand because a correct understanding of what "rest" means to God determines to a large extent what follows.
- ◆ ***"Then on the eighth day, God went back to work"***
- ◆ No, it doesn't say that.
- ◆ How long did this rest last? We don't know, but what we do know is something interrupted that blissful period of "rest" where God and man enjoyed an intimate loving relationship.
- ◆ What interrupted this rest? Man exercised his freewill and disobeyed God.
- ◆ So what was God's response to the disruption of this relationship? He had to start working again to restore the broken relationship He had with His creation.

So bearing in mind what "rest" and "work" means to God, let's look at what we find in scripture.

- ◆ In John 5, Jesus is being accused of healing a man on the Sabbath, something the Jews regarded as "breaking the Sabbath."
- ◆ Notice the answer Jesus gives to his detractors.
- ◆ ***John 5:17 But Jesus answered them, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working."***

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- ◆ Notice both the Father and Jesus have been laboring since the events of the garden to restore the relationship between God and man.
 - ◆ There is no “good cop,” “bad cop” routine going on.
 - ◆ As soon as man sinned, God the Father and the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world went back to work to restore the relationship.
 - ◆ Now notice when this work finished in John 17.
 - ◆ This is the occasion of the Last Supper
 - ◆ **John 17:1-4 Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: “Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, 2 “as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.3 “And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.4 “I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.**
 - ◆ There was a two-fold aspect of the Sabbath command, it looked back to the rest before sin entered the scene, but it also looked forward to the spiritual rest Jesus would accomplish through His saving work of salvation.
- History of Sabbath Rest. (See figure below)*



- ◆ So the word, “rest” refers to the state of peace and intimate communion that exists in the relationship between God and humanity.
- ◆ And the word “work” refers to Christ’s saving work in restoring that relationship.
- ◆ Notice what Jesus’ work accomplished.
- ◆ **John 17:2 “that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him”**

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- ◆ Jesus' saving work has restored the relationship and made it possible for sinful mankind to once again enjoy spiritual rest with His God.
- ◆ So the signpost of the Sabbath in the Mosaic Covenant was much more than a day of "physical rest," it pointed to the one who made "spiritual rest" possible, Jesus Christ.
- ◆ The Jews whose focus of attention was on the signpost completely missed what the sign was pointing to, Jesus Christ.
- ◆ That's why Jesus told the Jews, *I am the Lord of the Sabbath (Matthew 12:8)* or in other words, "I am the Lord of spiritual rest."

The author of the book of Hebrews makes the same argument.

- ◆ The first 10 chapters of the Book of Hebrews are a comparison between the Old and New Covenants
- ◆ ***Hebrews 3:16-19 For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses? ¹⁷Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? ¹⁸And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? ¹⁹So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.***
- ◆ The "rest" in this verse is referring to entry into the Promised Land and how the unbelief (or a lack of faith in believing God would overpower the giants in the land) prevented the rebellious Israelites from entering the Promised Land.
- ◆ But then the author of Hebrews goes on to warn the Jews they too could miss out on entering the spiritual rest offered to them for the same lack of faith.
- ◆ ***Hebrews 4:1-11 Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it.***
- ◆ "Now a much better rest is being offered to us, so don't make the same mistake our forefathers made by rejecting the one who is offering us spiritual rest."
- ◆ ***V.2 For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.3 For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said: "So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest,' "although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. 4 For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: "And God rested on the seventh day from all His works";5 and again in this place: "They shall not enter My rest." 6 Since therefore it remains that some must enter it, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience, 7 again He designates a certain day, saying in David, "Today," after such a long time, as it has been said: "Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts." 8 For if Joshua had given them rest, (Joshua had the Sabbath day, so it can't be talking about the day) then He would not afterward have spoken of another day.9 There remains therefore a rest for the people of God.10 For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His. 11 Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.***
- ◆ After man sinned, God went back to work in order to restore the relationship that sin had broken.
- ◆ True spiritual rest was re-established by the saving work of Jesus on our behalf.
- ◆ Notice what the author of Hebrews says about what Jesus did after he had completed his saving work.
- ◆ ***Hebrews 10:11-14 And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.12 But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God,***
- ◆ The work of the Mosaic priesthood was never finished, that is why they remain "standing." In contrast, after Jesus' once for all sacrifice, he was able to "sit down" and "rest."
- ◆ ***V.13 from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool.14 For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.***
- ◆ And what were Jesus' last words on the cross?
- ◆ ***John 19:30 "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.***
- ◆ So to summarize. The Sabbath command pointed backwards to the time when God and mankind enjoyed spiritual rest before sin entered. But it also pointed forwards to the time in the future when that relationship would be restored by the saving work of Jesus Christ, the Lord of true spiritual rest

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We have looked at the words, “work” and “rested,” but what about the word “remember”?

- ◆ Under the Mosaic Covenant the Israelites were told to “remember” the Sabbath day.
- ◆ But now as part of the New Covenant, what are we told to “remember”?
- ◆ ***1 Corinthians 11:23-25 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread;24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, “Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.”25 In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.”***
- ◆ It is no mere coincidence that this word “remembrance” is used in this context.
- ◆ It is a reminder for Christians to remember the one the sign pointed to, Jesus Christ who gives us “spiritual rest.”

And what does Jesus Christ himself say about the “rest” he offers us.

- ◆ ***Matthew 11:28-30 “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.29 “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.30 “For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”***
- ◆ God never intended us to focus on the signs of the various covenants, but rather what they represented.
- ◆ He wants us to focus on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and how He has given us “spiritual rest” by what He suffered on our behalf.
- ◆ And if we do, there is a spiritual blessing recorded in the book of Hebrews.
- ◆ ***Hebrews 10:15 But the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us; for after He had said before, 16 “This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them,”17 then He adds, “Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.”***
- ◆ If you think steak knives are a good bargain, check this one out.
- ◆ God says ***“If you remember me, (1 Corinthians 11:24-25) I will not remember your sins” (Hebrews 10:17)***
- ◆ Now that is a pretty good bargain.

What was the purpose of the Sabbath in the Mosaic Covenant?

- ◆ Exodus 31 tells us it was a sign.
- ◆ So we have to look at the Sabbath day as a sign in that it pointed both backwards and forwards
- ◆ ***Exodus 31:17 It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever; for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed.’ ”***
- ◆ So it pointed backwards in the sense that on the Sabbath the Israelites were commanded to imitate the way Adam and Eve lived on that seventh day.
- ◆ Adam and Eve enjoyed intimate spiritual rest with God in Eden – there was no sin, no disharmony, and therefore no need to work.
- ◆ The Sabbath was to remind the Israelites of “the spiritual rest” mankind enjoyed with God in Eden before “sin” entered the equation.

But it also looks forward.

- ◆ ***Exodus 31:13 ...for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the Lord who sanctifies you.***
- ◆ Who ultimately sanctifies us? Jesus Christ.
- ◆ So the Sabbath day also pointed forward to the one who would ultimately sanctify us or give us true spiritual rest through His saving work.