

The Sabbath and the Agreement



SABBATH—MAY 22

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Genesis 2:2, 3; Exodus 20:11; Exodus 16:23; Exodus 31:12–17.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘The Israelites must remember the Sabbath and make it a special day. They must continue to do this forever. It is an agreement between them and me that will continue forever’ ” (Exodus 31:16, ERV).



The Sabbath helps us to remember the things that are the most important to us as Seventh-day Adventists.

THE SEVENTH-DAY SABBATH helps us remember who we are as Seventh-day Adventists. The Sabbath also helps us remember everything God promises us we can be. We need the Sabbath. We are so busy during the week. We are busy spending money and making money. We go here. We go there. We go everywhere! Then the Sabbath comes and connects us again to all our beliefs. The Sabbath helps us to remember the things that are the most important to us as Seventh-day Adventists. God made the Sabbath. God made us, too. The Sabbath helps us remember these important Bible truths.

The Sabbath never fails to come at the end of each week. The Sabbath fills every part of our lives. It helps us remember that every part of our lives belongs to God. God put us here on this earth. He is the One who made the earth and the skies in the beginning. This Bible truth is the reason for all our Christian beliefs. The Sabbath is the sign, or proof, that God made us.

This week we will study this sign, the Sabbath. We will learn about the important part the Sabbath has in the Sinai agreement.

WHEN THE SABBATH WAS MADE (Genesis 2:2, 3)

Many Christians think that God made the Sabbath only for the Jews. So, they name it the “old Jewish Sabbath.” But the Bible shows us that the Sabbath was around long before there were any Jewish people. God made the Sabbath when He made the skies and the earth in six days.

Look up Genesis 2:2, 3 and Exodus 20:11. These verses show us that God made the Sabbath. When does He do that?

Do you see that Genesis 2:2, 3 does not say that the “seventh day” is the same as the Sabbath? (The first time the Bible says the seventh day is the Sabbath is Exodus 16:26, 29.) Now look at Genesis 2:2, NLV: “And He rested on the seventh day from all His work.” The word “rested” is “**shabat**” in the Hebrew language. “**Shabat**” has almost the same meaning as the Hebrew word for Sabbath, which is “**shabbat**.” Compare the two Hebrew words: “**shabat** [rested]” and “**shabbat** [Sabbath].” Do you see how “**shabat**” and “**shabbat**” are spelled almost the same? This shows us the seventh day in Genesis 2:2 really is the Sabbath.

“The word ‘sabbath’ is not written in Genesis 2:2, 3. But we can be sure that Moses was talking about the Sabbath when he wrote that God blessed and made the seventh day holy.”—G. F. Waterman, *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975), volume 5, page 183, adapted. So, we can see that Genesis 2:2, 3 teaches us that God made the Sabbath. God also gave the Sabbath to all humans as a blessing.

Read Mark 2:27. Jesus says that the Sabbath was made for all humans and not only the Jews.

Why does God Himself rest on the seventh day? Does God really need to rest? If no, what other reason do you think God must have for resting on the Sabbath?

Some Bible thinkers say God needed to rest after He made the earth in six days. But the real reason God rests is to give us an example of what we should do. Humans also must work for six days. Then we must rest on the seventh-day Sabbath. Bible expert Karl Barth says God rested on the seventh day to show humans that rest is part of His agreement with humans. The Sabbath is an invitation from God. On that day, God invites humans to rest with Him.



God invites humans to rest with Him.

FOOD FROM HEAVEN AND THE SABBATH (Exodus 16:23)

Read Exodus 16. This chapter tells the story about the manna. Manna is the special food from heaven that God sent His people when they lived in the desert for 40 years. Remember, the story of the manna in Exodus 16 happens before Sinai. Let us see what we can learn from this story:

1. The Israelites can use only a limited amount of manna each day. But on the 6th day, they must collect a double amount.
2. God does not give any manna on the Sabbath.
3. God works a miracle on Friday to keep the extra manna from spoiling on the Sabbath. But manna left over from any other day will spoil the next day.



The Israelites can use only a limited amount of manna each day. But on the 6th day, they must collect a double amount.

Read Exodus 16:23–28. How does this story show that the Sabbath is holy long before God gives Israel the law at Sinai?

“God shows His people that the 7th day is the Sabbath. God gives the Sabbath to the Israelites as a blessing. The people rest on the 7th day because God tells them to. All this information helps us remember Genesis 1 and 2 when God first made the Sabbath. At that time, God separated the Sabbath as a special day of rest and blessing for all humans.”—G. F. Waterman, *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, volume 5, page 184, adapted.

At first, you may not see everything Exodus 16 teaches about the Sabbath. Answering these questions will help:

1. Which day is the day we prepare for Sabbath?
2. Which day of the week is the Sabbath?
3. Where does the Sabbath come from?
4. What experience should we have on the Sabbath day?
5. Is the Sabbath a day when we do not eat any food?
6. Is the Sabbath a test of our loyalty to God?

How does your understanding about the Sabbath match what we learned today in Exodus 16?

THE SABBATH: THE SIGN OF THE AGREEMENT (Exodus 31:16, 17)

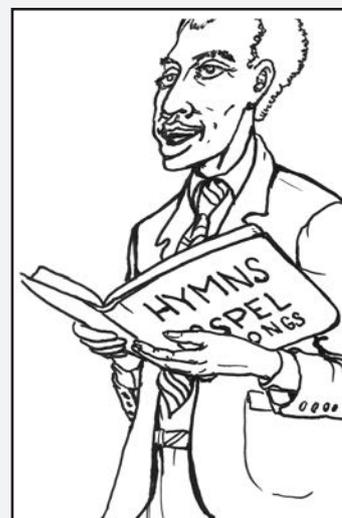
“ ‘ “The Israelites must remember the Sabbath and make it a special day. They must continue to do this forever. It is an agreement between them and me that will continue forever. The Sabbath will be a sign [mark] between me and the Israelites forever.” ’ (The LORD worked six days and made the sky and the earth, and on the seventh day he rested and relaxed)” (Exodus 31:16, 17, ERV).

The Bible shows us four times that the Sabbath is a “sign” for important Bible truth (Exodus 31:13, 17; Ezekiel 20:12, 20). A sign is not the same thing as a word picture. Word pictures help us remember something else that is almost the same as the word picture itself. An example of a word picture is a fist. A fist shows us “might” or “strength.” But a sign is a mark or object that helps us remember a special message. In the Bible, the Sabbath is a sign that shows us a special message about the agreement God makes with His people. Nothing in the sign really tells us about the agreement. So, why does the Bible say that the Sabbath is a sign (Exodus 31:13) of the agreement with God? Because God says so.

Why does the Lord make the Sabbath a sign of His agreement? We know that an important part of the agreement is the Bible truth that our good behavior cannot save us. What is it about the Sabbath itself that shows us the plan of God to save us?

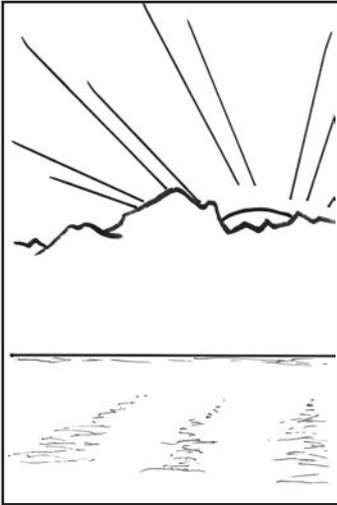
For many hundreds of years, the Jews believed that the Sabbath showed the plan of God to save humans by a Savior. The Jews felt that the Sabbath showed the future time when the Savior will come to this earth to make us free from sin. The Bible teaches that the Sabbath shows us two important Bible truths: the saving plan of God and His agreement (read Deuteronomy 5:13–15). So, the Sabbath shows us the mercy and forgiveness of God. The Sabbath does not show us that we are saved by our own good behavior.

What does it mean to rest on the Sabbath? How do you rest on the Sabbath? What do you do different on this day that makes the Sabbath a “sign”? How does your life show other people that the Sabbath really is a special day for you?



How does your life show other people the Sabbath really is a special day for you?

THE SABBATH: A SIGN THAT GOD MAKES US HOLY (Exodus 31:13)



“God gave the Sabbath to humans to help them remember that He is the One who made the earth and the sky.”

“He said, ‘Tell the people of Israel, “You must always keep my Sabbath days. That will be the sign of the covenant [agreement] I have made between me and you for all time to come. Then you will know that I am the LORD. I am the one who makes you holy” ’ ’ (Exodus 31:13, NlrV).

Exodus 31:12–17 comes after the Lord gives Moses the plan for building Him a house of worship in the desert (read Exodus 25:1 to Exodus 31:11).

In Exodus 31:12–17, the Bible tells us for the first time that the Sabbath is a sign between God and His people. That is, the Sabbath is a mark that shows everyone on earth that the Israelites are the special people of God. Exodus 31:12, 13 teaches us two new and important ideas:

1. The Sabbath shows us what it means to know God.
2. The Sabbath shows us that God makes us holy.

What does it mean to know God? The Hebrews taught that knowledge included many parts of the human experience: knowing, doing, and feeling. So, when a Hebrew person “knew” something, he or she knew more than information. This was very true when the Hebrews talked about knowing a person. For the Hebrews, “knowing” someone meant having a close friendship with that person. So, when the Bible says that someone “knew the LORD,” the Bible means that this person was personal friends with God and served Him (1 Chronicles 28:9). This person respected and honored God, too (Isaiah 11:2). He or she trusted the Lord (Psalm 9:10).

Look up each of the verses in the paragraph above. How do they help us understand the idea of knowing the Lord?

The Sabbath also shows us that God makes us holy (compare Leviticus 20:8 with Deuteronomy 7:6). God is the only One who can save us or make us holy. “ ‘ “Obey my rules. Follow them. I am the LORD. I make you holy” ’ ’ (Leviticus 20:8, NlrV). So, we can see the Sabbath is a sign or mark that shows us that God is the One who makes us holy. “God gave the Sabbath to humans to help them remember that He is the One who made the earth and the sky. The Sabbath also is a sign that shows us that God makes us holy.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 6, page 350, adapted.

REMEMBERING THE SABBATH (Exodus 20:8)

The Sabbath is a sign or mark that helps us remember important Bible truth. The word “remember” shows us all the things God wants us to think about. God wants us to remember His wonderful work for us in the past, now, and in the future. First, we must remember what God did in the past. The Sabbath helps us remember that God made the earth and the sky in six days. At the end of this week, God rested on the Sabbath. God made the Sabbath a special day of rest each week. The Sabbath is special time we spend together with God.

Second, we must remember everything God does for us now. We show God that we remember Him by keeping the Sabbath holy (read Deuteronomy 5:12).

Finally, we must remember what God will do for us in the future. The person who keeps the Sabbath holy now will have a beautiful future with the Lord of the Sabbath. This promise of future happiness helps us stay loyal to the Lord now. That is why it is important to remember that the agreement with God is a friendship with Him, too. The Sabbath can help make our friendship with God stronger.

So, we must remember God and everything He made. Then we also will remember the loving things God does to save us. (Read Deuteronomy 5:14. In this verse, the Sabbath is a sign or mark of freedom from slavery. God frees Israel from slavery in Egypt. Egypt also is a word picture for our slavery to sin. So, the Sabbath also shows us that God saves us fully from sin.) The Bible truths about God as the One who made us and the One who saves us are shown together in the Sabbath.

“When we keep the Sabbath, we show other people that we belong to God. The Bible announces that the Sabbath is a mark that shows everyone the people of God. These people obey the law of God. . . . The people who obey the law of God will be in agreement with Him during the worldwide war between good and evil. This war started in heaven between Satan and God.”—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 2, page 160, adapted. How does the Sabbath show more than any other commandment who the people are who obey the law of God?



The Sabbath can help make our friendship with God stronger.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, Comments, pages 968–970, in *The SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 7; “The Observance of the Sabbath,” pages 349–351, in *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 6; “From the Red Sea to Sinai,” pages 295–297, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.



“The people who want to have the seal, or mark, of God put in their minds must keep the Sabbath holy.”

The Ten Commandments show us fully the plan of God for humans. These laws show us how we must love God and humans. The commandment at the center of the Ten Commandments is the Sabbath. The Sabbath shows us two important parts: (1) God is Lord of the Sabbath. The Sabbath also shows us (2) everything that God controls and what He owns: all heaven and earth. These two parts of the Sabbath commandment also are part of seals in important peace agreements between kings in Bible times. These seals are most often put in the middle of these peace agreements. The seals in these agreements show us two things: (1) the name of a god worshiped by one of the kings and (2) the area that the god owns and controls. (This land is often a country or other limited area.)

“The Spirit makes humans holy. Holy people will have the seal, or mark, of God. Their holy lives will show that they are different from the people who keep the false day of rest.

“The test will come. Then people will understand what the mark of the beast is. The mark of the beast is keeping Sunday.

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“God chose the 7th day as His Sabbath. . . . The 7th day Sabbath will show everyone who is loyal to God and who is not loyal to God. The people who want to have the seal, or mark, of God put in their minds must keep the Sabbath holy. This is the 4th commandment.”—Ellen G. White Comments, in *The SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 7, pages 980, 981, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Read Leviticus 19:30. Do you see how this verse makes a connection between the temple of God and the Sabbath? Explain the connection.
- ② Ask yourself this question: Has Sabbath keeping made my friendship and spiritual life with the Lord stronger? If not, what changes can you make?

Summary: The Sabbath helps us remember that God made the earth in six days. It also helps us to look forward to the future when God will make everything new.