

THE SABBATH

From Shadow to Saviour

Floyd Nolen Jones, Th.D., Ph.D.

Excerpt from Apples of Gold

“A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver.” Proverbs 25:11

13 Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a **sign** between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you. 14 Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it **shall surely be put to death**: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. 15 Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the sabbath of **rest**, holy to the LORD: whosoever doeth any work in the sabbath day, he **shall surely be put to death**. 16 Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. 17 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**. (Exodus 31:13-17)

The Sabbath "rest" was to be a day of commemoration and celebration whereupon the children of Israel were to reflect on God and His completed creation *ex nihilo* (cp. Mk. 2:27). God "rested" because He was finished with the creation and thereby ceased to exert His creative powers – not because He was tired. He also so did as a pattern for us to follow. In our fallen state, we still need one day of rest in seven for good health's sake – as well as to reflect.

From the verses above, it should be obvious that if we are going to "keep" the Sabbath then we must put to death all who do not rest on that day (rest & refresh are called for, not "worship"). Therefore, if we are not killing those not resting on the 7th day, we are not "keeping" the Sabbath. To keep it, all the instructions must be followed – not pick and choose which part of the instructions we wish.

12 Keep the sabbath day to sanctify it, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee. 13 Six days thou shalt labour, and do all thy work: 14 But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt **not do any work**, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; that thy manservant and thy maidservant may **rest** as well as thou. 15 And **remember** that thou wast a servant in the land of **Egypt**, and that the LORD thy **God brought thee out** thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: **therefore** the LORD thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day. (Deut. 2-15)

Here God adds that Israel was to also keep the Sabbath not only as a reminder of the Creation, but in commemoration and celebration of their great deliverance from Egypt by God's "mighty hand". That day was to remind Israel that it was God who had chosen, set them aside for His special purposes to serve Him, and set them free from bondage. Again, *rest* from work is stressed – not gathering together for worship.

12 Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a **sign** between me and them (the nation Israel), that they might **know** that I am the LORD that sanctify them. (Ezekiel 20:12)

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Nearly a thousand years later, Ezekiel reminded the nation of Israel that the Sabbath was a special sign between Himself and them as a reminder of their past setting aside.

While the apostles were still alive, the early church met on the first day of the week – *not* the Sabbath (Heb. = the 7th), in honor of the Resurrection (Acts 20:7; I Cor. 16:2; cp. Mk. 16:9; Joh. 20:19; Rev. 1:10). Were they wrong, or did they know something? Also, note that by the time John wrote the book of Revelation, the first day of the week was referred to as "the Lords day".

Moreover, we observe that when the commandments are addressed in the New Testament, the Sabbath is *never* mentioned (Mat. 22:39; Lk 18:23; Mk. 10:19; Acts 15:20, 28-29; Rom. 13:9). Especially note vs. 28 of Acts 15:

28 For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these **necessary** things; 29 That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well. (Acts 15:28-29)

Finally, we observe the following commandment from the Word of the Living God:

16 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the **sabbath** days: 17 Which are **a shadow** of things to come; but the body is of Christ. (Colossians 2:16-17)

And:

5 One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. 6 He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks. (Romans 14:5-6)

Amen. Thus from Colossians 2:16-17 we see that the Sabbath was part of the shadow God gave to point us to Christ Jesus. As Galatians 3:24-25 puts it:

Wherefore **the law** was our **schoolmaster** to bring us **unto Christ**, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, **we are no longer under a schoolmaster**).

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Thus when Jesus came, school was over. That part of the law that had served as a teaching tool to lead us to Christ had served its God intended purpose.¹ From this and all the above, we see it is no longer required that we must fully "keep the Sabbath" (and still have to slay all Sabbath breakers).

Finally, Hebrews 10:1 refers to the Law as "a shadow of good things to come". Now a shadow from the doorway could call my attention to the fact that my wife was about to enter the room. From this shadow, I would learn who was coming, from whence, and how many were coming. But once my wife enters the room, I do not run over, embrace the shadow and say: "O wonderful shadow". Rather, I take hold of the reality that caused the shadow and embrace her.

Now the shadow was good, and it did its job – it served its purpose well. The shadow pointed the way to the source of the reality that had caused it, but once reality comes we no longer embrace the shadow even though the information it presented was true and good. Let us rejoice in the shadow and move on to Christ Jesus – the reality.

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¹ The Sabbath is a memorial – a reminder. It is a day of rest to commemorate (reflect on) God's completed act of Creation *ex nihilo* (out of nothing) in 6 literal days.

Sunday differs from the Sabbath in that it commemorates God's victory over death by the Resurrection of Christ Jesus (not merely "coming back to life"). He is the "Firstfruits" of the Resurrection (I Cor.15:20, 23); hence, we will also be resurrected.
