

JESUS IN THE FEASTS OF ISRAEL WEEK 2 – THE SABBATH

Lev. 23:1-3

It's crucial for us in our study of the Bible to identify the readership, the recipients of a specific verse, passage, book of the Bible. To whom is God speaking in Lev. 23 – to the children of Israel through Moses.

Moving forward in our study, you need to know. . .

- That the Bible teaches one way of salvation – from Genesis through Revelation:
 - By grace through faith in God's revealed message – and that revealed message always points to the Messiah Jesus. Hab. 2:4 - *the just shall live by faith.*
 - While the law is holy and righteous – reflecting Who God is – the law could NEVER save
 - Rom. 8:2-3 - *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. ³ For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh,*
 - Gal. 2:16 - *knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.*

OT people were saved by grace through FAITH in God's revealed message. That message always pointed to the Messiah Jesus.

Gen. 15:6 – Abraham put his trust in God and in God's promises which included the promise of a son, Isaac. Isaac was the son of promise (Gen. 21:12; Rom. 9:7); through Isaac's seed the Messiah would come.

In Hebrews 11 we read of many OT people who came to faith. Hebrews 11 has been labeled “the hall of FAITH.”

The children of Israel looked forward to what God had promised. Therefore, we read in Hebrews 11:13-16 - *These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, ¹⁴ embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. ¹⁴ For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. ¹⁵ And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶ But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.* These verses span the feasts: Passover to Tabernacles.

For Jewish and Gentile believers in Jesus today, how do we understand the law?

- The law is Scripture (II Tim. 3:16).
- The law is holy and restores the soul because it reflects Who God is.
- The law is a teaching tool to show God's standard of righteousness as well as man's sinfulness and need of a substitutionary atonement (sacrifice) and

- ultimately redemption through the perfect sacrifice – Jesus, the perfect Passover Lamb.
- The believer in Jesus is not under the authority of the Mosaic Law.
 - Gal. 3:19 – the law was given because of transgression/sin (to give man a standard of righteousness) UNTIL the Seed (Jesus) should come Who would FULFILL the law. Jesus paid the penalty that man owed for not being able to keep the law.
 - Gal. 3:24 - *Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.*
 - Rom. 7:1-6 – we have been delivered from the law to serve another – Jesus.
 - Rom. 10:4 - *For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.*

As believers in Jesus, we have freedom in Christ to observe or not observe the feasts – to keep or not to keep the law. Please note two dangers in a believer keeping the law: thinking that by keeping the law you're adding to your salvation/sanctification; imposing the observation/celebration of the law/feasts on others.

We need to know that believers, Jewish and Gentile believers in Jesus, live under a higher law - the law of Christ:

Rom. 8:2 - *For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.*

Gal. 6:2 - *Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*

It is only through the power of the Holy Spirit that we can live under the law of Christ. Jesus told the Jewish masses *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* (Matt. 11:28-30).

Lev. 23 – God's appointment schedule begins with the Sabbath! Why? The Sabbath is mentioned as a holy convocation (as are specific feast days). Some have labeled the Sabbath a weekly feast. It is celebrated once a week – 52 times each year.

Some say that the Sabbath was given to the Jewish people and doesn't apply to the Church. It was part of the Law. We're now under grace. John1:17 - *For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.* The law given by Moses was not a display of God's grace but rather a display of God's demand for holiness. God designed the law as a means to demonstrate the unrighteousness of man in order to show the need of a Savior/Redeemer, Jesus the Messiah.

Today we are going to look at the Sabbath. . .

- in relation to God’s triumphant rest.
- in relation to instructions given by God to the Jewish people in the wilderness before the law was given.
- in relation to Israel’s history.
- in relation to it as the sign of the Mosaic Covenant.
- in relation to creation and redemption.
- in relation to resting in Jesus.
- In relation to the future.

Regarding God’s triumphant rest:

Gen. 2:2-3 - *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.* God sanctified the seventh day; the seventh day was set apart. The seventh day is called – “the seventh day”; it’s not labeled as the Sabbath. In Gen. 2 we read of the “rest” of God on a specific day which would establish a precedent on which future Sabbath teachings would be based. The work of creation had been completed on the sixth day. On the seventh day God rested because He finished the work of creation. He then blessed and sanctified this day. NOTE: no command is made in this text. The seventh day was not even called the Sabbath. But, the seventh day is differentiated and set apart/sanctified from the other six days. It’s assigned special significance and was blessed by God Almighty.

There is no record of Sabbath observance between Adam and Moses. Job lived 500 years or more before Moses. His experience tells us of the spiritual life of the pre-Mosaic Law saint (one who placed their trust in God through faith) who, having no written Scriptures (Moses, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, wrote the first five books of the Bible – Genesis through Deuteronomy), so desired to know his relationship/obligation to God. Job and his friends refer to creation, the flood, many details of human obligation to God; however, not once do they mention the Sabbath.

Again, from Genesis 2:2-3 we observe that GOD ALONE rested!

We need to know that this “seventh day” of the week, which eventually became known as the Sabbath – NEVER changed from being the “seventh day” of the week. The Sabbath is NOT now Sunday. The Sabbath remains as the “seventh day” of the week. What is the “seventh day” of the week? SATURDAY!

Regarding instructions given by God to the Jewish people in the wilderness before the law was given:

Ex. 16:23-26 - The word “Sabbath” is mentioned for the first time in Scripture – as a Sabbath rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD. God was speaking to the Jewish people regarding their not gathering manna in the wilderness on the seventh day. They were to cease from labor. This was before the law was given in Ex. 20.

Regarding Israel's history:

Later, this 7th day was incorporated into the law as the people were reminded to keep it holy. They were reminded – “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy” – so it already was in existence. It was already blessed by God. The children of Israel were told to keep it sanctified/holy.

Ex. 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.

Let's consider what we've read from Genesis and Exodus. The Sabbath is observed in recognition of what God has done. Our focus is on God. It began with God's triumphant rest. Then we observe that God set aside this day, in the Exodus 16 passage, for man to cease from labor – to rest – and it is called “Sabbath” for the first time in Scripture. Sabbath – from the Hebrew word “Shabbat” – “to rest; to cease from labor”. Consider - the Jewish people had been slaves in Egypt. Slaves are not given a day of rest. Here was a day of rest for the children of Israel who had been taken out of bondage in Egypt. A day of rest – holy to the Lord.

In Isa. 58:13-14 we see that the Sabbath honors God. God, through Isaiah, told the Jewish people. . . if you call the Sabbath a delight – this holy day of the Lord – if you embraced it as honorable by honoring God, then you would delight yourself in the Lord . . . and God will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father!

Jewish people at this time were involved in external/outward rituals with little to no inner motivation – no right heart attitude. God was calling them back to honor Him through the Sabbath.

Jesus observed the Sabbath (Luke 4:16. . .). He spoke out against the perversion of the Sabbath by the Jewish leaders who laid out a myriad of tasks that man could not do on the Sabbath. Jesus healed on the Sabbath. He placed human need above external ceremonial observance of the Sabbath.

Regarding the Sabbath as the sign of the Mosaic Covenant:

Exodus 31:13-14 - Speak also to the children of Israel, saying: 'Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you.' ¹⁴ You shall keep the Sabbath, therefore, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people.

Gen. 2:2-3 – God sanctified, set apart, the seventh day and blessed it – for His purposes – signifying His triumphant rest.

Ex. 31 – God sanctified Israel – He set them apart for His purposes.

Regarding creation and redemption:

The weekly Sabbath points to the theme and goal of God's redemption program. The Feasts outline God's plan of redemption. How appropriate to place the Sabbath at the beginning of Lev. 23 in the discussion re: the feasts. And, what is the goal of God's redemption program? The root word for Shabbat in the Hebrew is yashav which means to sit down, to dwell, to abide in. The word denotes resting in an object – GOD. That is the goal of Sabbath! When God finished creating the world, He then created rest.

In Deut. 5:15 - *And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.*

Passover, deliverance from slavery in Egypt, a finished work, is fulfilled in Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. His crucifixion which means our REDEMPTION! The Sabbath and Passover are connected. The Sabbath is wrapped up in God's rest at creation and redemption. Redemption is accomplished in the death of Jesus. In John 19:30 we read that on the cross, Jesus proclaimed, "It is finished"! John 17:4 – in Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, just hours before His agony and death on the cross, He prayed to the Father - *I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.*

CREATION and REDEMPTION – finished works!

Regarding resting in Jesus:

For those who have come to faith in Jesus, our sins have been removed, redeemed, taken away – and He provides for us rest.

Heb. 4:10 - *For he who has entered His (God's) rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His.* When do we cease from our works? When we come to faith in Jesus. The book of Hebrews tells us that Jesus is our Sabbath rest – not for one day a week – but 24/7 – 365 days a year – FOREVER!

Heb. 4:8 - *For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day.*

Heb. 4:10 - *For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His.*

The Sabbath is fulfilled in Jesus! The Sabbath is the only one of the 10 commandments that Jesus didn't mention during His public ministry!

Jesus created (Col. 1:16 - For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth,)

Jesus redeemed – by His precious blood (I Pet. 1:18-19)

And, both are finished works – and we can rest in them! We rest in Him Who rested from His works!

Heb. 4:3 - . . . *the works were finished from the foundation of the world.*

They are both finished in Jesus

The Sabbath foreshadows Jesus

The message of the Sabbath is REST and it is fulfilled in Jesus.

Jesus proclaimed, *Come unto Me all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* (Matt. 11:28).

In the book of Joshua. . . .

The Sabbath rest is Jesus.

Col. 2:16 – don't let anyone judge you re: a festival, new moon, or Sabbath. These are but shadows of things to come. The substance is Jesus. Our rest in Him should be 24/7.

Heb. 4:11 – “Let us therefore be diligent (labor in earnest; making haste) to enter that rest.” REST entails a diligent faith – faith is trusting in, relying on Jesus and His finished work for us. II Peter 1:1-8.

Regarding the future:

The Sabbath will continue into the new heavens and the new earth (Isa. 66:22-23).

What is God's purpose for the Sabbath? REST! This is a timeless principle based on Who God is. It is a timeless truth.

QUESTIONS:

Have your thoughts about the Sabbath been changed through the lesson today?

What questions do you have about the Sabbath?

How does what Scripture teaches about the Sabbath impact you?

From what you learned today, how can you love, trust, and worship God?

SUGGESTED HOMEWORK:

Reread the handout.

Journal your thoughts and questions about the Sabbath.

Share what you've learned with someone while verbalizing what you now believe.