

Lesson 5: Do We Keep the Sabbath in the Church Age?

What are God's "everlasting commandments" for Sabbath-keeping?

- 1) How do you keep it?
- 2) When do you keep it?
- 3) Why do you keep it?

We have already established that we have had a spiritual *sabbath*-ing when we entered into the day of grace through Christ's death on the cross. The questions for us are:

- 1) Should we practice a *physical* version of it as well in the Church Age? (Is it even possible in our modern culture?)
- 2) Should we feel guilty if we can't?

Question: If we *were* to practice a physical Sabbath day for the purpose of keeping alive the picture of Christ and the *shabbath*-ing events to come, what might that practice look like? (For inspiration: Psalms 46 and 92.)

Email me with your thoughts: christyvoelkel@comcast.net

Sabbath Practice

Card#	Sabbath Day requirement	Wilderness economy	Kingdom economy	Exile economy	Judaizer practice
1	Keep the day holy (set apart)				
1-2	No work on the seventh day				
2	You shall not kindle a fire on that day				
2	Priests change the showbread in the Tabernacle/Temple				
2	Priests offer offerings for the Sabbath day				
3	Penalty of death for not keeping it				
Sabbaths associated with feasts					
4	Feast of Unleavened Bread —no laborious work, remove yeast from your houses				
5	Feast of Weeks (wheat harvest) —no laborious work				
5	Feast of Trumpets —no laborious work				
6	Day of Atonement —no work at all, your works cannot be part of your atonement				
6	Feast of Booths —no laborious work				
7	No buying or selling (Nehemiah 13)				
Sabbath Year requirement		Wilderness	Kingdom	Exile	Judaizer
8	No work for the Land. No harvest.				
9	Release from debts				
10	Release of servants				
Jubilee Year requirement		Wilderness	Kingdom	Exile	Judaizer
11	Consecrate the fiftieth year				
11	No work for the Land for the year				
11	Release of slaves/Restoration to their ancestral land				
11	Restoration of families				

Script: Lesson 5, the Shadow of Things to Come

Good morning and welcome back to our study of **the Shadow of Things to Come**.

Today we are in **Lesson 5** and we are going to talk about whether or not we keep the Sabbath in the Church Age.

The Judaizers have come into the Colossian church with this set of rules that they say believers must keep in order to maintain their relationship with God or else they will be “cut off.” Keeping the Sabbath is a big rule. You must keep the Sabbath day on Saturday, or else you are violating God’s commandment and will lose your salvation. That is what they told me. I imagine it is what they told the Colossians as well. The message hasn’t changed.

If we are going to answer the question over whether or not we should keep the Sabbath, the first we need to know is what is even involved with keeping the Sabbath. I have put these questions on your handout.

- 1) How do you practice it?
- 2) When do you practice it?
- 3) Why do you practice it?

As we go through the verse cards, you can fill those in.

We have already established that we, as believers, have had a spiritual *sabbath*-ing when we entered into the day of grace through Christ’s death on the cross. Our old sin nature has lost its grip on us, and we have become a new creation. So the next questions are:

- 1) Should we practice a *physical* version of the Sabbath as well? (Is it even possible in a culture that does not acknowledge God’s laws?)
- 2) Should we feel guilty if we can’t keep a Sabbath?
Feeling guilty implies that you’ve sinned somehow but is it really a sin as far as God is concerned or is it just a false sense of guilt that the Judaizers have caused? We need to sort that out.

I have given you a second handout titled **“Sabbath Practice.”** On this handout, I have listed the points of Law that involve the practice of the Sabbath (I have numbered them according to the verse cards). Next to the requirements, I have put some columns titled Wilderness Economy, Kingdom Economy, and Exile Economy. Remember, the way of relating to God changes with the *shabbath*-ing of these economies. There are time when these laws can be kept and times when they can’t because conditions have changed. Once we go through the cards, we will check off what can or cannot be kept in the different economy columns.

To start, let’s go through cards 1-7 that deal just with the Sabbath day.

Keeping the “Everlasting Commandments”

[Card 1] The Fourth Commandment

Exodus 20:8-11 NASB

*“Remember the sabbath **[Shabbath]** day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested **[nuakh]** on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath **[Shabbath]** day and made it holy.*

Exodus 31:16 NASB

“So the sons of Israel shall observe the sabbath, to celebrate the sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant.”

So, here we have an answer for “**how**” to keep the Sabbath. One day a week, you change how life is lived. Specifically, you cease your labor. We also have a “**why**”—as a memorial of something God did. The LORD made heaven and earth and then He sat down. You work the earth, and then you sit down. The LORD set aside the day, therefore you set aside the day. This is a perpetual covenant. You model God.

[Card 2] Sabbath Day Rules

These describe “**how**” to keep the Sabbath.

Exodus 34:21 NASB (also Lev 23:3)

*“You shall work six days, but on the seventh day you shall rest **[shabbath]**; even during plowing time and harvest you shall rest **[shabbath]**.”*

Exodus 35:3 NASB

*“You shall not kindle a fire in any of your dwellings on the sabbath day **[Shabbath]**.”*

Q: Why did Israel kindle a fire in the Wilderness?

Q: Do we need to kindle a fire in modern day for these things?

In most cases we don’t. If we need light, we flip on a light switch. If we need a meal, we turn on the oven. If we are cold, we turn up the thermostat unless we don’t have central heating. Then you might need to cut wood. The prohibition isn’t really about not kindling a fire. It’s about not cutting or collecting wood. But there are arguments in orthodox Jewish circles over whether flipping a light switch is forbidden work. Do you know what their solution is? You get a Gentile to do it. Gentiles aren’t under the Law.

Here's the problem with that thinking. Work isn't prohibited just for Israel. It is prohibited for those who serve Israel—including servants, beasts of burden, and sojourners. Everyone, including the Gentile, gets a Sabbath rest. You do not demand to be served so that you yourself can rest. That is hypocritical if you do that.

There are also some priestly requirements . . .

Leviticus 24:8 NASB

“Every sabbath day [the high priest] shall set [the showbread] in order before the LORD continually; it is an everlasting covenant for the sons of Israel.”

An everlasting covenant? Really? So even today when there is no Temple or no priesthood, is this still a requirement? Of course not! It is impossible to keep without a physical Temple or priesthood. So if someone throws the argument at you that you have to keep these Laws because they are “everlasting covenants,” do not succumb to false guilt over that. God has made it impossible to keep these laws for a reason.

Numbers 28:9-10 NASB

Offerings for the Sabbath day.

[Card 3] Penalty for Not Keeping the Sabbath.

Exodus 31:14-15 NASB

*“Therefore you are to observe the sabbath [**Shabbath**], 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. For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there is a sabbath [**Shabbath**] of complete rest [**shabbathon**], holy to the LORD; whoever does any work on the sabbath day shall surely be put to death.”*

I asked one of the Judaizers if they were stone me for not keeping the Sabbath, and he said no, of course not. That would be murder. So much for the everlasting covenant.

[Cards 4-6] Sabbaths in the Feasts. The Sabbath day with its prohibition against work is mentioned at the start of Leviticus 23, which is then followed by these descriptions of the festivals that have a Sabbath-like prohibition against laborious work.

[Card 4] The Feast of Unleavened Bread

Leviticus 23:6-8 NASB

“Then on the fifteenth day of the same month there is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the LORD; for seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall have a holy convocation; you shall not do any laborious work. But for seven days you shall

present an offering by fire to the LORD. On the seventh day is a holy convocation; you shall not do any laborious work.

In addition to this, there is a *shabbath*-ing task—you are to remove all yeast from your houses.

Exodus 12:15-17 *“For seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, but on the first day you shall remove **[shabbath]** dough with yeast from your houses; for whoever eats anything with yeast from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel.”*

You know, I actually tried doing that. The Messianic Jews gave me a list of leavening agents that I needed to look for in my house—and not just in my pantry but in my bathroom and laundry room. Anything with baking soda in it is considered a yeast, and that includes toothpaste and laundry soap. I will tell you, it is impossible to get all the yeast-laden crumbs out of the toaster. And then there was the question over what to do with all the food items that I pulled out of my pantry. Do I throw them away? You must be kidding! I spent good money on those! I used up as many as I could and chalked it up to a lesson in the futility of keeping this law. You cannot get the leavening out of your life.

[Card 5] The Feast of Weeks

Leviticus 23:21 NASB

“On this same day you shall make a proclamation as well; you are to have a holy convocation. You shall do no laborious work.”

This feast marks the beginning of the wheat harvest. A landowner must bring the first fruits of his field to the Temple to present it to the LORD. You can’t celebrate this without a harvest, a priesthood and a Temple.

[Card 5] The Feast of Trumpets requires a *shabbathon*—a Sabbath observance.

Leviticus 23:24 NASB

*“Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, ‘In the seventh month on the first of the month you shall have a rest **[shabbathon]**, a reminder by blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation.’”*

[Card 6] The Day of Atonement requires a strict prohibition against work—a *shabbath shabbathon*, or sabbath of complete rest.

Leviticus 23:32 NASB (cf. Lev. 16:29-31)

*“It is to be a sabbath **[shabbath]** of complete rest **[shabbathon]** to you, and you shall*

*humble your souls; on the ninth of the month at evening, from evening until evening you shall keep your Sabbath **[shabbath]**.”*

[Card 6] The Feast of Booths

This is the harvest celebration which means it can't be kept until Israel enters the Land.

Leviticus 23:39 NASB

*“On exactly the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the crops of the land, you shall celebrate the feast of the LORD for seven days, with a rest **[shabbathon]** on the first day and a rest **[shabbathon]** on the eighth day.”*

So here is the answer to the “**when**” question. Not only do you have to keep the Sabbath every week, but you also have to observe the no-work days associated with the festivals. So, that is another seven days of vacation time you need to take if you are employed.

There is one other Sabbath prohibition that isn't expressly stated in these passages from the Law, but it is implied. It is the prohibition against buying and selling on the Sabbath day. We will fast forward in time to Nehemiah, who has to find a way to enforce this.

[Card 7] No Buying or Selling on the Sabbath

Nehemiah 13:15-16, 19 NASB

*“In those days I saw in Judah some who were treading wine presses on the sabbath **[Shabbath]**, and bringing in sacks of grain and loading them on donkeys, as well as wine, grapes, figs and all kinds of loads, and they brought them into Jerusalem on the sabbath day **[Shabbath]**. So I admonished them on the day they sold food. Also men of Tyre were living there who imported fish and all kinds of merchandise, and sold them to the sons of Judah on the sabbath **[Shabbath]**, even in Jerusalem ... It came about that just as it grew dark at the gates of Jerusalem before the sabbath **[Shabbath]**, I commanded that the doors should be shut and that they should not open them until after the sabbath **[Shabbath]**.”*

The weekly Sabbath observance requires that all work must shut down. Everyone in the community must keep the Sabbath or else no one keeps the Sabbath. This is why Nehemiah shut Jerusalem's gates on the eve of Sabbath, to keep the merchants out, because they can break the system. Unrestrained consumerism was a problem back then, just as it is today, so this is something to which we can relate. Let me give you a personal illustration from my husband's experience on how an unrestrained merchant class sabotages Sabbath-keeping.

My husband (now retired) was a postal carrier for the United States Postal Service (a government agency). Part of the reason he took the job was because it originally allowed him Sundays off so that we could go to church and participate in corporate worship. Midway through his career, the post office leadership signed a contract with a merchant, Amazon, to deliver Amazon purchases, including next-day deliveries. Consequently, any citizen who bought something on Amazon and clicked “next day delivery” obligated the post office (and, subsequently, my husband) to carry that item to them, even on Sundays. The merchant set the conditions for the government contract. The post office agreed to it and, in doing so, altered the terms of my husband’s contract as a carrier so that he was no longer guaranteed Sundays off. My husband had no say in that decision, but he was obligated to perform the service. As a result, his ability to join corporate worship services on any given Sunday was determined by a merchant who needed to satisfy a random citizen-consumer. The unrestrained consumer didn’t care if my husband got a day of worship and rest. They themselves rested comfortably at home while my husband delivered the product to them. The unrestrained merchant (Amazon) didn’t care, either, because the sale meant profit for them. The governmental authorities saw no problem with it. Not even the Christian community had a problem with it. There are a lot of Christians who, even now, take advantage of Amazon’s next-day Sunday delivery and have forced their brethren in the postal service to go to court just to appeal their right to worship and rest on Sundays.

The system broke the moment an unrestrained merchant was allowed to drive the contractual agreements for the community, and the brokenness is perpetuated by every citizen-consumer who gets next-day delivery on Sundays.

We can adjust our spending habits and not purchase things through Amazon that get delivered on Sunday (or Saturday, if that is what you consider the Sabbath). We don’t need to go out to lunch after service or stop by the market. We can keep the Sabbath by curbing our actions on the *buying* side of the dynamic, but what about my husband who was contracted to a merchant on the *selling* side of things? Shops will be open, regardless, and those merchants will schedule workers to work on the Sabbath.

The Sabbath laws only work in a closed community where the influx of goods coming into the community could also be controlled. It isn’t just the marketplace that has to shut down. This includes the airlines and shipping services that are importing the goods. It includes the ports and customs houses that have to be open to receive the goods. It includes the gas stations and service people who work on those vehicles. Imagine all transportation shutting down on Sundays. This is what has to happen.

So, you understand why Nehemiah shut the gates. The Sabbath isn't just about sitting down and resting for a day. It is about ceasing how life is lived for a day, and not just for you but the entire community. Unless everyone curbs consumerism on the Sabbath, then no one keeps the Sabbath.

[Sabbath Practice Handout] Let's pause for a moment and work through our Sabbath Practice handout. We are working through the first part that lists the Sabbath Day requirements.

First of all, we know that in times of exile, God takes away the sabbaths, new moons, and festivals when He puts Israel under Gentile government for discipline. So, we can X out the Exile economy. That leaves the Wilderness and Kingdom economies. All the laws can be kept under the Kingdom economy, so put checkmarks in that column. The difficulty with the Wilderness economy is that some of the laws required having a harvest. So Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Booths gets an X. The rest get check marks.

Set these cards aside and layout out cards 8-11.

Keeping the Sabbath Year and Jubilee

[Card 8] Sabbath Year

Leviticus 25:2-6 NASB

*"... 'When you come into the land which I am going to give you, then the land shall have a Sabbath **[Shabbath]** to the LORD. Six years you shall sow your field, and for six years you shall prune your vineyard and gather in its produce, but during the seventh year the land shall have a Sabbath rest **[Shabbath]**, a Sabbath **[Shabbath]** to the LORD; you shall not sow your field nor prune your vineyard. Your harvest's aftergrowth you shall not reap, and your grapes of untrimmed vines you shall not gather; the land shall have a sabbatical year **[shabbathon]**. All of you shall have the sabbath **[Shabbath]** of the land for food; yourself, and your male and female slaves, and your hired man and your foreign resident, those who live as aliens with you."*

The Land gets a Sabbath. Man works for six days and rests for one. The Land works for six years and rests for one. There are some more "how to" requirements.

Q: What does this mean: "All of you shall have the sabbath of the Land for food"?

In the Sabbath year, everyone was supposed to relinquish their ownership of the Land to God. All the fields became God's field, and God the King served the nation from one big

table, so to speak. He took away individual ownership and made all land community property. Thus, everyone was allowed to eat from everyone's fields, and not just the people but the cattle and wild animals. All of creation is sustained from the LORD's table.

Where the text says not to reap or gather, it doesn't mean that a person couldn't take food from the land. It means they can't harvest food in abundance to process it and save it up. They could walk through the field and pluck some grains of wheat if they were hungry during the day, but they only ate what they needed for the moment. That way they didn't stress the land.

If you are an agricultural community as Israel was and you rely on your harvests to pay vendors and lenders, then you can't pay your bills in a Sabbath year. Thus, vendors and lenders are required to release you from the payment of debts in the Sabbath year.

[Card 9] Release from debts in the Sabbath Year

Deuteronomy 15:1-4 NASB95

"At the end of every seven years you shall grant a remission of debts. This is the manner of remission: every creditor shall release what he has loaned to his neighbor; he shall not exact it of his neighbor and his brother, because the LORD's remission has been proclaimed,"

Pause there . . . Now some commentaries say that this is just a suspension of debt for one year. Others say this is a permanent release from a debt. The text doesn't make that clear. It says you shall grant a remission of debt. Period. The LORD goes on to say in verse 4 . . .

"However, there will be no poor among you, since the LORD will surely bless you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance to possess."

In other words, in a perfectly-run Sabbath economy, the community will prosper and thrive and there will be no debtors or poor people to worry about—but only if they follow the rules. This requires trust that the LORD will keep His promise in supplying the necessary harvests and some restraint from greediness on the landowner's part.

Nothing creates impoverishment in the community like greed. In as much as the LORD gives to His citizens, they too should give to help the unfortunate among their members, but so long as a landowner takes everything from the field and keeping it for his own profit, there is nothing left except meager gleanings for the impoverished in the land. And when landowners control all the product, then they can charge what they like for it, and the collective community can develop an unbalanced degree of need in certain demographics and begin to perpetuate a poverty class. We have seen this happen in our own modern

capitalist economy—which is a Gentile economic model. The release of debts in the Sabbath year was meant to correct the economic imbalance even as the LORD cares for impoverished people Himself. But it doesn't work apart from the LORD's participation.

The release of debts also extends to the release of slaves who are working off a debt.

[Card 10] Release of Servants in the Sabbath Year

Deuteronomy 15:12-15 NASB95

“If your kinsman, a Hebrew man or woman, is sold to you, then he shall serve you six years, but in the seventh year you shall set him free. When you set him free, you shall not send him away empty-handed. You shall furnish him liberally from your flock and from your threshing floor and from your wine vat; you shall give to him as the LORD your God has blessed you. You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you; therefore I command you this today.”

When Israel was released from the Egyptians' bondage, they did not leave empty-handed. God saw to that. Hebrew masters are to treat their servants in like manner when they release them from their bondage. He calls them to remember that event as they practice the Sabbath. This is a “**why**” reason for keeping these laws: to memorialize something and carry that remembrance into future generations.

[Card 11] The Jubilee

Leviticus 25:8-12 NASB

*“You are also to count off seven sabbaths [**shabbath**] of years for yourself, seven times seven years, so that you have the time of the seven sabbaths [**shabbath**] of years, namely, forty-nine years. You shall then sound a ram's horn abroad on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement you shall sound a horn all through your land. You shall thus consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim a release through the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you, and each of you shall return to his own property, and each of you shall return to his family. You shall have the fiftieth year as a jubilee; you shall not sow, nor reap its aftergrowth, nor gather in from its untrimmed vines. For it is a jubilee; it shall be holy to you. You shall eat its crops out of the field.”*

The Jubilee is treated like a Sabbath year, and the year begins on the Day of Atonement. The LORD pairs Israel's physical release from bondage to physical masters with her spiritual release from the bondage of sin through the atonement process. It is a *shabbath*-ing moment. We will talk about this more when we get to the Day of Atonement.

The one difference between the Jubilee and the Sabbatical years was the return of a person's ancestral lands. Servants were not just released from servitude and sent away with a good-will gift. All citizens who had lost the ownership of their ancestral land had their property deeded back to them and were allowed to return to their land and to their family. This is a *shabbath*-ing event. It is an economic reset where everything returns to how it was at the beginning of the kingdom. Restoring families was another big aspect of the Jubilee.

Breaking the Poverty Cycle

The Sabbath economy was God's way of keeping a community's prosperity in balance so that there would not be a poverty class. The Sabbath is His way of breaking the poverty cycle.

But creating the Sabbath economy had to start with every citizen being given a permanent inheritance in the Land from which they could sustain themselves. Every family in Israel was a small business owner of some sort, and God gave them the means to profit and grow from that initial stake based on the merit of their effort. **In that sense, the Sabbath economy was very capitalistic by nature.**

The one big drawback to capitalism is greed. There is no rest with unrestrained consumerism, and a person could end up in unrecoverable debt if calamity befalls them and they lose their stake in the Land. Thus, the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. We have seen this happen in our own country today.

For this reason, God demanded a periodic break from capitalism for a more **socialist approach** to community prosperity. For one year, everyone's land became His land, and everyone in the community were fed off the same table—not for profit but for rest.

The drawback to a socialist economy is that a community isn't sustainable while all the people are in a perpetual state of "rest," taking from the community pool without replenishing it. The only reason it was sustainable under the Sabbath system was because God Himself provided the surplus and covered the deficit. Without Him, the socialist approach doesn't work, as we have also seen in our own world today.

For this reason, God departed from the socialist economy after one year before it broke the bank. Then Israel reverted back to capitalism again. Thus, **the Sabbath-year economic model is a hybrid model—six parts capitalism to one part socialism**—and God orchestrates it in such a way as to prevent a perpetual poverty class from developing in the kingdom community. But it only works in an agrarian community, where a nation's produce is the main source of wealth.

[Sabbath Practice Handout] Let's pause for a moment and work through the second part of our Sabbath Practice handout that lists the Sabbath Year and Jubilee requirements. We are going to check off under what economies the Sabbath day can be kept.

God takes away the sabbaths, new moon, and festivals in the exile economy. When Israel is in exile, she is under the Gentile economies. Put X in the Exile economy column.

The Sabbath Years and Jubilees also cannot be celebrated in the wilderness because they require these things:

- 1) A yearly harvest
- 2) Every family must have a permanent sitting-down place—an allotted inheritance of land that could not be permanently sold away from the family.

Set those cards aside and lay out cards 12-14.

Jesus and the Sabbaths

The Sabbath economy should have governed Israel during the Kingdom Years, but they didn't keep it, and so they went into Exile where they definitely didn't keep it. After Israel returned to the Land, they still could only keep it in a limited sense because a great part of the kingdom land was still under Gentile ownership and government. This is the state of things when Jesus came in His first advent. The Sabbath day was definitely being observed. The Sabbath year and Jubilee, not so much because the land was under Roman rule.

When Jesus came, He kept the Sabbath day according to the Law, but then He began to speak about a coming Sabbath year and the experience of release that He would initiate when He took the throne in His kingdom. He made two signature statements and then performed seven releases. The first signature statement is that He is . . .

[Card 12] Lord of the Sabbath

Mark 2:23-28 NASB

*"And it happened that He was passing through the grainfields on the Sabbath **[Sabbaton]**, and His disciples began to make their way along while picking the heads of grain. The Pharisees were saying to Him, 'Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?' . . . Jesus said to them, 'The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath **[Sabbaton]**.'"*

It is not against the Law to walk through a field and pluck a few heads of grain on the Sabbath. On the Sabbath, everyone eats from the King's table. Jesus says He is LORD of the

Sabbath, in that He is the source of provision on the Sabbath and has a kingly authority over it. (That's what the title "Lord" means in the Greek.) As the Messiah, the Sabbath "belongs" to Him. He is the master over it. It is not the master over Him, as the Pharisees would have it.

The second statement that He makes is another kingly claim.

[Card 13] Jesus & the Year of Release

Luke 4:16-21 NASB

"And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read. And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book and found the place where it was written, "The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, because He anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the favorable year of the LORD." And He closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

[back of card] Sabbath Releases

- Release #1: Man with unclean spirit (Luke 4:31-35)
- Release #2: Lame man at Bethesda (John 5:8-16)
- Release #3: Man with withered hand (Matthew 12:10-12)
- Release #4: Blind man healed (John 9:14-15)
- Release #5: Woman with bowed back (Luke 13:14-16)
- Release #6: Man with dropsy (Luke 14:1-6)
- Release #7: Jesus death on the cross (John 19:31)

[Card 14] Promise of Future Rest

Hebrews 4:8-10 NASB

"For if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day after that. So there remains a Sabbath rest [sabbatismos] for the people of God. For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His."

Shabbath-ing is a "ceasing" kind of rest.

It is separate from the *nuach*, or "sitting-down" kind of rest.

There is a third kind of rest—*shakat* or quietness.

Stop what you are doing, sit down, and be quiet. Together they make up the totality of rest. But if you have ever dealt with children, you know that just because you get a child sitting in the chair, that doesn't mean that they are being quiet, nor have they ceased doing anything. You can achieve one aspect of rest without having the other two.

The sitting-down kind of rest was a great part of Joshua's work when he established Israel in her inherited land. He broke the back of the enemy powers in the Land and gave her a sitting-down place—a positional place from which the enemy could not forcibly remove her.

Joshua was a picture of Jesus in this sense. Jesus gave us a sitting-down place in the future kingdom—an assured, permanent place from which the enemy cannot remove us. But that was just the beginning of the full rest experience. The writer of Hebrews agrees with Paul that the Sabbath is the shadow of something to come. It is not the kind of rest that we expect in the Church Age.

Answering the Judaizer Argument for Keeping the Sabbath

Before we dig into the questions and answers, we should consider what “Laws” the Judaizers are expecting us to keep. Let's fill in the Judaizer column on our **Sabbath Practice handout**.

- Keeping the day holy—check
- No work on the seventh day—check
- No kindling a fire—well . . . there is some debate about what that means.
- Priestly service—X and X. You can't keep that without a priesthood and Temple. But don't worry, that is coming back in the future!
- Penalty of death—X. That goes against Gentile laws . . . ah-HA! By their own admission, they agree that we are living in an exile economy. That means the Sabbaths have been taken away altogether.
- Feast of Unleavened Bread—check. Or at least as much as can be done without a priesthood and Temple.
- Feast of Weeks—X. We don't have a wheat harvest, a priesthood or Temple
- Feast of Trumpets—check
- Day of Atonement—well . . . that's a questionable one.
- Feast of Booths—check. Or at least as much as can be done without a priesthood and Temple.
- Sabbath Years and Jubilees—X and X. Can't keep those outside of the Land

So, out of all the Mosaic Laws concerning the Sabbath, the Judaizers only keep the element of rest for a day, and limited versions of the festivals that can be done without a harvest, a physical priesthood, and a Temple. Whatever they fail to keep, they put on Jesus and He “covers” that. (They treat Jesus as kind of a patch for their holey garment.) And in doing this, they consider themselves to have kept the Laws sufficiently for God to count them righteous and to secure their salvation.

The problem is that the Sabbath is a package deal. You either keep all of it, including the Jubilees, or you go into exile. You are either living in the kingdom or you aren’t. (We are **not** living in the kingdom!)

Statement #1: It is an everlasting covenant. You have to keep it to maintain a relationship with God.

First of all, just because it is an everlasting covenant doesn’t mean that its requirements can be kept in every economy. These laws are meant to rule a kingdom economy, but God takes away the sabbath during times of exile. Then it is only kept to the degree that the Gentile laws allow. The Church age is an age of exile.

Jesus’ death and resurrection changed how we relate to God. It was a *shabbath*-ing moment when righteousness according to the Law clicked over into righteousness according to grace. The sin nature’s power over us has been stripped away and we have been severed from that master and the terms of service under that master. Our bondage to sin *katargeo*-ed (ceased), and our bondage to the Laws *katargeo*-ed as well.

We *can* keep a physical version of the Sabbath—there is nothing wrong with that. It speaks of Christ and things to come. We can seek employment that allows us a Sabbath day of rest, and as much as it depends on us, we honor God by setting aside a time for corporate worship and personal rest and reflection.

But we cannot keep a physical Sabbath according to the Laws (that is impossible outside of the kingdom) or for the purpose of being righteous before God. We do not incur guilt before God for not keeping these laws in the Age of Grace. Our way of relating to God has changed.

Those are my answers to our opening questions: should we practice a physical Sabbath and should we feel guilty if we can’t?

Statement #2: If you don’t keep it, you will be “cut off” (lose your place in the kingdom).

Jesus is fulfilling these Old Testament pictures, including the Jubilee. With His death, He purchased a permanent place in the heavenly kingdom for all who believe in Him. He allotted us an inheritance that we have yet to claim.

There is tremendous emphasis in the New Testament writings about the “inheritance” that we will be granted in the coming kingdom. And it must be an inheritance that, once it is granted, cannot be lost. It has to be a permanent inheritance if it is going to fulfill the Old Testament picture. **Having a permanent inheritance in “the land” is the key requirement for the Jubilee release.**

Thus, if we use the physical model that God sets up for Israel as a guide for the spiritual one as it will apply to us, we can see that no matter how impoverished our spiritual life becomes, God holds out the promise that once we are given a place in that kingdom, it can never be lost regardless of what we do. There will be consequences associated with our sin and impoverished state, but the inheritance is never lost and there is a day of rest and restoration coming.

Question: If we were to practice a physical Sabbath day for the purpose of keeping alive the picture of Christ and the *shabbath*-ing events to come, what might that practice look like? (For inspiration: Psalms 46 and 92.)