

# The Sabbath Watchman

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## The Fourth *Commandment* Part 2

### WORLD IN BRIEF

- The Good Samaritan
- The Sabbath Watchman

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# Introduction

The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. Exodus 20:10.

When God created the earth and placed human beings upon it, He divided time into seven periods. Six He gave to us for our own use, to employ in secular business; one He reserved for Himself. Having rested on the seventh day, He blessed and sanctified it. Henceforth, the seventh day was to be regarded as the Lord's rest day and to be sacredly observed as the memorial of His creative work. It was not the first, second, third, fourth, fifth, or sixth day that was sanctified, or set apart to a holy use; neither was it a seventh part of time and no day in particular; but it was the seventh day, the day upon which God had rested....

When the law was given at Sinai, the Sabbath was placed in the midst of moral precepts, in the very bosom of the Decalogue. But the Sabbath institution was not then made known for the first time. The fourth commandment places its origin at Creation. The Creator's rest day was hallowed by Adam in holy Eden and by the people of God throughout the patriarchal ages. During Israel's long bondage in Egypt, under taskmasters that knew not God, they could not keep the Sabbath; therefore the Lord brought them out where they could remember His holy day....

A threefold miracle was wrought in honor of the Sabbath, even before the law was given on Sinai. A double quantity of manna fell on the sixth day, none upon the Sabbath, and the portion needed for the Sabbath was preserved sweet and pure, when if any were kept over at any other time, it became unfit for food. Here is conclusive evidence that the Sabbath was instituted at Creation, when the foundations of the earth were laid, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy. And its sacredness remains unchanged, and will so remain even to the close of time. From the Creation, every precept of the divine law has been obligatory on mankind and has been observed by those who fear the Lord. The doctrine that God's law has been abolished is one of Satan's devices to compass the ruin of the race....

The holy oracles were especially committed to the Jews; not to be an Israelite was not to belong to the favored people of God.... Now the prophet declares that the stranger who will love and obey God shall enjoy the privileges that have belonged exclusively to the chosen people.—*Signs of the Times*, February 28, 1884.

*Ellen G. White.*

## The Sabbath Watchman

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Beacon of hope, faith, and truth in a confused world.

We believe:

- The all-wise, loving God created all things in the universe by His Son, Jesus Christ; He is its Owner and Sustainer.
- He met the challenge to His loving leadership and authority by reconciling the world to Himself through the life, death, and resurrection of His Son, the Word made flesh.
- The Holy Spirit, Jesus' representative on earth, convicts of sin, guides into truth, and, when abiding in man, overcomes all unrighteousness.
- The Bible is the record of God's dealings with mankind and the standard of all doctrine; the Ten Commandments are the transcript of His character and the foundation of all enduring reform.
- His people, in harmony with God's Word and under the direction of the Holy Spirit, call all men everywhere to be reconciled to God through faith in Jesus.
- Bible prophecy reveals that earth's history will soon close with the visible return of Jesus Christ as King to claim all who have accepted Him as the world's only Redeemer and their Lord.

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Phone 770-748-0077,  
Fax 770-748-0095,  
Email [info@sda1844.org](mailto:info@sda1844.org),  
Website [www.sda1844.org](http://www.sda1844.org).

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# God Gave the Sabbath *as a Sign*

By Antonino Di Franca

In the book of Exodus, instructions and commands for how to keep the Sabbath are frequent. After 16 and then 20 more instructions are given in chapters 23, 31, and 35, some of them repeat what was already presented; and others supply additional teachings for clarification and reinforcement. After the Decalogue, the next text that calls attention to the Sabbath is Exodus 23:12: "Six days you shall do your work, but on the seventh day you shall rest; that your ox and your donkey may have rest, and the son of your servant woman, and the alien, may be refreshed." This text focuses in a special way on the humanitarian nature of the Sabbath, showing that it is not only for the father as the head of the family but also for his sons and servants, foreigners, and even his domestic animals. All of them, after working, are entitled to physical rest; and people also need to have their spirits refreshed.

Because of the Sabbath's rich spiritual nature and the people's failure to grasp that and observe the holy day properly, the prior teachings were frequently repeated and strengthened with additional instructions. Especially in Exodus there is frequent mention of the Sabbath and additional teachings related to it. For example, in Exodus 31:12-17, only a short time after the Lord had spoken the fourth commandment along with all of the others, a very strong emphasis was given that broadened the meaning of the Sabbath. It was declared to be a sign given by God of the perpetual, binding covenant that exists between Him and His people that no one may annul or alter. This chapter examines that portion of Scripture.

## "ABOVE ALL ... KEEP MY SABBATHS"

The command to honor the Sabbath day is unequivocal, as verse 13 states: "Above all you shall keep My Sabbaths, for this is a sign between Me and you

throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you." Exodus 31:13, emphasis supplied. The words "above all you shall keep My Sabbaths" stress that Sabbath keeping comes first and is "above all" secular needs and duties. The place that God wanted Sabbath observance to occupy in the lives of His people was not secondary or subject to circumstance or convenience. Human work and needs were lower than the place occupied by the Sabbath. Other versions translate this verse as, "Verily My sabbaths ye shall keep" (King James Version), or "Truly you shall keep My Sabbaths" (Amplified Bible, Classic Edition), emphasizing the idea that the Sabbath should be observed not superficially or simply formally, but "truly" and "verily."

The second point that the above verse emphasizes is in the Lord's use of the plural form—"Sabbaths." "Above all you shall keep My Sabbaths" (emphasis supplied). Therefore, He was referring not to one single Sabbath or to some special one—and not even to the people's willingness to keep the Sabbath from time to time—but to all Sabbaths every year, because every one is equally precious and due immense respect.

A more recent Bible commentary explained the concept this way.

"The plural 'Sabbaths' refers to the regular keeping of the Sabbath day week in and week out, not to a multiplicity of differing Sabbath days."  
—*The NIV Application Commentary*:  
Peter E. Enns, *Exodus*.

The third significant element in these verses is that God did not say simply, "Sabbaths," "your Sabbaths," or "your day of rest," as might have been the case if He was requesting the people to keep them. No, He used a phraseology showing how important He considered

the Sabbath. “Above all you shall keep My Sabbaths.” Exodus 31:13, emphasis supplied. In various centuries, and especially in our day, it has become common to call the Biblical Sabbath “the Jewish Sabbath,” “the Judaic Sabbath,” or “the Hebrew Sabbath,” which shows how people totally disrespect the Lord’s message. In many Scriptural verses, God called the day that He sanctified “My Sabbaths” (Exodus 31:13; Leviticus 19:3, 30; 26:2; Isaiah 56:4; Ezekiel 20:12, 13, 16, 20, 21, 24; 22:8, 26; 23:38; 44:24), because He blessed and hallowed His holy day. Even after Israel was commanded to observe the holy day, God continued to refer to “My Sabbaths,” so the fact that the Jews kept the holy day did not make “My Sabbaths” the “Jews’ Sabbath”; to this day it remains God’s Sabbath.

### GOD GAVE IT AS A SIGN

In the same verse, Exodus 31:13, the Lord told His people that Sabbath observance “is a sign between Me and you,... that you may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you.” What did this mean? What did the “sign” refer to? What did a “sign” between God and His people mean—for them and for us today?

The word “sign” (Hebrew *ôth*) is a reminder, an indication of something beyond itself; it is a functional concept used in cognitive context to transmit an understanding of a certain reality and to generate a corresponding conduct. As a “sign” between God and Israel, the Sabbath points to something beyond itself and leads to the understanding of God’s redemptive work and the believer’s heartfelt response. The verse’s focus is on the experience of “knowing” the Lord. He is the One who “sanctifies” them—“that you may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you,” or, as another version translates it, “so you may know that I am the Lord, who makes you holy.” New International Version. In other words, the seventh day, which the Lord required to be observed faithfully throughout all generations, is a token or a badge testifying that the sanctification experienced by those who keep the Sabbath comes directly from the Lord.

Since the Sabbath was God’s sign that He sanctified those who kept His holy day, this implies that those who were faithful to Him and entered into a covenant with Him were the people with whom He had a special relationship. When they observed the sacred Sabbath day, the people not only practiced obedience to God, but they also confessed that they were loyal to the true

God and cherished His sign that identified them as His chosen people. Those were the people whom He powerfully delivered from Egypt and to whom He gave freedom and enormous blessings, including freedom and rest, which to an even greater extent He offers to everyone who believes in Him today. In sanctifying the day, He sanctified all who accept the sign of identification and mutual relationship between God and them. They recognized that He alone is God, the only One who is able to make a person holy.

While people dedicate every weekday to their secular business, so it should be with the seventh day—it should be kept holy, dedicated to Him. This implies that the holy day of rest was not and was not intended to be a “lazy day” for idleness, sleep, or vacation; rather, it is for “sanctification,” to be fully dedicated to and centered in the Lord. When one hallows the Lord’s holy day, which He hallowed, he is made holy by Him. His thoughts, words, and actions focus on God as he spends the entire 24-hour period of the seventh day differently than he does the common weekdays. The Sabbath is a very special day for worship, prayer, study of the sacred word, and brotherly communion. It is time that is focused on the Lord and His promises, blessings, and work of creation and redemption. To the extent that the seventh day is kept holy in this way, so great will be the blessings that one receives.

The concept of the Sabbath as a “sign” appears in Exodus 31:17 as well: “It is a sign forever between Me and the people of Israel that in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed” (emphasis added). Another version reads: “It is a sign..., for in six days the Lord made the heaven and the earth, and in the seventh day He ceased and rested.” —1599 *Geneva Bible*. The text reveals another reason why the Sabbath is a “sign”: because “in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed.” Rest during





the seventh day of creation was not an event of Israel's history that limited the Sabbath to them. It was completely God's action and decision, and for this reason it applied to everyone. He gave it to Israel as a "sign," for at the time they were His chosen people; but it was not limited to them.

Summarizing, the Lord defined the Sabbath as a "sign" twice (in verses 13 and 17) and for two reasons. It was because, first, He was the One who sanctified the people, and, second, "in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day rested and was refreshed." Following the Lord, the people testified what He had done for them and bore His "sign."

Concerning Sabbath observance as a sign from the Lord, the following were some writers' explanations.

"As a covenant sign rooted in creation, the Sabbath mediates an understanding of redemptive history (i.e., covenant history) by pointing retrospectively and prospectively. Retrospectively, the Sabbath invites the believer to look back and memorialize God as the Creator of an original, perfect creation. Genesis 2:2, 3; Exodus 20:8, 11; 31:17. Prospectively, the Sabbath encourages the believer to look forward and trust God's promise to fulfill His 'everlasting covenant' (Exodus 31:16; Hebrews 4:9) to restore this world to its original perfection. Thus, the Sabbath stands as a sign of an 'everlasting covenant' between creation (Genesis 2:2, 3; Exodus 20:11; 31:17) and redemption. Deuteronomy 5:15; Isaiah 56:1-4. It directs us to the past perfect creation, and it points constantly to the future, ultimate restoration." —Samuele Bacchiocchi, *The Sabbath under Crossfire*, p. 58.

"The Sabbath was intended to commemorate God as our personal Creator, King, and Judge. Genesis 1:31-2:2. It is a 'sign' that God has set us apart as His own treasured people.... The Sabbath is the weekly reminder that the Lord is both our Creator and Redeemer." —John J. Parsons, *The Sign of the Sabbath*, p. 1.

"It is a sign between Me and you (Exodus 31:13), and again, Exodus 31:17. The institution of the Sabbath was a great instance of God's favor to them, and a sign that He had distinguished them from all other people: and their religious observance of the Sabbath was a great instance of their duty and obedience to Him. God, by sanctifying this day among them, let them know that He sanctified them and set them apart for Himself and His service, otherwise He would not have revealed to them His holy Sabbaths, to be the support of religion among



them. Or it may refer to the law concerning the Sabbath: Keep my Sabbaths, that you may know that I the Lord do sanctify you. Note, if God by His grace inclines our hearts to keep the law of the fourth commandment, it will be an evidence of a good work wrought in us by His Spirit. If we sanctify God's day, it is a sign between Him and us that He has sanctified our hearts; hence it is the character of the blessed man that he keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it. Isaiah 56:2. The Jews, by observing one day in seven, after six days' labor, testified that they worshipped the God that made the world in six days, and rested the seventh; and so distinguished themselves from other nations, who, having first lost the Sabbath, which was instituted to be a memorial of the creation, by degrees lost the knowledge of the Creator, and gave that honor to the creature which was the due to Him alone." —Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Complete Commentary on the Bible*. Commentaries on Exodus, comments on Exodus 31:12-18.

"A sign between Me and you. It was the weekly return of the Sabbath which reminded Israel of the special relation which God had been willing to establish with them. In this way the Sabbath became later the distinctive sign of the Jews who lived in pagan nations." —*La Bible Annotée*, Pentateuque, comments on Exodus 31:12-17.

"The Israelites could have imagined that the work for sacred things, intended for the worship of God, was lawful. This is the reason for which God renews here the prohibition of working, even to those who observe His worship, during the days of the Sabbath, and that on pain of death." —Joseph Franz von Allioli, *Bible d'Allioli*. Exode, comment on Exodus 31:13, p. 374.

"God specifically declared it to be 'a sign' between Him and His people for all time, by which they were ever to remember the true God as their God. Exodus 31:13." —Siegfried H. Horn, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary*, p. 936, article "Sabbath."

“In Exodus 31:13-17 we find a statement very similar to those in Genesis 2:2, 3 and Exodus 20:11, but with several added features.... The keeping of God’s Sabbath is a sign, not only of Creation (verse 17), but also of His sanctifying His people (verse 13).... The use of the word ‘sign’ in verse 13 is noteworthy. A sign is something that points beyond itself to reveal a more profound reality. With respect to Sabbath, that reality is twofold: The Sabbath provides an ever-present assurance of God’s sanctifying of His people (verse 13), and it serves as a constant reminder of God’s creatorship (verse 17). In both aspects, the keeping of the Sabbath is what gives it effectiveness as a sign. Verses 13, 16.” –*Handbook of SDA Theology*, p. 497.

In a similar vein, other authors wrote the following about this.

“That is the real reason for the festal rest: God created man in His image and likeness. As God creates and then rests, so man is like Him, because with his labor he produces, and then rests on the feast day. The Lord, therefore, in this precept reminds His people of His creation and His rest after creation. When man works, he is not a slave; he is an image of God the Creator, and, to complete the nobility of this image, he should rest. God sanctified the seventh day, and the man sanctifies the sanctifying of himself.... When man rests, he takes pleasure in God, worshipping Him. The little creature thus returns to the Lord with a grateful heart for the condescension that He deigned to have for what He had created.” –Dain Cohenel, *La Sacra Scrittura. Psicologia-Commento-Meditazione, Esodo-Levitico*, p. 159.

“The purpose of the Sabbath is ‘so you may know that I am the Lord, who makes you holy.’ Exodus 31:13. It is, in other words, a reminder of who God is and what His intentions are for His people. We also see here what Jesus meant when He said: ‘The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.’ Mark 2:27. The regular keeping of the Sabbath serves a purpose for our

benefit, to help us along in a deeper understanding of who God is.” –*The NIV Application Commentary*, Peter E. Enns, Exodus, comment on Exodus 31:13.

“With its one day in seven observance, the Sabbath cut across the naturebased calendars of the pagans, which revolved solely around phases of the moon and agricultural seasons. Indeed, it called God’s people to march to the beat of a different drum, as a mark of submission to their covenant Overlord. It was a sign of their liberation from bondage (for slaves are not in control of their schedule) and also a sign of their distinctiveness from other nations who had not been similarly redeemed. To profane the Sabbath was to thus abandon an essential element of their distinctiveness as the people of the Lord and to attempt, in effect, to ‘become like the nations around us.’ It is to refuse to follow the example that God Himself set in Genesis 2:1-4.” –Iain M. Duguid, *NIV Application Commentary: Ezekiel*, p. 261.

“The word Moses wrote in Hebrew is ‘owth, which means ‘a sign, signal, distinguishing mark, banner, remembrance, warning; a token, ensign, standard, miracle, proof.’ –Brown, *Driver and Briggs Hebrew Lexicon*. A banner or flag identifies a nation or group. A signal like a beacon announces the existence of something, like a rocky shore, that others need to be warned about. A token is a visible sign that serves to make something known, such as a white flag is a token of surrender....

“God commands His people to keep His Sabbaths as a sign. It is a sign between God’s people and God.... The Sabbath is the sign that identifies to people who their God is. It is the sign by which we may know that He is the Lord. It identifies God, and by so doing, it identifies who His people are as well.” –“Sabbath, God’s Gift to Us,” *An Eternal Covenant*.

“In other words, the Sabbath is a weekly reminder that the Lord is both our Creator and our Redeemer.... The Sabbath is the sign.... It is a ‘statement of faith,’ a visible practice of bittachon that honors the Lord as both our Creator and our Redeemer.” –John J. Parson, *The Sign of the Sabbath*.

“When God gives a sign, He intends that it should be taken seriously. God links a disbelief in His signs as a rejection of Him. Forgetting God’s signs leads to forgetting Him. A sign serves as a symbol of divine communication.... As well, obedience to His Law constitutes a sign to God that we are loyal to Him and will respond to anything He says, including keeping His Sabbath.” –David C. Grabbe, *The Signs of God*, November 21, 2015.



“If God did not need to rest, why did He designate the seventh day for rest? (He seems to have done it for two reasons. First, God designated the Sabbath as holy to give us a weekly reminder that He is our Creator. Second, the Sabbath gives us a day of rest—and, unlike God, we need to rest!) ... The Sabbath is a sign of what God has done and continues to do for us!” —Bruce N. Cameron, *The Covenant Sign*, 2018.

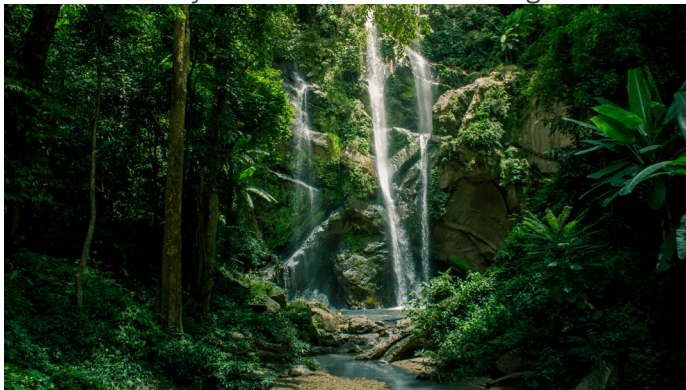
If the Sabbath, among other gifts, was for a memorial and a sign of the Israelites’ liberation, their violating it or profaning it would have shown that they did not appreciate it and literally profaned the great good and the great privileges that they had been given—blessings that no other people had enjoyed.

Commenting on the Sabbath as a sign that distinguished God’s people in the past and continues to do so in the present, Ellen G. White wrote the following important points.

“As the Sabbath was the sign that distinguished Israel when they came out of Egypt to enter the earthly Canaan, so it is the sign that now distinguishes God’s people as they come out from the world to enter the heavenly rest.

“The observance of the Sabbath is the means ordained by God of preserving a knowledge of Himself and of distinguishing between His loyal subjects and the transgressors of His law.

“It [the Sabbath] belongs to Christ.... Since He made all things, He made the Sabbath. By Him it was set apart as a memorial of the work of creation. It points to Him as both the Creator and the Sanctifier. It declares that He who created all things in heaven and in earth, and by whom all things hold together, is the head of the church, and that by His power we are reconciled to God. For, speaking of Israel, He said, ‘I gave them My sabbaths, to be a sign between Me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them’—make them holy. Then the Sabbath is a sign of Christ’s



power to make us holy. And it is given to all whom Christ makes holy. As a sign of His sanctifying power, the Sabbath is given to all who through Christ become a part of the Israel of God....

“To all who receive the Sabbath as a sign of Christ’s creative and redeeming power, it will be a delight. Seeing Christ in it, they delight themselves in Him. The Sabbath points them to the works of creation as an evidence of His mighty power in redemption. While it calls to mind the lost peace of Eden, it tells of peace restored through the Saviour. And every object in nature repeats His invitation, ‘Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.’ Matthew 11:28.

“The Sabbath is a golden clasp that unites God and His people.” —Ellen G. White, *Maranatha; The Lord Is Coming*, p. 244.

“... Thus setting apart the Sabbath, God gave the world a memorial. He did not set apart one day and any day in seven, but one particular day, the seventh day. And by observing the Sabbath, we show that we recognize God as the living God, the Creator of heaven and earth....

“And ‘the Lord made heaven and earth,’ and what then? ‘And rested the seventh day’ and ‘sanctified it,’ and gave it to you to observe as God’s memorial—a memorial that He is the living God who created the heavens overhead and the earth upon which we stand. He made ... human beings and gave them the Sabbath. What for? For all the posterity of Adam; it was a gift to all His posterity. If they had always obeyed the fourth commandment there never would have been an infidel in the world, because it testified that ‘the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is.’” —Ellen G. White, *Christ Triumphant*, 1999, pp. 18, 15.

## OTHER SIGNS INCREASE MAN’S UNDERSTANDING

The word “sign” commonly denotes an element that distinguishes things or people and gives evidence to identify them; it can be found in the person, in clothing, or in behavior, as is the Sabbath, which singles out those who observe it. The Biblical meaning of “sign” is different.

One of the first occurrences of the word related to the rainbow that the Lord gave to Noah and his family after the flood. Genesis 9:12-17. This “sign” took shape in the clouds in connection with rain; it is “the sign” that



God promised that the earth would never again be destroyed by a flood. Genesis 9:14, 15.

A sign was also given to Moses to confirm his mission. The Lord told him, “I will be with you, and this shall be the sign for you, that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain.” Exodus 3:12.

The Lord gave a sign to the Israelites in Egypt when He told them what to do to escape the punishment that would destroy all of the firstborn in Egypt. The divine sign would identify and protect the homes of God’s people. “The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt.” Exodus 12:13. In a similar way, observance of the Sabbath day is a sign that identifies God’s people, those whom the Lord said He would sanctify.

According to the Scriptures, when one keeps the holy Sabbath, “you may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you.” Exodus 31:13. In six days, the Lord made heaven and earth; and on the seventh day He rested, not for Himself, but to show and motivate man to do the same. One who follows the Lord’s example, working on six days and resting on every Sabbath day, thus sanctifying it, shows that he accepts the sign between him and God. It is the sign of allegiance to Him, as well as of the sanctification that the Lord brings about in His people. Neither one’s own works nor any other entity can generate sanctification in a person. The true God established and commanded His children to keep the Sabbath, and He is the One who sanctifies the faithful believer.

Over centuries, the Israelites kept the Sabbath day and confessed the true God who makes His children holy; it was a sign that the people accepted God’s plan to save them and lived in agreement with it. According to Exodus 31:13, 17 and Ezekiel 20:12, 20, the Sabbath was the sign that Israel belonged to God and was dedicated to and hallowed by Him. This was a testimony that they were loyal to God and desired true sanctification. Thus, the Sabbath was a sign that distinguished God’s people. It was not a sign that separated them from other people, but one that showed the relationship between God and His people, like a gift that a person gives to his friend and identifies him as such. “Keep My Sabbaths holy that they may be a sign between Me and you, that you may know that I am the Lord your God.” Ezekiel 20:20.

## KNOWING AND BEING SANCTIFIED BY THE LORD

At the end of Exodus 31:12, the Lord revealed another important aspect of the Sabbath. He stated that the goal of the Sabbath was not simply to give physical rest from labor, but also to provide special time for the people “to know” the Lord, who, through communication with them, sanctified them. This is why He added, “you shall keep My Sabbaths, that you may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you.” Exodus 31:12; cf. Ezekiel 37:28; Leviticus 20:8; 21:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:23.

They were not to know the gods of Egypt nor those of Babylon or Canaan, but the true God, their Creator and Redeemer. They were to “know,” believe, and obey Him, as well as understand Him in keeping His Sabbaths.

God did not create man and the whole world in a long, infinite, obscure process. It took, not years, such as kings need to establish their kingdoms, but only six days. What He accomplished was not like the wars of kings who, in the end, may have theoretically won by achieving more of a loss than a gain. At the conclusion of God’s work, there were no troubles and difficulties, but rest, blessing, and sanctity for human beings. Today, even after many millennia, He is still the One who sanctifies His people. Therefore, it is not anyone’s customs or merits, works or practice, that sanctify them, but only the Lord Himself, who has given them liberty and established the Sabbath at the beginning for their blessing and knowledge of Him and His work. Observing the Sabbath that crowned God’s achievements, His people testify that He alone is the true God and that they honor only Him.

Some writers commented about God’s unique accomplishments and the word sanctify in relation to Sabbath observance of Exodus 31:13.

“The Jews, by observing one day in seven, after six days’ labor, testified that they worshiped the God that made the world in six days, and rested the seventh; and so distinguished themselves from other nations, who, having first lost the Sabbath, the memorial of the creation, by degrees lost the knowledge of the Creator, and gave the creature the honor due to Him alone.” —*Joseph Benson’s Commentary of the Old and New Testaments*, commentary on Exodus 31:13.

“That doth sanctify you; that selecteth you out of all people, and consecrateth you to Myself, and to My service and worship, a great part whereof is the observation



of the sabbath. Or, that sanctifieth you by My word and ordinances, which are in more eminent and solemn manner dispensed upon the Sabbath day, by the observation whereof you declare that you own Me as your only Sanctifier; and so we may observe, the Sabbath owns the Lord as our Creator, and as our Redeemer, and as our Sanctifier.” –Matthew Poole’s *English Annotations on the Holy Bible*, Commentary on Exodus 31:13.

“... The continued observance of the Sabbath by the secular community would assure Israel the preservation of its faith.” –*Il dizionario della Bibbia*, p. 735.

“The Sabbath, as a day observed weekly in honor of Jehovah, and kept sacred to Him, is a constantly recurring memorial of Israel’s dedication to Him and of the covenant relation subsisting between them.” –Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges, S.R. Driver, *The Book of Exodus*, p. 344, comments on Exodus 31:13.

“That men may know [Hebrew, simply to know], that all the world may recognize, by means of the Sabbath, that it is Jehovah who ‘sanctifies’ Israel or provides it with the means of becoming a holy people. ‘I am Jehovah which sanctify [better, ‘which sanctifieth’] you (him, them)’ is one of the dominant thoughts.... Leviticus 20:8; 21:15 (cf. verse 8), 23; 22:9, 16, 31. Compare Ezekiel 20:12, ‘I gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between Me and them that men might know [Hebrew. to know] that I am Jehovah which sanctifieth them.’” –Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges, S.R. Driver, *The Book of Exodus*, pp. 344, 345.

## DESECRATION OF THE SABBATH AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

Soon after freeing them from slavery, the Lord gave the Sabbath to the Israelites, just as He gave them the gift of manna and communicated to them the necessary instructions for faithful participation in its blessings. A short time afterward, on Mount Sinai, He stressed the Sabbath again, proclaiming it with a loud voice and writing the commandment on the stone tables of the Decalogue. After that, He gave additional instructions concerning it, as shown especially in the second book of the Bible.

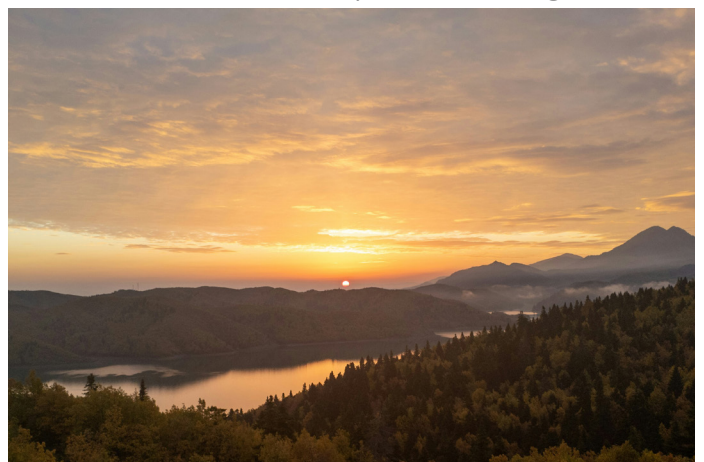
When the Israelites were in the wilderness, they received a treasure of light contained in an increasing body of education in religious, moral, hygienic, and civil matters. A large number of verses concerned the Sabbath. Exodus 16:23, 25, 26, 29; 20:8-11; 23:12;

31:13-17; 34:21; 35:2, 3; Leviticus 19:3, 30; 23:3; 24:8; 26:2; Numbers 15:32; 28:9, 10; Deuteronomy 5:12-15. There are even more references in other books of the Old and New Testaments that show how important the Sabbath was as God’s special gift for the instruction and blessing of His people.

From what has been discovered so far, God’s rest on the seventh day of creation, with its blessing and sanctification (Genesis 2:2, 3; Exodus 20:11; 31:17), was the basis for the Sabbath’s observance. In addition, after the miraculous deliverance of the people from Egyptian slavery, Moses made it clear that their slavery had ended and their freedom was permanent. “You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.” Deuteronomy 5:15.

These reasons should have been more than enough to motivate the people to consistently keep the Sabbath holy. However, the Scriptures stressed the deeper motive for observing the Lord’s holy day, declaring that the Sabbath was “a sign between Me and you.” After Exodus 31:13, the next verse that under-scored this was verse 17: “It is a sign forever between Me and the people of Israel that in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed.” Emphasis added. This was to continue for all generations—forever—as shown in the book of Ezekiel, where the Lord again to called the Sabbath “a sign,” His sign. Ezekiel 20:12, 20.

As noted previously, the Lord gave special teaching on many levels concerning this. On the sixth day of the week, a double portion of manna was to be gathered, thus providing food for the Sabbath, when none fell; and the food did not spoil, even though on other



days it went bad if it was kept until the next day. Notwithstanding these three weekly miracles, the fourth commandment, and all of the other directions, they were not enough to convince all of the Israelites, and overcome their prior prejudices. On Mount Sinai, the Lord Himself proclaimed the Sabbath again so that everyone heard it: “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.” And He added more: “Above all you shall keep My Sabbaths, for this is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations.” But it seems that this was not enough either. There were still some individuals who took the Sabbath lightly and desecrated it. It may seem difficult to understand why the penalty found in the following verses had to be so dire: “You shall keep the Sabbath, because it is holy for you. Everyone who profanes it shall be put to death. Whoever does any work on it, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the Lord. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day shall be put to death.” Exodus 31:14, 15.

There were reasons for such severity. The people had been given a great deal of clear, obvious instruction; no one could be misinformed about it. If someone transgressed the Sabbath, it could not be because of ignorance; rather, such action revealed the deliberate refusal to obey and the profanation that demonstrated not only disdain for the Sabbath but also contempt for the Lord Himself, who had established the holy day for man’s blessing. If such a rebellious attitude were not dealt with, it would spread to other people and other commandments, thus imperiling every divine principle. To safeguard the stability of the heavenly principles and protect the people living in the community from dangerous influences, it was necessary to address the deliberate desecration of the Sabbath and punish it in the same way as was the transgression of the other commandments. The poisonous root had to be removed at its first appearance so that it would not infect the entire community and destroy more souls.

Moreover, provisions were given how to deal with specific sins, and these included various levels of severity, according to the seriousness of the transgressions—reparations, indemnity, imprisonment, scourging, and the death penalty. Polytheism and idolatry, for example—violations of the first and second commandments—received the death penalty (Deuteronomy 13:1-5; 17:2-7; Exodus 32:1-28; Matthew 5:25);

and, according to Exodus 31:14, 15; 35:2, 3; Numbers 15:32-36, Sabbath violation received that same severe punishment.

This showed that the Lord regarded the Sabbath as being of supreme importance. If the violation of the fourth commandment received such a severe penalty, then Sabbath sacredness was not a minor matter. It reflected the relationship between God and His people, so keeping the Sabbath or not showed acceptance or rejection of the Creator of the universe. Like polytheism and idolatry, transgression of the Sabbath was the breaking of the covenant with the Creator and open defiance of Him. For this reason, it was a matter of life or death. Keeping the fourth commandment or not would bring a great blessing or a great curse, including exclusion from God’s people or even “death.” Exodus 31:14, 15.

God Himself set the serious penalty for such violation to help His chosen people to differentiation between what was holy and what was profane, thus making Israel a holy people. They had to understand that keeping the Sabbath holy was not an option that they could accept or reject by choice. It was not a secondary, flexible matter that they needed to come into harmony with only when circumstances permitted and could abandon in case of need and emergency, as when the Egyptians made them slaves. It was not limited to just some seasons of the year. No. The Lord’s requirement was, “Six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall rest. In plowing time and in harvest you shall rest.” Exodus 34:21.

A commentator wrote about this serious matter.

“Failure to keep the Sabbath (‘desecration,’ Exodus 31:14), therefore, is to be met with severe punishment—or ... being ‘cut off from his people.’ This penalty seems harsh, but not when we realize what the Sabbath was intended to do. By not keeping the Sabbath the Israelite was showing that he or she was not interested in ‘know[ing] that I am the Lord.’ Desecration means to do work....” —The NIV Application Commentary: Peter E. Enns, *Exodus*, comment on Exodus 31:13.

This is what took place when a man willfully violated the Sabbath. After due investigation and instruction from the Lord, he was condemned to death. Numbers 15:32-41. Practically speaking, it may not always have taken such severe measures for the holy Sabbath to be honored; however, when violation of the

Sabbath persisted, there was punishment. According to the law, one consequence of repeated Sabbath violation would be deportation to a foreign country for a time proportionate to the desecration. For the same number of years that the Israelites violated the Sabbath in their own country, they had to suffer in exile in foreign countries. Leviticus 26:34, 35.

Accordingly, Jeremiah's warnings showed that obstinacy in Sabbath desecration was a very serious sign of rebellion that had serious consequences. Because this was the case in Jerusalem and Judah, he declared that the destiny of Jerusalem, Judah, and their inhabitants—because of violating the weekly Sabbath and the people's unwillingness to hear and obey the Lord's voice—would be fire and destruction on the palaces of Jerusalem. Jeremiah 17:19-27. The people, including their rulers, continued to violate the Sabbath and other commandments; and the consequences were exactly what Jeremiah warned about. The temple and palaces in Jerusalem were burned down, and the land remained desolate for seventy years. The Babylonians "burned the house of God and broke down the wall of Jerusalem and burned all its palaces with fire and destroyed all its precious vessels. He [Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar] took into exile in Babylon those who had escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and to his sons until the establishment of the kingdom of Persia, to fulfill the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed its Sabbaths. All the days that it lay desolate it kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years." 2 Chronicles 36:19-21.

The following authors wrote about this.

"The desecration of the Sabbath day was one of the sins that led to the Babylonian captivity. Jeremiah 17:19-27." —Siegfried H. Horn, *SDA Bible Dictionary*, Washington, DC, Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1960, p. 936, article "Sabbath."

"When they [the Israelites] were living in Canaan during the time of the judges, and later during the monarchies, Israel and Judah did not consistently observe the Sabbath. They worshiped heathen gods, such as Baal, Moloch, and Ashtoreth. Their idolatry and Sabbath desecration were the chief reasons for their being punished with the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. Jeremiah 17:21, 27. National ruin was the result of Sabbath breaking.... Because the Sabbath desecration was one of the chief reasons for the

Babylonian captivity, the men who led the exiles to Jerusalem—Ezra, Joshua, and their successors—were determined to safeguard the Sabbath institution for their posterity." —Emilio B. Knechtle, Charles J. Sohlmann, *A People Ready for the Return of Jesus*, p. 110.

"In the prophets, observance of the Sabbath becomes the touchstone for Israel's obedience to its covenant with God. The future of Jerusalem depends on faithful Sabbath keeping. Jeremiah 17:24-27. One's personal well-being is also at stake. Isaiah 56:2-7. Those who honor the day will find joy, riding on the heights of the earth and being fed with the heritage of Jacob. Isaiah 58:14. As God once desired to destroy His people in the desert because of their Sabbath desecration (Ezekiel 20:12-14), so He now counts this among Israel's present moral failures (Ezekiel 22:8) for which there will be purging and dispersion. Amos issues a stern warning to those merchants who endure the Sabbath, anxious only to get on with the selling of grain. Amos 8:5." —Craig J. Slane, article "Sabbath," in *Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*.

"The seventh-day Sabbath or Shabbat is widely associated with God's creation of the world (Genesis 2:2, 3) and the Exodus of Ancient Israel from Egypt. Deuteronomy 15:15. The Sabbath is one of the Torah's moedim or appointed times. Leviticus 23:3. Desecration of the Sabbath actually brought judgment to Ancient Israel (Jeremiah 17:19-27), but blessings are offered to those who value and honor Shabbat (Isaiah 56:1-8), with a universal observance for the entire world anticipated in the Messianic Age. Isaiah 66:23." —J.K. McKee, Exodus 31:12-17—*The Sabbath as a Sign, a Perpetual Covenant*, May 22, 2018.

This should make one really think and understand that this is not some secondary or optional matter; God's commandments were given for man's blessing





and guidance. One who truly believes that the Lord blessed the Sabbath and that it is a blessing to every person, that He hallowed it as a means of sanctification to draw man to Himself, cannot and will not take it lightly, overlook its sacredness, or follow the modern mentality and customs. Rather, he will give it his undivided attention and faithful commitment, just as the Lord commanded.

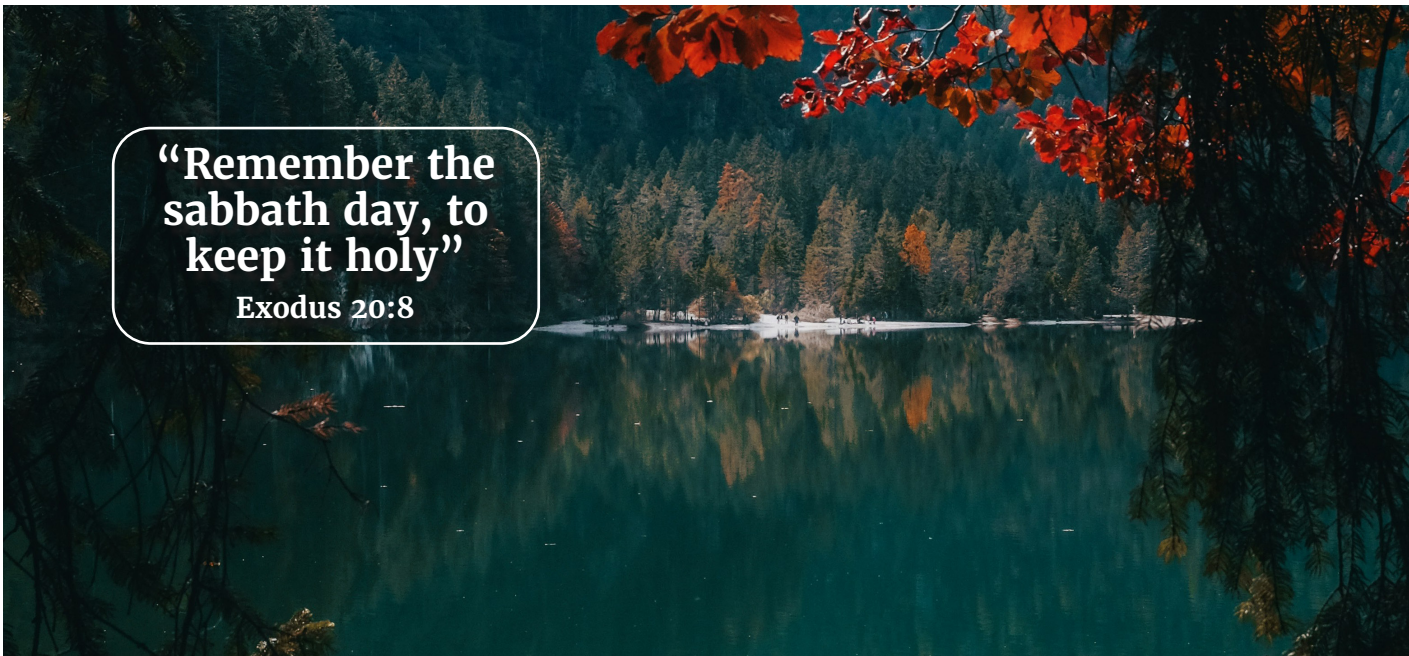
## IMPLANTING HOLINESS

The next part about Sabbath holiness is found in Exodus 31:14, 15: “You shall keep the Sabbath, because it is holy for you.” “Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the Lord.” In the instructions given in the desert of Sin (Exodus 16:23) and in the Decalogue (20:11), the Lord repeated exactly what He had declared at creation. Genesis 2:3. The blessed day is not a common day, when before or after the worship services one may do everything he is accustomed to doing on other days of the week. Israel as His people and the spiritual Israel of our days was to consider the Sabbath as a “holy” day, consecrated to the Lord, exactly as He had repeatedly declared.

Exodus 31:15 (like Exodus 35:2; Leviticus 23:3) is significant in that it uplifts true keeping, as the English Standard Version translates the verse: “The seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest.” The original Hebrew phrase is *šabbat šabbāṭôn*. Some versions translate the phrase as “solemn rest,” while others say, “a Sabbath

of complete rest,” and still others render it as “absolute rest” to indicate that the Lord was not willing for the people to rest only partially. To receive the Lord’s blessing, people should experience a “complete,” “solemn” rest. This emphasis on “complete rest” is confirmed in an Italian translation which, commenting on Exodus 31:15, observes that this verse is a “way of using the equivalent of a superlative.” —*La Sacra Bibbia con note a cura del Pontificio Istituto Biblico di Roma*, p. 150, note 15. This demonstrates that the holy day required the most careful, thorough observance.

The phrase “holy for you,” which is in verse 14, does not have the meaning of “only for you and not for others.” The text does not mention Gentiles as being excluded from the sanctification of the Sabbath. Neither here nor elsewhere is there any idea that keeps or excludes others from the Sabbath’s sanctification and corresponding blessing. “Holy for you” means that the Sabbath is for all who know the true God, who have the knowledge of His will, and who are the chosen people with whom the Lord has made a covenant, without preventing others who wish to follow the same principle. As we will see, Isaiah 56:1-7 clearly states that if someone else—meaning “the foreigner” or “Gentile”—converts to the Lord and “keeps the Sabbath,” he will receive the promised blessing accorded to God’s people. It is therefore in this context that we need to understand the phrases, “a sign between Me and you,” “between Me and the people of Israel” and “holy for you,” with the name “Israel” meaning not only “Jews” but also all of God’s people.



**“Remember the  
sabbath day, to  
keep it holy”**

**Exodus 20:8**



# WORLD IN BRIEF

# NEWS



**International  
Missionary  
Society**  
Seventh-day Adventist Church  
Reform Movement

**GC Good Samaritan Department** |

April 11, 2025

To: The Local Churches, Fields, Unions and Divisions

**Re: General Conference Good Samaritan Week – June 8-14, 2025, and Appeal for Support for the General Conference Good Samaritan Department Work**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Kindly accept warmest Christian greetings from the Brothers and Sisters of the General Conference Good Samaritan Department in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ with the words of Acts 4:32:

“And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.”

The story of the Good Samaritan recorded in Luke 10:30-35 illustrates the character of God – the character of love and compassion for those who are bruised, wounded and suffering. To live an unselfish life, to sacrifice our time, money, and earthly possessions for the good and blessings of others is a great privilege to be colaboures with Jesus Christ. Our Lord identifies Himself with the sufferings of our fellow human beings and considers deeds of love and mercy done to others as done unto Himself.

“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this: To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.” –(James 1:27)

As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.” –(Galatians 6:10)

“He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will He pay him.”- (Proverbs 19:17). “For the poor shall never cease out of the land therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land.”- (Deuteronomy 15:11)

Dear brothers and sisters around the world, to highlight the importance of the Christian virtues of unselfishness, benevolence, and compassion towards the poor and needy - the General Conference Good Samaritan Department has designated **June 8 -14, 2025**, as “**Good Samaritan Week.**”

During the week of **June 8 –14, 2025**, we are inviting our pastors, church leaders, and department leaders in our local churches, fields, and unions to prepare and present sermons and programs during your church services based on the theme: “***The Good Samaritan: Christian Love in Action.***”

We are appealing to our church members around the world to support the Good Samaritan work by praying



## WORLD IN BRIEF

# NEWS

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for the Department **especially during the week of June 8 -14, 2025** – and giving a special offering to the GC Good Samaritan Department during this week. Your financial support will be greatly appreciated and will enable the Department to provide help to more people who reach out to the Department for help.

We are also urging our members to support the Good Samaritan work in your local churches, fields, unions, and the GC Good Samaritan Department, through **systematic benevolence** – donating to this cause on a **regular** basis, regardless of the size of your gifts.

Currently, GC Good Samaritan Department receives calls for help from believers in many countries including Cuba, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Tanzania, Venezuela, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Benin, Nigeria, Honduras, Colombia, Peru, Guatemala, Bangladesh, and South Africa. The Department provides financial help to orphans, widows, the elderly, the sick, and those who need life-saving medical treatments – including dialysis, cardiac treatment, brain surgery, and cancer treatment.

We provide tuition, food, and school supplies support for school children in several countries including - Guatemala, Honduras, Benin, and Zimbabwe.

The General Conference Good Samaritan Department (GC GSD) also provides help to our members who are victims of wars and natural disasters – fires, floods, hurricanes, earthquakes, etc. The Department also provides help on a case-by-case basis to members who sustain serious injuries in motor vehicle and motorbike accidents.

Our GC GSD promotes and support the dignity of economic *self-reliance /self-sufficiency* of our church members - by providing support to churches, fields, and unions to establish viable business projects – (such as agricultural farming, honeybees farming, auto mechanics, et cetera) - that will provide employment and income to our members

The GC Good Samaritan Department Team wants to express our deepest appreciation and sincere thanks to our brothers and sisters from several European and other countries who generously donate to the GC Good Samaritan Department work on a regular basis. These donations are the lifeline of the Department. We urge ALL our members who can help relieve the sufferings of others to join us in this noble, God-approved, Good Samaritan work!

Thank you in advance for your benevolent and sacrificial support!

On behalf of the GC Good Samaritan Department Team,  
Your co-worker in Christ,

*Morris Lowe*

Brother Morris Lowe

GC Good Samaritan Department Leader

GC Help Ministry Leader







## The Sabbath Watchman

*A Voice of Hope, Truth, and Faithfulness*

Since its beginnings in 1919, The Sabbath Watchman has been more than just a publication—it has been a spiritual beacon for those who long to deepen their faith and live in obedience to God's commandments. In each issue, we seek to highlight the beauty of the Sabbath as a holy day, remembering its origin at Creation, its confirmation at Sinai, and its eternal significance as the seal of God upon His people.

This magazine is not only a space for deep study of the Word but also a means to strengthen the unity of the church on a global scale. Here you will find doctrinal articles, messages of hope, missionary experiences, and resources that invite you to live a consecrated life in preparation for the return of our Savior.





Dear reader, we pray that every page presented here may be a blessing to you, a guide, and a renewed call to keep the Sabbath not just as a day, but as a way of life in communion with the Creator.

International Missionary Society  
Seventh-day Adventist Church – Reform Movement  
[www.sda1844.org](http://www.sda1844.org) | [info@sda1844.org](mailto:info@sda1844.org)



*The Sabbath*  
Wachman

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