

The Sabbath Watchman

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Vol. 100, No. 3 – Beacon of hope, faith, and truth in a confused world.

The Fourth *Commandment* Part 3

WORLD IN BRIEF

- Italy
- Finland
- Egypt
- Ghana

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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.

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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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The Sabbath
Watchman

Binding as an *Everlasting Covenant*

By Antonino Di Franca

Completing instructions concerning the Sabbath, Exodus 31 explains the Sabbath as not just a covenant, but also “as a covenant forever”: “Therefore the people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observing the Sabbath throughout their generations, as a covenant forever. 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.” Exodus 31:16, 17.

These two verses stated four things concerning Sabbath observance:

- 1) “The people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath”
- 2) “Observing the Sabbath throughout their generations”
- 3) “As a covenant forever”
- 4) “It is a sign forever between Me and the people of Israel”

Three of these statements (2, 3, and 4) tell us about the perpetuity of the Sabbath. The first asserts that it was to exist “throughout their generations”; the second, “forever”; and the third, also “forever.” After reading such clear statements, one who bases his faith only on the Scriptures will have no doubts or uncertainties about the eternal existence of this holy institution. It will last “forever.” It will surpass the Hebrew era and the Christian era and will continue forever, as the prophet Isaiah confirmed when he told about the observance of the Sabbath in the new heaven and new earth: “For as the new heavens and the new earth that I make shall remain before Me, says the Lord, so shall your offspring and your name remain. From new moon to new moon, and from Sabbath to Sabbath all flesh shall come to worship before Me, declares the Lord.” Isaiah 66:22, 23.

Verse 16 also declares that the Sabbath will be celebrated or observed “as a covenant.” What does “as a covenant” mean? A “covenant” is not just some simple idea, proposal, or suggestion that is not firmly established; as an old Latin proverb says, it has nothing to do with *verba volant, scripta manent*, that is “the words fly, the writings remain.” A covenant is a binding agreement, commitment, or stipulation; once it is ratified, it is executed and binding on all of the parties to it. It cannot be changed, as the apostle Paul wrote: “Even with a manmade covenant, no one annuls it or adds to it once it has been ratified.” Galatian 3:15. No one changes or annuls a human covenant once it is ratified. Should a divine institution established “as a covenant” be any different or less binding? Let us therefore grasp that the Sabbath is not a transitory or temporary institution, but a firm, permanent, divine, everlasting covenant.

According to this Biblical concept, the Sabbath is not like the manna, which was given for forty years, in the time of the wilderness wandering, and then ceased. The Sabbath is also not like the earthly tabernacle that was constructed in the time of Moses and ceased to exist after 500 years, in the time of Salomon, nor like the temple that was built in the time of Solomon and was destroyed after almost 1,000 years in the year A.D. 70, when the Jews fought against the Romans. A number of verses confirm that the holy day is forever and will be observed in the new heaven and the new earth.

Despite such clear, repeated Biblical teachings, there are religious writers who consider the Sabbath to be a relative or temporary institution, valid only until the death of Christ on the cross. Based on this theory one person claims that the “Sabbath is ... temporary in nature,” and another that “the Sabbath is temporary and with the coming of

Christ has come to an end.” A third goes further, inventing another theory:

“The Sabbath is part of the law of Moses; and therefore, like the rest of the law, the Sabbath’s ultimate purpose was to teach men about the coming Messiah. Specifically, the Sabbath taught a spiritual lesson concerning the relationship between our works and spiritual rest. Under the Law of Moses, men performed physical work six days each week while looking forward to a day of rest each Saturday. But after the Sabbath ended, a new week of work began again. The physical Sabbath rest provided by the law was temporary and, ultimately, unsatisfying.” –*Which Day Is the True Sabbath?*

This thesis and similar ideas are not new and have had their supporters since the second century. Among them was Tertullian.

“It follows, accordingly, that, in so far as the abolition of carnal circumcision and of the old law is demonstrated as having been consummated at its specific times, so also the observance of the Sabbath is demonstrated to have been temporary.... But the Jews are sure to say, that ever since this precept was given through Moses, the observance has been binding. Manifest accordingly it is, that the precept was not eternal nor spiritual, but temporary, which would one day cease.” –Tertullian, *An Answer to the Jews*, Part I, chapter 4, Of the Observance of the Sabbath, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. III: Tertullian: Part I.

But others have seen the matter completely differently, as follows.

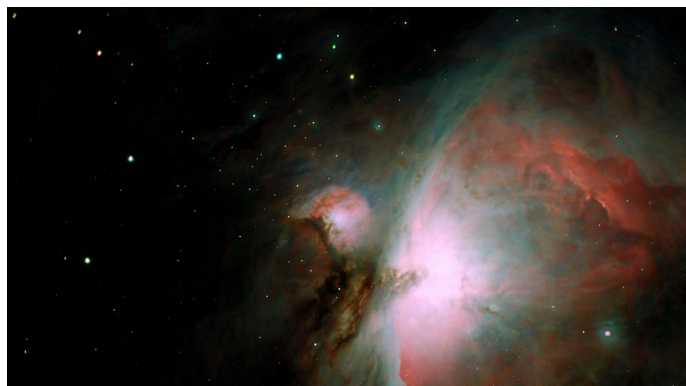
“If we examine the wording of the Sabbath commandment given at Sinai, we find that God bases His command on creation itself. It’s not based on the temporary ceremonial system of the people of Israel. It’s not based on a temporary epoch in redemptive history. Rather, God grounds the Sabbath on His own actions at the creation of the world.” –Tom Hicks, *6 Biblical Reasons to Observe the Sabbath*.

“The Ten Commandments were written in stone, while the ceremonial law was written in a book and hence it was also called the ‘Book of the Covenant.’ Have you ever heard the expression, ‘It is not written in stone?’ Written in stone means forever. On paper and in a book is temporary. So basically God had two specific laws. One was temporary, written

in a book, was not love, only for the Jews, practiced because of sin before Christ and why it was nailed to the cross. The other was eternal, written in stone, was love, for everyone, was sin to break and hence was NOT nailed to the cross. Now consider this question very carefully. If the Sabbath of the Lord was temporary and only for the Jews, which law would you place it in? In the temporary law or the eternal law? And is that where God placed His Sabbath? No! God placed His Sabbath exactly where it belonged. He placed it in the law that was love and eternal and for everyone along with the other Nine Commandments that obviously will never and can never end. Since God is not a fool or the author of confusion, then this alone reveals the truth.” –*“Sabbath Day Truth.”*

In reality, the ideas of Tertullian are not Biblical teaching but only human interpretation. If it had been that way, the Lord would have recorded in the Scriptures that the Sabbath would be for a limited time. The Holy Scriptures not only never define the Sabbath as temporary but emphasize just the opposite—that it extends “throughout ... generations” Exodus 31:13. Additionally, it explicitly teaches that it would last “as a covenant forever” (verse 16, emphasis supplied) and as “a sign forever.” Verse 17. How could the Sabbath be temporary if it was to last “forever” as a sign and a covenant? Just as God’s word, it “will stand forever” (Isaiah 40:8); and “forever” is the opposite of temporary.

Those who choose to follow their own opinions instead of the Bible may be numerous, but their numbers do not change the truth. Such theories produce much confusion in the religious world and create obstacles to people’s understanding and acceptance of the Biblical message. However, the testimony of the Bible remains clear, declaring even more times that Sabbath keeping will last “forev-



er,” so sincere, searching people will recognize the truth sooner or later.

Two authors who recognized that the Sabbath is not temporary wrote the following.

“Orders were now given that a tabernacle should be set up for the service of God. But they must not think that the nature of the work, and the haste that was required, would justify them in working at it on sabbath days. The Hebrew word ‘shabath’ signifies rest, or ceasing from labor. The thing signified by the Sabbath is that rest in glory which remains for the people of God; therefore the moral obligation of the Sabbath must continue, till time is swallowed up in eternity.” –*Matthew Henry Commentary*, comments on Exodus 31:12-17.

“... Keeping the Sabbath day is a sign of YHWH’s eternal covenant with His people for all future generations because, made in the image of God, Israel as His chosen and sanctified people is to reflect YHWH’s holy character and manifest His glory by manner of YHWH Himself.” –Edward G. Newing, “Up and Down–In and Out: Moses on Mount Sinai. The Literary Unity of Exodus 32-34,” in *Australian Biblical Review*, 41 (1993), p. 19.

“It is plain that the [Sabbath] day is regarded ... as ‘a sign’ of the covenant, and a means of realizing it in the study of God’s word, and the communion of the soul with Him. It is in these latter aspects also that the weekly day of rest still retains its inestimable value—that men ‘might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them.’” –*Ellicott’s Commentary for English Readers*, comments on Ezekiel 20:12.

EXAMPLE FROM THE DIVINE REST

The last of these important verses reiterates two aspects: The “sign forever” and the reason for being a sign—that “in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested.” “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.” Exodus 31:17). There is thus a link between these two things. God’s people are commanded to observe the Sabbath day, because it is a sign forever and is also a commemoration and imitation of the Creator’s rest. If after six days of activity God rested on the seventh day, how much



more should we follow His example as human beings who become weary and tired so quickly!

This is a very important aspect that Catholic, Hebrew, and Protestant writers agreed and commented on in reference to this and other verses.

“Primary motive of the institution of the Sabbath: to imitate the divine rest.”

“Motif principal de l’institution du Sabbat: imiter le divin repos.” –Louis-Claude Fillion, *La Sainte Bible Commentée [et illustrée] d’après la Vulgate et les textes originaux*, p. 293.

“... Humans who observe Sabbath become imitators of the divine action, partners in creation with God.” –Stephen A. Geller, “*Manna and Sabbath: A Literary Theological Reading of Exodus 16*,” *Interpretation* 59 (2005), p. 14.

“Moreover, the high point of the ... creation story is the seventh day when God stops all creative work on the Sabbath and thus sets it apart as special and holy, different from all other days. Genesis 2:1-3. Similarly, the high point of the ... manna story is the seventh day, the day when the Israelites imitate God and stop all work. Exodus 16:22-26).... Humans are commanded to stop their routines and do nothing on the seventh day just as God had done in the creation story. By their inaction on the seventh day, humans set thereby the completed week off as a finished period of time.” –Thomas B. Dozeman, *Methods for Exodus*, p. 31.

THE SABBATH IS NOT JUST FOR ISRAEL

As already noted in this chapter, the Lord said to His people that the Sabbath “is a sign between Me and you” (Exodus 31:13), “a sign forever between

Me and the people of Israel.” Exodus 31:17. Based on these two phrases—“Me and you” and “between Me and the people of Israel”—conclude that the Sabbath was only for Israel and call it the “Jewish Sabbath,” or “the Sabbath of the Jews.” They read the verse as if it were written, “It is a sign forever between Me and the people of Israel exclusively,” but exclusively is not part of the text. “Me and you,” or “between Me and the people of Israel” does not suggest exclusiveness or mean that, because the sign is described in such a way, the Lord intended the Sabbath to be only for the Israelites, excluding believers of other nationalities. Such thinking not only negates the true Biblical teaching, but also gives the impression that the Bible teaches that the Lord established the Sabbath only for the Jews, a concept that the Scriptures never teach. Two such people wrote the following:

“The Sabbath was inaugurated for the people of Israel to be celebrated as a weekly sign of the covenant. As a sign of the covenant, it was to last as long as that covenant. God instituted the Sabbath for His people as a constant, regular source of blessing for both spiritual and physical renewal; it was to express social concern and compassion. The Sabbath was a reminder that God was in control of man’s time. Trained by the regular recurrence of this gracious gift, Israel was able to stand before the Creator in freedom, responsibility, trust, and gratitude; she worshipped Him, the Lord of the Sabbath, and looked forward with joy and anticipation to the coming of the final Rest.” —Harold H.P. Dressler in *From Sabbath to Lord’s Day*, pp. 34, 35.

“In Exodus 31 the Lord tells Israel that the Sabbath is given to them as a sign—of what? Of the relationship between the Lord Himself on the one hand and His people on the other. What is that

relation? This: ‘that you may know that I am the Lord who sanctifies you.’ And ‘sanctify,’ we know, means to set apart, to make holy. God has taken Israel out of Egypt and set them apart, made them different from the Egyptians and the Canaanites and the Moabites, distinct. What was distinct about Israel; how were they different? This: Israel was God’s special people, and He was their God. And that’s to say that God made His covenant with Israel.” —C. Bouwman, *The Sabbath—a Sign of the Covenant*.

The first evidence that the Sabbath is not limited to the Jews is revealed by the fact that the Holy Scriptures never uses terms like “Jewish Sabbath,” “the Sabbath of the Jews” or “the Sabbath of the old covenant.” You may search as long as you may, but you will never find them. These definitions are strange to the teaching of the Bible and clearly opposed to it. The Scriptural definitions of the seventh day are “the Sabbath of the Lord” (Exodus 20:10; Leviticus 23:3), “holy Sabbath to the Lord” (Exodus 16:23), “My Sabbaths” (Exodus 31:13; Leviticus 19:3, 30; Isaiah 56:4; Ezekiel 20:12, 13, 16, 20, 21, 24; 22:8, 26; 23:38; 44:24), and “My holy day.” Isaiah 58:13. These verses refute the above idea and show that such explanations limiting God’s holy day disrespect His definition and consider human opinion to be above Scripture.

They could perhaps support their idea that the Sabbath was only for the Jews if anciently the Lord had had two groups of chosen peoples—the Jews and another one—and He had required Sabbath keeping only from the Jews; then their thesis might make sense. However, in Biblical times the Lord did not have two groups of chosen people and require the Jews to keep the Sabbath but not the other group, even while being His people and exempt from Sabbath keeping. Israel was His chosen people (Exodus 19:5, 6; Deuteronomy 7:6; 4:7; Isaiah 44:1, 8, 9; 45:4), those who recognized Him as the true God. He made His covenant with them (Exodus 24:8; Deuteronomy 5:3; Romans 9:4; 3:1, 2) and entrusted His law to them. Deuteronomy 4:8. Therefore, it was natural for Him to require them to keep His Sabbath, since the Sabbath was a sign between Him and them. They observed it, without excluding others from doing the same if they wished to belong to His people. Isaiah 56:1-7.



Many people interpret “Israel” in Exodus 31:17 as reductive, as an ethnic entity limited to the twelve tribes and excluding everyone else. While this is true in many instances when the term “Israel” appears in the Scriptures, many times the Bible uses the term “Israel” in a much wider, deeper sense to designate “the people of God.” See verses in the New Testament, such as Romans 9:6; 11:26; and Galatians 6:16, and in many examples in the Old Testament where “Israel” is synonymous with “My people.” Exodus 3:7,10; 5:1; 6:7; 7:4, 16; 8:1, 20-23; 9:1,13,17; 10:3, 4; 18:1; 22:25. In Egypt and later in many cases, Israel received God’s blessings, miracles, and divine instructions not because they carried a particular name, but because they were “the people of God”—His people. As such, it was proper that they were given the Sabbath as a sign between God and them.

Therefore, no one should attempt to make certain phrases take on a nationalistic meaning, for this would create numerous problems in understanding and explaining many verses. For example, how would one understand the phrase “Lord God of the Hebrews,” which appears in many places, including Exodus 3:18; 5:3; 7:16; 9:1, 13; 10:3? Is this to signify that the Lord is God only of the Hebrews? Who would doubt that “the God of the Hebrews” is the Lord is God of all who believe in Him, even if they do not belong the Hebrew people? What about the expression “your God,” in which “your” referred to the Israelites in instances such as Exodus 6:7; 16:12; 23:25; Leviticus 11:44, 45; 18:2, 4, and many others? It is clear that the word “your” referred to Israel—God’s people—without excluding the fact that the Lord is also the God of the Gentiles. In the same way, we should not understand “Israel,” as it appears in Exodus 31:17, as denying that other people are included in God’s

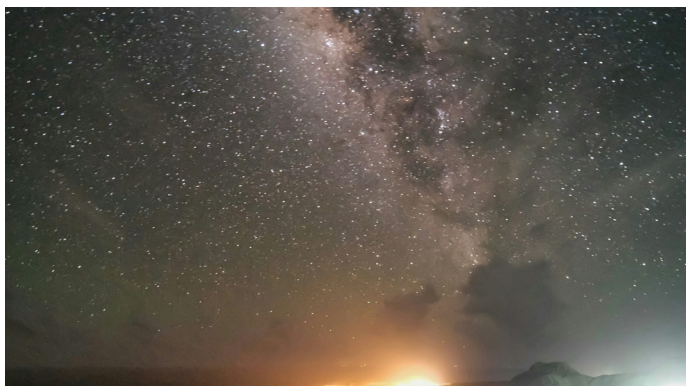
provisions, promises, blessings, prerogatives, and requirements to honor the Sabbath that the Lord gave to Israel.

Other important aspects to consider here are the reasons why the Lord gave the sign to Israel and makes no mention of any other nations. Would the Lord exclude any Gentiles from receiving the sign if they would convert and observe the Sabbath day? Surely not. They could not have the sign if they were not converted. However, if they would repent and keep holy the Sabbath, the Lord would embrace them with the Sabbath’s blessings (Isaiah 56:1-7) and include them in His sign. In no place do the Scriptures deny this possibility. Thus, the sign is not an exclusive identity of Israel as a nation, but a sign identifying spiritual Israel, the people of God throughout all time.

Unfortunately, people are known to interpret Bible verses such as Exodus 31:13, 17 as meaning that the Sabbath is a sign for Israel alone, even if other people believe in Him, while others deduce that they themselves have nothing to do with it, believing that are completely and for all time exempt from its observance. The reality is that such concepts, although widespread, do not exist in the Scriptures but are totally foreign to it—and to God’s character.

The Lord gave the Sabbath to Israel, just as He gave them all of the Ten Commandments, the Sabbath being the fourth of them. This is evident in the introductory sentence in Exodus 20:2: “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.” Those who experienced the deliverance from Egyptian slavery were clearly the Israelites, and they were given the Ten Commandments. Deuteronomy 5:6 says: “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.” The freed people were the Israelites, and they were the ones who received the Ten Commandments.

Since the above sentence refers to the Israelites, did that mean that the Lord exempted everyone else from obeying the Decalogue? Obviously, we all believe that this is not a reason to confine the Decalogue to Israel. The Decalogue is for all human-kind and so is the fourth commandment. As He has not exempted us Gentiles from observing the Decalogue, He has not exempted us from respect-



ing the Sabbath. Israel was made the guardian of the Decalogue, but the Lord did not make them the owners of it; the same is true of the Sabbath day.

The Sabbath was not given to be an exclusive sign for Israel alone, because God was the One who rested on the seventh day of creation, not Israel. The Lord requires the Sabbath to be kept holy because He rested on that day and blessed and hallowed it. Israel did not even exist at that time.

The Lord connected the origin of the Sabbath with the creation of humanity, both of which came into being a long time before the formation of nations and the people of Israel. The Sabbath, therefore, does not have an origin that is common with the Jewish people. When God chose Israel as His people and gave them blessings, promises, commandments, and the Sabbath (Exodus 19:5, 6; 20:1-17), everything that God gave them retained its prior nature and became Jewish only because Israel was its recipient. When He entrusted the Sabbath to them, it was not so they would become the exclusive depositaries of it, but because they were already His people and received all the oracles of God. The Lord planned for them to be a light to idolaters, to spread the message He gave them and to bear fruit, because other nations had fallen into polytheism (idolatry) and so were not able to receive God's revelation and law directly from Him, being "strangers to the covenants of promise." Ephesians 2:12.

Israel was adopted and received glory, the covenant, the law, oracles, worship, prophecies, and promises. Romans 3:2; 9:4. Did the Lord exclude everyone else from receiving these great blessings because He delivered them only to Israel? He made Israel the first receiver and the steward, not the exclusive owner. The same is true with the Sabbath; He gave it to them but never said that it was only for Israel. He gave it to them so they would be the intermediary, the people of God who were responsible to spread the light to the world. The message was supposed to come from Zion and spread everywhere around the world. It was written, "Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." Isaiah 2: 3; cf. Micah 4:2. "... Darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and His glory will be seen upon you. And nations

shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising." Isaiah 60:2, 3.

Among others is the promise of the "new covenant" (Jeremiah 31:31-33; Hebrews 8:10-12), which was made with "the house of Israel and the house of Judah." Did the Lord include others in the new covenant when He promised it to Israel? Yes, fully. In the same way, although He gave it to Israel to take care of, everyone has the opportunity to receive the blessings of the Sabbath.

The Jews had an "advantage" over other people. What was that? The apostle Paul wrote that "the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God." Romans 3:2. Yes, the Lord addressed His oracles to them! He entrusted all written revelation to them! Will someone renounce the Holy Scriptures and say that they belonged only to Israel because they were entrusted to them? A true Christian believer will never renounce to the holy Scriptures. So, why should it be different for the blessed day?

Concerning this, two authors, Ellen G. White and Gary Hullquist, wrote the following:

"In our day," writes a Bible author, "there are many who reject the creation Sabbath as a Jewish institution and urge that if it is to be kept, the penalty of death must be inflicted for its violation; but we see that blasphemy received the same punishment as did Sabbath breaking. Shall we therefore conclude that the third commandment also is to be set aside as applicable only to the Jews? Yet the argument drawn from the death penalty applies to the third, the fifth, and indeed to nearly all the ten precepts, equally with the fourth. Though God may not now punish the transgression of His law with temporal penalties, yet His word declares that the wages of sin is death; and in the final execution of the judgment it will be found that death is the portion of those who violate His sacred precepts." —Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 409.

"It is significant that never does Scripture refer to the seventh day as 'the Jewish Sabbath' or 'the Sabbath of Moses.' The Creator claims the Sabbath as His own consistently throughout the Bible record:

"The Sabbath of the Lord thy God."

Exodus 20:10; Leviticus 23:3.

"Keep My Sabbaths: I am the Lord your God." Leviticus 19:3.

“‘Ye shall keep My Sabbaths.’
 Leviticus 19:30.
 “‘My holy day,... the Sabbath.’
 Isaiah 58:13.
 “‘I gave them My Sabbaths.’
 Ezekiel 20:12.
 “‘My Sabbaths they greatly polluted.’
 Ezekiel 20:13.
 “‘They polluted My Sabbaths.’
 Ezekiel 20:16, 21, 24; 22:8.
 “‘Hallow My Sabbaths.’ Ezekiel 20:20.”
 –Gary Hullquist, *Sabbath Diagnosis: A
 Diagnostic History and Physical Exam-
 ination of the Biblical Day of Rest*, p. 41

“The word sanctify literally means ‘to make holy.’
 In other words, the purpose of keeping the Sabbath
 was to teach Israel that Yahweh alone would make
 His people holy. There was nothing that they could
 do, no work that they could perform or duty they
 could keep to sanctify themselves. Rather, they
 were to rest from all their work on the seventh day
 as a perpetual reminder that only Yahweh could
 make them holy.” –Jacob D. Gerber, *Bible Medita-
 tion for Exodus 31*.

“... As the Sabbath was appointed in memory
 of God’s having finished the work of creation in six
 days, and of His having rested on the seventh; so
 the Jews, by observing this Sabbath, did testify
 their belief in the Creator of heaven and earth; and
 profess themselves to be the servants and worship-
 pers of the true God, in opposition to the idols that
 made not the heaven and earth: at the same time
 the idolatrous nation of Egypt, from which the Isra-
 elites were delivered, and the other idolatrous na-
 tions which lived around them, had renounced the
 worship of the true God, and so would not observe
 His Sabbath.” –Hallett, as quoted in *Thomas Koke
 Commentary on the holy Bible*, Commentary on
 Exodus 31:13.

“KEEP MY SABBATHS”

The Sabbath was not a sign that Israel adopt-
 ed on its own initiative. It was God’s sign identi-
 fying His people; it was a sign that on their part
 indicated dedication and consecration to God, and

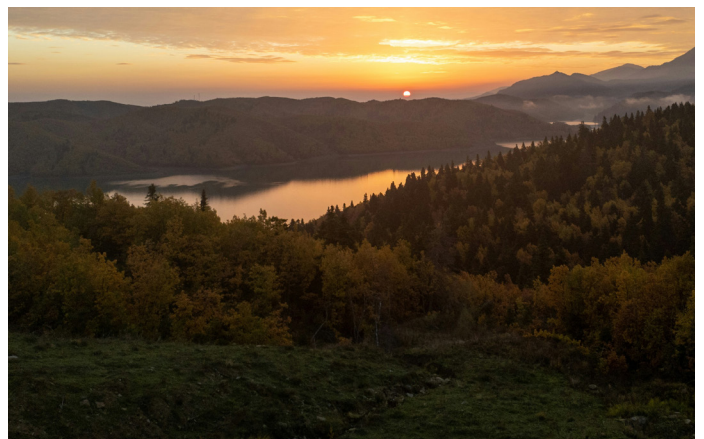
on God’s part that He was the One who sanctified
 them. Two books, Exodus and that of the prophet
 Ezekiel, attest to this:

“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.” “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 rest-
 ed and was refreshed.” Exodus 31:13, 17. “More-
 over, I gave them My Sabbaths, as a sign between
 Me and them, that they might know that I am the
 Lord who sanctifies them.” “And 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 20:12, 20.

It is interesting to note that in this part of Exo-
 dus, made up of just five verses (31:13-17), the
 Lord invited His people three times to keep the
 Sabbath.

“You are to speak to the people of Israel and say,
 ‘Above all you shall keep My Sabbaths, for this is a
 sign between Me and you throughout your genera-
 tions, that you may know that I, the LORD, sanctify
 you.’ “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.” “Therefore
 the people of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, observ-
 ing the Sabbath throughout their generations, as a
 covenant forever.” Exodus 31:13, 14, 16.

These invitations followed those in Exodus
 16:23, 25, 26, 29; 20:8-11. When connected
 with more verses in which the Lord calls the bless-
 ed day “My Sabbaths.” (Exodus 31:13; Leviticus
 19:3, 30; 26:2; Isaiah 56:4; Ezekiel 20:12, 13,



16, 20, 21, 24; 22:8; 23:38:44:24), all together the sacred writings move every searching soul to recognize that the Lord clearly revealed His will concerning His holy day of rest. Let the Lord touch our hearts and minds as we meditate on His many appeals so we will accept His call and decide to keep the sacred day that He called “My Sabbath.” In this way, we will honor Him and receive His promised blessing.

Since the Lord sanctified the Sabbath from the beginning, today we are the ones who sanctify it. Therefore, let us keep it holy because “the way in which the Sabbath is made holy is connected with the way in which we observe it.” –Rob Muthiah, *The Sabbath Experiment: Spiritual Formation for Living in a Non-Stop World*, p. 12.

ADDITIONAL QUOTATIONS

There are many writers who have seen the validity and holiness of the Sabbath, as reported in Exodus 31:13-17, including the ones below.

“The covenant Law was to be observed every day of the week, yet the Sabbath was set apart, consecrated, sanctified, or made holy and distinct from all other days to be observed with special regulations and privileges. The tremendous importance of the Sabbath is alluded to by the fact that it was the sign of the covenant between YHWH and Israel, to be kept in order ‘that you may know that I am the Lord who sanctifies you.’ Cf. Exodus 31:13). Though the people were called to be holy in their daily living (cf. Leviticus 11:44), this was a distinctly holy day (cf. Exodus 16:23; 20:8; 31:14; 35:2; Leviticus 23:3). Built into the weekly cycle of time, the Lord sanctified and blessed one holy day amid the common days (cf. Genesis 2:2, 3; Exodus 20:11), later to be declared holy to both the people and the Lord (cf. Exodus 31:14, 15) and “a holy convocation.” Leviticus 23:3.” –M.V. Pereira, *Contexts of Worship, Understanding Worship in the Various Situations of Life*, pp. 19, 20.

“When God reaffirmed the Sabbath for Israel, the Sabbath was more than a commandment; according to Exodus 31:13, 17 (cp. Ezekiel 20:12), the Sabbath functioned as a sign of the covenant

relationship by which He sanctified the Israelites. This function applied to Israel a principle which had been inherent in the Sabbath since Creation. On the seventh day of Creation, God sanctified the Sabbath (Genesis 2:2, 3), a unit of time. Why? In order to affect those who observe this special time. How would they be affected? They would emulate their holy Creator and acknowledge their ongoing connection with Him. Because they would belong to God, who is intrinsically holy, they would gain holiness from Him. In other words, the Sabbath would be a sign that God makes people holy, just as God explicitly said in Exodus 31:13 with particular reference to the Israelites. From the beginning, His desire has been for all people to enjoy a holy relationship with Him.” –Roy Gane, “Sabbath and the New Covenant,” in *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 10/1-2, 1999, p. 325.

“The Sabbath is a sign because it identifies the true God of creation—the Creator—and it also identifies His people that He sanctifies. The Sabbath is God’s Sabbath, not the Jewish Sabbath. Never does the Bible call it the “Jewish Sabbath.” The Sabbath was made for man. So said Jesus. Mark 2:27. It was made when man was made. Genesis 2:1-3. It was made to keep man in the true knowledge of the identity of the true God; to keep him from idolatry! And history proves that every nation that did not keep God’s Sabbath worshiped false gods, and did not know who the true God was!

“The Sabbath sets one apart from the world—and always did—as obeying and belonging to God. Can you think of any reason why anyone would ever keep the Sabbath, except to obey God? Would any man defy human custom and invite persecution, and be set apart as different, through human reason? The Sabbath identifies God’s people!” *The Mark of the Beast*, November 2005.

“The Sabbath’s nature as a ‘sign’ relates both to God and to man. As the rainbow is a perpetual guarantee that God will never again destroy all flesh on earth by a universal flood (see Genesis 9:13, 15), so the Sabbath is a ‘sign of guarantee’ whereby God assures in His efficacious grace that He will sanctify His people and make them holy. Because the Sabbath is part of the covenant that

establishes the beneficial relationship between God and His people, it has been pointed out that 'the Creator has stamped on world history the sign of the Sabbath as His seal of ownership and authority.' Indeed, the Sabbath commandment identifies (1) the Lord of the Sabbath as Creator (Exodus 20:11; 31:17); and (2) the sphere of His ownership and authority—'heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them.' Exodus 20:11, Revised Standard Version. The Sabbath functions as a 'sign' or a 'seal' having characteristics typical of seals ratifying ancient Near Eastern international treaty documents. This nature of the Sabbath as a sign or seal allows the true Sabbathkeeper to acknowledge God as the Creator and ReCreator who has ownership and authority over all creation and also over himself or herself. In keeping the Sabbath, the believer manifests that he or she belongs fully to God and His commandment-keeping people. Thus, the Sabbath is a sign that communicates the unique relationship between God and those who belong to Him who is both their covenant God and sanctifier." —G. Hasel, *"God's Perpetual Gift to Man,"* Ministry, September 1982.

"The Sabbath is grounded in Creation and linked with redemption. It is an agent of rest from work and confronts man's religious and social relationship.... Its nature is universal, and it serves all mankind. It is concerned with worship as well as with joy and satisfaction. The themes of Creation, Sabbath, redemption, and sanctification are inseparably linked together, and with the Sabbath's covenant aspect they reach into the eschatological future." —Gerhard Hasel, *"The Sabbath in the Pentateuch,"* in Kenneth A. Strand (ed.), *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, p. 21.

Still referring to the Sabbath as a sign of sanctification, other authors wrote:

"Hasel noted that the very nature of a sign signifies that it points to something beyond itself.... This concept is true with regard to the sanctity of the Sabbath. The origin of Sabbath holiness is the Creator God, who sanctified this day in creation times. Genesis 2:3. Holiness, as God's attribute, signifies that He is completely different, beyond all that is mundane, and totally independent.

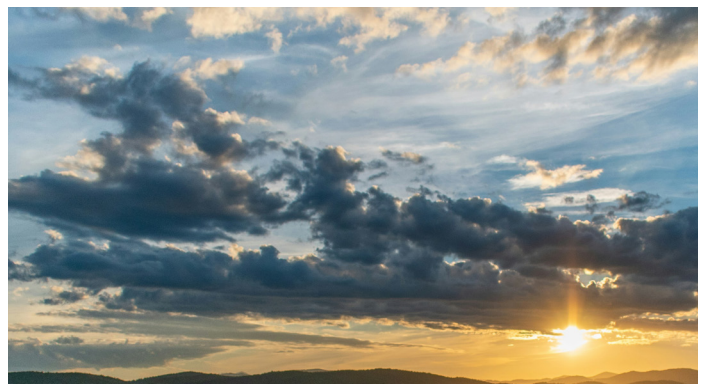
"Viewed from that perspective, Shapiro noted that God's holiness 'denotes absolute selflessness'

in order to 'give everything of Himself.'... The Sabbath, then, sanctified by the God who gives everything of Himself, lays the foundation for the concept of the Sabbath commandment where the Sabbath observer will be sanctified by YHWH. Exodus 31:13....

"The Sabbath observer's sanctification is bound up with the expression ... 'to know.' The Sabbath is called a sign 'to know ... that I am YHWH your Sanctifier....' Exodus 31:13. The infinitive construct of the verb ... 'know' is placed into a purpose clause and denotes the basic concept of an intimate divine-human relationship between YHWH and the Sabbath observer.... The Sabbath observer knows YHWH personally and intimately as his sanctifier....

"The divine-human relationship expressed in the Sabbath commandment is twofold: (1) It refers to the relationship between YHWH and the Sabbath observer from within the community of people and is based upon the saving act of YHWH for all people; and (2) it includes the personal relationship between YHWH and the Sabbath observer from the individual perspective, even from the individual who is able to perform sacred work because he is filled with the Spirit of God....

"The model for making the Sabbath results from an interesting conceptual inversion included in the text of the following verse: God 'made' ... the heavens and the earth during the six days, but ceased (sabbathed) on the seventh day. Thus, when the Sabbath observer responds to YHWH by enacting Sabbath, he follows the making model of the Creator God by working through the six weekdays toward the seventh day. According to God's creational activity, Sabbath-making begins with the first day of the week and culminates in completion of his work, rest and refreshment from



the work, and sanctification.” –Mathilde Frey, *The Sabbath in the Pentateuch: an Exegetical and Theological Study*, Dissertations, 2011, pp. 215, 216, 235, 219.

On the same issue of the Sabbath as a sign, another author added the following:

“True observance of the Sabbath is the sign of loyalty to God.” –Ellen G. White, *Last Day Events*, p. 220.

“Had Israel as a nation preserved her allegiance to Heaven, Jerusalem would have stood forever, the elect of God.” –Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 19.

“The fourth commandment alone of all the ten contains the seal of the great Lawgiver, the Creator of the heavens and the earth.” –Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 350 (1900).

“The observance of the Lord’s memorial, the Sabbath instituted in Eden, the seventh-day Sabbath, is the test of our loyalty to God....

“A mark is placed upon every one of God’s people, just as verily as a mark was placed over the doors of the Hebrew dwellings to preserve the people from the general ruin. God declares, ‘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.’ Ezekiel 20:12.” –Ellen G. White, *Last Days Events*, pp. 220, 221.

Clarifying the nature of the Sabbath even further as a divine institution, the following commentators concluded the following:

“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, the memorial of the creation, by degrees lost the knowledge of the Creator, and gave the creature the honor due to Him alone.” –Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, vol. 1, Genesis to Deuteronomy, comments on Exodus 31:13.

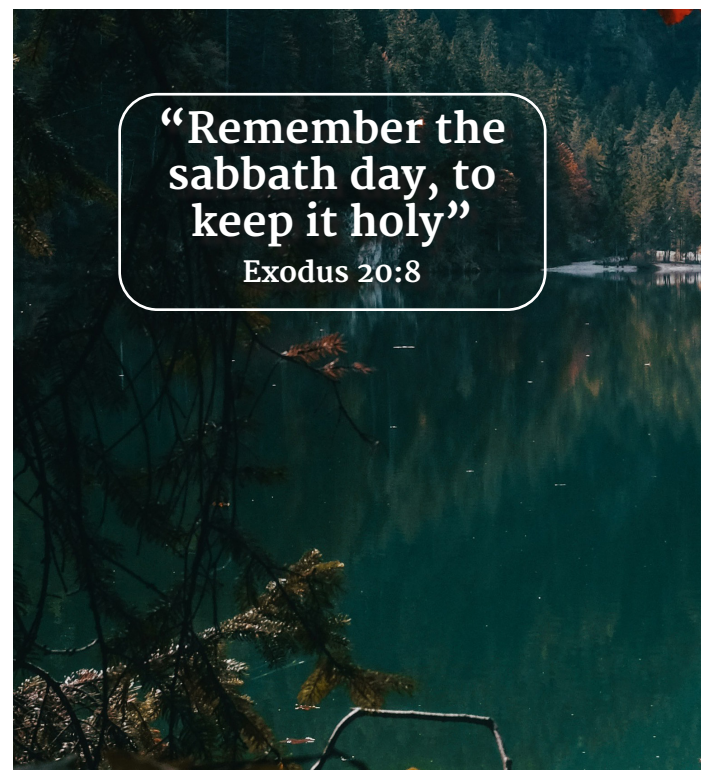
“The sabbath, as a day observed weekly in honor of Jehovah, and kept sacred to Him, is a constantly recurring memorial of Israel’s dedication to Him, and of the covenant-relation subsisting between them. Compare Ezekiel 20:12 ...

that men may know (Hebrew. simply to know: so Psalm 67:2, etc.), 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.” –*Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*, comments on Exodus 31:13.

“The law of the Sabbath is also a part of the moral law; and as such is of perpetual obligation.” –L. Coleman, “Historical Sketch of the Christian Sabbath,” *Bibliotheca Sacra and Theological Review*, vol. 1, no. 3, 1844, p. 528.

“By keeping the sabbath day as a day of holy rest the Israelites would know–i.e., would realize severally in their own persons, that God was their Sanctifier. Sanctification would be the fruit of their obedience.” –*Pulpit Commentary*, comments on Exodus 31:13.

“It seems clear, therefore, that the divine origin and institution of the Sabbath took place at the beginning of human history. At that time God not only provided a divine example for keeping the seventh day as a day of rest, but also blessed and set apart the seventh day for the use and benefit of man.” –G.H. Waterman, “Sabbath,” *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. v, p. 183.



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

Exodus 20:8



EUROPE

European Leaders' Christian Symposium Begins in Tortoreto, Italy

Tortoreto, Italy — Under the motto “Growing in Grace” (2 Peter 3:18), the European Leaders Christian Symposium organized by the European Division began on July 21, 2025. Among the keynote speakers were Pastor Franco Caputo, Pastor José Vicente Giner, Pastor Adalicio Fontes, and Pastor Tzvetan Petkov, President of the General Conference.

Throughout the week, participants reflected on pastoral service, unity in doctrine, and the spiritual education of leaders and youth. The meetings concluded on Sabbath, July 26, 2025, with sermons by Pastor Tzvetan Petkov and Pastor Wilmer Guevara.

“But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” — 2 Peter 3:18.

ITALY





Souls Baptized in Toijala, Finland, Europe

Toijala, Finland — In a joyful atmosphere of faith, one sister and one brother were baptized on Friday, August 8, 2025, by Pastor Vladimire Marinov, European Division Committee Member of the IMS. The mild 20°C day made the occasion especially memorable as both believers publicly declared their commitment to Christ.

Toijala, now part of Akaa municipality in southern Finland, is a quiet town where the gospel continues to reach new hearts across northern Europe.

“Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world”
Matthew 28:20.

FINLAND





AFRICA

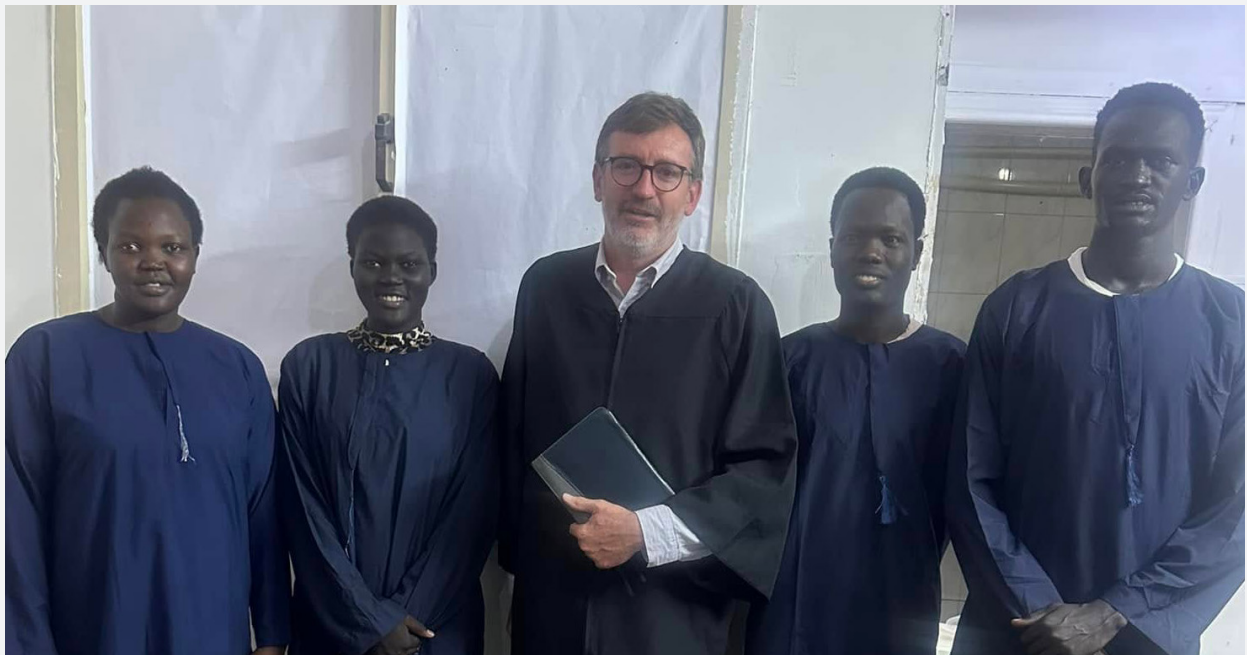
Souls Baptized in Egypt – Faith Shines by the Nile

Cairo, Egypt — Four believers – two sisters and two brothers – were recently baptized in Egypt by Pastor Pablo Hunger, Evangelism Department Leader at the General Conference.

Egypt, one of the world's most ancient nations, received Christianity through Mark the Evangelist in the first century. With a population exceeding 107 million, it remains a vital field for the spreading of the everlasting gospel.

“Out of Egypt have I called My son” Hosea 11:1.

EGYPT



GHANA

Baptisms in Ashaiman Jericho, Ghana, Africa

Ashaiman, Ghana — Great joy filled the hearts of believers as four souls – two sisters and two brothers – were baptized on Sabbath, August 23, 2025, in Ashaiman Jericho. The ceremony was conducted by Pastor Mohammed In-ussah, with confirmation by Brother Abukari Yaw Sampson, Multimedia Department Leader for the Ghana Field.

Ashaiman, home to more than 200,000 inhabitants, is known for its vibrant spirit of faith. Each baptism adds another light to the growing family of believers in West Africa.

“Then they that gladly received his word were baptized ...”
Acts 2:41.



The Sabbath

Wachman

July - September 2025

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