

Sabbath Observance

Key Verse:
***“Wherefore the
children of Israel
shall keep the
sabbath, to observe
the sabbath
throughout their
generations, for a
perpetual
covenant.”***
—Exodus 31:16

Selected Scripture:
Exodus 31:12-18

WHEN WE THINK OF SABBATH day observance, we may at first reflect upon it strictly as being a day of rest from earthly labors. (Exod. 20:10) However, upon conducting a thorough examination of the numerous aspects of this subject, we come to see that there is much more that is implied than merely a day of temporal rest each week.

In our selected verses, the keeping of the Sabbath is directly connected to holiness and sanctification. It is spoken of as “a sign . . . that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you. Ye shall keep the Sabbath; . . . for it is holy unto you. . . . [It] is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD.” (Exod. 31:13-15) It is later identified as “the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the LORD.”—Exod. 16:23

Our Key Verse states that Sabbath observance was to be for a “perpetual covenant.” The word translated “perpetual” is the Hebrew word *olam*, which means: always, everlasting, or age-lasting. The keeping of the Sabbath, part of the Mosaic Law arrangement, was to continue in force until such time as a better law would come through Christ. (Heb. 8:5,6) Thus, like all other features of Israel’s law, it was a shadow of greater things to come—a greater, more complete, and eternal rest.

The nature and intent of the Sabbath, by God’s own

declaration, put an honor upon its observance to be esteemed as something of great value to each Israelite. It was a “sign” between God and his people that, just as “he rested, and was refreshed,” following his creative works, they too, would be given a similar opportunity to be refreshed from each week’s labors. (Exod. 31:17) This was a mark of great favor to the Israelites, and a sign that he had distinguished them from all other people. Faithful observance of the Sabbath would be an indicator of their obedience to him. It would also serve as a constant reminder that they were to be holy, separated from all other nations, to serve and worship God. “Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I am the LORD your God. And ye shall keep my statutes, and do them: I am the LORD which sanctify you.”—Lev. 20:7,8

The words, “sanctify yourselves,” and “I am the LORD which sanctify you,” apply with even more force to spiritual Israel. Let us reflect upon Paul’s words in this regard. “Ye are washed, . . . ye are sanctified.” “Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.” “God hath . . . chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” “If a man therefore purge himself, . . . he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work.”—I Cor. 6:11; Eph. 5:25,26; II Thess. 2:13; II Tim. 2:21

The spiritual Israelite who has consecrated himself unreservedly to do God’s will, is spoken of as being of “them that are sanctified by God the Father.” (Jude 1) As this process continues, by faith, we enter into God’s rest. “We which have believed do enter into rest. . . . He that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest.” (Heb. 4:3,10,11) Our complete rest will come when we hear the words, “enter thou into the joy of thy lord.”—Matt. 25:23 ■