The Sabbath and Israel

A 4-Lesson Study by Keith Blades | Enjoy the Bible Ministries®

Study Overview & Lesson Summaries

About This Series

This four-lesson series examines the seventh-day (weekly) Sabbath and its role in God's program with the nation of Israel. Designed to complement two other series — A Short History of God's Program With Israel and A Survey of Israel's Calendar — this study provides a strategic grasp upon the issue of the seventh-day Sabbath in God's program with Israel: highly significant there, not highly significant in this present dispensation of grace. Beginning with fundamental issues, the series moves through the Sabbath as covenant and sign, its connection to God's original design and purpose for the earth, and the second sabbath after the first — its accomplishment vested in the nation Israel — ending with the Lord of the Sabbath.

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Lessons at a Glance

Lesson	Core Focus
Lesson 1	Defining the sabbath as rest; the plurality of sabbaths in Israel's program; Israel's need to be taught the seventh-day sabbath's significance
Lesson 2	The sabbath as covenant and sign in Israel's program; its absence of significance in the dispensation of grace (Colossians 2:16–17)
Lesson 3	God's original design and purpose for the earth; the first sabbath; Satan's usurpation and the delayed "second sabbath after the first"
Lesson 4	Israel's role in God's plan and purpose for the earth; the Abrahamic covenant; the Feast of Tabernacles; Christ as Lord of the Sabbath

Lesson Summaries

L1

Foundations of the Sabbath *What Is the Sabbath — and What Kind?*

- The series focuses specifically on the seventh-day (weekly) sabbath in Israel's program — not all sabbaths in scripture
  - About 135 occurrences of "sabbath" in scripture (about 35 of "sabbaths"); this study provides a strategic grasp of its doctrinal significance

What Is a Sabbath?

- The sabbath means REST — ceasing from all work on the seventh day (Exodus 16:23; 20:8–11; 31:15)
  - God rested on the seventh day following six days of creation (Exodus 20:11)
  - Israel was to labor six days and rest on the seventh, mirroring God's creation pattern

More Than One Kind of Sabbath

- There is more than one kind of sabbath in Israel's program: the seventh-day sabbath is distinct from what God calls "my sabbaths" (Exodus 31:12–13)
  - "my sabbaths" = the package of all the other days God designates as sabbaths (examples: Day of Atonement, Feast of Trumpets, Feast of Tabernacles, the land's sabbath) — one big sign of the necessity of the totality of his Jehovahness and grace put in effect for Israel to be sanctified
  - The seventh-day sabbath stands apart as the most fundamental and has its own distinct sign significance

Israel Had to Be Taught the Sabbath

- From the time God originally established the sabbath until Mount Sinai, no one observed the sabbath — God had not yet made it known (Nehemiah 9:14)
  - God made known his holy sabbath to Israel at Mount Sinai — not to anybody else; until then Sabbath keeping wasn't an issue
- The seventh-day sabbath is highly significant in God's program with Israel; it is NOT highly significant in this dispensation of grace, where any day Sabbath observing is a doctrinal error

L2

Highly Significant — But Not For Us *The Sabbath as Covenant and Sign in Israel's Program*

- The seventh-day sabbath is described as holy unto Israel AND holy unto the Lord — a perpetual covenant and sign (Exodus 31:14–17)
  - Violating it carried the death penalty, underscoring its critical weight in Israel's covenantal relationship with God
  - "It *is* a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever" (Exodus 31:17)

The Dispensation of Grace: A Different Program

- The mystery of Christ — God's secret purpose first revealed to the Apostle Paul — is a completely different program from God's program with Israel
  - Members of the body of Christ are not "spiritual Israelites"; our role pertains to the heavenly places, not the earth's kingdom program
- Paul warns the body of Christ against being judged in sabbath days — these are "a shadow of things to come" in Israel's program, not applicable to us (Colossians 2:16–17)

God's Design and Purpose for the Earth

- The sabbath is integrally connected to God's original design for the earth as the place of his residence
  - God stretches out the heavens as a tent to dwell in (Isaiah 40:22; Psalm 104:2–3)
  - He created the earth "not in vain" — he formed it to be inhabited (Isaiah 45:18)
  - The culmination: the New Jerusalem comes down from God, and the tabernacle of God is with men (Revelation 21:1–3)
- Israel's sabbath observance keeps before them the reality that God's original purpose for the earth is tied to his program with them

L3

God's Design for the Earth *The First Sabbath and the Usurper*

- Every time Israel kept the weekly sabbath, they were commemorating the original seventh day — God's declaration that everything was prepared for his residence to come down (Genesis 2:1–3)

God's Holy Habitation on Earth

- God's design for the earth is to make it his holy habitation; Moses describes the land three ways: a mountain of inheritance, a place he's going to dwell in, the sanctuary (Exodus 15:13, 17)
  - A marvelous parallel with the original six days of creation: the whole earth, then Eden, then the garden eastward in Eden — and Moses acknowledges all three
- God blessed the original seventh day — declaring it done — and in sanctifying it designated the "second sabbath after the first" as when his residence would come down

Satan's Usurpation

- Satan's action in Genesis 3 — getting Adam and his wife to sin — made him the usurped possessor of the earth (Job 1:6–7; 2:1–2; Isaiah 14:12–14)
  - Satan flaunts before God that he is possessor of the earth; the "second sabbath after the first" has been delayed as a result
  - The title Most High means "possessor of heaven and earth" (Genesis 14:18) — Satan did usurp both realms
- God created the nation Israel as the nation of his own creation to be the means of dealing with Satan's usurpation and accomplishing his original design for the earth
  - The Lord declared his own repossession plans — and those are vested in the nation of Israel

L4

Israel's Role and the Lord of the Sabbath *The Covenant, the Calendar, and the Fulfillment*

- The Abrahamic covenant (Genesis 12) — God invests in Abraham and his seed the accomplishment of his original design for the earth, going on the offensive against Satan's usurpation
  - "Israel" means "God's ruler" — the power vested in God to rule once again on this earth is being given to Jacob and his seed (Genesis 32:28)
  - God's plan, vested in Abraham and his seed: deal with the adversary, repossess this earth, demolish the plan of evil, bring his residence down

The Calendar Preserves the Pattern

- Israel's weekly sabbath reminds them on a constant basis of God's original design and purpose for this earth — and that they are the means God has chosen to bring it to pass
- The Feast of Tabernacles (Leviticus 23:39) features two sabbaths — a first and an eighth-day sabbath — replicating the first/second sabbath pattern on the yearly calendar
  - The Feast of Tabernacles foreshadows Jehovah-Shammah: the Lord here on this earth in his city, occupying his holy habitation (Zechariah 14:16, 18)
  - The entire calendar ends with this double-sabbath pattern, commemorating the fulfillment of God's original purpose

Christ as Lord of the Sabbath

- Luke 6:1 — "And it came to pass on the second sabbath after the first" — in connection with the Feast of Tabernacles; there the Son of Man is "Lord also of the sabbath"
  - As the Son of Man he fulfills Genesis 3:15 in connection with the Davidic covenant — the one who puts all of God's Jehovahness and grace into effect
- In God's program with Israel, seventh-day sabbath keeping commemorates the original design and purpose for this earth, declared when God blessed and sanctified the first Sabbath, and foreshadows the second sabbath after the first

Key Doctrinal Distinctions

The Seventh-Day Sabbath vs. "my sabbaths"

Israel's program featured two distinct categories of sabbath. The seventh-day (weekly) sabbath stands alone as the most fundamental — a sign pointing to God's original design and purpose for the earth. The other sabbaths, which God calls "my sabbaths," include just about one associated with every one of the seven major feasts on Israel's calendar. These function as signs between God and Israel of what it will take for him to sanctify Israel — the totality of his Jehovahness and grace put in effect. Though related in the overall package of Israel's calendar, the two categories serve distinct doctrinal purposes and must first be kept distinct in study.

Israel's Program vs. the Dispensation of Grace

The seventh-day sabbath is highly significant and integral to God's program with Israel — a covenant and a sign, holy unto Israel and holy unto the Lord, with a death penalty for defiling it (Exodus 31:14–17). In the present dispensation of grace, however, Sabbath observance has no role and is doctrinally incorrect for members of the body of Christ. Paul explicitly warns against being judged in "sabbath *days*," identifying them as "a shadow of things to come" in Israel's unfulfilled program — not a present obligation for the church (Colossians 2:16–17). Members of the body of Christ are not spiritual Israelites; they occupy a heavenly position in Christ, distinct from Israel's earthly kingdom program.

The First Sabbath and the Second Sabbath After the First

God blessed and sanctified the original seventh day of creation (Genesis 2:1–3) — declaring everything prepared for his residence to come down. This was the "first sabbath." The "second sabbath after the first" is when God designed and purposed his residence to come down and for him to rule as king over his whole creation. Satan's usurpation in Genesis 3 put this on hold. Israel's weekly sabbath and the Feast of Tabernacles foreshadow its fulfillment; in Luke 6 the Son of Man is "Lord also of the sabbath."

The Sabbath as Rest and as Covenantal Sign

At its most basic level, the sabbath means rest — ceasing from all work on the seventh day, mirroring God's own rest after creation (Exodus 16:23; 20:10–11). But for Israel the seventh-day sabbath was a covenant and a sign, integral to God's program with them because Israel's purpose on this earth is

integrally connected to God's design and purpose for this earth. Every week on Israel's calendar reminded them of that original week — so Israel never forgets where they came from, what they're all about and why they exist.

Key Scripture References

Exodus 16:23	The definition of the sabbath: "the rest of the holy sabbath unto the LORD" — in context of the manna
Exodus 20:8–11	Part of the Ten Commandments; the seventh day linked directly to God's creation rest as the pattern for Israel's observance
Exodus 31:12–17	The sabbath declared a perpetual covenant and sign between God and Israel; death penalty for violation; "my sabbaths" distinguished
Nehemiah 9:14	God made known his holy sabbath to Israel at Mount Sinai — until then no one was observing the sabbath
Leviticus 23:39	Feast of Tabernacles features a first and an eighth-day sabbath — replicating the first/second sabbath pattern on the calendar
Genesis 2:1–3	The original seventh day: God finishes his work, rests, blesses and sanctifies the day in anticipation of his residence coming down
Isaiah 45:18	God created the earth "not in vain" — he formed it to be inhabited; his original design and purpose for the earth affirmed
Isaiah 40:22	God stretches out the heavens as a tent to dwell in — his original purpose is to dwell within creation, on the earth
Colossians 2:16–17	Paul warns the body of Christ against being judged in sabbath days — "a shadow of things to come" in Israel's program, not for us
Revelation 21:1–3	The culmination of God's purpose: New Jerusalem comes down, the tabernacle of God is with men — the original design fulfilled
Luke 6	"the second sabbath after the first" (6:1) — in connection with the Feast of Tabernacles; the Son of Man is "Lord also of the sabbath"

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