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Old Testament Sabbath

Looking at the scriptures mentioned in Exodus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Jeremiah, and Nehemiah that deal with the sabbath I see a common thread. Each of the passages that are referred to stress the same God given Law, no work on the Sabbath. According to Exodus 20:8-11, 35:2-3 and Deut. 5:12-15; the seventh day is a day that is to be kept and set aside as Holy unto the Lord. No work whatsoever was to be done on that day. Everyone was to rest and remember that they were slaves in Egypt and the Lord mightily brought them out and commanded that they observe the sabbath by resting. Ex 20:10 says “On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns”; this would also include any visiting family or strangers who happen to come into town on the sabbath. God expected everyone to adhere to the same rule. No animals were to be worked or attended to on the sabbath.

The sabbath was to be a time of rest for everyone and kept as a Holy day which the Lord blessed. It was a time of reflecting on how God after the 6th day of creation rested on the seventh day. In Ex. 20:8-11 and Deut. 5:12-15, instructions were given as to who was to keep the sabbath holy by resting, it included, oneself, son, daughter, servant, animal, ox, donkey, or any foreigner residing in the town. While Numbers 15:32-36, Jeremiah 17:21-22, and Nehemiah 13:15-16, provides details regarding some daily tasks that are not to be done on the sabbath. Activities such as gathering wood, carrying a load through the gates of the town or out of the house, treading

wine presses, bringing in grain or loading it on a donkey with grapes, figs, or anything that would be considered a load were forbidden. You were also forbidden to sell food or any other kind of merchandise in Jerusalem on the sabbath.

I believe the command to obey the Sabbath is still valid today as a principal not as a legalistic rule to earn Gods favor. We need to have a holy rhythm of rest, not just working all the time. I believe God still wants us to be intentional about setting aside periods of rest. A time where we reflect and remember His grace and mercy extended first towards our ancestors and now us. We should think about how remembering Gods command to our ancestors to keep the Sabbath day Holy as a principal applies to us today. It was not just a day set aside for the Lord, but it was also healthy for man spiritually, while helping the body and mind to rest.

The world has always been such a busy place that requires constant movement, so we must make a personal conscious effort to practice slowing down, resting, and remembering where God has brought us from. I can remember growing up when it was normal for stores and businesses to be closed on Sundays as society seemed to be more aware of the presence of God and His commands for a day of rest, but as time has gone by more and more people have moved away from having a day of rest to pursue profit. There were certain things that parents and neighbors just would not allow us as children to do on Sundays, it was an unstated rule that communities united on. Sunday was a time for church, corporate worship, family, and reflection, only the bare minimum of anything else was allowed to be done on Sunday.

I realize now as an adult believer in Christ that our rest is in the Lord Jesus Christ who liberates us from the law, and as Christians we gather on Sunday as our set aside Lords Day. Col. 2:16-17 states, "Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration, or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the

things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ". However according to the Jewish calendar, the Sabbath is on Saturday since the first day of the week is Sunday. So Saturday is the Biblical Sabbath.