

# The 7th-Day Sabbath

## A Biblical Foundation

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### Introduction

This study examines what Scripture alone reveals about the seventh-day Sabbath—from its establishment at creation through New Testament practice. We'll address the most common objections and acknowledge honest tensions in the biblical record. Our goal is to let Scripture interpret Scripture, building a case based solely on God's Word.

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### I. Was the Sabbath Established at Creation or at Sinai?

[Genesis 2:1-4](#) - "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made. These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that Jehovah God made earth and heaven."

- The seventh-day Sabbath was established at creation itself—before Abraham, before Israel, before sin entered the world. God performed three acts: **1)** He rested, **2)** He blessed the day, and **3)** He sanctified (set apart as holy) the day. This was not ceremonial law pointing forward to Christ; it was a creation ordinance pointing backward to God as Creator.

[Exodus 20:8-11](#) - "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shall you labor, and do all your work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of Jehovah your God: in it you shall not do any work, you, nor your son, nor your daughter, your manservant, nor your maidservant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger that is within your gates: For in six days Jehovah made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore Jehovah blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it."

- Note the word "Remember"—not "begin observing" or "here is something new." The fourth commandment points back to creation as its foundation. The reason given for Sabbath observance is God's creative act, not Israel's national identity.
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### II. Did God Enforce the Sabbath Before Sinai?

[Exodus 16:4-5](#) - "Then said Jehovah unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no. And it shall come to pass, that on the sixth day they shall prepare that which they bring in; and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily."

- This passage occurs before the giving of the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai (Exodus 19-20). God built the Sabbath test into the manna provision.

[Exodus 16:22-23](#) - "And it came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man: and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. And he said unto them, This is that which Jehovah has said, Tomorrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto Jehovah: bake that which you will bake today, and boil that which you will boil; and that which remains over lay up for you to be kept until the morning."

- Moses speaks of the Sabbath as already known—"the rest of the holy sabbath unto Jehovah." This was not a new institution.

[Exodus 16:27-30](#) - "And it came to pass, that there went out some of the people on the seventh day to gather, and they found none. And Jehovah said unto Moses, How long refuse you to keep my commandments and my laws? See, for that Jehovah has given you the sabbath, therefore he gives you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide you every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day. So the people rested on the seventh day."

- God rebukes them for breaking "my commandments and my laws" regarding the Sabbath—before Sinai. He says He had already "given you the sabbath" (past tense). This proves the Sabbath was binding based solely on [Genesis 2:1-3](#), not on the yet-to-be-given Decalogue.
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### III. If the Sabbath Is from Creation, Why Does Exodus 31 Call It a Sign for Israel?

[Exodus 31:16-17](#) - "Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel forever: for in six days Jehovah made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed."

- This passage creates apparent tension: if the Sabbath is a universal creation ordinance, why is it called "a sign between me and the children of Israel"?

[Isaiah 56:6-7](#) - "Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to Jehovah, to serve him, and to love the name of Jehovah, to be his servants, every one that keeps the sabbath from polluting it, and takes hold of my covenant; Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all people."

- Scripture shows non-Israelites ("sons of the stranger") keeping the Sabbath and being blessed by God for doing so. This demonstrates the Sabbath was not exclusively for ethnic Israel.

## Understanding "Sign"

The Sabbath functioned both ways according to Scripture:

1. As a universal command from creation ( [Genesis 2:1-3](#); [Exodus 20:11](#) ties the command directly to creation)
2. A special covenant sign for Israel ( [Exodus 31:16-17](#); marking them as God's sanctified people)

Israel's faithful observance of the creation Sabbath served as a visible distinguishing mark that they were God's covenant people. But this does not make the command exclusive to them—just as honoring parents or avoiding lust distinguish God's people, yet apply universally. The sign was Israel's obedience to a universal command, not that the command applied only to them.

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## IV. What Does the New Testament Show About Sabbath Observance?

### A. Jesus's Practice and Teaching

[Luke 4:16](#) - "And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up to read."

- Sabbath worship was Jesus's custom—His regular practice throughout His life.

[Mark 2:27-28](#) - "And he said unto them, The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath: Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath."

- Jesus declared Himself "Lord of the Sabbath"—affirming His authority over the day, not abolishing it. He clarified that the Sabbath was made "for man" (humanity), not exclusively for Jews.

[Matthew 24:20](#) - "But pray that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day."

- Jesus spoke these words prophesying Jerusalem's destruction in AD 70—nearly 40 years after His crucifixion. He anticipated the Sabbath would still be observed by His followers decades later.

### B. Apostolic Practice

[Acts 17:2](#) - "And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures."

- Like Jesus, Sabbath observance was Paul's "manner"—his customary practice.

[Acts 13:42-44](#) - "And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath. Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God."

- Gentiles specifically requested Paul preach "the next sabbath." If Sunday were the new worship day, why wait a week? Why not meet the next day? Yet the entire city gathered on the Sabbath to hear God's Word.

[Acts 18:4](#) - "And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks."

- Paul preached to both Jews and Greeks (Gentiles) on the Sabbath. The book of Acts records approximately 84 Sabbaths where believers gathered for worship, with no indication of a transfer to Sunday.

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## V. How Should We Understand Passages That Seem to Dismiss the Sabbath?

### A. [Romans 14:5-6](#)

[Romans 14:5-6](#) - "One man esteems one day above another: another esteems every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regards the day, regards it unto the Lord; and he that regards not the day, to the Lord he does not regard it. He that eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he that eats not, to the Lord he eats not, and gives God thanks."

- Context is critical. [Romans 14:1](#) introduces the topic: "Him that is weak in the faith receive you, but not to doubtful disputations." Paul addresses "doubtful disputations"—matters of personal conscience, not God's commandments.

[Romans 14:2-3](#) - "For one believes that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eats herbs. Let not him that eats despise him that eats not; and let not him which eats not judge him that eats: for God has received him."

- The immediate context concerns eating meat versus vegetables—dietary preferences, not the fourth commandment. [Romans 14:14](#) clarifies: "I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteems anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean."
- Paul discusses personal conscience matters, not the Ten Commandments. Would we apply this passage to say one person can esteem honoring parents while another can dismiss it? The context shows Paul addresses disputable matters, not moral law.

### B. [Galatians 4:8-11](#)

[Galatians 4:8-11](#) - "However then, when you knew not God, you did service unto them which by nature are no gods. But now, after that you have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn you again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto you desire again to be in bondage? You observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain."

- Paul addresses Gentile Galatians (verse 8: "when you knew not God, you did service unto them which by nature are no gods"). He's concerned about their return to pagan practices—"how turn you again to the weak and beggarly elements."
- The phrase "days, and months, and times, and years" describes a comprehensive pagan festival calendar, not the biblical Sabbath. Paul's letter focuses on circumcision and justification by works ( [Galatians 2:16, 5:2-6](#) ), not the seventh-day Sabbath. Yet [Acts 18:4](#) records Paul observing the Sabbath while teaching Jews and Greeks—he would not condemn what he himself practiced.

### C. [Colossians 2:16-17](#)

[Colossians 2:16-17](#) - "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ."

- This passage requires careful examination. Notice Paul lists: "meat, drink, holyday, new moon, sabbath days." This grouping parallels Israel's ceremonial calendar system.

[Leviticus 23:37-38](#) - "These are **the feasts of Jehovah**, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, to offer an offering made by fire unto Jehovah, a burnt offering, and a meat offering, a sacrifice, and drink offerings, every thing upon his day: Beside **the sabbaths of Jehovah**, and beside your gifts, and beside all your vows, and beside all your freewill offerings, which you give unto Jehovah."

- Scripture itself distinguishes between **annual feast sabbaths** and "**the sabbaths of Jehovah**" (the weekly seventh-day Sabbath). Israel had multiple annual sabbaths:
- [Leviticus 23:24, 32, 39](#) - The Feast of Trumpets, Day of Atonement, and Feast of Tabernacles included special sabbath rest days that could fall on any day of the week.
- [Colossians 2:17](#) states these were "**a shadow of things to come**"—pointing forward to Christ. But the seventh-day Sabbath was established at creation before sin ( [Genesis 2:1-3](#) ). [Exodus 20:11](#) confirms **it points backward to creation, not forward as a shadow**. The ceremonial sabbaths connected to Israel's sacrificial system pointed to Christ; the creation Sabbath memorializes God as Creator.

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## VI. If the Sabbath Remains Binding, Why Is There No Explicit Epistle Command to Gentile Churches?

This is an honest and important question. The New Testament epistles explicitly restate nine of the Ten Commandments but never say directly: "Gentile believers, remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy."

**What Scripture Does Show:**

[Matthew 5:17-19](#) - "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."

- Jesus affirmed the enduring validity of God's commandments.

[James 2:10-12](#) - "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if you commit no adultery, yet if you kill, you are become a transgressor of the law. So speak you, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty."

- James treats the Ten Commandments as a unified whole—breaking one breaks all. He assumes their continued binding nature.

[Hebrews 4:9](#) - "There remains therefore a rest to the people of God."

- Greek: sabbatismos (Strong's #4520): "a keeping of the Sabbath" or "Sabbath rest." This specific term refers to Sabbath observance, not merely spiritual rest. The passage indicates ongoing Sabbath-keeping for God's people.

## The Pattern of Practice:

Throughout Acts, the apostles consistently observed the Sabbath ( [Acts 13:14, 42-44; 16:13; 17:2; 18:4](#) ). Their practice demonstrates what they believed and taught. Jesus anticipated Sabbath observance would continue 40 years after His death ( [Matthew 24:20](#) ).

We must acknowledge: Scripture does not give us an explicit epistle command saying "Gentile churches, observe the seventh-day Sabbath." This absence is real and significant. However, the biblical pattern shows:

- The Sabbath was established at creation ( [Genesis 2:1-3](#) )
- God enforced it before Sinai (Exodus 16)
- Jesus practiced and affirmed it ( [Luke 4:16, Matthew 24:20](#) )
- The apostles consistently observed it (throughout Acts)
- The Ten Commandments are treated as a unified whole ( [James 2:10-11](#) )
- Future Sabbath-keeping is indicated ( [Hebrews 4:9](#) )

The apostles lived and taught what they had received from Jesus. Their consistent Sabbath practice throughout the book of Acts—with both Jews and Gentiles—speaks loudly even in the absence of an explicit written command.

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## Practical Summary

The biblical evidence presents a compelling case that the seventh-day Sabbath:

1. Originates at creation, not at Sinai, making it universal in scope
2. Was enforced by God before the giving of the Ten Commandments, proving it existed independently of Mosaic legislation
3. Was observed by Jesus as His custom and expected to continue after His death
4. Was consistently practiced by the apostles with both Jewish and Gentile believers
5. The passages often used to dismiss Sabbath observance (Romans 14, Galatians 4, Colossians 2) address matters of personal conscience, pagan calendar observances, or ceremonial feast sabbaths—not the creation Sabbath of the fourth commandment.

The honest tension remains: why no explicit epistle command? Scripture doesn't directly answer this, but the consistent pattern of apostolic practice throughout Acts—combined with Jesus's own example and teaching—provides strong evidence for ongoing Sabbath observance.

As teachers of the Bible, we must allow Scripture to speak for itself, acknowledging both what it clearly reveals and where honest questions remain. The weight of biblical evidence supports the enduring obligation of the seventh-day Sabbath established at creation, affirmed in the Decalogue, practiced by Christ, and continued by His apostles.

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Desiring to live by every word that comes from the mouth of Jehovah ( [Deut8:3; Matt4:4](#) )

-[Sid Nash](#): 05/09/2026. Latest version: <https://sidnash.org/docs/Biblical7thDaySabbath.html>