**OBSERVING THE SABBATH**

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The length of the Sabbath varies in the Scripture records all the way from a day to eternity; in fact, any religious festival or holiday was termed by the Hebrews "a sabbath unto the Lord." As a modern institution the Sabbath, or rest from labor, as the word implies, has lost through the centuries of materialism much of its original spiritual significance and in some countries is now regarded more as a secular festival than as a religious holy day. In order to understand and appreciate the original meaning and true value of the Sabbath it is necessary, therefore, to go back to the time of the Hebrew theocracy and to learn something of the Levitical law, in which the rules for its observance were first definitely incorporated.

In the Bible the earliest mention of a Sabbath is to be found in the second chapter of Genesis, wherein it is recorded that God rested after the six days of creation. Its first connection with human affairs occurs, however, in the sixteenth chapter of Exodus, in which is told the story of the manna. This type of spiritual food, it will be remembered, was found on the ground every morning during the week except on the seventh day. On the sixth morning, notwithstanding the fact that at other times only sufficient manna was to be taken for the day, a double portion was gathered, so that the people might be free on the morrow to observe the Sabbath.

In the twentieth chapter of Exodus the observance of the Sabbath day is found incorporated into the fourth commandment of the Decalogue, and its reason as there given is that the Lord, who made heaven and earth, rested on the seventh day and hallowed it. The Hebrew law, as it was later developed, not only prohibited all unnecessary labor on the seventh day of the week but it also required that a Sabbath be kept on the first, tenth, fifteenth, and twenty-third days of the seventh month. On these days no servile work was to be done from the evening of the previous day until the evening of the Sabbath. During the feast of tabernacles, which lasted for the seven days between the fifteenth and twenty-third days of the seventh month, the Israelites are told to "dwell in booths," in order that they may be reminded that their forefathers dwelt in booths when God brought them out of the land of Egypt.

Again, at the expiration of every sixth year a Sabbatical year was set apart for mental and physical rest as well as for spiritual refreshment. The sixth year, like the sixth day in the wilderness, was to yield an exceptionally abundant harvest, so that there would be sufficient store to last during the twelve months of recreation and until the reaping of the eighth year. Finally, at the end of every week of Sabbatical years, that is to say, every forty-nine years, a trumpet was to be blown throughout the land of Israel, proclaiming the commencement of the jubilee, which was to be a year of liberty among the inhabitants. This fiftieth year was to be a time of general rejoicing and thanksgiving; families were to be reunited; and all lands which had previously been sold were to be restored to their original owners, for God had said, "The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is mine; for ye are strangers and sojourners with me." In this year all slaves were to be emancipated and, unless they preferred to remain as bondmen, were free thereafter to become hired servants. In a word, the submerged tenth of society was given opportunity to start life afresh under new and more favorable conditions.

The purely theocratic form of government which prevailed among the Hebrews before the time of Saul, necessarily involved constant spiritual instruction and reminders of the goodness, all-power, and authority of God. Labor, it taught, must not blind the eyes of the people to the true source of supply, and neither success nor failure in material acquisition must be taken as the standard of human achievement. The creation of the world in six days or periods of time, the manna which came down from heaven, the abundant harvests on the sixth year, and the still more fruitful year preceding the jubilee were all, no doubt, to be understood as evidence of the protecting care and loving-kindness of the heavenly Father, divine Mind.

While it is probable that these spiritually conceived statutes were never fully lived up to by the children of Israel, still they prefigure an ideal which must some day and in some manner be actually demonstrated. The ultimate captivity and humiliation of the Jews after the time of Jehoiachin is attributed by both Jeremiah and Ezekiel to the disobedience of the people to the laws of Moses, and their failure to observe the appointed Sabbaths. The writer of the second book of Chronicles also sees a connection between the seventy years of Jewish captivity in Babylon and the previously neglected Sabbaths, saying that it was "to fulfil the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths."

In the epistle to the Hebrews we are reminded of the promise of rest, made by God to the people of Israel, which, the apostle says, has not been kept because of unbelief on the part of those who heard it. He points out, however, that there still remains a rest for the people of God, but that this rest can only come through faith and the realization that the works were finished from the foundation of the world, "for," he adds, "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, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief." Paul clearly understood that mankind needed to be set free from the bondage of what theology had termed original sin. He saw that the false and perverted sense of life in matter had imposed upon mortals the necessity of laboriously tilling the soil for material food, and that this mental mist had obscured the divine idea which reveals Mind as the true substance and source of daily bread.

Jesus, as is pointed out in Hebrews, was the first to break the false claim of original sin, and to enter into his rest through demonstrating man's divine birthright as a son of God. Rebuking the Pharisees who found fault with his disciples for plucking the ears of corn on the Sabbath day, the Nazarene Teacher had said, "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath." He had shown how completely Jewish theology had perverted and materialized the meaning of the Sabbath and how it had bound upon mankind many heavy burdens. Had not Jesus also fed the five thousand and proved how simple and effective is the spiritual method of meeting the human need, when the divine law governing the true Sabbath is sufficiently understood?

In our own day, Mrs. Eddy, the Discoverer and Founder of Christian Science, again turns the attention of mankind to the same divine Principle which Moses, Jesus, and Paul so faithfully taught and exemplified. In one of her classes, referring to the Israelites before the walls of Jericho, she said (Miscellaneous Writings, [p. 279](http://concordexpress.christianscience.com/?query=They+went+seven+times+around+these+walls%2C+the+seven+times+corresponding+to+the+seven+days+of+creation%3A+the+six+days+are+to+find+out+the+nothingness+of+matter%3B+the+seventh+is+the+day+of+rest%2C+when+it+is+found+that+evil+is+naught+and+good+is+all.)), "They went seven times around these walls, the seven times corresponding to the seven days of creation: the six days are to find out the nothingness of matter; the seventh is the day of rest, when it is found that evil is naught and good is all."

As understood in the light of Christian Science, the observance of the Sabbath is not so much expressed in bestowing special reverence upon a particular day of the week, as in becoming every day more and more conscious of the divine Mind as the source and sender of temporal blessings as well as spiritual ideas. What is termed material work is shown to be blessed or unblessed just in the degree that it does or does not tend to awaken mortals to the true idea of cause and effect as wholly spiritual. The six days, six months, six years, or six thousand years, if a thousand years may be measured as one day, are but so many subdivisions of time in which mankind has the opportunity to rise superior to the illusions of mortal existence and to discover the living God, who has already created all things and has richly provided for all His children's needs.

Commenting on the fourth and fifth verses of the second chapter of Genesis, in which it is said that "the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, and every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew," Mrs. Eddy writes in "Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures" ([p.520](http://concordexpress.christianscience.com/?query=the+Lord+God+made+the+earth+and+the+heavens%2C+and+every+plant+of+the+field+before+it+was+in+the+earth%2C+and+every+herb+of+the+field+before+it+grew%2C&book=tfccs.main.sh)): "Because Mind makes all, there is nothing left to be made by a lower power. Spirit acts through the Science of Mind, never causing man to till the ground, but making him superior to the soil. Knowledge of this lifts man above the sod, above earth and its environments, to conscious spiritual harmony and eternal being."

Until the final demonstration of God's omnipotence can be made by mortals, however, there is much work to be done. This work consists in overcoming the belief of life in matter, and of establishing one's faith in and understanding of divine Principle. The daily overcoming of self in its various forms and with its insidious suggestions is the period of work that must always precede the Sabbath of rest. In learning how to perform one's daily duties in the office, field, or factory lovingly and efficiently, a great step is taken out of material servitude, and even on the human plane is sure to result in promotion and advancement. Any premature attempt to claim exemption from work before the completion of this period of self-discipline and loving service must always end in disaster and consequent delay. Mrs. Eddy reminds us of this fact on [page 216](http://concordexpress.christianscience.com/?query=There+remaineth%2C+it+is+true%2C+a+Sabbath+rest+for+the+people+of+God%3B+but+we+must+first+have+done+our+work%2C+and+entered+into+our+rest%2C+as+the+Scriptures+give+example.) of "Miscellaneous Writings," where she says, "There *remaineth,* it is true, a Sabbath rest for the people of God; but we must first have done our work, and entered into our rest, as the Scriptures give example."