

The Sabbath and Worship



SABBATH—JULY 9

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Exodus 20:11; Deuteronomy 5:15; Isaiah 44:15–20; Matthew 11:28–30; Romans 6:16–23.

MEMORY VERSE: “Come, let us bow down and worship him. Let us fall on our knees in front of the Lord our Maker. He is our God. We are the sheep belonging to his flock. We are the people he takes good care of” (Psalm 95:6, 7, NlrV).

CREATION AND REDEMPTION¹ ARE IMPORTANT PARTS OF THE FIRST ANGEL'S MESSAGE AND THE THEME OF WORSHIP. The first angel calls us to the “everlasting gospel,” which is the good news of salvation in Jesus. This is a salvation that includes both forgiveness of sin and power over it. The gospel also promises us a new life in Christ and the promise of sanctification (becoming like Christ). Sanctification itself is part of salvation and Redemption (John 17:17; Acts 20:32; 1 Thessalonians 5:23).

And the first angel's message includes a special reminder that God is our Creator. He is the One who made us and the world in which we live.

So, the themes of Creation, Redemption, and sanctification are connected to worship. These three themes are shown in the Sabbath, an important part of the events in Revelation 14. The question that faces all of us in Revelation 14 is, Do we worship the Creator, the Redeemer (Savior), and the Sanctifier?² Or do we worship the beast and his image?³ The verses do not leave us any third option.

This week we will study the Sabbath commandment and how these three themes of Creation, Redemption, and sanctification are shown in this day. As we study, ask yourself how we can make these themes important in our worship experience.

1. Redemption—how we are saved through Jesus' great sacrifice. He bought us back through His death on the cross for our sins.

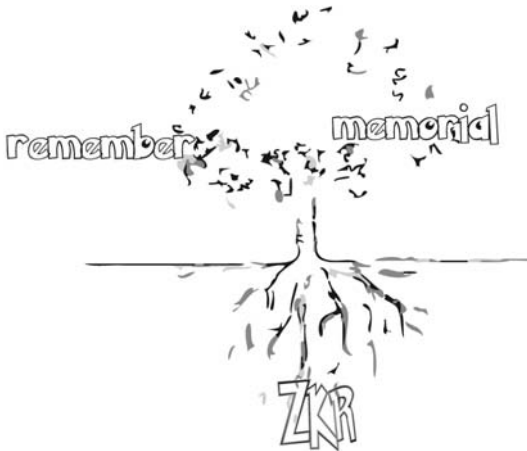
2. Sanctifier—Jesus as a Person who helps us lead righteous and holy lives.

3. image—when something has the form or appearance of someone or something else.

SUNDAY—JULY 10**CREATION AND REDEMPTION:
THE FOUNDATION (BASIS) OF
WORSHIP (Exodus 20:11)**

“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Exodus 20:8, KJV). The words *remember* and *memorial* in Hebrew come from the same Hebrew root word, *zkr*. When God said “remember,” He was giving the people a memorial of two great events; one is the foundation of the other.

According to the fourth commandment in Exodus 20:11 and Deuteronomy 5:18, what are these two events? How are they related to each other?



The words *remember* and *memorial* in Hebrew come from the same Hebrew root word, *zkr*.

Christ’s work as Creator is directly connected to His work as Savior and Redeemer. Every week the Sabbath points to both parts of His work. Not monthly, not yearly, but weekly! This shows how important the Sabbath is.

The God who designed and made us is the same One who freed Israel from Egypt. And He is the One who freed us from the slavery of sin.

How does Paul in Colossians 1:13–22 clearly connect Christ to His work as Creator and Redeemer?

Creation and Redemption are at the foundation of all Bible truth. They are so important that God has commanded us to keep the Sabbath as a reminder of these truths. From Eden, when the seventh day was first set up and made sacred (holy), there have been people who have worshiped the Lord through keeping the seventh-day Sabbath holy.

Think for a moment about how important these two truths must be for the Lord to have given us a weekly reminder of them. It is so important that God commands us to devote (give) one-seventh of our lives to a special kind of rest in order that we can better pay our attention to these truths. How can your Sabbath worship experience help you to better understand Christ as Creator and Redeemer?

MONDAY—JULY 11**REMEMBER YOUR CREATOR
(Isaiah 40:25, 26)**

The Bible begins with the famous sentence, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” The verb “created,” *bara*, is a verb that is used

for the actions of God only. Humans can build things, make things, and create things. But God alone can *bara*. Only God can create space, time, matter, and energy—all part of the material world in which we live. It is all here, only because God *bara*-ed it.

Of course, how He did it remains a mystery. Science cannot fully understand what matter itself is. Science understands much less how matter was created and why it continues (keeps going) in the way that it does. But it is important that we never forget for a minute where it all came from. “The heavens were made when the Lord commanded it to happen. . . . He spoke, and the world came into being. He commanded, and it stood firm” (Psalm 33:6, 9, NIV).

When an important project is finished, people like to celebrate. For example, when we build a church, we dedicate it to God. In the same way, when God finished with the earth, He made a memorial of the event by setting aside a special day, the Sabbath.



Only God could create (*bara*) the heavens and the earth.

Compare Isaiah 40:25, 26; Isaiah 45:12, 18; Colossians 1:16, 17; and Hebrews 1:2 to Isaiah 44:15–20; and Isaiah 46:5–7. What difference is being made here?

When the great controversy (war) between Christ and Satan came to the earth, the enemy (Satan) tried to lead people to doubt the true God, the Creator. People who do not know the Bible or God’s creative power try to find ways to explain our beginnings without God’s involvement. People have come up with all kinds of ideas about how this happened. The most popular theory⁴ today is evolution. Evolution teaches that humans and all life forms came to be because of changes that happened by a natural process over a very long time. Someone recently brought up a theory that we are all just products of a computer. In other words, we do not really live but are just computer creations under the control of aliens in outer space. In many ways the wooden gods mentioned in the book of Isaiah are as “good” as many of the other theories of beginnings often given in place of the God of the Bible.

If we truly accept the Sabbath as a memorial of God’s six days of Creation, how can we be protected from false ideas about our beginnings? Also, who would want to worship a God who used a method as cruel as evolution to create us, as some teach?

4. theory—an unproven idea about how or why things happen in the way that they do.

TUESDAY—JULY 12**FREEDOM FROM SLAVERY
(Romans 6:16–23)**

The Sabbath points both to Creation and to Redemption as important themes of worship. Deuteronomy 5:15 tells us, “ ‘Remember that you were slaves in Egypt. The Lord your God reached out his mighty [strong] hand and powerful arm and brought you out of there. So he has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day’ ” (NirV). These words remind us of the important theme of the first angel’s message, that of Redemption and salvation.

And this Redemption is a symbol of what the Lord did for the children of Israel through the Exodus.⁵ No god in Egypt had the power to stop this nation of slaves from escaping their slavery. Only the God of Israel



Redemption and salvation are important themes of the first angel’s message.

could show Himself in powerful miracles and His presence in great and blinding glory. Only the God of Israel could deliver them with a “ ‘mighty hand’ ” and a “ ‘powerful arm’ ” (Deuteronomy 5:15, NirV). God wanted the children of Israel to remember “that he is God. There is no other God except him” (Deuteronomy 4:35, NirV). So, He gave them the Sabbath day to always remind them—and us—of our rescue from sin through His great power.

What promises are given to us in Romans 6:16–23? How is this connected with what the Lord did for Israel in Egypt?

The New Testament clearly teaches that we need a powerful Savior to free us from the slavery of sin. The same was true with the children of Israel. They needed a powerful Savior to free them from slavery in Egypt. In their Lord, the children of Israel had just that. In our Lord, we Christians have that too. The same God who saved the children of Israel from their slavery saves us today from the slavery of sin. This is an incredible truth.

If we ever need a reason to worship the Lord, let it be for the freedom from slavery that He has won for us. The children of Israel sang a great song once they had been freed. (Read Exodus 15.) So, for us the Sabbath worship experience should be a celebration of God’s grace in freeing us from sin.

5. Exodus—the forty years of wandering in the wilderness after the escape from Egypt.

What does it mean to no longer be slaves to sin? Most important, how can you learn to claim the promises of freedom that the gospel offers us? How can you learn to make those promises of freedom real?

WEDNESDAY—JULY 13

REMEMBER YOUR SANCTIFIER (Exodus 31:13)

What do you understand Exodus 31:13 to mean? What does this verse mean to us today? What does it mean to have God sanctify (make holy) us? How can we experience this change in our own lives?

Creation, Redemption, sanctification—they all are related. Creation, of course, is the foundation of everything. (Without it there would be no one to redeem and sanctify.) Yet, in our sinful condition, Creation is no longer enough. We need Redemption, the promise of forgiveness for our sins. Otherwise, we would die with no hope of heaven. And our lives would be forever over.

Of course, sanctification cannot be separated from Redemption. Sanctification is the process by which we grow in holiness and in grace⁶ in our lives. The word translated as “sanctify” in Exodus 31:13 comes from the same root word used in Exodus 20:8. In this verse the Lord tells the people to keep the Sabbath “holy.” The same root word appears in Exodus 20:11, which says that God “hallowed” or “made holy” the Sabbath day. (Read also Genesis 2:3,

where God “sanctified” the seventh day.) In all these cases the root word, *qds*, means “to be holy,” “to set aside as holy,” to be “dedicated as holy.”

God called the people of Israel and set them apart as His holy people. God called Israel to be a light to the world. Christ called His disciples (followers) to a mission (special work) of carrying the gospel to the world. An important part of that work is the holiness and character⁷ of the people who preach the message. The gospel is not just about no longer being judged as guilty for our sins. As we learned yesterday, the gospel is about being free from the slavery of our sins. The gospel is about being new people in Christ. It is having our lives be living witnesses to what God can do for us here and now.

What is Paul saying in 2 Corinthians 5:17? And how can we relate this verse to the themes of Creation and Redemption and the Sabbath? How can our Sabbath worship help us to focus on these themes?



Without forgiveness for our sins, we would have no hope of heaven.

6. grace—God’s gift of mercy and forgiveness that He freely gives us, through our faith, in order to take away our sins.

7. character—the way someone thinks, feels, and acts; who someone is.

THURSDAY—JULY 14**RESTING IN REDEMPTION****(Matthew 11:28–30)**

Creation, Redemption, and sanctification: we have all these in Christ. And they all have become symbols in a special way through the blessings of the Sabbath.

In Matthew 11:28–30, read Jesus’ invitation to rest. How does the Sabbath fit in with what Jesus is telling us here?

The “rest” Jesus offered to people includes rest for our emotions, minds, and spirits, especially for those who are loaded with sin, guilt, and fear. In addition to the basic human need for physical rest, there is an equally important need for the mind and the spirit to have a change of pace. This is rest from the burdens and the stress of daily living. God designed the Sabbath for this special purpose. Studies have shown that the quality of work in the workplace really is better with a weekly break. Bringing closure to the usual routine of life improves the mind and the body.

Anyone can say that he or she is resting in Christ. But the Sabbath gives us a real proof of that rest. The Sabbath stands as a symbol of the rest that we truly have in the salvation that Christ has given to us.

The Sabbath also meets us at the

level of our emotional life. It gives us a sense of knowledge that we are created in the image of God. And we know that we belong to Him because He made us. God gave marriage in Eden to meet the human need for sexual closeness. In the same way He gave the Sabbath for vertical⁸ intimacy (closeness) between the Creator and His creatures.

The Sabbath promises the fulfillment of what we may become through Christ’s work of restoration. It gives us hope for the future—the fullness of eternal Sabbath rest. But most important of all, the Sabbath meets us at the highest of all human needs. This is our need to worship something or Someone. God in His great wisdom has given us the Sabbath as a day set aside for worship. He has given us a day to spend in honor and praise of Him.

What burdens are you carrying that you need to have rest from? And how can you learn to give them to Him? How can your Sabbath worship experience help you to learn truly to rest in Him?

FRIDAY—JULY 15

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read Ellen G. White, “The Creation,” pages 44–51; “The Literal [Seven-Day] Week,” pages 111–116, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*,⁹ “The Sabbath,” pages 281–289, in *The Desire of Ages*.

8. vertical—when one object or being is positioned above another.

9. Patriarchs and Prophets—patriarchs were leaders of God’s people in early Bible times, men such as Abraham and Isaac, or others leaders of Israel, such as Moses; prophets are men or women who are spokespersons for God.

“God planned that Sabbath keeping should mark [Israel] as His worshipers. It was to be an example of their separation from idol worship, and their connection with the true God. But in order to keep the Sabbath holy, men must themselves be holy. Through faith they must become partners of the righteousness [goodness; holiness; purity] of Christ. . . . Only thus could the Sabbath separate and mark Israel as the true worshipers of God.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 283.

“The Lord freed His people Israel from Egypt and had them become followers of His law. Then He taught them that by Sabbath keeping they were to be separated from idol worshipers. . . . Sabbath keeping was the difference between those who recognize the rulership of God and those who refused to accept Him as their Creator and King.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*¹⁰ for the Church, volume 6, page 349.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Think more deeply about the idea of how true Sabbath keeping can protect us from many of the false ideas about Creation. For example, think about the final events involving those who worship the beast as opposed to those who worship the Creator (read Revelation 14). How would a false understanding of our beginnings cause people to be deceived (fooled) in the final days with the idea that Jesus used evolution¹¹ to create us?
- ② Go back over the question of Sabbath and worship. How does your church worship on Sabbath? Is the service geared toward glorifying (loving and worshiping) God as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier? If not, what is the important focus? How can we learn to keep the Lord as the focus of our worship experience?
- ③ Creation is a very important part of all our beliefs. Why does nothing we believe as Seventh-day Adventists make any sense at all without God as the Creator? Truly Creation is the foundation (basis) to all that we believe. And the Sabbath is a very important part in the original Creation story. How do these facts help to show just how important the Sabbath is? How does this help us to better understand (know), too, how the Sabbath will keep us from being deceived (tricked) by Satan in the last days?

10. Testimonies—the writings of Ellen G. White.

11. evolution—a theory (belief) that the differences between modern plants and animals occur because of changes that happened by a natural process over a very long time.