

The Sabbath and Jesus – The Torah Series

Matthew Vander Els • 2019-09-24 • foundedintruth.com

MAIN VERSES

[Genesis 2:1](#) • [Exodus 20:8](#) • [Deuteronomy 5:12](#) • [Leviticus 25:1](#) • [Leviticus 26:2](#) • [Isaiah 1:1](#) • [Isaiah 56:1](#) • [Isaiah 58:1](#) • [Isaiah 61:1](#) • [Ezekiel 20:1](#) • [1 Kings 10:1](#) • [Jeremiah 50:1](#) • [Zechariah 1:11](#) • [Luke 4:16](#) • [Matthew 11:28](#) • [Hebrews 3:7](#) • [Psalm 95:1](#) • [Hebrews 4:7](#)

Welcome Home

Do you ever find yourself searching for something bigger than you? For a community to be a part of? A place founded on truth and love? A place to worship the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, and the Son of God? Welcome to Founded in Truth, where we're more than just a fellowship. We're a family, so welcome home.

The Torah Series

So if you've been with us for the past few weeks, we've been going through a new series called the Torah series—very creative title, right? We're moving through the first five books of the Bible, the Pentateuch, and we're exploring the story within a story.

When you read the first five books of the Bible as narrative, the first 69 chapters are a riveting story that launches us into the larger story of the Bible—the larger story about our God and his character, the larger story about this people, this peculiar people named Israel, and the larger story of how he came to introduce the world to his kingdom manifest through this person of Yeshua.

As we explore the narrative of the Torah, I've been hanging out in Genesis quite a bit. Today I felt like it was appropriate to speak about the Sabbath—something that probably many of us are familiar with, but we can always learn a bit more.

Exploring the Sabbath in Scripture

If you've ever studied the concept of the Sabbath as mentioned in the Torah and throughout the Scriptures, there are a lot of avenues you can explore. You can just sit on the patterns of sevens and go through all of that—really cool stuff, geek out in the Bible. You can explore the culture of Sabbath and what that looks like with the few commandments that are given about it.

Today, I wanted to look at the Sabbath and try to determine its purpose, its function, and its role as present in the story of the Bible. In other words, if we're reading the Bible like a story, which it is, it's written as a narrative, then when the Sabbath pops up, let's take note of where it pops up and where it recurs, and what is its role in the greater story of our God ushering in his kingdom to earth.

The Pattern of Rest

So, the Sabbath. We already know it's the seventh day—it's a sacred space within time. It kind of repeats and evolves itself throughout Scripture. The seven Sabbaths after Passover are Shavuot. Every seventh year is a sabbatical year where crops and the land is given rest. Every seven Sabbath years mark a Jubilee year where freedom for all is reset. Debts are forgiven. Slaves are set free. Land returns to its tribal inheritance.

When we look at the Scripture, the first Sabbath occurs during the creation week, during the creation story, where God himself rests within his good, complete creation. Something that's actually hinted at in the first verse of the Bible: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." In Hebrew, seven words. It's just neat.

The Gift of the Sabbath

But what is the Sabbath? Many of us have heard of the Sabbath. We may practice the Sabbath. We may see some of the vague commandments and restrictions regarding the Sabbath. So we struggle to put Sabbath into practice, hopefully progressively throughout our lives.

Today I want to talk about the why. Why does Sabbath appear in the Bible and its role in the story of the Bible? And spoiler alert, it has to do with our King. It has to do with Yeshua. Yeshua.

And the answer to why the Sabbath exists, not only for Christians today but for all mankind, is very simple: the Sabbath was a gift from God. It's a very simple answer. It's anticlimactic. It's the invitation to enter into some type of sacred space within time to experience this blessing from God.

The Work-Obsessed Culture

So I looked at some statistics of our culture. How many of you guys know that we live in a very work-related culture in the U.S.? Some of us do. Most of us have got jobs, other families, yeah. Men, do we stress out? Women, do we stress out about providing for our families and our households?

It's fascinating, isn't it? It's part of growing up, I guess.

I looked at some statistics, and I noticed some facts based on these numbers. Thirty-six percent of Americans took their last vacation over two years ago. Over 51% of American workers who took this survey have not taken a vacation in the last year.

When these workers were asked why they seemed so hesitant to at least attempt to make a plan and save up for this time away—this vacation—27% of them felt that they had too many projects or deadlines due. Thirteen percent of them feared that if they took too much time off, they would have too much work to return to and it would be too overwhelming. Nineteen percent of the respondents reported being pressured by their manager not to take a vacation, while 14% of respondents believed not using all their vacation time makes them look better as an employee and may get them a raise or some type of advancement in their career faster.

These were the biggest reasons. And I have to ask, who in here can relate a little bit to some of these reasons? Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. This is like totally par for our culture. And I am totally the mascot for these statistics. I put a ton of work here at the church, but I'm also an IT contractor.

The Competitor's Trap

So as a contractor, when tickets come in, I compete against other contractors for the work. It's what you do. And when I am forced to go on vacation due to my wife dragging me to the beach, it's absolutely horrifying—my work routine is going to be disrupted. I'm not going to be able to keep up. I'm not going to be able to compete for as many work tickets because I'm going to be five hours away from the main source of the jobs, the issues that I need to resolve.

Tickets lost is money lost, and lost money equals me not providing for my family, and not providing for my family means that I'm a failure, and me being a failure means that I'm probably just going to lose my house, and then my wife will leave me, and then I'll lose the kids, and this is the result of me not being able to work.

Anybody? It's a real thing. It's a real thing. Right?

We've come to a point in our culture where we are bred and molded to measure our value based on our productivity. It's a fact. And it makes complete sense to be honest. If you're intent on being lazy and never wanting to achieve or progress your life for yourself or anyone else, then honestly, what good are you to society around you? That's a fact. There are people who want to work but can't, and so get off your tush and go do something.

But we've been taught that at any point if we stop, if we rest, if we carve out intentional time for ourselves, that we're lazy. And I'm here to tell you that that's simply not true. That should not be a truth in your life.

Matt, what credibility do you have to tell me that that should not be a truth in my life? Because that was true for me once, and it probably still is—with the constant pressure that keeps pushing, it's probably still a truth in my own life. I always question: If I take an extra break, am I being lazy? Am I failing my family? Am I failing myself?

The Beach House Reckoning

So we went to the beach this last week, and I did not bring my laptop computer. I brought my desktop computer and my monitor, and I set that sucker up in the basement of the beach house. I will maintain my value. Oh yeah.

We ended up going down to the beach on day two, and of course, I took my phone because I needed to study. So while the beautiful waves were crashing before me, and while the wind was blowing, and while my wife and my son and my foster daughter wanted my attention, I was reading scholarly essays about the Bible because I needed to get some of these essays read.

And I did spend some time with them. I made time to spend with them while we were at the beach that day. I was able to carve out some time reading these long, exhaustive, actually pretty neat articles about random topics of the Bible. And I went in the ocean with my son. We played. It was awesome.

And I'm not sure if it was the ocean water or if it was the sand or just divine intervention, but that evening my face ID stopped working on my phone. My phone stopped recognizing me.

And the next day, as I was sitting around the dinner table looking at my phone, surrounded by my family, if you can get the image, my screen flashed white and then went black. The phone was not dead. The screen just stopped functioning. I could still receive phone calls, texts, and emails. I just couldn't do anything. I couldn't.

Every text message, I'm like, "Ah, maybe this is something important." I spent almost three days without my phone until Apple could ship me a replacement. And I'm sure I could have gotten an Android the day of, but who would do that? So I had to wait three days before Apple would send me a replacement warranty phone.

I decided to submit and make a conscious decision to embrace rest during these three days. My wife begged me. She was like, just stop thinking about it. And this is difficult because, babe, I might lose the house if I don't respond to a text message. You don't understand. I let go. I spent the day teaching my son how to fly his first kite. And I went on long walks on the beach with my wife. Oh, it was romantic. It was good. And I got to know my in-laws, and I got to enjoy the moments with my family. My father-in-law, he's retired from IBM as a manager and knew all too well what it's like to go on vacation and to watch your family play on the beach while he remained in a hotel room on a conference call. He told me, Matt, just listen to me, God killed your cell phone. And as much as I want to doubt that God personally executed my phone, I do believe that he is a man of great wisdom. So I intentionally submitted to this gift of time that was given to me and I experienced peace and joy there, in my life surrounded by my family.

Idols of Space, Moments of Time

Matt, what does this have to do with anything? Well, it has to do with knowing when we have created idols out of acquiring and chasing things that exist in space around us and not valuing and keeping sacred the moments in time. That's what this has to do with—the moments in time that within themselves contain a piece of eternity. We sometimes make the mistake of fearing time. Anyone getting a little bit older and feeling a little anxiety about it? We sometimes make the mistake of fearing time because we see that time erodes the world around us. But the reality is time is eternal. It's constant. It's the things within space that are temporal. And it's these temporal things that we sometimes end up giving our lives to, not realizing that we could have been spending and giving them to something of eternity, something of rest, something of joy, the moments in time.

God Found in Moments, Not Things

Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, he wrote a book. It's a fantastic book, about 144 pages long, called *The Sabbath*. And there was a quote in the book that just stopped me. He says, God is not found in the things of space, but in moments of time. It shook me because it's true. It's true. It's not in the things of space, the tangible things around us, that we experience this closeness or intimacy with God. Yeah, all the other nations, many other religions have these things. No,

it's the moments in life that I go back to that I remember when God has met me in my life. It's the sacred moments of time, and this is also carried forth in the Bible itself.

Sabbath: A Theme Through Scripture

Now, I want to explore what the Sabbath is in the Bible and show you that it's not simply a day of the week. But it's a theme that develops through the entire biblical narrative and actually finds its climactic essence in the person of Yeshua. And when we talk about the Sabbath pointing to Jesus, you always hear that. If you grew up in church, the Sabbath points to Jesus, it's all about Jesus. That's a thing, that's an actual biblical thing. And sometimes we minimize that because we're like, "Well, no," but it legit does.

God's Creation and God's Rest

Notice that the Bible does not start out emphasizing God simply creating things. You see in other myths that surrounded Israel in the Near East, God created this, this, this. In the first chapter of the Bible, it doesn't necessarily emphasize God creating things as much as it does God carving out moments of time when he engaged in creation. Seven distinct moments of time were carved out. Seven measurements of time where God acted, God moved, God molds the good things of creation. Day one—what does he call it? Good. It's a good day. Day two, he doesn't call good. It's kind of strange. Day three, he calls good, and then as if he realized that he forgot to call day two good, he calls it good again. It throws another good in there. He does this again and again and again. He continues labeling good.

Genesis 2:1. Because on it, God rested from all of his work that he had done in creation. So here, God takes a moment of time. He takes a day and he calls it holy. It's the first thing ever called holy in the Bible. A section of time, a moment, not the Ark of the Covenant, not the temple, not a tree of life, not a thing, but a moment of time. And there's something special about this moment of time. Unlike the prior six days, where every single day is recorded as ending—"Evening and morning was the first day," "evening and morning was the second day," "beginning and end was the third," "beginning and end was the fourth and the fifth"—the seventh day is without a close. He never says from evening and morning is the seventh day. It's as if it just remains. And I love that.

God Shares His Rest

What does that mean for us? Well, it means that our God is a Sabbath-keeping God. If he was selfish, he could force us to work endlessly. He could be a pharaoh in our lives and over his creation, but our God shares his time and rest with us. He invites us to partake in it. He invites us to enter into a gift. Now, we see the seventh day of rest, the Sabbath mentioned in [Genesis 2](#). And it's not mentioned as an actual institution until Exodus chapter 20. You know, the big ten, top ten, ten commandments. And I remember growing up, and it's amazing because growing up in church, we learned that keeping the Sabbath holy is actually one of the ten commandments. Surprise, right? But we never gave it any emphasis on rest. How many of you guys were taught to keep the Sabbath holy growing up in church? Right? Right? And we typically don't give it due credit. We go out in the world and think, "I'm going to do good and not murder someone today." That's going to be a big one. But Sabbath tends to fall down on the list.

Remember the Sabbath

Here's what [Exodus 20](#) says. Remember, do what? The Sabbath day, by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all of your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you nor your son nor your daughter nor your male or female servants nor your animals nor the foreigner residing in your towns. Can't force anyone else to work. So here we go. This day, the seventh day, will be a day that is set apart. The six days prior, you labor, you build, you create. You're productive in creation. But on this day, you slow down, you stop. You enter into a place where the goal is not to have, the goal is not to create, but to simply be. And here in [Exodus 20](#), the Sabbath is given to recall who our God is as the creator. I love that. Why is he given the Sabbath? Because creation. Because God created everything and he rested. Therefore, you shall rest. We rest because God rests. We join God in a different type of atmosphere that directly recalls [Genesis 2](#). Israel is called to imitate this cycle of work and rest and work and rest, all while remembering the Sabbath day by setting it apart as a day free of labor. The most basic early meanings of Sabbath then entail a day of rest from toil combined with a responsibility to devote the day to the Creator Himself. It's a day that we realize and recognize that our God is Creator of all, but that our God can be trusted. How many of you guys trust God on Sabbath? If you can, yeah.

The Gift of Trust

So Exodus chapter 16 recalls a moment where God tells Israel, he says, listen, y'all won't quit your complaining, so I'm going to give you manna. And it's going to be this magic wonder bread that falls from heaven and quail in the evenings. And I'm going to give you some every single

day. And on Friday, the day before the Sabbath, I'm going to give you double. And I want you to gather up the double because on Saturday you're not going to get any. And it was a way of showing that God can be trusted on this day.

Creator and Redeemer

Now, Exodus chapter 20 is one location where the Ten Commandments are stated, but in Deuteronomy chapter 5, there's another section where the Ten Commandments are repeated. And what's fascinating here is that [Deuteronomy 5](#) actually words it differently. Deuteronomy chapter 5, verse 12. It's even the same Ten Commandments, and here we come to the Sabbath. "...observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy." Some of your translations might say keep the Sabbath day. So here he's not using the word remember, but keep. Remember—in Exodus he said remember, but now we're to keep it. Keep it holy as the Lord God has commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, for the seventh is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you nor your son or daughter, male servant, female servant, ox, donkey, any of the animals or the foreigner that resides in your town, so that your male and female servants may rest as you do. So over in Exodus chapter 20, we're told to remember the Sabbath because God is the creator and he rested. And it's a time to recall this life in Eden where the garden is planted and man walks with God intimately. But Deuteronomy tells us to keep the Sabbath because why? Why? Not that our God is creator, but that our God is the redeemer.

Freedom from Slavery

Because of him, you are no longer slaves, in other words. This is why you keep the Sabbath. You are no longer slaves. And this should cause the attention of Christians to perk up, because that's like the motif of the entire gospel—that we're freed, we're redeemed, we're no longer slaves. According to Deuteronomy, Sabbath is a celebration of the redeeming power of our God every single week.

God is telling Israel that they must imitate him. Again, in our culture, we tend to get defensive and ask, well, why can't I continue working? Why can't I continue laboring? Why can't I continue carrying the burdens of stress and anxiety seven days a week? Why must I? Because God is asking you to imitate him. It's that simple. I love that.

Employers, parents, slaveholders in the Near East, are commanded to imitate God's merciful liberation by liberating their workers, even their animals, from burden and toil every week.

Now, some of you may have always seen it that way. I've never seen it as an invitation to enter into God's liberation into the world.

The Promised Land and Rest

The promise of an inheritance, a free and prosperous life in the land of Canaan, was what Israel was seeking after as they walked through the wilderness, what God promised them. And it's displayed in the scriptures also as a type of rest—a Sabbath rest. Life in the promised land carries the weight of the hope of true rest from the slavery of Egypt. Until Israel has a sovereign home and a land of its own, they await their true rest from the kind of toil that even they experienced in the wilderness.

The Sign of the Covenant

In [Exodus 31](#), the Sabbath is called a sign of the covenant between Israel and God. What's a sign for? So that if you're driving down the road and you see a sign, the purpose is you see it, right? So when Israel's neighbors saw this peculiar practice, they were to witness them inhabit and act out the drama of God's delegation, provision, and liberation. They were acting out God's character.

To see Israel practice the Sabbath in the narrative, in the story of the Bible, was to witness what it looks like when hope is actually lived out.

Why? Because Sabbath recalls a time when God redeemed us from slavery. In ancient Babylon, their mythological creation story was far different than Israel's. See, their God created them to be their slaves. Can you imagine? Can you imagine? I'm going to teach you about their pagan religion. Here you go. The gods got bored and they created us to be their slaves and serve them. God says, no, that's not me. No, you're not going to be my slave. I'm going to invite you into the liberation and the festival of freedom every single week that I reside in.

The Bigger Pattern of Sabbath

As this scene is played out once a week, we notice that the Sabbath doesn't stop there in the Bible. See, many times when we talk about the Sabbath in the Bible, it's that thing that we do once a week. It's that Saturday thing. And the Sabbath is actually much bigger. The pattern of the Sabbath is much bigger than that.

The reason why we isolate it to one day a week is because we struggle to keep the other occurrences of the Sabbath—the bigger ones in the Bible. No, God goes on to expand this pattern of acting out hope and liberation more than just once a week. Every seventh year, according to [Leviticus 25](#), Israel was to cease from their work and trust the provision of food from God and the land. In other words, they weren't allowed to cultivate the land. It's a sabbatical year once every seven years.

The Jubilee Year

And even more radically, every seventh Sabbath year—every 49 or 50 years—was a Jubilee year. What happened on the Jubilee year? I'm glad you asked.

In the Jubilee year that's mentioned in [Leviticus 25](#), all debts are canceled. So you can imagine. How big of a deal was that back then? How big of a deal would that be now? All of your debts are canceled. Your servants have to go free. You're working really hard. You have to pay off debt. You're in servitude to someone. You're enslaved. You've got to let them all go free. The poorest of the poor get brought back up to the same level as everyone else. There's a huge reset button that affects the entire economy in ancient Israel.

I'm poor. I was a slave. Now I'm free, but I don't have anywhere to go. I'm homeless. Oh, wait. The land that was given to your forefathers is now yours again. What? Yeah. You get to go occupy the land that was given to you. Radical. Radical. About every generation. Scandalous.

Sabbath as Enacted Hope

The drama and the story of hope was much bigger than this. When we think about the Sabbath, we think, oh, this is a day I can't swing a sickle in the field. But it's so much bigger. It's an enactment of hope that was more than just a ban of swinging a sickle or mowing your lawn once a week. No, the sign and story of God's provision and great liberation was meant to engulf and affect the entire nation at every level of the economy.

The poor are finally allowed to rest. They're liberated, re-established to land ownership—a radical act of mercy and grace and justice. The Sabbath is very much something that benefits you individually and should mold you spiritually. But here in the Torah, it was practical and effectively manifested God's liberating grace within the life of his people.

In other words, the Sabbath is not simply a time where you cease mowing the lawn once a week. It embodies the very character of God as many times and as many patterns as it has in the

Bible. It defines our God as someone who has mercy and delivers righteousness and justice and grace and love, that only a sovereign king has the ability to deliver.

Entering the Land as Sabbath Rest

If we continue the Bible's story past the Torah, we see that God equates Israel's entering the land as a type of rest—as a type of Sabbath. A type of culmination of the bigger picture of Sabbath. [Leviticus 26](#) reviews this imagery. You guys ready? You're good? We're going to dive into a very dense chapter of the Bible.

[Leviticus 26:2](#). Here's what it says. Observe my Sabbaths and have reverence for my sanctuary. I am the Lord. So right off the bat, verse 2, something about Sabbath is very important to this chapter. Does safety sound restful? I will grant peace in the land and you will lay down and no one will make you afraid. So you lay down, you're resting. I will remove wild beasts from the land and the sword will not pass by your country. I will put my dwelling place among you and I will not abhor you. I will walk among you and be your God and you will be my people. And the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt so that you will no longer be slaves to the Egyptians. I broke the bars of your yoke and enabled you to walk with your heads held high. That's powerful.

The Covenant and Its Consequences

So here, dwelling in the land is dependent on, of course, keeping the commandments, but first and foremost, observing the Sabbaths—the weekly, the yearly, and the jubilee. If dwelling in the land, entering it, and maintaining this restful state, this Sabbath life in Israel, is dependent on keeping these commandments and keeping this sabbatical pattern, what would be the punishment if you failed to do that?

Verse 14, God says, Here we go. Seven times over. Seven times. Where have we seen that number seven before? Oh, isn't that the number that embodies the Sabbath? I love that. So if you break the pattern of living as a sabbatical people that worships a Sabbath-keeping God, this vocation to image the mercy of God, giving rest and pursuing righteousness, if you disregard God's commandments, God will punish you seven times over. It's like an inversion of the Sabbath.

The Land Keeps Sabbath

Verse 33. I will scatter you among the nations and will draw you out by sword and pursue you. Your land will be laid waste and your cities will lie in ruins. Then the land will enjoy its Sabbath years all the time that it lies desolate and you are in the country of your enemies. And the land will rest and enjoy its Sabbaths all the time that it lies desolate. The land will have its rest it did not have during the Sabbaths you lived in it.

Here we go. So the chapter opens up with, hey, keep my Sabbaths. But if you don't do these things and everything that embodies the Sabbath—which trickles down into the commandments—then I'm going to kick you out of your land. And here it is, halfway through the chapter. Here we go. Verse 33. And you know what? After I drive you out of your land, then guess who's going to be keeping Sabbath? The land that you didn't let rest.

We always tend to hyper-focus on Sabbath as one day a week and miss the bigger pattern of Sabbath because of this. Was Sabbath a little bit bigger than just one day a week? It's kind of a big deal here. And it's a bit geeky, but wow, you will not enter rest unless you first submit to the Sabbaths and the commandments of God. If you disregard this, no rest will be given.

Let me put it this way. While in Egypt, Pharaoh did not give a Sabbath. No rest was given. And here, God is saying, if you enter the land and act like Pharaoh, then you yourself will lose the land, just like Pharaoh lost you. It's kind of a very poetic way, if you think about it, of putting that.

And this pattern—this threat of losing the land as a result of unfaithfulness to the covenant—runs through the common theme throughout the prophets as well.

Rest, Justice, and the Prophets

The idea of rest encapsulates the entire meaning of what it is to be free and be at peace. And here, when we jump into the prophets, we see exactly this. Isaiah paints a picture in Isaiah chapter 56, where he conflates the idea of Sabbath with justice and righteousness. [Isaiah 56:1](#). "This is what the Lord says: Maintain justice and do what is right." Okay, so this is going to be a section of scripture that's talking about justice and righteousness of God. Awesome. Notice what Isaiah has done here. He's directly equating keeping Sabbath with doing acts of righteousness and fleeing from evil. Am I wrong, or do we, on Sabbath, just do our best not to buy gas, or we don't want to lift anything too heavy, or we can scooch by getting past Sabbath if we try? No, this is something much bigger. It's not simply "don't lift some heavy stuff." No, it's flee from evil. Flee from being a people that exploits the poor, even on days outside the Sabbath. Flee from a people that resembles something a merciful people of God doesn't. Remember, in

Isaiah 1, one of the most brutal chapters in Isaiah, just like Amos, God's speaking through Isaiah and he's like, "Your Sabbath days make me want to vomit." So Israel was keeping some form of Sabbath. They probably turned it into a checklist—check, check, check, we do all these things—but all the while they're exploiting the poor. They're not being the beacons of light of God's justice and righteousness that they were meant to be. Oh, they sat on their couch all day. They sang some songs. They came to fellowship, high-fived a few people. "We're elite because we're keeping Sabbath," and God's like, "You're making me want to vomit. You're not. Even if you think you are, you're not. Because look at the rest of your life." Isaiah equates desecrating the Sabbath with evil and injustice. How am I desecrating the Sabbath if I'm not doing evil on Saturday? Because Sabbath is the embodiment of the character of God apart from the injustice of Pharaoh and evil.

Isaiah 58—many of us are familiar with it. It's an amazing chapter. It speaks of how people think they're honoring God's Sabbath, specifically an extreme Sabbath of Yom Kippur, the Shabbat Shabbaton, this heightened day of rest, the day of atonement. And Isaiah paints this picture of a people who think they're embodying the character of God by doing rituals, specifically fasting. "I'm fasting today, therefore I'm righteous, I'm keeping this Sabbath." But their lives reflect a different motive. Their lives are filled with exploitation of workers, with hating one another, with refusing to be a light of God's love and mercy. Instead, they hold the keys to the chains which bind the oppressed, all while thinking that they're righteous—"Yeah, I'm keeping the Sabbath, this is great." It's not simply about a single day as much as it is about a lifestyle that is memorialized on a specific day.

Israel Becomes Egypt

Ezekiel rakes Israel over the coals in Ezekiel chapter 20. Again, just like Isaiah, Ezekiel repeats the language of desecrating the Sabbath and overlaps it with idolatry and further injustice as an extension of Sabbath-breaking. This is the story of the Bible. Israel is enslaved in where? Egypt. They're redeemed by God, who frees slaves. The Sabbath is given as the mascot of God's justice and righteousness and liberating freedom and rest, whereby the people are to image God's liberation to their own servants, in their own family, in their own communities, even their cows. They are to be images of God to the world.

And Israel goes on to do the opposite. This is what the story of the Bible tells us. They go on to do the exact opposite. They break the Sabbath. They don't uphold justice. They go on to enslave other nations when they go into the land. So 1 Kings chapter 10 says that Solomon built the temple of God—the God that frees slaves—using slave labor. And the writer nonchalantly just

reads it as if you're supposed to be like, "Oh, yeah? Yeah." Israel overtook weaker nations around them, exploited their labor, and made them slaves to them. They became Egypt. Israel did. They became Pharaoh. And as a result, the prophetic punishment described in [Leviticus 26](#) comes to pass. They are rejected. They're ejected from the land. They're exiled into Assyria and then Babylon.

Looking Forward Instead of Back

This story right here is what the majority of the prophets speak about—this scenario, this pattern. Israel and her prophets began to look not within history, not behind them. They knew their history, they were told their history, and they found themselves in this foreign land watching their land keep the Sabbath because they couldn't, because they refused to live out the justice and liberating freedom that God gives. They refused to allow the land to rest and their own people to rest. And they found themselves in Babylon.

And instead of looking back, trying to figure out how they're going to fix this, because they've messed it up so bad, something begins to change. Israel and her prophets begin to look not into their past, but into their future for a type of hope and an ultimate rest that will come about. They begin to look forward to a new type of exodus that's going to form—one like the Passover in Egypt, but greater. A greater exodus. When God will once again deliver them from slavery and they will enter into freedom and complete rest. And the thing that's different about this story is that due to Israel's thorough and consistent failure, their constantly messing up leads the prophets to begin explaining that you need to anticipate something fuller, a more ultimate rest that will be ultimately accomplished and perpetuated by God himself.

Jeremiah declared a great day of the Lord will come and it will bring rest to Israel's land. It's a future event—this great and dreadful day of the Lord where the power and awesomeness of God will fall to earth, but unrest to those in Babylon, in Jeremiah chapter 50. Zechariah, in his very first chapter, envisions a time where the entire world, because of something God is going to do that will be just absolutely amazing, the entire world will be at rest and at peace. Sabbath, in [Zechariah 1:11](#). It's the chapter before he speaks about the new Jerusalem coming down and not having walls because it just overtakes all nations and cattle and creation. God is truly going to do something different, according to the prophets—something bigger at this point in the story.

The Atmosphere at the Time of Jesus

But when? When will God act? Well, the Babylonian exile ends. Israel gets to return back to the land, but they're still governed by Persia. They're not their own people. They still don't have rest. Then the Greeks come in, and we got that whole Maccabean thing, which seemed like a good thing, and then a generation later it was worse. Then the Romans came. Israel is still not at a place of ultimate rest because of their disobedience. They're still struggling, and they're still wondering when these promises that God made through the prophets are going to come to pass.

This is the atmosphere at the time of Jesus, at the time of Yeshua, in the first century. This is the atmosphere. And this rabbi from Nazareth, this no-name rabbi from Nazareth, decides to proclaim and announce the start of his ministry. And how does he do it? Luke chapter 4 records this. "Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and the news about him spread throughout the whole countryside. He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him. He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day, he went into the synagogue, as it was his custom, and he stood up to read. And the scroll of the prophet of Isaiah was handed to him." Unrolling it—I want you to imagine it. So he's standing up, and he's unrolling the scroll. Here we go. "He found the place where it is written: The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has appointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, walked over, and sat down."

A Mic-Drop Moment

And I picture him crossing his legs, but that's just me. Just sits down. "The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, 'Today'—again, my imagery is "today"—"this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." Talk about a mic drop moment. Like, just the audacity. The boldness. What a bad mama jamma. This guy—who does he think he is?

So if you're unaware of what scripture he's quoting, he's quoting a section of Isaiah in [Isaiah 61](#). And we're going to read a little bit of it. [Isaiah 61](#) is Isaiah speaking about a time—he's actually speaking about a jubilee, this divine ultimate jubilee that's going to be the climax of the kingdom of heaven being birthed on earth. And here's what he says about this time that is coming. He says—do I have it?—"The spirit of the sovereign Lord is on me because the Lord has appointed me to proclaim the good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and that day of vengeance of our God, to

comfort all who mourn and provide for those who grieve in Zion, to bestow on them the crown of beauty instead of ashes."

I'm going to keep reading. I'm excited. "You will receive a double portion, and instead of disgrace, you will rejoice in your inheritance. And so you will inherit a double portion in your land, and everlasting joy will be yours. I delight greatly in the Lord. My soul rejoices in our God, for he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness."

Yeshua's Ministry Announcement

"As a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and a bride adorns herself with jewels." This is what Yeshua quoted. He opened the scroll, read this and said, "This is fulfilled right now." What? This chapter is about Isaiah's vision of what the divine year of Jubilee looks like when God will come and enact it himself. God says, I'm going to do this, and I'm going to make a way, and I will establish my kingdom on earth in a way that will never be the same, it's never been seen or felt before.

And Yeshua, this is how he announces his ministry. Take that in. His purpose is announced with the Jubilee. His role in the story of Israel is announced as the one who is bringing forth the ultimate Sabbath rest, prophesied, never seen like this, never felt, something that was only prophesied by the lips of the prophets. Yeah, I'm bringing that now. I'm going to be the one that makes a way. I will establish God's kingdom on earth once and for all.

He ushered in the Jubilee year that Israel was always supposed to, that they were called to, but couldn't. A time of peace, a time of rest, a Sabbath season filled, gushing with God's ultimate presence. Yeshua had come to enact this. This is the new greater exodus that Isaiah prophesied about, where Israel would once again be gathered back together where? In their own land, as Jeremiah speaks about. This pattern of peace, this pattern of ultimate Sabbath rest. You will enter this rest greater than you ever entered it after Egypt.

Healing on the Sabbath

To heal the sick on the Sabbath? Man, that was one that really got him in trouble, wasn't it? Yashiro walked around doing stuff on the Sabbath. Why are you doing stuff on the Sabbath? Well, this is the inauguration of what God's kingdom looks like. The whole Sabbath season—yeah, I'm going to heal on the Sabbath. Because in God's ultimate Sabbath, in God's ultimate kingdom, in God's ultimate jubilee, Isaiah says that there will be no blind. There will be no lame. There will be no deaf. No.

So Yeshua says, if I'm the messenger for that, then that can't be. I love that. To heal the sick on the Sabbath was not something that disobeyed God's command, but to reenact God's work of provision and liberation he was always willing to give. Yeshua was representing what it would have looked like if Israel had actually succeeded in their vocational calling to image this Sabbath-keeping God fully. This is what the Sabbaths, the weekly Sabbath, the yearly, the Jubilee, this is what it all pointed to. All of it.

This cosmic community of people that walked out God's divine character. This was Yeshua's ministry. And see, the Pharisees had become so focused on what they believed Sabbath was supposed to be and revolve around. We see this here. They were always upset that Yeshua was doing stuff. No, you're breaking the checklist. We have a checklist.

The Sabbath Commandments

And what's funny about the Sabbath is, if you've ever studied it, there's only a few commandments of the Sabbath. And they're very vague, spoiler alert, they're very vague. So much so that every Jewish community has evolved the way that they keep Sabbath because they have to. So in ancient Israel, it was obviously kept one way. But then after the Babylonian exile, Ezra comes in here and he said, All right, we got all these pagan nations coming in here trying to sell stuff. And we got people here wanting to sell stuff and market. No, no, no, no. No buying or selling. That was something that was established by Ezra for his community.

And even at the time of Yeshua, there was an evolution of Sabbath commands because how do we keep these few commandments? How do we safeguard the Sabbath day? So every different sect school had different ways that they were going to. A Sabbath's day journey is mentioned in the New Testament. What is that? Well, it was something that evolved out of the need, how are we going to keep Sabbath sacred? Even today in Judaism, there are several different sects that have different standards. How are we going to set this day apart?

And here we see Yeshua constantly grinding against the Pharisees. And the Pharisees say, No, you don't understand. You're not keeping Sabbath, Yeshua. He said, Yeah, I am.

The Paralyzed Man

One Sabbath, when Jesus went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee, he was being carefully watched. Wonder why. There in front of him was a man suffering from an abnormal swelling of his body. This is very strange. There was a man that had an issue. And you could just—I don't know what it's like to have an abnormal swelling of my body, but it can't be

comfortable, I wouldn't think. I would assume it would be quite painful, quite displeasurable. And here's this guy sitting there and probably not even wanting to be there. I just want to go home. This is horrible. This is a horrible day. Just horrible.

Jesus asked the Pharisees and the experts of the law, Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not? Is it lawful for God's power and respiration and liberation from this thing to be endowed on this man on the Sabbath day or not? Is that something the Sabbath represents or not? Is that something freedom and liberation and provision from God looks like or not?

And they knew better. Verse 4, they remained silent. I would have too. So taking hold of the man, he healed him and sent him on his way. I like to think that was pretty aggressive. Yeshua took hold of him. Come here. You're healed. And sent him on his way. And then he looks back and he sees these shocked Pharisees and teachers of the law. They don't know what to do. No, I mean, if you're a doctor, you're working, so you're not supposed to be doing that. But he's got his point. Is it okay to do good on Shabbat? They're just shocked.

God's Character and Rest

And he asked them, If one of you has a child or an ox that falls into a well on the Sabbath day, will you not immediately pull it out? And they said nothing. If your child falls into a well or a sewer system, please pull him out on Shabbat. Just please, please. DSS will be called if you... What's this saying?

He's making the point that God provides and God liberates. And in that... We respond with rest, and we take up the attitude of not only taking on rest and entering into rest, but also giving rest on this Sabbath day, no matter what that ends up looking like.

This is what Sabbath orbits around, all of the Sabbaths, the entire scope of the Bible. It orbits around a display that represents a moment of time that embodies the character of our God in the Bible.

The author of Hebrews picks this motif up very hard, just rampant. And it's so important because the book of Hebrews is actually a sermon. How many of you guys knew that? The book of Hebrews is actually a sermon written by a pastor, and he's concerned for his flock because he has people in his fellowship, probably a home fellowship at the time.

Burnout and Faith

Some people have been believers for a long time. They've been holding on to the faith for a long time, but they're facing persecution, and maybe they're getting burnt out. Has anyone ever come to see themselves as burning out sometimes of the whole religion thing? Was that too transparent? He's getting concerned. He says, Man, they're burning out. I need to write and encourage them.

But then you have people over here. You have these new believers that are coming in, and they're just on fire, but are they really going to last? And then he has people that he knows think that they're believers, but really? Because they're not. They claim that they believe, but in their actions and through their faith, their walk, it's just not there.

And so he writes this sermon of the book of Hebrews. And in chapter 3, 7 through 19, he actually quotes [Psalm 95](#). And if you're unfamiliar with [Psalm 95](#), actually I skipped over it earlier. Here's [Psalm 95](#). He quotes about the first 40 years: "I load that generation and said they are the people who go astray in their heart and they have not known my ways. Therefore I swore in my wrath they shall not enter my rest."

Israel's Rebellion

And what this is speaking about, the psalm is reflecting on the people who encountered the redemptive love of God from Egypt and they wandered around in the wilderness and ended up coming to a place where they rebelled. We know the story. We're redeemed from Egypt, and everyone's saying, Man, everything you say we will do. We are your covenant people, God. We trust you. We believe in you. We have faith.

And then what happens? They reach the borders of the land, and we send those 12 spies in, and only two come back with a good report. And then everyone says, You know what, God? We want to go back to Egypt. They had watermelons. What they said. We want to go back to Egypt. Moses, they turn on Moses. Moses, have you brought us out here to kill us? What are you doing?

This huge rebellion takes place. And here's what the psalmist is reflecting on. He says, This is the moment when God looked at them and said, You will not cross over into the land. You will not cross over into the inheritance I have for you. You will not enter my rest.

This wasn't like a once-a-week Sabbath that he's speaking of. This is the ultimate climactic atmosphere of Sabbath that was supposed to embody the entire culture of a Sabbath-keeping people that serves a Sabbath-keeping God. And in Hebrews chapter 3, the author quotes this.

The Heart of the Matter

And then in chapter 4, the pastor who's writing reviews this section, essentially asking his fellowships: If you're going to act like you believe, but in reality, you don't live like it? In reality, your faith is not seen in your life. People look at you and they don't see someone who truly believes that they are redeemed from slavery. Are you going to act like Israel did or not? Or are you going to hold fast to the faith, to walking out what it means to be a redeemed people of God? That's the message.

Opening to Rest

Here's where he continues in Hebrews chapter 4, verse 7. He specifies a certain day.

Hebrews chapter 4, verse 7: "Again, he specifies a certain day. Today, speaking through David many years ago, reflecting on [Psalm 95](#). As it was previously said, 'Today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.'"

So there remains a Sabbath rest for God's people. And the author of Hebrews is asking, will you enter into it? Because it's not simply about a day that you don't mow your lawn and maybe you light some candles. These are parts of the day, but the underlying pattern and what fuels that day is something much grander and much bigger. It's something that's reflected in your life throughout the week. It's reflected in your lifestyle of faith—something reflected when you image the justice and mercy of God every single day. I love that.

In verse 11, just a little geek moment. Notice he does a wordplay here: "Let us make every effort and strive to enter the rest." It's like working to get to the Sabbath. It's intentional. It's funny.

This rest that God gives freely is available to all. This rest where you will not find chaos. You will not find worry. You will not find toil. You will find shalom and God's grace and love here.

Remember, Sabbath was a gift given to redeemed people. And the question is, will you enter in?

The Sabbaths were pointing to a time where God's presence would engulf creation, where his liberation would affect all people in a way that could only be imagined. And this fulfillment, we already know, is found in the person of Yeshua. And each week, we're reminded of the invitation to enter into this set-apart day that celebrates the life in Christ that we're given to live out.

A Gift Not to Be Dismissed

And it's sad because many Christians make the mistake in thinking that because Jesus has somehow embodied and enacted the climax of all the Sabbath in the Bible, it's done away with. No! It's available. It's available.

Don't we live out the Sabbath rest every day in Messiah? Of course we do. Absolutely. But that doesn't negate the day that God established and carved out of creation to memorialize, to reset, and to allow us to stop and focus on the climax of his love.

Friday night comes and we slow down and we enter into a different type of atmosphere where we're reminded of the greatness of our God.

Israel was called to live out the essence of the Sabbath character all week long, but they were still given the commandment of the memorial once a week where they enter in. It feeds off itself.

And maybe you've never taken advantage of that gift given to mankind in the Bible. How do we do it?

The Covenant Sign

Well, the sign of the covenant was given in the Torah to a people that was redeemed. And many of us here do that every Friday night. We stop. We rest. We enter in.

We've already spoken about a few of the commandments. That is the point of the Sabbath day. Yes, we're supposed to stop working, stop being productive. We're not the creators on that day. We're not God on that day, nor should we act as though God is working on that day.

We enter into the day in which he rested, in which he reigns, and we reflect on that, and we give that rest to others. That's the pattern of the Sabbath.

More Than One Day

Sabbath is a reminder that God is still there, arms out welcoming us into his rest. It's a reminder to endure in his mission. It's a reminder of the lifestyle of justice and righteousness. A day that a people are liberated from shackles. A year when creation is refreshed. A jubilee when captives are set free and the poor receive the blessings of their inheritance.

And if you've never kept a weekly Sabbath as a believer in Yeshua, I invite you to sit down Friday night with your family and take a moment to intentionally experience a gift from God. Whether it's a moment of silence to usher in this day and reflect, or whether it's elaborate

prayers and worship, this is the day that is supposed to be the mascot for the new life that we've been given through Yeshua.

Don't minimize it. Enter in and carry that same spirit throughout the rest of the week. Because your faith is not supposed to exist one day a week. It's supposed to exist in a lifestyle. Love that.

Come to Me

Matthew 11:28, we'll end with this:

"Come to me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

I don't know where you're at today, but I do know God wants you to experience his Sabbath rest. I do know that you're called to be a people of a Sabbath-keeping God, a Sabbath people. A people that refuses to be subjected to a world of constant progressive labor that tells us not to trust God with our time and our energy.

We're called to be a people that resists and instead stops and takes a moment. And the celebration of this rest once a week does not stop there. The ethic of the Sabbath is supposed to be embodied in who we are, so that when we encounter others, they feel the peace of God.

Enter Into Rest

So worship team, you guys can come up. We'll conclude with that.

Sabbath is the memorial celebrated once a week that embodies the covenant that exists every day. Enter in. There is a Sabbath rest for God's people. Enter into it.

Don't be like the people of Israel when they left Egypt and said, "Yeah, I believe in a God that breaks the shackles, and I believe in a God that redeems, and I believe in a God that gives liberation." But in reality, we just want to go back to Egypt.

Please stand as we conclude in worship.

Avinu Malkeinu, our father, our king.

Father, we thank you for this time together. And Father, we ask for the wisdom and the courage to step out. We ask that you would continue to image us after your character, that we would be a Sabbath-keeping people as you are a Sabbath-keeping God, and that every ounce of our life

would reflect that so that when people encounter us, we would be representations of the one who gives rest.

Allow us to be your image-bearers with the Spirit you've given to us.

Father, we thank you for this time. We thank you for this Sabbath day where we memorialize your covenant love for us through Yeshua. And we thank you, Father.

In Yeshua's name we pray. Amen. Shalom.

I'm Matthew Vander Els, and I hope you enjoyed this message. Founded in Truth exists to build a community that bears the image of God and lives the redeemed life only Yeshua gives.

If this message impacted you or if this ministry has been a blessing to you, we would love to hear from you. Send us a message through our contact form on our website and let us know how God has used this ministry to edify your faith and relationship with Him.

Don't forget to subscribe by clicking [here](#). And if you'd like to donate to this ministry and be a part of what God is doing through it, you can donate through our website at www.foundingatruth.com or by clicking [here](#).

We thank you for your continued support and we look forward to next time. Shalom.

For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at Foundedintruth.com EMAIL: Info@foundedintuth.com FACEBOOK: facebook.com/foundedintruth WEBSITE: Google:

Watch or listen: foundedintruth.com/bible-teachings/the-sabbath-and-jesus-the-torah-series/

This automated transcript has been lightly edited for readability; scripture quotations appear as spoken. For the authoritative teaching, watch the video. • Founded in Truth Fellowship, Rock Hill SC • Saturdays 11:00 AM • Your giving keeps every teaching free: foundedintruth.com/give