

EGF-12: The Same Tally of Bricks

EGF Group Bible Study 1-28-12

Before the modern age, farmers depended upon manual labor to plant and harvest crops. The tools used were hand tools and yokes that were connected to beasts of burden. Seeds were sown by hand and the fruit was harvested by hand. And just about everything harvested was used in life for one thing or another. The same is done today only machines have taken the place of laborers.

When my grandfather was young the wheat fields were reaped by hand with a large sickle. The straw was cut and separated from the grain and put into piles to be used to feed livestock, make thatch roofs and as a binding agent for bricks.

In bible times they didn't have the machinery of today. Most everything was done by hard labor and so rulers would need many hands to sustain the prominence of their kingdoms. After Israel had moved to Egypt during the time of Joseph, the Pharaoh treated them with respect and they flourished as the people of God... that is until Jacob, Joseph and the Pharaoh died. The new Pharaoh began to fear the Israelites because of their numbers and prosperity and he made them slaves of his kingdom. For several hundred years they were enslaved by Egypt until the Lord sent a deliverer to His people by the name of Moses.

Before Moses approached the king of Egypt to seek freedom for the children of Israel, he and his brother, Aaron, met with the oppressed leaders of Israel. During this meeting, Moses and Aaron encouraged the people to consecrate themselves to the Lord and told them God was about to deliver them from slavery with a mighty hand if they would harken unto Him and obey.

The Israelites had been laboring seven days a week to maintain their heavy workload for the Egyptians. But after this meeting with Moses, they decided to begin resting again every seventh day, as the Lord had commanded in the beginning. The law of God commanded Sabbath observance and it was their will to obey.

This is why the furious Pharaoh later said to Moses and Aaron: *"Behold, the people of the land now are many, and ye make them rest from their burdens."* Exodus 5:5. (The Hebrew word for "rest" used here is "shaw-bath." He is saying that Moses is having them "to keep sabbath.") In his reaction the king was essentially saying, *"these people are already good for nothing and you would have them stop working altogether!"*

The angry king knew that he must do something drastic to hold this nation of slaves under his control, so he decided to drown them with work and crowd both God and worship from their thoughts if possible. He said, *"Ye shall no more give the people straw to make brick, as heretofore: let them go and gather straw for themselves. ⁸ And the tale of the bricks, which they did make heretofore, ye shall lay upon them; ye shall not diminish ought thereof: for they be idle; therefore they cry, saying, Let us go and sacrifice to our God."* Exodus 5:7-8.

The workload of the people was increased dramatically in that they now had to personally gather the straw they needed to keep up with the same tally of bricks the king required. All in an effort to keep them from being faithful and obedient to God.

As in the days of Moses, God is about to do great things for His people. He wants to deliver them now from the battle with sin and prepare them for the journey to the heavenly Canaan. And as He did then, God is now trying to turn the minds of His people toward the importance of obedience to His law and the Sabbath rest.

In this study we are going to take a closer look at what the Bible says about the Sabbath of the Lord.

1. Did God make the Sabbath rest only for Israelites? *Mark 2:27*

2. When did God establish the Sabbath? *Genesis 2:1-3*

3. What day of the week is the Sabbath? *Genesis 2:2-3*

Three times in Genesis chapter 2, God tells us that He made the seventh day of Creation week the Sabbath. He also "*sanctified*" it, which means, "*to set aside for a holy use.*" God made the Sabbath as a 24-hour period of time, because time is what it takes to develop a true love relationship with Jesus. The devil, like Pharaoh of Egypt, wants to keep us so busy working that we don't think about God. Knowing how overly busy end-time people would be, God set aside 24 special hours each week, on the Sabbath, to spend with His people, to get acquainted with each of them. He has made that weekly appointment with you. Don't fail to meet Him!

4. How has God demonstrated the importance of His holy Sabbath? *Exodus 20:8-11*

Exodus 20:8-11 is the fourth commandment of God's law. By making the Sabbath one of His Ten Commandments, God demonstrated its extreme importance. Verse 10 calls it "*the Sabbath of the Lord thy God.*" Only the fourth commandment begins with the word "*remember,*" indicating God knew that people would forget. According to 1 John 3:4, breaking God's Ten Commandment law is sin. Jesus died to save His people from their sins, or law breaking (Matthew 1:21), and give them grace to keep it.

5. Of what two precious things does God say the Sabbath is a sign? *Ezekiel 20:12; Exodus 31:17*

God says the Sabbath is a sign, or mark, of His power as Creator and Redeemer. In Revelation 14:6-14, God gives three important messages that are to be proclaimed to "*them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.*" Verse 6. The first message is found in verse 7: "*Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.*" This appeal for a return to true worship is drawn right from the fourth commandment: "*For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.*" Exodus 20:11.

6. Which day did Jesus keep holy? *Luke 4:16; 1 Peter 2:21; 1 John 2:6*

Jesus is our example in living a faithful and obedient life to God. This includes Sabbath-keeping, which was His custom. A "custom" is a regular habit. Christians are to walk as He walked and keep the Sabbath of the Lord as Jesus did.

7. What was Paul's custom regarding the Sabbath? *Acts 18:4; 17:2*

8. Did the apostles also meet with the Gentiles on the Sabbath? *Acts 13:42; Acts 16:13*

On this occasion, the disciples met on the Sabbath with a group of Gentile women by the riverside, because the city had no synagogue. This shows us that the Sabbath had not been changed to the first day of the week or the Apostles would have been observing the change and teaching others to do the same.

**9. Did Jesus intend for His people to keep the Sabbath after He died for their sins?
*Matthew 24:20***

Jesus was here predicting the fall of Jerusalem, which He knew would take place in A.D. 70 (about 40 years later). So He suggested they pray that they would not have to flee from the invading army in the winter or on the Sabbath. The commotion, excitement, fear, and travel arrangements needed to escape from Jerusalem would be hard to do in the winter time and inappropriate to do on the Sabbath day. Christians were to pray that they might be able to keep the Sabbath as a day of rest, as God intended it should be kept.

There is a misconception that this verse is speaking about traveling on the Sabbath. That is not the context. Jesus is dealing with fleeing from persecution and all that it entails; He is not dealing with traveling on the Sabbath. That is why winter is also mentioned. Are we not to travel in the wintertime? Let us not wrest the Scriptures to say something they do not say. Many believers traveled to the temple each Sabbath and from good distances but in a reverent manner, which is acceptable to the Lord.

When the Christians did escape from the besieged city forty years later, it was not in winter or on the Sabbath! But it is clear from this Scripture that Jesus expected His people to be keeping the Sabbath holy long after His death.

10. Does the Bible teach that God's end-time people would also keep His seventh-day Sabbath holy? *Revelation 12:17; 14:12; 22:14*

The above Scriptures obviously refer to God's end-time church, and each passage states plainly that God's end-time church keeps His commandments, which include the fourth commandment about the Sabbath.

11. Will all of the saved in heaven keep the Sabbath? *Isaiah 66:22-23*

12. Can we be certain that the present seventh day of the week (Saturday) is the same Sabbath day that Jesus kept holy? *Luke 23:54-56; 24:1*

Jesus was crucified on Friday (preparation day), the day before the Sabbath (Mark 15:42). Jesus rested in the tomb on the Sabbath according to the commandment (Luke 23:56), then rose on the first day—the day after the Sabbath (Mark 16:1-6). Christians around the world still celebrate that day as Easter Sunday. The Bible clearly shows that the Sabbath was the day after Friday and the day before Sunday. It's easy to locate that day of the week on any calendar.

13. Does God allow anyone to change His holy day? *Proverbs 30:5-6; Deuteronomy 4:2; 1 Chronicles 17:27*

God blessed His Sabbath (Exodus 20:11), and when He blesses something, it is blessed forever. God says, " *My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.*" Psalms 89:34.

14. When does the Sabbath begin and end? *Genesis 1:1-5; Leviticus 23:32; Mark 15:42-43; 1:32*

Note for Genesis 1:1-5: Literally "evening was, morning was, day one." Darkness is defined, as an absence of light so before anything was created there was darkness. Then God created light and then He *separated* the two showing us that there is a distinct difference between them.

He then says the 'evening' (night) and the 'morning' (light) together, side by side, form a day, in this case the first one. The Hebrew word for 'evening' in this verse is "eh-reb" and it means 'dusk.'

Webster (1828 Ed.) defines dusk as: *A tending to darkness; incipient or imperfect obscurity; a middle degree between light and darkness; twilight; as the dusk of the evening.*

Twilight is defined as: *The light perceived before the rising, and after the setting, of the sun, or when the sun is less than 18° below the horizon, occasioned by the illumination of the earth's atmosphere by the direct rays of the sun and their reflection on the earth.*

Sunset is defined as: *The descent of the sun below the horizon; the time when the sun sets; evening.*

So the evening, or dusk when the sun has already set, is the beginning of the next day... as there was darkness before the light.

Note for Leviticus 23:32: Again, the same Hebrew word "eh-reb" meaning dusk or after the sun has set—gone below the horizon—darkness. The Hebrew word for 'Celebrate' is again the Hebrew word "shaw-bath" and it means to 'keep' or sometimes to 'rest' depending upon how it is used. In this case it means from sunset to sunset "*shall ye keep your sabbath.*"

Note for Mark 15:42-43: The Greek word for 'even' here is "*op-see-os*", which means "nightfall." Verse 42 tells us that it **was still the preparation day, but that nightfall or sunset was coming**—the even was coming is what is being said, not that it had arrived. Joseph knew that there wasn't much time before the Sabbath so he asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. They wanted to give Jesus a proper burial and not leave Him in the hands of the soldiers. So Joseph, Nicodemus and the beloved John took the body of Jesus, washed it, wrapped it in fine linen and placed it in the tomb before sunset—before the Sabbath had come.

Note for Mark 1:32: The same Greek word "*op-see-os*" is used here for 'even' meaning "*nightfall*." Mark leaves no room for doubt about this by saying, "*when the sun did set*" or at sunset—the sun below the horizon. This verse shows that the day had ended when the sun was down—the Sabbath had ended. So the Sabbath hours begin at sundown Friday and close at sundown Saturday.

15. What day is the Lord's Day of Revelation 1:10? Exodus 20:10; Isaiah 58:13; Mark 2:28

In both the Old and New Testaments, God calls the Sabbath the Lord's day. He also commands that people be warned against committing the sin of trampling God's Sabbath (Isaiah 58:1, 13). God declares that His holy Sabbath is for all people (Isaiah 56:2-7). The Bible **never** refers to Sunday as the Lord's day. It is simply one of the six working days of the week (Ezekiel 46:1). That's all it has ever been.

16. What blessing is promised by the Sabbath commandment? Matthew 11:28; Exodus 33:14, Hebrews 4:5

Each one of the Ten Commandments has a spiritual meaning. Some legalistic Christians focus on the letter of the law and neglect the spirit of the law. Jesus wants us to have both to maintain balance (Matthew 5:21-28). The Bible often uses the term "rest" to refer to salvation. Hebrews 4 says that those who have truly been led to the "rest" of conversion and who abide in Christ will keep the seventh-day Sabbath as a symbol of the Christian rest.

Because Jesus has given the Sabbath as a sign of His power to create and sanctify, would you like to begin receiving the blessings of this holy day by keeping it in His honor? Don't let the devil demand the same tally of bricks from you and thus forget the Sabbath rest.