

SABBATH: WORKING FOR THE OPPRESSED



Modern Sabbath discussions are often centered on abstaining from physical labor and chasing the utopian relaxation one day a week. Preachers and students of the text often use Sabbath keeping as an example of Christian liberty in opposition to the legalism of first century Judaism. While both of these ideas have connections to Sabbath, Biblical Sabbath, with strong association to Jubilee, employs avoiding work as an instrument to its greater purpose: release from bondage, caring for the oppressed, and celebrating the anticipated reign of Yahweh.

We first find God's instructions for Sabbath in His Torah. Famously part of the Ten Commandments, the version in Exodus teaches us that because Yahweh rested on the seventh day of creation, his followers should do the same (Exodus 20:8-11). Later, when Moses gives his final speech to the children of Israel, Sabbath observance is not linked to creation, but instead to God's redemption when he brought them out of Egyptian bondage. "Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day" (Deuteronomy 5:15). Sherman summarizes, "Sabbath represents not merely a cyclical order of nature, but rather the order of creation caught up in the dynamic movement of salvation history" (40-41).

The concept of Sabbath gains even more nuance in history as part of the Levitical holiness code. In Leviticus 25, shortly after a brief description of the Sabbath day, the author introduces the Sabbatical Year (every seventh year) and the Year of Jubilee (every fifty years), both of which are important to Yahweh. An astute Bible reader will perceive the parallel between Sabbath, both in the weekly and yearly cycle, and Year of Jubilee; Sabbath becomes less about not working and more about freedom. Liz Theoharis offers

The thesis clearly expresses the direction the essay is going to take. There is no mystery about it: the paper is going to present information to suggest considering a Biblical Sabbath as more than just resting; it is about caring for the oppressed.

Using quotations: attribution (Sherman) and parenthetical citation at the end (40-41). This quote is briefly introduced by the transition word "summarizes" which suggests that the quote summarizes the ideas of the paragraph.

this reflection: “The Sabbath isn’t about a holiday or taking a break. It is about economic equality and right relationship with humanity and God” (26). Here, within the purview of Sabbath, we recognize the significance of Yahweh’s people caring for the oppressed.

Using quotations: the author of the essay includes the application sentence following the quote; letting the reader know what they want you to understand from the quote. You’ll notice that these quotes are only one or two lines, not entire paragraphs.

Throughout the remainder of the Hebrew Scriptures we find great importance placed on release and redemption. The prophets yearn for a time when Yahweh establishes His kingdom, launching the Year of Jubilee “to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke” (Isaiah 58:6b). Later, as Jesus announces the arrival of the Kingdom during his ministry, he strengthens the Sabbath and Jubilee bond by claiming to usher in the Year of Jubilee (Luke 4:31-37), releasing people from physical infirmities on the Sabbath (Mark 3:1-6, Luke 13:10-17), and liberating those in bondage to sin (Mark 2:5-12). Because of the close relationship between Jubilee and Sabbath in the scriptures, it is obvious that release from bondage is more than just a hint in one’s Sabbath observance (Carson 73).

Using scripture: summarizing the relevant passage as well as including the citation.

Consequently, if Sabbath ritual is not necessarily about refraining from work, how should the people of God acknowledge this Biblical instruction? How is the twenty-first century Christian implicated by Jesus’ teachings and actions as they relate to Sabbath? N.T. Wright proffers valuable advice on how one should live during the Sabbath when, for a day, the future age interrupts our present age: “Even in the ongoing world of sin and death, one might live for a day in the promised New Age of blessing, healing and forgiveness” (Wright). In his esteemed book on the Sabbath, Abraham Joshua Heschel, the mid-twentieth century Jewish philosopher, builds on the attitude we must have during the Sabbath: “The seventh day is like a palace in time with a kingdom for all. It is not a date but an atmosphere. It is not a different state of consciousness but a different climate;

This is a good example of introducing a quote and including the parenthetical citation at the end.

it is as if the appearance of all things somehow changed” (21). Thus, as these scholars argue from both the Jewish and Christian tradition, Sabbath is a day when God’s people set apart the day especially to promote justice for the helpless, release from oppressors, and liberty from bondage as a banner pointing towards Yahweh’s eternal reign.

As such, having a Jubilee state-of-mind should radically influence the way we spend our time during Sabbath. While we have already established the point that only abstaining from work is not a complete fulfillment of Sabbath, “Refraining from work on a regular basis should also teach us not to demand excessive work from others” (Bass 15). We should be aware, however, that it is not only our drive to devour bargain products that can require grueling work, but our purposeful, Sabbath rest can likewise dictate that someone else toil harder to fill in for the void left by our slack, thereby producing a paradoxical effect to the liberation of our intentional Sabbath. Bass continues, “When Sabbath comes, commerce halts, feasts are served, and all of God’s children play. The equal reliance of all people on the bounty and grace of God is gratefully acknowledged, and the goodness of weekday work is affirmed” (12). Our intentional repose allows others to breathe. The cease in our quest for material gain releases those caught in the cogs of industry and grants rest, even if for a moment. The fear of scarcity, accentuated by society’s greedy opportunism, is replaced with the realization of God’s abundance set forth even in creation. When we liberate our minds from work and consumerism, we engage in Jubilee celebration, Sabbath justice, and anticipation of Yahweh’s Kingdom.

Parenthetical citations are used to direct the reader to the Work’s Cited listing at the end of the paper; there the reader can locate the source of the quote or idea being cited.

Chick-fil-A, remarkable for their stance of being closed on Sundays, has never veered from their convictions. There was one instance, however, when the heart of

compassion overcame the tenet of tradition. In 2017, when a power outage stranded thousands of commuters in the Hartfield Jackson airport of Atlanta on a Sunday, Chick-fil-A mobilized employees to deliver over 2,000 sandwiches and bottles of water to those stuck in the terminals. This wonderful expression of Sabbath epitomizes Chick-fil-A's corporate message, "It's not about being closed. It's about how we use the time" (Eades).

If Sabbath and Jubilee are truly concerned with equity among Yahweh's creation, then we must also realize that this liberation does not affect only humanity; His entire created order, proclaimed good at creation, is worthy of honor and freedom from human domination (Lowry 70). In his book *Subversive Sabbath*, A.J. Swoboda makes the following observation, "Sabbath dethrones humanity from its self-aggrandized place of lordship over creation by handing authority of the world back to the One to whom it already belongs." (127) Our participation in the New Creation and acknowledgment of Yahweh's authority, releases all of creation -- humanity and the cosmic order alike -- from oppression and subjective abuse, providing refreshment to creation and directing worship to the Creator.

Our modern Sabbath beliefs should be transformed by the actions of Jesus: releasing the oppressed so they are free to worship Yahweh. In fact, there is no better way in which to spend a day of practicing Sabbath, propagating God's Kingdom through the counter-cultural movement of Sabbath. Lowry asserts, "Liberty, justice, peace, freedom from violence -- these are signs of God's universal reign, announced by the raised torch of freedom" (76). When the people of Yahweh choose to engage in Biblical Sabbath, promoting justice and liberty instead of pursuing consumerism or relaxation, all creation will break forth in flourishing -- a real Jubilee!

The conclusion paragraph reiterates what was said in the introduction and reflects the position presented in the thesis as well as the ideas worked out through the body of the essay: the greater work of Sabbath is that of jubilee.

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These should all be listed in alphabetical order and should be formatted with a hanging indentation.