

That Mysterious Sabbath Verse — Exodus 20:11

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Perhaps I am overstepping my bounds by suggesting there is mystery to a verse most of us have read countless times. Exodus 20:11 is enigmatic for many of us — and was to me for most of my Christian walk — until the light dawned some years ago as to its true meaning. Here is what the verse says.

“For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it” (New King James Version, here and throughout).

Deuteronomy 5 ends the Sabbath command a bit differently, stressing that Israel had been held captive in Egypt for years, but was brought out by Yahweh Elohim with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm: “... therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day” (verse 15). Here we see again a bit of mystery added to the Sabbath command. Why is the command to keep the Sabbath day attached to the release from captivity in Egypt by God’s almighty hand?

God’s words are not written without great purpose, but are for our instruction and edification (II Timothy 3:16). Let us therefore scrutinize these ideas and understand what our Creator is telling us through these Sabbath commands.

The First Eden

We all know well the Genesis 1 recreation of the earth that took place in seven days, the first six restoring the surface of our watery planet to an exquisite environment capable of sustaining mankind, animals, birds, fish, creeping things, microorganisms, and the plants that feed them. It was a marvelous world that was made: beautiful, productive, peaceful, and joyous beyond belief! Within that world, somewhere in the Middle East — experts debate exactly where, but more than likely in the vicinity of modern-day Jerusalem — was placed the Garden of Eden. What a world that was, replete with every possible luxury for voluptuous living, for Eden means “paradise or delight.” “And out of the ground the Lord God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food” (Genesis 2:9).

There was also available fruit of the tree of life and of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. We know the story well, of how first Eve, and then Adam, partook of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, a fruit that was forbidden by their Maker; they chose for themselves what was forbidden and sinned, set themselves up as gods, and had to be expelled from that beautiful environment to never again enter (Genesis 3:22-24). Death now stalked their every step, and aging began to eat away at their lives. This was the ploy of the Serpent (Satan, or Lucifer) all along, to attempt to foil God’s plan of building a world-wide society of kings and priests made in His image (Exodus 19:5-6; I Peter 2:9), effectively replacing Satan and his minions as rulers over the earth and his own version of Eden based upon carnality, greed, and heartache as we see enveloping society worldwide to this very day. Satan is trying to substitute his own version of Eden on earth in place of the Father’s as we speak!

For 6,000 years since the creation mankind has been living in a culture based upon the Adversary’s design (II Corinthians 4:4). It has been an eon of wars, calamities, heartaches, tears, and suffering, each millennium of this 6,000 years typifying 1,000 years on God’s prophetic scale (II Peter 3:8; Psalm 90:4). Life has been lived outside of the Edenic environment, and the result has brought us to the precipice of World War III and nuclear, chemical, and biological extermination of the human race, unless God should cut those days short (Matthew 24:21-22). According to Wikipedia, there are 61 ongoing conflicts in the world right now, with cumulative fatalities ranging from 115 (Congo) to about 2 million (Afghanistan). On top of that, traffic deaths total about 1.3 million annually, and deaths from heart disease and strokes

total about 15 million. These are all, of course, merely a few causes of life-shortening deaths, for all men are appointed to die in this eon.

The New Eden

There is one more prophetic year awaiting us, the 1,000 year reign of Jesus Christ and the saints on the earth ... the millennial Sabbath (Revelation 20:4), a return of Eden to eventually envelope the entire surface of a renewed earth. This seventh one-thousand years will, as far as we know, be like the original Eden of Genesis 1, replete with a restored water canopy, worldwide moderate climate, untold productivity, food in abundance and without cost, peace and prosperity for all nations, tameness of animals, and an elimination of all vestiges of harsh forceful Gentile-style rule that Jesus Christ so vehemently railed against: "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them But not so among you: on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves" (Luke 22:25-26).

Imagine the world as is prophesied to be. The deserts will bloom like a rose (Isaiah 35:3-7), animals will coexist with people and each other in peace (Isaiah 11:6-9), mountains will be lowered and seabeds raised (Revelation 16:20), and sickness and death will be removed. It is possible that people will live the entire 1,000 years, as hinted at by the metaphoric language of Isaiah 65:20 and 22: "... for as the days of a tree, so shall be the days of My people." Some trees live to be several thousands of years old.

Are we beginning to see now why the creation week is included in Exodus 20:11? The Sabbath pictures the very time when our Savior walked with Adam and Eve, in their very presence, within that voluptuous paradise on the earth. It was a time of rest rather than the toil, sweat, and labor that entered after sin. Thus, as the Sabbath command says (Exodus 20:9), for six days (6,000 years of history) we work — we sweat, toil, and suffer *outside of Eden*, as it were — but on the seventh day (1,000 years of millennial bliss) we cease our heavy servitude and rest, rest within that Eden environment that God and the resurrected saints will be recreating on the earth's surface, like the Eden that Elohim refurbished on the earth during the six days of Genesis 1. The seventh-day Sabbath has everything to do with the reestablishment of Eden on the earth! That's why God in His wisdom put it there in the Sabbath command.

What about the statement in Deuteronomy 5:15 that reminded Israel they were slaves in Egypt but were led out by a mighty hand and outstretched arm? You are probably already ahead of me by now. Of course! For 6,000 years mankind has been held captive by the adversary's society, but at the return of Jesus Christ people will be released from that slavery, propelling all nations and all of the earth into 1,000 years of peace, beauty, and prosperity beyond imagination, beyond what eye has seen and ear has heard (I Corinthians 2:9) ... the seventh one-thousand years, the restored Eden, the Eden expounded by Peter at the first Pentecost when he said,

"Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so the *times of refreshing* [*anapsucho*, 'a recovery of breath, a refreshing'] may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ ... whom heaven must receive until the *times of refreshing* [*apokathistemi*, 'restoration'] of all things ..." (Acts 3:19-21).

What once was will be reinstated on earth. No longer will the residents on earth be subjected to the tyrannical governments of mankind that so often run roughshod over the people, extract taxes, draft their sons into military service, and do the things kings tend to do, and which God warned Israel against when they cried for a human ruler in Samuel's day (I Samuel 8:6-18). They will be delivered from slavery to Pharaoh and Egypt, a type of all the Gentile governments that rule today, as they have for 6,000 years since Cain killed Abel. The mighty hand and outstretched arm of the Eternal living God will deliver the nations, as we read of Jesus and the saints coming on white horses to defeat the Beast and the False

Prophet of Babylon (Revelation 19:11-12). Satan will be utterly restrained in the abyss this Sabbath millennium, unable to influence mankind for the entire 1,000 years (Revelation 20:1-3).

“... therefore the Lord your God commanded you ...”

... to keep the Sabbath day. Isn't it marvelous how there are more layers of understanding than first meets the eye within these wonderful words of our heavenly Father and Jesus Christ? These messages are as potent for us today as in the day they were written. Let us heed and understand them well, for they give us great hope in these end-time days to stay the course, and be with Him when that millennial rest arrives!

Paul W. Syltje — March, 2018