

The Christian Sabbath, or “Day of Rest”¹

Thoughts Influenced by Joe Lieberman Jewish USA Democratic Senator

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Thesis One

In this section we will examine why Christians do not, as a corporate practice, the Old Testament Jewish rules of the *Sabbath*, Ex 20:8-11, “**Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.** ⁹ Six days you shall labor, and do all your work; ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your manservant, or your maidservant, or your cattle, or the sojourner who is within your gates; ¹¹ for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it.”

As we will note in *Thesis Two* below, Christians respect the Sabbath as a cultural occasion with deep religious implications, but *not as a religious law* with religious significance.

The Jewish *Sabbath* commemorated God’s delivery of Israel from Egyptian bondage, but this was a Jewish religious law. Jesus indicated the limitation of the Sabbath law in his discussions with the Pharisees at Matt 12:1-8, “At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the sabbath; his disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. ² But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, “Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the sabbath.” ³ He said to them, “Have you not read what David did, when he was hungry, and those who were with him: ⁴ how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? ⁵ Or have you not read in the law how on the sabbath the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are guiltless? ⁶ I tell you, something greater

¹ The Jewish *Sabbath*, the seventh day of the week, was institutionalized by God through Moses at Mount Sinai, ca 1300 - 1250 BCE. The English word *sabbath* from the Latin *sabbatum*. With Sabbath," influenced by the Greek *sabbaton*, are primarily from Hebrew *shabbāth*, literally meaning *to rest*.

than the temple is here. ⁷ And if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. ⁸ **For the Son of man is lord of the sabbath.**"

Since Jesus is *Lord of the Sabbath*, he took the place of the Sabbath Law and *became himself the Sabbath law*.

Christians celebrate the *first day of the week* as a religious celebration of Jesus' "Sabbath" **delivery of believers in his death and resurrection as deliverance from the bondage to Satan under sin.**

Thesis Two

The thesis of this paper addresses how Christians *might improve their preparation for the "Christian Sabbath," The Lord's Day Worship Assembly.*

The New Covenant

Jeremiah had prophesied that God would usher in a new covenant, implying that the present covenant between God and the Jews would be annulled and replaced.

Jer 31:31-34, "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, ³² not like the covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. ³³ But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴ And no longer shall each man teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

Heb 8:1-7, "¹ Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, ² a minister in the sanctuary and the true tent which is set up not by man but by the Lord. ³ For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; hence it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer. ⁴ Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law. ⁵ They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly sanctuary; for when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, "See that you make everything according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain." ⁶ But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry which is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. ⁷ For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion for a second."

Heb 8:8-13. The writer of Hebrews claimed that God and Jesus had introduced such a new covenant, "For he finds fault with them when he says:

**"The days will come, says the Lord,
when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel
and with the house of Judah;**

⁹ not like the covenant that I made with their fathers
on the day when I took them by the hand
to lead them out of the land of Egypt;
for they did not continue in my covenant,
and so I paid no heed to them, says the Lord.

¹⁰ This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel
after those days, says the Lord:
I will put my laws into their minds,

*and write them on their hearts,
and I will be their God,
and they shall be my people.*

¹¹ *And they shall not teach everyone his fellow
or everyone his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,'
for all shall know me,
from the least of them to the greatest.*

¹² *For I will be merciful toward their iniquities,
and I will remember their sins no more."*

¹³ ***In speaking of a new covenant he treats the first as obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away."***

Gal 3:17-29, *"This is what I mean: the law, which came four hundred and thirty years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void.*

¹⁸ *For if the inheritance is by the law, it is no longer by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise.*

¹⁹ *Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made; and it was ordained by angels through an intermediary.* ²⁰ *Now an intermediary implies more than one; but God is one.*

²¹ *Is the law then against the promises of God? Certainly not; for if a law had been given which could make alive, then righteousness would indeed be by the law.* ²² *But the scripture consigned all things to sin, that what was promised to faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.*

²³ ***Now before faith came, we were confined under the law, kept under restraint until faith should be revealed.*** ²⁴ ***So that the law was our custodian until Christ came, that we might be justified by faith.*** ²⁵ ***But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a custodian;*** ²⁶ ***for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.*** ²⁷ *For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.* ²⁸ *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.* ²⁹ *And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise."*

Background Impetus to the Spirit of the "Sabbath Law"

The background impetus to this lesson was a sermon I heard presented by Dr. David Jeremiah, October 27, 2024, or November 3, 2024, on the topic of Christian Worship in which Jeremiah discussed Senator Joe Lieberman's book in the Sabbath, *The Gift of Rest*. I was so impressed by Jeremiah's discussion of Lieberman's deep spiritual approach to the Jewish Sabbath that I purchased Lieberman's book. Like Jeremiah, I was deeply impressed with what Lieberman described as the *genuine spirit* of the Jewish Sabbath. I began to understand what Christians have missed by defining the Sabbath by focusing on *the day's umbers, 7th and 1st days*, and *the formality* of the difference between the Pharisaic definition of the Sabbath and how modern Christians define the Jewish Sabbath. I was surprised, *perhaps shocked*, by what I learned from a contemporary, serious Jewish thinker, and what we had missed by focusing on the Pharisees of Jesus' day.

Lieberman opened a new door to my poor understanding of the Sabbath as a celebration rather than a ritual law defined as a formality by most Christian definitions of the Jewish Sabbath.

I highly recommend the purchase and reflection on Lieberman's *spiritual understanding* of the *Jewish Sabbath*.

The meaning of the Jewish word *Sabbath, Shabbat, Shabbos*

The following notes are comments from several Jewish sources. One should remember that Judaism was, and remains, divided by ethnic, geographic, and religious differences with the result that the word *Sabbath* appears in different forms but *almost always with the same religious implications*, a *Law* regarding keeping the *Sabbath*. The following notes summarize general Jewish views of the Sabbath.

Gerhard F. Hassel in the *Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*

Hassel provides an excellent introductory survey article on the *Sabbath*. Hassel covers a wide range of applications of the Sabbath in Jewish, Greek, and Christian practices. Hassel's comprehensive article demonstrates the scope of the meaning of *Sabbath*.

“Hebrew Terminology. The Heb noun *šabbāt*, “sabbath,” occurs 111 times in the OT. Concentrations of usage are in the Pentateuch with 47 times (Exodus 15 times; Leviticus 25 times; Numbers 4 times; Deuteronomy 3 times), the prophetic literature with 32 times (Ezekiel 15 times; Isaiah 8 times; Jeremiah 7 times; Amos and Hosea 1 time each), and the historical books with 30 times (Nehemiah 14 times; 1–2 Chronicles 10 times; 2 Kings 6 times). It appears one time each in Ps 92:1 and Lam 2:6. The noun *šabbātôn*, “sabbath feast,” seems to be a derivative of the noun *šabbāt* (GKC §240) and appears eleven times. It is used by itself in Exod 16:23; 31:15; Lev 23:24, 39 in the sense of “sabbath feast” and in Lev 25:6 for “the sabbath of the land,” i.e., the sabbatical year. The combination *šabbāt šabbātôn*, “sabbath of complete/solemn rest,” appears for the seventh day (Exod 32:5; Lev 23:3), the annual Day of Atonement (Lev 16:31; 23:32), the annual Feast of Trumpets (Lev 23:24) and the sabbatical year (Lev 25:4).

The relationship between the noun *šabbāt* and the Heb verb *šābat*, “to stop, cease, keep (sabbath)” in the *Qal*, “to disappear, be brought to a stop” in the *Nip'al*, “to put to an end, bring to a stop” in the *Hip'il*, remains disputed. Scholars have argued that the noun derives from the verb ... or that the verb derives from the noun ... While there is no conclusive answer, it seems certain that the noun *šabbāt* cannot be derived from the Akk term *šab/pattu (m)* ... A possible connection of *šabbāt* with the number “seven” has been left open ... In this case the Akk feminine form *sibbitim*, “seventh,” may be considered as an ancestor of the Heb noun *šabbāt*, “sabbath,” also a feminine form, which, if the relationship holds, may have originally meant “the seventh [day].” On this supposition “the seventh day” in Gen 2:2–3 would receive further light.²

Scholarly comments on Jewish Sabbath³

Other scholarly Dictionary discussions of the meaning and implications of the *Sabbath* principle provide a good summary of the *Sabbath* in both Judaism and Christian views.

“*Shabbat*, Hebrew: שַׁבָּת, also known as “Shabbos” or the “*Sabbath*”, is the Jewish *day of rest and celebration* that begins on Friday just before sunset and ends on the following evening after nightfall. In the late afternoon of the before the Sabbath it is ushered in with candle lighting, prayers, and feasting of braided bread and other delicacies. And the end of the Sabbath Day is marked with a multisensory ceremony as well.”

“The sacredness of the Sabbath has served to unite Jews during the long course of their history and has been for them a joyous reminder of their Covenant with God. The prophets, nevertheless, often found it necessary to remind the Jews of God’s commandment to keep holy the Sabbath. Since abstention from work was fundamental to Sabbath observance, God miraculously provided a double

² Hasel, G. F., “Sabbath,” *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, vol. 5, p. 849.

³ Comments from other scholarly resources and Dictionaries.

portion of *manna* (“bread from heaven”) on Friday so that the Israelites would not be compelled to gather food on the Sabbath during their 40 years of wandering in the wilderness.”

“*Shabbat*, also known as the day of rest and worship in Judaism. The word *Shabbat* literally means “to rest.” One of the most significant traditions in Jewish culture, *Shabbat* is observed every Friday evening until the following Saturday evening. It is the only ritual commanded by God in the Ten Commandments and is at the core of Jewish identity and has served as the anchor of Jewish continuity for thousands of years.”

Lieberman enriches our understanding of the Sabbath with a more practical contemporary spiritual understanding of *Sabbath* in *The Gift of Rest*. “The word Sabbath appears in several forms depending on the Hebrew dialect spoken, for example, *Shabbat* in Hebrew, or *Shabbos* in Yiddish. The word and idea of *Shabbat* and *Shabbos* draws on the primary meaning of rest.

“The Sabbath does not just happen spontaneously at sundown on Friday. In some important ways, it begins as darkness falls on the preceding Saturday night and we prepare to return to the six days of work. We leave Shabbat, knowing it is our responsibility to be as creative and purposeful for the next six days as God was in creating the Heaven and Earth. But we also yearn to return to Shabbat to enjoy the gift of rest, just as God enjoyed the seventh day as the culmination of His creation.”

“If all this sounds pedestrian or even shallow, there is another side to Sabbath preparation that is intended to ready us spiritually for the special day to come. The rabbis teach that Friday afternoon, *Erev Shabbat*, is a time for introspection, thinking about what kind of week we have had. Did I do right by my family, friends, and co-workers? Did I do right by God? It is an important time for self-examination and even repentance.

The *Mishnah Baruah*’s language on this is strong. *Since we are about to greet the King*, “it is not fitting to receive Him vested in the tattered rags of ... sinfulness.”

On Saturday evening or Sunset “we leave Shabbat, knowing it is our responsibility to be as creative and purposeful for the next six days as God was in creating the Heaven and Earth. But we also yearn to return to Shabbat to enjoy the gift of rest, just as God enjoyed the seventh day as the culmination of His creation.”

***Sabbath* suggestions regarding the Christian weekly preparation for the First Day of the Week Assembly, the Christian Day of Worship in which the Christian Lord’s Supper is celebrated**

The following are suggestions for a personal week-long preparation for celebrating the Christian “*Sabbath*,” *The Lord’s Day* worship assembly; in other words, the *Lord’s Day* communion service as the Christian “*passover*” communion, the *Eucharistic Day of Christian Spiritual Resting and Renewal*.

These notes as suggestions will be meaningless unless predicated by Lieberman’s *Gift of Rest*. Lieberman points out that the Jewish greeting, *Sabat Shalom*, carries the sense of a prayer, may you experience a sabbath spiritual day of rest and peace.

The Christian greeting, “*grace and peace from God, and Jesus*,” Rom 1:7, reflects a standard New Testament apostolic greeting to churches and Christian individuals. It emphasizes the *saving grace of Jesus*, the *mercy of God*, and the *peace that accompanies that grace and mercy*. The apostolic writings reflect the *loving concern* the apostles and early Christian leaders had for one another.

James, writing an early epistle, possible the first Christian epistle that we know of, used the simple salutation, “*Greeting*” from *χαίρειν, χαίρω, chairō*. James highlights Christian joy in his salutation, James 1:1, “*James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes in the Dispersion: Greeting.*” James 1:2, the greeting, *chairein*, wishes joy for the Christians who were experiencing considerable opposition from their neighbors, Jews, Romans, and Greeks.

James added a variant of the standard Christian greeting, by continuing, “*Count it all joy, my brethren, when you meet various trials...*”

Sabbath and Greeting, chairein

The Christian salutation, *Greeting, chairein*, like the Jewish greeting, *Shalom, Shabbat, sabbath*, included a prayer for **peace, rest, and blessing** from God.

The observations drawn from the Jewish *Sabbath* provide a rich understanding of the week prior to the *Sabbath* preparation by a Jew.

There might be an example of the Jewish mindset for a *serious approach to the* Christian Sabbath!

Unfortunately, for many Christians, the Sunday, Christian “*sabbath*” is somewhat detached from the six days prior to, or setting the scene for the following week! The Jewish six days were intended to be a period of preparation *for the Sabbath*. The Christian view of the Lord’s Day a preparation for the next week is excellent, but could there not also be some attention to the six days prior to the Lord’s Day being a *spiritual preparation* for the Christian “*sabbath*”!

I remember a young Christian many years ago, chastising fellow Christians in a Bible Class, “*five days of the week, Monday through Friday, belong to your employer; one day, Saturday, belongs to you, one day, Sunday, belongs to the Lord, you do not go to work or engage in Sport on that day, it belongs to the Lord!*” Obviously, we recognize the zeal, but also the poor understanding of the seven days!

Yet in effect, that is how most of our generation view the week. Saturday and Sunday belong to you, only give some time to the Lord as you go to worship!

However, the Sabbath concept of *rest preparation* is not intended only for the “*congregations celebration,*” but should be devoted to an individual preparation for spiritual rest with God, but also an overflowing of *love and concern for others*.

The question is, “*what can we provide by seeking to understand the Sabbath rest during the week before our Christian Sabbath, the Lord’s Day, in order to pass on that gift of peaceful rest with God and others?*” We can pray regularly, every day like today, for spiritual peace with God and others, *seeking the best spiritual rest for all!*

Sabbath/Greeting is not only a congregational practice, but in many ways should also be a *personal practice of spiritual rest enrichment for the Lord’s Supper spiritual rest and the week to follow!*

Personal Suggestions for preparation for the Christian “Sabbath,” Sunday

Explanation

These comments are a personal suggestion for the reader and should be adjusted for individual preferences.

My personal preference is to schedule this as my prayer time before closing my day!

Since I follow a regular daily Bible Study schedule, the repetition of these suggestions is not a personal problem, *I need discipline!*

Sunday – Day 1

The First Day of the Week, Sunday.

The day when Christians celebrate in the Lord’s Supper, the Eucharist, the Christian passover of sin by God and Jesus Christ.

Acts 20:7 indicates that early Christians in the Gentile culture of Troas celebrated this new “*Christian Sabbath,*” the gift of spiritual rest on the **first day** of the week.

Christians enjoy the personal experience of spiritual rest on the Christian Sabbath, focused on Jesus and God, the deliverers from their past captivity to the power of sin.

The ***Jewish Sabbath***, on the seventh day of the week focused on Moses' and Yahweh's, ***deliverance from Egyptian bondage!***

The ***Christian "Sabbath,"*** the First Day of the week, celebrates ***in a congregational gathering, church, assembly, the freedom Christians enjoy from the bondage of Satan.***

The Focus is on worshipping God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.

The Christian Lord's Supper "*Passover*" celebrates *in thanksgiving, the Eucharist, a celebration of the freedom from captivity to Satan and a corrupt world. It is a day of thanksgiving, of fellowship with God and Jesus, and celebrating the indwelling Holy Spirit in our lives.*

Set aside at least 30 minutes for reading Scripture that will encourage you to think positively. Psalm 22 is always a positive text for providing a positive view of next week; "*The Lord is our shepherd who will guide us each day, we shall not want!*"

Monday – Day 2

The second day of the Christian "sabbath" week.

It is a day on which Christians could decide how the principles of the Christian Sabbath will impact and enrich their week.

Be practical, perspective, and definitive on how the days of the Sabbath week will implicate or Day 2 and the following days.

Spend serious time reading Scripture and praying for God's Holy Spirit guidance and empowerment.

Some suggestions for the week's spiritual preparation, not paying attention to *when* or *where* these prayers should be prayed. Remember, we are examining *how* the *spiritual gift of the Jewish and Christian Sabbath can enrich our coming week.* 1 Thes 5:16-21; Phil 4:4-9; Matt 6:25-34; Rom 12:1-21.

Tuesday – Day 3

For the third day of the week we have some biblical suggestions!

On this day we explore *how* the Sabbath Spiritual Rest can *enrich fellowship with others*, both fellow believers, but also those who have not come to know the love of God and Jesus, and have not enjoyed the knowledge of the presence of God's Holy Spirit in their lives.

Think of Jesus' model prayer in Matt 6:9ff. This begins with *praising God's awesome holiness and kingdom power.*

The sermon on the mount, Matt 5, 6, and 7, and Luke 6:17-45 provide some of the best guidance for Christian Sabbath discipleship; how to live as a Sabbath kingdom disciples.

Note the emphasis on peaceful caring for others.

Paul's encouragement to the Thessalonians, 1 Thess 5:12-22 emphasizes praying with *rejoicing*, with *thanksgiving* and *praying constantly, regularly, a consistent aspect of Sabbath life.* Phil 4:6, 7 mentions prayer with *forbearance* and *supplication* in behalf of others.

Wednesday – Day 4

Day four is mid-week, a day for select Bible Studies.

The select Bible Studies will suggest certain biblical texts that enrich our understanding of *Worship.*

Ps1, Rev 4, Rev 5:11-14.

Thursday – Day 5

This is the day for reflection on personal worship of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Ps1, 19, 119, 136, Rom 12:1-21.

Friday – Day 6

Day five is a day for reflection from corporate, church, Bible studies.

1 Cor 14, Eph 5, Col 3.

Saturday – Day 7

Day seven is the final day of preparation for the Christian Sabbath, the day of the Lord's Supper, Eucharist.

This day is day for reflection on the rich meaning of Eucharist and the Christian "Passover."
Matt 26, Mark 14, Luke 22