

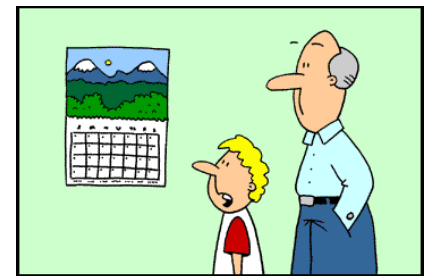
- Last week we looked at the way God instructed the Israelites to make sacrifices and how to atone for their sins. We noted that God gave very specific instructions for burnt offerings. (**Leviticus 1**), grain offerings (**Leviticus 2**), peace offerings (**Leviticus 3**), sin offerings (**Leviticus 4 and 5**) and give specific instructions to priests (**Leviticus 5 and 6**) We looked at penalties for not obeying in the example of Nadab and Abihu. (**Leviticus 10:1-2**) Finally, we looked at the concept of atonement under the Old Law as embodied by Yom Kippur (**Leviticus 23**) and our atonement through Christ today. (**Romans 5:1-11**)

- The question of whether a shark constituted a “clean” or “unclean” type of food under the old law came up. Leviticus 11:9-10 explains that things which have “fins and scales” may be considered clean. A shark definitely has fins, but does it have scales? If so, why do most scholars put it on the “unclean list? (For example, Wikipedia even lists it there.) The answer could be that in English we say a shark has scales, but those scales are really quite different from the scales we know. They are actually tiny little teeth!



(<http://www.thesuperfins.com/do-sharks-have-scales/>) The reason God’s gives commands is not to exert control over people but to keep them well (**Deuteronomy 5:29**)

- In this lesson we are going to look at the way God established the Sabbath system and how Israel turned to idolatry and went into decline.
- “Sabbath” comes from the original Hebrew word “sabat” meaning “rest.”  
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sabbath>
- We first read about this day as the day God blessed in “resting” from creation. (**Genesis 2:1-3**)
- God was obviously not really in need of rest. He did know that humans would need a specific day set aside for worship of Him. So He commanded them to keep the observance of the Sabbath in order to remember him and not to do any work on that day. (**Exodus 31:12-17**).
- Clearly there was no way to define this day. Whole groups of people even arose around the world and in different time zones – some observing the Sabbath according to their calendar, and some groups observing it in Jerusalem time no matter where they were. Usually the observance of this day, strictly defined, was from sundown on the sixth day until sundown on the seventh day. Of course, there were no clocks in those days, so they used the sun. We read about this even in Nehemiah’s time (**Nehemiah 13:19**)
- Even though as we will see later in this lesson, most Israelites fall into idolatry and decline, there are a few devout Israelites who get carried away with this command. They even try



(See Exodus 20:8) 01-18-1999  
I WAS HOPING TO KEEP THE SABBATH DAY HOLY, BUT I CAN'T EVEN FIND IT ON THE CALENDAR

to trap Jesus for performing miracles on the Sabbath but he points out they would do selfish work if they felt they needed to do so. (Luke 13:10-17).



*“And remember, if you need anything I’m available 24/6.”*

They continued cultivating and harvesting their land on the seventh year just as they had the other years. That was one evidence of sin which God cited when bringing the Assyrians and the Babylonians against Israel. (<https://www.gotquestions.org/sabbatical-year.html>)

- During these times, there was no one to work the land at all, so by default, the land observed its Sabbath rest all the time. (2 Chronicles 36:21).
- Today this year is known as “shmita” in Hebrew (literally “seventh”), it was reiterated in the Jewish law book called the “Torah” and still observed today. (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shmita>)
- Every 50<sup>th</sup> year God commanded the Israelites to observe what He called the “Year of Jubilee.” (Leviticus 25:8-12).
- The people are instructed to return to their own property in this year, and adjust sales prices accordingly. This was done as a reminder that the land really belonged to God, not to the people anyway. (Leviticus 25:13-23).
- An exception is made to houses in cities with walls, like what we would call a condo in the city. (Leviticus 25:24-34)
- Provisions are made for the poor to be taken care of by their wealthier brethren, and slaves are to be freed in the year of Jubilee (or a better way to think of it is that those who have become slaves are to have their financial obligations considered paid up). (Leviticus 25:35-54).
- The picture of redemption setup by the Year of Jubilee was fulfilled for us by Christ. (Galatians 5:1)
- The Year of Jubilee may have been observed by Israel for some time, but it likely was no longer observed by the time of Jesus. ([http://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/513212/jewish/When-Is-the-Next-Jubilee-Year.htm](http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/513212/jewish/When-Is-the-Next-Jubilee-Year.htm))
- Quite a few misconceptions about the Year of Jubilee exist. It was NOT a blanket redistribution of wealth and NOT a complete forgiveness of all debts. (<https://tifwe.org/resource/five-myths-about-jubilee/>)

- In the seventh year they were to let the land “rest” – farmers call this letting the land “lay fallow.” He even tells them they are not to have their servants tend the lands also, and one is not to harvest anything that happens to grow naturally unless they intend to eat it right away. He calls this the Sabbath year. (Leviticus 25:1-6).

- For a long time, Israel failed to observe the sabbatical years.

- Eventually Israel slips into idolatry again, and is eventually taken captive again. God places the blame for this squarely on the priests who are supposed to be leading the people and not allowing this to happen. Instead, they have also become so bad that they are not just allowing the people to go astray, they are actually leading them in the wrong ways. (Hosea 4)
- Teachers are always held to a higher standard, even today. (James 3:1)
- The book of the law God gave to Israel was to be read daily by the Kings of Israel so that they could rule according to God's command (Deuteronomy 17:18-20)
- It wasn't long until the law that God had given Israel was not only disregarded, it fell into such disuse during the reign of evil kings that good Kings had to find it, repair the temple per its instructions, and invite people to start worshiping correctly again. This happened under King Josiah who tore his clothes he was so grieved, then sent messengers throughout the land and told them to start worshiping again. It had been so long he had to have all the people retaught. (2 Kings 22 and 23).
- Today we are blessed if we hunger and thirst after righteousness. (Matthew 5:6). The only way to do this is to read and study scripture ourselves. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

## Questions

1. What does the word "Sabbath" mean?
2. In what context do we read about this day?
3. Why did God command observance of the Sabbath?
4. How do the devout Jews try to use the Sabbath against Jesus?
5. How does Jesus answer the devout Jews?
6. What is the Sabbath year? How are people to be fed during this year?
7. What were the consequences for not observing the Sabbath Year?
8. Why did was the Sabbath year observed during captivity?
9. What does "shmita" mean and how is it used today?
10. How often was the Year of Jubilee?
11. What was a reminder of the fact that the land belonged to the Lord?
12. What was an exception to property going back to its original owner in the Year of Jubilee?
13. What was to happen to slaves in the Year of Jubilee?
14. What is the equivalent to the Year of Jubilee for us today?
15. How long was the Year of Jubilee observed?
16. What are some common misconceptions about the Year of Jubilee?
17. Who does God blame for Israel's slide into idolatry?
18. What is expected of teachers?
19. How often was the King of Israel supposed to read scripture? Why?
20. Who was the King who found the law and began to follow it again?
21. Why should we study scripture today?