

Under the Abrahamic Covenant circumcision had to do only with *Abraham and his descendants* (and their servants), even so under the Mosaic Covenant circumcision had to do only with *the children of Israel* (and their servants). Circumcision was an exclusive sign reserved for a particular people only. In no way is it to be seen as having to do with any other people. It is important that this Scriptural truth be firmly established in our minds. Under the Mosaic Covenant no other people, no other nation, had anything to do with this covenant sign of circumcision—*only the covenant community of Israel*.

Now these are the two signs of the Mosaic Covenant—*circumcision* and *the Sabbath*. And from the passages above, do they not possess *the most striking similarities?* God’s Word could not more clearly set forth such an undeniable connection that exist between these two signs of the Old Covenant. They’re linked side by side by a comparison that’s too obvious to miss. Thus, the following conclusion is drawn from both Scripture and common sense: under the Old Covenant, both of these covenant signs, *circumcision* and *the Sabbath*, were restricted to Israel only, and no other nation. As *circumcision* had nothing to do with any other nation, equally so by clear comparison, *the Sabbath* had nothing to do with any other nation. Other peoples and nations were not involved with either of these signs. They were “covenant” signs, and had to do *only* with the “covenant” community of Israel.

To argue with this truth is to deny the obvious parallel that God so plainly gives us in his Word. Look at it. Go down the list again. Both of these signs are cast from the same mold, having the same likeness. If one is an *exclusive* command for a *particular people* only: **“You and your descendants,”** so is the other: **“The children of Israel.”** To say that this is not so is to reject what God so clearly shows us by this comparison:

Circumcision — (Gen 17:9-11 NKJV)

And God said to Abraham: “As for you, you shall keep my covenant, *you and your descendants* after you throughout their generations. This is my covenant which you shall keep, *between me and you and your descendants* after you: every male child among you shall be circumcised; and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and *it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you.*”

The Sabbath — (Exod 31:12-17 NKJV)

The Lord spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak also to *the children of Israel*, saying: ‘Surely my Sabbaths you shall keep, for *it is a sign between me and you* throughout your generations...Therefore *the children of Israel* shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. *It is a sign between me and the children of Israel* forever.”

Are these not exclusive statements ruling out other peoples and other nations? Is the Lord not here emphatically stating that circumcision had to do with none but **“the Jewish people”** only? And is he not just as clearly stating that the Sabbath had to do with none but **“the Jewish people”** only? If these two signs of the Old Covenant are not both “purely Jewish,” then words have no meaning, and we may as well stick to what we

believe, and ignore the Word of God. That’s what it really amounts to. To say, in the face of these texts, that circumcision was a *limited command* for **the Jewish nation**, but the Sabbath was a *universal command* for **the human race**—that kind of summation can only result from listening to what your church teaches instead of what the Bible states.

THE ENTRANCE SIGN & THE CONTINUING SIGN

It is important that we understand the relationship between circumcision and the Sabbath and see the role they play in the Mosaic Covenant. **Circumcision** was **the entrance sign** into the covenant. This was true of the Abrahamic Covenant, and of the Mosaic Covenant. It was the initiatory or entrance sign of the covenant by which one became a member of the covenant community. The Passover feast was a celebration for the covenant community *only*. In the following reference circumcision served as the entrance sign into the covenant community and thus gave one the right to participate in the Passover (or covenant) celebration.

The Lord said unto Moses and Aaron, This is the ordinance of the passover: There shall no stranger eat thereof: but every man’s servant that is bought for money, *when thou hast circumcised him*, then shall he eat thereof...And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the passover to the Lord, *let all his males be circumcised*, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as one that is born in the land: for *no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof.* (Exod 12:43,44,48)

The Sabbath, in a similar way, was **the continuing sign** of the covenant Israel was to “remember.” It was a *ceremony* observed weekly as a *renewing* of the covenant. As in the case with circumcision, if a foreigner desired to join in covenant fellowship, he was to observe the Sabbath: “But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou...nor *thy stranger that is within thy gates*” (Exod 20:10). Circumcision was the one-time *entrance sign* into the covenant community of Israel. Keeping the Sabbath was the *repeatable sign* of the covenant that Israel was to “remember.”

Did you notice how the Lord qualifies which Gentiles he would have to keep the Sabbath?—“thy stranger *that is within thy gates*.” This shows the absolute *Jewishness* of the Sabbath. The only Gentiles who had anything to do with the Sabbath command were those **within Israel’s gates!** The others who were **outside Israel’s gates** were under no obligation to keep the Sabbath. The **SDA** says the Sabbath command applies to everyone, Jew and Gentile, the world over. But God says the Sabbath was *restricted* to the *Jewish* communities only—“thy stranger *that is within thy gates*.” The Sabbath day was a rigid **Jewish** discipline, and rigorously enforced, even upon Gentiles, but only upon those who were **“within their gates.”** No other Gentiles were commanded to keep the Sabbath. It was *strictly Jewish*—a *national* law. Gentiles were often criticized by God through the prophets for moral violations, but *never* for **not keeping the Sabbath!** That law had to do only with those who were **“within Israel’s gates.”**

In their attempt to pull “all humanity” under the Sabbath command, the **SDA** ignores God’s introductory words at Sinai (*Exodus 20:1-3*): “And God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me...” Since Gentiles were never in Egyptian bondage, Adventists *leave off* this qualifying preface when quoting the Ten Commandments (see **SDABelieve**, p264). This is not what they want their people to hear. It clearly restricts the context of this passage to **the Jewish nation only**. They want their readers to imagine that God is speaking to “mankind,” to “all people,” to “the human race,” to “every human being.” These are phrases they commonly use when referring to the giving of the Ten Commandments and especially the command to keep the Sabbath. But all this is contrary to Scripture. Adventists are disregarding a crucial aspect of this context. And since keeping the Sabbath is nowhere commanded by Christ or the apostles under **the New Covenant**, the **SDA** is forced to take everyone back under **the Old Covenant** to Mt. Sinai to hear it! So now you see why God’s introductory words have to be gotten rid of. They simply don’t fit the **SDA** agenda.

THE SABBATH — THE REMEMBRANCE SIGN

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy” (*Exod 20:8*). Why did the Lord begin this Fourth Commandment with the word **“Remember”**? Why didn’t he just say, “Keep the Sabbath day holy”? Wouldn’t that have been the same command to obey and just as clear? Of course! Why join the word “remember” to it? The Fifth Commandment is not, **“Remember** to honour thy father and thy mother,” but merely, “Honour thy father and thy mother” (*v12*); and it’s just as clear a command without it. Why did the Lord use it in the Fourth Commandment? Why did he join the word “remember” specifically to the Sabbath? because the Sabbath is **the sign** of the covenant, **the remembrance sign** of the Old Covenant.

Adventists say the reason “remember” is used is because the Sabbath command *originated at Creation* and God would have them to remember it. But that’s nowhere taught in the Bible. The **SDA wish** it were there, and they teach that *it is* there, but they cannot back up this claim with Scripture. This supposed “Creation Ordinance” of theirs is nowhere in God’s Word. It’s merely an **SDA assumption**, and they’ve based their whole doctrinal structure upon it. They suppose it to be true, and believe that it is true, without any Scripture to prove it. This becomes all too obvious, because when they want you to keep the Sabbath, they don’t quote a text out of **Genesis**, they quote a text out of **Exodus!** “*Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy*” **Exodus 20:8**. That reveals right there the absolute emptiness of what they’re saying! They have not one shred of evidence of a Sabbath command coming from the Creation account, or anywhere in Genesis. They just want us to take their word for it—that God commanded *Adam* and *all humanity* to *not do any work* on the “Sabbath” day! That sounds mighty strange, though, especially since the word “sabbath” isn’t mentioned one time at all throughout the

entire book of Genesis! That’s right. The first time the word “sabbath” is found in the Bible is in Exodus 16 when God commanded *the children of Israel* to keep it. So we can dismiss this **SDA** fiction that the Sabbath command came from Creation; that’s merely a **“story”** they try to pawn off on others, a *myth* they believe. It’s certainly not why the Sabbath Commandment begins with the word “remember.”

Nor is it because Israel had been keeping it for a few weeks already, from Exodus 16 to 20, and God is merely encouraging them to keep it up. That’s not it either. This “remember” carries a much weightier meaning than that. It’s highly significant. This **“remember”** is directly tied to the **“sign”** of the covenant. Israel had entered into a covenant relationship with God at Sinai with solemn vows being spoken. The Lord said, “If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant...” The people respond, “All that the Lord hath spoken we will do” (*see Exod 19:3-8*). That’s an agreement, a covenant, between God and Israel. They go on to make promises again and again in the giving of the covenant to obey “all that the Lord hath said” (*see Exod 24:1-8*). The Sabbath as “the sign” of the covenant was the solemn reminder to Israel of the vows she had taken and the promises she had made.

What does that picture?—a marriage ceremony! A covenant is entered into between a man and a woman, vows are taken, promises are made, and the visible “sign” of this covenant relationship is then exchanged and placed on each other’s finger. That ring says it all! “You’re mine and I’m yours for keeps!” The ring is the sign. This is what the Sabbath was—*the wearing of the wedding ring*—the visible sign of the covenant between the Lord and Israel. The Sabbath was the sacred symbol of the relationship that Israel had entered into with God. Every Sabbath day that symbol, or sign, was set on display for all to see. Work was totally shut down; the camp of Israel came to a standstill. That entire day was a solemn reminder of Israel’s vows to God. It was **the remembrance sign**, set right before them every week! That was God’s design in the sign. It was something that could vividly be seen.

This is one of the reasons why the wedding ring is the perfect sign of the marriage covenant—it’s visibility! It’s right there in front of you. It’s not something you wear on your head, or a tattoo somewhere on your body, or even an earring. You’ve got to see it! That ring on your finger is right in front of your eyes in everything that you do. Keeping the Sabbath was Israel’s wearing the wedding ring! To keep the covenant fresh on their mind, the Sabbath was right there every week. Naturally, this Fourth Commandment is where the Lord is going to say, **“Remember,”** because *the Sabbath*, as the sign of the covenant, *was the reminder!* So he says, “Remember the Sabbath day!” What is God actually doing here? He’s using a *double emphasis* to highlight the importance of the covenant! God is saying: **“Remember the reminder to remember the covenant!”** This is what the Sabbath Commandment was all about—**the covenant!** People look at Exodus 20:8 and think “Sabbath, Sabbath, Sabbath, Keep the Sabbath!” But the

The Signs of the Covenants

There are no more gullible people than religious people! For the most part, individuals are vulnerable and naive, and they'll swallow just about anything—any notion, any story, any belief—as long as they're given a few Bible verses that *supposedly* support it. These generally have no idea of the snares and dangers that exist out there in the religious world, and how susceptible they really are to following that which is false, counterfeit, and made-up. There is a passage that says, “We have not followed cunningly devised fables” (2 Peter 1:16), but most people do! **THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS (SDA)**, “desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm” (1 Tim 1:7), clearly teach a few of these “fables.” We would do well to take heed.

THE SIGNS OF THE OLD COVENANT

The Mosaic Covenant, or Old Covenant, had two basic signs or seals. The *first* was “the **sign of circumcision**” (Rom 4:11) from the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 17:7-14). Only those households where the males were circumcised were included in the covenant community of Israel (Lev 12:3; John 7:23). The *second* sign was **the Sabbath**, specifically given as the sign of the Mosaic Covenant, but not included in the Abrahamic Covenant. “Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a **sign** between me and you throughout your generations” (Exod 31:12-13). Notice the marked parallels in the following texts from the Abrahamic Covenant in Genesis and the Mosaic Covenant in Exodus:

Circumcision . . . “Keep my covenant” (Gen 17:9) (NKJV)
The Sabbath “Keep my covenant” (Ex 19:5)

Circumcision . . . “You and your descendants” (Gen 17:9)
The Sabbath “The children of Israel” (Ex 31:17)

Circumcision . . . “You shall be circumcised” (Gen 17:11)
The Sabbath “You shall keep the Sabbath” (Ex 31:14)

Circumcision . . . “Throughout their generations” (Gen 17:9)
The Sabbath “Throughout their generations” (Ex 31:16)

Circumcision . . . “A sign...between me and you” (Gen 17:11)
The Sabbath “A sign between me and you” (Ex 31:13)

Circumcision . . . “An everlasting covenant” (Gen 17:13)
The Sabbath “A perpetual covenant” (Ex 31:16)

Circumcision . . . “Uncircumcised...cut off” (Gen 17:14)
The Sabbath “Whoever does any work...cut off” (Ex 31:14)

Circumcision . . . Servant to be circumcised (Gen 17:12)
The Sabbath Servant to keep Sabbath (Ex 20:10)

Circumcision . . . The sign of circumcision was given at the time of the giving of the covenant (Gen 17:1-14)
The Sabbath The sign of the Sabbath was given at the time of the giving of the covenant (Ex 31:12-18)

purpose of the commandment runs deeper than that. The Sabbath is secondary; it's purely incidental. There's an underlying message there that far outstrips **“Keep the Sabbath”**—and it's what God said to them just prior to this in Exodus 19:5, **“Keep my covenant!”** This is what the Sabbath command is all about—the **remembrance sign of the covenant**.

For Israel not to keep the Sabbath was equal to a wife taking off her wedding ring and shelving it. Think about the seriousness of such an act. That's no small thing. There's much more involved in it than what meets the eye. It reveals what's really going on in the woman's heart. She's not merely taking a ring off; she's closing the door on her marriage! She's saying that her commitment to her husband is over and done with; and the promises she once made and the vows she once took, she no longer counts as “sacred”—they're meaningless! The Sabbath as the sign of the covenant was the wedding ring. Keeping the Sabbath was something of the most profound significance. It was much more than just keeping a command. It wasn't merely, “We're doing this because God told us to”; but rather, “We're doing this because it *means something!*” It symbolized something honorable! All of the solemn promises made at Sinai were contained in it! This was “the sign”—the sign of the sacred covenant! You don't take that ring off; you **“keep”** it on. **“Remember** the sabbath day, to *keep* it...” This was **the remembrance sign** of the Old Covenant.

THE SIGNS OF THE NEW COVENANT

The Old Covenant signs have passed away. Adventists say the Sabbath has not, that it's “forever” (Exod 31:17). But words like “forever,” “perpetual,” and “everlasting” were attached to many things under the Old Covenant that are gone. They were perpetual in that they were to last *as long as that covenant lasted*. That *first* covenant **ended** when Christ died (Mark 15:37,38) “He taketh away the *first*, that he may establish the second” (Heb 8:6-13; 10:9). The Sabbath as “the sign” of the Mosaic Covenant can *only* be meant for Israel with whom that covenant was made, and *ceased* when that covenant came to an end. That's why there's no command anywhere in the New Testament for *New Covenant* believers to keep the Sabbath day.

The Old Covenant signs have given way to “new” signs. ...ye are *circumcised* with the *circumcision made without hands*, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh *by the circumcision of Christ: buried with him in baptism* (Col 2:11-12).

In this passage Paul takes the Old Covenant sign of circumcision and shows how Christ *symbolically fulfilled* this concept and then *links circumcision with baptism*. This is no accident. As circumcision was **the entrance sign** into the Old Covenant community of Israel, so baptism is **the entrance sign** into the New Covenant community of the Church. Then we have in the New Testament the New Covenant **remembrance sign**, and like the Sabbath, it's *repeatable*—it *continues*:

...the Lord Jesus on the same night in which he was betrayed took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “Take, eat; this is my body which is broken for you; do this *in remembrance of me*.” In the same manner he also took

the cup after supper, saying, “This cup is *the New Covenant* in my blood. This do, as often as you drink it, *in remembrance of me*.” For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till he comes (1 Cor 11:23-25 NKJV).

Here we have the Lord giving us in the plainest of language the New Covenant remembrance sign—**“in remembrance of me.”** He purposefully calls our attention to this key word **“remembrance,”** not once, but twice. The Sabbath was the Old Covenant remembrance sign for Israel to remember **their duty** to fulfill the covenant. The Lord's Supper is the New Covenant remembrance sign for believers to remember, not their duty, but **their Lord** who has himself fulfilled all the requirements of the New Covenant on their behalf! Israel did the sign *to keep the covenant*; believers do the sign to remember him *who kept the covenant!* As surely as the Old Covenant has given way to the new, the old “sign” has given way to the new!

The Old Covenant sign
This do—keep the Sabbath day—in remembrance of your duty

The New Covenant sign
This do—keep the Lord's Table—in remembrance of me

There's no misunderstanding what Jesus is saying here—**“in remembrance of me!”** That old remembrance sign pointed to the covenant of **“This do and live!”** The new remembrance sign points to the covenant of **“Believe and live!”**—“To him that *worketh not*, but **believeth** on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness” (Rom 4:5). Jesus has *done it all* by his life and death! “It is finished!” (John 19:30). **“Believe** on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved!” (Acts 16:31) This is what the Lord's Supper is—**“in remembrance of me!”** To drag the Sabbath over into this New Covenant age is both to misunderstand the old sign and miss the significance of the new! You may as well drag circumcision over here too—because both signs are *inseparably* tied to the Old Covenant!

That Old Covenant sign is useless! The Church already has her wedding ring on! She doesn't want, nor does she have any use for, the “Sabbath”—that “ring” that God *exclusively* gave to Israel! **“I am married to you!”** he said plainly (Jer 3:14). That old Jewish sign is *finished!*—**dead** and gone! Paul clearly illustrates all this in Romans: “. . . if her husband be **dead**, she is **free from that law**... Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become **dead to the law** by the body of Christ; that ye should be **married to another**, even to him who is raised from the dead” (7:3,4). Believers are *dead* to that Old Covenant law and its sign! The New Covenant has come, and we celebrate the “new” sign. We have one husband, Christ, and we have one emblem—the **Lord's Table**. This is the sacred symbol that he gave us as the unquestionable sign of his dying love for us! **“This cup is the New Covenant in my blood.** This do, as often as you drink it, *in remembrance of me*.” As the New Covenant sign applies to none but New Covenant people, so the Old Covenant sign applied to none but Old Covenant people. No one would even think of applying the New Covenant sign, **the Lord's Table**, to *the children of Israel!* That would be absurd! But it's just as ridiculous to take the Old Covenant sign, **the Sabbath**, and apply it to *the Church!* or to *the human race!*

The wedding ring applies only to a husband and his wife. That's the bounds of that sign. It reaches no further. For you to attempt to stretch the bounds of that ring and apply the bond that it symbolizes to another man and another woman would clearly show that you don't understand the wedding ring at all! This is the error of the **SDA**. Think about it:

Man — “the wedding ring” — the woman
Christ — “the Lord's Table” — the Church
God — “the Sabbath” — the children of Israel

It makes no sense to broaden the scope of any of these three “signs.” The sign of a marriage has to do with none but a man and his wife; the sign of the New Covenant has to do with none but Christ and the Church; and the sign of the Old Covenant had to do with none but God and Israel. If the Sabbath can reach out beyond the bounds of *Israel* to “all humanity,” then the Lord's Supper can reach out beyond the bounds of *the Church!* and the wedding ring beyond the bounds of *a marriage!* But that could never be! The Sabbath is just as restricted to the boundaries of the Old Covenant—the *children of Israel*, as the Lord's Table is restricted to the boundaries of the New Covenant—*believers!*

If the Sabbath command already concerned *all humanity*, as the **SDA** teach, God would not have chosen it as the peculiar “sign” between himself and Israel. Why choose something as a special sign to mark a distinct covenant with a particular people when it's *already worldwide?* He certainly would have chosen something that would be unique in some way showing a distinction. This is just another reason why we know that “keeping the Sabbath day” is not a command for *all mankind*. The Lord introduced this unique feature to Israel for the first time a few weeks before Sinai in Exodus 16. It is obvious that his purpose was to use this newly instituted command as the “sign of the covenant” and Israel's distinguishing mark!

Understand that when the **SDA** sets before you these words: **“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Exod 20:8)**, that they've taken them right out of the midst of the Old Covenant! And their intention is to bind your conscience with an old law that's been obsolete, dead and gone for 2,000 years! It served its purpose under the Mosaic economy, but Paul says it's as over and done with now as is all the rest of those old Jewish institutions: sacrificing animals, circumcision, passover, pentecost, etc.—“Do not let anyone judge you...with regard to a religious festival, a new moon celebration *or a Sabbath day!*” (Gal 2:16 NIV). Paul uses the word **“bondage”** when he refers to **SDA** doctrine—“How turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be **in bondage?** Ye **observe days**, and months, and seasons...” (Gal 4:9-10). God's people are absolutely **“FREE”** from **“observing days!”** with this clear-cut directive—“Stand fast in the liberty wherewith **Christ hath made us free**, and be not entangled again with the yoke of **bondage!**” (Gal 5:1). □

—Dan Shanks

This tract sprang from reading “Sabbath in Christ” by Dale Ratzlaff. The parallel list under the 1st point & the beginning of the 2nd point are his.

DOMINICA FREE PRESS Box 2168, Roseau, Dominica, West Indies