



THE SEAL OF GOD

Course 6, *New World Coming*, Lesson 4

The Problem: If the Bible teaches that the second coming of Jesus is near, it surely also offers guidance on how we are to prepare for such a momentous event. What kind of spiritual preparation—if any—does Scripture call for? Salvation has always been by God's grace, never by human effort (Ephesians 2:8–10). But does that mean we sit back and do nothing, assuming God will do it all? Or is there a faith-response He invites us to offer—something that reflects our trust in His saving power?

As we'll discover, the Bible speaks of a seal that God places upon His faithful just before Christ's return. But what is that seal—and who receives it? Is it available to all Christians, or are there specific spiritual characteristics God is looking for? While obedience doesn't save us, it reveals our love for Jesus and trust in His Word (John 14:15). Could it be that some forgotten truths are meant to be revived in the last days—so that God's people might fully reflect His character and enter more fully into His way of life before Jesus comes?

What About the Sabbath? What connection does the Sabbath have with God's final seal? Why did God set apart a day of rest—and does it carry spiritual weight beyond physical renewal? Some believe the Sabbath was merely a practical gift to prevent overwork. But others are convinced that Sabbath observance is part of a deeper spiritual covenant—an outward sign of inward faith and loyalty to God. For centuries, many Christians have worshipped on Sunday to commemorate Jesus' resurrection. Some keep it with the same seriousness as the Sabbath commandment. Others claim the Sabbath was abolished at the cross and that Sunday is a symbolic celebration of grace—not a sacred requirement.

So what does the Bible say? As sincere followers of Jesus, we want to do what He asks—not simply follow tradition or convenience. The only sure path is to invite the Holy Spirit to guide our minds as we prayerfully study the entire Word of God—allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture and truth to shine through every page. Does the Bible speak clearly about Sabbath keeping? Has anything changed since the cross—or does the call to holiness still include a sanctified day? As we explore Scripture's message for the last days, two vital questions rise to the surface: What is God's final seal, that distinguishing mark placed on those He will gather at Christ's return? And closely connected, what role—if any—does Sabbath observance play in receiving that seal? Are these distinct truths, or are they intertwined in a way that points us toward deeper faithfulness and a clearer understanding of God's will?

Objectives:

- I. We seek to understand the nature and timing of God's seal as revealed in Revelation.
- II. We explore the biblical link between Sabbath observance and God's seal.
- III. We discover which day the Bible identifies as the true Sabbath.
- IV. We examine how the apostles of Jesus related to the Sabbath after the resurrection.
- V. We answer the pressing question: Is Sabbath observance still necessary for Christians today?

I. WHAT IS GOD'S LAST-DAY SEAL?

The book of Revelation teaches that as the end of all things draws near and Christ's return is imminent, God places His seal upon those who are spiritually prepared to meet Him.

The Word:

1. What seal has been given to all believing Christians at every stage of history? 2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13; 4:30
2. What does the book of Revelation have to say about the last-day seal of God? Revelation 7:1-3
3. How many are said to be sealed in the last days? Is this number symbolic or literal? Revelation 7:4-8; 14:1
4. What are the special characteristics of those who are sealed? Revelation 14:2-5

Explanation: All true believers in Christ receive the gift of the Holy Spirit as a mark of their belonging to God. Scripture affirms that the Spirit's presence is what defines a Christian: *"If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him"* (Romans 8:9; see also Ephesians 3:16–17). In other words, without the indwelling Spirit, one cannot rightly be called a follower of Christ. However, the last-day seal of God is a distinct mark—given not at conversion, but to those believers who are alive and faithful just before Christ's return. This sealing takes place during a unique prophetic moment, and several key points help us understand its timing and meaning:

- **Timing: The Seal Comes Just Before the Close of Probation.**
 - a. *Revelation 7:3* describes four angels restraining destructive winds until all God's servants are sealed. Once the sealing is complete, those winds—symbolic of strife and divine judgments—are released. This marks the close of probation, after which no further decisions for Christ can be made. *Revelation 22:11* describes the finality of this moment: *"Let the one who is righteous continue to be righteous..."*.
 - b. *Revelation 6:12–17* portrays cosmic signs preceding Christ's return. The question is raised: *"Who shall be able to stand?"* *Revelation 7:1–8* answers that question—the sealed ones will stand, having received divine protection and spiritual readiness.
 - c. *Revelation 6:9–11* describes the judgment of the faithful dead, who are symbolically given white robes. They are told to rest until their fellow servants (the faithful living) are "made complete." The Greek indicates spiritual completion, not a completed number—pointing again to the final sealing of the living, just before probation closes and trouble intensifies (see *Daniel 12:1*; *Matthew 24:21*). God's sealed people won't be calling for the rocks to fall—they will stand with joy and confidence, sheltered by divine grace, ready to meet their returning Lord.
- **Symbolism: Who Are the 144,000 and What Does the Passage Mean?**

Revelation 7:4–8 introduces a group identified as 144,000 sealed from *"all the tribes of the children of Israel."* To understand their identity, we must recognize the highly symbolic nature of the book of Revelation. Virtually every element in these verses is best interpreted through a biblical-symbolic lens, using the principle of Scripture interpreting Scripture.

 - i) Is the Number 144,000 Literal? Almost certainly not. The number 144,000 is made up of $12 \times 12 \times 1,000$, which underscores a theme of completeness, covenant, and universality: - 12 represents fullness—think 12 tribes, 12 apostles. - 1,000 often represents a large, innumerable group in Scripture. So the number 144,000 likely symbolizes the totality of God's faithful people on earth at the time of the final sealing, not a literal headcount. To suppose exactly 12,000 believers will be saved from each literal tribe of Israel strains plausibility—not least because modern Jews generally don't know their tribal lineage. Furthermore, many of the tribes listed here (such as Dan and Ephraim) are missing or rearranged compared to Old Testament lists, which again signals symbolic intent.
 - ii) What About the "Tribes of Israel"? The mention of "tribes" doesn't refer to ethnic lineage. Instead, it points to spiritual Israel—those who follow Christ regardless of ancestry:
 - "Not all who are descended from Israel are Israel." (Romans 9:6)
 - "If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed." (Galatians 3:29)
 - "A person is a Jew who is one inwardly." (Romans 2:28–29)
Hence, the 144,000 are representative of faithful believers from all nations who have entered into covenant with Christ and are found spiritually complete when the sealing takes place.

iii) Symbolic Imagery in the Passage. Let's look at the other symbols in Revelation 7:1–3:

- a. The “four angels”: Likely represent God's universal control through His angelic host. They are holding back the “winds of strife”—forces of chaos, war, and destruction.
- b. The “four corners of the earth”: A symbol of totality—meaning the entire world, not a literal square shape.
- c. The “winds”: Represent judgments and turmoil, possibly both natural and supernatural (see Jeremiah 49:36; Daniel 7:2).
- d. The “east”: Biblically associated with divine glory and deliverance; in Revelation 16:12, the “kings from the east” refer to Christ and His angels.
- e. The “seal in their foreheads”: Not a physical mark but a spiritual one—symbolizing character, conviction, and allegiance. In Hebrew thought, the forehead is a metaphor for the mind and inner commitment.

Just as the High Priest in the Old Testament bore the inscription “Holiness to the Lord” on his forehead (Exodus 28:36), so God's last-day people are “sealed” as those whose thoughts and loyalties are aligned with His character and will.

- *Meaning: What Is the Last Day Seal of God?*

The background of the seal imagery comes from the high priest's golden plate inscribed with “*Holiness to the Lord*” (Exodus 28:36–38). In Revelation 14:1, God's name—His character—is said to be written on the foreheads of the redeemed. This is not a visible mark, but a spiritual reality: the mind transformed and aligned with God's will (cf. Romans 12:2). The sealed are those in whom Christ lives by the Spirit (Galatians 2:20; Romans 8:9–10). They have received His righteousness, embraced sanctification, and overcome sin by grace (1 John 5:4; Romans 6:14; Titus 2:11–14). They reflect His character. These are the “bride” of Christ, clothed in His righteousness (Revelation 19:7–8), described as “blameless” before God (Revelation 14:5). They are “redeemed from among men”—not because others aren't saved, but because they are taken to heaven without tasting death (Revelation 14:4).

Relevance: Will you be among those sealed for Christ in these final days? The Savior longs to dwell in every heart and seal each believer with His character and victory. While the decision to follow Jesus is ours, the sealing work is His. Though trials may come, His grace will preserve the faithful. And when Jesus returns, they will stand, not in fear, but with uplifted faces—welcoming the One they have loved and served.

II. THE SABBATH AND THE SEAL OF GOD

Scripture reveals that those who fully receive Christ's character will reflect His obedience—including His example of Sabbath observance—as a visible sign of their loyalty and covenant relationship with Him. In the final crisis, this outward sign becomes a seal of their inward transformation. Thus, those who receive God's last-day seal will be identified not only by their faith in Christ, but by their willingness to honor His law, including the Sabbath, as a testimony of their allegiance.

The Word:

5. In Scripture, what is the relationship between a “sign” and a “seal”? Romans 4:11
6. When was circumcision done away with as a religious symbol? Romans 2:25-29; 1 Corinthians 7:19; Galatians 5:6
7. What has God identified as a distinguishing “sign” or “seal” of His sanctifying work in the hearts of His people? Exodus 31:13, 17; Ezekiel 20:12, 20
8. What law, including the Sabbath command, is written upon the hearts of Christians in the new covenant experience? Hebrews 8:10; (compare Jeremiah 31:31-33); Romans 3:31; James 2:10-12

9. How were the name, authority, and dominion of an ancient king attached to decrees that he sent out? 1 Kings 21:8; Esther 3:12; 8:8, 10
10. Which of the ten commandments contains the name, authority, and dominion of the divine Lawgiver? Exodus 20:8-11

Explanation: Romans 4:11 demonstrates that Scripture sometimes uses the words “*sign*” and “*seal*” interchangeably. In the context of sanctification, the Bible identifies the Sabbath as both a sign and seal of God's transformative work in the hearts of His people (Exodus 31:13, 17; Ezekiel 20:12, 20). Sanctification is holiness, and the Sabbath is its enduring emblem. From the very beginning—*since creation itself*—God has invited humanity to keep holy His Sabbath day as a sign of His authority as Creator (Genesis 2:1–3) and as a reminder of His power to make His people holy.

This covenantal pattern is not limited to the Old Testament. The New Testament reaffirms the same new covenant first spoken through the prophet Jeremiah. Under this covenant, God writes His law—not a new one, but the very same Ten Commandments proclaimed at Sinai—on the hearts of His people (Jeremiah 31:31–33; Hebrews 8:10). Paul upholds this law as holy, just, and good (Romans 7:7, 12, 14), and teaches that faith does not void the law but establishes it (Romans 3:31). James echoes this by declaring that transgressing even one commandment violates the whole moral code (James 2:10–12). The standard of righteousness remains unchanged.

In this light, the Sabbath commandment—the fourth of the Ten—is not an exception but a centerpiece, bearing the seal-like characteristics found in royal decrees:

1. God's Name: “*The Lord*” (*Yahweh*)
2. His Authority: “*Who made*”
3. His Dominion: “*The heavens and the earth*” (Exodus 20:8–11)

In ancient times, such seals authenticated a ruler's decree and identified the legitimacy of his rule. Likewise, the Sabbath functions as a divine signature upon God's law—an enduring sign of His authority and a visible token of the covenant relationship.

Relevance: Those who are sealed at the end of time are those who have received the character of Christ through the indwelling Holy Spirit. Their obedience flows not from legalism, but from love. Among the fruits of that transformation is their faithful observance of the Sabbath—not as mere ritual, but as the Heaven-appointed sign of allegiance to the Creator-Redeemer who sanctifies them.

III. THE TRUE BIBLE SABBATH

According to the Bible, which day is the true Sabbath? To answer this question faithfully, it's vital to set aside tradition, personal assumptions, and inherited ideas—even if just briefly—and let Scripture speak for itself. Only by honestly examining God's Word can we discover the day He has set apart as holy and learn how that sacred rhythm still echoes through time today.

The Word:

11. On what day did John say he was having a vision on the island of Patmos? Revelation 1:10
12. What day did Jesus say is the “Lord's day”? Mark 2:28
13. Which day of the week is the Sabbath day? Genesis 2:1-3; Exodus 20:8-11
14. How can we know that the seventh day is Saturday? Luke 23:54 - 24:1, 7; compare Mark 16:9

Explanation: The Gospel accounts clearly confirm which day is the biblical Sabbath. Jesus was crucified on the “preparation” day—the day before the Sabbath (Luke 23:54). In both ancient and modern Greek usage, the term translated as “preparation” (Greek: *paraskeuē*) came to refer specifically to Friday, the sixth day of the week. The most recent and authoritative edition of the *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (commonly known as BDAG, edited by Bauer, Danker, Arndt, and Gingrich) affirms that *paraskeuē* became a recognized synonym for Friday because it was the day set aside to prepare for the Sabbath, when no work was permitted. In the year of Jesus’ death, the Passover preparation day and the weekly Sabbath preparation day coincided on the same Friday.

After His death, Luke records that Jesus’ followers “rested the Sabbath day according to the commandment” Luke 23:56. The next day, “on the first day of the week,” they found the tomb empty—Jesus had risen (Luke 24:1–3; Mark 16:9). This sequence—Friday crucifixion, Sabbath rest, Sunday resurrection—anchors the seventh-day Sabbath firmly in time. By this order:

- Friday = sixth day = preparation day
- Saturday = seventh day = Sabbath
- Sunday = first day = resurrection morning

This sequence has remained intact ever since. Despite minor calendar reforms (such as the Julian to Gregorian transition), the seven-day weekly cycle has never been disrupted. Thursday has always been followed by Friday, and Saturday by Sunday. Thus, the Saturday Sabbath of our present calendar is the same seventh day kept by Jesus and His disciples.

Luke, writing years after the resurrection, never suggests that the Sabbath was changed. If such a change had occurred, it would surely have merited mention—especially since Luke explicitly refers to Sabbath observance as ongoing. Likewise, there is no biblical evidence that Jesus or His apostles ever changed the Sabbath from the seventh day to the first.

Relevance: Since Scripture teaches that those who receive God’s final seal are those who keep His commandments (Revelation 14:12), including the Sabbath commandment, it follows that the day God still calls His own is the seventh day—Saturday. To align with God’s revealed will and covenant sign, believers are called to honor the Sabbath as a day of sacred rest and worship, just as Jesus and His followers did.

IV. DID THE APOSTLES OBSERVE THE SABBATH AFTER JESUS’ ASCENSION TO HEAVEN?

There is no indication anywhere in the New Testament that the Sabbath was ever changed or abolished. On the contrary, the book of Acts presents repeated evidence that the apostles continued to observe the Sabbath faithfully, even after Christ’s resurrection. Their consistent practice underscores the enduring significance of the seventh-day Sabbath in the life of the early Christian church.

The Word:

15. How many Sabbaths did Paul observe in Antioch in Pisidia? Acts 13:14-15, 44
16. Where did Paul conduct a religious service on the Sabbath day in Philippi? Acts 16:12-15
17. How many Sabbaths did Paul observe in Thessalonica? Acts 17:1-2
18. How many Sabbaths did Paul observe in Corinth? Acts 18:1, 4, 11

Explanation The book of Acts records at least 84 Sabbath meetings conducted by the apostle Paul over a span of approximately ten years (A.D. 45–55). This remarkable consistency reveals the apostles’ ongoing commitment to Sabbath observance—even among Gentile audiences. If there had been any divine instruction to change the day of worship, or to cease observing any day altogether, surely Luke—writing decades later—would have made that shift explicit. Yet there is not the slightest suggestion that the Sabbath was altered, redefined, or dismissed. On the contrary, the apostles,

following the example of Jesus, honored the seventh day as sacred, dedicating it to worship and rest from secular labor. In future studies, we will address the passages sometimes cited to support the idea that the seventh-day Sabbath was abolished—and show that they do not withstand close, contextual examination.

Relevance: The Christian Church is built upon *“the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone”* Ephesians 2:20. With such a foundation, Christian practice—especially in relation to Sabbath observance—should reflect the example of Christ and His first followers. Scripture teaches that those who receive God’s final seal are those who *“keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus”* Revelation 14:12. Among those commandments is the Sabbath—God’s appointed sign of sanctification and covenant faithfulness. Thus, the call to keep God’s holy day remains not only relevant, but essential in the closing conflict of earth’s history.

V. IS IT NECESSARY FOR EVERY BELIEVING CHRISTIAN TO KEEP THE SABBATH DAY HOLY?

What did Jesus instruct His followers to do concerning Sabbath observance? And does His guidance hold particular significance for believers living in earth’s final days?

The Word:

19. What did Jesus customarily do on the Sabbath day? Luke 4:16

20. What did Jesus instruct His followers to do just before the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70) and immediately prior to His second advent? Matthew 24:20

Explanation: When speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem and His second coming—events He described in connected, prophetic language—Jesus gave this counsel: *“Pray that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day”* (Matthew 24:20). Jesus spoke these words before His crucifixion, but they pointed forward to events that would unfold decades later, culminating in the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. This guidance was both practical and spiritual: fleeing in winter would be difficult due to harsh conditions, and fleeing on the Sabbath could disrupt the sacred rest and worship God intended for that day. The fact that Jesus referred to Sabbath observance as still relevant for His followers well after His resurrection is significant. It shows that He did not anticipate the Sabbath being changed or abolished in the years to come.

Many Bible students have noted that Jesus intertwined the fall of Jerusalem with broader end-time themes throughout Matthew 24. In that light, His words about the Sabbath may also point typologically to its relevance for believers in the final crisis. He spoke of the Sabbath not in the past tense, but as a living commandment—still worthy of reverence in the time of trial.

Relevance: What Jesus commands is what every sincere Christian desires to obey. He said, *“If you love Me, keep My commandments”* John 14:15. Among those commandments is the Sabbath, which He affirmed as sacred from creation to the second coming. How could anyone who claims to love Jesus intentionally disregard what He Himself honored?

The apostle John wrote, *“This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome”* 1 John 5:3. We do not keep the commandments in order to be saved—we keep them because we are already experiencing the joy of salvation through faith in Christ (Ephesians 2:8–10). True saving faith is *“faith working through love”* Galatians 5:6. And when that faith is real, the law of God is no longer resisted—it is established in the heart (Romans 3:31). In that spirit, Sabbath observance is not about convenience or legalism—it is a loving response to Christ’s invitation. It is a memorial of creation, a symbol of sanctification, and a weekly appointment with the One who made and redeemed us. It not only honors what Christ has done—it strengthens our relationship with Him and prepares us to receive His end-time seal.

It wasn’t convenient for Jesus to be born in a manger. It wasn’t convenient to grow up in a despised town like Nazareth. It wasn’t convenient to endure betrayal, injustice, or the agony of the cross. But He endured it all—because He loves us

immeasurably. So why should we speak of convenience when it comes to obedience? Jesus gave everything to win our hearts. He longs to forgive our sins, fill us with His Spirit, and shape us into vessels of holiness. And He's inviting you—today—to follow Him all the way, including the joyful observance of His seventh-day Sabbath.

He waits for your “yes.” Will you surrender all and allow Him to transform your life—starting now?

You've seen what Jesus taught about the Sabbath, how He lived it, and how His early followers honored it from love—not obligation. If the Sabbath is truly a gift from a loving Creator, could it be that it's a gift meant for you, too? As you consider His sacrifice and His invitation to walk in His ways, is there anything holding you back from embracing the day He calls holy? Jesus is still saying, “Follow Me.” Will you take the next step with Him—into truth, into rest, into deeper relationship?

Lord Jesus, I hear Your voice calling me to deeper trust, deeper rest, and deeper love. Thank You for giving me not only salvation, but also a day set apart to draw close to You. I want to follow You fully—not out of duty, but because I love You. Please write Your law on my heart, teach me to delight in Your Sabbath, and prepare me to receive Your seal. I give You my heart again today. Lead me every step of the way. Amen.

Review Questions

1. True or False
 - a. The seal of God spoken of in Revelation 7 was for everyone in history.
 - b. The ten commandments were abolished at the cross.
 - c. The law of God is written on the heart of the true believer.
 - d. Faithful Sabbath observance is one of the identifying marks of those who receive God's end-time seal.
2. Reflect: According to Scripture, those who receive God's seal in the last days are described as *“they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus”* (Revelation 14:12). The Sabbath, as the fourth commandment, is not singled out above the others—but it does stand out as the visible sign of allegiance to the Creator (Exodus 20:8–11; Ezekiel 20:12, 20). Just as ancient royal seals identified the authority and dominion of a king, the Sabbath reflects God's name, creative power, and rule.

While Sabbath observance does not earn salvation, it is one of the distinguishing marks of those who have surrendered to Christ, obey Him from the heart, and walk in harmony with His law. In that sense, it is an important identifying characteristic of those who are sealed—*not a qualification for earning the seal*, but a reflection of the relationship that makes receiving the seal possible.

3. Discuss: Why do you think God chose the Sabbath—rather than another practice—as the sign of His covenant and sanctifying work in the last days? What does it reveal about His character, and what kind of response does it invite from us?