

The Teacher of Righteousness and the Essenes

The fourth commandment is “Remember the sabbath day and keep it holy”. It might seem trivial to the modern mind that one particular day should be put aside as holy. However, biblical events show that it is very important.

- a. The world was created in 7 days
- b. The first world lasted 777.7×777.77 days = $60 \times 60 \times 24 \times 7$ days
- c. Babylonian Captivity lasted 70 years for all the Sabbath years missed. Every 7th year was a Sabbath year, and every 50th year was a Jubilee year (a Sabbath of Sabbaths). So, over a period of 430 years there are 61.4 Sabbath years and 8.6 Jubilee years = 70 Sabbath years.
- d. Each Covenant is separated from the previous one by 430 years (70 Sabbath years)

As you will see, the sabbath represents the mercy of God.

The Sabbath Cycle

Leviticus 25 describes the Sabbath cycle

The Lord said to Moses at Mount Sinai, 2 “Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘When you enter the land I am going to give you, the land itself must observe a sabbath to the Lord. 3 For six years sow your fields, and for six years prune your vineyards and gather their crops. 4 But in the seventh year the land is to have a year of sabbath rest, a sabbath to the Lord. Do not sow your fields or prune your vineyards. 5 Do not reap what grows of itself or harvest the grapes of your untended vines. The land is to have a year of rest. 6 Whatever the land yields during the sabbath year will be food for you—for yourself, your male and female servants, and the hired worker and temporary resident who live among you, 7 as well as for your livestock and the wild animals in your land. Whatever the land produces may be eaten.

The Year of Jubilee

8 “Count off seven sabbath years—seven times seven years—so that the seven sabbath years amount to a period of forty-nine years. 9 Then have the trumpet sounded everywhere on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement sound the trumpet throughout your land. 10 Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; each of you is to return to your family property and to your own clan. 11 The fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you; do not sow and do not reap what grows of itself or harvest the untended vines. 12 For it is a jubilee and is to be holy for you; eat only what is taken directly from the fields.

13 “In this Year of Jubilee everyone is to return to their own property.

14 “If you sell land to any of your own people or buy land from them, do not take advantage of each other. 15 You are to buy from your own people on the basis of the number of years since the Jubilee. And they are to sell to you on the basis of the number of years left for harvesting crops. 16 When the years are many, you are to increase the price, and when the years are few, you are to decrease the price, because what is really being sold to you is the

number of crops. 17 Do not take advantage of each other, but fear your God. I am the Lord your God.

18 “Follow my decrees and be careful to obey my laws, and you will live safely in the land. 19 Then the land will yield its fruit, and you will eat your fill and live there in safety. 20 You may ask, “What will we eat in the seventh year if we do not plant or harvest our crops?” 21 I will send you such a blessing in the sixth year that the land will yield enough for three years. 22 While you plant during the eighth year, you will eat from the old crop and will continue to eat from it until the harvest of the ninth year comes in.

During the Wilderness wanderings, Israel gathered manna for 6 days but not on the 7th. It's the same pattern.

In a 430 year period every 7th year was a Sabbath year when the land would rest, and every 50th year was also a Jubilee year. So in 430 years there would be 61.4 Sabbath Years + 8.6 Jubilee Years = 70. The Jubilee year was to be a year when debts were cancelled, slaves were set free and people received back their inheritance.

Bearing this in mind, consider the timing of the Biblical Covenants –

- Noahic Covenant (2348 B.C.)
then 427 years
- Abrahamic Covenant (1921 B.C.)
then 430 years
- Mosaic Covenant (1491 B.C.)
then 437 years
- Davidic Covenant (1055 B.C.)
then 430 years
- New Covenant (625 B.C.) announced by Jeremiah

Every 70 sabbath years God made a new Covenant.

Sabbath and Mercy

The Sabbath was the only commandment designed to teach MERCY.

In this command, God's people were to show mercy by allowing those under their care to rest, even down to the animals! This command teaches us about the merciful character of God, and teaches us to be merciful like Him. The Sabbath was God's sign between Him and His people, and evidence of His kindness, MERCY, and love.

Isaiah 58 discusses the Sabbath and religious observance. On the Sabbath we should not exploit workers or quarrel. Rather –

“Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to lose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter – when you see the naked to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?....If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, and if you spend yourself on behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed”

The actions prescribed for the sabbath day described in Isaiah 58 are the same as those for the Sabbath year and the Jubilee year in that it commends compassion towards the land and towards servants, livestock and even towards wild animals. They are to be allowed to rest and nourish themselves with whatever the land produces. In addition, the Jubilee year was a time of liberty – of setting captives free – so they can return home. Debts were cancelled, there was forgiveness, and people could make a fresh start.

So, the Sabbath is about mercy, compassion and forgiveness.

For a holy God to draw close to rebellious mankind is act of mercy and forgiveness – that's why a new covenant was always made after 70 sabbath years. Every interaction with a holy God is an act of mercy, and the sabbath is a day of mercy.

Upon every sabbath day we are urged to cease from worldly pursuits and show compassion to the poor and needy.

[The Isaiah 58 Challenge | The Day of Mercy | A Common Mans Bible Journey \(wordpress.com\)](#)

The Teacher of Righteousness and the Dead Sea Scrolls

A period of 70 sabbath years is also found in the book of Daniel, where “seventy sevens” represent the duration of the gentile empires until the final destruction of Jerusalem. The Book of Daniel describes a succession of foreign empires exercising dominion over Israel – the Babylonian empire, Persian empire, Greek empire and Roman empire. Each empire tries to impose its own culture and gods upon the Israelites. This is especially so for the Babylonian empire under Nebuchadnezzar, and for the Seleucid dynasty (Greek empire) under Antiochus Epiphanes.

The book of Daniel provides detailed prophecies of the war between the Ptolemies and the Seleucids, and of the rise of Antiochus Epiphanes who persecuted the followers of the Jewish faith – banning their religious practices on pain of death, and defiling the Temple.

Contemporary with this holocaust carried out by Antiochus Epiphanes, the Essenes record the arrival of a Teacher of Righteousness.

According to the Essene documents – the Zadokite Work, the Habakkuk Commentary – the Teacher of Righteousness appeared 390 years after 586 B.C. and began to preach at the start of the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes – to prepare the people so they could maintain their faith through the tribulation. [Teacher of Righteousness \(manchester.ac.uk\)](#)

It says God “visited His people” some 390 years after He had given Israel into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar (586 B.C.) – so this would be 196 B.C. , and caused “a root to issue from Israel and Aaron”.. This root was the sect from which the document came. We read that after the sect had groped like blind men for 20 years, God raised up for them a Teacher of Righteousness. Scholars therefore date the beginning of the sect in 196 B.C., and the rise of the Teacher of Righteousness in 176 B.C. This coincides with the beginning of the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes in 175 B.C.

In the Zadokite Work we read that the Teacher was raised up to lead the sect and " to make known to the last generations what He (i.e. God) would do to the last generation, the congregation of the evildoers ". So the purpose of the Teacher of Righteousness was to assure the people of the coming retribution , and to warn people to repent. God was passing a final judgement upon that generation.

This is borne out by what we find elsewhere in this work, where it is said that the Sons of Zadok are "the elect of Israel . . . who shall arise at the end of the days ".

The Essene documents describe a Man of the Lie – an anti-Christ, Man of Sin, Man of Scorn – who "caused the waters of untruth to drip to Israel". He is a military figure because he is described as accompanied by men of war. This would be Antiochus Epiphanes. He opposes the Teacher of Righteousness, and is helped by the Wicked Priest (Menelaus)

In the Habakkuk Commentary there are many references to the Kittim. They are said to be swift and powerful in battle, dreaded of the nations they plundered, cunning and deceitful, and without belief in the ordinances of God. They come from afar, from the isles or coastlands, they despise fortresses, and their rulers come one after another to destroy the earth. Again we are told that they gather wealth and booty like the fish of the sea, and they sacrifice to their standards and worship their weapons. They are cruel and heartless, having no mercy on children. There is mention of the kings of the nations, and of the chief of the kings of Greece, who came to wreak vengeance on those who rebelled. They are brought into association with the Wicked Priest, or with the last priests of Jerusalem, in that it is said that all the ill-gotten gains of the priests shall be handed over to them.

In the Battle Scroll we find some further references to the Kittim. Here the Kittim of Assyria are linked with the troops of Edom, Moab, Ammon and Philistia against the sons of Levi, Judah and Benjamin. We learn of the Kittim in Egypt marching forth to fight against the kings of the north, while elsewhere we find a reference to the king of the Kittim. The Kittim are the Seleucids (based in Assyria) and Ptolemies (based in Egypt).

Teacher of Righteousness and the Wicked Priest belong to the second century B.C., and to the critical period of the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes which provoked the Maccabean rising.

Of note here is that the Teacher of Righteousness appeared 390 years after the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. This is exactly 430 years after the New Covenant of Jeremiah

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then 430 years
- The Teacher of Righteousness (196 B.C.)

So the same pattern of "Seventy sevens", or seventy sabbath years, persisted.