

Sabbatismos

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When people ask me for one verse that shows without a doubt that Sabbath-keeping is still relevant after the death of Christ, more often than not I'll point to Hebrews 4:9:

*9 There remains therefore a **rest** for the people of God. 10 For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His. 11 Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience. (NKJV)*

*⁹So then, there remains a **Sabbath rest** for the people of God, ¹⁰for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. ¹¹Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience. (ESV)*

Notice the word rest, or Sabbath rest in verse 9. The Greek word for rest/Sabbath rest is *Sabbatismos*. This is the **only** instance this word was used in the entire Bible. It literally means "Sabbath-keeping" or observance and the term is believed to be coined for this very express purpose to denote literal Sabbath-keeping.

The following is an extended definition of the term, taken from Fred R. Coulter's **booklet**:

The Greek word that is used in Hebrews 4:9, **σαββατισμός**, pronounced *sabbatismos*, which means "Sabbath rest, Sabbath observance" (Arndt and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*).

This definition of the Greek word **σαββατισμός** *sabbatismos* is confirmed by other historical works: "The words 'sabbath rest' is translated from the GK noun *sabbatismos*, [and is] a unique word in the NT. This term appears also in Plutarch (*Superset. 3 [Moralia 166a]*) for sabbath observance, and in four post-canonical

Christian writings which are not dependent on Heb. 4:9” (*The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 5, p. 856).

The Greek word, **σαββατισμός** *sabbatismos*, is a noun. The verb form of the word is **σαββατίζω** *sabbatizo*, which means “to keep the Sabbath” (Arndt and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*).

This definition of **σαββατίζω** *Sabbatizo* is confirmed by its use in the Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Old Testament which dates from third century BC. It is called the Septuagint, meaning “Seventy” because the first five books were translated by seventy scholars who were Greek-speaking Jews in Alexandria, Egypt. Jews used the Septuagint in synagogues throughout the Roman empire, and by the Greek-speaking Jewish and Gentile converts in the early New Testament church. The apostle Paul, quotes extensively from the Septuagint in his epistle to the Hebrews. When Paul used the Greek word **σαββατισμός** *sabbatismos* in Hebrews 4:9, he knew that the meaning of this word was well known to the Greek-speaking believers of that day. The verb form **σαββατίζω**, *sabbatizo* was used in the Septuagint which was as familiar to the Greek-speaking Jews and Gentiles of New Testament times as the King James Bible is to Christians today.

The use of the verb **σαββατίζω** *sabbatizo* in Leviticus 23:32 in the Septuagint leaves no room to mistake its meaning. The *Greek English Lexicon of the Septuagint* defines **σαββατίζω** *sabbatizo* as “to keep sabbath, to rest” (Lust, Eynikel, Hauspie). The English translation of this verse in the Septuagint reads: “It [the Day of Atonement] shall be a holy sabbath [literally, ‘a Sabbath of Sabbaths’] to you; and ye shall humble your souls, from the ninth day of the month: from evening to evening **shall ye keep your sabbaths**” (*The Septuagint With the Apocrypha*, Brenton).

The phrase “shall ye keep your sabbaths” is translated from the Greek phrase **σαββατιείτε τα σάββατα** *sabbatieite ta sabbata*, which literally means, “You shall **sabbathize** the Sabbaths.” The form of the Greek verb **σαββατίζω** *sabbatizo* is the second person plural **σαββατιείτε** *sabbatieite*, which means, “ye shall keep.” Since the verb **sabbathize**, means “to keep the Sabbath,” this verb is a special verb that also relates to and defines “Sabbath-keeping,” for God’s command

for the land Sabbath every seven years. In the entire Septuagint, the verb **σαββατίζω** *sabbatizo* is never used to define the “keeping” of anything else. Rather, it is always used in relation to “Sabbath-keeping” and “Sabbath-keeping” only. In keeping with this definition, the KJV translates **σαββατεῖτε** *sabbatēite*, this way: “shall ye celebrate your sabbath.”

There is no question that the Greek verb **σαββατίζω** *sabbatizo* in Leviticus 23:32 is specifically referring to Sabbath observance. This meaning applies equally to the noun form **σαββατισμός** *sabbatismos*, which we find in Paul’s epistle to Hebrews. The fact that Paul used the Septuagint translation in this epistle confirms that the meaning word **σαββατισμός** *sabbatismos*, in Hebrews 4:9, is in complete accord with the meaning of **σαββατεῖτε τα σάββατα** *sabbatēite ta sabbata*, in Leviticus 23:32. Clearly Paul is upholding the observance of the Sabbath, the seventh day of the week.

And there you have it. Clearly, the Sabbath is still very much valid today, and to say that we no longer have to keep it holy, because “Jesus is our Sabbath rest”, is dangerous and foolish.