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Arminianism and Adventism: The Sabbath—A Highlight of Adventist Soteriology

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October 15, 2010

Arminianism and Adventism: The Sabbath—A Highlight of Adventist Soteriology

Vespers began with soft music playing in the chapel dimly lit by the flames of menorahs sitting on a table in the front of the chapel along with a collection of shofars. Following a soothing rendition of "[Remember the Sabbath](#)," Dr. Jo Ann Davidson began sharing about her reluctant trip to Israel on her husband's sabbatical. Although she was a fourth generation Adventist and knew that she didn't keep the Sabbath to be saved, Israel is where she began to learn the deeper meanings of the Sabbath.

One of her first experiences was reluctantly visiting a Jewish festival in a park where the Jews were praising God for the law. This was a new concept to her. She new the law as eternal and good, but praising the law? There isn't a hymn in the Adventist hymnal praising the law.

One day her family was invited to their first Jewish Friday night Sabbath meal. This continued to happen, and after about three months she remembered coming home and falling to her knees and asking the Lord to forgive her for not wanting to come, because she realized God had a blessing for her too. She realized that her Jewish friends had been celebrating for thousands of years and had highly developed the art of Sabbath celebration.

She realized that the Sabbath is not something we do to show God that we are good and holy. The Sabbath is a gift God gives us that comes every week, whether we want it or not, just like salvation.

Next Dr. Richard Davidson shared about the blowing of the shofar. He was expecting to hear it when he first arrived in Israel but instead got an air horn. The Second Temple, of course, was no longer standing, and thus its services were no longer happening. But they were just starting to excavate the cheesemakers vally beneath, and found a stone that was oddly shaped. On that stone was and inscription: "The place for the blowing of the shofar."

So he invited us to go back to Jesus day in Jerusalem, and to hear the sound of the shofar. A shofar can be an antelope horn, a ram's horn, or the ibex horn. Richard blew the traditional blasts from the ibex horn shofar.

Next, Jo Ann shared about the traditions of her Jewish friends. The Sabbath was the zenith of their weeks. It wasn't something they had to do. It was a gift.

The mothers would light the candles. They light two candles for the Sabbath as a symbol of God as creator and redeemer. After the lighting of the candles the mothers would pray a Sabbath prayer, which she proceeded to pray over us.

Jo Ann shared two sayings about the meaning of the candles. You can light a whole room full of candles, and still the candle would be as bright as ever. Even so, God has been blessing the Sabbath for 2000 years, and still the blessing is as bright as ever. Also, on the first day God created light. And because every Sabbath is a new creation, they lit candles.

After the candles comes the blessing of the husband for his wife. When Richard and his wife are alone, he reads the traditional blessing from Song of Solomon. But since they were with us, he read the traditional blessing from [Proverbs 31](#). After the husband blesses his wife, she blesses him by reading from [Psalm 112](#).

As Jo Ann watched the children in these Jewish homes seeing their parents expressing affection for each other, it moved her heart. After this the father would take the children in his arms or put his hands on them and bless them. Joann and her husband continued this tradition.

Eventually, she asked her friends where they had found these traditions, and they told her she found it in the Torah. She was surprised, and asked where they found it. They pointed to [Ex 31](#), saying that the verb that is translated "observe" in English is the same verb for when he "made" the earth. Therefore, it is up to us to "make" the Sabbath, as God made the Earth with joy.

"Where was there joy in creation?" she asked. They pointed her to [Job](#), where the sons of God shouted for joy. They also saw it in [Gen 1:2](#) where the spirit of God hovers over the waters. Moses only uses that verb for hovering one other time, describing a mother bird hovering over her nest. God hovered over us as he made our nest.

"So why the expensive silverware for Sabbath?" she asked. For this they turned to [Is 58](#), where calling the Sabbath a delight has the nuance of a royal delight. Therefore the Sabbath is a royal day.

For Jo Ann's Jewish friends, the most beautiful word in the fourth commandment is the word remember. The first three commandments start with "Thou shall not" and the last five start with "Thou shall not." The two that are expressed positively are the commands to honor the Sabbath and our parents. The Sabbath was originally given to our original parents. And among all the creation stories of different cultures, the Bible has the only one that involves the Sabbath.

So Jo Ann concludes that the Sabbath is God's signature. It is not linked to any natural cycle. It is God's celebration of his power as creator every week. God set apart one day of the week to remind us that time has a pattern, and therefore history has a pattern. Every week, we get a chance to start our story over.

The question isn't, Why do I have to keep the Sabbath? The question really is, Why are we so blessed to have the Sabbath? When the creator comes down to restore and bless us, who would want to miss that? When Jesus came down, he performed more miracles on that day than any other to remind us that on that day God gives us his choicest blessings. God put his best gift in time, so that we wouldn't miss it.

She shared a story of how she know her husband was serious about her, because when he asked her to go out with him for the first time, he asked her to meet him at a specific time. In the same way, God does not just ask for us whenever. He asks for us to meet him at a specific time.

The service closed with singing Hebrew hymns about Sabbath.

Posted by [David Hamstra](#) on October 15, 2010 in [Arminianism and Adventism Symposium](#) | [Permalink](#)

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I went into the sanctuary expecting a worship service filled with songs and praises and a short devotional. Instead, we all got a spiritual treat as we heard the testimony of the Davidson's turning point in understanding a deeper significance for the Sabbath from the Jewish perspective.

Well, done; well prepared. It was a wonderful blessing.

Posted by: [Victor M. Reyes-Prieto](#) | [October 16, 2010 at 06:30 AM](#)

I'm curious ... how was this connected to the theme of the conference ...?

Posted by: Bill Cork | [October 16, 2010 at 10:25 AM](#)

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