

Significant Lessons From The Seemingly Insignificant

#8 God's Sabbath Rest

What is meant by "God's Sabbath Rest"? We are not debating whether we should worship on Saturday or Sunday. As believers, we are called to worship our Lord and Savior every day. Jesus emphasized in: Mark 2:27 *The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.* His words point back before the Ten Commandments, to the original purpose and will of God. Paul in Col. 2:16-17 "Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; The Reality, However, Is Found In Christ."

These two statements warn us against turning the weekly Sabbath into a rule that has to be obeyed to avoid punishment. It is strange that after 2000 years of Christian teaching, the Sabbath is still misunderstood, though its true meaning is of CRUCIAL importance to us.

Since Augustine, Christians have recognized that the Bible describes human experience in a fourfold scheme: in (i) creation, (ii) fall, (iii) redemption and (iv) glory. It is no surprise then that the Sabbath, which was made for man, is experienced by him in four ways.

Goals: How does the Sabbath relate to me? Creation; Redemption; Sanctification and Eternity

The Origin of the Sabbath: A Gift to Man Rooted In Creation

A. The Sabbath Relates To Me Because Of Creation

Gen. 2:1-3 Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. And on the seventh day God [had] ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it [set it apart as His own] because on it God rested from all His work which He had created and made.

Note: LXX reads "on the sixth day." God finished His work on the 6th day and rested on the 7th. Some translations say: "By the seventh day..."

- "Sabbath," "seven," and "rest" are all the same basic word in Hebrew: Shabbat
- The root meaning of the words: To Cease Working; to rest - Primary Significance!

Note: God ceased from His work of Creation.

1. God's Sabbath Rest came into being when man came into being. It was set apart and blessed-as a divine example-for the use and benefit of man, at the Creation. A Gift Of God In Eden

2. The Personal Sabbath of the Lord God

Consider: When we work hard and are weary and tired, we need rest to restore our strength. Rest here = the ending of activity; the cessation of effort

- a. This 1st Sabbath didn't take place because God was tired or weary from all His Creative work.
- b. God did not rest to restore His strength.

Isa. 40:28 Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the LORD, Creator of the ends of the earth, Neither faints nor is weary. His understanding is unsearchable.

- c. He stopped because He was through. He rested in the midst of a perfect creation.
 - d. He set apart the 7th day because His work of Creation was finished and He was pleased and satisfied with what He had created.
 - e. The true Sabbath is not the keeping of a special day but the Ending Of A Specific Effort.
 - f. The specific effort from which God rested was creation.
- Sabbath = God's Creative Activity has ended.

Gen. 2:1-3 Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

- Twice in Gen. 2:1-2, we find the word: Finished
- Last account of any creative activity. There has been NO creation since.
- Man is the last effort of God in creation on the physical level.
- God is not creating physically today.
- However, God is ceaselessly active in many, many ways, but not in creation.

In John 5, when Jesus was in the synagogue the Jews were very distressed because He healed a man on the Sabbath day. They accused Him of breaking the Sabbath. Jesus answered them in John 5:17 - My Father is working until now and I am working.

- It was proper for Him to perform a deed of mercy on the Sabbath day because He was imitating His Father who was ceaselessly active in mercy and love on His Sabbath day, His long rest. God had stopped creating but He was still busy in a thousand different ways.

Gen. 1:31 Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

Note the distinct points about the 7th day of creation week.

- Every day of creation is followed by "there was evening, and there was morning," day... in Genesis except Day 7.
- This indicates that the 1st Sabbath was a continuous rest, or a continuous ceasing from labor. God's Sabbath rest would have no end. God has never taken up the work of creation again. Therefore a word that means ceased was used in describing His Sabbath rest.
- God rested on this specific seventh day, blessed this specific seventh day, and hallowed this specific seventh day. There is no indication in the text of any repetitive keeping of seventh days. There is no command and, unlike the other days, there is no 'evening and morning' boundary - it is as if the day is open and unending.
God rests from God's work of creating and goes on resting because it is, indeed, finished.
- Therefore, this Sabbath, this rest upon which God entered, still continues today.
- If God's resting, blessing, and hallowing the seventh day was intended as an institution of the Sabbath command, then one would expect that Adam and Eve would have kept the Sabbath in Eden and beyond.

- Note: This was GOD'S REST. No obligation on man's part to keep the Sabbath is even implied in this passage.

On God's Sabbath Rest, God made the world His dwelling place; a time to fellowship with His creation. God's creation work was done. It was to be Sabbath rest from that point onward. Consider: Since no ending was given to the 7th day, could it be that it was meant that Adam & Eve would enjoy a perpetual rest in the Garden of Eden?

3. The Fall Of Man

But Adam fell. Instead of walking with God, he hid from God. His sin interrupted God's fellowship with him.

Gen. 3:8-9 And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden. And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?
a. God desired fellowship with Adam & Eve.

Note: After the fall of man and sin entered the world, there is absolutely NO reference in Genesis that states all mankind will keep the Sabbath as a day of rest.

The entire book of Genesis spans the first 1/3 of man's history.

After this first mention of God's Sabbath Rest, there is silence for 2500 years.

1. God made the Covenant Of Grace with Abraham in Gen. 12.

2 God instituted the Covenant Of The Law 430 years later.

Note: There is not one inkling of a hint about the Sabbath being kept by anyone during this extensive period.

Note: Some events: Noah & Flood; Tower of Babel; Call of Abram; Isaac; Jacob; Joseph; Move to Egypt; slaves in Egypt; Deliverance from Egypt; Cross Red Sea; Journey to Mt. Sinai

4. First Mention

The first mention of the "Sabbath" [from the Hebrew verb Shabbat, meaning "to rest from labor"; the day of rest] since the time when God ceased from His work of Creation on the seventh day is in Exodus 16:23, regarding the gathering of manna:

And he said unto them, This is that which the LORD hath said, Tomorrow is the Rest of the Holy Sabbath unto the LORD: bake that which ye will bake today, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning .

Notice: This is four chapters before the Law was given at Mt. Sinai. They were to gather twice as much on the sixth day in anticipation of a day they were to cease working.

Key Point: They have just applied the blood on the doorposts. They have just experienced deliverance from bondage. God is teaching. He wants them to learn to "rest in Him."

a. The 1st instruction about keeping the Sabbath day rest was concerning food. Don't collect on the 7th day. God will provide a double portion on the 6th day. None will be given on day 7.

b. On the other 5 days, any extra manna would rot if they kept it over until the next day.

c. But the extra gathered on day 6 would not rot overnight.

Significance of 1st Mention: Israelites learned: God is our provider. We can trust Him, depend on Him and rest in Him. God wants a relationship with His people based on trust.

5. Sabbath in the 10 Commandments

Ex. 20:8-11 Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD our God. In it you shall do no work:... For *in* six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

a. The Exodus account of the commandments refers to the creation and the fact that God rested on the 7th day as the reason for the Sabbath Day.

Important Key Points:

After creation, God ceased from His labor or work of Creation and rested on the Sabbath.

b. Shabbat is about a relationship with our Creator.

- Shabbat is related to shevet = to dwell and abide; to rest in

That by HIS WORKS we would dwell with Him and relate to Him.

Of all His creation, only man is in the image of God. [Gen. 1:26-28]

c. When God finished creating, He then "created" rest.

- Not just a day off from work, but a day TO the Lord - a time to relate to Him.

Essence of Sabbath: God desires relationship with His creation and a weekly time of rest was set aside for that purpose.

Significance of 4th Commandment:

It was given to fallen man - therefore, it says "you shall not." Man was not to work, but to rest. The Israelites needed to learn to rest in the Lord.

Worship Him as God The Creator

Externally: Cease from his ordinary tasks in order to meet with God.

Internally: Cease from all self-sufficiency in order to rest in God's grace.

B. The Sabbath Relates To Me Because Of Redemption: It Is Rooted In Redemption

Recall: Man Lost His True Rest In God Through Disobedience.

Consider: How do we find rest, peace, and a dynamic relationship with God in our lives?

The goal of God's work was to restore the Sabbath rest which comes through Jesus Christ.

God's Call Of Abram: Gen. 12:2-3 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: ³ And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

1. God's desire: Bless Israel and for them to be a blessing to other peoples.

2. God charged Israel with a sacred trust: Bear God's name

3. God's redemptive plan for the world would issue forth from Israel.

John 4:22 ...for Salvation Is Of The Jews.

Moses in giving his last speech to the Israelites reviews the 10 Commandments.

Deut. 5:12-15 Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. ¹³ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁴ but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. And Remember That You Were A Servant In The Land Of Egypt, And That The LORD Thy God Brought Thee Out Thence Through A Mighty Hand And By A Stretched Out Arm: THEREFORE the LORD Thy God Commanded Thee To Keep The Sabbath Day.

Note: Deut. Account of the 10 Commandments links the Sabbath with the Israelites' deliverance in Egypt. God is your Creator; God is your Deliverer, your Redeemer

- God redeemed us for Himself.
- God delivered us from bondage and judgment not just to escape punishment, but that we would be His people and have a relationship with Him.

b. After creation, the next work God performed was a blood sacrifice to cover the sin of Adam and Eve. [Gen. 3:21]

c. His work of creation was over by the 7th day, but because of sin, God's work was to redeem His fallen creation.

d. God's work of redemption was accomplished through the death of Jesus who declared, "It is finished." [John 19:30]

Key Points: God asks us to keep the Sabbath to remember: He is our Creator.

We were slaves of sin and He set us free with His great power.

Sabbath is a time for remembering the work of Jesus on the cross.

What Is The Theme Of God's Redemption Program?

God's Plan of Redemption is illustrated in the Feasts, [moedim = appointments] He ordained.

1. God's ordained feasts provide a Biblical and historical foundation for faith in Jesus Christ.

2. There are 7 annual feasts, appointed times, outlined in Leviticus 23.

3. Purpose of Feasts: Reveal God's Plan; Celebrate His Faithfulness; Point to Jesus, the Messiah; Give Hope for Daily Living; Glimpse of the Future

Lev. 23:1-3 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, ² Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, Concerning the feasts [appointed times] of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are My Feasts. ³ Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day is the Sabbath Of Rest, an holy convocation; ye shall do no work therein: it is the Sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings.

Note: The Sabbath is linked to God's Feasts. This is God's appointed schedule to meet with His redeemed people. The feasts were holy "rehearsals" for the prophetic appointed times by God for the 1st & the 2nd Coming Of Messiah.

The first 3 feasts in the spring illustrate God's redemption plan accomplished in Christ's 1st coming. The 4th feast illustrates the "body of Christ" being established in the earth. The last 3 feasts focus on the 2nd coming of Christ and the consummation of God's redemptive program.

4. The feasts are God's way to remind His people that He is the King of creation and the Ruler over time: past, present and future.

God's Sabbath Rest is Linked To:

Creation:	Worship Him as the Creator of All; God created us.
Manna:	God is our Provider
Redemption:	God delivers us from the Bondage of Sin
Feasts:	God's Appointments to Reveal His Overall Plan For Man