

## 8. Rest (2Q 2009—Walking the Walk: The Christian Life)

**Biblical material:** Gen. 2:2, 3; Deut. 5:12–15; Isa. 58:12–14; Ezek. 20:12; Heb. 4:9–11.

### Quotes

- One day in seven, the Sabbath was made holy unto God and set aside solely for his worship (in ancient Israel). There was no choice about it. In those first days there was no such thing as religious liberty in Israel. A man had to go to worship whether he liked it or not. The fact that he didn't like the priests didn't matter ... The excuse that he was intellectually superior to the congregation of Israel didn't work ... Religious liberty was given no thought in Israel. I sometimes wonder if it isn't given too much thought in our own America. *Rev. W. D. Lewis*
- Look at what the members of Jesus' own family did to Him. John 1:11. "He came to His home and His own family did not welcome Him." (Goodspeed) In fact, they told Him He had a devil to be so describing His Father. They killed Him to silence Him. We need to remember as we have mentioned several times in these conversations, that the ones who rejected Christ and preferred Satan's picture of God, were the most pious group of Seventh-day-Sabbath-keeping, tithing, health-reforming, Bible-studying, Adventists the world has ever known. *A. Graham Maxwell*

### Questions

Why did God "need" to "rest"? If "the Sabbath is made for man," what does this tell us? How do we view the God of the Sabbath? How can we misrepresent God through what we say and do regarding Sabbath? Do we really enter into God's rest on Sabbath, or are we just too busy? How does the Sabbath rest reveal truth about God?

### Bible discussion

God rests and institutes the Sabbath (Genesis 2). In Deut. 5 God repeats the Ten Commandments, yet in this case the Sabbath is a memorial not of creation, but of redemption from slavery in Egypt. We are to keep the Sabbath holy, not doing our own pleasure (Isaiah 58), while in Ezek. 20:12 God gives the Sabbath as a covenant sign with his people. This special rest remains for God's people (Heb. 4:9).

### Extended comment

So I'm sitting next to this guy on the plane. We talk for a bit. He finds out a bit about me. Then he turns to me and asks, "You're a Seventh-day Adventist, then. *So what's all this about the Sabbath?* What about worshiping on a Saturday? Isn't that a real problem?"

Now I'm intrigued. Why should the seventh-day Sabbath be a problem? So I ask him.

"Well, to start with, what about missing all those ball games? Wouldn't that be difficult?" he asks.

I don't want to admit that the delights of American football, baseball and basketball have left this English traditionalist totally unaffected. But I see his point—at least if it were a cricket match or a soccer game!

“Yes, but it’s a question of priorities. Spending time with God is more important than a ball game, surely?”

He nods. “Maybe. But then there’s all the shopping you need to do, and fixing cars and mowing lawns—if you can’t do that on Saturdays, then that’s a real pain.” He looks me in the eye, showing definite interest.

“I find time to do all those things—but not on Saturday.” I’m keeping it cool.

“So it’s a rule then? No work—that’s what the church demands. Or is it because it’s a commandment, and if you don’t do it you won’t be saved?”

How did I know that one was coming!

“No, it’s not like that,” I reply, hopefully with some grace. “Keeping the Sabbath for me is not a question of rules and regulations, but what I choose. That does mean there are some things I do, and some I don’t. It’s not a question of being legalistic; instead I’m being true to myself and what I want from my relationship with God. I choose to agree with God when He tells me to keep the Sabbath holy, because God has my best interests at heart. For me Sabbath is the best day of the week.”

“You just take a rest then. I wouldn’t mind that, I guess.” For a moment he sounds wistful.

“More than a rest—a total recharge!” I respond. “And sometimes that means Sabbath is the busiest day. Spending time with God doesn’t necessarily mean being inactive. It’s my quality time with the God who made me, and who is re-making me. I wouldn’t miss that for the world.”

He pauses before replying softly: “I can see that. I get so busy, that I just don’t have time to stop and think. Sometimes I think I’m going nuts. What with the pressure of work, my family problems and everything else, I often feel it’s just not worth it. What is the point--of all the money and power and prestige, if you don’t have any time to take time off? I really wish I had something like that which would make me ease up once in a while. You’re really sensible.”

Sensible? Maybe. But I can’t leave the Sabbath there as a convenient rest stop on life’s busy highway. For though the “Sabbath was made for man,” who made it, and why?

So I start explaining about God as Creator, and the Sabbath as his last act in the creation drama. How he blessed the day, and made it special right there in the very beginning. How to make time holy was a truly inspired and brilliant idea--for any place or object, or anything tangible and physical would soon have become the focus of worship instead of God Himself. But it’s really hard to worship a day, a period of time!

How the Sabbath becomes the sign, the emblem, of my relationship with the God who is not the distant Governor of Universe but the one who walks with me in the cool of the day. How on His Sabbath I can really come close to God, and share all my concerns and worries, all my praise and my joy--without worrying about all the other things I “need” to do.

How the Sabbath is the promise of God’s continued interest and care, week by week by everlasting week. How the Sabbath gives me--poor, deficient, feeble little old me--my regular reassurance of hope. Hope that I need so badly because there is so much in this world that can lead to hopelessness and despair. Hope that conquers the terrifying prospect of time running out, of there being nothing left. Hope that says there is time, there will always be time, if I hug God close to me.

“Hope?” he asks. Yes, hope. For while the Sabbath reminds us of God as Creator in Genesis and God as Commandment-giver in Exodus, God as the source of hope is the essential future-in-the-present aspect of Sabbath. God’s future promises become real in the Sabbath of the present. Jesus dies Friday afternoon. He rests in the grave that awesome crucifixion Sabbath, dead yet ready with intense anticipation to rise again. And with his glorious resurrection comes the total assurance of victory—over death, over evil, over the inevitable passing of time that slowly kills us every week.

For we are all dying, and every week takes us closer to our graves. But the Sabbath, each week, points us to that hope beyond death, the amazing truth that time cannot kill us or our relationship with God.

Sabbath is the reminder of the world made new when all will still meet to spend that wonderful time together with God. That time when God shall share together with those who will live forever, to wipe away the tears from their eyes, and they shall be His people and He shall be their God... I’ve almost forgotten my seatmate. Talking to myself, it all seems so clear and so real. The Sabbath hope reminds me of the God I love, the God who is forever true and right. The God I love and admire right now, and the God I wish to spend all eternity with, day by day, week by week, year by eternal year.

“So this Sabbath stuff is about God, really. Not about commands or requirements or rituals. Not about doing this or not doing that. It’s about God—and hope.” He seems satisfied, and yet positively ready to hear more.

I nod, and wonder why I didn’t say it as simply as that.

“The Sabbath is about God—and hope.”

### **Ellen White Comments**

The Sabbath should be made so interesting to our families that its weekly return will be hailed with joy. In no better way can parents exalt and honor the Sabbath than by devising means to impart proper instruction to their families and interesting them in spiritual things, giving them correct views of the character of God and what He requires of us in order to perfect Christian characters and attain to eternal life. {CG 536}

In His [Jesus’] days the Sabbath had become so perverted that its observance reflected the character of selfish and arbitrary men rather than the character of God. Christ set aside the false teaching by which those who claimed to know God had misrepresented Him. Although followed with merciless hostility by the rabbis, He did not even appear to conform to their requirements, but went straight forward keeping the Sabbath according to the law of God. {PK 183}

The Jews accused Christ of trampling upon the Sabbath, when he was only seeking to restore it to its original character. The interpretations given to the law by the rabbis, all their minute and burdensome exactions, were turning away the Sabbath from its true object, and giving to the world a false conception of the divine law, and of the character of God. Their teachings virtually represented God as giving laws which it was impossible for the Jews, much less for any other people, to obey. Thus in their earthliness, separated from God in spirit while professedly serving him they were doing just the work that Satan desired them to do,—taking a course to impeach the character of God, and cause the people to view him as a tyrant; to think that the observance of the Sabbath, as God required it, made man hard-hearted, unsympathetic, and cruel. {GCB, March 5, 1895}

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