

January 12, 2020

—The Gospel Changes Everything—

The Sabbath in Creation

Genesis 2:1-3

What is this series?

This morning we are starting a new 6 week series on the Sabbath. This series has been on my heart for at least 5 years. I believe that if it is taken seriously, if the arguments are carefully weighed against Scripture, it has the capacity to ignite personal revival in your life and a new reformation in this church.¹

This series is an extension the Gospel Changes Everything series that we began in 2016. We followed that initial series up with another installment in 2018 on vocation. For myself, those first two sermon series were nothing short of revolutionary. Massive worldview categories shifted for me. This morning begins our third installment. Like those first two installments we will be looking at the Sabbath through the categories of creation, fall, redemption, and glory. The reason why these categories are so helpful is because everybody on planet earth has to answer these questions.

Creation: How did this universe begin? What is it's purpose? Why do I exist?

Fall: Why is there evil and suffering? What has gone wrong with the world? What's gone wrong with me?

Redemption: Is there an answer for this evil and suffering? How can the world be set right again? How can I be set right?

Glory: Where is all of this going? How does this story finally end?

And those four categories shape the questions we will ask for the Sabbath.

¹ That is not hyperbole. The Word of God is what shapes nations; it is what crumbles tyranny; it is what restores the years the locusts have eaten, and it is what raises the dead.

Creation: Why is the Sabbath such a blessing? Why is the Sabbath *necessary* for a fulfilled life?

Fall: Why is the Sabbath so *hard*? Why is the Sabbath often either a victim of legalism or a victim of antinomianism?

Redemption: How do we overcome this frustration with the Sabbath and find joy in it through the gospel? How does Jesus revolutionize the Sabbath?

Glory: What will the Sabbath look like in Heaven? What is God calling us to for all eternity?

So our plan is to take each one of those categories in a separate sermon. And God-willing, we will have two additional sermons, one on how the Christian relates to the law, and the last one on practical application.

Why did God create us?

Alright, so let's begin. Why did God create man? There are tragic answers the people give to that question that aren't worthy of the Person of God. 'Well God created' some say 'because He was bored' or 'because He was lonely.' Dear congregation, if we are the solution to God's boredom or loneliness, he is not a god worth worshipping. Those answers betrays how little we think of God to begin with. What kind of a God does the Bible confront us with? With a God who is infinitely frightening. He speaks and the earth melts. "The nations rage, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts" (**Psalm 46:6**). The Bible confronts us with a God who is so holy that even the purest angels must cover their faces in His presence (**Isaiah 6:2**). The Bible confronts us with a God who needs nothing from us: "If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and its fullness are mine" (**Psalm 50:12**). "Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases" (**Psalm 115:3**). **Job 34:14-15** "If he should set his heart to it and gather to himself his spirit and his breath, all flesh would perish together, and man would return to dust." No God didn't create us because we somehow completed Him.

God wanted to share Himself with us

God created us, shockingly, because—though He is perfectly complete in Himself, though He is perfectly happy in the enjoyment of His beloved Son and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit—He wanted to share Himself with us. That is the plot line of the entire Bible. It begins in a garden. Man brought into existence to love and delight in God. And it ends in a garden in the book of Revelation.² “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. (**Revelation 21:3**).

The ultimate goal of humanity: Sabbath

Dear congregation that is Sabbath. Our true and final Sabbath. God created Man, as the Heidelberg catechism puts it, to truly know and love Him and to live with Him in everlasting happiness, all to His praise and glory.³ “The ultimate goal of creation [is] for humanity to dwell with God.”⁴ That’s sabbath. That’s what **Genesis 2:1-3** is pointing at. The first six days of creation were simply the opening act, the prelude, the preparation for God’s ultimate aim: for humanity to live in His presence in love and worship and delight forever.

The Big Idea...

The Sabbath is the chief end of man: God made us to rest and rejoice in His presence forever

² Revelation 22

³ Heidelberg Q.6

⁴ L. Michael Morales, *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord?: A Biblical Theology of the Book of Leviticus*, (Downers Grove, IL.,: InterVarsity Press, 2015), pg. 40

- ☆The Sabbath as a Creation Ordinance
- ☆The Sabbath as the Greatest Gift
- ☆The Sabbath as a Profound Prophecy

I. The Sabbath as a Creation Ordinance

The seventh day x 3

There are two textual clues that help us see how special the Sabbath is. The first is that the seventh day is repeated and reinforced three times.

Beginning of v.2 “And on the *seventh day* God finished his work...”

End of v.2 “...and he rested on the *seventh day* from all his work...”

Beginning of v.3 “So God blessed the *seventh day*...”

The Scripture uses this type of repetition to show us something really important is happening here like the three holies in Isaiah 6 or the seven woes in Matthew 23.

The Chiastic Structure!

The second textual clue that helps us see how special the Sabbath is, is that Moses, our author, presents these verses in a literary structure called a chiasmic structure. “A [chiasmic structure] is a literary device in which a sequence of ideas is presented and then repeated *in reverse order*.”⁵ So imagine a pyramid, the ideas are presented walking their way up to the peak of the pyramid, and then their mirrored truths they walk their way back down the other side. So consider the chiasmic structure of v.2-3.

⁵ Source: <https://www.gotquestions.org/chiasm-chiastic.html> accessed March 2, 2019

A1 God *finished* his work *that he had done* (v.2a)

B1 and he *rested* on the seventh day... (v.2b)

X So God *blessed* the seventh day and made it *holy* (v.3a)

B2 because on it God *rested* from all his work (v.3b)

A2 *that he had done* in creation (v.3b)

What's helpful about this structure is that you can find the main point of the text relatively easy. The main point is simply the peak of the pyramid. What's the peak? The peak is that God blessed the seventh day and made it holy. Listen to what Michael Morales says here:

“The seventh day is not only the first day to be blessed, and the only day mentioned three times, but it is also the first object ever to be set apart as holy by God. Moreover, the seventh day is the *only* object of sanctification in the entire book of Genesis.”⁶

The one measurement not controlled by nature

And you can see the import of this by simply considering how mankind measures time. Every nation on earth operates on a seven-day week. Why? If you are an atheist you can't answer that question. We know where the 24 hour day comes from—it corresponds to one complete rotation of the earth. We know where months come from—they correspond to the waxing and waning of the moon. We know where years come from—they correspond to the time it takes for the earth to travel around the sun. Nature explains the day, the month and the year. But what explains the 7 day week? **Genesis 2:1-3**. God. There is nothing in nature itself that tells us we should have a 7 day week. So the atheist has to say “I don't believe in God, but I'll operate by the week that He set up.” Even the non-christian 1911 version of the Encyclopedia Britannica surprisingly

⁶ L. Michael Morales, *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord?: A Biblical Theology of the Book of Leviticus*, (Downers Grove, IL.,: InterVarsity Press, 2015), pg. 45

says this: “*Those who reject [Genesis 2:1-3⁷] will be at a loss, as . . . to assign [the 7-day week⁸] to [any other origin⁹].*”¹⁰ There is no explanation for the 7-day week outside of the Bible, yet humanity can’t seem to evolve past it. Why? Because God blessed it and made it holy.

Creation ordinances

You see, the Sabbath is what is called creation ordinance. What is a creation ordinance? Creation ordinances are those things that God has ordained that bind all men for all time. They are part of God’s covenant with mankind. All Christians know of the specific ordinance (or covenant) that God made with Adam, that he wasn’t to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (**Genesis 2:17**). “It is also true, however, that the covenant of creation also contains several positive stipulations, or things that tell us what to do and not just what not to.”¹¹ There are three such ordinances: labor, marriage and Sabbath. First, the ordinance of labor or vocation, sometimes called the cultural mandate is found in **Genesis 1:28**. Second, the ordinance of marriage being between one man and one woman is found at the end of **Genesis 2:18-25**. Third the ordinance of Sabbath is found here in **Genesis 2:1-3**.

Creation ordinances precede the law and cannot be broken

Now what is very particular about these three things, is that they precede the law that God gave Moses at Sinai. Which means they are not peculiar to the Jewish nation. They are binding on all mankind. They were given to Adam and

⁷ Original “the Mosaic recital”

⁸ Original “it”

⁹ Original “an origin having much semblance of probability”

¹⁰http://books.google.com/books?id=r3syvcP9UmlC&pg=PA988&lpg=PA988&dq=Encyclopedia+Britannica+Those+who+reject+the+Mosaic+recital+will+be+at+a+loss,+as+.+.+.+to+assign+it+to+an+origin+having+much+semblance+of+probability.&source=bl&ots=-PMS21wKi8&sig=Ily_wb_lUXDw8-shQMHmsG1BEMA&hl=en&sa=X&ei=TgkvVMXQAszcoATAHoLACw&ved=0CByQ6AEwAA#

¹¹ Source: <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/creation-ordinances/> Accessed January 11, 2020

he represented us in the garden, therefore they were given to all—both Jew, Gentile, Chinese, African, those living in 2020 b.c, and those living in 2020 a.d. Those who violate these creation ordinance invite ruin. We are seeing this play out right now in our country. The welfare state is the sad child of rejecting the creation ordinance of labor; and the embracing of the sexual revolution that victimizes both women and children and defaces man is the fruit of rejecting the creation ordinance of marriage.

The Sabbath as binding on all men

But we also see that one cannot simply ignore the Sabbath ordinance without grave consequences. Three test cases. First, we have Israel herself. The Lord spoke a curse against Israel in **Leviticus 26:33-35**, that if she rebelled against Him, He would hand them over to the nations and then the land would enjoy it's Sabbaths. What happened? They rebelled. They neglected wholesale the worship of God. Fast-foward to **2 Chronicles 36:17** "Therefore [God] brought up against them the king of the Chaldeans...[v.21] to fulfill the word of the Lord...until the land had enjoyed its Sabbaths. All the days that it lay desolate it kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years." Why was Israel in captivity for 70 years? The Scripture gives us the answer. "Because of their sin, the land of Israel had to observe an enforced accumulation of Sabbaths during the people's exile...In a most dramatic fashion, the law of the Sabbath determines the years of Israel's captivity."¹²

Objection: the Sabbath is not a creation ordinance

Now if someone says, "No Israel was put into captivity *not* because the Sabbath was a creation ordinance *but* because it was part of the ten commandments which they violated. I have three answers: **First**, I would ask: can't it be both? Isn't it possible that the Sabbath is *both* a creation ordinance and then was later put in ten commandments? **Second**, Israel knew of the

¹² O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants*, (Phillipsburg, NJ.: P & R Publishing, 1980), pg. 71

Sabbath *pre* ten commandments. This is clear from comparing Exodus 16 with Exodus 20. Exodus 16 is where God told Israel to gather enough manna on the 6th day so that they would not have to gather any on the 7th which was the Sabbath (v.22-26). Exodus 20 is where the ten commandments, and specifically the 4th commandment regarding the Sabbath, were officially published (v. 8-11).¹³ In other words, God expected them to honor the Sabbath before the ten commandments.

The nations unravel at Sabbath violation

Third, Non-Jewish nations, have suffered for ignoring this creation ordinance. During the French Revolution (1793-1805) which was essentially France's rejection of Protestantism, France established a 10-day week. This lasted a mere 12 years.¹⁴ This new week was "designed in part to remove all religious and royalist influences from the calendar." But they were forced to abandon it because workers became over exhausted, and it threw their market into complete confusion because they were not aligned with the rhythms of trade that the rest of the world practiced. Likewise, Russia from 1929-1940, under the control of Stalin eliminated the Sabbath in order to boost productivity as a nation. But they didn't make the same mistake as the French, they made the week shorter. Called "The Soviet Experiment," a system was developed which gave every citizen a day off based on an assigned color. In 1929 it began as a 5 day week. In 1931 it changed to a 6 day week. In 1940 it was dropped altogether. Why? Because "the effect on social life was disastrous...with such a large segment of the country's population at work on any given day, the result

¹³ "The commandment does not begin, 'Know there is a Sabbath day', but '*Remember...*'; and what is to be remembered is specifically identified with Genesis 2:3." [That is the ground of the 4th commandment is the creation account found in Genesis 1:1-2:3]. Iain Murray, *Rest in God & A Calamity in Contemporary Christianity*, (Carlisle, PA.: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2010), pg. 11

¹⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_Republican_Calendar#Criticism_and_shortcomings
 "The calendar was abolished because having a ten-day working week gave workers less rest (one day off every ten instead of one day off every seven); because the Southward equinox was a mobile date to start every new year (a fantastic source of confusion for almost everybody); and because it was incompatible with the secular rhythms of trade fairs and agricultural markets."

was that it isolated friends, church members and families from each other. If the husband rested every Red day, the wife rested every Blue day and the children were out of school every Green day, there were very few opportunities for socializing together even within the family unit, except after a long day of work.”¹⁵ Every nation that has forsaken the Sabbath eventually falls into ruin.¹⁶

That’s our **first point**. The 7-day week is *not* something that is explainable by nature—by the earth’s rotation or the cycles of the moon—it is only explainable by Divine revelation. The Sabbath was put into the very fabric of creation. It is binding on all nations for all times, and to alter it is to unravel society itself.

II. The Sabbath as the Greatest Gift

The origin of Sabbath

Please look again we me at our text. Two times we read in our passage that God *rested*. **v.2** “And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he *rested*...” And then again at the end of **v.3** we read that “...God *rested* from all his work that he had done in creation.” Now this word rested is where we get the word Sabbath. The Hebrew word is *shä·vath’*. This is the verb form. When Moses places it in the ten commandments, he puts it in the

¹⁵ Source: http://www.4angelspublications.com/articles/The_Soviet_Experiment.pdf accessed November 8, 2017

—
<http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,828481,00.html>

¹⁶ If someone objects by saying, “No the disasters that followed France and Russian after they changed their calendars had nothing to do with the Sabbath ordinance but rather other factors that were happening.” I would respond by asking: “Then don’t France or Russia have non-7 day weeks now? Why did they change back to a seven day week if there was no causal connection between their economic ruin and their blatant overturning of the Sabbath?”

noun—“Remember the Sabbath.” But the point here is that God rested, that is He *sabbatized*.¹⁷

Was God tired?

The question is, how are we to understand God *resting*? It doesn't mean two things. **First**, it doesn't mean God was tired. I remember being a young Christian and this brother tried to tell me that because God had put all His effort into creating us, He was tired, so He needed to rest. I know he meant well. But he was wrong. God doesn't need rest. **Isaiah 40:28** says “Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary...”¹⁸ So no God didn't rest because He was tired.

Did God stop all activity?

Secondly, when it says that God rested, it doesn't mean that He ceased from all activity whatsoever. Jesus said in **John 5:17** “My Father is working until now, and I am working.” He denied that the Father ceased from all work. If God were to cease from all work, then we would collapse into nothingness. **Hebrews 1:3** says “...he upholds the universe by the word of his power.” So no God didn't cease from all activity when he rested.

God stopped creating *ex nihilo*

So then what did it mean that God rested? Simply this, God's resting means “...that he stopped producing new kinds of things; that the work of creation, in the true and narrow sense of producing things out of nothing, was

¹⁷ Iain Murray, *Rest in God & A Calamity in Contemporary Christianity*, (Carlisle, PA.: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2010), pg. 6

¹⁸ God could have made countless more worlds than He did. He could spend immeasurable amounts of energy in every nanosecond multiplied out for eons and He would never need refreshment. Puritan Stephen Charnock said “There is infinitely more power lodged [hidden] in his nature [than will ever] be expressed in the world.” Job says that all of the created order is just the *mere* fringes of His ways, it is the smallest whisper of what He can do (**Job 26:14**). Paul says that He “...is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think.”

over.”¹⁹ As v.1 says “Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.”

God rested and was refreshed

Yet there is something else that is implied in this resting, this sabbatising that God does. Please turn with me to **Exodus 31:17**. Here Moses is unpacking the stipulations of the Sabbath to the people of Israel. And just like the 4th commandment, he grounds the Sabbath in creation. He says this “It [the Sabbath] is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day *he rested and was refreshed*.” God not only rested, but was refreshed! What does that mean? I remember when I used to set tile, whenever I finished a big job, I would behold the final product and there would be this [deep breath]...this great sense of satisfaction. It was, well... refreshing. That’s what we see happening as God reflected on His creation. We read six times “And God saw that it was good” and then chapter one finishes with “And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good” (**Genesis 1:31**). Why was everything good? Because universe fulfilled it’s purpose of displaying the greatness, the beauty, the power, and the wisdom of God. That’s why God made the cosmos and everything in it. “The heavens declare the glory of God” (**Psalms 19:1**). As one author said “The world is the temple of God, ‘And in His temple all cry, “Glory!”’ (**Psalms 29:9**).”²⁰ That’s *why* God was refreshed. “As he surveyed his work he was satisfied. He took pleasure in it...because he delights in his own glory. In other words, God’s rest is in himself.”²¹

¹⁹ Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: God and Creation Vol. 2*, (Grand Rapids, MI.,: Baker Academic, 2004), pg. 592

²⁰ Iain Murray, *Rest in God & A Calamity in Contemporary Christianity*, (Carlisle, PA.,: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2010), pg. 6

²¹ *ibid*

Therefore God blessed the Sabbath

Then Moses makes this incredible *therefore* statement. Please look again at Genesis 2. He says in v.2 "...he rested on the seventh day...", v.3 "So [that means *therefore*] God blessed the seventh day and made it holy." Because God rested, *therefore* He blessed this day and made it holy. Now it's vital to see here that God blessing the Sabbath must apply to mankind, and *not* to God Himself. As Sinclair Ferguson has said "God had no need to either bless or sanctify a day for himself."²² No, God blessed this day *for* man.²³ As Jesus said in **Mark 2:27** "The Sabbath was made *for* man."

Are we slaves?

And this is where I hope to forever ruin the way that you read Genesis 1-2. I've heard it said, and no doubt I've said it before that the climax of God's creation is the 6th day when God created man. During the first five days God created the vastness of the universe—the blazing sun with its perpetual nuclear core, the one billion trillion stars,²⁴ the sea with its monsters still hidden in the deep, the dinosaurs, the volcanoes, the lions, the butterflies, the stink bugs and stick bugs—but then on the six day God created one creature and only one creature that is made in His image. **Genesis 1:27** says "God created man in *his*

²² The full quote is: "Implied here is that the statement "God blessed the seventh day and made it holy" (v.3) must apply to God's intention for men and women, not to his blessing the day for himself (he had no need to either bless or sanctify a day for himself)." Sinclair Ferguson, *The Whole Christ: Legalism, Antinomianism, and Gospel Assurance—Why the Marrow Controversy Still Matters*, (Wheaton, IL.: Crossway, 2016), pg. 147

—
Likewise John Calvin says "He did not need to [i.e. set aside a day for Himself], as we have stated, but he instructs us what we are to do, as if saying, 'Behold, I want a day set aside for contemplation of my works.' Therefore, we have a God who is resting to be a mirror and pattern so that we may conform ourselves to him..." quoted in Iain Murray, *Rest in God & A Calamity in Contemporary Christianity*, (Carlisle, PA.: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2010), pg. 16

²³ To bless can mean to give thanks or to pray (Luke 9:16). To bless can mean to praise or adore (Psalm 103:1). To bless can mean to grant favor, or success, benefits or happiness. It's this third use that Moses has in mind. That's how he used the word in **Genesis 1:22; 28**. In other words, the Sabbath was for the benefit and happiness of mankind—that what "So God blessed the seventh day" means.

²⁴ These are just the stars that are in the observable universe.

own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” Therefore many of us have concluded on this account “Look God didn’t create man—His own image bearer—until the 6th day, this must be the climax of the creation account.” But let’s consider that for a moment. How does the 6th day end? God gives humanity the cultural mandate, **v.28** “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion...” Now that is glorious. But dear congregation, is that the great purpose of mankind? To not be interrupted in our tilling of the ground?²⁵ No. If the 6th day is the climax of creation we are slaves.

The climax of creation is not man but Sabbath

No the climax of the creation account is not the creation of man on the 6th day, but man in communion with God on the 7th day. Man is not the climax of creation. Sabbath is. That is, man dwelling in the special presence of God. Dear congregation, that is the meaning of God blessing this day and making it holy. It is set apart from every other day for humanity to behold the Person and works of God and to rest and be refreshed in His presence. That is the greatest privilege of being made in His image. We have the absolutely unique blessing of being friends of God “...in a way the other creatures cannot.”²⁶ Worship is what distinguishes man from animals. God gave us the Sabbath so that we could put aside all of our other normal activities and focus our attention solely on Him.

Objection: “Isn’t everyday supposed to be worship?”

Now no doubt, someone will say “But isn’t every day a day we are supposed to worship and glorify the Lord? Doesn’t **1 Corinthians 10:31** say “...whatever you do, do all to the glory of God?” Everyday is worship” How do we answer that? We say, “...yes of course we should worship the Lord every

²⁵ “The great purpose for which God’s people existed was not to be found in the “uninterrupted tilling” of the ground.” O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants*, (Phillipsburg, NJ.: P & R Publishing, 1980), pg. 70

²⁶ L. Michael Morales, *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord?: A Biblical Theology of the Book of Leviticus*, (Downers Grove, IL.: InterVarsity Press, 2015), pg. 46

day. But there's a difference. God appointed the six days for our labor and we are to worship Him in and through our particular calling. But He gave us the Sabbath specifically so that all those concerns could be laid aside and we could give Him our concentrated devotion. Boys and girls, think of the special gift of the Sabbath day like this. What if you went to your daddy and said "Daddy, will spend some special time with me this week so that I know that you love me?" What if your dad said "Honey, I don't need to spend special time with you because I love you every day of the week." Would that convince you that he loves you? No of course not.²⁷ God gave us the Sabbath because He really does want to spend special time with us. Not because He needs us, but because He loves to share Himself with us.

The Sabbath is the greatest gift

Dear congregation, God gave us the Sabbath so we could have lay aside everything else, and come into His presence, for in His presence is fullness of joy, and at his right hand are pleasures forevermore (**Psalm 16:11**). To fail to see that the Sabbath is the goal of creation is to fail to see the storyline of the entire Bible. "Entering the house of God to dwell with God, beholding, glorifying and enjoying Him...is the story of the Bible..."²⁸ That is at the very heart of the covenant—that God would dwell with us, and we with Him.

"How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts!
My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the Lord;
my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God...
Blessed are those who dwell in your house, ever singing your praise!"
(**Psalm 84:1-4**)

²⁷ You see nature itself teaches us that we should have a special appointed time to spend with the Lord. The Westminster Confession of Faith says in 21.7: "...it is the law of nature, that, in general, a due proportion of time be set apart for the worship of God..."

²⁸ L. Michael Morales, *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord?: A Biblical Theology of the Book of Leviticus*, (Downers Grove, IL.: InterVarsity Press, 2015), pg. 40

That's our **second point**. The Sabbath is the greatest gift in creation, because it meets man's highest and best end: to dwell with God. "Man can maintain his humanity *only* in the presence of God."²⁹

III. The Sabbath as a Profound Prophecy

The profundity of it all

Bring to your mind again what I have said so far about the Sabbath. "The seventh day is not only the first day to be blessed, and the only day mentioned three times, but it is also the first object ever to be set apart as holy by God."³⁰ Dear congregation, this is not just a neat data point when it comes to the Sabbath but it points to something incredibly profound.

Three-fold use of Sabbath

To show how profound it is, you must see that there are three uses of the term Sabbath in the Scripture. There is a temporal use, a spiritual use, and an eternal use.³¹ The **temporal use** of Sabbath is what we have been looking at thus far, that God set aside one day in seven and to worship Him. In the NT, the term Lord's Day is used. We will look at this more in future weeks. The **eternal use** of Sabbath is how the Bible describes our future rest in Heaven where we will experience eternal happiness with God. **Hebrews 4:9** says "So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God." But it's the **spiritual use** that demonstrates how profound Sabbath is.

²⁹ *ibid*, pg. 47

³⁰ L. Michael Morales, *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord?: A Biblical Theology of the Book of Leviticus*, (Downers Grove, IL.,: InterVarsity Press, 2015), pg. 45

³¹ Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology Vol. 2* (Phillipsburg, NJ.,: P & R Publishing, 1994), pg. 78

The prophecy of Sabbath

The Sabbath is a prophecy. Please turn with me to **Colossians 2:16-17**. Here Paul is writing against a faction that had infiltrated the church in Colossae. They were ensnaring the church with all these outward regulations. It was self-made religion. And they were even using the Sabbath to enslave people. This is what Paul says starting in **v.16** “Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.” Profound! Sabbath is a shadow. Christ is the substance. Consider that.

I remember the first time I saw Paul’s similar argument in Ephesians 5 regarding marriage. He labors to talk about how husbands and wives are to relate to each other and then he says in **v.32** “This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.” Marriage is a profound mystery. Why? Because it is copy, it’s *not* the original. The union of husband and wife is a copy of the union between Christ and the Church. In other words, God created human marriage in order to teach us what true marriage is—the union that believers have with Jesus Christ. That’s why there won’t be any marriage in heaven! The bride who is the church will be with her husband who is Christ.

The true Sabbath³²

Now that is what Paul is saying about the Sabbath. The Sabbath is a shadow. But what do you need in order to cast a shadow? Shadows don’t come first, they come second. Christ, great Lord of the Sabbath, has been standing from eternity casting His shadow in time. God instituted the Sabbath to tell a story about Him. He is the true Sabbath. He said “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you *rest*. [I will give you true Sabbath] Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find *rest* for your souls” (**Matthew 11:28-29**).

³² “Interestingly, the prophet Isaiah...employed this sabbatical imagery to describe the proclamation of liberty associated with the coming of the anointed Messiah (Isaiah 61:1-3).” O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants*, (Phillipsburg, NJ.: P & R Publishing, 1980), pg. 70

“We who have believed enter that rest”³³

Dear congregation, isn't that what you need? Rest for your souls? Christ is the very substance of your rest. If you've taken hold of Christ by faith, you have already entered that rest. **Hebrews 4:3** says “For we who have believed enter that rest...” What greater rest could you possibly desire in the world? What greater rest could you find for your soul?

You no longer have to work to prove yourself.

You no longer have to be a slave to sin and death and the devil.

You no longer have to be tormented by a guilty conscience.

You no longer have to worry about that Great Day of Judgment.

You no longer need be concerned about how your life will turn out in this age.

Why? Because Jesus has blotted out all your sins. He has redeemed your soul. Not with perishable things such as gold or silver but with His own precious blood. And He was raised from the dead to demonstrate that the great work of your salvation has been finished.

You now have the greatest possession in the world—forgiveness.

You now have the greatest title in the world—child of God.

You now have the greatest security in the world—the righteousness of Christ.

You now have the greatest promise in the world—resurrection from the dead.

You now have the greatest inheritance in the world—eternal life.

You now have the greatest friend in the world—Jesus Himself.

All these you possess in Christ, your True Sabbath. He is what the Sabbath points to.

³³ Walter L. Wilson, *A Dictionary of Bible Types*, (Peabody, MA.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999), pg. 355

Will you take hold of Christ?

Dear friend, if you have never taken hold of Christ by faith, you do not have this rest. Are you not weary? Do you not find that your soul is incurably thin and famished? Are you not exhausted of being a slave to sin? Come to Christ this morning. He invites you to rest in Him. He says “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you *rest*.” Nothing else will bring you rest.

That’s our **third point**. The Sabbath is a profound prophecy. Before the world ever fell into sin and death, God was already telling a story about His Son—the true Sabbath, where sinners could find rest for their souls.

Application

What are we aiming at in this series?

1. God-willing at the end of this series we are going to launch a Sunday night service. That is one of the things that we are going to talk about at our next membership meeting coming up on the last Sunday of this month. If you’re a member, please stay for that. We desire to hear from you about what time this service would be best for you and your family. Also if you have questions regarding the Sabbath, please email me. The last message in this series will be on some of the practical applications, and it would be really helpful if I actually addressed some of the concerns that you have.
2. Secondly, we desire to help you see that Christian relationship and Christian fellowship depend largely on how you Sabbath. The connection between these two is unmistakable in Scripture. In Hebrews 10 the Apostle makes the corporate gathering the epicenter of community life. He says “Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting

to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another..." (v. 24-25). In Acts 2 we see this being played out. The church devoted themselves to the apostle's teaching *and* the fellowship....day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes (v.42, 46). Notice the juxtaposition: teaching *and* fellowship; temple *and* home. That is not an accidental connection. It is a necessary one. True Christian fellowship hangs on how we treat the Sabbath.

3. Thirdly, we are aiming at destroying legalism and antinomianism when it comes to the Sabbath or the Lord's day. The legalist will take hold of the Sabbath and twist it, adding unScriptural requirements so that no longer is the Sabbath a rest, but another way to justify ourselves before God. The antinomian (the one against the law) will happily cast off the Sabbath all together and say we have no obligation at all. Both of these views are unbiblical.
4. Fourthly, we want to dismantle the great either/or has often been set up in Evangelicalism. Here it is: *either* you see that Jesus is the true Sabbath, and now everyday is alike with no distinction; or the Sabbath (the Lord's Day) is still a special day of rest for God's people. But you can't believe both. The Bible doesn't commit this fallacy. It is true that Jesus is our true Sabbath, Jesus is our Immanuel (God with Us), Jesus is the place where we meet God, Jesus is the Person with whom we have peace with God and rest from all our works. *And* it is true that God still gives us this precious weekly Sabbath rest weekly where He calls us to come commune with Him.

The Christian should be able to say two things. 1. Jesus: "Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you" (Psalm 73:25) and 2. "How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts! My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God" (Psalm 84:1-2).