

SABBATH THOUGHT 2023-04-22—SABBATH TIME

May God bless you on His Sabbath day!

The Sabbath is one of the Ten Commandments, so it is fundamental to God and His Law. Nine of the commandments are **ordinances of behavior** that are based upon the character of God—who He IS—and they define what mankind is to BECOME. However, the Sabbath is a period of TIME. It transcends the other commandments because the Sabbath is a time of perfecting the other commandments as we draw closer to God. In other words, the Sabbath is time during which we should reflect the perfect nature of God.

The Sabbath day is unique from all other commandments because it is time. It also involves both mankind AND God. What does time have to do with God? Is He not eternal? Yes, but all that He has done, is doing, and will do is a sequence of events that He directs over time. Even eternal life is simply time without death. The whole of God’s Work—creating an eternal Kingdom of children—is a progression of time-events. But the Sabbath is much more than that. Grasping all that the Sabbath means begins with understanding dominion and that can be found in the Genesis creation account:

GENESIS 1:26, 28, 31 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let **them have dominion** over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and **over all the earth**, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. ... 28 And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and **replenish the earth, and subdue it**: and **have dominion** over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and **over every living thing** that moveth upon the earth. ... 31 And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, *it was* very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

Genesis establishes the duration of every day of the week as 24 hours (“evening and morning”). Regardless of how anyone tries to “interpret” other scriptures, the duration of a day was irrefutably instituted at creation as a complete 360° rotation of the earth. Therefore, all days of the week are 24 hours long, including the seventh day Sabbath.

Heaven and earth were created *prior* to man. God owns everything but He gave mankind dominion over—to conquer, subjugate—the *whole* earth after He finished creating the physical universe. But He did not put everything under mankind—He did **not** give mankind jurisdiction over the heavens, which is why they will be forever out of reach of physical people. Only later will He give mankind dominion over the heavens¹. But the conclusion of the physical creation was the Sabbath:

¹ Rev. 21:7.

GENESIS 2:2-3 And **on the seventh day God ended his work** which he had made; and **he rested** on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. 3 And **God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it:** because that in it **he had rested** from all his work which God created and made.

God made the earth and all that is in it for mankind in the first six days but His final act of not working made the seventh day different from the other days. God made the Sabbath time by replacing work with refreshing rest for *both* God and man². The basic time-unit of a week consists of six days for work and the seventh as **no** work. The Sabbath was the conclusion of the creation but it also bookends our lives each week that we draw breath as a “new creation.”³ During the creation, God made both physical things and time. He gave mankind jurisdiction over the physical things of this earth and six days of time in which to carry out works over those physical things; however, God retained dominion over the heavens and the Sabbath, which He separated (sanctified) for a special purpose:

MARK 2:27 And He [*Jesus*] said to them, “The **Sabbath was made for man**, and not man for the Sabbath;

While God retained dominion over the Sabbath, it was time made BY God FOR mankind. The Sabbath day is when EVERY LIVING SOUL is to do no work—**including God!** God gave mankind dominion over the earth and all that is in it as well as the time of the first six days of a week—but not the Sabbath:

MARK 2:28 Therefore, **the Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath.**”

God retained dominion over the seventh day Sabbath of rest and this was well understood from the beginning:

LUKE 13:14 And the ruler of the synagogue answered ... and said unto the people, **There are six days in which men ought to work**⁴ ...

DEFINITION: *Work* is not just an occupation to earn a living. It encompasses much of what we do that is beyond simple labor. In Greek, *work* (various forms of *ergon*—G2041) can mean task, occupation, engagement, labor, deed, action, achievement, etc.⁵ In Hebrew, *work* (various forms of Hb. *`abad*—H5647 and *ma`aseh*—H4639), means labor, work, action, activity, etc.⁶

The emphasis in this verse on the first six days is MEN working. Because mankind has dominion over the time of the first six days of the week, we can use them for our own

² Exod. 31:17.

³ 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal 6:15.

⁴ While this was spoken by a priest, Jesus Christ did not refute it.

⁵ Matt. 26:10; Acts 10:35; Rom. 13:10; 1 Cor. 9:13; Gal 6:10; Col 3:23; Heb 11:33; Jas 2:9; et al.

⁶ Gen. 20:9; Gen 46:33; Exod. 23:12; et al.

purposes. However, as Lord of the Sabbath, Jesus Christ has dominion over the Sabbath time. He has the authority to demand that all “**keep my Sabbaths**, and reverence my sanctuary” (Lev. 19:30). How does He command us to keep the Sabbath?

EXODUS 20:8-11 **Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.** 9 Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: 10 But **the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work**, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: 11 For *in* six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them *is*, and **rested** the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.

EXODUS 23:12 Six days thou shalt do thy work, and on **the seventh day thou shalt rest**: that thine ox and thine ass may rest, and the son of thy handmaid, and the stranger, may **be refreshed [Hb. naphash]**.

DEUTERONOMY 5:12-14 **Keep the Sabbath day to sanctify it**, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee. 13 Six days thou shalt labour, and do all thy work: 14 But the seventh day *is* the Sabbath of the LORD thy God: *in it* **thou shalt not do any work**, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that *is* within thy gates; that thy manservant and thy maidservant **may rest as well as thou**.

The word *keep* is similar to the word *observe* used in regard to That Night of the Lord, which is “a night to be much **observed**.”⁷ It means to protect, hedge about, attend to, take heed of, and be circumspect about the Sabbath time. **Keeping** Sabbath time means to earnestly protect it, hedge it about, and attend to it. It is a time of **no work**—to cease from those things that are not in keeping with “no work.” Why? Because GOD ceases from all His work to spend that time with His people so that both are refreshed. Instead of working, it is meant to be a **rest** and a **refreshing**—literally, *naphash* means “to be breathed upon.” We keep it **holy** (pure) by striving to be like God is—holy, just as God is holy⁸. God’s holiness is the perfection of love, righteousness, justice, truth, mercy, and faithfulness. The Sabbath is **sanctified** by respecting and revering the time we spend in the presence of God. The Sabbath is a time to keep (guard, protect), make holy, sanctify, not work, rest, be refreshed—“breathed upon” by God—and remember. But what exactly are we to **remember**?

DEUTERONOMY 5:15 And **remember that thou wast a servant [bondslave] 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.**

⁷ Exod. 12:42.

⁸ 1 Pet. 1:15.

What does slavery have to do with the Sabbath? When a person is saved from death, that person owes their future existence to the rescuer simply because life would have ceased without the intervention. God rescues us from death so the remainder of our lives belongs to Him. The Sabbath is a remembrance that we owe Him our lives. The Sabbath also is something special to those whom God is saving:

EXODUS 31:13, 16-17 Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily **my Sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign [signal, evidence] between me and you** throughout your generations; that ye may know that I *am* the LORD that doth sanctify you. ... 16 Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, **for a perpetual covenant.** 17 **It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever:** for *in* six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.

The Sabbath is a commandment but it is more than a period of time. The Sabbath is a sign or evidence of those in covenant with God. A covenant consists of promises made between parties. We promise to obey God's Law, including the Sabbath, and He promises to save us from death. The Sabbath time is evidence to God that we understand our lives will end in death without His intervention. We owe our existence to Him. Refusing to keep the Sabbath rejects a covenant with God. The Sabbath time is a sign or evidence of a **covenant relationship** with God wherein we promise to become as He is—as reflected in the other nine commandments. The Passover and other holydays portray the plan of God to redeem mankind from death but that plan has an ending. The Sabbath is about our relationship with God, which will be eternal.

The seventh day Sabbath is one day—24 hours—that God created by replacing work with rest. God gave mankind dominion over the first six days of time but He retained jurisdiction over the seventh. He intended it to be a time for us to keep (guard, protect), make holy, sanctify, not work, rest, be refreshed as God “breathes upon” us, and remember our salvation. The Sabbath is a sign of a covenant relationship with God for a life that will continue throughout all TIME. The seventh day of the week was the conclusion of the physical creation but it also reflects the greatest creation—God's eternal children. The Sabbath is a covenant reminder and the rest and refreshing is a type of the covenant fulfillment that is coming. The seventh day is a taste of a never-ending life of love with God the Father, Jesus Christ, the heavenly angels, and each other.

May God's grace and peace be upon you!

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