

May God bless you on His Sabbath day!

Sabbath rest. That phrase is redundant because Sabbath in Hebrew means rest. So *Shabbath shabbathown*<sup>1</sup> is the English equivalent of “Rest rest.” The Sabbath originated when God ceased His creation works:

GENESIS 2:1-3 Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. 2 And on the seventh day **God ended His work** which He had done, and **He rested on the seventh day from all His work** which He had done. 3 Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it **He rested from all His work** which God had created and made.

There two fundamental points of the seventh-day Sabbath<sup>2</sup>—cessation of work and resting—but there is more behind the simple meaning of those words:

DEFINITIONS:

WORK: *Work* (H4399 *mla'kah*) is not referring to *labor*, which specifically infers strenuous, often repetitive physical exertion. *Work is a broad term for any physical or mental effort directed toward a goal.*

REST = *Rest* (H7673 *shabath*) is more than simply stopping labor to physically or mentally recover. *Rest is quietude; a tranquility of the mind, body, and soul independent of external influences.*

Consider the first thing that Adam and Eve did after they were created on the sixth day—they kept the seventh-day Sabbath! The first full day of Adam and Eve’s lives was spent with God on the seventh-day Sabbath. If the Sabbath was about ceasing from physical labor, then they did not need the Sabbath because they had never worked a day in their lives. So, the Sabbath is more than a day to stop work. God made the Sabbath so that mankind could rest from those things that take a mental, physical, and emotional toll on a person and be refreshed in mind, body, and soul. The tranquility of the Sabbath mirrors a deep relationship with God:

MARK 12:30 ‘And you shall love the LORD your God with **all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.**’ ...

Many debates revolve around what is and is not permissible work on the Sabbath. “No work” is detailed in the Law of God<sup>3</sup> but the primary purpose of the Law is not the thou shalt and thou shalt nots but to instill agape love in the hearts of people:

1 TIMOTHY 1:5 Now **the purpose of the commandment [Law of God] is love from a pure heart,** *from a good conscience, and from sincere faith,*

The Sabbath is a key element of the Law of God, notably as the fourth of the Ten Commandments. The Law directs people in The Way of The Life<sup>4</sup>. It is condensed into the

<sup>1</sup> Exod. 16:23; 31:15; 35:2; Lev. 23:3.

<sup>2</sup> Also Exod. 20:11; 23:12; 31:15; 34:21; 35:2; Lev. 23:3; Deut. 5:14.

<sup>3</sup> Exod. 20:8-11; Deut. 5:12-15.

Two Great Commandments upon which all the Law is derived<sup>5</sup>, which is agape love for God and agape love for others. Too often people focus on what is forbidden in the Law of God instead of seeking ways to fulfill it. In that regard, the Sabbath is fundamental to the Law of God because it is part of the framework that defines and teaches what agape love is and what it is not. How? Notice the emphasis of the first four commandments: 1) have no other gods before the Most High, 2) do not worship carved images, 3) do not take God's name in vain, and 4) remember the seventh-day Sabbath. The first three are warnings against disrespecting and despising God but the fourth is a reminder to observe God's Sabbath. The Sabbath is a day to develop a relationship with God by setting aside the day to spend time with Him, unlike the first three that warn how *not* to have a relationship with Him. If everyone kept the Fourth Commandment, the first three commandments would be unnecessary—those who keep the Fourth Commandment are 1) honoring God as the Most High sovereign Creator, 2) worshipping God in spirit and truth<sup>6</sup>, and 3) revering and honoring His name. Violating any of the first three commandments brings down the anger of God but obeying the Fourth Commandment is very pleasing to Him. If mankind were not rebellious, then it is likely that the first of all commandments would be keeping the Sabbath; after all, it was the first thing God did with Adam and Eve.

Observing the Sabbath requires cessation of work<sup>7</sup> but the real question is not what is prohibited on that day; instead, it is what does it mean to REST? And what does it mean for God who never gets tired or weary?

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

God never gets tired so the Sabbath was not for Him, it was for mankind:

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

Technically, the Sabbath was not *created*. The seventh day is simply 24 hours of time like all other days of the week. The Sabbath came about when God specified *how* to use that time. God “made” or established the weekly Sabbath by ceasing from work; but more than that, He “rested” and the result was He was REFRESHED:

EXODUS 31:17 ‘**It [the seventh-day Sabbath] is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever; for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed.**’ “

How can God, who never grows weary, be refreshed? The Hebrew word for *refreshed* is *naphash* and it is only used three times in the entire Bible. It means *to breathe* or *be breathed upon* and is the root word for *nephesh*, which is a *breathing creature*. It is translated *soul* in many places. But being refreshed pertains to flesh and blood so it is hard to say exactly how God was refreshed. One possibility is that it was the result of

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<sup>4</sup> John 14:6.

<sup>5</sup> Matt. 22:36-40.

<sup>6</sup> John 4:23-24.

<sup>7</sup> Refer to the booklet “[No Work & No Servile Work.](#)”

restoring the earth in Genesis 1 from desolation and ruin<sup>8</sup>. God was very pleased when He finished repairing the destruction and, perhaps, that was refreshing to Him:<sup>9</sup>

GENESIS 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.

For people, however, being refreshed is a restoration and renewing of life by revitalizing the mind, body, and soul. Lemonade is refreshing on a hot day after hard labor but the Sabbath refreshing is more than drinking cold lemonade. Sabbath refreshing ultimately comes from God who is the only One who can revitalize life at the core of the mind, body, and soul. Notice the beautiful promises of God to those who are weary:

ISAIAH 40:29-31 **He [God] gives power to the weak,** and to *those who have* no might **He increases strength.** 30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall, 31 But **those who wait [H6960 qavah = wait upon, bind together] on the LORD shall renew their strength;** they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

One way to “wait” upon God is by observing the Sabbath. The Hebrew also means to *bind together*. That mirrors Sabbath-keeping since it is a day when people ‘bind together’ with each other and God. People congregate and gather together on the Sabbath and spend time with Him! The Sabbath is a time to be refreshed by God:

ISAIAH 38:16 O Lord, by these *things men* live; and **in all these things is the life of my spirit; so You will restore me and make me live [be revived].**

MATTHEW 11:28 “Come to Me [*Jesus Christ*], all you who labor and are heavy laden, and **I will give you rest [refreshing].**

While the Sabbath is a day to cease work and rest, the purpose of doing those things is to be REFRESHED. Stopping all work frees people to redirect mentally, emotionally, and spiritually toward a state of rest, which is key to being refreshed:

EXODUS 23:12 “**Six days you shall do your work, and on the seventh day you shall rest,** that your ox and your donkey may rest, and the son of your female servant and the stranger may **be refreshed.**

While it is difficult to say how God can be refreshed, His role in the Sabbath is to refresh those of flesh and blood who keep the Sabbath! Being refreshed on Sabbath is a *gift* from God. Interestingly, repentance of sin is described exactly the same way—it is not only a gift of God<sup>10</sup> but also refreshes the mind, body, and soul<sup>11</sup>:

ACTS 3:19 “**Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,**

The refreshing of repentance lifts a weight from the mind, body, and soul. It frees and revitalizes the life of someone through forgiveness. Only God can forgive and give a

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<sup>8</sup> Gen. 1:1—*tohuw* and *bohuw*.

<sup>9</sup> Also Gen. 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31.

<sup>10</sup> Rom. 5:14-17; Eph. 2:8; 4:7.

<sup>11</sup> Also 2 Cor. 7:1; Eph. 5:25-26; 1 John 1:7-9.

repentant sinner such relief and the same is true of the Sabbath. Observing the Sabbath is a deep refreshing from God because the Sabbath day is when people KNOW God and are SANCTIFIED by Him:

**EZEKIEL 20:12 “Moreover I also gave them *My Sabbaths, to be a sign between them and Me, that they might know that I am the LORD who sanctifies [H6942 qadash = cleanses] them. ... 20 ‘hallow My Sabbaths, and they will be a sign between Me and you, that you may know that I am the LORD your God.’***

The Sabbath brings people closer to God. They not only spend time getting to *know* Him but He “sanctifies” or *cleanses* them. A shower or bath after a day of hot labor is refreshing but being cleansed by God is a refreshing of the mind, body, and soul. It penetrates deep into a person’s inner being; it does not simply clean the outside<sup>12</sup>. But those who desire the deep refreshing of God on the Sabbath must also *keep* it<sup>13</sup>:

**EXODUS 31:16 ‘Therefore the children of Israel shall *keep [guard] the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath* throughout their generations *as* a perpetual covenant.**

In the Bible, the Hebrew and Greek words for *keep* are more than simply possessing something; they mean to *guard* it. Guarding something means to protect it and not allow it to be violated. The Sabbath must be guarded against external influences that can upset it! The Sabbath rest is finding quietude; a tranquility of the mind, body, and soul independent of external influences. However, there are things that can disrupt it. For example, having with a flat tire on the Sabbath can adversely affect the whole day.

A common view of the Sabbath is that it is a time to refrain from physical labor. It is the subject of many debates and arguments about what constitutes work. God made the Sabbath for mankind to rest from those things that take a mental, physical, and emotional toll on them but they are only important if they lead to being refreshed by God with quietude—a tranquility of the mind, body, and soul that only He can provide. God knows flesh and blood are bombarded with things that cause restlessness, agitation, and worry that rob people of peace:

**PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7 *Be anxious for nothing*, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and *the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.***

The quietude and tranquility God gives to those who keep and observe the seventh-day Sabbath is both a prevention and a cure for the afflictions of the mind, body, and soul. In the words of Jesus Christ, “your heavenly Father knows that **you need all these things.**”<sup>14</sup>

May God’s grace and peace be upon you!

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<sup>12</sup> Matt. 23:25-26.

<sup>13</sup> Also John 9:16.

<sup>14</sup> Matt. 6:32.