

Genesis 2:1-3

Entering God's Rest

According to 2 CDC studies released in February Americans are getting less sleep than ever. The studies didn't investigate why, but they did point to the fact that today's average person sleeps fewer hours than the average person did 20 years ago.

The studies were reported in the CDC's weekly *Mortality and Morbidity Report* – which makes you wonder just how harmful lack of sleep is. If the statistics are right there's a lot of us that are in need of rest.

Health problems associated with not enough sleep are high blood pressure, obesity, depression, irregular hormone production, a weakened immune system, memory lapses, chronic irritability, and decreased concentration and reaction times. There are over 100,000 car crashes each year due to sleepy people at the wheel.

Rest is absolutely important. It's designed by God as a way for our bodies to rejuvenate. But the physical isn't the only area we need rest in.

This is week 5 of a series we're doing on the Old Testament Book of Genesis. So far in Genesis 1 we've seen that God had a plan and a purpose to the way He carried out the creation.

Open your Bibles to Genesis 2

God could have spoken all things into existence and creation would have been complete instantly. Instead God chose to take 6 days to create the heavens and the earth and all that was in them. And then on the 7th day He rested.

I. God Rested On The Seventh Day Of The Creation Week

Read verses 1-3

Isaiah 40:28 says, *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.*

On the 7th day God rested, not from fatigue but because His creative work was finished.

By resting on the 7th day God showed that what He had set out to do in creation was

accomplished. From this point on He would no longer bring something out of nothing, but He would control and sustain that which He had created.

So God “blessed” the 7th day. That lets us know that He gave it His holy approval and made it a blessing. Then God “sanctified” the 7th day. That means that He set it apart for Himself.

The 7th day was separated *from* the 6 days of work. The 7th day was separated *unto* a restful enjoyment.

This Sabbath rest of Genesis 2 wasn’t the Jewish Sabbath, rather it was the Creator’s Sabbath. The entire creation week including the Sabbath, had nothing to do with human activity, it was all about God.

This was Adam’s first day, not man’s 7th day and while God rested, Adam carried out his responsibility of tending and keeping the garden.

When we think of God resting we shouldn’t think of Him closing His eyes, putting His feet up, and taking a nap. He didn’t become indifferent to His creation.

Donald Grey Barnhouse has a devotional study of the book of Genesis which gives His comments after each verse. After the phrase “he rested” Barnhouse wrote - “But not for long!”

God got back to work again but it was a different type of work. Adam and Eve would sin and God would work to bring about their salvation and the salvation of all who would trust Him for it.

In Genesis 2 I see God resting in a unique way. God having completed His work of creation rests, as if to say “This is the destiny of all those who are my people; to rest as I rest, to rest in me.”

We’re a restless generation. But not just because of the fast pace of modern life. Since the beginning people have been restless. We’re restless because just as Adam sinned against God we sin against our Creator.

The Bible says sinners are like the troubled sea, churning, never resting. That’s what sin brings into our lives.

The Bible also tells us in no uncertain terms that we have a real adversary named Satan, or the Devil.

"Together the words describe one who is always throwing something into the middle of things. He's the one who throws the monkey wrench into the machinery.

He plays havoc with our lives through the sin that he promotes. If we were sinless, we'd have the peace that God has. But because we are not, we are at odds with God (who has become our enemy), with others (with whom we are in conflict), and ourselves.

There is no peace when sin rules..

And yet on the 7th day God rested. What a peaceful statement that precedes the rebellion and fall of man that we're going to read about in chapter 3.

I. God Rested On The Seventh Day Of The Creation Week

II. God Commanded The Jewish People To Rest On The Seventh Day Of The Week

God's rest on the 7th day of the creation week was really intended to be the basis for something more.

Adam and Eve had multiple descendants. Their children married their brothers and sisters at first. There weren't all the genetic factors that we have today.

That would happen over time. Eventually as more and more of Adams descendants rebelled against God, God chose a man named Abraham and blessed his descendants.

We know them as the Jewish people. Eventually they end up enslaved by Pharaoh in Egypt. Finally, God uses Moses to lead the people out in what we call the Exodus. From Adam to the Exodus is 2400 years. At Mount Sinai God gives His people the 10 commandments. The 4th commandment is *Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 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 cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. 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.* Exodus 20:8-11

What's the deal with the Sabbath day? It's part of the 10 commandments. In Jewish reckoning Saturday is the Sabbath. Sunday is the first day of the week. Why don't we worship on Saturday instead of Sunday?

A lot of people end up having questions about our relationship to the Sabbath day and those who teach that believers today are bound by a Saturday Sabbath point to the fact that the concept extends back before Moses, to creation itself.

Well, it's true. God rested on the 7th day.

It's also true that the 4th commandment to have a day of rest is rooted in the fact that God rested on the 7th day.

What's important to recognize is there's no mention of the Sabbath until Moses. The Sabbath originated in the days of Moses!

I realize that arguments from silence aren't conclusive proof, but it seems incredible to me that something as significant as the institution of a 7th day rest day could have existed for 2400 years and there be no mention of it in the rest of the Bible.

Now, if the Bible doesn't give any commands until Moses' time just what does it have to say about the Sabbath, and what does it mean to us today?

In Exodus 16 the people of Israel are wandering in the desert under Moses leadership. At this point they are doing their usual. They are murmuring about something. This time it's food.

To satisfy their hunger God gave them manna.

Turn to Exodus 16 page 65

Read 14-15 The English "What is it?" is *man* in Hebrew. That's where we get the word manna. Manna means "What is it?"

They were all to go out and pick up a specific amount but look at verse 19. **Read 19-20** God was teaching these people to trust Him for their daily bread. No hoarding it overnight. It was literally "daily bread." So they were to use it up each day trusting God there would be more on the next day.

Now look at verses 23 - 24

This is the first mention of a Sabbath. Again, God is teaching a lesson. He said, "Trust me for each day's supply and then on Friday pick up 2 days worth and it will keep. There won't be any out there on the 7th day.

Verse 27 Aren't they just a picture of us so many times? They doubted God.

Verse 28 - 29 - The Sabbath taught the people of Israel to trust God.

Now look at Exodus 20 Read verses 8-11 The seventh day was a day of rest. The Israelites were being put to the test by God. This commandment was very different from the other 9. It had nothing to do with morality or ethics.

This commandment tested the Jews to see if they would believe that God could provide from them if they didn't work on this day.

And if you think that was a test in Leviticus 25 God said not only was there to be a 7th day rest but there was also to be a 7th year rest. And then every 50th year was a year of Jubilee and again there was to be no sowing or reaping.

God said you keep my commandments as my special beloved people and I'll bless your land until you have so much food, you'll never go hungry that 7th year.

This was the same lesson as the manna and the weekly Sabbath just on a larger scale. The whole Sabbath concept was a way of showing the Israelites that they could trust God's faithfulness.

Now go with me to Deuteronomy 5 Page 164

In Deuteronomy Moses repeats God's law to a new generation of Israelites.

Read verses 12-15

You guys were slaves in Egypt. God took you out and set you free. He provided for you and met your needs. God is trustworthy. Now keep the Sabbath day as a perpetual reminder of God's faithfulness.

Where do we find rest? Where do we find peace? Only in the God of peace. We can trust Him and participate in His rest. That was what the Sabbath was all about.

But now, remember, this was a specific token of God's covenant with Israel.

Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever.
Exodus 31:16-17

A command to keep the Sabbath was never given to non-Jews because God didn't make a covenant with Gentiles only Jews.

Remember also that the Sabbath wasn't a worship day it was a rest day.

There was specific worship days, or feast days that were referred to as Sabbaths. They could fall on any day of the week. But the Saturday Sabbath was a day of rest. In fact, the Hebrew word *shabbath* means "to rest" not "to worship."

God never commanded His people to worship on a regular weekly Sabbath. The synagogue worship that was practiced in Jesus day and on into our own time was started during the Babylonian captivity when the temple was destroyed and the people were scattered. *Sunagoge* is a Greek word.

God never commanded it, it was simply started by the people themselves.

So then the Sabbath day was a day of rest, it was part of the law of Moses, and it was only given to the Jewish people.

Now, how about us today? What relationship do we have to the Sabbath? Well, we have a very important relationship to the Sabbath, it just has nothing to do with going to church on Saturday.

I. God Rested On The Seventh Day Of The Creation Week

II. God Commanded The Jewish People To Rest On The Seventh Day Of The Week

III. There Is A Sabbath Rest For Us

When Jesus died on the cross He *wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to*

the cross. Colossians 2:14. In other words He fulfilled the law of Moses.

The Bible explains the purpose of the Law of Moses. *The law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.* Galatians 3:24-25

The laws of Moses were designed to point people to their need of a Savior.

Now as a system of law we are no longer bound by that Mosaic system. That is why we don't have a priesthood and offer sacrifices, and all the rest.

As far as God's standards go many of the Old Testament commands are repeated within the framework of the New Testament concept of grace. Nine of the 10 commandments are repeated. The Sabbath is the only one that is not.

That is because, thou shalt not kill, or thou shalt not steal are timeless principles that are always a violation of God's standards.

They aren't signs of a covenant, they flow out of God's holy character. The reason the Sabbath command isn't repeated is because it was a unique and different type of command. It specifically dealt with the Jews and not you and me.

In the New Testament, rather than finding commands for us to keep a Sabbath day, every time the Sabbath is mentioned it's in the context of saying we are not bound to keep it.

Romans 14:5 says *One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind.* We are free to keep the Sabbath, we're free not to keep the Sabbath.

Look at Colossians chapter 2 with me. Page 1046

Read verses 14 - 15 Jesus dealt with the Mosaic Law at the cross

Read verses 16 - 17 If you want to keep a Sabbath day fine. But don't get bent out of shape if someone judges you for not keeping the Sabbath.

The law was a shadow. The body, or the substance is Christ. The reality of what God was trying to teach His people Israel about confidence in Him is found in Jesus Christ.

There is a Sabbath rest for New Testament Christians. This is so important for you and I to understand.

Turn to our last passage today, Hebrews 3 Page 1063

The writer of Hebrews is going to expand upon the concept of the "rest". The rest for the people of God. **Read verses 17-19**

He begins by saying that God has a "rest" for the Israelites in the wilderness but they died in their unbelief so they failed to enter that rest.

Now chapter 4:1-3

The point all through here is that this rest is a "faith rest." Just because you go to a church where the gospel is preached doesn't mean you have entered into God's rest. Those Israelites in the wilderness heard the good news of God's promises and were part of a group called The People of God. And yet they failed to believe God so they fell.

Now verse 4

God's rest on the 7th day was a prefiguring of a rest that we can enjoy too.

From Creation, God has been offering rest to mankind. The admission gate is open. The Israelites in the wilderness failed to enter because of unbelief. But the promise is still in effect.

Read verse 5 Here's a quote from Psalm 95 showing there is still a future sense to this rest.

Read verses 6 & 7 See, even in the days of David, about 500 years after the Israelites were shut out of Canaan God was still using the word "today" as a day of opportunity.

The point is that God's promise of rest didn't stop with the Israelites in the desert. In David's time he was still pleading with people to trust in Him and not to harden their hearts.

Read verse 8 Some Israelites did enter the Promised Land with Joshua. They did enjoy a rest of sorts, but that rest was only one very limited aspect of God's real rest. Joshua who came after Moses couldn't give spiritual rest in God. If he would have then God wouldn't have still be offering "rest."

Read verse 9 God's rest for believers still remains. The word that is used here is *sabbatismos*. It's a Sabbath rest that remains. This is the rest that God was picturing on the 7th day and through the 4th commandment.

Read verse 10 Whoever enters into God's rest ceases from his works just like God did on the 7th day.

This rest is one that remains and that we enter into by faith. It is a perfect rest made possible by the perfect work of Jesus Christ.

In one sense we enjoy a small aspect of God's real rest while we are on this earth. We can have peace of heart and mind knowing that we are right with God through faith. But there is coming a Sabbath that is going to last through out all eternity.

Listen to Revelation 14:13 *Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.'" "Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them."*

God's rest today is the new creation made through the finished work of Jesus on the cross, and we will never know perfect rest until we find that perfect rest with Jesus, where He is.

There won't be perfect rest on this earth in this age because the earth is cursed. It is a place of sin, sadness and sorrow. But we will know perfect rest when we rest with Jesus in the eternity ahead.

In this day of grace we can rest in faith. But in that day faith will become sight. The labors, trials, heartaches, disappointments and tears of this earthly pilgrimage will all be over when Jesus descends in the air with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God and believers are all caught up to meet Him in the air, to forever be with the Lord. We'll be glorified with Christ. We'll dwell with him forevermore.

And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him. They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever. Revelation 21:3-5

There's a heavenly Sabbath, a true eternal rest for the people of God.

So the writer of Hebrews warns in verse 11... **Read verse 11**

God's rest is still available.

If we want to enter into God's rest we have to be diligent to make sure that our one and only hope is Jesus Christ.

The Israelites were careless. They treated God's promises lightly. They looked back to Egypt, the land of their bondage. They weren't diligent in appropriating God's promises by faith and as a result they never reached the place of blessing.

What a shame it would be for anyone to be under the preaching and teaching of the gospel here at this church to be fellowshiping with God's people but to come short of entering into God's rest through unbelief.

Where is your trust this morning? Is it in Jesus Christ and Him alone? If it is, there is a Sabbath rest for you.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. John 3:16