

ORIGINS

"THE BEGINNING OF SABBATH" GENESIS 2:2-3

This Week's Core Competency

Worship – I worship God for who he is and what he has done for me. Psalm 95:1-7

*Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD;
let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.*

*2 Let us come before him with thanksgiving
and extol him with music and song.*

*3 For the LORD is the great God,
the great King above all gods.*

*4 In his hand are the depths of the earth,
and the mountain peaks belong to him.*

*5 The sea is his, for he made it,
and his hands formed the dry land.*

*6 Come, let us bow down in worship,
let us kneel before the LORD our Maker;*

*7 for he is our God
and we are the people of his pasture,
the flock under his care.*

While Saturday is "the seventh day," many contemporary believers treat Sunday as the "Christian" Sabbath, their day devoted to worship and rest. Cornelius was the first Gentile added to the church. Prior to his conversion, the first Christians were all Jews who continued to worship at the temple, follow the dietary laws, and observe the Jewish Sabbath. However, sometime after the spread of the gospel to Gentiles, the planting of churches outside of Jerusalem (Ac 13-14), and the Council's decision that believing Gentiles had

***Are there any Christians who take
a day of rest anymore?***

– Amy Julia Becker

neither to be circumcised nor to follow the law of Moses (Ac 15), Christians regularly gathered on the Lord's Day, the first day of the week (Re 1:10; cf., Ac 20:7; 1Co 16:2). While this might suggest that Christians simply moved Jewish Sabbath-keeping from the seventh day to the first day, that seems unlikely given Paul's words to the Colossians, "Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ" (2:16-17). His words suggest that keeping the Jewish Sabbath is not required.

Nevertheless, because remembering the Sabbath day is one of the Ten Commandments (Ex 20:8-11), which everyone is expected to obey, Sabbath-keeping denominations like the Seventh-day Adventists worship on Saturday. They argue for their practice this way: "The beneficent Creator, after the six days of Creation, rested on the seventh day and instituted the Sabbath for all people as a memorial of Creation. The fourth commandment of God's unchangeable law requires the observance of this seventh-day Sabbath as the day of rest, worship, and ministry in harmony with the teaching and practice of Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath" ("28 Fundamental Beliefs," www.adventist.org).

Commenting on Christian Sabbath-keeping (whether on the seventh day or the first day) one author muses, "'Sabbath observance' has for us a rather negative ring conjuring up pictures of dreary Sunday afternoons, with grandfather dozing in

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front of a large Victorian Bible, and the children not allowed to do anything that resembled fun" (J. A. Motyer, *The Message of Genesis 1-11*, TBST, 48)—not so much anymore. Nowadays Sabbath's "ring" is not nearly so negative. "Yesterday was Sunday," one woman blogs. "I think of it as the Sabbath, even though I know that the Sabbath is a Jewish observance that typically happened on the last day of the week, Saturday. But still, from what I understand, Christians co-opted the Sabbath and moved it to the first day of the week after Jesus' resurrection, so it became both a day of rest and of celebration" (Amy Julia Becker, *Thin Places*, posted Oct 28, 2013, www.christianitytoday.com/amyjuliabecker).

For many popular proponents of Sabbath observance, keeping the Sabbath is viewed less as a commandment to be obeyed and more as a pattern to be followed. For them, setting aside one day a week to rest, worship, and spend time with the family is a wise thing to do for practical reasons. It quiets the soul, clears the mind, rejuvenates the body, and restores one's perspective. Andy Crouch is such a proponent. He writes: "There is perhaps no single thing that could better help us recover Jesus' lordship in our frantic, power-hungry world than to allow him to be Lord of our rest as well as our work. *The challenge is disarmingly simple: one day a week, not to do anything that we know to be work.*" Then he goes on to identify the ways his own Sabbath-keeping has identified disorder within his soul as he finds himself out of sorts on those days: "I rarely feel such clear signs of fatigue and anxiety on days that are filled with travel, meetings, and assignments—only when I stop to rest. Without sabbath, I would be dangerously ignorant of the true condition of my soul" (*Energy and Power*, cited by Becker, italics added).

Perhaps it's best on the one hand to recognize the timeless significance of the seventh day specified in Genesis 2:3, "God blessed the seventh day and made it holy," i.e., he distinguished it from the other six days making it a special day, "because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done." The seventh day continues to function as a memorial day of sorts commemorating that God created the heavens and the earth. Interestingly, no stipulations are given in connection with keeping this "Creation" Sabbath. And best on the other hand to recognize the passing significance of the seventh day as specified in the Mosaic law. One writer explains: "The Sabbath is the sign of the Mosaic covenant. When others ask an Israelite why he does not work on the seventh day, he answers that he is in covenant with the Creator, who also rests on the seventh day. It is a reminder of his people's past as slaves in Egypt and a hope of the future rest with God. In the rabbinic literature, circumcision, dietary practices, and Sabbath observance become the distinctive marks of Judaism" (Bruce K. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology*, 423). So although the people of God are no longer required to keep the "Jewish" Sabbath that does not render the "Creation" Sabbath irrelevant. As the same writer says: "Though we are not under law—and the Bible does not command a Christian to keep a Sabbath—it is in our hearts to set apart a day, sanctifying it for worship and reflection. A person who feels inclined to work seven days a week should examine what god he or she worships" (424).

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Genesis 2:2-3

2 By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. 3 And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

Cf., another translation

2 By the seventh day God finished what he had been doing and stopped working. 3 He blessed the seventh day and set it apart as a special day, because by that day he had completed his creation and stopped working. (GNT)

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Underline "seventh" in vv. 2, 3.
- * Bracket "had finished" in v. 2.
- * Box "so" indicating *result* in v. 2.
- * Circle "rested" in vv. 2, 3.

- * Circle "blessed" in v. 3.
- * Circle "holy" in v. 3.
- * Box "because" indicating *reason* in v. 3.

day 2 EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Did God finish his creative work on the sixth day or the seventh day? Explain.
2. What do you infer from the fact that two verses refer to "the seventh day" *three* times?
3. The term "Sabbath" is not used in verses 2-3. How do we know that "the seventh day" is the Sabbath? (See note on v. 2.)
4. The term "rested" (v. 2) makes it sound like God was exhausted after a tiring week of work. But God is omnipotent, isn't he? Explain.
5. In what sense is "the seventh day" *blessed*?
6. With regard to "the seventh day," put what God "made it *holy*" means in your own words.
7. Explain the significance of "the seventh day," i.e., what makes it "a special day" (GNT).
8. Explain what *this* text requires as far as keeping or observing the Sabbath is concerned.
9. **Discussion.** Is Sunday the Christian Sabbath? Talk about the relationship of "the seventh day" to the church.

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

God marked the end of his creative work, which involved giving form to what was "formless" and filling what was "empty," by blessing the seventh day and making it holy. He did this by distinguishing it from the other six days and vesting it with unique significance. Because God finished his work of creation on day six, on day seven "he rested from all the work of creating that he had done," and so the seventh day was set aside to commemorate God's completion of the heavens and the earth. The Good News Translation renders Genesis 2:2-3 this way: "By the seventh day God finished what he had been doing and stopped working. He blessed the seventh day and set it apart as a special day, because by that day he had completed his creation and stopped working." God didn't rest to recover from six days hard work; he stopped to bask in his finished product and celebrate its completion. In the words of one writer, "The seventh day, which later became the sign of the Sinaitic covenant with Israel, reports the Sabbath of God as the blessed culmination of creation" (Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing*, 113).

And an appropriate sign of the covenant it was. Observing the Sabbath day, which commemorated the Creator's finished work of creation, became the sign that identified the Israelites with their God, the Creator. According to Exodus 31:12-13, 16-17, the LORD told Moses to tell the Israelites, "Say to the Israelites, 'You must observe my Sabbaths. This will be a sign between me and you

for the generations to come, so you may know that I am the LORD, who makes you holy . . . The Israelites are to observe the Sabbath, celebrating it for the generations to come as a lasting covenant. It will be a sign between me and the Israelites forever, for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day he abstained from work and rested.'" How they were to observe the Sabbath is described in the Ten Commandments. The Fourth Commandment says, "Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates" (Ex 20:9-10).

Although Christians no longer keep the Sabbath in obedience to the law, that does not mean that the Sabbath is irrelevant. Certain days have special significance, like Christmas Day, Easter Sunday, and the Lord's Day. Christians recognize the significance of the seventh day as a weekly commemoration of the Creator's handiwork. But Christians are not obligated to observe the Sabbath in the way demanded of the Israelites. Sabbath-keeping is no longer the sign between God and his people. Instead, Christians observe the first day, which marks their Savior's resurrection from the dead.

The Message of the Passage

God blessed the seventh day by setting it apart as a special day to commemorate the completion of his work as Creator of the heavens and the earth.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on 3 "living questions" to apply what you have learned this week.

• **Journal your answers to the following *living* questions:**

–How is God making himself known to you?

–How does God want to change you?

–How is God calling you to change your world?

“The Beginning of Sabbath”
(Use the space below for Sunday’s message notes)

v. 2 **By**

Heb "on" or "in."

v. 2 **seventh**

"Our verse consists of three consecutive, parallel lines, each of which contains seven words and is divided into two parts, the first part ending in every case, like a threefold refrain, with the words-the seventh day" (U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis: From Adam to Noah*, 61).

v. 2 **had finished**

Cf., "on the seventh day God finished his work" (ESV). "To say that God finished work on the seventh day might seem to imply that he was working on that day. For this reason some versions and modern commentators changed 'seventh' to 'sixth' (Newman, *BT 27* [1976] 101-4). This spoils the threefold repetition of 'seventh' in vv 2-3, and it overlooks the exact nuance of [*klh*] 'and he had finished.' Elsewhere in the Pentateuch, e.g., Gen 17:22; 49:33; Exod 40:33, the phrase indicates that the action in question is past, and a pluperfect is used in English translations. There is no implication in the Hebrew of 2:2 that God was working on the seventh day before he finished" (Gordon J. Wenham, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 1, *Genesis 1-15*, 35). "The meaning of our verse is: 'Since God was on the seventh day in the position of one who had already finished His work, consequently He abstained from work on the seventh day'" (Cassuto, 62).

v. 2 **rested**

Cf., "stopped working" (GNT). "The repetition in this last section of the narrative stresses the culmination of and cessation from creation. The key word here is the well-known 'rest' (*sabat*, 'to rest'; *sabbat*, 'the Sabbath'). The word actually means 'cease,' more than 'rest' as understood today. It is not a word that refers to remedying exhaustion after a tiring week of work. Rather, it describes the enjoyment of accomplishment, the celebration of completion" (Ross, 113-14). "Although the word 'Sabbath' is not used here, the Hebrew verb translated 'rested' (see v. 2) is the origin of the noun 'Sabbath.' Ex 20:11 quotes the first half of v. 3, but substitutes 'Sabbath' for 'seventh' clearly equating the two" (*The NIV Study Bible*, note on Ge 2:3).

v. 3 **blessed**

"Though the seventh day is not called the Sabbath, God 'blessed' it and 'hallowed' it. These are striking terms to apply to a day. Biblical usage generally restricts blessing to animate beings—God, men, animals and so on—and it is not immediately obvious in what sense a day can be blessed (cf. 1:22, 28). Divine blessing on men and animals leads to fruitfulness and success, and it is paradoxical that the day on which God refrains from creative activity is pronounced blessed. Partly the Sabbath is blessed by being 'hallowed,' but there is also the suggestion that those who observe the Sabbath will enjoy divine blessing in their lives" (Wenham, 36).

v. 3 **made it holy**

Cf., 'sanctified it' (NKJV); "set it apart as a special day" (GNT). "Similarly, it is unusual for a day to be 'hallowed,' that is, made of declared holy . . . Places, people, and religious objects may be hallowed, but apart from the Sabbath, only in Neh 8:9, 11 is a festival day called holy . . . The seventh day is the very first thing to be hallowed in Scripture, to acquire that special status that properly belongs to God alone. In this way Genesis emphasizes the sacredness of the Sabbath" (36). "On the seventh day God not only ceased from his work of creation, he sanctified the day in commemoration of it" (Ross, 114). "The theological significance of Sabbath lies in the explanation why God blessed it and made it holy: twice it is said he rested (Heb. *sabat*, 'ceased') from his work. God's attainment of enduring rest marks completion of the act of creation. Earlier we noted that by creating the world the Creator triumphed over chaos and effected life. His enduring rest signifies that he succeeded; his victory and work are complete and final" (Waltke, 187).

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

Several years ago my son and I were watching the weather together when we heard storms were in the forecast for the next day. This is the kid who only a few months before would hide under the bed with the dog at the first sound of thunder. He did not like storms. He didn't say anything so I hoped he hadn't been paying attention to the prediction. Later that evening while tucking him in bed, he said "I hope it's a really bad storm tomorrow." Surprised, I asked him if he had changed his mind about how he felt about storms. "No," he said, "I still don't like them but if it's raining and thundering really hard maybe we can't go anywhere and we can just stay home in our pajamas." After walking away, I heard his heart. "Let's slow down, Mom." Life is busy. When I read our text for this week, I exhaled a bit. God designed rest. Rest should actually be a holy moment. It is a time when we can connect intimately with God and each other. However, times of rest and stillness will not happen on their own. You need to schedule them, just like you do dentist appointments and date nights. Let's make a pact to be intentional about scheduling times of rest for our families this summer. We will not be sorry!

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Ge 2:2-3

1. On what day did God finish His work?
2. What did He do next?
3. What did God think about the seventh day?

What Do You Think

1. Would you rather rest or play?
2. Why do you think it is sometimes hard for us to rest?
3. How do we keep Sunday holy?

What R U Going To Do

Keep a journal beside your bed this week. After you get in bed, before you fall asleep, write down some reflections from the day. What great thing happened? Was there anything bad? Stop and thank God for loving you and being with you through your day.

MEMORY TIME

Core Comp

Worship - I celebrate God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Memory Verse

Psalm 100:3 - *Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.*

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized CC ____ and Verse _____. Family completed **Say** _____ **Think** _____ **Do** _____

Child's name _____ Grade ____ Parent's signature _____

Earn tokens by completing the Bible study portion of this page.
Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.