

# Understanding the Sabbath Day, God's Sabbath Rest & Finding Quietness in Ultra-Busy Lives

Isaiah 30:15; 48:18 & 58:13-14

Today we begin a study of the Sabbath Day that can impact the way we live for the rest of our lives.

## **TIME & MONEY: TWO BIG INDICATORS OF SPIRITUAL LIFE**

There are two simple barometers of our spiritual lives: the way we invest or spend our time and the way we invest or spend our money. Counselors have long known that if you sit with someone and find both their financial habits and time usage habits, you have a great picture of what's really going on in their lives.

Today we are looking at how the investment of our time reflects our beliefs about whether God owns us or not.

God our Creator has shown us that the best way to live our lives is the way that He our Creator, designed us to operate. God has given us life measured by time in which to live. God wants us to reflect His ownership of our lives by our time usage. As God said through Moses in Psalm 90:12 (NKJV):

<sup>12</sup> So teach *us* to number our days,  
That we may gain a heart of wisdom.

Keeping track of investing our time wisely begins by understanding God's ownership of our time. Which leads us to the start of time, the institution of the Sabbath Day and all that God's Word teaches about the rhythms of life that were laid down by our Creator at the dawn of human existence.

To understand the Sabbath Day, and to understand God's Sabbath Rest, and Finding Quietness in Ultra-Busy Lives, we need to go back to the very foundation of our existence.

## **GOD CREATED TIME + SPACE + MATTER + LIFE**

God alone is Eternal and Self-Existant; so everything else had a beginning.

All humans originated from one man, created by God, on the sixth day of creation.

We know that because God said that in His Word. Please open with me to Genesis 1.

In that account we find the first mention of time, days, a week of days, and the seventh day.

As we begin this study of the Sabbath Day, the subject of our study is a unit of time, a day of the week. It is the seventh day that starts all of this discussion. As we turn to where this entire topic starts, we will see the very first mention of days, and then the days of a week, and the

seventh day are all in Genesis 1-2.

The explanation of the Sabbath Day does not begin until Exodus and Moses. What is the first lesson we see in Genesis, before the giving of the Sabbath to Israel in Exodus?

## **THE EVENING & THE MORNING = ONE DAY**

Please stand with me for the reading of God's Word. Note with me in your own Bibles these reoccurring terms in Genesis 1:

Genesis 1:5 (NKJV) God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the **evening and the morning** were the first day.

Genesis 1:8 (NKJV) And God called the firmament Heaven. So the **evening and the morning** were the second day.

Genesis 1:13 (NKJV) So the **evening and the morning** were the third day.

Genesis 1:19 (NKJV) So the **evening and the morning** were the fourth day.

Genesis 1:23 (NKJV) So the **evening and the morning** were the fifth day.

Genesis 1:31 (NKJV) Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the **evening and the morning** were the sixth day.

Pray

When we read the Scriptures at the start of our study, do you remember how God explains our worldview? God says that a day begins at sunset, not at sunrise. The day begins when God alone is at work and we are asleep.

## **OUR DAYS BEGIN WITH GOD WHILE WE SLEEP**

When we go helplessly, and vulnerably to sleep, and only God is on duty and working: that is when the day begins. Then, after God has started the day while we slept, we awaken to the day He has already fashioned and jump in to see what He has planned and prepared for us. That rhythm is how we keep in step with God's grace.

If I believe and accept that the day begins with God at work and not me, then I go through life stepping into each of God's days and not my own. Think of the implications of a Biblical worldview of time:

God holds and directs my time and days.

My length of days, and success in life do not come from me, but from God.

God wants me to enter each day that He already started, with the rest of that day surrender to Him.

Life is a stewardship of the days given to me by God.

This belief in God as Lord of my time allows me to have a peaceful rest at night no matter how uncertain the world is around me, just like David confessed in Psalm 3:5-6 while hunted by his own son Absalom.

Knowing God owns my time schedule also prompts me to want to add His pattern of Sabbath rest into my weekly plans. God offers us the gift of ceasing from our labors one day in seven to rest, renew, and most of all pursue the delight of knowing Him.

A pastor in Seattle wrote about our hurried, shallow, and often empty lives over 20 years ago, and these thoughts are still so timely for us today.

Have we reflected on the pace of our lives as we came here to worship God? Perhaps<sup>1</sup> we all need to slow down and reflect on:

## **THE PARADOX OF OUR TIME**

The paradox of our time in history is that our lives are all becoming shallower and shallower.

We have taller buildings but shorter tempers;

We spend more but have less;

We buy more but enjoy it less.

We have bigger houses and smaller families;

more conveniences but less time;

We have more degrees but less sense;

more experts but less solutions;

more medicine but less wellness.

We laugh too little, drive too fast,

get too angry too quickly,

read too little of God's Word, watch TV too much,

fast too rarely, give too little, and pray too seldom.

We have multiplied our possessions but reduced our values.

We talk too much, love too seldom, and hate too often.

We've learned how to make a living but not a life;

We've added years to life, not life to years.

We've been all the way to the moon and back

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from original work by Dr. Bob Moorehead, former pastor of Seattle's Overlake Christian Church (who retired in 1998 after 29 years in that post). This essay appeared under the title "The Paradox of Our Age" in *Words Aptly Spoken*, Dr. Moorehead's 1995 collection of prayers, homilies, and monologues used in his sermons and radio broadcasts

Read more at <http://www.snopes.com/politics/soapbox/paradox.asp#WxbIJhROC4S7ehYB.99>.

but have trouble crossing the street to meet the new neighbor.

We've conquered outer space but not inner space;

We've done larger things but not better things;

We've cleaned up the air but polluted the soul;

We write more but learn less;

We plan more but accomplish less.

We've learned to rush but not to wait;

We have higher incomes but lower morals;

We've become long on quantity but short on quality.

These are the times of fast foods and slow digestion;

more leisure but less fun;

more kinds of food but less nutrition.

These are days of two incomes but more divorce;

of fancier houses but broken homes.

It is a time when there is much in the show window and nothing in the stockroom;

So it is time to look again at God's offer of the blessings of a Sabbath REST!

## **SEEKING SABBATH BLESSINGS**

God offered some amazing things to His people in the Old Testament. Among the most amazing offers we can find in Isaiah, that huge and vital book of the Major Prophets.

As we open to Isaiah 30:15, ask yourself how much of what God was promising to Israel, do we on this side of the Cross actually know by experience.

Isaiah 30:15 (NKJV) For thus says the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel: "In returning and **rest** you shall be saved; In **quietness and confidence** shall be your strength." But you would not,

Isaiah 48:18 (NKJV) Oh, that you had heeded My commandments! Then your **peace would have been like a river**, And your **righteousness like the waves of the sea**.

Isaiah 58:13-14 (NKJV) "If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, *From* doing your pleasure on My holy day, And call the Sabbath a delight, The holy *day* of the Lord honorable, And shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, Nor finding your

own pleasure, Nor speaking *your own* words, <sup>14</sup> Then you shall **delight yourself in the Lord**; And I will **cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth**, And **feed you** with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

God was offering a life of quiet confidence, of peace that just keeps flowing like a river, of righteousness washing across life like endless sea waves, and a delight that makes our souls soar: as we are fed by God. Whatever all that means it sure sounds like God is offering something very good and very special.

## **WHAT IS SABBATH REST?**

Just mentioning the word Sabbath produces such a variety of images and definitions in our minds.

- For some the Sabbath is just a word they’ve heard but know little about. It has no impact on their lives: either emotionally, physically, or spiritually.
- For others the Sabbath may just mean Saturday or the seventh day of Creation when God rested. This day may or may not have any impact.
- For others the Sabbath Day is mysteriously sacred. Some of those Old Testament rules have somehow moved to Sunday, and they are always unsure about what they should or shouldn’t do on Sunday.

That is why we need this very life-impacting study.

- What does God say about the Sabbath?
- Where did it come from, what was it for?
- How should the Sabbath impact our lives today?

One more reason for this study, beyond the Scriptural clarity we each need to have on such a highly controversial topic, is the amazing blessings that are somehow attached to this topic in God's Word.

To begin to understand the Sabbath we first need to go back to our framework for how we think. Remember a few weeks ago we looked at this whole concept of worldview? For a moment, review this huge element of our daily lives with me.

Each of us today has an operating system we use to go through life. This operating system is called our worldview. Our worldview is how we determine reality and make decisions like: What is good and what is evil. What is real and what is false. What is worthwhile and what is worthless. Those distinctions are each derived from our worldview.

## **OUR WORLDVIEW PROMPTS OUR CHOICES**

The power of our worldview as the central processor, or filter that we see life through can’t be understated. Your worldview clearly reveals who you are as a person, more than any other element of our lives.

Each of us look at life through the framework of what we believe. Either consciously or unconsciously we have slowly built a framework of beliefs. Everyone alive operates this way. It frames our reality: how we operate, what we do and say, how we feel, and the way we live. That framework is called our “worldview”.

The Bible presents a linear view of everything: our origin in the Universe, our purpose in history, and our destiny.

A Biblical or Christian worldview is a framework or window or lens through which a born-again believer can understand everything in the world, and all of reality from God’s perspective and thus be able to discern and follow God’s will for every choice in life.

## **GOD & OUR UNDERSTANDING OF TIME**

Part of a Biblical Worldview is how we look at our time. Either we see time as belonging to us, or belonging to God. Just like our bodies and money, so our time is a reflection of how clearly we believe in God’s ownership of all that we are.

The Sabbath Day was initially God’s signature of ownership.

God created everything.

God ceased from Creation, and set aside the 7<sup>th</sup> day as a reminder of His creation.

God said that one day in the seven would be marked by His special blessing.

That is why we begin our study of: “Understanding the Sabbath Day, God’s Sabbath Rest & Finding Quietness in Ultra Busy Lives”.

## **WORLDVIEW & THE CLOCK**

In Jonathan Swift's classic book *Gulliver's Travels*, when Gulliver arrives in Lilliput, the Lilliputians see his pocket watch and conclude that it must be Gulliver's god. After all, Gulliver told them that he never did anything without consulting it first. [Don't you] often feel like that?

Is the clock your god? [There] is probably no other part of our lives so thoroughly co-opted by a secular worldview as our notion of time. We say time is a gift from God, but most of the time we treat time as a club rather than a gift-something that we chase, and once we catch it, it beats us up. It's a notion of time that is contrary to a Christian worldview.

To properly understand time, we need richer language than the language of management. We need biblical language that reflects the God who grants us life hour-by-hour, minute-by-minute.

Time in the global economy is what [is called] "head-banging time." There are no more days; there is simply productivity-24/7. Time in the global economy never slows down, never rests, and has no rhythm but the relentless beat of commerce.

That is not the biblical idea of time. God has built a rhythm into the world and into human beings<sup>2</sup>.

## APPLYING A BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW OF TIME

There are at least four applications for this biblical view of time.

First, we should honor our bodies by **keeping sensible schedules and getting the rest we need**. We have enough time to work, rest, love our families and friends, worship, and exercise. Because, God has said in 2 Cor. 6:19-20 that since we were bought at a price we should glorify God by what we do with our bodies because they belong to Him.

Second, **prayer and meditation on God's Word must be built into our schedules**. Keeping God and His Word at the forefront of our minds helps us develop the biblical notion of time. Because God has said in Mt. 6:33 that we should seek first the rule of God in our lives above all else, the rest will follow.

Third, **we can say no**. Our overscheduled lives are testimony that our notion of time has not been formed by a biblical worldview. Because God has said in 1 Tim. 4:7 that we need to discipline ourselves, and as Rom. 6 says, to say no to things that keep us from fully following God.

And finally, **we can enjoy the freedom of Sabbath [rests in our lives]**, that foretaste of our eternal rest with God. Because as God says in Romans 14 we are to observe any day as unto the Lord. The goal is to nurture an intimate and growing relationship with God. That is what any Sabbath is geared towards ultimately. Not points with God but relationship.

Time is a profound worldview issue. And this biblical perspective on time will revolutionize the way we live, play, rest, worship, and work.

So the next time you look at your watch, take a moment to remember who your God is and how He has providentially given you all the time you need<sup>3</sup>.

## WHAT IS THE SABBATH?

The New Testament Sabbath is God inviting us to set aside time with Him because we love Him. Looking to the days ahead as we dig into the Scriptures, let me just share my conclusions with you.

1. The Sabbath is not a day we observe, but an attitude that flows from a relationship. It has nothing to do with shopping, traveling, or activities; and everything to do with knowing God, longing for His Word, and delighting in His His Presence.
2. Our time investments as New Testament believers should show a conscious move away from endless time invested in work for physical profit, and growing choices for regular time invested in knowing God better each day.
3. Sabbath observance becomes a daily lifestyle of enjoying moments of resting in Christ.

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<sup>2</sup> BreakPoint with Charles Colson July 31, 2003 Worldview and the Clock ([213 words] Note: This commentary was delivered by Prison Fellowship President Mark Earley)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. [173 words]

Any temporary daily cessation from work is primarily to open time for reflecting our desires for intimacy with our Savior and Creator. We don't live to work every moment, we live to know Christ and work hard to fulfill our Biblical responsibilities in life.

4. The New Testament teaches that all the Old Testament rules regulating Sabbath Day behavior were part of the ceremonial law that God gave to Israel. The moral law is repeated in the New Testament and is binding upon all believers of all ages; but the ceremonial law is not repeated in the New Testament and is not binding upon New Testament believers.
5. The system of sacrifices, the system of a Levitical priesthood, and all the elements of the ceremonial law system including Sabbath Day behavior, passed away when Christ came to bring the New Covenant.
6. Sabbath observance was not stated anywhere in the creation account in Genesis 1-2. But, in Exodus, Ezekiel and Nehemiah the Sabbath Day is stated to be a sign to Israel, not to the Church.
7. In the Epistles Paul explicitly says that the Old Testament ceremonies were shadows of Christ that are past, now that He has come (Gal. 4:10-11; Col. 2:16-17). When Paul wrote about sins to avoid, he never stated sins of not observing the Sabbath, rather he stated the opposite. Paul says beware of Sabbath observance that leads to bondage.

So the Sabbath Day has blessings, but an unbiblical observance leads to bondage. That is what we will see in the days ahead. God wants us to understand the Sabbath rest He has given both in salvation and in our rhythms of life.

To seal this first step into this realm of finding God's promised quietness in our lives, please turn with me to an old hymn.

## **TAKE TIME TO BE HOLY**

Take time to be holy, speak oft with thy Lord;  
Abide in Him always, and feed on His Word.  
Make friends of God's children, help those who are weak,  
Forgetting in nothing His blessing to seek.

Take time to be holy, the world rushes on;  
Spend much time in secret, with Jesus alone.  
By looking to Jesus, like Him thou shalt be;  
Thy friends in thy conduct His likeness shall see.

Take time to be holy, let Him be thy Guide;  
And run not before Him, whatever betide.  
In joy or in sorrow, still follow the Lord,  
And, looking to Jesus, still trust in His Word.

Take time to be holy, be calm in thy soul,



Each thought and each motive beneath His control.  
Thus led by His Spirit to fountains of love,  
Thou soon shalt be fitted for service above.

*Words:* [William D. Longstaff](#), 1882. *Music:* Holiness, [George C. Stebbins](#), 1890