



# THE JOURNEY CHURCH

## SERMON GUIDE 2.20.2022

### GENESIS

#### The Sabbath

#### SCRIPTURE:

Genesis 2:1-3

#### RECAP:

We live in a restless culture. We are frantic people that live at a frantic pace. Why are we frantic, busy, and fast-paced? We are over-committed. We feel the need to prove ourselves. We need to show that we are somebody, that we matter, that we have value and worth. We are busy externally, because we are restless internally. Now listen, I'm not knocking hard work or full schedules (we celebrated the fact that God made us to work a few weeks ago, and we reprimanded laziness). But we need to be healthy in our work, and that only comes as we are internally satisfied with something other than work. We have a case of chronic restlessness.

In *Rocky I*, why is Rocky, the Italian Stallion working so hard, running and working out and hitting those frozen slabs of meat to toughen his hands? Why is he doing it? Why is he willing to go against the undefeated Apollo Creed who nobody has ever gone the distance with? He answers, "'Cause all I wanna do is go the distance. Nobody's ever gone the distance with Creed, and if I can go that distance, you see, and that bell rings and I'm still standin', I'm gonna know for the first time in my life, see, that I weren't just another bum from the neighborhood." Chronic restlessness. Rocky is killing himself in training, not because he doesn't want to get hurt, and not because he thinks he can win, he just wants to go the distance to prove he's not a bum.

In *Chariots of Fire*, Olympic athlete Harold Abrahams reflects on why he runs. It's not for joy or love of running. He says, "I am forever in pursuit and I don't even know what I'm chasing." Then he says, "And now in one hour's time, I will be out there again. I will raise

my eyes and look down that corridor; 4 feet wide, with 10 lonely seconds to justify my existence. But will I?" Chronic restlessness.

The North African theologian Augustine (lived from 354-430AD) famously said, "You have made us for Yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in You." We are restless people, not just in our activities, but in our souls. And our only rest comes from God. That leads us to this passage and topic today: the Sabbath. The word Sabbath is Hebrew "shabbat," which means "to rest." We are commanded to rest, but we're going to explore what God instructs us on that from His Word.

Here's what I want you to walk away with from today's message: We are not machines of ceaseless activity; we require purposeful, God-focused, soul-refreshing rest. I'm going to build a case today that you should absolutely honor the Sabbath, but what we mean by that will be the substance of the message. Let's look today at our passage again.

### **Exegesis: Genesis 2:1-3**

**vs 1** -- the work of creation is finished. God's creative work is completed. All of the galaxies, natural laws, DNA strands, quarks, black holes, subatomic particles, and everything in between was made.

**vs 2** -- So on the seventh day, with the work completed and finished, God rested from His work. This doesn't mean that God took a break or was tired. He wasn't exhausted or strained from creating the universe. To rest simply means He ceased the activity. In music a rest means to stop.

But then Moses makes this statement in the next verse.

**vs 3** -- "God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation." Notice the language here. It is really important. God blesses this seventh day. He puts His special favor on this particular day. It says God made this day holy. That means He set it apart, He separated it off from the other days. The question we should ask is "why?" Why did God bless it and make it holy? Moses answers this question: Because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation. This is a day set aside as blessed and holy.

Here's an interesting note in terms of what is the next day, it would have been the eighth day, followed by the ninth day, and now we are technically in the 95 billionth day (or whatever, right?). But notice that this day, the seventh day (not just one time on the only day 7 that ever existed), God blessed and set it apart. This means that after Day 7, a cycle

of new days began. This is the idea of a week. So the cycle is six days, and then the seventh day is set apart. So Sunday is the first day of the week and Saturday is the seventh day of the week. The 7 day calendar is a result of biblical influence. It used to be that people operated on the lunar cycle, a monthly cycle. But the Judeo-Christian influence on the world is why we think about 7 day cycles. We work, we rest. That is a week.

So God institutes a seven day cycle for humans to live on. The seventh of those days is blessed and holy (set apart). Now, I'm not getting into what that seventh day is intended for yet, because Genesis 2 doesn't say it. We simply see that God rested from the work of creation and made the day a special and set apart day because on it God stopped creating because it was complete. So the day has something to do with acknowledging God's creation of the world. We will return to that.

After Genesis 2, we don't hear anything else about the Sabbath in Genesis. There is no mention of it with worship or anything else. We don't hear about Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, or any of the other people mentioned in Genesis worshiping on the Sabbath. It doesn't surface again until Exodus 16. It is mentioned in Exodus 16:29 about God's provision of manna in the wilderness to His newly rescued and liberated people out of Egypt. Think about that. It is mentioned after the creation of everything, and then we don't see until after the Exodus from Egypt.

### **Exodus 16:29 --**

*See! The LORD has given you the Sabbath; therefore on the sixth day he gives you bread for two days. Remain each of you in his place; let no one go out of his place on the seventh day."*

This is the first mention of the seventh day since Genesis 2. The people are told to collect manna every day, and on the sixth day (Friday), the LORD will give them bread for two days. Why? So they don't have to collect it on the seventh day. Notice that it isn't called the Sabbath or anything.

Just the seventh day. So we see this seven day cycle exists in the life of the people of Israel. Then we get to Exodus 20, where God gives the covenant to Israel, including the Ten Commandments.

## Exodus 20:8-11 --

*8"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, 10but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. 11For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy."*

Notice that this "Sabbath" day, which means "rest" is on the seventh day. It is the 4th command in the 10 commandments. He then expands on it. He tells them they have six days to work and labor, but the seventh day is a Sabbath (rest) to the LORD their God. That day is set apart from the LORD. Why? Because in six days the LORD made all of creation, then rested on the seventh day. God has blessed that day and made it holy.

So the rest of man on the Sabbath of man, the rest of man on that day, is rooted in God's rest after creation. This was a uniquely Jewish thing. This was not a practice anywhere else in the world. The Jewish people were to set apart this day to the LORD. For what reason? It is a reminder of creation. But why? Man was made to live in creation forever, with joy and fellowship with God. The Genesis 2 completion of the world was a place of peace and joy for mankind. They lived in a paradise created by God. But sin entered the world and man was removed from paradise. God calls Israel to Himself to walk with Him as a covenant people. He is restoring these people to Himself so that ultimately through them would come a Redeemer that would bring people from every nation, tribe, and tongue. But for now, they were given the law, and that law revealed how incapable they were. Every Sabbath reminded them of God's creative work in the universe (to generate gratitude), but also to remind them of what they had forfeited (to produce repentance). This was unique for the people of Israel.

There's no question that the other 9 commandments are permanently binding. They are not civil or ceremonial laws. They are moral laws. They are absolute and universal laws, binding at all times and all peoples. But it is the 4th commandment's permanence is heavily debated. **Strict-Sabbatarians** say, "Yes, we should set aside the seventh day just as commanded." Some believe that means we should also worship on that day, even as Christians. This is what the Seventh Day Adventist believe. There are other Christians who will only worship on the seventh day because they believe this command is still binding. Then there are **Christian sabbatarians**. They believe it is no longer the 7th day (Saturday), but the 1st day (Sunday). This view has been held by many since the time of Jesus. They point to the New Testament only prescribing Sundays (the 1st day) as the

Lord's Day for worship of the church. This is because this is the day Jesus was raised from the dead. Here is a really important point about both of these positions: they hold that Sabbath (rest), work six and rest one, is explicitly tied to corporate worship. I do not believe that is the case. Why not? Let me make my case with 3 texts, and then I'll give you the conclusion of what I believe about the Sabbath.

### **1. Exodus 31:12-17 --**

*12 the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 13“But as for you, speak to the sons of Israel, saying, ‘You shall surely observe My sabbaths; for this is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you. 14‘Therefore you are to observe the sabbath, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people. 15‘For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there is a sabbath of complete rest, holy to the LORD; whoever does any work on the sabbath day shall surely be put to death. 16‘So the sons of Israel shall observe the sabbath, to celebrate the sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant.’ 17“It is a sign between Me and the sons of Israel forever; for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day He ceased from labor, and was refreshed.”*

I want to point out a few things before I point out the main thing. Profaning the sabbath was punishable by death. So this is serious business to get this right. We also see again the reasoning why they are to do this. It is rooted in God's creation in 6 days and 7th day of rest. Israel is to observe this day and celebrate as a perpetual covenant.

Notice what is said in vs 13. The Sabbath is a sign. A sign is something that points you to something else. If you are driving into Florida and you see a sign that says “Florida 15 miles ahead” that is pointing you to Florida, it isn't Florida. It points to something else. It is a symbol. It points you toward something. The Sabbath is a sign, but of what? Of Jesus. And the coming of Jesus not only fulfilled all things, but it changed many things. Things that were massively significant. Everything changed when Jesus came. He did this with all things. The Temple no longer had its prominence. The priests no longer had their prominence. The sacrificial system no longer had a place. And the Sabbath was redefined too. He treated the Sabbath however he wanted. He did not follow the religious traditions.

## **2. Mark 2:23-28 --**

*23One Sabbath he was going through the grainfields, and as they made their way, his disciples began to pluck heads of grain. 24And the Pharisees were saying to him, "Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?" 25And he said to them, "Have you never read what David did, when he was in need and was hungry, he and those who were with him: 26how he entered the house of God, in the time of Abiathar the high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those who were with him?" 27And he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. 28So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath."*

Jesus violated the Sabbath according to the standard of the Jews, but Jesus refutes them by reminding them of David eating the holy bread set apart for worship which is not lawful for even the priests to eat, and he gave to people who were with him. Yet God didn't condemn him. Then he told them some fascinating things:

- Man was not made for the Sabbath, but Sabbath was made for man (not a burden, but a blessing). Sabbath had become a burden because it was layered with all sorts of restrictions and extra components. Sabbath was given by God to be a blessing.
- Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath (he is sovereign over it). He's not under the Sabbath command, he is the fulfillment of the Sabbath command.

Interestingly, we never see any teachings by Jesus to keep the Sabbath, nor do we ever see one time where the apostles in the NT writings instruct on Sabbath keeping. Not once. When the Jerusalem Council takes place in Acts 15, they do not instruct Gentiles to keep and set aside the Sabbath. Why do you think that is? It is fulfilled in Christ. And you have to know that both Jesus and all the apostles would have mentioned it if the strict command given in Exodus 20:8-11 would have still been binding. If not keeping the Sabbath still merited death, don't you think they would have mentioned that one? But they don't mention it even once.

## **3. Romans 14:5-6 --**

*5 One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. 6The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God.*

This is such an instructive passage on the Sabbath debate. Should we worship on Saturdays or Sundays (only Sundays are prescribed in the New Testament for Christians)? If you worship on Sundays, should that be your day of Sabbath (rest)? Should Christians still worship on Sundays but view Saturday as Sabbath day?

Paul hits on a controversy brewing amongst believers during that time. Some esteemed one day as better than another (what do you think this was about?). Another esteems all days alike. What does he say? Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. This means we should be led by personal conviction, but notice he doesn't direct us on what that conviction should be. He doesn't lay down a must. It is an open-handed issue. The one who observes the day, observes it in honor to the Lord. That's great. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God. One abstains in honor of the Lord. The point he's making? There is no fixed law. The key is that whatever you settle on in your own heart, you should do it in honor of the Lord.

### **Application:**

So I want to wrap up our time with this question for us: What place does the Sabbath play in the life of the Christian? I do not believe the Exodus 20:6-8 statute is still in place for us as Christians. I think the texts I outlined in Exodus 31 (that it's a sign), Mark 2 (that Jesus is the Sabbath), and Romans 14 (not one day is more special than another) show the Mosaic law restrictions on Sabbath are no longer binding on Christians (just as the Temple regulations and sacrificial offerings are no longer binding). However, I do believe the Genesis 2:1-3 principle is still valid. The principle of Sabbath, of rest, is still something we were created for. We are not made to run with both ends of the candle burning without rest. Work 6, Rest 1 is a healthy pattern we need in order to flourish.

So I believe we need a day in our schedules and routines of purposeful rest. This is a day to be elevated above all other days as a memorial to remember the glory of God's perfection in creation. It is to be a reminder that God created the universe in perfection. It teaches us that WE are not God. It reminds us that we can trust God (the world will keep spinning while you rest). It frees us from being a slave to our work, our ambitions, and our need to prove ourselves.

What should you do on your rest day? It's okay to watch a movie or some of your favorite shows, but let me encourage you not to simply consume media on the couch. Some say if your job is manual labor, then do something with your mind. If your work is more thought work (sitting in an office), then do something with your body (more active). I actually encourage you to do some of all that. Find some hobbies: fish, hunt, run, play chess, read, hike, lift weights, take music lessons, learn to cook/cook, sew, take dance

lessons, etc. Enjoy God as you enjoy His creation. Rest from your labors by doing things that refresh you.

I love what John MacArthur said about this. He said, "Saturday is set aside as a perpetual reminder that God is Creator. But Sunday is set aside as the "Lord's Day" to remember that God is Redeemer."

I want to finish with the way I started. The reason we need this rest is because there is a chronic restlessness we have as a result of sin. And the truth of the matter is, unless we deal with this inner-restlessness, our external disciplines to rest from work won't solve our issue. We are made for God, and sin has caused separation from God. We are restless creatures in constant pursuit of proving ourselves, showing our worth, and not being a bum. And this is why we gather on the Lord's Day, because we have a Redeemer who bore our sin and enmity. On the cross, Jesus writhed about in pain, agony, and dread. He was restless. Why? Because he was bearing our sins on himself. He was bearing our sins in his body. The wrath of God was poured out, and the face of God turned from Him.

#### **Isaiah 53:4-6 --**

*4 Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. 5 But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

Jesus was restless at the cross because our chastisement was upon him. But because it was on him, those who come to him by faith are offered peace and rest. This is why Jesus says in Matthew 11.

#### **Matthew 11:28-30 --**

*28 Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

Listen weary sinners and saints. Those of you laden with burdens. Jesus offers you rest. He bids you to come to him. He's the only one that can give you rest in your restlessness. He is the fulfillment of the Sabbath. It is only as we rest in Him as Redeemer, that we can enjoy rest from our earthly labors as Genesis 2 describes. So come to Jesus.

**QUESTIONS:**

1. Do you find yourself over-committed, restless, frantic? Why do you think that is?
2. What does it mean in Genesis 2:2 that God “rested”?
3. What does it mean that God made the seventh day holy?
4. All the other days end with, “there was evening and there was morning”. Why is it significant that this isn’t included with the seventh day?
5. How did Jesus fulfill the Sabbath?
6. Why is it important to go to Jesus when we are weary and heavy laden (Matthew 11:28-30)?