

12. Sabbath: Experiencing and Living the Character of God (4Q 2020—Education)

Biblical Material: Genesis 1, 2; Exod. 16:14–29; Isa. 58:1–14; Matt. 12:1–13; Luke 13:10–17; Mark 2:27, 28.

Quotes

- A life built upon Sabbath is contented because in rhythms of rest we discover our time is full of the holiness of God. *Shelly Miller*
- Most of the things we need to be most fully alive never come in busyness. They grow in rest. *Mark Buchanan, “The Holy Wild: Trusting in the Character of God”*
- Every time we turn to Christ in faith it is like a moment of Sabbath, a little foretaste of eternal rest and glory... It is the holy time set aside to receive the greatest gift of God ever has to give, which is himself, in his own beloved Son. *Phillip Cary*
- God did not intend the Sabbath to be a burden, but rather a time of joy. The Bible says that blessings come when we honor the Sabbath and call it a delight (Isaiah 58:13). Yeshua said the Sabbath was made for our benefit (Mark 2:27). So enjoy it and give thanks to God for giving us rest. *David Wilber*
- How do we hallow the Sabbath day? In my much younger years, I studied the work of others who had compiled lists of things to do and things not to do on the Sabbath. It wasn't until later that I learned from the scriptures that my conduct and my attitude on the Sabbath constituted a sign between me and my Heavenly Father. With that understanding, I no longer needed lists of dos and don'ts. When I had to make a decision whether or not an activity was appropriate for the Sabbath, I simply asked myself, “What sign do I want to give to God?” That question made my choices about the Sabbath day crystal clear. *Russell M. Nelson*
- Stop for one whole day every week, and you will remember what it means to be created in the image of God, who rested on the seventh day not from weariness but from complete freedom. The clear promise is that those who rest like God find themselves free like God, no longer slaves to the thousand compulsions that send others rushing toward their graves. *Barbara Brown Taylor*

Questions

How is the title of this week's lesson a new way of thinking about the Sabbath? How do we avoid slipping back into a legalistic observance? What did Jesus seek to demonstrate by his healing miracles on the Sabbath? What do we learn about God from the Sabbath he began in Creation and which continues on throughout eternity? What is the Sabbath *for*?

Bible summary

Genesis 1, 2 reveal the Sabbath's place in Creation. In Exod. 16:14–29 God provides manna to feed his people, with special arrangements for observing the Sabbath. God calls for more than legal observance of the Sabbath, insisting that it should be a delight (Isa. 58:1–14). Jesus speaks about the true meaning of the Sabbath when his disciples are accused of breaking it by picking grain (Matt. 12:1–13). Jesus intentionally healed on the Sabbath. One example is that of the crippled woman (Luke 13:10–17). “‘The Sabbath was made for your benefit, not for you to benefit the Sabbath,’ he told them. ‘So the Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath.’” Mark 2:27, 28 FBV.

Comment

“Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father,” says Jesus (John 14:9 FBV). He shows us God’s true character. So when it comes to the Sabbath and “experiencing and living the character of God,” Jesus and his ideas about the Sabbath provide a wonderful insight. His Sabbath is truly a delight, and not a dreary observance of rules. Yet the self-righteous saw Jesus as a blasphemer. Those who claimed to know God failed to recognize him. In the final irony, the faithful Sabbath-keepers called for the Lord of the Sabbath to be killed and then removed from the Cross so they could go home and observe the Sabbath.

God is Creator, and the Sabbath is his last act in the creation drama. In John we read that the Word is the Creator. He blessed the day, and made it special right there in the very beginning. To make time holy was a truly inspired and brilliant idea—for any place or object, or anything tangible and physical would soon have become the focus of worship instead of God Himself. But it’s really hard to worship a day, a period of time!

The Sabbath is made the sign, the emblem, (Ex. 31:13; Ez. 20:12, 20) of our relationship with the God who is not the distant Governor of the Universe but the one who walks with us in the cool of the day. On his Sabbath we can really come close to God, and share all our concerns and worries, all our praise and joy—without worrying about all the other things we “need” to do.

The Sabbath is the promise of God’s continued interest and care, week by week by everlasting week. The Sabbath gives us who so badly need it our regular reassurance of hope. Hope that conquers the terrifying prospect of time running out, of there being nothing left. Hope that says there is time if we hug God close. For while the Sabbath reminds us of God as Creator in Genesis 2, repeated in Exodus 20, and Redeemer in Deuteronomy 5, God as the source of hope is the essential future-in-the-present aspect of Sabbath. God’s future promises become real in the Sabbath of the present.

Jesus dies Friday afternoon. He rests in the grave that awesome crucifixion Sabbath, dead yet ready with intense anticipation to rise again. With his glorious resurrection comes the total assurance of victory over death, over evil, over the inevitable passing of time that slowly kills us every week. For we are all dying, and every week takes us closer to our graves. But the Sabbath, each week, points us to that hope beyond death, the amazing truth that time cannot kill us or our relationship with God. Sabbath is the reminder of the world made new when all will still meet to spend that wonderful time together with God. That time when God shall share together with those who will live forever, to wipe away the tears from their eyes, and they shall be his people and he shall be their God...

Ellen White comments

Christ, during His earthly ministry, emphasized the binding claims of the Sabbath; in all His teaching He showed reverence for the institution He Himself had given. In His days the Sabbath had become so perverted that its observance reflected the character of selfish and arbitrary men rather than the character of God. Christ set aside the false teaching by which those who claimed to know God had misrepresented Him. {PK 183.1}

The Jews accused Christ of trampling upon the Sabbath, when he was only seeking to restore it to its original character. The interpretations given to the law by the rabbis, all their minute and burdensome exactions, were turning away the Sabbath from its true object, and giving to the world a false conception of the divine law, and of the character of God.. {GCB, March 5, 1895 par. 24}