

## ***Glimpses of Our God*** ***Lord of the Sabbath***

Lesson #7 for February 18, 2012

Scriptures: Genesis 2:1-3; Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12-15; Matthew 12:1-13; John 9; 19:30.

1. This lesson is about the Sabbath and the Lord of the Sabbath. Read John 1:1-13. Jesus Christ, our Creator and Savior, has always been the Member of the Godhead assigned to reach out to all of God's children.
2. In heaven He was Michael the Archangel. We need to recognize that the word *Michael* means "Who is like God?" or "The One Who is like God." It was Michael the Archangel Who led heaven's armies against Lucifer/Satan in his rebellion in the courts of heaven. (Revelation 12:7-12) Jesus had moved among the angels as if He were an angel until many of the angels must have thought that He was like one of them.
3. In response to the sin problem which began in heaven, God created this world with its new and distinct order of beings. (*RH*, Feb. 11, 1902; *1BC* 1081.3) As human beings, we have the ability to procreate and produce little human beings like ourselves. Are they sometimes too much like us? Not even Lucifer/Satan has that ability. So, what does all this teach us about the Lord of the Sabbath?
4. God created this world and placed the beautiful Garden of Eden in it. In that garden, He placed Adam and Eve. The Devil, God's adversary, immediately demanded access to the new couple. God recognized the danger of allowing Satan to have unlimited access to them. So, He limited the Devil to one tree, the tree of knowledge of good and evil. At the same time, God with His absolute commitment to fairness and freedom apparently limited Himself in His access to the couple. He did not walk with them wherever they went, warning them and protecting them against the devices of Satan. But, God created a special time when He could have fellowship with them and teach them about Himself. That special time was the Sabbath. In creation, we see a definite pattern. Things God created on days 1, 2, and 3 prepared this earth for the creatures which God created and sustained on days 4, 5, and 6. God filled day 7 with Himself.
5. As God created our world step-by-step, He saw that each creation was good. When human beings were created with freedom and in the image of God, He pronounced them very good. But, on the last day of creation week, He created something quite different. It was not a holy place or a holy mountain that He created but a holy period of time set apart for fellowship with God. Since our lives and our salvation depend on a trusting relationship with God, the Sabbath is central in that relationship.
6. Read Genesis 2:1-3. Notice that God created a day. He rested on that day. He blessed it, and He sanctified it. That is, He set it apart, making it holy. God intended for the Sabbath to be a time of great celebration. It was our time to get to know our Creator. I am sure that it was Adam and Eve's favorite time.
7. Why would God create a monument in time? First of all, He wanted to demonstrate that He was Creator not just of creatures and space but also time. We have no control over time. We cannot slow it down. We cannot speed it up. It moves on reminding us that we have a very limited amount of time for life here on this earth as human beings.
8. Think of some of the other alternatives God might have chosen instead of the Sabbath. What if He had set aside a certain place as holy, as He did with Jerusalem. Then, each one

of us would have to try to make arrangements to get there to worship Him. Or, perhaps He could have chosen a certain object—say a certain type of white stone or something similar—so that everyone could have access around the world. But, that would create a problem. We would think that we could manipulate those stones. We cannot manipulate time. In one sense, it controls us. We can misuse it, but we cannot manipulate it.

9. Read Exodus 20:8-11. What should we learn from the details of this Sabbath commandment? Notice several things. Everyone is supposed to rest. Even slaves and animals are supposed to rest. Thus, the Sabbath is a kind of great equalizer. Humans have tried to create special places in synagogues or churches, but that was not God's idea.
10. One aspect of the Sabbath commandment that is usually not discussed is the fact that we are commanded to labor six days a week. But, then the Sabbath is set apart as holy, a special time for rest and fellowship. And what was special about the Sabbath? It was a time to celebrate what God did in creation; and later, it became a celebration of what God has done in redemption.
11. Read Deuteronomy 5:12-15. How does this passage compare with Exodus 20:8-11. Notice that Deuteronomy 5 emphasizes the point that "your slaves must rest just as you do." Furthermore, it gives a different reason for observing the Sabbath. If God "dictated" the Bible, this is a big problem. God had rescued them out of Egypt and slavery and in the process went to a great deal of effort to re-inaugurate the Sabbath as a holy rest day. (See Exodus 16)
12. Virtually all Adventists and other conservative Christians when asked to quote the Ten Commandments turn to Exodus 20. Why is that? Are we afraid that quoting Deuteronomy 5 might make the Sabbath seem more like a Jewish day? How do you explain Deuteronomy 5:22, *GNB*? It says:

These are the commandments the LORD gave to all of you when you were gathered at the mountain. When he spoke with a mighty voice from the fire and from the thick clouds, he gave these commandments and no others. Then he wrote them on two stone tablets and gave them to me.
13. Is that suggesting that the Deuteronomy 5 version of the Ten Commandments is the real original? Or, is Deuteronomy 5 just an expansion of the principles set forth in Exodus 20? Or, from Mount Sinai did God give enough explanation that it included both the ideas of Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5? During the 80 days that Moses spent up on the mountain, surely, God explained many things to him, and he struggled to decide how much he should write down. There were other "rest days" or "Sabbaths" that were scattered throughout the year: Passover, Pentecost, the Feast of Tabernacles, and the Day of Atonement, just to mention some of the most important. These festivals were tied to days of the month rather than to a specific day of the week like the seventh-day Sabbath.
14. Clearly, Exodus 20:8-11 focuses on the God Who is our Creator. Deuteronomy 5 goes on to include the God Who is our Redeemer and delivers us from slavery to sin.
15. In passing, we must note that it was Jesus Who came down on Mount Sinai and gave those original commandments. God the Father is not the harsh, scary God of the Old Testament. (1 Corinthians 10:1-4; Luke 24:44)
16. Christ has promised to set us free from bondage. What does He set us free from? The penalty of sin? What does this freedom allow us to do that we could not do before? To live Christ-like lives?

17. There is plenty of evidence that Jesus, as a faithful Jew, correctly and faithfully kept the seventh-day Sabbath. Read Matthew 12:1-13; Mark 2:27,28. Compare Hosea 6:6 and Micah 6:6-8. Jesus asked, "Is it against our law to heal on the Sabbath?" Note that the word for *heal* in Greek is also translated *save*. The most basic and fundamental principle of God's kingdom is love. God Himself is described as *love*. (1 John 4:8,16) By contrast, Satan's kingdom is based on selfishness. Thus it is that we have verses like Romans 13:8-10 (*GNB*) which tell us, "To love, then, is to obey the whole Law."
18. How does that relate to the seventh-day Sabbath? If we seek to keep the Sabbath as Jesus did, would that lead us to become more like Him and more loving? Jesus went out of His way to perform miracles on the Sabbath.
19. Many arguments have been tried; and, in fact, entire books have been written to try to explain that the seventh-day Sabbath is no longer required for Christians. Do you see any evidence in the Gospels that Jesus was trying to change the day of worship? Some would suggest that the fact that Jesus opposed the way in which the Pharisees kept the Sabbath was proof that He was trying to change it. But, Jesus was merely trying to reestablish the correct keeping of the Sabbath as opposed to a kind of rigid, legalistic observation of hundreds of rules for Sabbathkeeping which had developed in Jesus day. Those rules turned the Sabbath into a great burden. Jesus intended for us to learn that the Sabbath is supposed to be a time for doing loving deeds. It is a time to show our love not only for God but also for our fellow beings.
20. What did Jesus do on the Sabbath? Read Luke 4:31-37; 13:10-17; John 5:1-9; John 9. Jesus went out of His way to perform acts of kindness including some astounding miracles on the Sabbath day. Why did He do that? Surely, it must be apparent to any honest reader of the Gospels that Jesus was trying to restore true Sabbathkeeping.
21. Read Matthew 27:57-28:1; Mark 15:42-16:1; Luke 23:51-24:1; John 19:31-20:1. It is very clear in each of the Gospels that Jesus was crucified and buried on Friday, rested over the Sabbath, and rose to life again on Sunday morning. Notice the interesting parallel with creation week. At the end of the six days of creation week, having completed His creation—all except for the Sabbath—God created a rest day of celebration. In the same way, after living a life of sinlessness, Jesus died on Friday and rested on the Sabbath. But, God could hardly wait to get Him out of that grave and back to heaven to celebrate.
22. If Jesus intended to change the Sabbath in any way, surely He should have done so in the final days of His life here on this earth. But, there is no hint of any such thing. Even after His death, which most would call the conclusion to the plan of redemption, Jesus was still resting on the seventh-day Sabbath. Jesus was adding reasons for keeping the Sabbath.
23. There are no verses in the rest of Scripture that suggest any kind of change. As recorded in Acts 13-18, Paul repeatedly worshiped in different synagogues on the Sabbath. As the apostle to the Gentiles, he surely should have said something about the change in the Sabbath if that is what God wanted.
24. Look at a couple of other verses that might be relevant. Read Acts 20:7. Some have suggested that Paul was introducing a new day of worship. Considering what we know about how they counted a day—beginning at sundown and continuing until the following sundown—modern versions say that this service was on Saturday evening up until midnight. And the reason for getting together was not to establish a new day of worship but because Paul was planning to depart early the next morning!
25. Another text that is sometimes suggested as favoring a new day worship is 1 Corinthians

16:2. But, this verse is suggesting that they should go home, look at their records, evaluate their income, etc., and plan for what they might be able to give to God when Paul came. It says nothing about coming together for worship on Sunday.

26. If we intend to follow God truly and faithfully, we must be willing to take a candid look at the evidence on such issues as the Sabbath. But, we find that so many people are prejudiced in so many different directions about the Sabbath that this sometimes becomes very difficult.
27. Do you find the Sabbath to be a great blessing? Every Friday evening, do look forward to the arrival of the Sabbath? Do you consider Sabbath to be the best day of the week? Or, do you find it an inhibition which prevents you from watching television or listening to the radio or doing something else that you want to do?
28. Try to imagine how you would organize the best possible day for yourself and your family. Of what would it consist? Would it be anything like a true Sabbath?
29. Why do you think God chose a period of time as a monument to Himself instead of a place or a thing?
30. The Sabbath commandment is the longest, and the most detailed of the ten. It is a commandment which talks to us about our relationship with God and about our responsibilities to those around us.
31. How do you think of the Ten Commandments? Do they seem to you like they are a set of rules that are sometimes difficult to keep? Each Sabbath, God Himself is inviting you to fellowship with Him.
32. When He was here on this earth, why do you think Jesus spent more time healing than preaching? (*MH* 19.4; *4T* 225; *GW* 43.2) Were His miracles a way of attracting people to listen to His teaching? It seems that they did that, but was that the main point? In *Koine* Greek as we have it in the New Testament, the word *sozo* means both salvation and healing. Every healing was supposed to be a step toward salvation. Jesus did not spend a lot of time talking about the legal technicalities of justification, sanctification, propitiation, or expiation. He did not discuss imputed or imparted righteousness. Does that mean that He did not understand salvation? Of course not! Jesus spoke of salvation in terms of farmers in their fields and fishermen with their nets, even kings at weddings. Could it be that Jesus would like us to set aside the legal model of salvation and focus more on the healing model?
33. If Sabbath is not about a legalistic observation of God's laws, do we still need to be very careful about how we observe it? What is the primary thing you learn from Sabbathkeeping? Does it draw you any closer to God?
34. In the great-controversy, trust, healing model of the plan of salvation, the Sabbath is a core element. It is a chance for us to spend time with our best Friend and other friends. It is a time to reach out to others and make new friends. It is also a time to get to know our best Friend better. This should be the very best time of the week.

**© 2011, Kenneth Hart, MD, MA, MPH. Permission is hereby granted for any noncommercial use of these materials. Free distribution is encouraged. It is our goal to see them spread as widely and freely as possible. If you would like to use them for your class or even make copies of portions of them, feel free to do so. We always enjoy hearing about how you might be using the materials, and we might even want to share good ideas with others. So, let us know.**

[Info@theox.org](mailto:Info@theox.org)

Last Modified: December 30, 2011

Z:\My Documents\WP\SSTG-Hart\Glimpses\SS-7-Glimpses-2012\_02\_18-Fin+.wpd