***Rest in Christ***

***Sabbath Rest***

Lesson #10 for September 4, 2021

Scriptures: Genesis 1:26‑27; 9:6; 2 Peter 2:19; Romans 6:1‑7; Exodus 19:6; John 5:7‑16; Leviticus 23:3.

Have you ever been told by someone that you were trying to influence to join the church that the Sabbath has been changed?

We hear all sorts of arguments against keeping the seventh‑day Sabbath, dont we? We hear that Jesus changed the Sabbath to Sunday or that Jesus abolished the Sabbath or that Paul did or that the apostles replaced the seventh‑day Sabbath with Sunday in honor of the Resurrection and so forth. In recent years, some of the arguments have become more sophisticated, claiming, for instance, that Jesus is our Sabbath rest, and therefore we dont need to keep that day or any day holy. And, of course, there will always be the argument, strange as it is, that by resting on the seventh day we are somehow seeking to work our way to heaven.*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* for Sabbath, August 28.

How should we respond to these arguments? Is it possible that only one of the Ten Commandments has been changed? Or, dropped? Could it be that by refraining from work on the Sabbath and resting as God did at the end of creation week, we are trying to work our way to heaven? Could we really work our way to heaven by resting? Does keeping the fifth, sixth, first, or any other commandment mean that we are trying to work our way to heaven?

Unfortunately, many of our Christian friends have come to believe that the first 11 chapters of Genesis are only myth. By that, they do not mean that they are completely untrue; instead, they mean that the first 11 chapters of Genesis were given to teach us certain important lessons but that those chapters are not necessarily based on fact.

In creation, God had a lot of things to think about. Imagine all the different chemical processes, biological processes, and interactions that must take place to keep us alive every second of our lives. Each of those processes is controlled by DNA and protein molecules that reside in specific locations within cells. All was designed by God.

**Genesis 1:26-27**: 26Then God said, And now we will make human beings; **they will be like us and resemble us.** They will have power over the fish, the birds, and all animals, domestic and wild, large and small. 27So God created human beings, making them to be like himself. He created them male and female.American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation*\* (2nd ed., Genesis 1:2627). New York: American Bible Society.

Evolutionists suggest that since there is so much DNA which is similar between human beings and even some plants, that this is proof of the evolutionary process. By contrast, wouldnt it also be correct to say that if God had figured out a way to code some chemical process that is necessary for life, why not use it repeatedly in different organisms. There are way too many differences between us and even the most advanced apes for us to believe that we came from them or even from their ancestors. As we read last week:

All heaven took a deep and joyful interest in the creation of the world and of man. **Human beings were a new and distinct order**. They were made in the image of God, and it was the Creators design that they should populate the earth. They were to live in close communion with heaven, receiving power from the Source of all power. Upheld by God, they were to live sinless lives.Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*,\* February 11, 1902, par. 1. Compare *SDABC*, vol. 1, 1081.3. [It seems that we are the only procreators in the universe.]

What should be our relationship to the rest of creation? Think about how animals and birds and fish and plants were created in contrast to how God created Adam and, then, Eve. What did God mean when He said we should have dominion over creation?

Surely, sin has marred creation. So, what should be our role now?

As we have suggested in the past, **the Sabbath is a memorial of more than just creation**. Last week we reviewed Deuteronomy 5:12‑15.

: **Deuteronomy 5:12‑15**:12 Observe the Sabbath and keep it holy, as I, the LORD your God, have commanded you. 13You have six days in which to do your work, 14but the seventh day is a day of rest dedicated to me. On that day no one is to workneither you, your children, your slaves, your animals, nor the foreigners who live in your country. Your slaves must rest just as you do. 15**Remember that you were slaves in Egypt, and that I, the LORD your God, rescued you by my great power and strength. That is why I command you to observe the Sabbath.** *Good News Bible*.\*

The children of Israel had just come out of slavery. When they arrived at the foot of Mount Sinai, we think of them as being quite primitive and uneducated. They had been slaves for generations, unable to think for themselves. But, are there ways in which we are enslaved?

**Genesis 4:7**: If you [Cain] had done the right thing, you would be smiling; but because you have done evil, sin is crouching at your door. It wants to rule you, but you must overcome it.*Good News Bible*.\*

**Hebrews 12:1**: As for us, we have this large crowd of witnesses round us. [See Hebrews 11.] So then, let us rid ourselves of everything that gets in the way, and of the **sin which holds on to us so tightly**, and let us run with determination the race that lies before us.*Good News Bible*.\*

**2 Peter 2:19**: They promise them freedom while they themselves are slaves of destructive habitsfor a person is a slave of anything that has conquered him.*Good News Bible*.\*

Is it possible that sin could control us? How could we escape the slavery of sin? The first-born sons of the children of Israel were preserved by splashing blood over the doorpost on Passover night. Could we be saved by the blood of another Lamb? What does it mean to be *saved by the blood of the Lamb*? And what does that have to do with the Sabbath?

Jesus took upon Himself the results of sin. He died on our behalf in order to demonstrate the serious consequences of sin. But, three days later, exercising His own divine power, He arose from the tomb and returned to heaven. (See *Desire of Ages* 785.)

Baptism is supposed to represent that process: Dying to the old man and rising to a new life. God will do anything He possibly can without violating our freedom in order to free us from the slavery of sin.

How does God actually change us and free us from sin?

**Throughout the parable of the sower, Christ represents the different results of the sowing as** **depending upon the soil**. In every case the sower and the seed are the same. Thus He teaches that if the word of God fails of accomplishing its work in our hearts and lives, the reason is to be found in ourselves. But the result is not beyond our control. **True, we cannot change ourselves; but the power of choice is ours, and it rests with us to determine what we will become.** **The wayside, the stony‑ground, the thorny‑ground hearers need not remain such.** The Spirit of God is ever seeking to break the spell of infatuation that holds men absorbed in worldly things, and to awaken a desire for the imperishable treasure. It is by resisting the Spirit that men become inattentive to or neglectful of Gods word. **They are themselves responsible for the hardness of heart that prevents the good seed from taking root, and for the evil growths that check its development.**Ellen G. White, *Christs Object Lessons*\* 56.1.

Where do you think you would fit in the parable of the sower? As stony ground? Good ground? Thorny ground? Seed snatched up by the birds?

One of the questions that has been raised repeatedly about the Sabbath is whether or not it was only for the Jews. We have already said very clearly that the Sabbath was created at the beginning for all mankind. But, what other evidence do we have to suggest that while the Jews may have been the recipients of Gods messages, they were for all mankind.

**Exodus 19:5-6**: [The Lord said:] 5 Now, if you will obey me and keep my covenant, you will be my own people. The whole earth is mine, but you will be my chosen people, 6a people dedicated to me alone, and you will serve me as priests.*Good News Bible*.\*

Why do you think God placed Israel in Palestine at the crossroads between three continents where people from each of those continents would need to pass through on their business? Look at Exodus 23:12.

**Exodus 23:12**: Work six days a week, but do no work on the seventh day, so that your slaves and **the foreigners who work for you** and even your animals can rest.*Good News Bible*.\*

In this passage, God said that foreigners and even animals are supposed to rest on the Sabbath. Who is not included in that group? Surely, these statements from the Bible suggest that every human being should be eligible to experience the Sabbath.

So, what does *Sabbathkeeping* mean to you? Is it a time of joy? And even service toward others?

In the New Testament in the times of Jesus, the religious leaders had formulated hundreds of rules for Sabbathkeeping. Try to imagine how that might have come about. For most of the people in the world in those days, the Sabbath was either completely unknown or totally disregarded. But, then **Satan had to try to figure out what to do with the Jewish people who were committed to Sabbathkeeping. So, if he could not get people to ignore the Sabbath, why not take them into the ditch on the other side of the road and make the Sabbath virtually impossible to keep?**

Notice these guidelines taken from the Jewish *Mishnah*.

The main classes of work are forty save one: {Do you do any of these things on the Sabbath?} sowing, ploughing, reaping, binding sheaves, threshing, winnowing, cleansing crops, grinding, sifting, kneading, baking, shearing wool, washing or beating or dyeing it, spinning, weaving, making two loops, weaving two threads, separating two threads, tying [a knot], loosening [a knot], sewing two stitches, {If a button fell off the pastors Sabbath suit on his way to churchhe does want to look tidy in the pulpitit is too bad that he cannot sew it on.} tearing in order to sew two stitches, hunting a gazelle, slaughtering or flaying or salting it or curing its skin, scraping it or cutting it up, writing two letters, erasing in order to write two letters, building, pulling down, putting out a fire, lighting a fire, striking with a hammer and taking out aught from one domain into another. **These are the main classes of work: forty save one**.*Mishnah* 106. [Content in curly brackets, i.e., { and }, in the paragraph above is added; content in square brackets, i.e., [ and ], in the paragraph above is in the original translation.]

In the footnote it says: These thirty‑nine acts of work are treated in various degrees of detail in chapters eleven and following.

So, what are those details? What if you were rushing home on Friday evening and you did not quite make it home, and your donkey was still heavily loaded? There is definitely a rule for that.

If [on the eve of the Sabbath] darkness overtook a man while he was on the way, he must give his purse to a gentile {while it is yet day, of course} {You see, a Gentile was not going to be saved anyway; so, let him carry things for you.}, and if there was no gentile with him he must put it on the ass {on the donkey}. When he has reached the outermost courtyard [of the town] he may take off [from the ass] such baggage as can be taken off on the Sabbath, and for what cannot be taken off on the Sabbath **he may loosen the cords so that the sacks fall down of themselves**.*Mishnah* 120. [Content in curly brackets in the paragraph above is added; content in square brackets in the paragraph above is in the original translation.]

Remember that Jews were not allowed to light or put out a fire on the Sabbath. But, what if a Gentile was willing to light the fire for him? Are you old enough to put out the fire?

If a gentile came to put out the fire they may not say to him, Put it out, or Do not put it out, since they are not answerable for his keeping Sabbath. But if it was a minor {a young person} that came to put it out they may not permit him, since they are answerable for his keeping Sabbath.*Mishnah* 114. [Content in curly brackets in the paragraph above is added.]

One of the most unusual rules is about bathing on the Sabbath and drying off after bathing!

If a man bathed in the water of a cave or in the water of Tiberias and dried himself, even though it was with ten towels, he may not bring them away in his hand.*Mishnah* 119.

One wonders what that would mean; so, there is a footnote:

From fear of offending against the principle of squeezing out, however little the moisture in them.*Mishnah* 119.

Do you suppose that God intended for us to be following some of these rules even today? Did He ever intend these rules to be followed? Very conservative Jews are still trying to follow them.

**Some of the most important miracles that Jesus performed in the Bible happened on the Sabbath.**

**John 5:7‑18**: 7The sick man answered, Sir, I have no one here to put me in the pool when the water is stirred up; while I am trying to get in, somebody else gets there first.

8Jesus said to him, Get up, pick up your mat, and walk. 9Immediately the man got well; he picked up his mat and started walking.

**The day this happened was a Sabbath,** 10so the Jewish authorities told the man who had been healed, This is a Sabbath, and it is against our Law for you to carry your mat.

11He answered, The man who made me well told me to pick up my mat and walk.

12They asked him, Who is the man who told you to do this?

13But the man who had been healed did not know who Jesus was, for there was a crowd in that place, and Jesus had slipped away.

14Afterwards, Jesus found him in the Temple and said, **Listen, you are well now; so stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.**

15Then the man left and told the Jewish authorities that it was Jesus who had healed him. 16So they began to persecute Jesus, because **he had done this healing on a Sabbath**. 17Jesus answered them, My Father is always working, and I too must work.

**18This saying made the Jewish authorities all the more determined to kill him; not only had he broken the Sabbath law, but he had said that God was his own Father and in this way had made himself equal with God**.*Good News Bible*.\*

This story in John 5 about the paralytic man that was healed on the Sabbath and told to carry his mat is a very interesting one. Think of all the ways that Jesus could have avoided creating that conflict with the Jewish leaders if He had chosen to do so. (1) He could have told the man just to leave his mat behind. (2) He could have guided the man to go in a way that he would not have met any Jewish leader who would accuse him. (3) He could have healed the man on some day besides the Sabbath. Did Jesus intentionally heal on the Sabbath and ask the man to carry his mat so that He could create a conflict with the Jewish leaders?

The *King James Version* calls that pool, the pool of Bethesda. *Bethesda* means house of mercy or house of grace.

But, archaeological evidence from that part of Jerusalem has revealed that the area next to the temple was actually called *Bethzatha*.

Thus, it is quite likely that the pool was not called the pool of Bethesda, but rather named after that particular section of Jerusalem: Bethzatha, which means house of olives. Thus, more modern translations will suggest that the pool was named the pool of Bethzatha. It was located very close to the Temple Mount.

Recounting this experience in *The Desire of Ages* (pages 201-202), Ellen White described Jesus as walking alone, in apparent meditation and prayer when He saw this one case of supreme wretchedness.

This Sabbath miracle, as each of Jesus Sabbath healings, is intimately tied to a deeper spiritual truth. Accepting the Word of God by faith and acting upon it, we are made whole. **The point of this Sabbath miracle is that Jesus is both our Creator and our Redeemer.** The One who made us can re‑create us and make us whole again. He meets us where we are, sees our needs, redeems us by His grace, and turns our despair into hope.*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* 135.

A careful study of the events in the four Gospels suggests that this story took place during the second Passover that Jesus attended during His ministry.

During the first Passover of His ministry, He had cleansed the temple; you remember how they were upset by His behavior. Notice these words from Ellen White. Even from that first Passover, the Jewish rulers wanted to kill Jesus.

[After quoting John 2:18-20, she wrote:] **In these words His meaning was twofold. He referred not only to the destruction of the Jewish temple and worship, but to His own death,the destruction of the temple of His body. This the Jews were already plotting. As the priests and rulers returned to the temple, they had proposed to kill Jesus, and thus rid themselves of the troubler.** Yet when He set before them their purpose, they did not understand Him. They took His words as applying only to the temple at Jerusalem, and with indignation exclaimed, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt Thou rear it up in three days? Now they felt that Jesus had justified their unbelief, and they were confirmed in their rejection of Him.Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*\* 164.3.

How could so‑called religious leaders become so upset at the behavior of someone like Jesus? They chose to completely ignore the fabulous and wonderful miracle that Jesus had performed by healing that cripple. All they could think about was the fact that Jesus had broken one of their rules; and this might be a chance for them to accuse Him!

So, what should the Sabbath be for? What should our attitude be as we keep the Sabbath? Remember Isaiah 58:12‑14.

**Isaiah 58:12‑14**: 12 Your people will rebuild what has long been in ruins, building again on the old foundations. You will be known as the people who rebuilt the walls, who restored the ruined houses.

13The LORD says, If you treat the Sabbath as sacred and do not pursue your own interests on that day; if you value my holy day and honour it by not travelling, working, or talking idly on that day, 14then you will find the joy that comes from serving me. I will make you honoured all over the world, and you will enjoy the land I gave to your ancestor, Jacob. I, the LORD, have spoken.*Good News Bible*.\*

God is not asking for ritualistic, empty worship; He wants us to enter into worship fully and completely, with joy and delight.

Moreover, God wants us to use the Sabbath as an opportunity to reach out to the hungry, the naked, those walking in darkness, and those who need to know about the Savior.

1. In Isaiah 58:13-14 (*KJV*), it talks about turning our feet away from the Sabbath. What does that mean?

In biblical times, placing your feet on a piece of property was a symbol of ownership. The Sabbath belongs to God. We do not own it. It is His, so He graciously invites us to find our deepest delight and highest pleasure in worshiping Him and blessing others on the Sabbath.*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* 135.

What is the purpose of a sign? Back in the days before we had cell phones and global positioning satellites to guide us to where we need to go, signs were very important. We would look at maps and try to find where we were and where we needed to go by reading the signs and looking at the maps.

During World War II, England was expecting an imminent invasion by the German army. Preparations were made to defend the island home as much as possible. Extra fortifications were installed along the beaches. Roads, of course, would offer the enemy the fastest routes to their objectives, and consequently, blockades were installed at strategic points. English authorities then did something strange. In order to slow down and confuse the enemy, railway signs were removed and road signs were taken down. Engraved markers on stone or on buildings couldnt be taken down, but they were covered with cement.*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* for Thursday, September 2. [They were trying to keep the enemy from knowing the correct directions.]

So, in what sense is the Sabbath a sign?

**Exodus 31:12-18**: 12The LORD commanded Moses 13to say to the people of Israel, Keep the Sabbath, my day of rest, because **it is a sign** between you and me for all time to come, to show that I, the LORD, have made you my own people. 14You must keep the day of rest, because it is sacred. **Whoever does not keep it, but works on that day, is to be put to death**. 15You have six days in which to do your work, but the seventh day is a solemn day of rest dedicated to me. **Whoever does any work on that day is to be put to death.** 16The people of Israel are to keep **this day as a sign** of the covenant. 17**It is a permanent sign between the people of Israel and me**, because I, the LORD, made heaven and earth in six days, and on the seventh day I stopped working and rested.

18When God had finished speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two stone tablets on which God himself had written the commandments.*Good News Bible*.\*

A sign should point to something important that we need to know. **The Sabbath is intended to provide opportunities for us to get to know God better**.

Earthly signs posted on roads and buildings require us to look for them. But, **Gods sign comes once a week whether we are ready right on time or not.**

Some people reading Exodus 31 use that passage to suggest that the Sabbath was meant only for Israel and the descendants of Abraham. But, we need to remember what it says in Galatians 3: 28‑29.

**Galatians 3:28-29**: 28So there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles, between slaves and free people, between men and women; you are all one in union with Christ Jesus. 29**If you belong to Christ, then you are the descendants of Abraham and will receive what God has promised**.*Good News Bible*.\*

We do not have any way of stopping the days of the week. We cannot prevent the Sabbath from coming back each week. So, **the Sabbath serves as a constant reminder of Gods plans for us.**

All through the week we are to have the Sabbath in mind and be making preparation to keep it according to the commandment. We are not merely to observe the Sabbath as a legal matter.Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*,\* vol. 6, 353.4. [What are the implications of keeping the Sabbath?]

**All heaven is keeping the Sabbath**, but not in a listless, do‑nothing way. On this day every energy of the soul should be awake, for are we not to meet with God and with Christ our Saviour? We may behold Him by faith. He is longing to refresh and bless every soul.Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*,\* vol. 6, 362.1.

**The demands upon God are even greater upon the Sabbath than upon other days.** [Does God work harder on the Sabbath?] **His people then leave their usual employment, and spend the time in meditation and worship. They ask more favors of Him on the Sabbath than upon other days. They demand His special attention. They crave His choicest blessings.** God does not wait for the Sabbath to pass before He grants these requests. Heavens work never ceases, and men should never rest from doing good. **The Sabbath is not intended to be a period of useless inactivity**. The law forbids secular labor on the rest day of the Lord; the toil that gains a livelihood must cease; no labor for worldly pleasure or profit is lawful upon that day; but as God ceased His labor of creating, and rested upon the Sabbath and blessed it, so man is to leave the occupations of his daily life, and devote those sacred hours to healthful rest, to worship, and to holy deeds. **The work of Christ in healing the sick was in perfect accord with the law. It honored the Sabbath.**Ellen G. White, *Desire of Ages*\* 207.2.

Environmental issues including global warming and the accumulation of trash in the oceans have become very important political issues. People have taken very different approaches to these political agendas. So, how should we as Adventists feel? **If God made us in charge of the rest of the world starting back in the days of Adam and Eve, shouldnt we still be doing everything we can to protect and preserve our environment? Shouldnt the Sabbath remind us that God has given us life and health and an environment in which we can learn about Him?**

**Human beings** are separate from all other creatures on this earth by the fact that **they can think forward and backward in time**. It has been said: If we dont learn from history, we are condemned to repeat it. So, remembering is a very important part of our lives. And what has God asked us to remember? The seventh-day Sabbath. Think how serious things would be if we did not have the capacity to remember. Everything that we needed each day would be lost. So, why do you suppose the fourth commandment is the only commandment that begins with the word, *Remember*? What are the things that God specifically wants us to remember each Sabbath? Surely, **He intends for us to think: (1) About creation and about redemption; (2) About what He did for us in His life and His death on this earth; and (3) About how each of these major events in history are connected in one way or another with the seventh-day Sabbath.**

In 2008, there was a fascinating article published, titled Neurotheology: Are We Hardwired for God? The article quotes Dean Hamer, a PhD behavioral geneticist. The author of the article, René J. Muller, PhD, states, In 2004 Hamer published *The God Gene: How Faith Is Hardwired Into Our Genes*, which was showcased in a *Time* cover story on neurotheology. Hamer made it clear that he had approached his work with the tools of natural science: The first task for any scientist attempting to link genetics to spirituality is to show that spirituality can be defined and quantified. Hamers work is not about demonstrating the existence of God, which is the domain of religion, but about showing that spirituality is a real phenomenon that can be described and measured. . . . Religion, he believes, is rooted in nurture and spirituality in nature.Neurotheology: Are We Hardwired for God? *Psychiatric Times*, May 1, 2008, http://psychiatrictimes.com/view/neurotheology‑are‑we‑hardwired‑god.[as quoted in *Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* 132-133]. [This type of thinking takes place in the frontal lobes of ones brain. That is the area of the brain most adversely affected by alcohol and drugs.]

Is it possible that even right inside our brains God has placed in the genetic code at the deepest level our need for worshiping someone? The Sabbath better than any other gift helps to fill that void.

So, what should we, as a Seventh‑day Adventist Church, be doing about **pollution**?

Toxic pollution affects more than 200 million people worldwide, according to Pure Earth, a nonprofit environmental organization. . . . Americans generate 30 billion foam cups, 220 million tires, and 1.8 billion disposable diapers every year, according to the Green Schools Alliance. . . . Pollution in China can change weather patterns in the United States. It takes just five days for the jet stream to carry heavy air pollution from China to the United States, where it stops clouds from producing rain and snow. About 7 million premature deaths annually are linked to air pollution, according to [the World Health Organization]. That is one in eight deaths worldwide.Alina Bradford, Pollution Facts and Types of Pollution, Live Science, February 28, 2018, http://livescience.com/22728‑pollution‑facts.html. The Sabbath is a clarion call to care for Gods creation.*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*\* 133. [Brackets and the content in brackets in the paragraph above are in the *Bible Study Guide*.]

1. Think of the incredible things that God created just to make the Garden of Eden ready for Adam and Eve. There must have been fruit trees with beautiful fruit, hanging and ready for the eating. We do not know exactly what their diet consisted of; but, we hope to find out, one day. In any case, God has the ability to create whatever is needed. Just as He created fruit on the trees in the Garden of Eden, He has the power to produce the fruit of the Spirit in our lives if we allow Him. He can breathe new life into our lives. That is what is supposed to happen in the process of baptism. The Sabbath was intended to be for the benefit of everyone.

Have we learned something in this lesson that will help us to make the Sabbath a greater joy in our lives? Have we found some deeper meanings for the Sabbath? Think about your own Sabbathkeeping. What does God think about your Sabbathkeeping? How important to you is the keeping of the Sabbath? What could we do to change our lifestyles? Our habits? Which of those would make the Sabbath more meaningful not only for ourselves but also for any to whom we might witness?

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**Last Modified: July 23, 2021**

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