

Rest In A World Of Restlessness

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Mark 4:35-40. (Read verses 35-39.) Here the disciples found themselves in a life-threatening situation but Jesus saved them. That is a good lesson. But why did Jesus say the words of verse 40 to them?

Jesus' words,

“Why are you so fearful, do you have no faith?” challenge our thoughts. With the winds howling and water filling the boat, how can you not fear? Is He telling us that when our life is full of change and conflict, we are to be at peace? If His Church were to be attacked and appear ready to fall we can work on in peace? Is this what His words say to us?

How can we have rest in a restless, conflicted changing world?

We can rest secure in this life, and the reason is,

God, our Creator, had a good plan for this world, and though human actions derailed that plan, because of what God has done in the life and death of Jesus Christ, His plan will be realized. His promised future is secure.

“Rest.” We want it. We have a longing for peace and rest.

We anticipate a planned vacation, and the pleasure and excitement of the trip.

When it is over and done we say, “We had a good time but, it is good to be home!” We relax. It is good to have a place to call, “home.” A place where you can rest.

But all this is not the real rest. The pressures of life are upon us. Our loved ones may be far away. If they were near it would be better, but still not the complete rest.

David the Psalmist, expressed the desire for rest.
Psalm 55:6

“O that I had the wings of a dove, then would I fly away and be at rest.” He had observed doves feeding along the ground. When any danger threatened they simply fly away. So in his trouble he pictured how nice it would be if he could do the same.

How can we obtain the desire rest? Things and circumstances, may help. But they cannot eliminate our restlessness. (Lk. 12:15) Perfect surrounding circumstances are not possible in our fallen world. And if they were possible, we, in our fallen condition would be unable to see and accept it.

(Christ’s own disciples could not see the perfection that existed in Him and in all that He did. Do we?)

GOD IS THE GIVER OF REST.

God speaks about rest. We first hear about it in Gen. 2:2,3. God rested. His rest was not, “taking a break,” in the midst of working. He had finished His work. Creation was completed. He rested and the word for rest is shabath.

The next time we hear the word is in Gen. 8:4. The Ark “shabathed”, it rested.

Then we find “rest,” in the 4th commandment. God’s rest and our faithful rest in His completed work is the reason for the commandment.

The Hebrew word, shabbath, means, “ceasing - rest.” Why is the 7th day of the week called Sabbath, that is, “ceasing”?

The answer is found in Genesis 1:31, and Genesis 2, verses 1-3.

The six days of creation were over. “And God saw all that He had made and behold it was very good.” The whole creation was good. The first lesson of Scripture is: When God has finished something, it is very good. We need to remember that.

The heavens and the earth were completed. God made this earth to be inhabited. (Isa. 45:18) It was done in six days. So did God give us a six day cycle for the week?

No, He added a seventh day to the six. It is by what God did, His acts on that seventh day that made it to be “Sabbath” He rested from a completed work, blessed the day, and set it apart. This is why the number “7” came to be recognized as, “completion, total or all”, in both the Bible and in ancient culture.[i]

“There is clear evidence in the cuneiform texts, which are our earliest authorities, that the Babylonians regarded 7 as the number of totality, of completeness. The Sumerians from whom the Sem Babylonians seem to have borrowed the idea, equated 7 and “all.”

The seven storied towers of Babylonia represented the universe. 7 was the expression of the highest power, the greatest conceivable fullness of force, and therefore was early pressed into the service of religion. It is found in reference to ritual in the age of Gudea, that is perhaps about the middle of the 3d millennium B.C. “Seven gods,” at the end of an enumeration meant, “all the gods.” ... As this sacred or symbolic use of 7 was not peculiar to the

Babylonians and their teachers and neighbors, but was more or less known also in India, and China, in classical lands, and among the Celts and Germans...”

William Taylor Smith, International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, vol. iv, p. 2159.

The Bible’s record suggests that this idea of 7 indicating completeness is derived from God’s activity. “Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts. And on the seventh day God completed the work which he had done. Genesis 2:1,2.

The idea of seven symbolizing completeness, or all, is evident in this and in many other references throughout Scripture. (Gen. 4:14,15; Matt. 12:45; 18:21,22, etc.)

(The number 7 occurs 49 times in the book of Revelation. In Revelation the seven churches are used to represent the complete Christian age. The seven spirits of God equal the completeness of the Holy Spirit at work in the world. The many sevens

remind us that God is completing His work of salvation on earth.)

SABBATH FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

Our Heavenly Father, the Great Creator, made a special time for fellowship with humans. What a wonder this is!

That first Sabbath Adam and Eve learned where they came from, and begin to know their Creator. It was not a one time event. God put a blessing in the seventh day, set it apart as His special holy day for the human race. (Mark 2:27,28) He made the Sabbath to be a weekly time for resting in God, a time of special fellowship between God and His people.

Try to imagine Adam and Eve in the exuberance of their life. I can remember how I felt when I turned 20. I was, full of energy, with life. My future seemed secure, but the way I felt was nothing compared to the life-force within Adam and Eve. What marvelous abilities they had. I can picture them running across a field as swiftly as a deer.

Then think of the wonders of the world around them. So much to get acquainted with, so much to see and do. It would have been easy for the world and their own abilities, to become the center of all their thinking and living. That is what happened to Lucifer in heaven.

Adam and Eve needed Sabbath rest with their Maker so that His sanctifying power would keep them willingly united to Him and they could become all that they were created to be. God made the seventh day of the week to be, Sabbath. He gave it to the human race. It is a sign that our faith rests in His work, not in our own doing.

We know what a trademark, is don't we? It is a name on a product that identifies who made it. A trademark name can add great value to a product. It tells us who produced and guarantees the product.

Made by God the Creator, the Sabbath bears the Trademark of God. His name is in it.

God's words, "I placed My name there," are

true of the seventh day Sabbath. Read the 4th. Commandment (Ex. 20:8-11) and notice how His name appears in it:

“The seventh day is the Sabbath of, the LORD your GOD... For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the 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.” (Ex. 20:8-11)

“LORD.” Three times this sacred name which the Jews neither wrote or spoke appears in this Commandment. This is the, “I AM” which Christ claimed for Himself and for which they wanted to stone Him. (John 8:58,59) This is the name that trademarks God’s holy Sabbath day.

“REMEMBER the Sabbath day to keep it holy.” “Remember.” The Sabbath is not something new that the world had never known. It was known in ancient cultures. (2)

(2) The seven day cycle of days is evident in

ancient history. In seeking to understand where the idea of seven and rest, originated, Augustus Strong, in his, *SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY*, (1907) gives various ideas among which is the following quotation:

“But now the discovery of a calendar tablet in Mesopotamia shows us the week of seven days and the Sabbath in full sway in ancient Babylon long before the days of Moses. In this tablet the seventh, the fourteenth, the twenty-first, and the twenty-eighth, are called Sabbaths, the very word used by Moses, and following are the words: ‘A day of rest.’

The restrictions are as rigid in this tablet as in the law of Moses. This institution must have gone back to the Accadian period, before the days of Abraham. In one of the recent discoveries this day is called, ‘the day of rest for the heart,’ but of the gods, on account of the propitiation offered that day, their heart is at rest. See Jastrow, in *Am. Jour. Theol.* Apr. 1898.” Strong, *Systematic Theology*, p. 408

“A rest for the gods,” is reflective of Genesis 2:2, but at the same time is a corruption of God’s rest

on the seventh day. God's rest was not due to some propitiation offered to Him, but due to what He had provided for the human race in Creation and in the Sabbath.

Sabbath rest witnesses to the fact that God is the One who is the source of the complete rest for which we long.

The Sabbath is to be REMEMBERED. Why remember that He is Creator? It is by His work that we and all things exist. It is by His work that we have salvation. It is by His work that we have a future. This is why true rest is found in Him. It is found in His goodness as our Creator and in His goodness as our Redeemer.

The Sabbath was made for the human race to keep it connected to its roots. We humans did not originate out of some mindless random occurrence. We are here because of a Person. That person is, God the Creator. Humans, made in the image of God, could experience the joy of living to a superlative degree. Humans were to experience the joy of living,

and knowing God, and so to reflect His goodness, His righteousness, and His love.

Sin changed the human situation and the rest of the Bible story is a revelation of God's work in Jesus Christ through whom He will restore all things. (Read, Acts 3:20, 21)

The Sabbath as the memorial to God as Creator, tells us that He can make us to be, "a new creation." It is a sign that His creative power can sanctify us. (2 Cor. 5:17; Eze. 20:12)

The seventh-day Sabbath is not only a part of God's eternal moral law, but it comes to us rescued and restored by the Lord Jesus Christ. "He is Lord even of the Sabbath." Mk. 2:28

Sabbath-keeping was being regarded as a good work by which to earn God's blessings.

Rabbis had given dozens, even hundreds of rules about what was permitted and what was not permitted to do on Sabbath.

In the Messianic anticipation of the 1st century, there were Rabbis who taught that if all Israel kept a single Sabbath properly Messiah would appear, or if they kept two Sabbaths properly, not only would Messiah appear, but the nation would be redeemed. (George E. Rice, CHRIST IN COLLISION, p. 18, Tannith 64a; Shabbath 118b)

Jesus by His life revealed the purpose and blessing of the Sabbath for fallen humanity. It was His custom to attend synagogue on the Sabbath. He fellowshiped with His people. He taught His people. He worked miracles for His people. In His Sabbath ministry we see the blessings which the Sabbath provides for the fallen human race.

In His prayer following the, Last Supper, Christ said “I have finished the work which You gave Me to do.” As He died on Friday, He cried, “It is finished.” (Jn. 17:4;19:30)

Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus got permission to bury Him. (verses 40-42)

The Son of God, by finishing the work He came to do had, “authored salvation.” Salvation, which had been a plan, and a promise, He made to be a reality.

Having accomplished that work, He, as at Creation, rested. He rested in Joseph’s tomb.

GOD’S TRUE REST COMES TO US THROUGH JESUS CHRIST. Read Matt. 11:28,29.

The leadership of Joshua gave the 12 tribes rest in the land of Canaan. (Josh. 22:4;23:1)

Yet that was not the rest which is found in God. King David brought to Israel, rest from its enemies. (1 Kings 5:4) It did not last. Such rest was recovered in the days of King Asa, and again under Jehoshaphat. (2 Chron. 15:5; 14:6, 7; 15:15; 20:30) But that rest was not the rest we long for, not the rest God provides.

“There remains therefore the keeping of Sabbath for the people of God.” (Heb. 4:9)

The promised Sabbath rest cannot be known apart from Jesus Christ. “He is our peace.”

He is Shiloh, peace-giver. The Messenger of the Covenant He is the One who assured Moses following the “golden-calf” idolatry, “My presence shall go with you and I will give you rest.” “The cloud went before them to search out a resting place for them.”

(Eph. 2:12-19; Gen. 49:10; Ex. 23:14; Num. 33:10)

Rom. 5:1, Peace comes from being in harmony with God, by trusting completely in Him. Christ by His life and His death has made this possible. Now by His heavenly ministry He is with us more surely than He was in the boat on storm-tossed Galilee. We come to Him, accept His yoke, learn from Him, and give Him our obedience.

We are to always, even when the boat is filling with water, keep our faith in Him. He is the Creator, the Builder, the Protector, and the Enabler of His Church.

Observing God's Sabbath becomes "a delight," and a weekly experiencing in the rest which God has for His people, those, "steadfast saints who keep the commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus." (Isa. 58:13; Rev. 14:12) We take our refuge in Him.

He is our peace. He is our rest. Picture the following:

A small child is crying. The cries tell us they very upset. They have no peace.

His mother takes them in her arms and rests them against her shoulder.

They move in their discomfort.

Gently she pats their back and speaks softly to them.

After a while their crying slows. Then it stops.

A few more turns of their head.

Then they take a deep breath and rest their head on her shoulder.

All is quiet. They are at rest.

Can you picture yourself in the same way, resting in God’s arms? “The eternal God is your refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms.” Deut. 33:27

When all about you is in conflict picture yourself, “Safe in the arms of Jesus, ...” His promise is, “I will never leave you or forsake you.” You have found “Shabbath.”

[i] The biblical symbolism of the no. “7,” and the 7 day cycle in ancient culture.