



# THE **JESUS** APPRENTICESHIP

## Session 9: Sabbath

What is Sabbath and does it apply to Christians today?

### Teaching notes:

#### **Introduction**

We live in a society of restlessness – driven by the gods of accomplishment and accumulation. There is so much striving to achieve these goals.

#### **Creation as God Intended It**

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and empty and darkness covered the deep waters” (Gen 1v1-2).

From a formless void God created land, sky, vegetation and animal life, sun, moon and stars. Day 1, day 2, day 3 and more there was morning and evening and He saw that it was good. Day 6 He created “human beings in His own image” (Gen 2v27) and blessed them to rule and reign over His creation.

“Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky and all the animals that scurry along the ground.”

“Look, I have given you every seed-bearing plant throughout the earth and all the fruit trees for your food.”

“Then God looked at what He had made and He saw that it was very good. And, evening passed and morning came, marking the sixth day”.

From chaos God created a world of beauty, order, fruitfulness and plenty. This was as He intended it. This was God's perfect design.

#### **Introduction of the Sabbath** Genesis

2 v1-3 says:

“So, the heavens and the earth and everything in them was **completed** (MADE WHOLE). On the seventh day God had **finished** His work of creation, so He **rested**

from all His work. And God **blessed** the seventh day and declared it **holy**, because it was the day when he **rested** from all His work of creation”.

There is a real emphasis here on the wholeness/completeness of God’s work. It says that God “rested”. The word rest comes from the Hebrew word “shabbat”, which means to stop – to cease activity. God didn’t need to do any more work in creation. It was complete.

In its completeness God “blessed the seventh day and declared it holy”. Notice that on this day we do not hear the refrain ‘there was morning and there was evening marking the ‘whatever’ day”. It seems there was to be no end to this day. God had entered into His rest - an unending day - and humanity dwelt there, in the fullness of His presence.

However, we all know though that this isn’t the end of the story. Sin entered in and the seventh day as God intended it, was lost. Mankind was cursed to a life of slavery to sin and separation from their Creator.

### **The Ultimate Seventh Day**

Throughout scripture however there are little reminders that point to a culmination in time when humanity will return to the Eden-like state that God intended - the **ultimate seventh day**. We might know that as the new heavens and the new earth. The weekly practice of Sabbath seems to be the main way God asks His people to remember His ultimate purpose and design for humanity.

### **10 commandments**

God makes this clear in Exodus when instructs the Israelites on the Sabbath in the Ten Commandments:

**“Remember to observe the Sabbath day keeping it holy.** You have six days each week for your ordinary work, but **the seventh day is a Sabbath day of rest, dedicated to the Lord your God.** On that day no one in your household may do any work. This includes you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, your livestock, and any foreigners living among you. **WHY???** For in six days the Lord made the heavens, the earth, the sea and everything in them; but on the seventh day He rested (STOPPED). That is why the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart as holy” (Exodus 20 v.8-11).

He now invites the people of Israel to set aside a whole day, every seven days, where they devote themselves to God ceasing from their labours, as He did in the creation story, and focus on Him. A weekly reminder, if you like, of all that God achieved in creation, pointing to the ultimate seventh day we will experience when Jesus fully establishes His Kingdom on the new earth.

40 years later in Deuteronomy, as the Israelite people are camped on the edge of Canaan Moses reminds the people of this commandment once more but this time there is something new:

All your male and female servants must rest you do. **WHY?? Remember you were once slaves in Egypt, but the Lord your God brought you out with His**

**strong hand and powerful arm. That is why the Lord your God has commanded you to rest on the Sabbath day”** (Deuteronomy 5v12-14).

This time God reminds them not of what He did in creation, but of how He delivered them from slavery in Egypt. When referring to the Israelites' slaves the word rest is “Nuach”. This means to settle in and be refreshed. The Lord understands that they need rest. Once they have stopped there is time to “enter into His rest” and all the fullness of that rest. Sabbath is a bit like this - a day set aside every week - dedicated to the Lord – one of gratitude that reminds the people of Israel of all His has **delivered them** from and all He is **calling them** to. In Isaiah (58v13-14) the people of Israel are reminded to keep the Sabbath day holy so that the Lord would be their delight – they were to make space to honour Him and dwell in His presence. The emphasis is that “the Lord will be ‘their’ delight” – not their own accomplishments, not the wealth they had acquired, not even their family or friends, but the Lord.

### **So, what does Jesus have to say about all of this?**

Jesus tells us that Sabbath was made to meet the needs of people, and not people to meet the requirements of the Sabbath (Mark2v27). Sabbath is not about keeping rules and regulations but about allowing His people to experience a taste of the ultimate rest that is to come – to abide in the presence of their Creator.

“Come to me all you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light” (Matthew 12v28-30).

Jesus is saying that **He** is the way to rest.

In dying on the cross Jesus made a way for humanity to be reunited with our Creator and reconnected to God's original design. It is no longer necessary for us to be banished from God's presence, as Adam and Eve were. He has made a way for us to enter into His presence and therefore into His rest. In Hebrews 4 it says: “God's promise of entering His rest still stands”

It says:

“We enter into this rest by first believing in Christ...This rest has been ready since He made the world”. The scriptures say we are invited to join Him in that place “today”. God has been dwelling in this place of rest since the completion of creation (the seventh day) and through Christ He invites us to join Him, by entering into that rest.

So, to summarize the **Old Testament** Sabbath was a **shadow pointing to Christ**. One day there will be a new heavens and a new earth and the Eden reality will be restored. For the **New Testament** believer Sabbath is no longer a shadow pointing to Christ but a **foretaste in Christ of the rest that will one day be ours**

in its completeness – the new heavens and the new earth – Eden restored. God dwelling amongst His people.

### **Applying the principles of Sabbath rest in our daily lives**

In as much as we tithe our money, acknowledging that everything we have is His, so too we must set apart the first fruits of our time for God. He is the master of our time. He is the master of our schedule – not us.

Setting aside a time of devotion is an act of trust where our focus shifts from us to Him. It is an inconvenience – a discipline that enables us to tune into His voice, seek His guidance and simply rest – He approves of rest!! In doing so we resist the pulls of desire for more stuff and greater recognition by society.

### **Conclusion**

He invites us as His apprentices to be yoked to Him, to follow where He leads, to feel the warmth of His presence **that only close proximity brings.**

- He alone is the way to peace and rest.
- He alone silences the inner restlessness of souls.
- He alone gives us life, purpose and wholeness.

### **For further study:**

**'The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry'** - John Mark Comer

<https://www.eden.co.uk/the-ruthless-elimination-of-hurry-john-mark-comer/>

**'Sabbath'** – The Bible Project' <https://youtu.be/PFTLvKB3JLM>