

The Sabbath And The Savior

Endtime Issues No. 65

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Samuele Bacchiocchi, Ph. D.
Retired Professor of Theology, Andrews University

Dear Members of the Endtime Issues Newsletter:

Sometime ago I was invited to speak at a gathering of 150 religious leaders representing twenty one denominations. At the end of my lecture, a gentleman asked me the following pointed question: "Are you not a legalist for emphasizing the observance of the Sabbath?" This question reveals the prevailing misconception that Sabbatharians are legalistic, that is, they seek to earn salvation by works of obedience.

The fact is that genuine Sabbathkeeping is an antidote to salvation by works, because the Sabbath invites us to stop our work in order to allow the Savior to work more fully and freely in our lives. I made this point in my reply, saying: "Sir, I believe that there is a misunderstanding on the meaning and experience of Sabbathkeeping. A legalist is a person who seeks to earn salvation by works, but I do not work on the Sabbath. I rest. How then can I be a legalist? For me the act of resting is an act of resignation to my human effort to earn salvation. It is an act whereby I allow the omnipotent grace of God to operate more fully and freely in my life."

My interrogator remained speechless. It came as a surprise to him, as to many people, to discover that genuine Sabbathkeeping affords the opportunity to stop our works to allow our Savior to work in us more fully and freely. Perhaps this is the greatest challenge Sabbathkeepers face today: the challenge to experience through the physical rest of the Sabbath, the greater rest of salvation the Savior offers us on His Holy Sabbath Day.

During the past few years I have attempted to show the connection between the Sabbath and the Savior at over twenty professional growth seminars attended by clergy of different denominations. The last one was held few months ago on the campus of the University of Birmingham in England. The moderator was a Bishop who also served as a professor in the school of theology.

The response from the participants has always been gratifying. Part of the reason may be the fact that my approach is confessional, rather than confrontational. I simply share how the Sabbath enables me to experience the awareness of the presence, peace and rest in my life. Indeed this confessional presentation is one of my favorite Sabbath sermon. It was professional videotaped recently at the Sacramento Central SDA Church and I will be preaching it again on Sabbath, March 17, at the WINTER SPRINGS SDA CHURCH, in Orlando, Florida. Since many of the subscribers to this newsletter many never have the opportunity to attend my seminars, I decided to post this sermon for the benefit of every interested reader. If you prefer to enjoy the video and/or audio recording of this sermon, as well as the other four lectures of the SABBATH ENRICHMENT SEMINAR, we will be glad to mail them to you. At this end of this newsletter you will find the special offer and the order form.

NEW SOFTWARE TO MANAGE THIS SUBSCRIPTION LIST

During the past few days a friend, who is a computer expert, has spent many hours testing a new software, called LetterRip Pro, to help me manage the constantly growing list of subscribers. This program should be functional by the time you receive the next newsletter. Soon it will be possible for people to subscribe, unsubscribe, change the address automatically. It will also remove duplicates and addresses no longer in service. The next newsletter will contain specific instructions on how you can add, change, or remove your address. Believe me, this program will save me countless hours that I can spend researching and writing.

SAMUEL KORANTENG-PIPIM'S NEW BOOK *MUST WE BE SILENT?*

It is not my practice to recommend books of other authors, because I do not want this newsletter to become a business channel. I am making an exception this time, because I believe that Dr. Samuel Pipim's new book ***MUST WE BE SILENT?*** addresses from a biblical perspective some of the most divisive issues facing the Adventist church today. You can learn more about this timely book at the following website: www.bereanbooks.org

To the subscribers to the ENDTIME ISSUES NEWSLETTER, Dr. Pipim is offering the books at the discounted price of only \$15.00 (plus \$3.00 S&H), instead of the regular price of \$20.00. You can contact Dr. Pipim directly at: pipim@compuserve.com

A THANK YOU NOTE:

Thank you for taking time in your busy schedule to read these lengthy newsletters. If these Bible studies enrich your understanding and experience of Biblical truths, be sure to invite your friends to subscribe. All what they need to do is to email me a request at: [<sbacchiocchi@qtm.net>](mailto:sbacchiocchi@qtm.net) As a result of your promotional endeavors over 13,000 people are already benefiting from these Bible studies.

UPCOMING WEEKEND SEMINARS

As a service to our subscribers, I am listing the date and the location of the seminars for the months of March, and April 2001. Feel free to contact me at (616) 471-2915 for a special seminar in your area during the latter part of this year. I still have few open weekends.

MARCH 2-3: WALLA WALLA CITY SDA CHURCH

Location: 2133 Howard Street, Walla Walla, WA 99362

For information call Pastor Rick Bowes at (509) 525-9540 or (509) 525-5700.

MARCH 9-10: APOPKA SDA CHURCH (ORLANDO)

Location: 305 South Highland Avenue, Apopka, FL 32704

For information call Pastor John Appell at (407) 899-2812 or (407) 880-1726

MARCH 16-17: WINTER SPRINGS SDA CHURCH (ORLANDO)

Location: 50 S. Moss Road, Winter Springs, FL 32708

For information call Pastor Gustav Scheuneman at (407) 327-1190 or (407) 862-5463.

MARCH 23-24: SPOKANE CENTRAL SDA CHURCH

Location: 828 W Spofford Avenue, Spokane, WA 99205

For information call Pastor Jeff Kinne at (509) 328-5900 or (509) 443-9961.

APRIL 6-7: RED DEER SDA CHURCH, ALBERTA, CANADA

Location: Highway 2 South to McKenzie Road, Red Deer

For information call Pastor Ian Hartley (403) 347-9201 or (403) 886-4123

APRIL 13-15: BREMEN, GERMANY

Location: GANDERKESEE near Bremen, Freizeitheim HOEHENBOEKEN, Ammerweg 15

For information call 04223-9310222. People can book there for accommodation by tel.038784-60428 or fax 038784-90067 with church elder Georg Bunkus, president of our institution.

APRIL 20-21: SANDPOINT SDA CHURCH

Location: 2255 Pine Street, Sandpoint, Idaho 83864

For information call Pastor Ron Reed at (208) 265-0519 or (208) 263-3648

APRIL 27-28: HERMISTON SDA CHURCH

Location: 855 W. Highland, Hermiston, OR 97838

For information call Pastor Kevin Wilfley at (541) 567-7989 or (541) 567-8241

**ENDTIME ISSUES No. 65:
THE SABBATH AND THE SAVIOR
Samuele Bacchiocchi, Ph. D.,
Prof. of Theology, Andrews University**

The cover of *TIME* magazine (June 6, 1983) carries the caption: "Stress! Seeking cures for Modern Anxieties." The researchers of the cover-story note that the best selling drugs in America today (like Valium, Inderal, and Tagamet) are all stress related. The article quotes scientists who claim that America is experiencing today "a stress epidemic."

. Physicians often admonish patients, saying, "You need to slow down and rest." But, how difficult it is to work off tension, to quiet restlessness! Some join athletic clubs, others meditation groups. Still others seek release from their tension by taking vacations, tranquilizers, drugs or alcohol. Experience tells us, however, that even fabulous vacations or magic pills provide at best only a temporary evasion but not a permanent quieting of inner tension and restlessness. Why? Because true rest is to be found not in *places* or through *pills* but rather in a right relationship with a *Person*, the Person of the Savior who says: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28; NIV).

Perfect rest and peace are not a human achievement but a divine gift. It is an experience that come to us when we allow Christ to harmonize our lives ("I will give you rest"—Matt. 11:28). This truth is fittingly expressed by Augustine in the opening paragraph of his autobiography entitled *Confessions*, when he says, "Thou hast made us for Thyself and our hearts are restless until they find rest in Thee."

Why do we need divine assistance to experience true rest and peace in our lives? The answer is to be found in the fact that perfect rest does not come about accidentally but is the result of an harmonious accord of the physical, mental and spiritual components of our being. Can we by ourselves harmonize these three, that is, our body, mind and soul? We can stretch our tired body on a bed but if our mind and soul are troubled, we have not rest but agitation, tension or even nightmares.

As the various components of an orchestra need the direction of a skilful maestro to blend them into harmonious music, so the physical, mental and spiritual components of our being need the direction of our supreme Master in order for us to experience harmonious rest and peace. And this is were the Sabbath comes in. The Scripture tells that the Lord has given us the Sabbath as an invitation to stop our work, so that He can work in us more fully and freely (Heb. 4:9-10).

Unfortunately, this divine institution has often been neglected, or even rejected. This occurred in Old Testament times when Sabbath profanation often led to open rebellion against God. We read in Ezekiel 20:13: "The house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness . . . my sabbaths they greatly profaned." The same is happening in our materialistic-oriented society, where many people today treat God's *Holy Day* as a *holiday*: as a time to seek for personal *profit* and *pleasure* rather than for divine *power* and *presence*.

The story is told of a pastor calling upon a member who had missed church services for several Sundays. The pastor asked him, "What keeps you away, friend?" To this the member replied: "I'd rather be in bed on Sunday morning thinking about the church than in the church thinking about my bed. At least my mind is in the right place." Indeed, for many the right place to be on their "Lord's Day" is not in God's sanctuary but rather in the sanctuary of a bed, a boat, a car, a restaurant, a football field, a cinema, a shopping

mall, et cetera. Even those Christians who attend morning church services will often revert in the afternoon to places of business or entertainment. This is hardly reflective of the Biblical view of Sabbathkeeping, a day when we withdraw from the world of things to enter into the peace of God for which we were created.

This prevailing indifference toward God's Holy Day raises a crucial question: Is the Sabbath institution a superseded religious tradition no longer relevant to twenty-first century Christians? Or, Is this a divine ordinance still essential for our Christian growth and survival? For me it is hard to believe that at the very time when the tyranny of things enslaves so many lives, we no longer be any need for the Sabbath day—the day whose very function is to free us from the bondage of materialism in order for us to experience divine peace and rest in our restless lives.

I firmly believe that if ever there was a time when we needed the rest and renewal of the Sabbath, such time is today, in our tension-filled and restless society. We need the Sabbath today to summon us weekly to make time in our busy life to cultivate our relationship with the Lord. To appreciate more fully our vital need of the Sabbath, I would like to invite you to consider seven ways in which on and through the Sabbath we can experience the awareness of Christ's presence, peace, and rest in our lives.

1. THE REST OF CREATION

A first way in which the Sabbath brings Christ's rest to our lives is by constantly reassuring us that our lives have meaning, value and hope because they are rooted in God from creation to eternity. We may call this *the rest of creation*. This is the rest that many are seeking for today. There are many people in our society who are disillusioned by their existence, because they do not know where they come from, why they are here, and where they are heading to. Some seek for meaning in their lives by tracing their ancestral roots, hoping to discover that some special blue, royal blood flows through their veins. You recall the popularity of the book and film *Roots*, by Alex Haley.

Through the Sabbath the Lord offers us this restful reassurance that our roots are good because they are rooted in Him from creation to eternity. This message of the Sabbath is found in the creation story, where the seventh day marks the completion and perfection of God's creation. When I took time to study the literary structure of the creation story, I was surprised to discover that the whole narrative is built around the number seven and multiples of seven. The creation story is divided in seven sections, by the recurring phrase "and there was evening and there was morning, one day . . . a second day, etc., until we come to the seventh day which is repeated three times in Genesis 2:2-3.

Not only the structure of the narrative is built around the number seven, but many of its details are given in seven and its multiples. For example, in Hebrew Genesis 1:1 has *seven* words and the second verse fourteen—twice *seven*. The three names that occur in the first verse, namely *God* ('Elohim), *heaven* (*shamayim*), *earth* (*heres*) are repeated in the story as follows: *God* thirty-five times, that is, five times *seven*; *earth* twenty-one times, that is, three times *seven*; *heavens* (or *firmament*) twenty-one times, that is, three times *seven*. There are also *seven* references to *light* (*hor*) in the account of the fourth day (Gen 1:14-18) and *seven* times the expression *it was good* occurs, the last time is *very good* (Gen 1:31).

Why are the structure and many of the details of the creation story based on the number *seven*? The reason is to be found in the symbolic meaning of the number *seven*, which in the Bible stands for completion and perfection. This means that the frequent

recurrence of the number seven in the creation story is designed to heighten the function of the seventh day as the herald of the perfection of God's original creation.

To dramatize the completion and perfection of His creation, God did something special on the seventh day. Twice we are told in Genesis 2:2-3 that He "*rested*." Obviously God did not rest because He was tired. The Bible tells us that "God does not faint or grow weary" (Is 40:28). In fact, the Hebrew *shabat* translated "rested," does not mean "to relax," but "to stop, to desist, to cease from doing." This means that God "stopped" His creative activities in order to dramatize the fact that He was the happy Creator of a perfect creation. There was no need of improvement, finishing touches.

To celebrate the Sabbath means, first of all, to experience weekly Christ's restful reassurance that our life has meaning, value, and hope because that our ancestral roots are rooted in God Himself (Gen. 1:26-27) from creation to eternity. It means to rest in the reassurance that our human existence, in spite of its apparent futility and tragedy, has value because it proceeds from God and moves toward a glorious divine destiny.

The Sabbath offer us the reassurance that not only our origin was "very good," but also our destiny also is going to be "very good." It offers us the reassurance that the gender distinctions of male and female which God declared to be "very good" at the beginning, are also going to be "very good" at the end. It is this reassurance that enables us to live with a sense of peace and purpose in a world of problems and uncertainties.

2. THE REST OF DIVINE PRESENCE

A second way in which proper Sabbathkeeping brings Christ's rest to our lives is by enabling us to experience the awareness of His divine presence. We may call this *the rest of divine presence*. It is Christ's presence that brought stillness to the stormy lake of Galilee (Matt. 8 :23-27) and it is also the assurance of His presence that can bring peace and stillness to troubled lives. This is basically the meaning of the holiness of the Sabbath which is frequently stated in the Bible.

The holiness of the Sabbath consists not in the structure of the day. After all, the Sabbath has the same 24 hours day like the rest of the weekdays. What makes the Sabbath Holy is God's promise to manifest His presence through this day in the life of His people. When we on the Sabbath lays aside our secular concerns, turning off our receiver to the many distracting voices in order to tune in and listen to the voice of God, we can experiences in a real sense the spiritual presence of Christ. The heightened sense of the nearness of Christ's presence experienced on the Sabbath fills the soul with joy, peace and rest.

Relationship, if they are to survive, need to be cultivated. This is true both at a human and human-divine level. I vividly recall the A, B, C privilege-system that governed the social relationships among students of the opposite sex at Newbold College, in England, where I received my college training. A couple with an "A" status was entitled to a weekly encounter of about one hour in a designated lounge. However, those couples who qualified for a "B" or a "C" privilege could officially meet only biweekly or monthly.

Frankly, I did my best to maintain the "A" status because I viewed those brief weekly encounters with my fiancée as indispensable for the survival of my relationship with my fiancée. The Sabbath is in a sense our special weekly "A" privilege encounter with our Creator-Redeemer. This encounter, however, lasts not merely *one hour* but a *whole day*. It is a sobering thought that to enter into the holy Sabbath day means to enter in a special sense into the spiritual presence and communion of the Lord.

The experience of God's presence on the Sabbath, makes the day a "sanctuary in time." We might call it a *portable sanctuary*, because God's people were able to carry it with them into exile. They could not carry the stones of the Jerusalem Temple to Babylon, but they took with them the Sabbath. In fact, the Sabbath became for the exiles a sanctuary in time when they weekly met by the riverside or under a tree to experience God's sanctifying presence.

The Sabbath has been a portable sanctuary in my life. I vividly recall the many Sabbaths I spent in the town of Fano, Italy (on the Adriatic riviera), worshipping God alone in the seclusion of my room or out in open field. At that time I was a teenager selling Christian literature during the Summer to earn a scholarship to go back to our academy in Florence. During the week I had to face considerable hostility from various quarters. The local priest constantly reported me to the police. The police constantly threaten to punish me for distributing unauthorized literature. Customers feared to become contaminated by my heretical books because they did not have a Catholic imprimatur. My uncle and aunt gave me hospitality in order to bring me back to the Catholic fold and thus rescue me from hell-fire.

When Friday evening came, I would say: "Thank God it is Sabbath." I rejoiced at the thought that for one day I could forget the hostile world around me and enter into the peace of God for which we have been created. Since there were no fellow believers in the immediate area, I would worship God in the privacy of my room or of an open field. I was alone, but not lonely, because the Sabbath was for me a portable sanctuary. It brought to me the reassurance of God's presence in my life. For many believers who through the centuries have been prevented by sickness or circumstances from worshipping in a stone sanctuary with fellow believers, the Sabbath has been a *portable sanctuary*—a day when even prison bars have not barred the presence of God from lighting the soul of the believer.

3. THE REST FROM COMPETITION

A third way in which true Sabbathkeeping brings Christ's rest to our lives is by releasing us from the pressure to produce and achieve. We may call this *the rest from competition*. The pressure that our competitive society exerts on us can cause untold frustration. Competition can dishearten, dehumanize and demoralize a person. It can turn friends into foes.

In order to keep up with the Joneses, some Christians today, like the Israelites of old, choose to moonlight even on the Sabbath day. When I first heard about moonlighting I thought it was a romantic activity conducted under the silver rays of the moon. But I soon learned that moonlighting is not romanticism, but a second or third job that people will hold to earn more and more and never be satisfied. A vital function of the Sabbath is to teach our greedy hearts to become grateful, and a grateful heart is the abiding place of Christ's peace and rest.

By restricting temporarily our productivity, the Sabbath teaches us not to compete but to commune with one another. It teaches us to view fellow beings not *quantitatively* in terms of how much they make, but *qualitatively* in terms of their human values. If Mr. Jones lives on social security, during the week we may be tempted to think of him in terms of his small income. But on the Sabbath, as we worship and fellowship with Mr. Jones, we appreciate not the little that he makes but the much that he offers to the church and community through his Christian witness and example.

By releasing us from the pressure of competition and production, the Sabbath enables us to appreciate more fully the human values of people and the beauty of things. This free and fuller appreciation of God, people and things brings joy, harmony and rest to our lives.

4. THE REST OF BELONGING

A fourth way in which genuine Sabbathkeeping brings Christ's rest to our lives is by reassuring us of our belonging to Him. We may call this *the rest of belonging*. At the root of much human restlessness there is a sense of alienation, estrangement. The sense of not-belonging to anyone or anything will cause a person to feel bitter, insecure and restless. On the contrary, in a relationship of mutual belonging one experiences love, identity, security and rest. To enable human beings to conceptualize and experience a belonging relationship with Him, God has given helpful *signs* and *symbols* such as the rainbow, the circumcision, the Passover lamb and blood, the bread and wine.

The Sabbath occupies a *unique place* among these various God-given covenant signs or symbols. It is *unique in its origin*, because it is the very first sign given by God to reveal his desire to fellowship with His creatures. It is *unique in its survival*, because it has survived the Fall, the Flood, the Egyptians slavery, the Babylonian exile, the Roman anti-Sabbath legislation, the French and Russian temporary introduction of the 10 days week, antinomianism, and modern secularism. The day still stand for God's people as the symbol of God's gracious provision of salvation and belonging.

It is *unique in its function*, because it has functioned as the symbol *par excellence* of the divine election and mission of God's people. Achad Haam, a Jewish scholars, aptly remarks: "We can affirm without exaggeration that *the Sabbath has preserved the Jews more than the Jews have preserved the Sabbath*." I believe that Sabbathkeeping has contributed not only to the survival of Judaism but of Christianity as well. After all the essence of a Christian life is a relationship with God. The Sabbath provides the time and the opportunities to cultivate this relationship with God.

During the week, as we live and move among the crowd, we may feel frustrated by a sense of anonymity. We may ask, "Who am I?" and the answer that often echoes back is, "You are a cog in a machine and a number in the computer." On the Sabbath, however, the answer is different. The Christian who observes God's holy and chosen day hears the Lord saying, "You may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you" (Ex. 31:13).

It is noteworthy that the phrase "to sanctify" is used in the Talmud to describe the engagement of a woman to a man. A woman who declared her belonging to a man, was sanctified, made holy. In the same way when we on the Sabbath give priority to God in our thinking and living, we show in a concrete, tangible way that we belong to God and God belongs to us. When we experience on the Sabbath this sense of belonging to our Creator-Redeemer, we find a renewed sense of human dignity, identity, peace and rest to our lives.

5. THE REST FROM SOCIAL TENSIONS

A fifth way in which true Sabbathkeeping enables us to experience Christ's rest is by breaking down social, racial and cultural barriers. We may call this *the rest from social tensions*. The inability or unwillingness to appreciate and accept another person's skin-color, culture, language or social status, is a major cause of much unrest, hate and tension in our contemporary society. After the Fall an important function of the Sabbath has been to teach equality and respect for every member of the human society. Every seven days, seven years (sabbatical year) and seven weeks of years (jubilee year), all

persons, beasts and property were to become free before God. And genuine freedom leads to equality.

The uneven divisions of the Hebrew society leveled out as the Sabbath began. In his book on *The Sabbath*, Samuel H. Dresner rightly notes that this equalizing function of the Sabbath has seldom been recognized. He wrote: "Although one Jew may have peddled onions and another may have owned great forests of lumber, on the Sabbath all were equal, all were kings: all welcomed the Sabbath Queen, all chanted the *Kiddush*, all basked in the glory of the seventh day. On the Sabbath there were neither banker nor clerk, neither farmer nor hired-hand, neither rich nor poor. There were only Jews hallowing the Sabbath."

It is noteworthy that Isaiah reassures the outcasts of Israel, specifically the eunuchs and the foreigners of whom the Assyrian and Babylonian wars had produced a great number, that by observing the Sabbath they would share in the blessings of God's covenant people, "for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples" (Is. 56:1-7).

Many social injustices could have been avoided in the ancient and modern society if the concern for human rights expressed by the Sabbath (and its sister institutions, the Sabbatical years) had always been understood and practiced. The Sabbath forces upon us the important issues of freedom and humanitarian concern for all, from our son to our servant (Ex. 20:10; 23:12; Deut. 5:14).

By placing such issues before us at the moment of worship—the moment when we are truest to ourselves—the Sabbath cannot leave us insensitive toward the suffering or social injustices experienced by others. It is impossible on the Sabbath to celebrate Creation and Redemption while hating those whom God has created and redeemed through His Son. True Sabbathkeeping demands that we acknowledge the Fatherhood of God by accepting and strengthening the brotherhood of mankind. The bond of brotherhood which the Sabbath establishes through its worship, fellowship and humanitarian services influences by reflex our social relationships during the week.

To accept on the Sabbath those who belong to ethnic minorities or to a lower social status as brothers and sisters in Christ demands that we treat them as such during the weekdays as well. It would be a denial of the human values and experience of the Sabbath, if one were to exploit or detest during the week those whom the Sabbath teaches us to respect and love as God's creatures. By teaching us to accept and respect every person, whether rich or poor, black or white, as human beings created and redeemed by the Lord, the Sabbath breaks down and equalizes those social, racial, and cultural barriers which cause much tension and unrest in our society and consequently it makes it possible for the peace of Christ to dwell in our hearts.

6. THE REST OF REDEMPTION

A sixth way in which Sabbathkeeping brings Christ's rest to our lives is by enabling us to experience through the physical rest the greater rest and peace of salvation. We may call this *the rest of redemption*. The relationship between the Sabbath rest and Christ's redemption-rest is examined in chapter 5 of *Divine Rest for Human Restlessness*. It is interesting to see how the Sabbath reveals, to use the words of Pope John Paul II in his Pastoral letter, "the sacred architecture of time." It began as the symbol of God's initial entrance into *human time*, and after the Fall it became the symbol of God's promise to enter *human flesh* to become "Emmanuel—God with us."

It is fascinating to study how the Sabbath points to the Savior to come in the Old Testament and how it celebrates the salvation of the Savior who has come, in the New Testament. In the Old Testament the rest and liberation from the hardship of work, and from social inequalities which both the weekly and annual Sabbaths granted to all the members of the Hebrew society, was understood not merely as a commemoration of the past Exodus deliverance (Deut. 5 :15), but also as a prefiguration of the future redemption rest to be brought out by the Messiah.

Daniel, for example, uses the Sabbatical structure of seventy weeks—in the original “seventy Sabbatical cycles—to measure the time until the coming of the “Messiah Prince” (Dan 9:25), whose mission is “to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for inequity” (Dan 9:24). The prophet Isaiah describes the mission of the Messiah by means of the imagery of the Sabbatical/Jubilee liberation: “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good tidings to the afflicted, he has sent me to bind the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (Is 61:2).

Christ fulfilled these Old Testament Messianic expectations typified by the Sabbath (cf. Luke 4:21) by identifying His redemptive mission with the Good News of release and redemption of the Sabbath. It was on a Sabbath day that, according to Luke (4:16-21), Christ inaugurated His public ministry in the synagogue of Nazareth by quoting a passage from Isaiah (61 :1-2) and by claiming emphatically to be the fulfillment of the sabbatical liberation announced in that passage. In His subsequent ministry, we found that Christ substantiated this claim by revealing His redemptive mission especially through His Sabbath healing and teaching ministry (cf. Luke 13 :16; Matt. 12 :5-6; John 5 :17; 7:22-23). Finally, it was on that historic holy Sabbath that Christ completed His redemptive mission (“it is finished”—John 19:30) by resting in the tomb.

Christ’s Sabbath rest in the tomb reveals the depth of God’s love for His creatures. It tells us that God was willing to enter not only into the limitations of *human time* at creation to fellowship with His creatures, but also into the suffering, agony, and death of *human flesh* during the incarnation, in order to become “Emmanuel,” God with us. The Savior made the Sabbath the fitting channel through which to experience His rest of salvation.

The Sabbath invites us to celebrate the Good News of God’s creative and redemptive love. It is the weekly celebration, jubilation of a liberated people. It is the day when we cease from our work to allow God work in us more fully and freely, to bring to our lives His rest of forgiveness and salvation.

7. THE REST OF SERVICE

A seventh way the Sabbath brings Christ’s rest to our lives is by providing us with time and opportunity for service. We may call this *the rest of service*. Inner peace and rest are to be found not in *self-centered relaxation*, but in *other-centered service*. The Sabbath offers us a unique weekly opportunity to serve God, ourselves, and others.

We serve God on the Sabbath by giving Him priority in our thinking and in our living. Like Mary, we lay aside all our work and worries, in order to be receptive and responsive to His Spirit. All what we do on the Sabbath should be seen as an act of worship because they spring from a heart who has decided to honor the Lord on His Holy Day.

We serve ourselves on the Sabbath by experiencing mental, physical, and spiritual renewal. Physically our body can rest better on the Sabbath, because our mind is at rest, and our mind is at rest, because it rests in God. Spiritually we are enriched on the Sabbath because through the physical rest we enter, as Hebrews 4:10 tells us, "into God's rest." Through the physical rest we can conceptualize and internalize the reality of the spiritual rest of salvation and forgiveness.

We serve others on the Sabbath by coming closer to loved ones, friends, and needy people, sharing with them our friendship and concern. The service we render unto others on the Sabbath, honors God and enriches our lives with a sense of restful satisfaction.

Conclusion. In conclusion we can say that the Sabbath is Christ's weekly invitation to come to Him and find rest in Him. We have seen that through the Sabbath the Savior offers us the rest of creation, the rest of His divine presence, the rest of belonging, the rest from competition, the rest from social tensions, the rest of redemption, and the rest of service. May the Sabbath truly become for each one of us the day when we allow the Savior to enrich our lives with a larger measure of His divine presence, peace, and rest.

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