

A close-up photograph of several purple flowers, likely geraniums, with water droplets on their petals. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green. The text is overlaid in a light blue, serif font.

Sabbath's Lost Meaning

A Sermon by Norman Moll

February 25, 2012

Topics

Sabbath in:

Genesis | Revelation

Very Good | Not Good

Known | Unknown

Destruction | Restoration

Arbitrariness | Openness

Sabbath points back to where we came from.

Sabbath also gives us a basis for hope
in the seemingly uncertain future.

By pointing back to our origin & ahead to our ultimate destination

Sabbath fills our present with meaning and purpose.

Genesis 1:31 *Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.* Genesis 2:1 *Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished.*

² *And on the seventh day God ended [completed] His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done.* ³ *Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.*

“God **completed** the work that He had done.”

While God finished his work of creating the earth on the sixth day it was only on the 7th day that he completed his creation, by instituting the Sabbath day, the **integral memorial** of what he had done.

“He *rested* on the seventh day
from all His work which He had done. “

- It was God who rested
- God gave the invitation to join His rest
- On the Sabbath God entered into time, into His own creation, to touch, to feel, to experience, what He had made.
- The description of God ceasing his work is best understood as God’s having *arrived*, with the anticipation of meeting someone, in this case meeting with Adam and Eve. One author comments “In addition to the transition from activity to quietude, there is the expectancy of one person longing to see the others.”

“God **blessed** the Seventh day.”

- “[A] blessing is the utterance of a good wish; applied to things, it means their endowment with permanently beneficial qualities.”
- “The Sabbath is a constant source of well-being to the man who recognizes its true nature and purpose.”
- In blessing of the Sabbath God pronounces His word of blessing on human existence, and this word is in itself forward-looking, speaking of things to come that are not yet fully revealed.

“God *sanctified* it.”

God invoked the same power, the same authority in sanctifying the Sabbath that he used in the creation described as occurring in the preceding six days.

“By the word of the Lord were the heavens made! He spake and it was done, he commanded and it stood fast (Psalm 33:6, 9).”

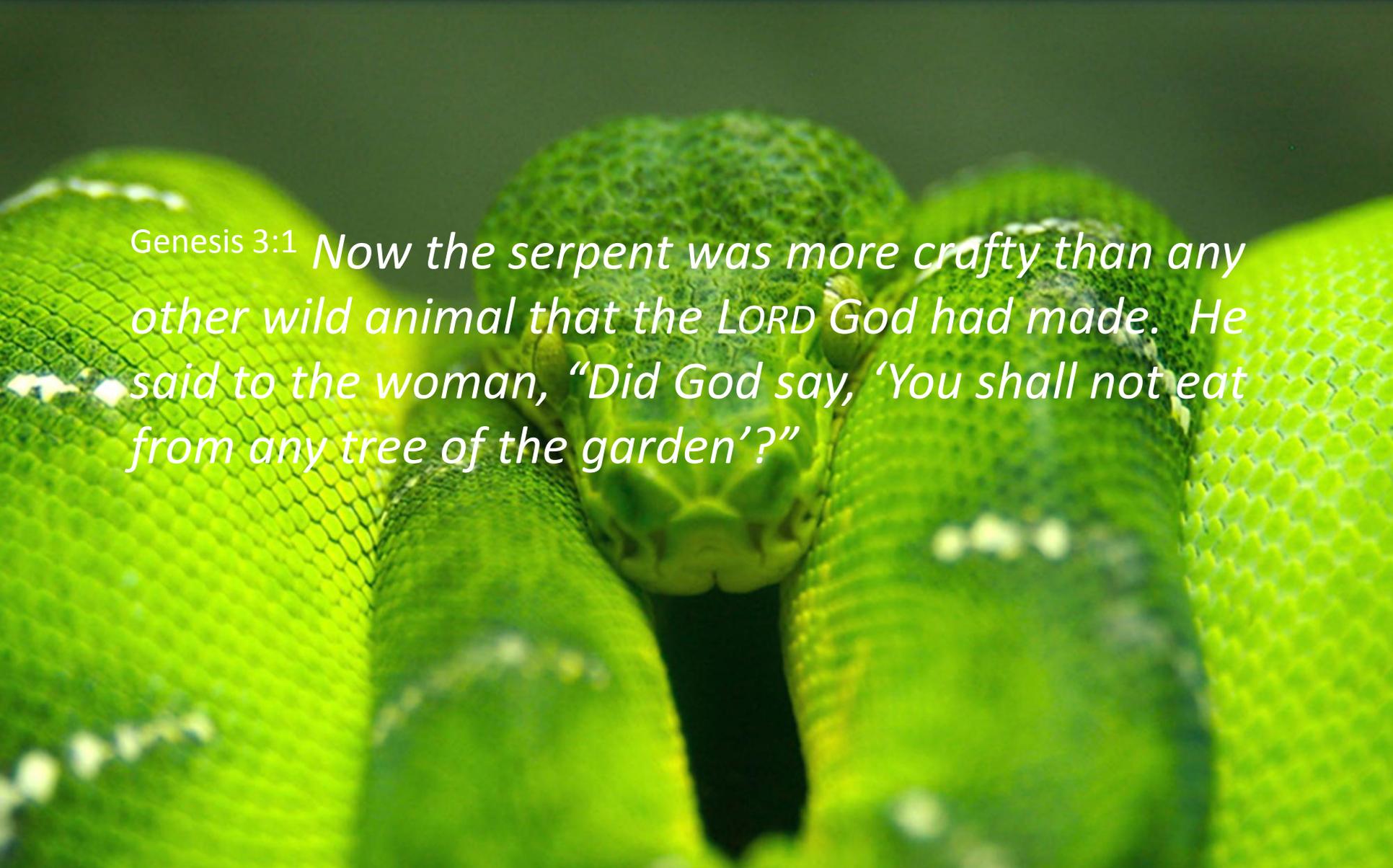
“God *sanctified* it.”

- In hallowing the Sabbath Day God is shown coming into an enduring relationship with Creation.
- He enters into the time of the created order.
- “Intimacy threatens to eclipse majesty in this scenario: at the very least we are led to see God’s desire for intimacy in the seventh day to the point that God’s awesome power and majesty are veiled and held in the background so as not to intimidate human approach.”

Trouble in Paradise?

Genesis 1:31 *“Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.*

Genesis 2:16 *And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”*



Genesis 3:1 *Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God say, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden’?”*



Revelation 12:9 *That ancient serpent
called the devil or Satan”*



*Did God say,
“You
shall not
eat
from
any tree
in the
garden?”*

Trouble in Paradise?

Genesis 3:2, ³ *And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; ³ but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’”*

“No, no, God didn’t say that! He said. . .

Genesis 3:4 *Then the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. ⁵ For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”*

What is the issue here?

Is it one tree or something bigger?

By overstating God's command that they not eat of the one tree the serpent has planted the idea that God is more interested in restricting them than giving them freedom.

Is God trustworthy?

Is God reasonable?

Is God believable?

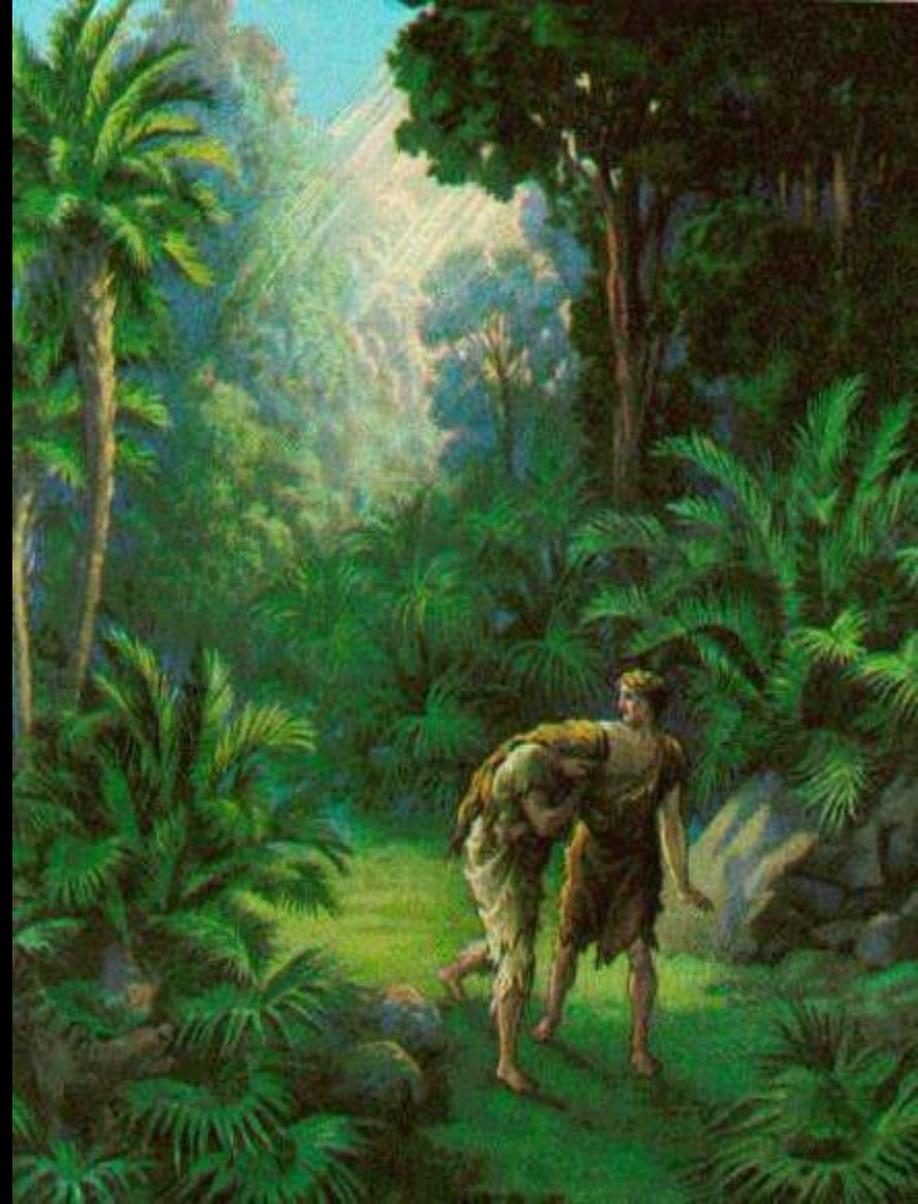
Is God leveling with you?

What kind of a God is He anyway?

Genesis 3:6 *So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. ⁷ Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.*

And the RESULT?

- Fear, Shame
- Cold and Heat
- Banishment
- Pain, Thistles, Thrones,
- Sweat of the Brow
- Sin – Murder, Lust, Lies
- DEATH
- Enmity
- Serpent to strike HIS heel
- Serpent's head crushed



What next?

God, and everything He says,
is subject to questioning
and doubt.

Marriage?

Why for life? Why bother?

Why only one woman?

Why between a man and a woman?

Sabbath?

Why rest?

Why the 7th Day?

Sacrifice?

Why a Lamb?

What next?

God, and everything He says,
is subject to questioning
and doubt.

God is to blame!

God is arbitrary!

God isn't here!

God doesn't care!

What next?

God, and everything He says,
is subject to questioning
and doubt.

God's "very good"
faces the ultimate challenge of
Satan's "not good"

What happens to the Sabbath?

What about God's law?

Are they observed prior to Sinai?

Genesis 4:3-5 NASB *In the course of time [literally, “at the end of the days”] Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. ⁴ And Abel also brought an offering—fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, ⁵ but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor.*

Sabbath observance by Cain and Abel suggested!

What happens to the Sabbath?

What about God's law?

Are they observed prior to Sinai?

Genesis 6:5, 8, 22 NASB *Then the LORD saw that **the wickedness of man was great on the earth**, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. . . . But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord . . . Thus Noah did; according to all that God had commanded him, so he did.*

Without His law being known,
how could God judge the antediluvians?

What happens to the Sabbath?

What about God's law?

Are they observed prior to Sinai?

- In the account of the flood in Genesis 6-9 seven-day periods are mentioned twice before and twice after the flood
- The exact year, month and day in Noah's life on which the flood started and ended is recorded
- Specific periods of time during the flood are noted.

Careful time records were kept during the flood.
Weekly cycles were noted & the Sabbath likely observed!

What happens to the Sabbath?

What about God's law?

Are they observed prior to Sinai?

God said, "Abraham obeyed Me and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My laws (Genesis 26:5 NASB)."

Abraham's relationship with God was
personal and direct.

Even God's most severe test Abraham willingly obeyed.

What happens to the Sabbath?

What about God's law?

Are they observed prior to Sinai?

Exodus 5:5 *And Pharaoh said [to Moses and Aaron], "Look, the people of the land are many now, and you make them rest [sabbath] from their labor!"*

The word "rest" used here is the same one used of God's action on the 7th day of Creation week. Moses, it seems, had revived Sabbath worship.

What happens to the Sabbath?

What about God's law?

Are they observed prior to Sinai?

Exodus 16:23 Then he [Moses] said to them, "This is what the LORD has said: 'Tomorrow is a Sabbath rest, a holy Sabbath to the LORD. Bake what you will bake today, and boil what you will boil; and lay up for yourselves all that remains, to be kept until morning.'" ²⁴ So they laid it up till morning. . . Then Moses said, "Eat that today, for today is a Sabbath to the LORD; today you will not find it in the field. ²⁶ Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, the Sabbath, there will be none."

Sabbath worship before Sinai.

Sabbath at Sinai

Exodus 20:1 And God spoke all these words, saying: ² “I *am* the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. ³ “You shall have no other gods before Me. . .

⁸ “**Remember** the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, **nor your stranger who is within your gates.** ¹¹ For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.”

The Sabbath a day of rest for ALL?

Isaiah 56:2 *How blessed is the man who does this. . .; who keeps from profaning the Sabbath, and keeps his hand from doing any evil. ³ Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the LORD say, "The LORD will surely separate me from His people." ⁶ Also the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to Him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be His servants, every one who keeps from profaning the Sabbath and holds fast My covenant; ⁷ even those I will bring to My holy mountain and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar; for My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples.*

The Sabbath a day of rest for ALL?

If the Sabbath was instituted at Creation should there not be a latent global memory of this fact?

Even if Sabbath is not observed, a weekly cycle in and of itself is mute testimony to the Biblical record of Creation Week.

What is the evidence?

The Sabbath a day of rest for ALL?

- The 7-day week is not the result of any natural cycles.
- A 7-day week is characteristic of native peoples globally.
- The number seven has special significance in many primitive societies.
- The name of the 7th day of the week in many languages is a derivative of the word Sabbath
- Ancient pagan religions where worship is required on other than the 7th day still observe a seven day week.
- Imbedded in the pictorial characters of the Chinese written language are amazing representations of the Genesis account including allusions to Sabbath worship.

Sabbath's Purpose

- A memorial of God's creation in six days Genesis 2:1-3
- A reminder that God frees us from slavery Exodus 20:1, 8-11 and Deuteronomy 5:6, 12-15
- A day of rest for all of God's creation Ibid.
- A day to foster communion between people groups Ibid.
- A *sign* that God sanctifies us Ezekiel 20: 12
- A *sign* that we accept God is Lord of our lives Ezekiel 20:20
- A universal, eternal, day for the worship of God Isaiah 66:25

Summarizing:

- Sabbath has its roots not at Sinai but at Creation
- Sabbath is the climax of God's "very good" Creation
- Sabbath is God's invitation to commune with Him
- Sabbath commandment is to be remembered
- Sabbath was intended to be a universal blessing
- Sabbath points back to creation but also forward!
- Sabbath has been attacked by Satan through
misrepresentation of God and His character

Jesus and the Sabbath

- Jesus was preoccupied with doing good
- Jesus' miracles identified Jesus as more than a man
- Jesus' actions revealed what His Father is like
- By performing healings on the Sabbath Jesus opened insights into the purpose of the day.
- Jesus' persistent Sabbath ministry resulted in his enemies plotting his death
- Jesus' ultimate purpose was to reveal the character of God.

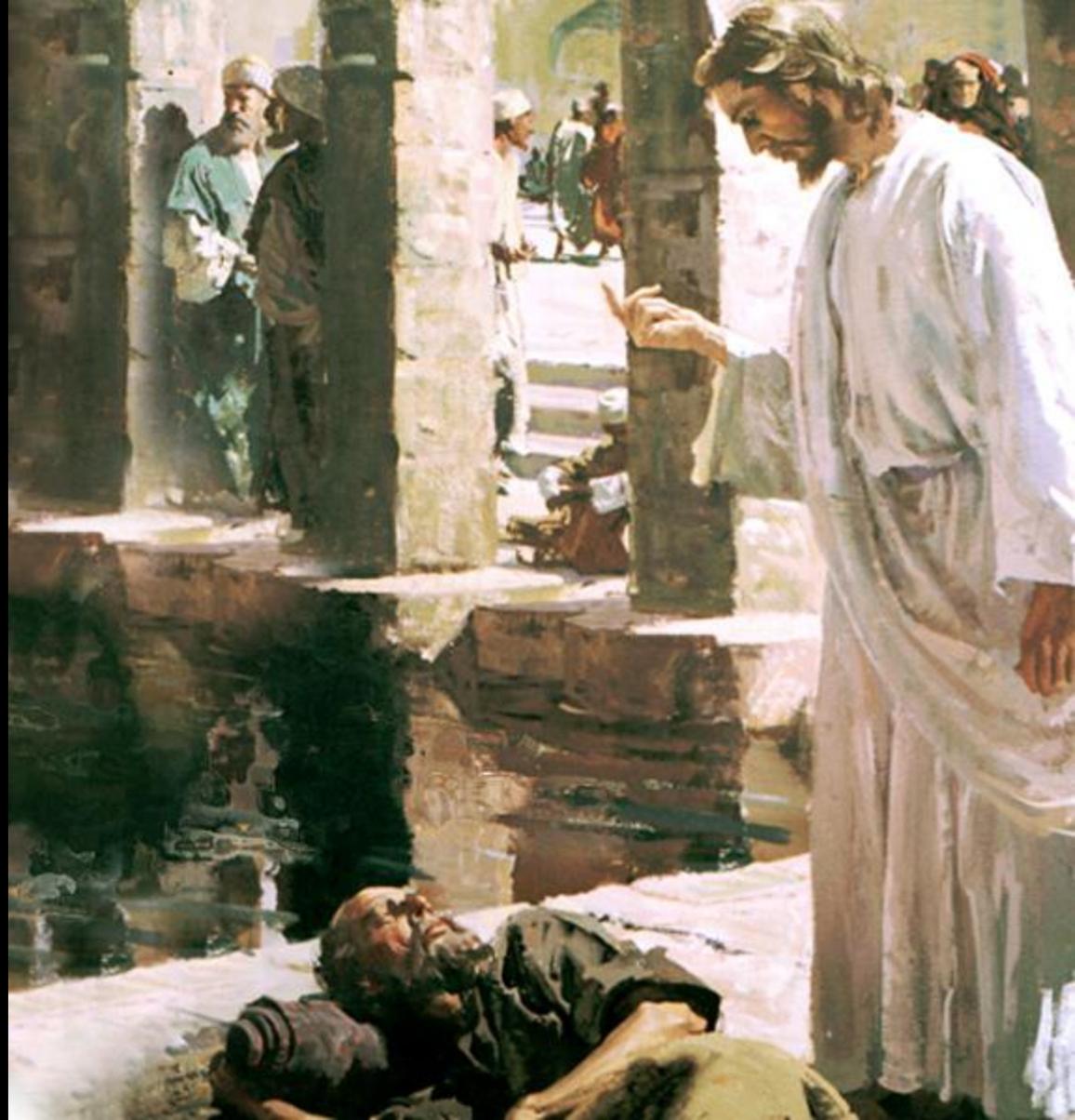
John 5:5-16 Man paralyzed
38 long years—

Jesus asks, “Do you want
to be made well?”

Man answers, “I have no
one to help me . . .”

Jesus said to him, “Rise,
take up your bed and
walk.”⁹ And immediately
the man was made well,
took up his bed, and
walked.

And that day was the
Sabbath.



A
woman,
18
years
bent
double.



Jesus deliberately challenged the Sabbath prohibitions that affected the health, welfare, and happiness of people, drawing attention to what the Sabbath really is—a day for miracles, a day for healing, a memorial of God’s creative and re-creative power, a day when the captives are freed (Luke 13:10-17), the lame can walk (John 5:5-16), and people are made whole again. “The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27).



Is God arbitrary and exacting?

Is the Sabbath commandment an
example of God making
arbitrary demands?

If the Sabbath is not God's
arbitrary demand, what is it?

Is God arbitrary and exacting?

John 15:15 *No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.*

Jesus words to his disciples echo his words establishing the Sabbath inviting humans into his sphere, investing their relationship with high and enduring expectations.

“Every seventh day God invites us is to renounce dominion over time, thereby renounce autonomy, and recognize God’s dominion over time and thus over us.”

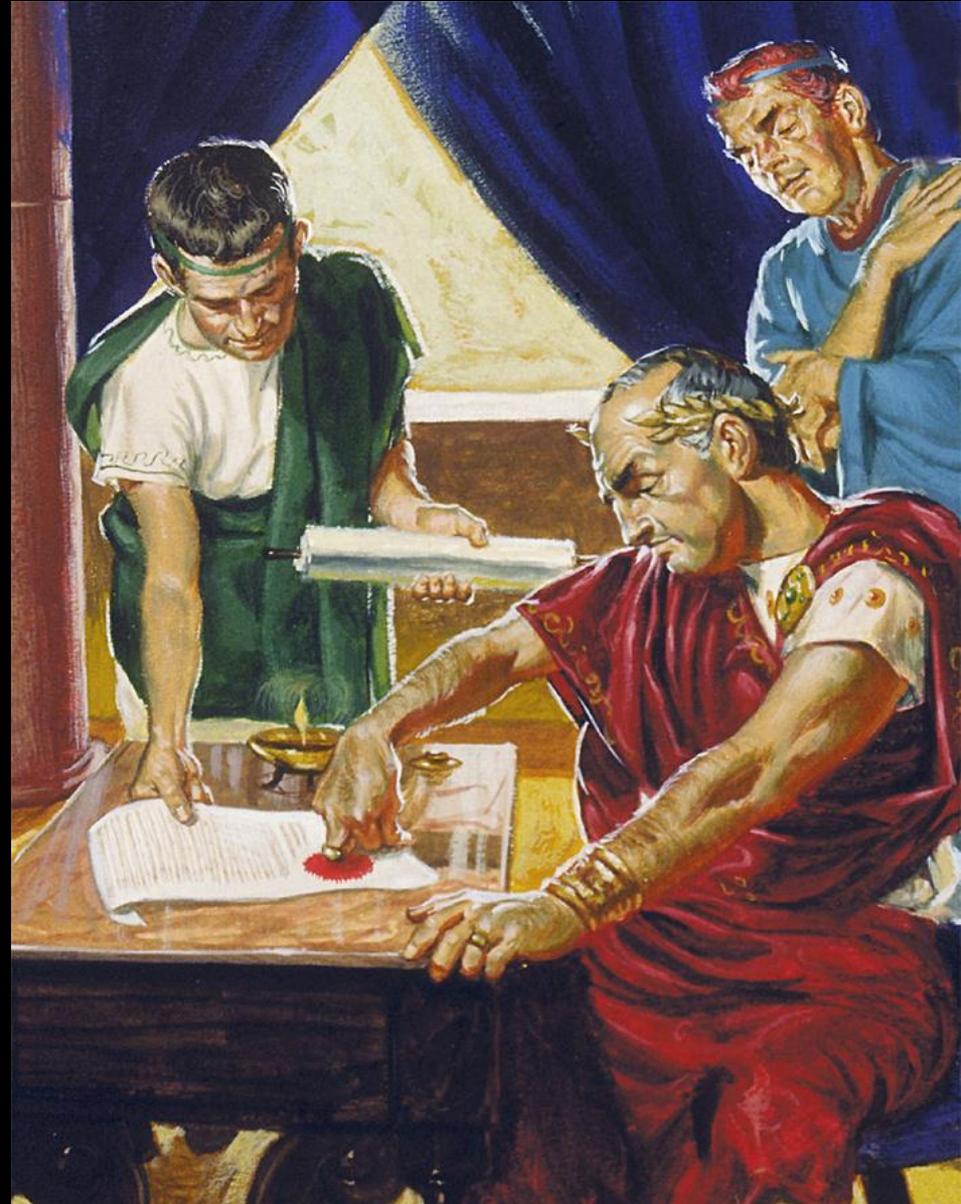
Matitiahu Tsevat, “The Basic meaning of the biblical Sabbath,”
ZAW 84 (1972): 447-459 [adapted]

On the Sabbath, God invites us to join Him
in His celebration of
Creation, Salvation and Re-Creation

Sabbath was created to give us entrance into a “palace in time” where we can fellowship with our Creator and Redeemer in a weekly foretaste of Paradise. Jesus not only claims to be Lord of the Sabbath and its true Interpreter, but also the Provider of Sabbath rest, giving us a “preview” of the peace and rest of our promised future in heaven.

Decreed 321 A. D.
“All judges,
townspeople and
all occupations
should rest
on the most
honorable
day of the sun.”

Constantine the Great,
Ruled, July 306 to May 337 A.D.



Sunday worship was not just an incidental issue in the transition of power from state to the church. Sunday became the hallmark issue! By requiring universal acceptance of Sunday, the stage was set for the church to demand universal acceptance of its doctrines by all. In the same way citizens of the Roman Empire experienced coercion based on the life or death forces of the state, so it would become in the area of the universal religion of the Dark Ages.

Does God rule by Divine Edict?

Does God impose his arbitrary decisions on everyone?

Is God a dictator, the ultimate *imperator*?

Is the seventh-day Sabbath an “imperial decree”
issued by an unreasonable God?

If it isn't then what is it?

In God's dealings with humankind have you not detected His love? Let us look to see the evidence that Love is the motivates all of God's actions.

At Revelation's core we find the powers behind the struggles we battle here on earth: Christ on the one hand and the dragon, Satan, that old serpent on the other.





Revelation 5:4 *And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon.*
5*And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.*





*I saw between
the throne
(with the four
living creatures)
and the elders a
Lamb standing,
as if slain,
having seven
horns and seven
eyes, which are
the seven Spirits
of God,
sent out into
all the earth.*











Revelation 14:6,7 And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, **fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of water.**



