

The Sabbath Watchman

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Origin of the *Seventh Day*

WORLD IN BRIEF

– GHANA
– LESOTHO

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Introduction

The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. Exodus 20:10.

When God created the earth and placed human beings upon it, He divided time into seven periods. Six He gave to us for our own use, to employ in secular business; one He reserved for Himself. Having rested on the seventh day, He blessed and sanctified it. Henceforth, the seventh day was to be regarded as the Lord's rest day and to be sacredly observed as the memorial of His creative work. It was not the first, second, third, fourth, fifth, or sixth day that was sanctified, or set apart to a holy use; neither was it a seventh part of time and no day in particular; but it was the seventh day, the day upon which God had rested....

When the law was given at Sinai, the Sabbath was placed in the midst of moral precepts, in the very bosom of the Decalogue. But the Sabbath institution was not then made known for the first time. The fourth commandment places its origin at Creation. The Creator's rest day was hallowed by Adam in holy Eden and by the people of God throughout the patriarchal ages. During Israel's long bondage in Egypt, under taskmasters that knew not God, they could not keep the Sabbath; therefore the Lord brought them out where they could remember His holy day....

A threefold miracle was wrought in honor of the Sabbath, even before the law was given on Sinai. A double quantity of manna fell on the sixth day, none upon the Sabbath, and the portion needed for the Sabbath was preserved sweet and pure, when if any were kept over at any other time, it became unfit for food. Here is conclusive evidence that the Sabbath was instituted at Creation, when the foundations of the earth were laid, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy. And its sacredness remains unchanged, and will so remain even to the close of time. From the Creation, every precept of the divine law has been obligatory on mankind and has been observed by those who fear the Lord. The doctrine that God's law has been abolished is one of Satan's devices to compass the ruin of the race....

The holy oracles were especially committed to the Jews; not to be an Israelite was not to belong to the favored people of God.... Now the prophet declares that the stranger who will love and obey God shall enjoy the privileges that have belonged exclusively to the chosen people.—*Signs of the Times*, February 28, 1884.

Ellen G. White.

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Beacon of hope, faith, and truth in a confused world.

We believe:

- The all-wise, loving God created all things in the universe by His Son, Jesus Christ; He is its Owner and Sustainer.
- He met the challenge to His loving leadership and authority by reconciling the world to Himself through the life, death, and resurrection of His Son, the Word made flesh.
- The Holy Spirit, Jesus' representative on earth, convicts of sin, guides into truth, and, when abiding in man, overcomes all unrighteousness.
- The Bible is the record of God's dealings with mankind and the standard of all doctrine; the Ten Commandments are the transcript of His character and the foundation of all enduring reform.
- His people, in harmony with God's Word and under the direction of the Holy Spirit, call all men everywhere to be reconciled to God through faith in Jesus.
- Bible prophecy reveals that earth's history will soon close with the visible return of Jesus Christ as King to claim all who have accepted Him as the world's only Redeemer and their Lord.

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Origin of the *Seventh Day*

By Antonino Di Franca

Do you know that among the seven days of the week one is a holy day? Do you have ever heard that one of them is blessed? Have you ever read that one day of the week is especially for the benefit of men? Can you say which is it? What is that makes it holy and blessed? How can we know about? What have we to do in order to receive its blessing? Where do we find the information about the holy and blessed day? These and many other amazing questions await for answer, therefore this long expected book has a duly place, being written drawing from the sure source of life and hope, which is the Word of God.

In some environments, the rhythm of work reaches dizzying levels. While in some case, there is the serious problem of unemployment, in other cases we pass to over-employment with various shifts and activity, running seven days a week, day and night, under heavy pressure and frenetic rhythms. If we add that certain workplaces are fully unhealthy, we perceive that incessant work and stress became risk factors for health, psychic and spiritual balance of the worker, with consequence for family and society. What use will it be to continue working under tension until becoming a slave of work until exhaustion? Even common sense tells us that regular breaks are necessary so that the employees can breathe and recover energy in order that then may continue with new upsurge. From the origins, while man was still in the paradise, when work was not so wearing and exhaustive, the Lord foresaw the need for a rest day, the great benefit that men would receive, and disposed a weekly day of rest for his physical comfort and spiritual enjoyment.

Have men always been able to foresee and arrange such a day of rest for their employees, or are rather prevailing private interests than the health and wellbeing of the worker? What about the time of slavery when there were no performance limits and no timetables

provision? Even when slavery with its inhuman conditions in some countries went to end, tragic experiences resurfaced with the industrial revolution. How often just today interest and capital power prevail in people exploitation ignoring and trampling human dignity and rights! If we leave only to the sensibility of man to decide for his employs, we are not sure that he will make the best choice and will respect it over time! We can have no certainty that he will do it first for himself!

The Lord has foreseen all these abuses and irregularities as well that man sometimes is sucked in a whirlpool and does not even thinks enough of himself and does not discerns what the best is for him. For all these reasons, the Lord not only in the begin-ning has given good example, He made promises and provided guidance so that not only the free man, but also the employees or servants could regularly benefit from rest and not permit that the work crushes them. He appointed for a day and announced His blessing since the beginning. Do you know which this day is?

WHEN HEAVENS AND THE EARTH WERE FINISHED

Giving a panoramic and conclusive look at the marvellous completed creative work, at the beginning of the second chapter of first book of the Bible the inspired author writes:

“Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.” (Genesis 2:1-3, ESV)

The first page of the Bible with its stupendous creative narrative is amazing in revealing our origins and the origin of the earth in which we live. It is like a light that illuminates our history and helps us to know where we come from. The beginning of the second chapter with the history of the institution and blessing of the seventh day is like a light that illuminates our present and future and helps us to understand that we are not abandoned, but there is a divine blessing, that accompany us constantly as our time is running.

These verses presents the general conclusion of the creative work, including four fundamental concepts: (1) the fulfillment of creation, (2) the rest of God, (3) the blessing of the seventh day and (4), as culmination, the sanctification of the seventh day. We will examine them according to their order, the first two aspects in this chapter, the others in the following.

As conclusion of the creative activity and introduction to the origin of the holy and rest day the biblical report affirms, "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them." (Genesis 2:1 ESV) Mentioning heavens, earth and the entire host this sentence forms as a kind of general epilogue to that stupendous work.

"The heavens — writes John Calvin — without the sun, and moon, and stars, would be an empty and dismantled palace: if the earth were destitute of animals, trees, and plants, that barren waste would have the appearance of a poor and deserted house. God, therefore, did not cease from the work of the creation of the world till he had completed it in every part, so that nothing should be wanting to its suitable abundance." (*Calvin's Commentary on the Bible*, comments on Genesis 2:1.)

<https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/cal/genesis-2.html>

FULFILLED ON THE SEVENTH DAY

In the second text of this second chapter, we find the sentence: "On the seventh day God finished his work that he had done", sentence that after the previous information of the precedent text and the confirmation of Exodus 20:11 and 31:17, has given a little to think. When was accomplished creation, on the sixth or on the seventh day? Faced with the apparent disagreement, some authors have assumed that here we may find facing a possible copyist's error. This idea would seem to

find confirmation in consideration that the first version in Greek, known as LXX or Septuagint, the Samaritan Pentateuch as well the Syriac and Arab text in Genesis 2:2, and the Talmud (Megil. 9,1), instead of "seventh," have "sixth" day. In this sense is oriented the commentary of the French Bible of Louis-Isaac Le Maistre de Sacy:

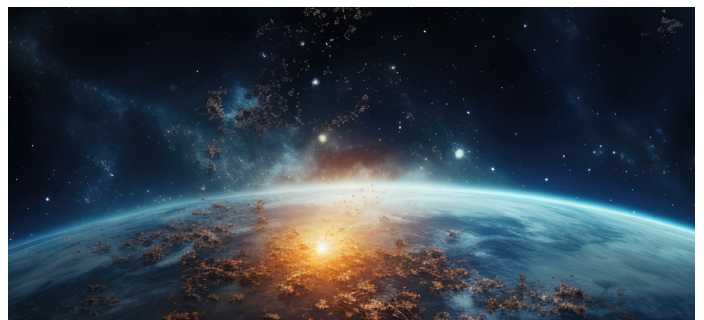
"God finished his work on the seventh day, that is to say, he ceased to act that day, all having been completed the previous day. This is why it is said in the Septuagint that God ended the sixth day, because he finished his works at the end of this day." (*Bible de Louis-Isaac Le Maistre de Sacy. La Genese traduite en François avec l'explication du sens literal et du sens spirituel*, Paris, Guillaume Desprez, 1725, pp. 35-36, comments on Genesis 2:2. Italics of the author.)

http://jesusmarie.free.fr/bible_sacy_genese.pdf

The German "Konkordante Wiedergabe," published in 1958, follows also this idea and translates, "And God finished his work on the sixth day". (*Konkordante Wiedergabe der Heiligen Schrift* (AT): Erstes Buch Mose, Pforzheim, Germany, Konkordante Verlag, 1958, Genesis 2:2).

Nevertheless, other consider that the solution can be another and while on the sixth day creation in itself was complete, operative and "very good" (Genesis 1:31), it was still lacking of the seventh day blessing and sanctification. One author therefore writes that, "the Sabbath completed creation" (Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath: Its meaning for Modern Man*, New York, Ferrar, Straus and Young, 1952, p. 21) and another interprets the verb "finished" of verse two as putting the seal on his creation,

"God did not work on the seventh day, but put the seal on his works; this is the sense of finished" (*La Sainte Bible commentée d'après la Vulgate* par L.- Cl.



Filion, Tome I, Paris, Letouzey et Ané Editeur, 1899, p. 25, comments on Genesis 2:2.) http://jesusmarie.free.fr/bible_fillion_genese.pdf

This is also the position of the SDA Bible Commentary, that asks,

“When did God complete His work? We can only answer, “On the seventh day God ended his work” (ch. 2:2), “for [in] six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them [is], and rested the seventh day” (Ex. 20:112)” (*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, Washington, D.C., Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1953, p. 208, comments on Genesis 1:1).

THE SEVENTH DAY

In the same second chapter, reporting about the day, the blessed and holy day established by the Lord at the beginning, the book of Genesis affirms that it was “the seventh day.” “On the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.” (Genesis 2:2-3, ESV)

While the biblical report of creation in chapter one mentions other days only once (Genesis 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31), in Genesis 2:2-3 we have three recurrence of the expression “seventh day.” Two times in verse 2: “On the seventh day God finished his work” and “he rested on the seventh day,” and one in verse 3: “God blessed the seventh day.” After having mentioned all six days specifying what had been His accomplishment in every one of them, at their fulfillment is the turn of the seventh, characterized by cessation, rest, blessing and sanctification.

According to this report, the Lord chose the seventh day of the creative week because it was the fulfillment, conclusion or culmination of the creative work, as the text expresses it two times: “Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day” (2:1-2, emphasis supplied). With the blessing on the conclusive day, the Lord has expressed his approval to the realized work, approval that could not give before he had finished the work. Five times in five different verses (Genesis 2:2, 3;



Exodus 20:11; 31:17, Hebrew 4: 4) the Scripture connects the “seventh day” directly with creation, showing that its origins date back to the beginning of humanity.

Underlining the particular detail that the origin of the holy day of rest goes back to creation, some authors write:

“At the end of the account of the creation of the world with which the book of Genesis begins, we read: On the seventh day God finished his work which he had made (or done); and he rested (Heb. *šābat*) on the seventh day from all his work which he had made (Gen. 2: 2). The story of the Old Testament sabbath therefore begins with the sabbath or repose of God after his work of creation.” (Roger T. Beckwith and Wilfrid Stott, *This is the Day*, London, Marshal, Morgan and Scott, 1978, p. 2.) <https://earlychurch.org.uk/pdf/ttd/chapter01.pdf>

“Moses used this... pattern to represent in a brief yet accurate manner God’s creation of the heavens, the earth and all things therein in the space of six sequential numbered, literal days... Moses theological emphasis was to demonstrate in literary form that day 7 was a day of cessation from divine creative activity as the two uses of *šābat* (“ceased” in NET Bible) in Genesis 2:2-3 clearly indicate.” (Terry Mortenson, Thane Hutcherson Ury, eds. *Coming to Grips with Genesis: Biblical Authority and the Age of the Earth*, Green Forest, Arizona, Master Books, 2008, p. 242).

“God first created space, and then He filled it with the inhabitants. On the first day God created light, and on the fourth day He put lights or luminaries (sun and moon) in their place as “inhabitants” of the light element. The second day He separated water from water by creating an expanse and on the fifth day filled the waters with fish and the sky with birds. On the third day God formed dry land and the vegetation on it, and on the sixth day God filled the land with the inhabitants he created—first a variety of land animals and creatures, and finally humans. He then gave humans and animals vegetation for food.

“As a final and climactic act of His creation, God made the seventh day—separating it from the other days of His creation and making it holy. Sabbath is a palace in time. God created/formed a very significant temporal space, but much more than that, He also filled the time with His holiness.... The Sabbath is the only day where forming and filling are put together... From the... Creation story it is evident that the creation of the Sabbath is highlighted...” (Jiří Moskala, “The Sabbath in the First Creation Account”, *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, 13/1, April 2002, pp. 56–57.) <http://www.atsjats.org/publication/view/62>

“We are simply told that God enjoyed his rest, because all was done, so far as the mere creation was concerned. There was nothing more to be done and, therefore, the One who had, during six days, been working, ceased to work, and enjoyed his rest. All was complete; all was very good; all was just as he himself had made it; and he rested in it. “The morning stars sang together; and all the sons of God shouted for joy.” The work of creation was ended, and God was celebrating a Sabbath.” (Charles Henry Mackintosh, *Notes on the Book of Genesis*, 1878, comments on Genesis chap. 2) <http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=8IY-RvDK-Swl%3d&tabid=268&mid=887>

“The seventh day, rich with God’s blessings, was the climax of God’s creative work. In the words of Abraham Heschel, «Last in creation, first in intention, ‘the Sabbath is the end of the creation of heaven and earth.» Everything was declared to be “very good” and no shade of disorder can be traced in the complete Creation Story.” (Zdravko Stefanovic, “*The Great Reversal: Thematic Links Between Genesis 2 and 3*”, in Andrews University Seminary Studies, Spring-Summer 1994, Vol. 32, No. 1-2, p. 49.) <http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Scholarly> For the reported quotation, see Abraham Heschel, *The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man*, New York, Farrar, Straus and Young, 1951, 14).



Other authors, always tracing the origin of the blessed rest day to creation, briefly observe,

“According to the biblical creation narrative the Sabbath originated at the end of creation week as an expression of the divine will (Gen 2:1-3).” (Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, *The Biblical Sabbath: The Adventist Perspective*, Genève, Biblical Research Institute General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2002, p. 1.) https://www.adventist-biblicalresearch.org/sites/default/files/pdf/Sabbath-Catholic_2002.pdf

“Silence and stillness once again enter the atmosphere. The mood of the prologue now resurfaces in this epilogue. There is no activity, no noise, no speaking. All that God has willed and designed for his canvas of the universe is now in its place.” (Victor P. Hamilton, “The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17,” *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1990, p. 141).

Just at the beginning, when every day had its proper designation with an ordinal name (first, second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth day) also the last received a corresponding ordinal name, the “seventh” day, so it was exactly designated and could not be confused.

Some people think that it is no matter which day they keep to worship the Lord; they think that every day is alike; according to them important is not the day or the name but to worship Him. This may seem a harmless and acceptable idea, but is not. Just such mentality has generated so much difference and confusion among people that everyone is willing to follow his opinion, according to his understanding and many are not prepared to accept what the Lord has established for us. It is god to worship and prises the Lord every day, morning, noon, evening and even more in other hours of the day, but this cannot be a justification for altering and rejecting what he has established, the “seventh day.”

This day is not only the seventh in its order, is also the day during which God rested from his creation work. His divine work of “resting” gives to it a second corresponding name that emphasizes the aspect of resting, that is “Sabbath”, which means exactly “rest” (Exodus 16:23, 25, 26, 29; 20:8, 10, 11; 31:14) or “cessation” (Genesis 8:22; Job 32:1; Proverbs 18:18), without ceasing to be identified as “seventh day” (Exodus 16.26, 27, 29, 30; 20:10, 11; 23:12; 31:15,17...). In some cases, both names are used “seventh day” and “Sabbath” as in Exodus 16:26, 29; 20:10, 11; 31:15.

The term “Sabbath” denotes foremost the concept of “rest”, “day of rest,” while the definition “seventh day”

indicates its exact collocation in the week, the “seventh” the periodicity, every seven days, and so it refers properly to the events of creation, to the epoch of its origin when everything came into existence. Of the various creative days, the separated, blessed and sanctified day is therefore the “seventh” not another or any one. Let us not ignore or oppose the order established by the Lord!

The day appointed by the Lord since the origin is therefore well definite and is not one whatever among others, which everybody may select as he prefers. The definition “seventh day” is clear evidence that when no day had an exact denomination the Scripture used a way to identify everyone as well as the last. Reading the biblical report is now clear that the blessed day is the conclusive, the last of the series and as such is called “the seventh day” (Genesis 2: 2 and 3). In his Scripture, the Lord has inspired the writers to use exact definition and this shows firstly that God is interested in exact identification, so that people receives the blessing of His holy day and nobody can be confused and keep another day.

THE REST OF GOD

In the second verse of this section, the sentence reports that “on the seventh day God ... rested ... from all his work that he had done”. In the third text the same fact is repeated: “God rested from all his work” (Genesis 2:2, 3, emphasis supplied), both clearly speaking of God’s rest. After the work of creation and blessing of the human being (Genesis 1:28), God’s rest is the subsequent work that the Lord performs. These are the first two examples that the Scripture uses the verb “rest” in reference to God; verb, which referred to Him, has a very deep meaning, as we will study soon.

Since now is good to specify that the biblical concept of “rest” has nothing to do with the Latin otium; the Lat-

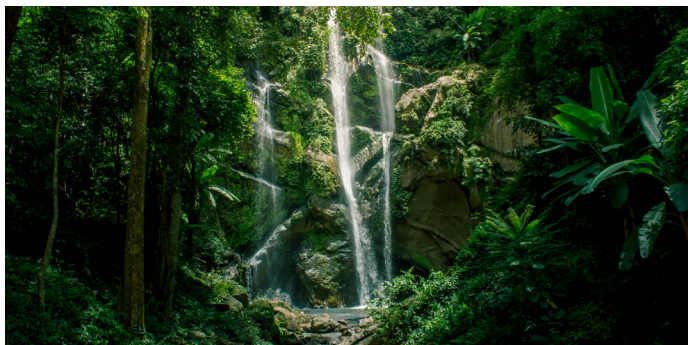
in is negative, the biblical is positive. While the Latin otium denotes inactivity, inertia, idleness, laziness and indolence, the biblical “rest” means breathing, refreshment, recovery, quietness, peace and blessing. As after a day of trying work, one expects enough hours of rest, so after six days of stressing and wasting activity, body and mind need a sufficient time to recover physical and spiritual energies and power. Biblical text shows therefore that the weary needs power and strength to recover (Isaiah 40:29), needs food and water for physical restoration (Job 22:7) and words of sustentation and encouragement (Isaiah 50:4), Therefore the LORD said to his people, “This is rest; give rest to the weary” (Isaiah 28:12 ESV).

God’s rest experienced during the seventh day of creation (Genesis 2:2-3) is the root of multiple kind of rest, physical, moral and spiritual, individual, collective and national. God’s rest would grant weekly rest, freedom from slavery and oppression, peace from enemy’s attacks in Canaan and communion with God. Because entering fully in God’s rest for Israel had included these blessings, the Lord “gave” them his weekly Sabbath (Exodus 16:29; 20:8-11), the freedom from Egyptian slavery, to which the weekly Sabbath was a constant memorial (Deuteronomy 5:15). To all of them He would have given also the delight of entering Canaan to live there in peace (Hebrew 4:8) and, as top conclusion, the communion with him, stay in Canaan and communion that He calls “my rest” (Psalm 95:11; Hebrew 4:1-3). All this was included in the rest of God that He wanted to grant to his people.

Explaining the purpose of creation, Firmianus Lactantius (c. 250 – c. 325), an early Christian, observes:

“The world has been created for this purpose, that we may be borne; we are born for this end, that we may acknowledge the Maker of the world and of ourselves — God: we acknowledge him for this end, that we may worship Him.” (Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, 7, 6, as quoted in R. R. Reno, Genesis (*Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible*, p. 62.) https://books.google.it/books?id=xLRzBQAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&hl=it&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false

Through the seventh day rest the Lord makes man free from the slavery of work and Sabbath becomes the symbol of liberation from slavery and from Egyptian domination and its rest constitutes an additional reason to keep it with thankfulness to God (Deuteronomy 5:15). Nevertheless, the majority of Israel’s people did not reach this spiritual level and consequently they



could not enjoy the various kinds of rest that the Lord wanted to give them. It was the Lord's wish that all people could enter His rest, rejoice in keeping the weekly Sabbath and delight entering Canaan under his peace and blessing, but they were not faithful, rebelled and desecrated the weekly Sabbath (Ezekiel 20:12-13, 16, 20-21, 24).

As consequence the Lord decided, "They shall not enter my rest" (Psalm 95:11; Hebrews 3:10-11) and that generation could not; only a remnant had that blessing (Numbers 14:22-31). Under Joshua the descendants entered Canaan and for a time rejoiced of God's rest having peace from enemies (Joshua 21:44; 22:4; 23:1); nevertheless, even so they don't reached God's ideal of entering properly and fully God's "rest" understood as the communion with him (Hebrews 4:8). Neither in time of Joshua nor in the time of David people entered properly God's rest reaching the level of being in communion with Him (Hebrews 4:7). Nevertheless God maintains His word and "the promise of entering his rest still stands" (Hebrews 4:1) in the Christian church. Therefore, the author of Hebrews writes that "we who have believed enter that rest" (Hebrews 4:3) and, confirming that God's rest includes the weekly rest of the Sabbath, the inspired author writes, "So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God" (Hebrews 4:9).

The biblical concept of God's rest or "His rest", how is called in Hebrews 3:18; 4:1, is different than we could imagine. It is not God that continues to rest for centuries and millennia; what continues is His divine "promise" through which He invites us to enter his rest (Hebrews 4:1). This means that God's rest is far larger than we could imagine. His promise to enter into his rest is not limited to a single period of history, nor to a single people, but starts from the beginning and extends to the end, when the people of God besides the weekly (Exodus 20:8-11) will enjoy eternal rest (Isaiah 66:23).

Observing the weekly sabbatical rest let us remember then, that it is not only just physical rest. Every seventh day the Lord gives us the opportunity to lead us to a higher level of spirituality so that we achieve communion with him. On the spiritual and wide nature of this rest, one author writes,

"*Menuha* which we usually rend with rest means much than withdrawal from labor and exertion, more than freedom from toil, strain or activity of any kind. *Menuha* is not a negative concept but something real and intrinsically positive...

"To the biblical mind *menuha* is the same as happiness and stillness, as peace and harmony... It is the state wherein man lies still, wherein the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest. It is the state in which there is no strife and no fighting, no fear and no distrust. The essence of good life is *menuha*." (Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath: Its meaning for Modern Man*, New York, Ferrar, Straus and Young, 1952, pp. 22-23).

THE TIME OF ITS INSTITUTION

The second constituent element is relative to the time of origin. According to the speculations of certain authors, the origins of the Sabbath should be relatively recent, for example during the Mosaic period of Israel history. For others it will be necessary to go back a little further to Mesopotamia up to the time of the first Babylonian Empire (about 2000-1100 B.C.). Still others are even more undefined and refer simple to a vague past. From all nobody is able to present convincing evidence. The only reliable source remains the Holy Scripture.

In Genesis report, after learning that "the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them", we continue reading that "on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested" (Genesis 2:1, 2). As third, the report adds, "So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy" (Genesis 2:3). In this way, biblical evidence shows that the origin of the holy and blessed day dates back to creation, when "heavens and the earth were finished."

Being so, the origin of the blessed day is much earlier as the dates suggested by some authors and, as consequence, subsequent the time suggested by some Jews traditions, who pretend that the Sabbath is older than creation. If in question of origin we stay to the Word of God, which is well defined, we do not need to hear human speculations, because it has a very definite answer. Not only the creation story, but also other clear text of the Revelation confirms the same truth.

At Sinai, as the Lord gave the Ten Commandments and spoke powerfully that all could hear and understand, He referred to the origin of Sabbath going back to the time of creation, saying: "For in six days the LORD made heaven and 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"

(Exodus 20:11). A second time He reiterated the same as He add-ed, “It is a sign forever between me and the people of Israel that in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed.” (Exodus 31:17). In the New Testament, in the Letter to the Hebrews, where the writer mentions the rest of God and the time since the promise of entering into God’s rest is valuable, he quotes exactly the text of Genesis 2:2, where God’s rest is attested. “For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way: “And God rested on the seventh day from all his works.” (Hebrews 4:4 ESV). On the origins of the Sabbath at the time of creation, the Scripture is therefore clear and the believer who accepts it as an inspired word should have no more doubts.

“At this time – writes an author – none of the human race were in being but our first parents. For them the sabbath was appointed; and clearly for all succeeding generations also.” (*Matthew Henry’s Concise Commentary*, comment on Genesis 2:1-3.) <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/genesis/2-2.htm>

Why then did the Lord bless and sanctify the seventh day? A French author gives two reasons:

“One is because since then God wanted that Adam and his posterity would give in this day a special worship; the other because He intended only this day to be consecrated to him as he did when Moses, on the part of God, gave the express commandment to the Jewish people.” (*La Genese traduite en François avec l’explication du sens literal et du sens spirituel*, Paris, Guillaume Desprez, 1725, p. 87.) http://jesusmarie.free.fr/bible_sacy_genese.pdf

The Lord established the day of rest in paradise, before man’s fall in sin, when man was still in his state of innocence and holiness. Even then, man needed the rest of the seventh day. If so that he needed rest when he was still in a state of innocence and holiness, how much more did he need it after the fall in sin, that made man’s life particularly difficult and full of troubles and the work harder and tiresome (Genesis 3:17-19)!

THE ORIGINATOR OF THE SABBATH

Human theories are not limited to the era of the origin of the day of rest. There are number of speculations also on the identity of the peoples that according to

them would have started the sabbatical practice. Some attributes it to the Kenites, other to the Babylonians; still other to the Akkadians or Israelites, while some suppose that certain people derivate it from the influences of Saturn or from the lunar phases. All theories that leave the reader in a state of full nebulous uncertainty. What does the Bible assert?

Also on this important aspect, in the book of the origins the Holy Scripture gives reliable information. The texts already known are the followings:

“And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done.

“So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation. (Genesis 2:2-3, ESV)

These verses show very important elements for our research like, author or originator of the seventh day institution, name given to it, time when it originated, reason for its institution, benefit that are connected with it. In this section, we will concentrate our study on the first.

In verse 2 we read, “on the seventh day God ... rested” and in verse 3 is the reiteration that “on it God rested”. These verses are the report about God and creation, God and the seventh day; God and His rest; God and his blessing; God and his sanctification of the day of rest. At the centre, there is always God; therefore properly speaking, God is the Originator or divine Author of the holy and blessed day. God who created heaven, earth and all what was necessary, is also the originator of the Sabbath.

Why this emphasis on the person of the Lord? To find the answer is not difficult. If at the beginning, the seventh day had not God as author or originator, but an



angel, a people or whatever human being, there was no certainty that men would have accepted it and shown respect to it during the centuries. Many are not observing it knowing that their Father was the first who gave the example; much less would they have appreciated this gift if its origin had been different. For this and other reason was necessary that at the origin of the holy sabbatical institution should not be an angel, a man, a people or whoever, susceptible to generate uncertainty on the institution. No, this is not the case. At the origin of the seventh day, we find the person of God; He, in His sovereign authority plans, decides and acts. He rests, blesses and hallows the seventh day. The day of rest therefore has its foundation on the will and action of the supreme authority of God.

Among the different religious movements, there is a variety of holidays and differences in the days of worship. It happens that over time, there are changes within the same community, so that the panorama is considerable varied. Some, for example, without any biblical support, observe Fridays; others, recognized as Christian believers who pretend to base their practice on the gospels, respect Sunday and many other festivities days throughout the year, all created by men in different moments and circumstances. Is there any certainty that the Lord has blessed those days and will give rich blessing to those who keep them?

Even the Jews, additionally to the feasts of divine origin, had days of proper establishment. Such were the feast of Purim (Esther 9:26-32) and the feast of the Dedication (1 Maccabees 4:59; John 10:22) as well four yearly days of fasting, one during the fourth, one on the fifth, one on the seventh, and one on the tenth month (Zechariah 8:19; 7:3-5). As if these were not enough, they added two more days of fasting to be respected weekly (Luke 18:12). All eight days of human institution! Can we believe that the Lord welcomes all such institutions and the way they celebrate them? Are we interested to celebrate such or other human institutions that the Lord never recommended and blessed or we prefer to keep the seventh day that will bring great blessing to us in our spiritual life? This is the only festival established by God from the beginning and never changed over time.

These should be good reasons for everyone to consider own practice and if not in harmony begin to prac-

tice the institution of the Lord because this is the only day who has holy origins, and is of divine request. Observing what is coming from God can only bring blessings. Let us therefore enjoy God's rest because it will be a blessed experience.

THE DAY OF GOD'S REST

While some people have had difficulty to understand the "rest" of God, the Bible in its extensive message shows that it involves deep implications. According to Genesis 2:2 the next significant factor is that in this day God "rested." After the Lord has finished the grandiose work of creation, "on the seventh day God ... rested" (Genesis 2:2). The same we read in Genesis 2:3 that "the seventh day ... on it God rested", so that the seventh day of creation week is characteristic for being the day of God's rest. The Scripture confirms it also in Exodus 20:11, "In six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day" and 31:17, "in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested". The same is written in the following apostolic message: "He has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way: «And God rested on the seventh day from all his works»" (Hebrew 4:4). Characteristic of the seventh day above other days therefore is rest, the rest of God.

What means that God "rested"? Had He a need to "rest"? Is He like men that become tired? Is He not the Omnipotent that created the world with the Word and the breath of his mouth? He is (Psalm 33:6), and the Scripture affirms that He never grows faint or weary. "Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable" (Isaiah 40:28. ESV). "Ah, Lord GOD! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you" (Jeremiah 32:17 ESV).

God created all by His Word not with great physical stress, wear and tear, such as in humans when we perform a work. We read, "God said, "Let there be light," and there was light." (Genesis 1:3) "And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so." (1:9). "God said, "Let the earth sprout

vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth.” And it was so.” (1:11) “For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm.” (Psalm 33:9 ESV). Because of this, God’s “rest” cannot have the meaning of a kind of physical recovery or reinvigoration from weary and exhausting. As many authors explain, referred to God, “rest” has a different connotation and denotes cessation of creation, complacency, well pleasing, satisfaction for completion and joy for achievement.

Beginning with the understanding just mentioned, the scholar Frederic Godet writes, “«to rest» can only mean to cease creating, to contemplate the completed work.” (Frédéric Godet, as quoted by Paul Nouan, *Le septième jour signe de Dieu pour l’homme d’aujourd’hui*, Dammarie Les Lys, Editions SDT, 1979, p. 17).

Continuing in this interpretation, Dietrich Bonhöffer adds, “in the Bible “rest” really means more than “having rest”. It means rest after the work is accomplished, it means completion, it means the perfection and peace in which the world rests.”⁴. (Dietrich Bonhöffer, *Creation and Fall. A Theological Interpretation of Genesis 1-3*, 1964, p. 40, as quoted in S. Bacchiocchi, *Divine Rest for human Restlessness*, Rome, The Pontifical Gregorian University Press, 1980, p. 67; online edition p. 84.) http://www.friendsofsabbath.org/Further_Research/Bacchiocchi%20Research/Divine%20Rest%20for%20Human%20Restlessness.pdf

Others who in like manner come to similar conclusion are the Bible scholars Albert Barnes, John Gill, Norman R. Gulley and others, who have released the following comments:

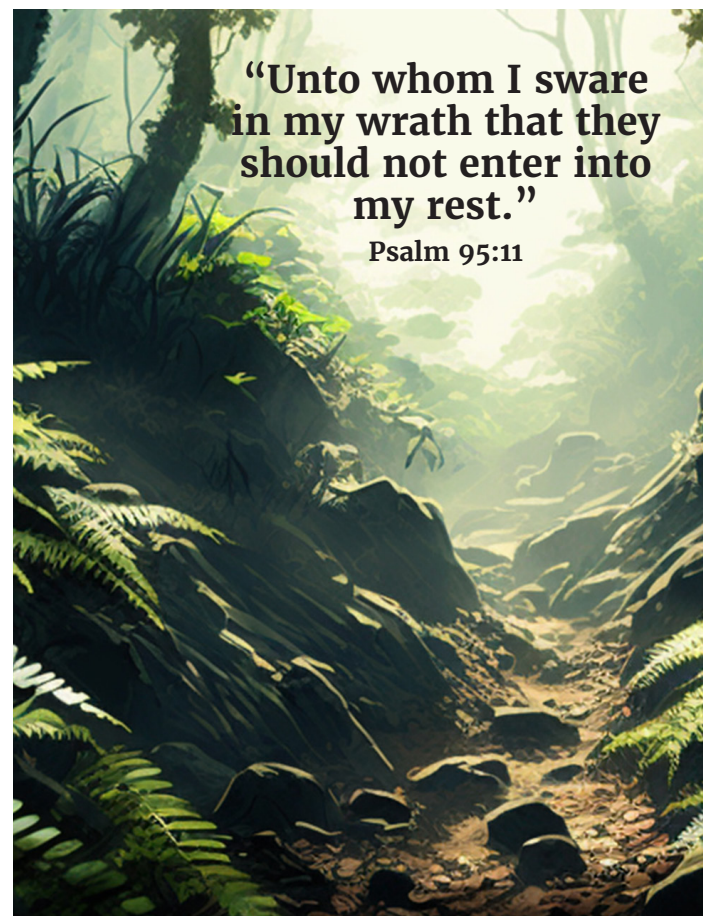
“The resting of God arises not from weariness, but from the completion of his task. He is refreshed, not by the recruiting of his strength, but by the satisfaction of having before him a finished good (Exodus 31:17)” (*Barnes’ Notes on the Bible*, comments on Genesis 2:2). <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/genesis/2-2.htm>

“... God had ended”, or “finished his work”, which he had done on the sixth day, then he rested on the seventh day from all his works which he had made: not as though weary of working, for the Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not, nor is weary, Isaiah 40:28 but as having done all his work, and brought it to such perfection, that he had no more to do ...”. (*Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible*, comments on Genesis 2:2). <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/genesis/2-2.htm>

“The word Sabbath is derived from the Hebrew word sabbat, meaning to “cease” or “desist” from a previous activity — in this case, to desist from creating. God finished His work of creation during the six days. He didn’t cease because He was tired, but He ceased in order to celebrate with Adam and Eve what He had completed. So Sabbath is time to celebrate the finished work of Christ’s creation.” (Norman R. Gulley, *Basic Issues between Science and Scripture: Theological Implications of Alternative Models and the Necessary Basis for the Sabbath in Genesis 1–2*, p. 221.) http://www.atsjats.org/publication_file.php?pub_id=45&journal=1&type=pdf

“God’s rest then means His ceasing the work of creation in order to be free for the fellowship with man, the object of his love, for the rejoicing and celebration of His completed work together with his son on earth, the imago Dei, his festive partner.” (Hans K. LaRondelle, *Perfection and Perfectionism*, Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1971, p. 72 quoted by Á. M. Rodríguez, in *The Biblical Sabbath: The Adventist Perspective*, p. 2.) https://adventistbiblicalresearch.org/sites/default/files/pdf/Sabbath-Catholic_2002.pdf

“From creation – preceding and superseding every human decision of obedience or disobedience – there



remains (ἀπολείπεται [apoleipetai]) for the people of God the Sabbath rest (σαββατισμός [sabbatismós]), the divinely willed and ordered fellowship, relationship and agreement between His own and human freedom as the goal and determination of the way to which this people continually have to be recalled...". (Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics Study Edition 13: *The Doctrine of Creation*, vol. III.1 § 40-42, London, T. T. Clark, 1958, p. 226, square brackets supplied).

"He was well pleased with the beauty and perfection of His creative work of making our world, both as a product of His power, wisdom and goodness, and as manifestation of His glory. The creation of the earth was a joyous occasion..." (Robert Leo Odom, *Sabbath and Sunday in Early Christianity*, Washington D. C., 1977, p. 14).

"The rest here, it is to be remembered, is God's rest. The refreshment is God's refreshment, which arises rather from the joy of achievement than from the relief of fatigue" (Albert Barnes' *Notes on the whole Bible*, comments on Genesis 2:3.) <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bnb/genesis-2.html>

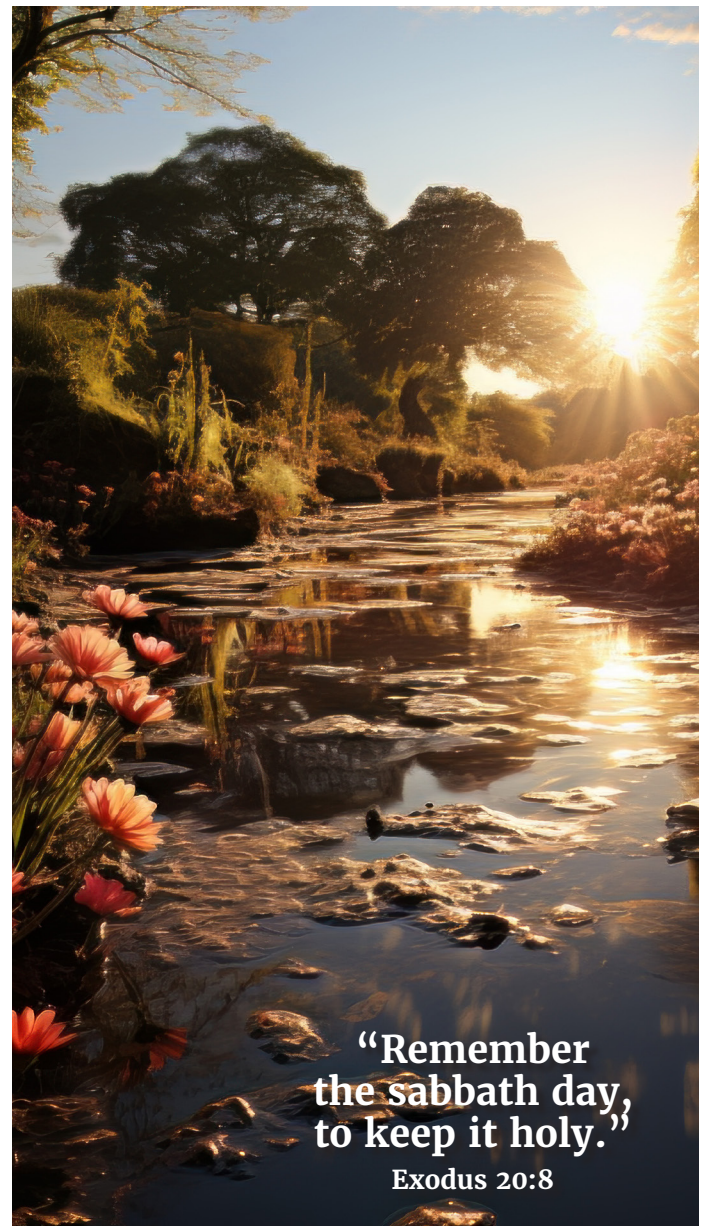
"God rested from his creative activity on the seventh day. This is not the rest that follows weariness but the rest of satisfaction and completion of a job well done" (William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary*, Nashville, Tennessee, Thomas Nelson Publishers Inc., 1995, p. 34, comments on Genesis 2:1-3.) https://books.google.it/books?id=qJF_24QKAfIC&printsec=frontcover&hl=it&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false

We can better understand the concept of "God's rest" if we consider the sentence that the creative page repeats frequently, almost after every creative realization. In the first day after the creation of light, the inspired text reports the observation: "And God saw that the light was good" (Genesis 1:4). In the third day is the same, after the creation of all kind of vegetation, the observation is made, "And God saw that it was good" (v. 12). Exactly the same is repeated in the verses 18, 21 and 25, until we reach a final observation on the creation of verse 31, "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good". These reveal that after creation there was observation, evaluation and appreciation.

In the "rest" of Genesis 2:2 and 3, as well in Exodus 31:17, where is said that "on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed", the concept is referred to God's "rest", and the first implication is "cessation", "stopping", "finalizing"; as second is "appreciation", "satis-

faction", "delight", "enjoyment", "refreshment" for the work He had done. He stood there not as the potter described in Jeremiah, whose vessel of clay "was spoiled in the potter's hand" (18:4) as he was working, but like one, whose vessel resulted a masterpiece.

Having concluded His stupendous realization, He considered all the grandeur of creation, the wonders of the sidereal and natural world and enjoyed for it. He observed the plains full of vegetation and life, the different kinds of creatures, especially the human beings bringing His image of holiness and glory as tracts of their dignity and all was "very good" (Genesis 1:31). At the end of creation God "rested" sensing comfort and great delight in contemplating and enjoying the wonderful work He had accomplished during the six days and His wish was that man might participate in it.





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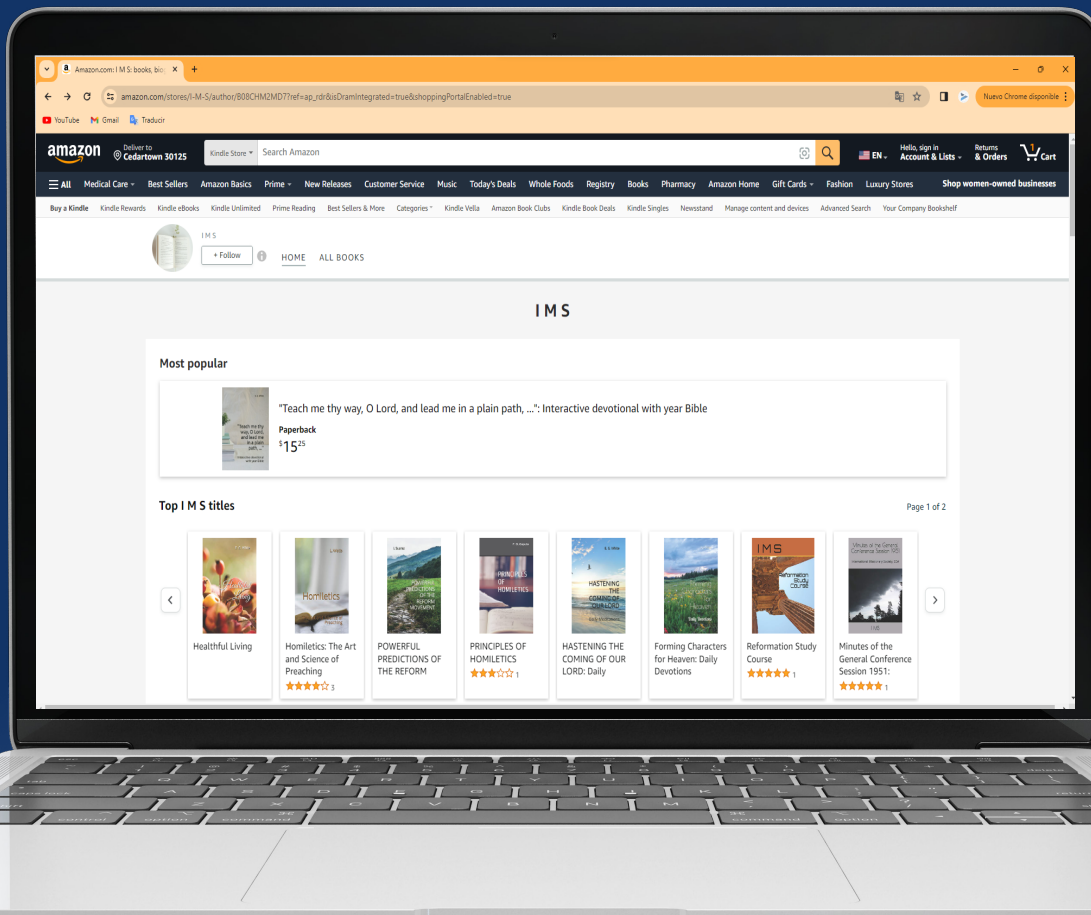


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AFRICA



GHANA



The Ghana Field had a smooth congress for the year 2023 in Aboaso in the Ashanti Region. During the congress, on December 30; 5 members, 2 brothers and 3 sisters, were baptized, and they brought joy to the countryside and to heaven as well.



LESOTHO



Last year in October 2023 we made a tent effort for 7 days for which 5 souls were baptised, that was a public conference and we continue with the work in the prisons, we preach to around 200 inmates and some after being freed still wish to study with us. We also do programmes on radio.



The Sabbath

Wachman

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