

The True Meaning of Sabbath Rest for the Church

By Pastor Rommel Insigne

1 Thus the heavens and the earth were **completed, and **all their hosts**. 2 And on **the seventh day** God 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 on it** He rested from all His work which God had created in making it. (Genesis 2:1-3)**

God is the Creator of heaven and earth (Genesis 1:1). He completed and established His order of creation and all its hosts in literal 6 solar days (Genesis 2:1). It is a supernatural work of God, made by God and for the glory of God. Chapter 2 of Genesis was an excellent conclusion and summarisation of the accounts of creation before it focuses on man, his obedience and his fall starting verse 4 and onwards. Now, from our text Genesis 2:1-3, God laid down the meaning and importance of seventh day. The question is what did God do on the seventh day? How significant seventh day for Christians today?

The author of Genesis highlighted “the seventh day” three times and “His work” three times. Other words like God completed, God rested, God blessed and sanctified are significant words to study as well. This is how Moses ordered verse 2 and 3: First, on the seventh day God **completed** His work; Second, on the seventh day God **rested** from all His work; and third, on the seventh day God **blessed and sanctified** it after His work. When we see repetitions of words or phrases in Scriptures it is emphatic. It shows importance, it is serious and it needs commitment to faithfulness not only to the text of Scriptures but to Christlikeness.

Let us study the seventh day to look further why it is important to God. First, in **verse 2 And on the seventh day God completed His work which He had done. . .** Why did God stop creating after six days? On the seventh day God completed His work in creating the world. God finished everything in six days. The word seven could mean in Hebrew to make a swear or to make a pledge or to make a covenant. God made a promise or a pledge to complete everything which indeed God completed His work after 6 days. For Christians, the seventh day should be a reminder that God was the Creator of heaven and earth. God perfectly and excellently designed everything by His words in six days. Our seventh day should be our pledge or covenant to God, to confess God is the Sovereign Creator and the Giver of life. The word completed in Hebrew kallah it means Yahweh God began and finished everything. The Hebrew word for work is lakah it means God worked, creation was the workmanship of God, He designed everything and made it beautiful in 6 solar days. From the rising of the sun to the setting down and from the setting down to the rising of the sun. The Triune God worked together and united together in completing all creation. No angels helped God. No one helped God but by Yahweh Elohim alone. One God in 3 persons.

When day 7 came everything was finished and completed. God stopped and ceased to work because it is finished and nothing to work on. Everything in creation was completed by God alone. God put order, beauty, colour, artistry, intelligence, precision and perfection and it is finished. That is why in verse 31 of chapter 1 of Genesis, God said, it was very good. Heaven and earth was not a theory or man’s idea or an evolution eliminating God as the sole Creator. Creation was not by evolutionary processes, random chance or by selection based on million years old earth theory. It is clear God made them all and completed everything and there is no evolution and survival of the fittest kind of life. It was a miraculous and supernatural work of God. Every details of light, the expanse of the heavens and sky, the waters, darkness, sun and moon and the stars. The dry land, soil, rocks and dust all made by God. Plants, seeds, fruits and trees all made by God. Fish in the ocean and birds in the air and every details of their organs and physical appearances all made by God. How about animals? Domestic animals to the creeping insects and the

microscopic bacteria. There are millions of them all made by God. How about the more special living beings: male and female God created them. God gave them life, organs, blood vessels and heart beats and all the complex machines in our bodies God breathed on them all. The physical appearances of man are God's excellent design. God designed them and created them all. It is a big job for the world and for scientists to make creation happen and to be like gods in creation. We see many books on evolution creating evil ideas and theories and refuting and denying creation as God's Own creation. But it was God who completed His work in creation. This is clear in Scriptures, "In the beginning God. . ."

Second, why seventh day is important to God, half of verse 2 it says, **and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done.** The Hebrew word for rest is sabat or Sabbath. On the seventh day God didn't speak out to create more so therefore He rested. However, sabat does not mean God stopped in His involvement or ceased to exist or evaporated from the scene. God did not stopped communicating to the world and left living creatures to survive and evolve by themselves or maybe God was tired and slept for eternity. That is not the meaning of Sabat or God rested. To **rest** means **to reflect, to delight**. It is like saying, it is finish, the work is done, mission accomplished. God rested means God was delighted and satisfied and happy in His creation. God was delighted to see the glory of God in His creation. Purely perfect and holy and glorious. Can you imagine no impurities, no separation, no deaths, no sicknesses and no sins. All you see was God's perfection and beauty, and colour, life, living creatures roaming around, swimming running and flying. This is the meaning of God rested. God rested or refreshed Himself from work and He was satisfied from His work. This sabat or rest day of God should be forever but it was cut short because of the fall. We know Moses wrote the 10 commandments being inspired by God and part of the 10 commandments is to obey the Sabbath day. People cannot really be perfect in our sabbath day keeping and other parts of the 10 commandments. We may perfect it but we cannot attain salvation by obeying the sabbath and all the Mosaic laws. Sabbath points us to our failures, weaknesses and sins that we cannot reach God by our faithful obedience to sabbath. We can only be perfect in our sabbath keeping by having Christ in our hearts the Lord of the Sabbath. True rest is Jesus Christ the Saviour and can only be attained by faith in Christ and by His grace alone. Jesus Christ is our Sabbath (Matthew 12:8).

When God rested it doesn't mean this is the sabbath day of man and so demand to have sabbath rest as well. In the New Testament, the church didn't command believers to have sabbath rest like the non believing Jews perfecting sabbath. Only God who rested and enjoyed the beauty and perfection of His creation. Seventh day was really for God and for man to thank God, be grateful to God, worship God and continue to fear God as the Creator and giver of life. As Job said in chapter 1 verse 21, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, And naked I shall return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." The God who can give and take away our life anytime deserves all our fear and reverent worship.

Third, why seventh day is important to God, in **verse 3 Then God blessed the seventh day** — God, the Triune God blessed everything they created and even gave some of them the breath of life: Look at all living creatures God blessed them with life. How about human beings, God created man in His own image, according to their likeness. And they are to be fruitful and multiply. Because He blessed them, on the seventh day, God indeed blessed the seventh day. Why did God bless the seventh day? The word blessed means to remember God, to exalt God, to know God is the Creator, to see God is powerful, miraculous God, nothing is impossible with God, He is gracious, generous and faithful to His promise and covenant. He is worthy of our trust. The only day that was blessed by the Lord is the seventh day. God sovereignly chose seventh day as a blessed day. The only blessed day so people would cease or pause from work and worship Him and bring back all glory and honour to Him alone, the true giver of life and rest. God designed the

seventh day as such. He made a pattern in our seven days in a week, work for six days (6 days creation) and on the seventh day was a blessed day. On the seventh day, God wants His faithful followers to seek and know the Creator, fear the Creator, abide and pursue a lasting relationship with the Creator the true giver of rest in our souls.

God was not yet finished aside from He blessed the seventh day, God even said, **and sanctified it, because on it He rested from all His work which God had created in making it.** What does it mean sanctified it? The word sanctified in Hebrew is qadosh it means holy. To sanctify means to consecrate or to set apart. This was the first time the word sanctified or holy was used in Scriptures. God made the seventh day holy or an exalted day of the Lord. It is a holy day. It is a hallow day or an honourable day. This is to set us apart as pure and clean from the impurities of the world. God sanctified it or appointed the day as a holy day of God. God memorialised it as a holy day lest we forget our Maker.

As I conclude, the seventh day is the only day in the week that is blessed and holy set apart by the Lord. God made this day for His people to remember the Creator for the rest of their lives. Sabbath day is a day to separate, to magnify and exalt the Maker of heaven and earth. Remember God finished and completed His creation in six days and He rested. He was blessed and satisfied in His intelligent design. God saw His creation and it was very good. A perfect excellent work of God. He exalted the seventh day. Blessed the seventh day, and made it holy.

Today, the Sabbath in the old testament has ceased and was replaced by Christ and His gospel the Lord of the Sabbath. There is no more sabbath day for us to follow from 6pm Friday to 6pm Saturday. True sabbath is putting our faith in Christ the Lord of the Sabbath. Our rest here on earth is to be with Christ and with God's people His church, to remember our Creator, to know the Gospel: the works of Christ on the cross, His death and resurrection and His second coming. He is indeed the Lord of the sabbath. He is our priest. He is the perfect sacrifice. He is in the temple of our hearts who made us holy in Christ (Ephesians 1:4). He is our new covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-43). Jesus is the exalted One and must be exalted, remembered, worshipped and served all the days of our lives.

Believers in Christ are commanded not to forsake the assembly of the church. As Hebrews 10:25 says, "not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more as you see the day drawing near." Sunday is a special day for Christians because according to Scriptures the church met every first day of the week which is Sunday. Sunday for Christians is to remember God, Christ and His gospel, to worship God, to preach and hear the Word, break bread and to fellowship with one another. Sunday is not sabbath day. Sunday is the Lord's day. Let us make the Lord's day a blessed day and a sanctified day. Let us be holy and set apart from the world. Let us see Sunday as an opportunity given by the Lord to us as chosen and blessed people of God to worship the Lord of the Sabbath Jesus Christ the true giver of our eternal rest.