In The Beginning, part 7
The Sabbath
Mentone April 11, 2015

Somehow it seems appropriate that our seventh study in this series would be on the topic of the Sabbath. Seven in the Bible is a number that seems to have special significance, and the seventh day being God’s holy day of rest is just one of those examples. We’ve looked at how God created this earth and “all that in them is” in the days of creation week, which we understand to be literal 24 hour days. We’ve seen that this creation account is not only the true and accurate record of how God brought this world into existence, but is also an illustration of how He is now re-creating sinners, fulfilling His original mission statement, to “make man in Our image.”

He brings us from darkness to light. He separates sin and the world from us. He re-plants the Seed of righteousness within us to enable us to bring forth fruit “after His kind,” that is, the fruits of righteousness, the fruits of the character attributes of His unselfish agape love. All of these aspects of literal creation pertain now to His grand objective to “make man in Our image” even after the Fall. And the purpose and lessons associated with the instituting of the Sabbath likewise find their fulfillment in that objective.

At the close of the literal creation week, He instituted something very special. He set apart, blessed and sanctified a whole day during which He and mankind, the “new and distinct order” of humanity could become better acquainted. This was to be a time of “rest” or cessation of other activities. Neither the Creator nor His creatures Adam and Eve knew what fatigue was before sin, so this was not “rest” in the sense that we usually think of it. But it was a stoppage (the word Shabath means “to cease”) from other activities in order to focus on their relationship together. The Bible says in Genesis 2:1-3, “Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which God had created and made. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.”

Last time we saw that the days of Creation Week were literal 24-hour days. We know that because they are described as being an “evening and morning,” a phrase which is used only in speaking of literal days, and because a number is attached to each of them, such as “the first day,” again being a technique that makes it certain that
24-hour literal days are being described. The concept that the days of creation week were long epochs of time makes no sense grammatically, nor does it make sense biologically. The symbiotic systems within nature depend on their being brought forth at the same time, or at least within a very short period of time. It’s safest to take God’s word just as He said. “In six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them.” Exodus 20:11.

We found that the Sabbath on which we worship today is the very same seventh day from the beginning. We know that because accurate astronomical records show that the seventh day today is the same as the seventh day when Jesus was here, and that seventh day was honored by Jesus, the One in Whom is no sin, and was declared to be the “Sabbath according to the commandment.” Even though there have been calendar changes, the weekly cycle has never been changed. We found that in about 100 languages, the word for the seventh day of the week is “Sabbath.” Beyond that, even in modern Greek, the word for the sixth day of the week is paraskevi, or “Preparation,” deriving from the practice of preparing for Sabbath on the day before.

And though the hand of man has been raised to attempt to change God’s holy Law, never in Scripture do we find one statement that divine authority brought about any change in the specified day of worship for God’s followers. So we can be assured that there is no inaccuracy with respect to this seventh day today being the day that God set aside for our spiritual re-creation and enjoyment. It is our privilege to honor Him as Creator by humbly complying with His command to keep this day holy. We didn’t make it holy. God did. But we can “keep” it holy. Adam didn’t make the Garden of Eden. God did. But he was told to “keep” it, wasn’t he.

We traced the history of the Sabbath in the Old Testament, and saw how Satan, the enemy of God, led people to become lax in observing God’s day of rest, knowing that they would lose God’s blessing in doing so. Eventually, violating God’s holy Sabbath was part of the reason He allowed them to go into captivity. When they returned, Satan induced them to heap rigorous restrictions on the day of rest. The devil did this to obscure its true beauty and making it a burden, not a blessing, and to set up a rejection of the Messiah, Whom he knew would not follow the man-made laws.

What a blessing the Sabbath is! Besides offering physical and spiritual refreshment, true “re-creation,” it plays a special role in our
becoming made into the image of God. The Lord said, “Moreover I also gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between them and Me, that they might know that the I am the LORD who sanctifies them.” Ezekiel 20:12. Just as He set apart the seventh day for special use, so He has set us apart for special use. He wants to make us holy as He did the seventh day. He wants to make a “marvelous distinction” between us and the world. He wants to “sanctify” us lost sinners through His grace.

There are at least 4 reasons that the devil hates the Sabbath. These 4 reasons should be reasons why you and I as committed Christians would want to honor God and keep the Sabbath. The devil hates the Sabbath because it identifies God as Creator. He wants to mislead and deceive people into believing that there is no God, no Creator, and that nature somehow gave birth to “all this” on her own. Not true! What an insult to Jehovah! And inspired by someone, Satan, who has been eyewitness to billions of creation episodes! God raised up this church just at the time when the false teaching of evolution was gaining attention, to alert the world, as we’re told in the Three Angels’ Messages, to “worship Him Who made.”

Secondly, the Sabbath, correctly understood, teaches salvation by grace. It is true that some think it is “legalistic” to worship on the Sabbath, but that is because they don’t understand its true beauty and purpose. Satan led people in the past to keep it from a wrong motivation, thinking that by their works they could attain to righteousness. But this is “Old Covenant” thinking. We can never atone for our sins by our good works! “All of our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.” Isaiah 64:6. All the Sabbath-keeping; all the tithe-paying, all the church-going I do will never amount to anything as far as earning God’s favor. I am a lost sinner, and my “works” cannot contribute to my salvation.

Thank God that He sent Jesus Christ, the divine Redeemer, to pay for my sins and give me (the word “grace” means “gift”) salvation freely. “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.” Ephesians 2:8, 9.

The Sabbath, correctly understood, teaches salvation by grace. The “work” was done by God, not by Adam. Adam “rested” in a finished work in keeping the Sabbath. And as far as the provision for salvation is concerned, we celebrate a finished work accomplished by
Jesus Christ on the cross and from the tomb. The blood was shed on Calvary, and when He cried out “It is finished,” He meant exactly that.

Now, just to be clear, the “finished work” of the provision for salvation is to be distinguished from the on-going work of applying the blood to our hearts today. In the original Passover event, there were two separate parts, each of vital importance. The lamb was slain, representing the death of Jesus. Then the blood was brushed on the doorposts. Both were important functions. In a similar way, the finished work of the provision for salvation was accomplished when Jesus died on the cross. Now, He ministers that blood of the covenant to us individually as He serves as our High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary. The Sabbath teaches salvation by grace. We rest and trust in what God has done for us.

Thirdly, the Sabbath teaches that God takes us as we are and then He makes us into His image. That’s the great objective we’ve been studying the last few weeks, the fulfillment of His “mission statement” given in Genesis 1:26. Just as He took a world in darkness and “without form and void” and worked on it, shedding His light, separating waters from the waters, making it fruitful, so He is doing in our souls. At the end, He will be able to say His work has resulted in something “very good.” Just as He did in Genesis 1 in the literally creation, He works on us day by day, through His Word which has creative power and by His Spirit, the One hovering over the vast face of the sea of humanity.

And fourthly, the Sabbath is all about spending quality time for the purpose of building and maintaining relationships. We all know that time is the irreplaceable, indispensable commodity when it comes to maintaining relationships. And if a weekly appointment with the Creator was important for Adam and Eve before sin entered, just think how important it is for us after sin came into this world!

The Sabbath is a divine “sign post” pointing to God as Creator and Redeemer, and the devil knows it. So he devised a plan for this special day to be ignored, violated and eventually changed. The “sign post” was turned another direction. Another day was substituted for God’s holy Sabbath, and that by human and not divine authority. For this change the Roman Catholic hierarchy takes full credit saying in their catechism, “Which is the Sabbath day?” “Saturday is the Sabbath day.” “Why do we observe Sunday instead of Saturday?” “We observe Sunday instead of Saturday because the Catholic Church, in the Council of Laodicea (A.D. 336), transferred the solemnity from
Saturday to Sunday.” Convert’s Catechism Of Catholic Doctrine (Peter Geiermann, Herder Book Co, London, 1931), the question is asked, Page 50.

Another Catholic author writes, “You will tell me that Saturday was the Jewish Sabbath, but that Christian Sabbath has been changed to Sunday. Changed! but by whom? Who has authority to change an express commandment of Almighty God? When God has spoken and said, Thou shalt keep holy the seventh day, who shall dare to say, Nay, thou mayest work and do all manner of worldly business on the seventh day; but thou shalt keep holy the first day in its stead? This is a most important question, which I know not how you can answer. You are a Protestant, and you profess to go by the Bible and the Bible only; and yet in so important a matter as the observance of one day in seven as a holy day, you go against the plain letter of the Bible, and put another day in the place of that day which the Bible has commanded. The command to keep holy the seventh day is one of the Ten Commandments; you believe that the other nine are still binding; who gave you authority to tamper with the fourth? If you are consistent with your own principles, if you really follow the Bible and the Bible only, you ought to be able to produce some portion of the New Testament in which this fourth commandment is expressly altered.” Library of Christian Doctrine: Why Don’t You Keep Holy the Sabbath-Day? London: Burns and Oates, Ltd., pp. 3, 4.

God Himself established the line between what is sacred and holy, and what is not. His injunction remains to not confuse the sacred with the common.

What do you do if you find that something you felt you knew and depended on for decades, or your family practiced in good faith for centuries, turns out to be inaccurate? The line separating North and South Carolina had been relied on for over 200 years, depending on maps drafted by surveyors in the 18th Century. But just a few years ago, in March of 2012, by using more modern equipment such as computers and GPS systems, it was discovered that the line was in the wrong place, in some locations as much as 150 feet off, further north than it should have been! When the adjustment was made, North Carolina “grew” a bit more, and South Carolina became a bit smaller as a result.

This became a problem for those experiencing this new adjustment, who had to adapt to the new address and all that that means. For some of the citizens it was more than mere inconvenience,
such as Victor Boulware who owns Lake Wylie Minimarket in what used to be South Carolina but has been redefined as North Carolina. In his new state, Victor finds that a different state gasoline tax makes it $.30 more per gallon now, reducing his sales and the fireworks that he used to sell are now illegal in his new home state.

But as inconvenient or even costly as it might be, for the sake of accuracy it was important to fall in line with truth as it was now discovered. So with God’s holy day, the seventh-day Sabbath. It may be that for some they and their families have been honest in heart while worshiping God on another day. Now that the light of truth has shined, what should they do? The Bible gives us the answer as to how God looks at this. Paul said to those on Mars’ Hill, “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent, because He hath appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained.” Acts 17:30, 31, KJV.

As we near the close of time, the Sabbath will occupy a unique role as it defines those who are the true followers of God and who are not. God created a perfect world, but gave His children freedom to choose and a vehicle by which they could demonstrate their choice. Adam and Eve disregarded the express command of Jehovah and forfeited their right to eternal life and home in a perfect environment.

Nevertheless, God instituted a wonderful plan of redemption, in which He would give mankind another chance to choose. He Himself would pay the costly price for transgression, and through His Spirit He would restore in mankind the image of God, which had been marred by sin.

As the clock of time ticks toward eternity, God will institute a similar opportunity by means of a very simple test, whether to obey the express command of God or not. On those who choose to obey Him by His grace, He will place His seal of approval and save for eternity. In Eden it was a choice, if you can see it this way, between two trees, the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

Because mankind has proliferated and spread across the globe, a test between the “two trees” is impractical and logistically impossible. Therefore God has designed another very simple test involving something that spans the globe, giving all the inhabitants of Planet Earth an equal opportunity to express their allegiance to God. At the
end, the choice won’t be about the “two trees,” it will be about the “two days,” the Sabbath of God’s making and the false sabbath set up by Satan through his human agencies.

This test is not today in place, but will soon be. As our country continues to defy God and seeks to wipe Him from their conscience, it will forfeit the protection that He gives. Disasters and calamities will increase, as we are seeing already today. Eventually the voice will be heard, calling for a “return to religion.” This movement, led by the pastors of Sunday churches, will birth a law that elevates the first day of the week to national prominence, and demands worship thereon.

God’s people will have to face that test and through His strength resist the temptation to disobey the Creator’s just Law. Stiff fines, confiscation of property, and ultimately the loss of life will be the tools used by the devil to bring the nation and even the entire globe under his flag.

But God will have a “remnant” who will be faithful to Him, even if it means losing their property or laying down their lives. Many devout Christians who today know nothing of the existence or significance of God’s holy day will be drawn to the side of Jehovah and honor His day as a sign of their allegiance to Him. We must pray for these dear souls, and never neglect one opportunity demonstrate Christ’s love for them, and His desire for them to know the special truths for these times.

Such a one was pastor Timothy. He was approached by one of his church members with a question. “Pastor Timothy, I need your advice. The nurses from the Seventh-day Adventist hospital in Atoifi are holding a clinic here in Kwaibaita. You’ve often warned us about Adventists’ misguided doctrines. Is it safe to go to their clinic?” Since Timothy was not only pastor but chief of that entire district in the Solomon Islands, he wanted to give good advice. He told Nathaniel, “You can accept the Adventists’ medications, but don’t listen to their teachings.”

Even as he gave this counsel, his conscience pricked him. He had found some Bible texts that made him wonder if maybe the Adventists were right. Nevertheless, he, his wife and their 10-year-old son headed out to work in their garden that Saturday in September of 1990.
As they neared the gate that separated a cow pasture from their garden, Timothy’s wife spoke up. “Look at how all the cows have lined up facing us. It’s almost as if they’re trying to block our way.” “They look like soldiers on parade,” her husband laughed. He expected them to move out of their way, but they didn’t. Going around the line of cows, there stood a large bull that seemed to be staring right at them. As the family approached, the bull suddenly spoke in the Kwaibaita language. “Why are you going to the garden now? Don’t you know that today is the seventh day, the Sabbath of the Lord God?”

Pastor Timothy’s jaw dropped. “Did you hear that?” he croaked. “I think the bull just talked!” his wife whispered. Timothy’s neck swiveled around, thinking that it must have been someone else speaking to him. But no one was around. Then he heard the voice again. “Timothy! Timothy! I’m speaking to you!” Even the bull’s mouth seemed to be moving as it spoke the words.

“There must be a devil in you to make you talk like that,” Pastor Timothy managed to say. “I am not the devil,” the bull replied. “I am the voice of Jesus talking to you.” Now the attention of Pastor Timothy was riveted on the bull, who went on to say, “Today is the Sabbath of God. Don’t you know that God gave you six days to work, and the seventh day is the Sabbath? You have been a pastor, and yet you don’t know these things? How blind can you be?”

In his mind, Pastor Timothy knew this was right. He knew that he had been refusing to accept what the Bible teaches. The bull continued, “You must not work in your garden today. Go home and read Jeremiah 1:5. Share it with your people. Then look for the Seventh-day Adventist pastor, Pastor Bata. He will further explain these things to you.”

Immediately Pastor Timothy and his family left the garden and went home to look up the passage which says, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart. I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.” “What does it have to do with the Sabbath?” his son asked. “I think it means that I must share this message with my people,” his dad replied, which he did. On the day of his baptism, he challenged his villagers to accept the new truths that he had discovered, and the majority of his people made their decision to follow their pastor and become Seventh-day Adventists. (Adapted and quoted from Guide Magazine,
Another Sunday Pastor named Tim had just undergone a very difficult divorce. One day while switching across the television channels, he came upon an Amazing Facts broadcast, led by Pastor Doug Batchelor. Even though he was a minister, Pastor Tim recognized that Bible truth was being presented with things like the Bible Sabbath and the unconscious sleep of the dead in their graves. He was brought to conviction, and one Saturday morning got up, put on church clothes, and determined to find a Sabbath keeping congregation. But where would he find such a group? He got into his car and began driving, and within a short time saw a man and a women dressed in nice clothes getting into their car. He felt a strong impulse to follow them. They drove through the neighborhood. They got on a a busy freeway. Pastor Tim did his best to keep them in sight. At times he felt foolish and almost gave up the pursuit, but the impression came upon him urgently, “Follow that car.”

The car exited the freeway and and wound among many streets and eventually entered the parking lot of a public high school. “Ah,” smiled Pastor Tim, “They're going to a high school basketball game.” He nearly chuckled at his gullible naivete in following them such a distance. But yet, the conviction came upon him, “Follow them.” He got out of his car and followed as they passed through a number of corridors and then entered a room. It was a Seventh-day Adventist Church group, renting space in the high school.

Pastor Tim found his heart warmed, and in visiting another Seventh-day Adventist Church nearby in California's state capital, found it to be Sacramental Central SDA Church, the very church pastored by Doug Batchelor whom he had seen on TV. And that was not the only surprise for Pastor Tim that day. Looking around, he recognized no less than 3 of his former members from different Sunday congregations. When he posed the question to each of them, “What are you doing here,” they all gave a similar answer. “We discovered Bible truth, and had to follow it.”

Pastor Tim continued attending Sacramental Central SDA Church and was baptized. As some time passed, the day came when the one who had been appointed to speak was not available, and the elders turned to Pastor Tim and asked if he would share a message from God’s Word.

As he stepped onto the platform, ready to share the sermon, a sudden wave passed across his soul as he realized that he was then standing on the very spot where Pastor Doug Batchelor had been
standing when he first saw him on the Amazing Facts broadcast a few years before. Pastor Tim continued to grow in his knowledge of God's last day Bible truth, and felt a conviction that he should spend his full time in sharing these things. He is now a full-time evangelist for the Amazing Facts Ministry team. Praise God for those like Pastor Tim Jones who have the courage to follow when God leads into further truth!

Such a one is Genoveva. Raised Catholic, she became convicted that the Holy Bible is God’s Word and began reading it. Sensing her interest in spiritual matters, many in her family began to invite her to their churches. But though she visited many different denominations, none of them suited her, as they were not teaching the things she had discovered in her Bible. She was led to come to our church and attend some meetings featuring the messages of the Three Angels of Revelation 14.

One day I came unannounced to her home. As I knocked on the screen door, I could see that at that very moment she was studying her Bible, with the materials that we had handed out from our meetings. She graciously invited me in and we conversed. During our talk I felt prompted to ask her about her Bible reading, and it came out, very modestly, that in the past 3 years or so she had read her Bible from cover to cover 20 times!

She requested to be baptized in a river, a request we were happy to oblige, though it was December. It was a truly beautiful service.

Another sister was searching for truth, searching for a group that was following God’s ways. One day she was walking down the road and a very large impressive church stood prominently before her. In her mind, she asked the question, “Could this be the church that I should join, the church that I should belong to?” Immediately she heard a “voice” in her mind, answering her question. “No, it’s not this one,” referring to the large church of another faith. “It’s this one,” and her attention was directed to another church, smaller and on the side of the street, the Seventh-day Adventist church. We were thrilled to baptize this sister after studying more particularly the truths of God’s Word.

Yes, God has His children, His truth-seekers in the world today. And in the very near future, as things begin to be wrapped up, as the prophecies of the Bible come to fulfillment, there will be many who will
join the ranks of Jehovah and honor all His commandments, including keeping the seventh day as holy to Him. Today we stand as God’s messengers, His “angels,” giving His solemn, warning message of love to the world to love, accept and obey Him as the Sovereign of the universe. Isn’t that how creatures should relate to their Maker? Isn’t that how compliant, faithful citizens should relate to the Law of His kingdom? Why should obeying God be thought of as being a strange and weird thing?

By the end of the sixth day of Genesis 1, God had a man and a woman who bore His likeness and His image, and it was time to reflect and enjoy the day of His rest, the Sabbath. Perhaps relating to this there is a small, tangential application of that passage where Peter writes, “A day is as a thousand years.” Genesis tells us that 6 days were followed by a Sabbath of rest. The Bible and history tell us that the story of mankind will comprise approximately six thousand years, followed by a thousand-year sabbath of rest. When the six thousand years of sin will have come to its end, we will have a thousand years of rest in heaven.

We feel that this is not too much of a “stretch,” in that when the captivity of ancient Israel came, part of the purpose was to allow the land to enjoy her jubilee Sabbath, making up for all the times when the rests that God had not appointed had not been faithfully observed. See II Chronicles 36:21. And so it will be that during the 1,000 years after Jesus comes, this earth will observe its “rest,” and the saints will enjoy a sabbatical from sighing and cares in the city that God has prepared.

Those who will be ready when that day comes will have experienced the fulfillment of God’s original mission statement, “Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness.” That’s how Adam and Eve were created, in form, feature and character bearing the impress of God’s image. Then sin came and like a sharp piece of metal scrawled across the image. Mankind’s nature and character were drastically changed, and sin became attractive and addictive.

Through the wonderful provisions of the Gospel, God has yet declared that He will pursue His original objective. Though apart from God we are in darkness, without form and void spiritually, He sends the Light of His truth. He separates sin from us. He plants the Seed of righteousness within us and makes us “fruitful” in bringing forth the character attributes of agape love within us. At the “end of the day,” He will again have man in His image, re-created through His Spirit, His
“trophies of grace,” demonstrating the truth of His claims and the utter emptiness and falsehood of Satan’s charges. To these restored ones He will point and say, “Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.” Revelation 14:12. May, by His grace, you and I be among those!