

### A bible study on our Sabbath Rest:

*God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning--the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done. (Genesis 1:31-2:3 NIV)*

There is no feast in the Christian calendar more important than the Sabbath. In fact, all feasts are derivatives of the Sabbath. It is the Sabbath that differentiate God's narrative and the gospel from that of the devil's. In the narrative of the devil no real Sabbath exist. So what is the Sabbath then really? Just to define the Sabbath as resting from our labour is not good enough.

First of all the Sabbath is embedded in the creation act, as stated by our text above. It is a God ordained event, not just an institution. Each of the six preceding days were a creation event, the same holds for the 7<sup>th</sup> day. It was an event, but also a feast. All feasts are events. In Late Judaism, when Jesus strolled the streets of Palestine, that wasn't the case anymore, when the Sabbath was abused as an institution proposing slavery rather than a feast. This was the context in which Jesus' words were spoken when he said *"The Sabbath was made to serve us; we weren't made to serve the Sabbath"* (Mark 2:27 The Message). The feast of the Sabbath is there for mankind and not mankind for the feast, just as any feast, or public holiday etc., is there for the people and not the people for the feast. Would your country maintain public holidays, and loose economical muscle, if it wasn't for the people, but rather for the days itself?

God created the world in six days and saw that it was good. The question is, did God create the world in six days and needed a 7<sup>th</sup> day to rest, or did God rather create the world for the 7<sup>th</sup> day so that he could have a feast of time once it was finished? I think it is rather the last one. God rested from his labour, so that he could have time to enjoy his creation.

This is the difference between God's narrative and that of the devil's. In God's narrative we labour towards the Sabbath, so that the Sabbath can labour for us. In the devil's narrative labour is an end in itself. Labour is encouraged by empty promises, *"Once you have this and that, and accomplished this and that, you'll have a feast"*. This is lie, since material and status accomplishments only erect barriers between people, and no feast is a feast without other people.

This brings us to the second point. The Sabbath is a covenantal obligation. Covenant is a metaphor describing a Godlike relationship between parties. When God created the world, in Genesis 1, it wasn't Yahweh (the covenantal God) who created but Elohim – the same God with two different hats for distinctive roles. When God laboured he was alone, not in a covenant, but once he had retired, had a feast and fellowship with mankind. God entered into a covenant with his creation and even had evening walks, in the new found garden of Eden, with mouth-to-mouth fellowship with Adam and Eve (see Genesis 3:8-9).

Sabbath is the fulfilment of the Christian covenant of fellowship and feasting within community. Labour as an end in itself, on the other hand, neutralises community by categorising/labelling people according to their different skills, possessions and statuses. Sabbath again brings labour into perspective as only a servant of the feast of the Sabbath.

Thirdly, the Sabbath is about abundance, constituted by God's blessing. This is the Old Testament picture of a feast at the king's table, flowing over with exceeding abundance, where the rich and the poor are all enjoying God's blessings on equal foot - spiritually, emotionally and materially.

The best picture of Sabbath is what we see after Pentecost, in Acts 2:44-47:

*And all the believers lived in a wonderful harmony, holding everything in common. They sold whatever they owned and pooled their resources so that each person's need was met. They followed a daily discipline of worship in the Temple followed by meals at home, every meal a celebration, exuberant and joyful, as they praised God. (The Message)*

What a feast of the Gospel it was. Everyone owning everything in common, while daily attending to spiritual and emotional needs by gathering in house and in the temple. Labour was put in perspective, it was to serve the one equal community.

In the Old Testament the weekly Sabbath extended into the Sabbath year, when the land had to be laid barren for a whole year and when all slaves were set free, for a year of feasting. This was to restore true fellowship between all of Israel. The abundance of God's blessings had to be enjoyed by everyone (no one excluded) in the termination of labour, and consequently segregation, with everyone on equal foot enjoying God's blessed land. The year of jubilee, every 50<sup>th</sup> year, extended this Sabbath feast even further when property had to be returned. In short, every 50<sup>th</sup> year the system was to be rebooted and the memory cleared, when all slaves were set free and property returned. After every 50<sup>th</sup> year everything started all over again. What a feast and restoration of

fellowship?

In the Sabbath is the command that there should be no poverty (spiritually, emotionally and materially) in Israel, since God's blessings are sufficient for everyone!!

Driving it home:

1. Has labour become an end in itself for you, since it never ceases for Sabbath?
2. Do you have, at least once a week, a Sabbath feast with others? This doesn't have to be on a Sunday, or any particular day, since Sabbath is a way of life.