

## God's Rest (Part 1)

What is God's Rest?

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Given 24-Feb-01; Sermon #489

We will begin this sermon by turning to II Corinthians 5:14

**II Corinthians 5:14-18** For the love of Christ constrains us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. Wherefore, henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yes, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature [or creation]: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who has reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation.

This series of verses is going to be the foundation from which we are going to launch this sermon subject, and I want to zero in first of all on verse 16 just very briefly where Paul states that he could no longer look upon Christ as he formerly had. In other words, there was a time that he looked upon Christ as being an enemy. That's what it means. It means that he looked upon Him in a carnal point of view. There came a time (and as we know, it occurred in his case dramatically on the road to Damascus) when he was converted, and from that point on he looked upon Christ in a different way.

In like manner, though it may not have happened to us in the same dramatic fashion, it nonetheless occurred to us, that there was a time that we looked upon Christ differently from the way we do today. What separates the way we looked at Him *then*, and the way we look at Him *now*, is *conversion*.

In verse 17 he says, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a *new* creation: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." I want to draw our attention to two things in here. They are grammatical things in the way that Paul wrote this. "*Old things*" is written in the *aorist* tense, which indicates that there came a time of decisive break away from the *old things*. As I said, with Paul it took place on the road to Damascus, and for us generally it usually did not happen quite as quickly, but it did nonetheless occur. And so "the old things are passed away, and behold, all things are become *new*."

Paul shifted the tense when he got to "*become new*." He shifted it away from the *aorist* tense to the *perfect* tense, indicating something was continuing on. In this case it was the result of a new fellowship with Christ. In other words, the dramatic change had continued right on from that point up until the present. Again he is implying to you and me that the same thing has occurred to us that had occurred to the Corinthians.

In verse 18 he says, "All things are of God, who has reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ." What he is stating here is the basis for the *new fellowship* that is continuing from the time of the dramatic change. The basis for that fellowship is that the hostility between us and God is removed through Christ; thus there is *peace*. *Reconciliation* is a word that is frequently used by Paul to indicate *peace* that now exists between two parties who formerly were hostile to one another: the one party being God, and the other party being us.

When justification occurs through the blood of Christ the hostility is removed, and we then go on with a fellowship that was initiated by God. That is important to this. We did not initiate it *with* God. God initiated it with us, even as it was God in the form, as it were, of Jesus Christ who initiated the change in Paul on the road to Damascus. That occurrence there is a model for what occurs to all men who are drawn into fellowship with God through Jesus Christ. God initiates the peace between two warring parties.

Turn now to Ephesians 2:10, and we are going to pick up on something that Paul stated there in II Corinthians 5:17 where he said, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation." This is not a finished creation. It is one that is continuing, as he said in that same verse, "Behold, all things are become new." (The *perfect* tense continuing.) The creation is continuing.

**Ephesians 2:10** For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them.

My Bible has a figure "1" beside the word *workmanship*. In the margin it says "creation." "For we are **His creation** [workmanship], created in Christ Jesus unto good works."

Now we're going to look at I John 3:2.

**I John 3:2** Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him: for we shall see Him as He is.

"It does not yet appear what we shall be."

All of these verses taken together emphasize that the Christian is undergoing a creative process at the hand of God that will bring him from what he was to what he will be. It is an ongoing process that began with the fellowship that was initiated by God Himself, and we are not finished products yet. "It does not yet appear what we shall be: but when He appears, we shall be like Him."

What Paul is indicating is that God is remaking our spiritual lives, and that any good that exists is due to His creation. He said there in Ephesians 2:10 that "we are created [that is, we are being created] unto *good works*." The implication is that before God began His creation, which began with our conversion, we were not capable of doing the good works that He wanted us to be producing. It is only by His creative efforts in us that we are able to produce the good works that He wants us to be able to do.

We're going to add one more scripture to this as we form the foundation for the beginning of this message. Turn to II Corinthians 3:18, where Paul clarified an aspect of this creation, because that is what he is talking about in all of these verses.

**II Corinthians 3:18** But we all, [meaning Christians—all of us] with open face, [meaning unveiled] . . .

This has to be understood in the context of what went before when he was talking about the veiled face of Moses, so that the people couldn't clearly look upon Moses' face. But our face has been unveiled so that we are able to see.

**II Corinthians 3:18** . . . But we all, with open face, beholding as in a glass [meaning reflecting] the glory of the Lord, ...

We are leading here to where we reflect the glory of the Lord. This is what is being created in us.

**II Corinthians 3:18** . . . are changed [transformed] into the same image [of Jesus Christ, of God the Father] from glory to glory, [from the glory of man to the glory of God] even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

You and I are, to put it bluntly and clearly, being worked on: reformed, reshaped into the image of the One who is making us. My concern as we begin this sermon is that we so frequently hear that the purpose of life is to build godly character. That is not entirely wrong, but we need to understand this more clearly, that it is **God** who creates. Every one of these scriptures showed that very clearly. God is the One who is creating His image in us. Is that clear? The danger in not understanding this clearly is that we arrive at the conclusion that we are the ones building the character.

Now have you ever heard of anything creating itself? Yes you have! It's part of the doctrine of evolution. I should say the *evil doctrine of evolution*! If we don't watch out, we are led to believe, regarding building character, that it is **our** effort, **our** work that does the creating.

Turn now to I Corinthians 1:26-31 and we'll clarify this further.

**I Corinthians 1:26-31** For you see your calling brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called: But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And *base* things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen, yes, and things which are not, [We are nothing], to bring to nought things that are: [Why?] That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are you in Christ Jesus, [Notice whom Paul is pointing to] who of God is made unto us wisdom, [Where does our wisdom that we might have come from?], and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glories, let him glory in the Lord.

Incidentally, that word "base" in verse 28 is more synonymous with the English word "insignificant." That's what we are. We are insignificant.

Let's add one more scripture to this so that we understand very clearly as we begin this message that it is God who does the creating. Turn to Philippians 2:12-13.

**Philippians 2:12-13** Wherefore [a collective word pointing to a conclusion], my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

Let's understand this "work out." It's really an unfortunate translation, even though it can mean, "work out." But there are better English words that express what Paul's intention is here. The word means *to express, to carry out*. The word denotes the expression, the manifestation of what they already have! "Express what you already have! Manifest what you already have! Give evidence of what you already have!" What do they have? Salvation! "Work out your own salvation with fear and

trembling, for it is God which **works** [energizes, empowers] you, both to will [to have the resolve, to have the desire] and to do [to actually carry it out] of His good pleasure."

That makes it very clear that even what we are able to do, what we are able to express of the likeness or the image of God in attitude, in character, and in work, is made possible by God. He gives us the desire to manifest it. He gives us the will, the resolve to express it, and He gives us the power that enables us to make that choice and to actually do it.

We indeed do have a small part that is played out in yielding to the persuasions of God. I want to emphasize the word "small." If we played a large part, it would put God in the position of owing us something, and salvation is then no longer a matter of grace, but of works. Even though God gives us so much, none of this relieves us of the responsibility of doing what God does require of us. Our part, though small, does indeed seem large and difficult to us.

I might compare it to those of you who surely understand this by looking at your little children. Jobs that you consider to be so minor, so easy, can be hard and difficult for little children. You can tell four or five year old children that they have to keep their room in order. You want them to put their shoes in the closet, to fold up their pajamas and put them into the drawer, to hang up their clothing. Those are monstrous jobs for five-year olds. They think it is so hard.

Do you know what? I would guess that most of the time they even forget to do it. They get distracted by something else, and they go off in a good attitude doing what they want to do rather than what you want them to do. Even when they do it, it is very likely that they are feeling put on, somewhat resentful, and grumbling and murmuring most of the time while they're doing it, that their mean old mom wants them to do this thing, and no other kid on the block has to do it.

Does that strike a familiar chord with any of you, because that is a description of the way we feel about the responsibilities that God puts on us. They seem so *hard* for us. Certainly they are more complex, and they are more difficult than just hanging up your clothes and putting your shoes in the closet, and those kinds of things, but to us they seem so hard to do.

In his book, *Types in Genesis*, Andrew Jukes, the author, perceives that each day of the creation shown in Genesis 1 symbolizes the steps in the spiritual conversion process. The imagery in Genesis 1 begins at a time when we are without true knowledge of God and living a life chaotically in the spiritual darkness of *tohu* and *bohu*. I want you to go back to Genesis 1, and we're going to look at three verses there.

**Genesis 1:6-8** And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so. And God called the firmament heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day.

At the very beginning of the Bible there is a small but interesting point found right here in these three verses in an understanding of the word that is translated in the English versions as "heaven." What the understanding of this word does is it continues to show God as the Creator, but it reaches far beyond the immediate context here, and it is something that needs to be applied in our lives. An understanding of this word shows that He is the active, moving, but unseen force bringing about the visible changes, whether it occurs to the earth or to us.

We always look at this word "heaven" as meaning *expanse*, and this is not wrong. But when one takes a closer look, it reveals that *expanse* is only an indirect use of the word. The root of the word heaven, or *expanse*, is derived from a verb that means *to set* or *to place*, and forms the word "placer," or "arrangers."

What God is bringing to our attention in verses 6 through 8 is that all the arranging that we see in the creative process in Genesis 1, and all the arranging that we see taking place in our spiritual re-creation as well—all the creative effort, all the setting in order—is being conducted *unseen* from above within the *expanse*, because that's where God's throne is. There are three heavens, and His is part of that *expanse*. Verses 6 through 8 are telling us that God is making all the arrangement from the *expanse*.

Mankind is by nature aware of three kingdoms: the animal, the vegetable, and the mineral kingdom. But what this is showing us is that there is a fourth kingdom—the kingdom of heaven—upon which the others are completely subject, and it is that kingdom which arranges everything; not merely who is going to be the ruler of nations, but **all** things, as we will find Paul says in Romans 11:36.

**Romans 11:34-36** For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been His counselor? Or who has first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of Him, and through Him, and *to* Him, are **all** things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.

Paul is saying that God is the source of all things. God is the channel through which all things are accomplished. God is also the **goal** of all things as well. Every aspect of these three kingdoms submits by nature to the fourth, except man. It is man's failure to submit to the fourth kingdom that introduced and continues the decline toward the deceived, chaotic, anxiety-ridden, divisive, violence-filled, adversarial, and competitive manner of life that we see being lived everywhere on earth.

Another piece of this picture is supplied in Psalm 104:29, where the psalmist says this about God, and to God:

**Psalm 104:29-31** You hide your face, [He's invisible. We don't see Him physically, actively working.] they are troubled [meaning the other kingdom.] You take away their breath; they die, and return to their dust. You send forth Your spirit, they are created: and You renew the face of the earth [or renew the life of a man]. The glory of the Lord shall endure forever: the Lord shall rejoice in His works.

Now Jukes perceived that as conversion begins, the veil of ignorance is lifted somewhat as the light of God's truth begins to penetrate through the midst of all of the spiritual debris that is floating through our mind. At that point of time we do not yet perceive God, as He later will be by us, but is a definite improvement over the spiritual fog that we formerly walked through. Conversion then proceeds step by step as God adds creative spiritual, rather than physical touches, as is seen in symbol in the imagery of Genesis 1, until we are at *rest* with God. Each step in the creative process adds not only clearer definition to what is being created, but also greater productiveness and usefulness to God's purpose as well.

As a kind of an editorial and critique of Juke's approach, I felt that some of his perceptions were vague and somewhat stretching of things, but I felt also that it was nonetheless acceptable. I definitely agree with him that there is some rich teaching material to be mined out of Genesis 1 by

looking at the chapter in this manner. It was his teaching drawn from the first and the last day that drew my interest the most though, and that is what I would like to pass on to you today. The first day, because it shows fruit of sin in our lives, and the last day because it shows one overall general fruit of God's creative effort. This is the one that I really want to focus on as we move on.

**Genesis 1:2** And the earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

You can connect this for sure from your own studies, from your own knowledge of the scriptures, that there is a great deal of imagery in this verse. John 1 carries on the thought here about the play between light and darkness that John opens the book with. In this section of Genesis 1 is perceived as symbolically describing the conversion process as being a series of creative acts by God. The called-one's mind, at the beginning of the process, is clearly being described as being in a chaotic condition. Each mind is spiritually in Babylon (in confusion).

I want to pick up a thought now from Isaiah 55:6-9.

**Isaiah 55:6-9** Seek you the Lord while He may be found, call you upon Him while He is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.

In this series of verses the basic overall difference between man and God is stated. In short, we don't think like God. That's the problem. At the beginning of the conversion process we are seen by God as being in *tohu* and *bohu*. Spiritually, we are a mess! We are anything but in His image. It is our nature that produces the kinds of thinking that produces chaos.

Chaos is a term that at its simplest indicates a state of disorder, disarray, and at an extreme, even mayhem and havoc. I am using "chaos" in an overall sense as a collective noun to capture the multitude of specific bad fruits possible to be derived from human nature, because of mankind's incredibly imaginative self-centered capabilities. Physically, before God's calling, a person may appear on the outside to have it all together, but spiritually, in the heart, as God would see it, chaos reigns.

You might recall that God's charge to mankind in Genesis 1:28 is to have dominion over the earth and subdue it. This is the first indication that nature, including man's mind, left untended and unprotected, not dressed and kept in the way that it should be, will revert or regress to a state of chaotic wildness. It is a subtle instruction on the second law of thermodynamics that generally states that nature tends toward a state of randomness or disorder; and thus it is with mankind's nature as well.

By the time that God begins His creative effort, a man's mind is in spiritual chaos, deceived, because it is completely subject to and enslaved by his spiritual environment, and it cannot be dressed and kept as God would have it. We are totally and completely subject to and enslaved by Satan. There is therefore only one dominating way that we can think, and that is to think in the way of Satan. That is why we see cultures all over the world that are adversarial in nature, highly competitive in nature, chaotic in lifestyle where there is violence. There is taking advantage of. There is putting down.

There is corruption everywhere that one looks, because it is impossible to break away from that by one's self. It takes a *miracle*, an *act of God* that may not be to the degree that the Apostle Paul met with on the road to Damascus, but nonetheless, symbolically, in type, the same thing has to happen to us or we will continue on the road to Damascus just as unconverted as Paul was before that time. There is no way that our mind can go spiritually except toward a state of randomness and disorder.

At the time of God's calling, man's mind doesn't have enough spiritual truth to work with in order to produce the fruit that the Creator desires, and so the Creator initiates the conversion process by first letting in some of the light of His truth so that the fog of lies begins to lift and we begin to see the true form and shape of just a small number of spiritual things. But the process continues throughout the remainder of life until we enter into *His rest*, as symbolized by the Sabbath of the creation week.

Turn now to Genesis 1:31 through Genesis 2:4.

**Genesis 1:31** And God saw every thing that He had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

**Genesis 2:1-4** Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made. These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.

It is at this point that the re-creation reaches its highest point. The key word in these verses for the purpose of this sermon is the word *rested*. "Rested" is #7673 in Strong's, and it is usually translated throughout the Old Testament as "rest" or "rested." The word usually translated "*Sabbath*" is #7676. Strong's explains that #7676 is merely an intensive form of #7673, and thus #7673 is the root of #7676. "Rested" is the root of "Sabbath." Therefore, in one sense, it is literally saying in Genesis 2:2-3, that "God Sabbatheth."

Now the cause of the state of rest is because God, through the Word of God, spoke, and light appeared. God spoke and the heaven separated away from the land. Do you see what I mean? It was through the Word of God that these things occurred, and God's *will is done* through His Word. From this begins to arise a major principle to understand. That is that no true rest can occur unless the will of God is done. **Mark you well that important point.** When His will is done, either for us, or in us, and by and through us, then there can be rest. Most of that work done for us and in us is going to be done just like it was done in the first week of this re-creation. It is going to be done by God.

Notice next then that it is God who rests from *His* work, not us. What He is shown resting from is *His* labor for and within His creation, of course meaning us—His new spiritual creation. He is not shown resting from weariness, because, as His own word says later in Isaiah 40:28, that "He neither faints nor is weary." He doesn't get tired, and so He is not resting because of tiredness.

It has to be understood that resting is being derived from a sense of satisfaction in a job well done. Isn't that what happens to you when you do a job well? Do you not step back and admire it, and you feel *good* about it. That's what God is saying here. And so verses 2 and 3 show that He is resting from His labor, and He is also shown taking joy and pleasure in His accomplishment.

All of His labor is seen from its beginning in chaos, to its end in beauty, in peace, in rest, as being done, that He might *rest* in us. That *He* might rest in *us*, satisfied, taking joy in what He has accomplished by *His* creative efforts in us. Remember that we are His workmanship.

Furthermore, He blessed and sanctified the day that He rested in. It is the memorial of His labors, and is set aside, as we find in later passages, for us, but only for His use in our lives. That's what the Sabbath is for. It is for us, but in an overall sense it is set aside for Him to work in our lives. We're going to see a little bit later that God never stops working. He does take pleasure in what He does.

In order for us to imitate Him and use the day properly, we must stop our normal customary labor and devote that day entirely to God's use. Much of that day then is to be given over to spiritual things: prayer, study into, meditation upon, and conversation about God Himself, God's word, God's spiritual creation that we are now involved in with Him as He labors in us.

It is also interesting to note that unlike the other six days of creation, "evening" is not mentioned. You will find no mention of "evening." This is a subtle precursor of the time coming when the light of God's truth will never again be diminished in any way as a result of His labor. This pops up out at us in places like Revelation 21:25 and Revelation 22:3.

**Revelation 21:25** And the gates of it [the city of Jerusalem] shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.

**Revelation 22:3-5** And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it: and His servants shall serve Him: and they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there: and they need no candle, neither light of the sun: for the Lord God gives them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever [as they had been prepared to do].

There is yet another very interesting and significant thing that occurred during the recording of the events of the re-creation week, but this time it immediately follows the introduction of the Sabbath. There is a name change that takes place. Like I said, this is not insignificant. The name change occurs to God from *Elohim* to *Yahweh*; from God, as it appears in the *King James Version*, to "Lord God."

Look in Genesis 1 where it says:

**Genesis 1:1** In the beginning *Elohim* created the heavens and the earth.

**Genesis 1:2** And the spirit of *Elohim* moved upon the face of the waters.

**Genesis 1:3** And *Elohim* said, Let there be light.

**Genesis 1:4** And *Elohim* saw the light, that it was good: and *Elohim* divided the light from the darkness.

**Genesis 1:5** And *Elohim* called the light Day.

And it goes on and on all the way through until chapter 2:4, and then very suddenly the name change takes place.

**Genesis 2:4** " . . . In the day the *Yahweh* [the Lord God] made the earth and the heavens.

**Genesis 2:5** For *Yahweh* [the Lord God] had not caused it to rain upon the earth.

**Genesis 2:7** And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground.

**Genesis 2:8** And the Lord God . . .

**Genesis 2:9** And out of the ground made the Lord God . . .

It goes all the way through right up to the very last verse, verse 22. The reason for this is *Elohim* is the word that God uses in order to focus attention on His power. It focuses attention on what He does in terms of creative acts, and His power to do what He does. "Lord God" (*Yahweh*—the Self-Existent One; the Eternal) emphasizes what He is in Himself. As soon as a relationship with man enters the picture, (that is, man as created at the end of chapter 1), the emphasis on God shifts from His power to do things to His inherent quality—His nature, His character—the things that motivate Him to do what He does. The emphasis subtly shifts in the direction of "*this is One who can be trusted.*" "*This is One that we can have faith in.*"

I used to wonder why Herbert Armstrong said several times in my hearing that one of the first things that he always did at the beginning of virtually every prayer was to thank God that He is God. He is One who can be trusted. He is One who can be relied upon, and One who is filled with love. Every act of His is going to be an act of righteousness that is done for the well-being of all concerned, that is being done for the well-being of His spiritual creation. He will always do exactly what He says that He will do. His word is never fickle. It is always true. He always follows the patterns that He establishes in His word so that we can always have faith in what He does and see evidence of Him in what is going on in the church and in our lives.

As we begin our conversion, what He can do for us is of primary importance to us. It is exceedingly important. We want to know what He can do for us, but as we grow in the relationship with Him it is essential that we come to appreciate even more what He is, because what He *is* is the real goal. "Jesus Christ is the end of the law for righteousness." Jesus Christ is the goal of life. "We shall be *like* Him," John says. It is what He is in His character, in His nature, that is important and needs to be implemented in our lives; not what He can do for us by His creative physical act of healing, or prospering, or protection. It is what He can do for us in regard to the creative spiritual act so that we end up in character and nature as He is.

If we do not have the same goal in mind that He does, then it is going to be awfully hard, and that much more difficult for us to cooperate with Him because we will always be looking in the wrong direction for His blessing. So frequently we want Him to do something, and He *is* doing something, but what He is doing is being done in relation to what He wants us to become rather than what we want at the moment, which is so frequently something that will improve our physical well-being. And so without realizing it, we are at cross purposes with Him, and it can very easily lead to misunderstanding, to resentment, and bitterness even, because we are looking in a different direction from the direction that He is working toward.

The sermon takes a bit of a turn here. It's not a 180-degree turn at all. We're going to go back to Hebrews 4:3, and we will see that "*rest*" is part of the context here.

**Hebrews 4:3** For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, *if they shall enter into my rest.*

I want to inject something right here, because that is somewhat mistranslated. I want us to look at Hebrews 3:11.

**Hebrews 3:11** So I swore in my wrath, They shall *not* enter into my rest.

The reason I want to draw your attention here is because that is exactly the same phrase that appears in Hebrews 4:3. Why they ever translated it differently, I do not know, because it is the same dogmatic statement: "They shall *not* enter into My rest."

Now back to Hebrews 4:3 again.

**Hebrews 4:3-4** As I have sworn in my wrath, they shall *not* enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For he spoke in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, and God did rest the seventh day from all his works.

The author is quoting that from Psalm 95.

**Hebrews 4:5** And in this place again, If they shall enter into My rest.

Again, this is the same phrase that is in verse 3, and also in Hebrews 3:11. It is a direct statement. "They shall *not* enter into My rest."

**Hebrews 4:6** Seeing therefore it remains that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief.

Now who were the first ones that had this said to them? It was the children of Israel in the wilderness. So what was the result? The result was that those who were above the age of twenty when they left Egypt did not enter into the *rest*. That's what the author is drawing upon. The second time that it was stated, David stated it in Psalm 95, and so the author is reaching a conclusion there.

**Hebrews 4:6-8** Seeing therefore it remains that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief, Again, he limits a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts [Psalm 95], For if Joshua had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day.

The answer to that is "no." David would not have spoken. Now notice the conclusion that Paul, or whoever the author of Hebrews is, gives in verse 9.

**Hebrews 4:9-11** There remains therefore a *rest* to the people of God. For he that is entered into His rest, he also has ceased from his own works, as God did from His. Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest, [showing very clearly that it yet lies ahead], lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief [or disobedience].

We're going to go to John 5:16-18, and then we're going to come right back to Hebrews 4.

**John 5:16-18** And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath day [the *rest* day]. But Jesus answered them, My Father works hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill Him, because He not only had broken the Sabbath, but said also that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.

This episode in John 5 took place on the Sabbath and involved the question about what work is considered appropriate on the Sabbath. Jesus' statement containing the word "hitherto" is important to us. It means that God began His work in the indefinite past. The past is not stated at this point. It is just indefinite, and that the work is continuing right up to this very moment.

In other words, we haven't yet reached "the *rest*" that Paul is talking about, or the author of Hebrews is talking about in Hebrews 4. It had not yet been reached in the author's day. It hadn't been reached in David's day. It hadn't been reached in the children of Israel's day.

God began His work in the indefinite past, and that work is continuing right up to this very moment. "The Father is continually working" is the sense of what Hebrews is saying there. Furthermore, his statement includes a very strong implication that Jesus is involved in the same work and toward the same goal as the Father, and Jesus is thus asserting that His spiritual labors toward the same end as the Father's are therefore permissible on the Sabbath. In fact He goes so far as to equate Himself *with* the Father, and this is the way that the Jews understood it. He was saying, "I am God" without saying it directly.

Let's go back to Hebrews 4. I'm going through this to show that "Sabbath" and "rest" as it appears here in Hebrews 4 involves three related issues, and each involves a measure of symbolism. The first involves a future entering into, or keeping of a Sabbath rest that also pictures the end or fulfillment of God's purpose and plan when *He* stops His labors.

In Genesis 1 and the beginning of Genesis 2, He stopped his physical exertion, if I can put it that way—His physical labor in re-creating the earth; but it was only then that His spiritual labors actually began.

The second issue here involves the actual literal keeping of each Sabbath as a type of that culmination of God's labors. Do we not work physically throughout the week? We do customary work, and so when the Sabbath comes along we stop our customary work, just like God stopped His, and we do it as a type of Him ending His labors there.

The third is that "rest" implies an entering into God's favor and blessing right here and now as a small fore type of what is coming in the future. This is what is meant in verse 10, where it says "For he that is entered into His rest."

We have three different rests that are being spoken of here in Hebrews 4. Now you have entered into this *rest* if you are converted, but it's looking forward to a *rest* of a higher and greater magnitude that is yet to occur—the actual rest and the finishing of God's spiritual labor in mankind.

Now we observe Passover through a ritual that looks back upon the actual event, and we observe it knowing full well that it's not the real thing, but only a representative of the real thing. We also know

that God commands that we do it, and at the same time understand that merely doing it, that is, observing it, cannot take the place of truly believing in its reality. The reality was Jesus Christ sacrificing His life.

The evidence that we truly understand and believe is shown in the way that we conduct our lives at all other times. A person can hypocritically, and with no understanding, go through the ritual, and it means nothing. What is important is that when we take it, we fully understand what it means, and we are *expressing* our belief like Paul said there in Philippians 2:12. We are giving evidence of our belief by the way that we live, by the attitude that we express.

The same principle applies to keeping the Sabbath, except that observing it looks both backward and forward in time—back to God's resting during the creation week, and forward to God's rest when He completes His spiritual plan.

Let me remind you that "rest" does not imply idleness. The keeping of the Sabbath is not a day of idleness. The keeping of the Sabbath involves what we do on the Sabbath. The spiritual mind is anything but idle, even though we are not carrying out the customary work that we do on the other six days. It is a day of intense activity whose every effort is to be expended in the work in which God Himself is involved—the spiritual creation of Himself in us.

God did, though, stop what He customarily did on the other six days, and then He began to turn His full attention to His spiritual creation. We are to follow what He did in our approach to keeping the Sabbath in imitation of Him, looking back in satisfaction on what was accomplished in the previous six days. Do you do this? Does what you accomplish during those six days give you satisfaction?

When we evaluate on *that Day*, do we evaluate how many times we fail to do the will of God, how many times we allow our weakness to surface and follow it rather than follow in the image of God, how many times we didn't pray as we should, as fervently as we should, and about others as we should? Do we evaluate how many times when we let down in weakness and did things that we ought not to have done that are no part of the spiritual creation, of the character, of the nature of God that He want to see in us, and we fail to yield to His creative efforts, and giving us knowledge of His way so that we're able to follow it?

The Sabbath is thus to be a time of the recharging of ourselves both physically and spiritually through evaluation, and resolve to do better than we did the previous week so that there can be greater satisfaction and sense of well-being spiritually when the next Sabbath comes along, because we have cooperated with God to the best of our understanding.

The Sabbath rest is not complete until this point is reached. As you can see, it doesn't happen magically. It happens because we are yielding to the will of God, and when the will of God is done, it produces satisfaction, a sense of well-being. It produces peace, because we know that all is well.

Don't expect that you will ever totally reach that place, because it will not be reached until God Himself is satisfied that we have reached the point where He is satisfied with His work in us, and is acceptable to Him for His kingdom. But even what we do have is nonetheless good. It is a small foretaste of what is coming in the future, because we have entered into that rest.

There is much more to this subject, and perhaps, God willing, and with your prayers and mine, I can milk this subject one more time. I don't mean "milk" in a bad way. I mean "milk" in a good way,

because what comes from a cow is awfully good for us. It's something that I think we need to understand so that our lives are filled with the kind of peace that God wants us to have. He *is* working in us. The burden is upon us merely to yield to Him. He does the creating. It is the energy that He expends for our well-being, in our behalf, that really produces the changes and gives us the kind of peace and satisfaction that we so much look forward to.