

After all of the heart-pounding storm of the previous night, the quiet of Sabbath was disturbing – but in a different way. It was hard to settle down and sit still after being chased out of the garden and trying to keep from being captured. I longed to be out of the city, but I had to stay and participate in the Day of Rest as though nothing special had happened.

We had heard reports from other disciples that the trial had occurred and that the Teacher had been crucified. We had been told that He was buried by friends in a rock grave that was located in a garden<sup>1</sup>. The message moved along the “grapevine”, even though individually we could not move very far. It was though the world stopped as we wondered about the recent events and their impact on the future. In the enforced inactivity (designed for spiritual contemplation), I began to think about the Sabbath in a new way.

Sometime after the resurrection, I came to the conclusion that God had planned the crucifixion so that there was this quiet space – the Sabbath – where there was absolutely zero activity among the faithful of the Jewish nation. The disciples had to deal with their concern, defeat, and the sense of loss; they were so anxious to resume their lives after this proscribed wait. A new life, however, was about to burst forth. It would have the effect of a new day dawning to those who wished for the morning<sup>2</sup>.

The Darkness<sup>3</sup> that Jesus passed through on that Sabbath was so much darker than what we have ever experienced<sup>4</sup>. He indeed was isolated from God in a way that, because of Him, we will never have to be. He went through the valley of the shadow of death for us<sup>5</sup> but He did not quote that Psalm because God was not with Him for that time. On the cross He quoted from another Psalm<sup>6</sup> about being forsaken<sup>7</sup>, but the full statement of the Psalm<sup>8</sup> had to do with God’s ultimate Presence<sup>9</sup>. During that time God once again stopped work, in a sense, and allowed Christ to fall deeper and deeper into the Darkness. But He would not allow His Son to remain there<sup>10</sup>.

There were special Jubilee Sabbaths at regular intervals<sup>11</sup>, but this Sabbath was one that divided the world into two realms, corresponding to the Old and New Kingdoms. It was the transition between them, like the eye of a storm that set the stage for the future.

This Sabbath was bracketed by darkness on one side<sup>12</sup>, and the opening of graves<sup>13</sup> and the brightness of angels on the other<sup>14</sup>. On one side, men ran from the Teacher, but ran toward His tomb on the other side. Similarly there was despair, then joy; death, then life; burial, then resurrection. There was the day of “rest”, and then the day of the Lord. The essence of that rest<sup>15</sup>, time (the Sabbath<sup>16</sup>) and space (the land of Canaan<sup>17</sup>), was imparted fully into the Christ<sup>18</sup>, and thus keeping the Sabbath is not needed any longer.

The Sabbath was instituted to commemorate the Creation, while the Lord’s Day commemorates the re-Creation (the resurrection of Christ and thus all souls). It was given as a reflection of the time when God stopped His initial work of creation, not to actually rest but to let the purpose of the world move on.

These ideas gave me a greater insight into the Providence and Plan of God. I was glad to be on the dawn side of the New Kingdom.

1. Matthew 27:59-61, John 19:40-42
2. Matthew 4:16
3. Think here of the concept of Sheol
4. Matthew 12:40 - For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.
5. Psalm 23:4
6. Note the proximity of the two Psalms: 22 and 23
7. Psalm 22:1
8. Where the Christian tradition cites a psalm by number, the Jewish tradition evokes the entire psalm by quoting the first sentence or the first few words. So what the Bible is telling us in this passage is that Jesus recited all of Psalm 22. And if you read this psalm, you will see that it begins in despair but it ends as a hymn of hope. Erich Fromm, for the Love of Life, p. 102.
9. see Psalm 22:19-21
10. Acts 2:22-27, “He would not allow His Holy One to see corruption” KJV

12. Luke 23:44, the darkening of the sun at Jesus' death
13. Matthew 27:52
14. angels in white, see John 20:12 and Acts 1:10
11. Leviticus 25:8-12
16. Exodus 20:11
15. Note the writing of N.T. Wright: Somehow, in a way most modern people find extraordinary to the point of being almost unbelievable, the Temple was not only the center of the world. It was the place where heaven and earth met. Judaism already had a massive "incarnational" symbol, the Temple. Jesus was behaving as if he were the Temple, in person. ... If the Temple was the space in which God's sphere and the human sphere met, the Sabbath was the time when God's time and human time coincided. The Sabbath was to time what Temple was to space. N.T. Wright, *Simply Jesus: A New Vision of Who He Was, What He Did, and Why He Matters* (p. 136)
17. Joshua 1:13, "Remember the command that Moses the servant of the Lord gave you after he said, 'The Lord your God will give you rest by giving you this land.'"
18. Matthew 11:28-29, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

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