

CHAPTER 9

THE PROVISION FOR REST

In his essay “The Sabbath in the Pentateuch” Gerhard Hasel gives a brilliant summary of how the Sabbath is introduced and developed in the first five books of Moses:

The Sabbath is grounded in Creation and linked with redemption. It is an agent of rest from work and confronts man’s religious and social relationship Its nature is universal and it serves all mankind. It is concerned with worship as well as with joy and satisfaction. The themes of Creation, Sabbath, redemption, and sanctification are inseparably linked together, and with the Sabbath’s covenant aspect they reach into the eschatological future (1982:21).¹

This chapter will attempt to understand the biblical foundation and practice of the Sabbath/Jubilee and how it applied to the redemption of Israel’s community of disciples. As has already been noted in the first chapter, the Great Commission marked a dramatic change in the missionary intent of God. Up until this time, Israel was to be made the depository of God’s revelation and grace which all the nations were to be blessed as they gathered to Jerusalem.

When Peter stands up in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, he proclaims release for the captives of all the nations. As the disciples would scatter from Jerusalem, (cf. Acts 8:4) the Old Testament curse of the scattering of the people would be turned into a blessing for the nations. This would be accomplished primarily because of the ongoing presence of Christ with His disciples through the Spirit.

¹ This is the first of many essays written primarily by professors at Andrews University Seminary and edited by Kenneth Strand under the title *The Sabbath in Scripture and History* in 1982. As the preface states, this was the first major academic work on the Sabbath since J.N. Andrew’s book which was published in 1887. Up until that time there had been several books written, primarily by evangelists, (cf.: C. Haynes *From Sabbath to Sunday* (1928), *The Christian Sabbath*, (1948), M.L. Andreasen, *The Sabbath*, (1951) order to prove that the Sabbath and not Sunday is the proper day of worship.

Some noteworthy exceptions to the above SDA apologetic approaches are Edward Allen’s D.Min. dissertation: *Rest as a Spiritual Discipline: The Meaning and Manner of Sabbath Observance*, (1991), Eric-Neils Andreasen’s *Rest and Redemption*, (1978), Samuele Bacchiocchi’s *Divine Rest for Human Restlessness*, (1980); Richard Davidson’s *A Love Song for the Sabbath*, (1988), Sakae Kubo’s *God Meets Man*, (1978) and Jana Kay Boyd’s doctoral dissertation from the Fuller Theological School of Psychology which measured the meaning of Sabbath with leisure and marital satisfaction (1998).

That being said, the original instruction Israel received on the Sabbath was meant to make them a holy people by providing a divine provision of rest. In this connection the primary elements of the creation, remembrance, redemption, nurturing, release and prophetic elements of the Sabbath will be discussed with a specific view towards how these contributed to the discipleship of Israel.

The Creation of the Sabbath in Genesis 2:1-3

The ongoing blessings of the Sabbath were foundationally rooted in the presence and activity of God at creation.² Since the creation Sabbath (Gen. 2:1-3) is used to justify both the importance of the work-rest commandment (Exod. 20:11) and the seriousness of the covenant (Exod. 31:17) there can be little doubt that the opening words of Genesis had a profound effect on the theological development of the Sabbath.³ While finding other Ancient Near East historical sources for the Sabbath has been investigated without success for some time, the Sabbath itself can be seen as an integral part of the overall construction of the creation story.⁴

Drawing upon the work of Nicola Negretti (1973), Bacchiocchi shows how the entire creation story of Genesis 1:1 to 2:3 is built upon the number seven (and its multiples).⁵ God's example of resting on the seventh day in Genesis 2:2-3 also is structured on the number seven. As Bacchiocchi points out, "that the seventh and the last section (Gen. 2:2-3) which deals with

² Although the term "Sabbath" does not appear in the Genesis 2:1-3 account, "the expressions 'the seventh day' (Gen. 2:1-3; Exod. 20:10), 'bless' (Gen. 2:3, Exod. 20:11), 'make holy' (Gen. 2:3; Exod. 20:11; cf. Exod. 31:14), 'make' (Gen. 2:2-4; Exod. 20:9, 10; 31:14, 15; cf. Exod. 35:2; Deut. 5:13, 14), and 'work' (Gen. 2:2-4; Exod. 20:9, 10; 31:14, 15) connect these texts most closely" (Hasel 1982:24).

³ Bacchiocchi posits that the Bible writer used the phrase "seventh day" instead of "Sabbath," "may well reflect the writer's concern to underline the *perpetual order* of the day, independent and free from any association with astrological 'sabbaths' of the heathen nations" (1980:34, emphasis his).

⁴ Hasel reports that "the quest for the origin of the Sabbath that began about a century ago has been unsuccessful It may be concluded that from the point of view of religiohistorical investigation the Sabbath is unique to Biblical religion" (1982:22). For instance, a clear contrast can be seen between the Biblical Sabbath in which God gives rest to his creation, and the god Marduk who in the *Enuma Elish* pronounces that, "Verily, savage man I will create. He shall be charged with the service of the gods, that they might be at ease" (Pritchard 1950:68)!

⁵ For example, Genesis 1:1 is composed of seven Hebrew words, three of which (God, heavens and earth) are all repeated in multiples of seven in the pericope (1980:62).

the seventh day has in Hebrew ‘three consecutive sentences (three for emphasis), each of which consists of seven words and contains in the middle the expression the seventh day’” (1980:63).⁶

This is clearly shown by the following structure (1980:63, emphasis his):

- 1). And on the seventh day God finished His work which he had done (v. 2a-seven words in Hebrew).
- 2) And he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done. (v. 2b-seven words in Hebrew).
- 3) So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it (v. 3a-seven words in Hebrew).

Although the command to keep the seventh day is not explicitly stated in Genesis 2:2-3, Hasel notes that God did provide “a divine example for keeping the seventh day as a day of rest” (1982:23). God did not rest because He was weary, (cf. Isa. 40:28) but “in order to provide a day of meeting in rest with the crown of Creation, man, made in His image” (1982:24). Our first parents, as the crowning work of creation, began their existence with communing with their Maker, thus ordering for all time the priority of enjoying the time for intimacy with their Creator and one another over against engagement with the things of creation.⁷

Already it can be noted that the Sabbath, as originally instituted, was an ideal weekly opportunity for humankind to be released from their normal employment in order to have a special time to both commune with their Maker and enhance their bond and community with one another. Thus the essential principles of discipleship in enhancing both the vertical relationship

⁶ Bacchiocchi further notes that “recent studies on the usage of the number seven reveal that this number was used both in the Biblical and ancient Near Eastern literature to express the meaning of completion and perfection” (1980:64). He draws a comparison between orders for marching for seven days from a Ugaritic tablet with the seven days of marching around Jericho to show the influence of the number seven in its sense of completion (1980:64).

⁷The Puritans ordered the day in order to enhance communion with God and community with one another. (See Allen 1991:200-215).

with God and the horizontal fellowship with one another was clearly promoted by the creation Sabbath.⁸

Furthermore, “in the coming of Jesus Christ, who lived among us and who was called Immanuel—’God with us’—we find a re-Sabbatization The time Christ lived on earth represents a kind of long Sabbath day” which was continued through the presence of the Spirit and will only be fully realized in eternity (Kubo 1978:17). Thus the presence of Christ with His people on the Sabbath day was rooted in the creation which in a sense promised the ongoing relationship God would have with His creation even before sin entered in to the world. Geerhardus Vos insightfully notes this eschatological aspect of the Sabbath when he says:

The Sabbath brings the principle of the eschatological structure of history to bear upon the mind of man after a symbolical and typical fashion. It teaches its lesson through the rhythmical succession of six days of labor and one ensuing day of rest in each successive week. Man is reminded in this way that he is not an aimless existence, that a goal lies beyond. This was true, before, and apart from redemption. The eschatological is an older strand in revelation than the soteriological (1971:156-157 as quoted in Davies 1983:34).⁹

Hence the Sabbath has a perpetual grounding in the existence of humankind through the creational, incarnational and eschatological aspects of God’s presence with His people. Just as Jesus promised His disciples in Matthew 28:20 that He would be with His disciples until the end of the age, so God has continually fulfilled His promise to meet with His people in the sanctuary

⁸ Within the scope of this study it is important to note that the Sabbath was the foundation for the Puritan pastor’s discipling ministry. It became the primary method for building the practice of all other pious duties and Henry Burton voiced the thoughts of many others when he said that the Sabbath was “the market day of our souls” (1631:64).

According to Allen, Nicolas Bownde promoted at least seven spiritual disciplines which could be associated with the Sabbath. The first four disciplines are primarily focused on both the preparation (through personal prayer, bible study and meditation) and the attendance at the corporate worship service. To these four are to be added participation in small groups, the singing of Psalms and works of mercy (1991:201-209).

⁹ Kubo sees the same promise of God’s presence in the Sabbath in the future of humankind: “Even before man sinned, the Sabbath contained within itself the promise that should man sin, God would return to share again that pristine friendship and fellowship. . . . Thus the Sabbath had contained the promise of the Incarnation” (1978:17).

of Sabbath time. How this privilege was re-taught to the Israelites in the wilderness is the subject of the next section.

The Rest of the Sabbath in Exodus 20:8-11

The Sabbath commandment given in the wilderness at Sinai consists of fifty-five Hebrew words and is the longest of the Ten Commandments.¹⁰ The introductory word “remember,” has both retrospective and prospective elements and urged the newly redeemed community of Israel not to forget God in the midst of their work.¹¹

The fourth commandment encompasses both the six days of Israel’s work and the seventh day of rest and thus the weekly rhythm of working and resting are intimately connected. “The six working days find their meaning in the seventh day of rest, and the seventh day finds its meaning in God’s presence among His people, the meaning of all human time is found in communion with God” (Bacchiocchi 1980:104).¹²

The Sabbath teaches that disciples are not to allow the tyranny of work to rob us of our fellowship with Him or our association with one another. The Lord clearly taught the Israelites that, “six days you shall labor, but on the seventh day you shall rest; even during plowing season and harvest you must rest” (Exod. 34:21). “Even in the busiest time of year God rescues us from

¹⁰ The connection between the Sabbath commandment and Creation “is so close that God’s six day creation, followed by His rest on the seventh day, serves as the theological motivation for the seventh-day Sabbath of the fourth commandment” (Hasel 1982:30).

¹¹ In one sense the term “remember” points back to the holiness in which God first invested the day through His presence at creation (Gen. 2:3). According to Hasel, the elemental meaning of the Hebrew idea of “holy” is “separation,” which is expressed by the fact “that the seventh-day Sabbath is that very day that God has separated from the rest of the days” (1982:25). Bacchiocchi rightly inquires, “How can one distinguish holy time, if there is no common time from which to distinguish it?” (1980:101). This issue of separating holy from common time will come to the fore again when those who espouse a “generic” Sabbath time is discussed.

¹² As Abraham Heschel beautifully states:

All days of the week must be spiritually consistent with the day of days. All our life should be a pilgrimage to the seventh day’ the thought and appreciation of what this day may bring to us should be ever present in our minds. For the Sabbath is the counterpoint of living; the melody sustained through agitations and vicissitudes which menace our conscience; our awareness of God’s presence in the world. What we are depends on what the Sabbath is to us (The Sabbath, 1951:89).

the tyranny of toil. No secular business is so important as to rob us of fellowship with Him” (Davidson 1988:101).

Hence the community of Israel was to nurture and demonstrate its weekly devotion to God. The Sabbath was to be one of the important means God would use to sanctify them (cf. Exod. 31:13-17) thus making them a holy witness to the nations. The remembrance of a definite holy time, grounded in the original creation week would provide an ongoing reminder that it was God who had both made and redeemed them.

In the same way, the busyness of modern life which tends to overwhelm the time needed to find communion with God and fellowship with one another is counteracted by the remembrance of the holiness of the Sabbath which separates the sacred from common time. As such, this sharp distinction between the sacred and common time is not shared with some recent writings on the Sabbath which have a more philosophical than biblical basis.

In *Receiving the Day* by Dorothy Bass observes that “lately, Sabbath has become the word for almost any time we can manage to set apart for refreshment” (2000:55). Donna Schaper opens her book *Sabbath Sense* by stating “Sabbath is a state of mind, not a day of the week” (1997:19).¹³

Wayne Muller defines the word Sabbath “both as a specific practice and a larger metaphor, a starting point to invoke a conversation about the forgotten necessity of rest.” (1999:7-8).¹⁴ Don Postema in *Catch Your Breath* states that “Jews and Christians also have a practice as near as our Bible, as close as our tradition, as available as the next ten minutes or weekend: the sabbath!” (1997:15).

¹³ Donna Schaper is a Christian minister married to a Jewish person. They celebrate the lighting of the candles for both Sabbath and Sunday. She goes on to say that “our need for sabbath, for rest and time for God, does not have a one-day solution. The need for rest has only gone underground into a deep urgency and a deep desire. Even people who believe God is with them on Monday like to worship a Sunday or Saturday God” (1999:5).

¹⁴ He goes on to say that Sabbath time may also be “a Sabbath afternoon, a Sabbath hour, a Sabbath walk—indeed, anything that preserves a visceral experience of life-giving nourishment and rest” (1999:7-8).

These books tend to use the concept of the Sabbath as a spiritual antidote for the overworked and busy lives of modern people. Drawing from a variety of biblical, mystical and non-biblical sources, the authors seek to provide a rationale and atmosphere for work-driven people to catch their breathes and allow God's presence into their lives.¹⁵

The Redemption of the Sabbath in Deuteronomy 5:12-15

The Sabbath commandment of Deuteronomy 5:12-15 consists of sixty-four Hebrew words and is an oral reaffirmation of the commandment given earlier in Exodus 20:8-11. One of the main differences between this Sabbath commandment and the one given earlier at Sinai is the implicit stress in the redemptive motivation for keeping the commandment. While the first stating of the commandment focuses on God's work as Creator, the second formulation focuses on God's work as Redeemer.¹⁶

Niels-Erik Andreasen emphasizes that "the real purpose of this 'remembrance clause' in Deuteronomy 5:15 is to provide a strong motive for all Israelites who remember their own deliverance from servitude to extend such a deliverance from servitude on the Sabbath to those in their midst who are not free to observe it" (1978:49-50). Davidson also stresses this important theme by saying:

¹⁵ While it is encouraging to see that some within modern society see the clear value of "sabbath" rest, the observation by the Puritan Thomas Fuller about the English Anabaptist group called the "Family of Love" who claimed that every day was a Sabbath for the Christian seems appropriate: "These transcendents, accounting themselves mounted above the predicament of common piety, aver they need not keep any, because they keep all days Lord's days, in their elevated holiness. But alas! Christian duties, said to be over doen, will prove never done, if not sometimes solely done (Fuller 1842:426 as quoted in Primus 1989:152).

¹⁶ As Bacchiocchi has pointed out, this motivational theme of redemptive was also implicitly stated in the commandment at Sinai:

The link between the Exodus liberation and the Sabbath is *implicitly* suggested in the Exodus version of the Fourth Commandment by the preface where God introduces Himself as Israel's Liberator (Exod. 20:2). However, in the Deuteronomic version, the link between the Sabbath and the Exodus liberation is established explicitly by means of the "remembrance clause: 'You shall remember that you were a servant in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out thence with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day'" (Deut. 5:15). (1980:139, emphasis his).

At the same time Moses makes clear that the Sabbath also has a redemptive aspect. On Sabbath the Israelites were even to liberate slaves from their toil. As a people, Israel could especially appreciate the redemptive feature of Sabbath rest because they had once been slaves in Egypt. But God redeemed them with a mighty hand, and their Sabbath rest epitomized that liberation for all. Thus their Deliverer asked them to make the Sabbath a special time for remembering their own redemption. Also, on Sabbath they were to extend that redemptive work to those not yet completely free (1988:58).

In essence the Sabbath teaches the equality between all peoples, both on the basis of creation and redemption. As such, the Sabbath has strong social and ecological interests. The rest and blessing of the Sabbath are to be specifically extended to son and daughter, manservant and maidservant, animals and everyone within their sphere of influence (cf. Exod. 20:10, Deuteronomy 5:14).

Now the entire household, including manservant and maidservant, those of an inferior status in society, are to rest together. The Sabbath also taught concern for those on the margins of society. This not only had a humanitarian but a clear missional dynamic as well. Note Kubo's comment which blends the theology of the Sabbath with Christ's ministry to free the oppressed in Luke 4:18-19:

The Sabbath not only reminds us of our deliverance, but it commands us to extend the blessing to those under oppression or servitude. It is not enough to rejoice in and enjoy one's own salvation. One must also work with God to bring deliverance 'to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord' (Luke 4:18). Every Sabbath as the Christian rests in remembrance of his redemption and freedom, he must also consider those who still remain in bondage (1978:46).

Throughout the Bible, God urges the recipients of His blessings to both remember and extend these blessings to others. In this instance, the circuit of beneficence is fulfilled when the redemptive rest of the Sabbath is extended to every living thing within the sphere of influence. Thus the Sabbath incorporates God's universal, redemptive mission to all peoples. It is a

mission prefaced by God's own creative, redemption and incarnational presence of love and rest.¹⁷

The Sabbath in its essence teaches the redeemed disciple to not only remember his own redemption but to go forth and redeem others who know not the blessings of fellowship with the Creator. Thus the Sabbath not only has a profoundly vertical dimension informed by the holiness of God but a dynamic horizontal and missional aspect guided by the redemption of God.

In this respect, the proclamation of redemptive "release" to the prisoners by Jesus on the Sabbath was deeply rooted in the Old Testament teaching of the Sabbath itself. As Christ stood up among His kinsfolk at Nazareth, He was announcing the continuing purposes of God for Israel to bless all those within their sphere of influence. Their rejection of Jesus on the Sabbath was in a sense a rejection of the gift of redemption itself. This gift of redemption as well as God's continual care is brought out in the next section.

The Gift of the Sabbath in Exodus 16

Hasel maintains that "the gift of the manna is the occasion for renewing the greater gift, the Sabbath the didactic character of this narrative is obvious throughout" (1982:26). Having been just released from a long term of slavery in Egypt, the Israelites had perhaps forgotten much of their earlier spiritual heritage. Therefore, the falling of the manna might be seen as a weekly object lesson that was designed to teach the nation important truths about the gift of the Sabbath itself.

The gathering of a double portion on Friday which did not spoil provided a weekly reminder for the Israelites of the important distinction and blessing God had placed on the

¹⁷ There is no doubt that a profound mission theology and practice could be developed based on the Sabbath and Jubilee themes alone.

seventh-day.¹⁸ Just as the manna must be eaten daily to sustain physical life, the Bread which came down from heaven must be daily assimilated by the true disciples in order that they might share in the life of God. This special daily communion with God which all disciples need in order to be Christ-like, is especially enhanced by the sacred boundaries of the Sabbath wherein God provides the special gift of His presence.

The Sabbath provided the foundation for the jubilarly regulations which would later be defined in Leviticus 25. This connection between the Sabbath and the Jubilee is made clearer when the underlying elements of sabbath/seven, God's redemption, the treatment of aliens and rest/release are understood.

The Relationship Between the Sabbath and Jubilee

In several profound ways the Sabbath and the Jubilarly regulations were closely intertwined. Some of the same themes of redemption and the blessing of others on the Sabbath are amplified by the Jubilee. In the next four sections these aspects are compared and contrasted.

The Number Seven

The first and most obvious connection between the Sabbath and the Jubilee is the number seven. The seventh day of the creation week (Gen. 2:1-3), the falling of the manna (Exod. 16) and the shaping of the written (Exod. 20:8-11) and oral (Deut. 5:12-15) giving of the Sabbath commandment is clearly echoed in the number "seven" and the word "sabbath" which are used in the jubilarly regulations of Leviticus 25.¹⁹

¹⁸ The manna not only taught the people their physical dependence upon God but had clear Christological implications as brought out by Jesus in the feeding of the 5000 and his subsequent discussion with the Pharisees in John 6.

¹⁹ The number seven and/or the Sabbath is seen in the regulations governing the sabbatical year in which the land was to take its rest (Lev. 25:1-7). Included are the terms: "a sabbath to the Lord" (Lev. 25:2, 4); "the seventh year" (Lev. 25:4); "the sabbath year," (Lev. 25:6) and "a sabbath of rest" (Lev. 25:4).

Immediately following the laws which governed the rest of the land every seven years, are the regulations governing the Jubilee.²⁰ The Jubilee not only was a point of time measured out in mathematical proficiency, but served as an important marker for settling the payment of debts. The buying and selling of land (Lev. 25:15, 27) and the redemption from slavery (Lev. 25:50) were based on the time either before or after the Jubilee.

Thus the celebration of the Sabbath and the Jubilee are firmly built upon a definite and not generic time. It was not until the trumpet sounded on the threshold of the fiftieth year that the release of the captives would take place. Therefore, the “now” which Jesus pronounces in the synagogue in Nazareth on that fateful Sabbath day profoundly linked the chronological with the redemptive aspects of His ministry. Although God’s redemption can be proclaimed every day, the Sabbath provided Jesus with a theologically rich context in order to remind Israel of the blessings that awaited it.

The Theme of Redemption

We have already seen that both God’s creative power in Genesis and redemptive activity at the time of the Exodus provided a strong motivational incentive to keep the commandments as a whole (Exod. 20:2) and the Sabbath in particular (Deut. 5:15). These same two motifs are either implicitly or explicitly noted in the jubiliary law.²¹

In addition to citing the creation as a basis for keeping the Jubilee, God explicitly reminds the Israelites three times that He is the one who brought them out of the land of Egypt: (Lev. 25:38, 42, 55). These reminders are given especially as it relates to the treatment of others such as lending for profit (Lev. 25:37) and forcing a fellow Israelite to work as a slave (Lev.

²⁰ Again, both the number “seven” and the “sabbath” figure prominently in the ordinance. The terms, “seven sabbaths of years,” “seven times seven years” and “seven sabbaths” all appear in the heart of the jubiliary regulations of Leviticus 25:8. The same rest is given to the land during the fiftieth or year of the Jubilee (Lev. 25:11).

²¹ In Leviticus 25:23 the Lord reminds the Israelites that “the land is mine” and they themselves are “aliens” and his “tenants.” Through creation, God owned the land and placed Adam in the garden to “work it and take care of it” (Gen. 2:15). This stewardship is reemphasized here in the law of the Jubilee.

25:39-43).²² Sloan comments that “it is important to note here that Yahweh’s ownership of the people (as is probably intended with regard to His ownership of the land), and hence their jubiliary rights and expectations, is predicted upon His deliverance of them from Egyptian servitude (Lev. 25:42, 55; Deut. 15:15)” (1977:7).

As was discussed above, the Sabbath rest (Exod. 20:10, Deut. 5:14) was to be extended to all those within their sphere of influence. The Jubilee echoes the same liberation for all: “for yourself, your manservant and maidservant, and the hired worker and temporary resident who live among you as well as for your livestock and the wild animals in your land” (Lev. 25:6-7).

An even more extensive rest and liberation than the Sabbath is extended to the “wild animals” (Lev. 25:6-7); the land itself (Lev. 25:5); houses (Leviticus 25:29) and people (Leviticus 25:39-54). The fair treatment of fellow Israelites who have sold themselves into slavery (Lev. 25:39-43) and slaves (Lev. 25:44-46) is based on the fact that the Israelites that they themselves are still themselves “aliens” (Lev. 25:23).²³

Thus Christ’s announcement of His ministry to the poor in Luke 4:18-19 is clearly grounded in the theological intent of both the Sabbath and jubiliary laws. In addition, the reference Jesus makes to the prophetic ministry of Elijah and Elisha who both minister to “aliens” within the gates of Israel also illustrates the profound missional and universal intent of the Sabbath as manifested during the time of the Jubilee. That this missional dimension for the alien and the slaves is grounded in the proclamation of release is the focus of the next section.

The Theme of Rest and Release

When reading the Sabbath commandments in Exodus 20:8-11 and Deuteronomy 5:12-15 and Exodus 16:1ff, the rest set forth on the seventh day is somewhat non-specific. In contrast,

²² In fact, the very last verse of the chapter on the Jubilee ends with the reminder: “for the Israelites belong to me as servants. They are my servants, whom I brought out of Egypt. I am the LORD your God” (Lev. 25:55).

²³ Sloan comments that “it is because of Yahweh’s activity of delivering them from Egypt for the purpose of giving them Canaan and ‘to be your God’ that the Jews are to sustain the poor among them” (1977:9).

the Jubilee serves as a wonderful expose' of just how broad the rest and release of people, animals and land is to be extended.

For instance, at the very beginning of the jubiliary law, the land itself “must observe a Sabbath” (Lev. 25:2); “have a sabbath of rest” (Lev. 25:3); “a year of rest” (Lev. 25:5) by not being cultivated. Although the land is not to be worked, it is still to minister to the needs of all (Lev. 25:5-6).

The main proclamation which was to occur with the sound of the trumpet on the Day of Atonement is specifically given in Leviticus 25:10 and focuses on the already discussed term “release”: “Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty [LXX “aphesis”] throughout the land to all its inhabitants.” The basic benefit of this release was the reunion of broken family ties (Lev. 25:8) which might have come about through the sale of property (25:15-16) or the individual (25:38-41) into slavery.

Thus the broad redemptive aspects of the Sabbath as rest and release came as a complete gift of grace to all who would receive it. It was based on God’s own gracious actions in the past deliverance from the servitude in Egypt (Lev. 25:38, 42, 55) which now must be extended to everyone and everything that lived within the borders of the Promised Land. As has already been discussed in Luke 4:16-22, Christ’s proclamation of release was tied to a definite time. Just how the Jubiliary proclamation of release might be tied to Christ’s proclamation in Luke 4:16-30 is briefly outlined below.

The Prophetic Elements of the Sabbath and Daniel 9

That the Jubilee was seldom observed and linked to the coming of the Messiah is forcibly taught in Daniel 9:1ff.²⁴ The chapter begins: “in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, understood

²⁴ Bacchiocchi comments that, “at these annual institutions, the Sabbath truly became the liberator of the oppressed in Hebrew society Though seldom observed, these annual Sabbath institutions by promising a national restoration to the people and to the land became the symbol of the future restoration to be accomplished by the Messiah” (1980:141-142).

from the Scriptures, according to the word of the LORD given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years” (Dan. 9:2).

In commenting of the seventy years of captivity, the chronicler specifically tells us that this period is connected directly to the lack of rest the land had missed, probably because the Israelites had not obeyed either the sabbatical or jubilar rest of the land for a great many years. “The land enjoyed its sabbath rests; all the time of its desolation it rested, until the seventy years were completed in fulfillment of the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah” (2 Chr. 36:21).

This prolonged sabbath rest of years had been pronounced by God as a possible punishment in the book of Leviticus if the Israelites did not obey His laws: “Then the land will enjoy its sabbath years all the time that it lies desolate and you are in the country of your enemies; then the land will rest and enjoy its sabbaths. All the time that it lies desolate, the land will have the rest it did not have during the sabbaths you lived in it” (Lev. 26:34-35). Thus the seventy years of captivity in Daniel 9:2 are directly related to the disregard of the sabbaticals which God had so mercifully provided His people.

Near the end of this seventy years of captivity, Daniel earnestly prays to understand the time when the predicted restoration would take place (9:3-19). The angel Gabriel is sent and makes known to Daniel a richly textured prophecy wherein is woven jubilar and Messianic themes.

The seventy years of national captivity are to be followed by “seventy sevens”²⁵ wherein both the city and people would be given an opportunity “to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy” (9:24). Just as the land (cf. Lev. 25:4) was to rest for 10 Sabbaths of years (ten times seven), the people were to have 10 Jubilees of years (ten times forty-nine) before the coming of the Messiah.

²⁵ The seventy specific “years” of captivity are not only thematically linked to the seventy “sevens” of grace but provide the most obvious measure of time for the Messianic Jubilee to occur.

In answer to Daniel's prayer, the angel Gabriel links the restoration of the temple (and by extension the people) to the coming of the Messiah in Daniel 9:25: "Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens.'"²⁶

An argument can be made that there are close and rich parallels between the prophecy in Daniel 9:1ff and the jubiliary proclamation by Jesus in Luke 4:16-22. As was studied in the last chapter, the two main components of the Nazareth pericope proclaimed that Jesus is the Christ²⁷ and now²⁸ is the time for the liberation. It could also be argued that the last "seven" (cf. Dan. 9:27) of the seventy "sevens" (cf. Dan. 9:24) represent an extended Sabbath/Jubilee time when Christ and His Spirit-filled disciples through word and deed proclaim the richness in God's redemption through the proclamation and release of all those help captive by sin.²⁹

In a broader sense, the ministry of Jesus could be seen as centered on the redemption and release of those in bondage to Satan, especially on the Sabbath day. Given this background, Christ's question to the critical Pharisee's after the healing of a woman is full of pathos: "Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her" (Luke 13:16)?

The time of jubilee had come and the Anointed One was standing in their midst bringing rest and release to the captives. Only those who were not willing to be healed of their blindness concerning the nature of Christ and the time of release were left in the darkness. It could be said

²⁶ The intentional division of the sixty-nine "sevens" into seven "sevens," and sixty-two "sevens" possibly points to another indication of the jubiliary nature of the Messiah's coming.

²⁷ In Daniel 9:25,26 the noun form for the Messianic title "Christ" (Gr. *Xristou*) is used and in Isaiah 61:1 the verbal form "Anointed"/"Christened" (Gr. *exrisevn*) is found. Thus a strong nominal and verbal link is established between the prophecies in the Old Testament and their fulfillment on that fateful Sabbath day in the synagogue in Nazareth by Jesus.

²⁸ The command to restore Jerusalem was given in Ezra 7:11ff in 457 B.C.. The seven and sixty-two sevens or 483 years would then extend to 27 A.D., at the beginning of the ministry of Jesus in Palestine.

²⁹ Kubo comes close to this thought when he says, "In the coming of Jesus Christ, who lived among us and who was called Immanuel—'God with us'—we find a re-Sabbatization. . . . The time Christ lived on earth represents a kind of long Sabbath day" (1978:17).

that the history of Israel, its relationship with its Creator and Redeemer and its influence on the nations is well reflected in its understanding and faithful practice of the Sabbath day.

Summary of Sabbath Redemption

This chapter attempted to understand the biblical and theological foundation of the Sabbath and how it applied to the nurturing of Israel's faith in its witness to the nations. In this connection, the primary elements of the seventh day of rest in Genesis 2:1-3; the fourth commandment of Exodus 20:8-11; the oral reaffirmation of the Sabbath commandment in Deuteronomy 5:12-15; the story of the manna in Exodus 16:1ff and the jubilarious regulations of Leviticus 25:1ff were discussed.

God's rest on the seventh day of creation was found to be unique to Biblical religion and provides the keystone for the later developments of the Sabbath. The multiple and integral use of the number "seven" in the creation story was noted as well as the importance of God providing a Divine Example of resting from His completed work of creation so He could communion with the human family. The eschatological, incarnational and soteriological aspects of the Sabbath were briefly discussed as well.

In the Sabbath commandment in Exodus 20:8-11 the introductory word "remember" was shown to have both prospective and retrospective elements. Both work and rest are enjoined by the commandment, the two being separated from one another because of the holiness of God's presence. Even in the most busiest times of the year, Israel was to be released from their labors in order to remember the God who had created and redeemed them. Thus the Sabbath provided the vehicle in which the nation of Israel would be sanctified and thus separated from the nations which surrounded it.

The oral reaffirmation of the Sabbath commandment is given in Deuteronomy 5:12-15. The grace-filled liberation from Egypt which appears in the preface of Exodus 20:2 now explicitly is used as a prime motivation to keep the Sabbath in Deuteronomy 5:15. This weekly

remembrance that they were once redeemed from bondage is to be extended to those who are not completely free.

As such, the redemptive, humanitarian and missional character of the Sabbath is especially displayed here. Thus Israel was constantly reminded through the weekly Sabbath that the blessings of God were not to be hoarded, but shared with the most needy around them. The weekly didactic character of the renewing of the Sabbath in the life of the Israelites in Exodus 16:1ff was also noted.

After laying a foundation for the understanding of the Sabbath, four of the more obvious correlations between the Sabbath and the Jubilee in the life of Israel were discussed. The first of these was the building of the timing and keeping of the jubilee on both the number “seven” and the term “sabbath.”

Next, the stewardship of the land was based on both the creative and redemptive aspects of God’s work. God’s ownership of the people and the land was to provide the motivational basis for their own redemptive treatment of one another in following the jubiliary regulations.

The third correlation between the Sabbath the Jubilee focused on the treatment of the land and all those within their sphere of influence, especially those on the margins of society. Lastly, the Sabbath “rest” is further extended into the idea of “release” of all those who are in any type of bondage or servitude.

In the seventy years of Babylonian captivity God ordained that the land would take the rest the Israelites had not given it earlier. In seeking to understand God’s redemptive purpose, Daniel is shown that the restoration of the Temple would be linked to the coming of the Messiah in both a Jubilee-like chronological and theological perspectives.

Thus it could be argued that the highly recognized programmatic discourse in Luke 4:16-30 not only has strong prospective elements but retrospective ones as well. As such, the Nazareth pericope can be seen to be grounded not only in the Jubilee of Leviticus 25:1ff but more foundationally in the Sabbath commandments of Deuteronomy 5:12-15; Exodus 20:8-11, the

story of the manna in Exodus 16:1ff and ultimately back to the creation story itself in Genesis 1-2.³⁰

In the context of making disciples, the Old Testament Sabbath not only provides the time but also informs and directs our understanding of how to use that time to enhance our communion with God and our relationship to one another. Both the creative and redemptive aspects of the Sabbath provide a firm ground for the making of modern disciples who have all too often been caught up and enslaved by the things of this world. In this respect, the Sabbath redeems, reorients and reshapes human life on an ongoing basis, in order that other lives which have been oppressed can be set free.

Towards a Sabbath Theology of Discipleship

The purpose of this third major part was discover how the Sabbath could impact the teaching and practice of discipleship today. If discipleship could be defined as the personal and corporate communion with God through the Word, prayer and worship in order to produce a fruit-filled community of believers who fulfill the Lord's commission through the Spirit empowered release and incorporation of others, then how could the Sabbath positively affect the making of disciples?

In the midst of our frenetic and materialistic modern world, the proper teaching and continual practice of the biblical Sabbath has the potential of becoming one of the most powerful tools for discipling people today. Through both the retrospective and prospective elements of remembering the day as a time of creation, redemption and release, the Sabbath not only releases us from the world of care, but heals and sanctifies all who come within its sphere of influence.

The very heart and center of the divine influence of the Sabbath is supremely focused on the past, present and future creative and redemptive ministry of Jesus Christ. As such, the weekly

³⁰ In addition, although the obvious eschatological elements of both the Jubilee and the Nazareth pericope have not been discussed, there are strong themes which connect these two with the ultimate and final eternal redemption of God's faithful people.

Sabbath from the very beginning had very deep incarnational and Christological overtones which were further affirmed that day in the synagogue at Nazareth and continued through the ministry of Jesus and Paul.

In the widespread search for meaning which has become an incessant quest for the individuals in our society, the very ontological heart of modern man's existence needs to be impregnated with a wholly objective and deeply subjective encounter with the Creator and Redeemer of the world. Although a generic "sabbath" walk in the woods might be a start for over-wrought secular people, the potential of the Sabbath to inform and motivate our communion with God, our community with one another and our service to others is beyond estimate.³¹

As Jesus attempted to show his kinsfolk in Nazareth and as the Puritans demonstrated in their own efforts to keep the Sabbath, the full consciousness of a definitive holy and redemptive time is absolutely essential for the ongoing healing and discipline of the spiritual life. In the divinely ordained weekly rhythm of resting and working, the Sabbath not only brings us a much needed rest from our labors but more importantly helps to reshape and redirect the meaning of the very work itself.

It should not be overlooked that the creation week clearly teaches that Adam and Eve's first day of existence was not spent working but resting in God's completed work. In our modern society, which has clearly placed productivity over relationships, doing over being, the weekly Sabbath has the potential of reminding us that life was not made to be devoted to the material but the spiritual and relational. The Sabbath teaches that humankind was not made to consume things but made for communion with God and community with one another.

Within the context of the emerging post-modern reality where personal subjective meaning has far more influence than absolute objective truth, people must be encouraged

³¹ As Ellen White comments on the potential far reaching aspects of the Sabbath: "all through the week we are to have the Sabbath in mind and be making preparation to keep it according to the commandment. We are not merely to observe the Sabbath as a legal matter. We are to understand its spiritual bearing upon all the transactions of life" (1948:353).

and led to “taste” the Sabbath in order to see its goodness. Those interested in taking advantage of the Sabbath day to disciple people need to first construct simple guidelines to instruct individuals and families on how to usher in and nurture the reality of God’s presence through the word, prayer and worship. Whatever can be done to enrich the communion with God on the Sabbath will not only pay rich dividends for that day but tend to shape the devotional exercises during the week as well.

Next, it is absolutely essential that the community aspect of Christian living be emphasized during the Sabbath through participation in small groups, attendance at corporate worship, sharing a common meal and being with other believers in a variety of ways. Church attendance and small group participation on the Sabbath should not be seen as a duty to be fulfilled but a most essential element in the spiritual and social formation of our Christian characters.

Lastly, the missional aspect of the Sabbath, the extending of the rest to all those within our gates needs to be recognized and practiced. The Sabbath was not made for self-indulgent spiritual exercises but was created and empowered to bring release to the poor, the oppressed and the heavy burdened. Modern believers need to follow in the footsteps of Jesus who used the Sabbath to teach and especially heal those on the margins of the society through His creative word and gentle touch.

Just as Jesus arose on that fateful Sabbath day in his hometown of Nazareth to announce the prophetic fulfillment of His Messianic presence and ministry, He arises today in the world He created and called home for thirty years. He comes willing to impart His Spirit as the balm of Gilead to heal our wounds and strengthen our steps. He comes to sharpen the images of remembrance of both past and future jubiliary release. He comes to release His disciples for mission in contemporary North America.