

The Seventh Day at Creation: Celebrating a Fruitful God

Odiaka G. Walker
School of Religion and Theology
Northern Caribbean University

Introduction

The discussion of the Sabbath has stirred many deliberations and generated many questions.¹ There are many views on the meaning of the seventh day of creation in the Genesis account (Gen 2:1-3). Some suggest that the mention of the seventh day and God's blessing and sanctifying of it has nothing to do with the keeping of the Sabbath holy today. Expressions are even made that God's activities during the creation week and the days of creation are to be taken as imaginative and fictional concepts.²

If there were no mention of the seventh day except that in the creation account, would we be able to deduce God's command to keep the Sabbath holy? Can a positive implied command to keep the Sabbath be found in the Bible's first account of the seventh day in Genesis? How are the two commands to be fruitful relate to the keeping of the Sabbath holy?

This paper examines the account of the seventh day in Gen 2:1-3 with a focus on clues to Sabbath keeping from the use of the term *bless* in the creation account. The related terms in the protological Sabbath

¹ Eugene F. Roop, *Genesis*, Believers Church Bible Commentary (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1987), 32.

² John C. L. Gibson, *Genesis*, The Daily Study Bible Series, vol. 1 (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001, c1981), 90. Here Gibson says, "The picture is part of the 'fiction' of seven days around which the author structures his story, and it is to be interpreted imaginatively, not literally."

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reference of the Genesis account are explored in light of God's later command for Sabbath observance in Exodus.

Rest on the Seventh Day at Creation

There are many views concerning the meaning of the blessing of the seventh day and the rest of God. In explaining the Sabbath rest at creation, James M. Boice points to freedom from restlessness, wilderness wandering, and sin. He further said that the creation rest of God means to come to rest in faith in Christ.³ The literal day that God blessed and rested on were not expounded on. According to Andrew Louth and Marco Conti, "God's rest on the seventh day is a metaphor that depicts the mystery of the true rest given to people in the eternal world and alludes to the rest of the Son before his resurrection."⁴ There were no points drawn from the text to indicate how the seventh day rest was a metaphor.⁵

David R. Helm and Jon M. Dennis believe that God's rest was not passive but a beginning of a new activity. The activity, they explain, was God's rule over creation where He was governing and upholding His creation.⁶ Helm and Dennis, having mentioned that rest is the idea of cease, seem to contradict themselves in presenting rest as a new activity of ruling creation. Walter Brueggemann holds that the Genesis narrative culminates with "the institution of the Sabbath" which he calls the "weekly cessation of work." He believes the "original Sabbath" for the Israelites was not a "day of worship but a day of rest."⁷ This of course ignores God's actions of blessing and sanctifying the seventh day. Nahum M. Sarna sees the *Shabbat* as a "a fixed institution recurring with cyclic regularity" and as an Israelite institution which was not around

³ James M. Boice, *Genesis: An Expositional Commentary*, Originally Published: Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 98-100.

⁴ Andrew Louth and Marco Conti, *Genesis 1-11*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture OT 1 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 45.

⁵ Did Adam and Eve rest with God? Did God take them out of the world He created in order for them to rest in some other world? These and many other questions were left unanswered by Louth and Conti.

⁶ David R. Helm and Jon M. Dennis, *The Genesis Factor: Probing Life's Big Questions* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2001), 38-40.

⁷ Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis*, Interpretation, a Bible commentary for teaching and preaching (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1982), 35.

before Israel came on the scene as a nation. This view regards the Sabbath as a human institution and not what God established at creation.⁸

The Creation is a Literal Event

The discussion on whether the account of creation was literal or non-literal is of great importance to theology. The understanding of fundamental doctrines such as salvation, sin, judgment, and the Sabbath depends on a literal interpretation of creation. There are many New Testament references to details in the creation account that strongly point to creation and its elements being literal. Jesus Himself, who was at creation, said that Adam and Eve were created in the beginning and these first male and female were real, literal people (Matt 19:4-6; Mark 10:6-8). The LXX uses the following translation for the Hebrew of Gen 1:1, “ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν” which is translated as “In the beginning, God made the heavens and the earth” (LXX Gen 1:1).⁹ Jesus pointed back to a specific point in time by using the phrase “ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς” which is “from the beginning” (Matt 19:8). The actions of God in creating Adam and Eve and putting them in the permanent institution of marriage was from the beginning. Also, Paul affirmed the fact of God creating literal human beings when he said Adam was the first man that God created (1 Cor 15:45; 1 Tim 2:13, 14; cf. Luke 3:38). Paul further indicated that God made all humanity of one blood (Acts 17:26).¹⁰ Thus, the individuals and their marriage are literal in the creation account, according to these New Testament references.¹¹

⁸ Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis*, English and Hebrew; Commentary in English.; Genesis = Be-Reshit., The JPS Torah commentary (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 14.

⁹ This is the author’s translation of LXX Gen 1:1.

¹⁰ Paul’s idea may be an inference from Gen 1:28 where Adam and Eve, the first male and female, were created as the parents of all human beings.

¹¹ See Richard M. Davidson, “The Biblical Account of Origins,” *Journal of Adventist Theological Society*, 14/1 (Spring 2023):10-19. Davidson outlines many lines of evidence from Genesis itself which suggest that the creation account was a literal event. These include: the literary genre and the literary structure pointing to literal historical nature and literal intentional nature of creation. The “literal, historical nature of Gen 1 and 2” includes “a literal creation week consisting of six historical, contiguous, creative, natural twenty-four-hour days, followed immediately by a literal twenty-four-hour seventh day, during which God rested, blessing and sanctifying the Sabbath as a memorial of creation,” 19.

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Additionally, Peter indicated that the Genesis account of how God created the heavens and the earth was accurate and trustworthy. He said that God created the heavens and earth by His word (2 Pet 3:3-7). He was not only aware of the psalmist words that “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, And all the host of them by the breath of His mouth” and “For He spoke, and it was *done*; He commanded, and it stood fast” (Ps 33:6, 9). Also, he knew of the Genesis statements, “Then God said, “Let there be. . .” and “it was. . .” (Gen 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24). The New Testament writer held the creation details as real, actual events in the history of the world.

God’s rest on the seventh day is related to as a literal event by the author of Hebrews in Hebrews 4:4. The New Testament Greek is “καὶ κατέπαυσεν ὁ θεὸς ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ ἐβδόμῃ ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν ἔργων αὐτοῦ” which is translated as “and God rested on the seventh day from all His work.” The Genesis account was cited almost exactly, “καὶ κατέπαυσεν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ ἐβδόμῃ ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν ἔργων αὐτοῦ” (LXX Gen 2:2). This is translated as “And He rested the seventh day from all His work.” The term for rest here is “*katapauō*” which is equivalent to the Hebrew word used in Gen 2:2, “*shabath*” for rest or repose.¹² The Hebrew 4:4 reference points to the fact that God rested on the seventh day as a literal action which was completed in the past.¹³ These terms, “*katapauō*” and “*shabath*,” point to ceasing from activity and continuing in that state of inactivity. This is what God did. He stopped from creating the heavens and the earth on the seventh day. Then, He continued in that

¹² Horst R. Balz and Gerhard Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990–), 266. See also James Strong, *A Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Greek Testament and The Hebrew Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2009), 40; James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997), vs. “καταπαύω”; Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich, and Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985), 419; *The Lexham Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, Logos Bible Software, 2011), vs. “καταπαύω.”

¹³ Joshua J. Spoolstra, *Lexham Theological Wordbook*, Lexham Bible Reference Series, ed. Douglas Mangum et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014), vs. “Rest.”

inactivity for the entire seventh day.¹⁴ Thus, God's rest on the seventh day was a literal event on a literal day at creation.¹⁵

The Implicit Command to Celebrate God on the Seventh Day

The Seventh-day Sabbath rest has its origin in the action of God on the seventh day of the very first week. God did not work on the seventh day because His work was finished on the sixth day.¹⁶ The seventh day Sabbath is a literal day filled with spiritual and temporal blessings. The uniqueness of the seventh day lies in the “desistance from labor” and the infusion of the day with blessing and sanctity. Thus, the seventh day is an “integral part of the divinely ordained cosmic order, it cannot be abrogated by man. Its blessed and sacred character is a cosmic reality entirely independent of human effort.”¹⁷ It is the last day of the week, and the only day of the week blessed by God.

The language of the seventh day in Genesis 2:2-3 sets the seventh day as a central feature of creation. K. A. Mathews sees the structure of the verses in this way:

So God finished by *the seventh day* his work which he did,
and he rested on *the seventh day* from all his work which he did,
and God blessed *the seventh day* and sanctified it,
because on it he rested from all his work which God created to do.¹⁸

The triple phrase “the seventh day” stands in the center of the lines. The threefold reiteration points to its principal “importance within the cosmic whole.”¹⁹ Creation moves toward rest, a rest of satisfaction and not exhaustion, a rest of celebration of a God who is inexhaustible in creativity.²⁰

¹⁴ Francis D. Nichol, ed., *The Seventh-Day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7 (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1980), 419–420.

¹⁵ See Walter M. Booth, “Days of Genesis 1: Literal or Nonliteral?” *Journal of Adventist Theological Society*, 14/1 (Spring 2023):103-105 for a presentation of seven convincing arguments for the days of creation being literal, twenty-four-hour days.

¹⁶ William D. Reyburn and Euan McG Fry, *A Handbook on Genesis*, UBS Handbook Series (New York, NY: United Bible Societies, 1997), 55.

¹⁷ Sarna, *Genesis*, English and Hebrew, 14.

¹⁸ K. A. Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, electronic ed., Logos Library System; The New American Commentary, vol. 1A (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001, c1995), 176.

¹⁹ Sarna, *Genesis*, *Genesis*, English and Hebrew, 14.

²⁰ Roop, *Genesis*, Believers Church Bible Commentary, 32.

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Kenneth A. Strand sees the declaration in Gen 2:2-3 as carrying the arrangement of a chiasm or inverted parallel statement:

- A. God finished his work (verse 2)
- B. And he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had done (verse 2)
- C. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it (verse 3)
- B'. Because on it God rested from all his work which he had done (verse 3)
- A'. In creation (verse 3, cont.)²¹

The blessing and sanctifying of the seventh day fall within the center, suggesting a main take-away from the account.

First Blessing Followed by a Command

The first use of the term for bless in the creation account related to the animals. “And God blessed them, saying, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth’” (Gen 1:22). In the creation account, the Pi’el verb (the intensive active stem), בָּרַךְ (*bārāk*), is used for the first time from the lips of God. God placed His own divine favor on the fish and the birds. Their future would be prosperous and productive.²² God declared the things He made on the fifth day to be good and then blessed not inanimate objects, but living things.²³ He now fills the sky and waters, that He created on the second day, with fish and birds. His blessing and command secure their fertility.²⁴ Insightfully, in the Exodus command of the fourth commandment, the “cattle” (from the Hebrew בְּהֵמָה, *bēhēmāh*, meaning animal) should enjoy rest and the blessing of the Sabbath, also (Exod

²¹ Kenneth A. Strand, *Handbook of Seventh-Day Adventist Theology*, electronic ed., vol. 12, Commentary Reference Series, ed. Raoul Dederen (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2001), 495.

²² James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, 1997), v.s. “בָּרַךְ”.

²³ Nichol, ed., *The Seventh-Day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, 214.

²⁴ Gordon J. Wenham, “Genesis,” in *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition*, ed. D. A. Carson et al., 4th ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1994), 60–61. He further points out that there was a parallel in terms of what God did for the first three days and the second three days. He notes that the great creatures of the sea that the ancient worships are but the creation of God’s hand. These animals are not in need of magic nor fertility rites to reproduce but God’s own blessings.

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20:10).²⁵ After the use of the term bless, there is an imperative: “Be fruitful.” This is from the verb *pʿrû* (פָּרָוּ). This term is plural as God speaks blessings upon many animals.

The Second Blessing Followed by a Command

The second use of the term for bless related to humanity. “Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth” (Gen 1:28). God spoke to both Adam and Eve. The expression “blessed them” means that both came under the pronouncement of God’s favor. In this second command, God did something different from what happened in the first. He spoke to humanity and gave humanity authority over the earth. This was God’s first revelation to humanity.²⁶ Here again, the use of bless follows an imperative verb “be fruitful.” This is plural as God spoke to two human beings, male and female—Adam and Eve.

In both the first and the second usage of the term blessed, there followed a command by God for animals and humanity to be fruitful. The pattern is here that a command follows the use of the term bless. Therefore, the next time the term bless is used, there is an expectation of a command with the terminology of “fruitful.”

The Third Blessing Followed by an Implied Command

The third use of the term for bless was in relation to the seventh day of the very first week. God blessed time. Donald E. Gowan has rightly observed that “Previously, living creatures have been blessed; now a period of time receives a blessing, and it is ‘hallowed,’ made a holy time, set apart from the other days of the week that provide time for ordinary human activities, and made God’s own possession.”²⁷

In the creation narrative, one is pulled into the literary flow of events with the use of the term “bless” followed by a command (Gen 1:22, 28). After God’s action of blessing the seventh day, one immediately looks forward to “and be fruitful.” However, the explicit command is not seen.

²⁵ Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew*, vs. בָּרַךְ.

²⁶ Nichol, ed., *The Seventh-Day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 216-17.

²⁷ Donald E. Gowan, *From Eden to Babel: A Commentary on the Book of Genesis 1-11*, International Theological Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 31.

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While the first two entities that were blessed were living beings, the third was a day, the seventh day of the week. The command was not explicit.

Considering the mighty and matchless power and creativity of God seen in the world he had just made, humanity is drawn to celebrate a fruitful God within a specified time, the seventh day. Thus, the implied command that follows God's blessing of the Sabbath is "celebrate a fruitful God." The idea of God saying to the day "be fruitful and multiply" may be tempting because that blessed day would be repeated every week without ever losing its blessedness. What appears to be emerging from the use of the term bless and then a command is an implied call to celebrate the fruitful God of creation. This situation seems to be planned by God in order that humanity responds to His command that would be imbedded in His actions of resting on, blessing, and sanctifying the seventh day.

Within an environment of perfection, that is, God Himself being absolutely perfect, the world He created being perfect, the animals being perfect, and humanity being perfect (Gen 1:31), humanity would understand God's intention in blessing and sanctifying the Sabbath as a period for holy time with God. This blessing was accompanied by the sanctifying of the seventh day. The sanctifying action provides further clarity to what God intended humanity to receive from the blessing of the seventh day. Humanity would respond to God with worshipful celebration of Him as a wonderful Creator and God. Not having said "celebrate a fruitful God" would not have made God's intentions hidden nor unclear to the holy pair, Adam and Eve. Thus, the implied duty to keep the seventh day holy would be as strong and clear as the outward command by God in later years.

Table with Blessing and Command

Text	Blessing	Command
Gen 1:22	"And God blessed them, saying"	"be fruitful"
Gen 1:28	"And God blessed them, and said to them"	"be fruitful"
Gen 2:3	"Then God blessed the seventh day"	"[celebrate a fruitful God]"

Implied Command at Creation Verified

Insightfully, the Exodus' explicit command to keep the Sabbath holy builds on the implied command in Genesis (Exod 20:8-11; 31:14-17; 35:1-3). This reveals God's original intention in the Sabbath. In Genesis, at the time when all is perfect, there is an implied command to keep the seventh day holy. In Exodus, at a time when almost everything is broken, there is an explicit command to keep the seventh day holy. The link between the two commands, the implicit and explicit, is the linguistic correlation between the Genesis account of the seventh day and the Exodus command. The vocabulary of Gen 2:1-3 is "interwoven with other Pentateuchal references to the Sabbath." In fact, the link with creation is seen explicitly in the Exodus Ten Commandments (Exod 20:8-11).²⁸

The terms in the fourth commandment confirm a God-intended command to keep the Sabbath holy which was implied in the creation account of the seventh day. God made the seventh day as holy time to celebrate Him as the fruitful God. The linguistic connection between the Genesis account of the seventh day and the Exodus commands of the seventh day makes a compelling argument for the implied command to rest on the seventh day and celebrate a fruitful God.

Table of Related Terms in Gen 2:1-3 and Exod 20:8-11

Concept	Text	Phrase	Translation
God rested	Gen 2:3 Exod 20:11	וַיִּשְׁבֹּת וַיִּנַּח	And He rested And He rested
The seventh day as a day of rest	Gen 2:2, 3 Exod 20:11	וַיִּשְׁבֹּת בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וַיִּנַּח בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי	And He rested on the seventh day And He rested on the seventh day
God made it holy; humanity keeps it holy	Gen 2:3 Exod 20:8	וַיְקַדְּשׁ אֹתוֹ לְקַדְּשׁוֹ	And sanctify it To keep it holy
Creation within six days	Gen 1:31; 2:1 Exod 20:11	יוֹם שֵׁשִׁי וַיְכַלּוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ כִּי שֵׁשֶׁת-יָמִים עָשָׂה יְהוָה אֶת- הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת-הָאָרֶץ	And on the sixth day the heavens and earth were finished Because in six days the LORD made the heavens and the

²⁸ Sarna, *Genesis*, English and Hebrew, 14.

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			earth.
All the host was created	Gen 2:1 Exod 20:11	וְכָל־צָבָאָם כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־בָּם	And all the host of them All that [were] in them
God sanctified the seventh day	Gen 2:3 Exod 20:11	וַיְקַדֵּשׁ אֹתוֹ וַיְקַדְּשֶׁהוּ	And sanctified it And sanctified it
God blessed the seventh day	Gen 2:3 Exod 20:11	וַיְבָרֶךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶת־יְוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי בָּרַךְ יְהוָה אֶת־יְוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי	And God blessed the seventh day And the LORD blessed the seventh day

The clarity of the connection of language between the seventh day of the creation account and the Exodus account affirms the implicit command embedded in Gen 2:3. The verb for rest (נָחַ from נָח) used in the Exodus' account is not the exact term used in Gen 2:3. This difference does not affect the concept of rest in the Exodus' account since the noun *Shabbat* is found three times in it (Exod 20:8, 10, 11). The Genesis account has the verb *Shabat* which is used twice and points to God resting on the seventh day (Gen 2:2, 3).

In both accounts, the seventh day (יוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי [*yôm haššēhî'i*]) is the day of rest (Gen 2:2, 3; Exod 20:11). The language of the Exodus' command points back to the seventh day of creation. The basis of requiring the rest of the seventh day is on the arrangement of the Creator blessing and sanctifying the seventh day. In both accounts, no other day can be designated as the day of rest except the seventh day that God rested on, blessed, and sanctified.

The language of both accounts shows that God rested on the seventh day (Gen 2:2, 3; Exod 20:11). The call to humanity to keep the seventh day holy as the Sabbath is based on what God does. God sanctified the seventh day. Therefore, humanity is to keep it holy (Gen 2:3; Exod 20:8). The verb *qadash* (קָדַשׁ) is used here. This forms the strong linguistic ground for the origin and purpose of the Sabbath.

Additionally, both the Genesis and Exodus accounts tell the duration in which the creation of the heavens and the earth were completed. Within six days (שֵׁשֶׁת יָמִים, *yôm shishshî*), the heavens and earth (הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ, *hashshāmāyim w^eha'arets*) were created (Gen 1:31-2:1; Exod 20:11). The day following the sixth is the seventh. Everything within the heavens and the earth were made during the six-day period. The expression “all the host of them” and “all that [are] in them” means

that the creation was completed over six literal days (Gen 2:1; Exod 20:11). Then, God sanctified and blessed the seventh day (Gen 2:3; Exod 20:11).

Table of Related Terms in Gen 2:1-3 and Exod 31

Concept	Text	Expression
God rested	Gen 2:3 Exod 31:17	And He rested He rested
The seventh day as a day of rest	Gen 2:2, 3 Exod 31:15 Exod 31:17	And He rested on the seventh day The seventh day is the Sabbath of rest on the seventh day He rested
God made it holy; humanity keeps it holy	Gen 2:3 Exod 31:15	And sanctified it the Sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord
Creation within six days	Gen 1:31; 2:1 Exod 31:17	And on the sixth day the heavens and earth were finished for <i>in</i> six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth
God sanctified the seventh day	Gen 2:3 Exod 31:14 Exod 31:15	And sanctified it keep the Sabbath, therefore, for <i>it</i> is holy to you the Sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord.

Though the elements of “all the host of them” and “blessed the seventh day” are missing in Exod 31, the language connection is nonetheless in the affirmative. The facts of the Genesis account are given. God rested and the seventh day is the Sabbath or a day of rest. The seventh day is holy to the Lord and for God’s children. He completed creation in six literal days. Had the days in Exodus been different from the days in Genesis, there would be an indication of it.²⁹

²⁹ There are a few language elements in Exod 16 and Exod 35 which are related to the creation account of the seventh day. Elements in Exod 16 are: six days gathering is done (Exod 16:26); the seventh day is the Sabbath (16:26, 27, 29, 30); God’s people are to rest on and keep it holy (16:30); it is a holy Sabbath to the Lord (16:23); the Sabbath is God’s commandment (16:28, 29). Elements in the Exod 35 are: God commands the seventh day as a Sabbath of rest (35:1, 2; implied command in Gen 2:3); six days work

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The seventh day and the Sabbath day are synonymous (Exod 20:11; 35:2-3). God's resting on the seventh day created a day of rest. This day of rest is called the Sabbath. Matthews indicates that:

The derivative noun "Sabbath" (*šabbāt*), which is a transliteration (not translation) of the Hebrew word, does not actually occur in the creation account (though it is obviously alluded to by *šābat*, "ceased"), probably since the number "seventh day" is in keeping with the numerical format of the narrative.³⁰

The Meaning of Celebrating a Fruitful God on the Seventh Day

Engaging the celebration rest on the seventh day considering a fruitful God means sharing into God's rest. Celebrating the Sabbath rest meant that the God of creation was acknowledged for who He really was. Humanity could not replicate God's works, but humanity could rest with God and rejoice for His stupendous works. Celebrating God on the Sabbath meant holding, honoring, and respecting God as our Maker (Ps 95:6). It meant giving something to God that is not due to anything or anyone else. We "worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water" (Rev 14:7). It is worship, a worship that sees the mighty magnificence, supreme excellence, utter uniqueness, and transcendence of God. This worship celebrates God as deserving singular homage, unshared obeisance, and reverential deference. "God is greatly to be feared and to be held in reverence. . ." (Pss 89:7; 111:9; 33:8). The seventh day Sabbath, not having a physical entity of nature for its existence, points to the Creator God who is "wholly outside of nature."³¹

In this sense of responding to God in total worship for the duration of the Sabbath, there lies a great spiritual equalizer for humanity. All humanity, irrespective of status, wealth, or rank, cease their activities for the twenty-four hours to worship God on the Sabbath day. Thus, faithfulness to the celebration of God on the Sabbath would be an antidote for idolatry. The celebration of God on the Sabbath is a foretaste of the alignment of all creation to God's original purposes.³² Not only in earthly Jerusalem but "it shall come to pass *That* from one New Moon to

should be done (Exod 35:2); the seventh day is a holy day (35:2); it is a Sabbath of rest to the Lord (35:2).

³⁰ Matthews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 176.

³¹ Sarna, *Genesis*, English and Hebrew, 14.

³² Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 35.

another, And from one Sabbath to another, All flesh shall come to worship before Me, says the Lord” (Isa 66:22).

God created a day of rest when He rested on, blessed, and sanctified the seventh day. He did this for humanity to share a special celebratory time with Him. Had God not fixed a specific time for all humanity to come together in corporate worship; there could be no consensus on which day to render united homage to Him. God has made an authoritative separation of the seventh day when all humanity should celebrate Him as Creator.³³ Humanity kept the first Sabbath with His Creator. The Creator revealed His love and care for humanity on the seventh day. Understanding how God brought the world into being and filled it with all that humanity needed gave the first Sabbath celebrants great delight in their Maker. He opened their attention to who He is and what the Sabbath meant for them.

The Lord who formed the earth and established it shew Adam and Eve great and mighty things on that first Sabbath (Jer 33:2, 3). He is ready to do the same for His children today. As God made known the holy Sabbath to Israel, so God made known that first Sabbath to Adam and Eve (Neh 9:14). They were wrapped into the sweetest joy as they celebrated their productive, prolific, proficient God.

What God did in creation revealed who He is (Rom 1:20) The nature of God was manifested in the wonderful world He made. His works were not an end in themselves. They are to point back to Him (Ps 19:1). The earth was not to be the focus of the Sabbath celebration. The God who created it was the great center of the day of rest. The first family celebrated the fruitful God. They came into close fellowship, into deep contemplation on God’s creation, but more so, into rapturous celebration of God Himself. Ceasing from one’s work is but the initial element demanded by the Sabbath rest. The Sabbath rest seems not to find its full purpose until an individual moves not only from his works but moves into celebration of God, worshiping the Creator. This truth cuts against the claims that the original Sabbath was not a day of worship.³⁴

The Sabbath is thus reserved for this ceasing from work and joining with families into worshipful celebration of God. As Adam and Eve

³³ Charles Simeon, *Horae Homileticae: Genesis to Leviticus*, vol. 1 (London: Holdsworth & Ball, 1832-63), 6.

³⁴ Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 35. Brueggemann seems to suggest that the worship element of the Sabbath came about after the exile of the Jews. However, the key actions of God to bless and sanctify the seventh day clearly reveal the nature of the Sabbath as a day set apart for holy use which would include worshiping the Creator (Gen 2:3).

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worshiped on the first Sabbath, all humanity came before the Creator to celebrate Him. The Sabbath is meant for all humanity to come together in worship of the Maker of all things (Mark 2:27).

Considering the aforementioned, Isaiah's words seem very insightful:

If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, *From* doing your pleasure on My holy day, And call the Sabbath a delight, The holy *day* of the Lord honorable, And shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, Nor finding your own pleasure, Nor speaking *your own* words, Then you shall delight yourself in the Lord; And I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, And feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the Lord has spoken (Isa 58:13, 14).

God's original blessings were poured out on the first couple as they delighted in the Sabbath rest. These special blessings are obtained when the Sabbath is used for God-intended ways. Ascending to God's proposed achievement and feeding on the good things of the saints are reserved for those who delight in God on the Sabbath.

God bound Himself to sustain humanity when He blessed them. For God always sustains what He creates. God expressed His sovereignty over time when He blessed and sanctified the seventh day. He had already displayed His sovereignty over space by His creativity.³⁵ He would be close to creation and humanity by virtue of the special blessings He bestowed.

The blessed rest of the Sabbath presupposes productive work during the six working days. Ezekiel identified that there is a difference between the six working days and the Sabbath (46:1). Without God-honoring work, there is no genuine celebration of the Sabbath rest. Though the focus of the Sabbath is not about resting from the work of humanity, humanity enters the Sabbath rest having ceased from his work (Heb 4:10). The celebration of rest is in light of God's activities, God as Creator.

Humanity enters into the Sabbath rest worthily when he has done meaningful and God-honoring work during the week. The call to rest as God rested means that one has worked as God worked at creation. This does not mean that we are creators of worlds or divine beings. We are human beings made in the image of a holy God. When we have done

³⁵ Sarna, *Genesis*, English and Hebrew, 15.

work that honors God, we are then ready to rest and celebrate God on the Sabbath day. Dishonorable work disqualifies authentic Sabbath celebratory rest and worship. Yet, the Sabbath can be a time of reconciliation with God so that we can honor Him.

The first seventh day on earth was kept holy by a holy God, holy humanity, and uncorrupted animals (Gen 2:2, 3; Mark 2:27). God consecrated a whole twenty-four-hour period. Because God blessed and sanctified the seventh day, it is reserved for God's own use and purpose. Humanity, therefore, does not decide how to relate to the Sabbath. God who made it and blessed it tells us how to relate to it.

Exodus 31:13 indicates that the command to keep the Sabbath holy went to people who were sanctified. The term used in Gen 2:3, Exod 20:11, and 31:13 as sanctify point to God's unique action of making holy and setting aside for holy use. Humanity is unable to make things or time holy. We give ourselves to God and He makes us holy. If God sanctifies a people, they are then enabled to keep His seventh day Sabbath holy.

No mention of humanity was made in the account of the seventh day (Gen 2:1-3). The account of creation began with God and ended with God (Gen 1:1-3; 2:1-3).³⁶ This was to focus on the purpose of the Sabbath, highlight its origin, and direct the mind to God. The purpose of the Sabbath is to celebrate God with the putting away of our regular work. Having its origin in God, the Sabbath is assigned its value not by humanity, but by the Creator. The Sabbath is a God-centered day for the blessing of humanity. The phrase "his work" occurs three times in Gen 2:2-3 "to emphasize that creation was God's work alone."³⁷ God rested from His work as an example for humanity because God was not fatigued and in need of refreshment from strenuous labor.³⁸

The Sabbath is a sign that God has not abandoned His creation because He made the seventh day holy, that is, He filled a portion of time with His presence. God did not keep Himself from the time He made, but wrapped Himself in the hours of the seventh day for the benefit of humanity. He does not keep Himself from what He creates. He participates in and continues to interact with and sustains His creation. The Sabbath speaks of the Creator who fellowships and communes with humanity and touches His creation. Yet, He is separate and distinct from creation and time. His created works and time are not media through

³⁶ Sarna, *Genesis*, English and Hebrew, 14.

³⁷ Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 176.

³⁸ Reyburn and McG Fry, *A Handbook on Genesis*, 55.

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which we can channel worship to Him. We are called to worship the Creator directly and solely. Otherwise, worship is unacceptable, tainted, and serves the enemy's purposes.

God's time became a shared experience with His creatures during the Sabbath hours. The time of the Sabbath had God's presence interwoven into it. Humanity, the animals, and God come together in a unique experience during the Sabbath. God, time, and man come into a rare harmony during the Sabbath. While we remain in harmony with God during the week, God reserved the seventh day for us to spend with Him in a manner that no other day of the week affords.

God rested on the seventh day (Gen 2:2, 3). God related to the time He created. He made time (Gen 1:1). He submitted Himself to operate differently during the Sabbath day. He refrained from working. He ceased working on the seventh day. The Sabbath's origin is in God's specific and special acts of resting, blessing, and sanctifying the seventh day.

God blessed and sanctified the seventh day. This means that in blessing it, God has endowed the seventh day "with permanent beneficial qualities" and in sanctifying it He has "set it apart from common use" and put it in a special relation to Himself.³⁹ God touched time and consecrated it. God saw fit to separate the twenty-four hours of the seventh day for holy use. The implied command to celebrate a fruitful God in the creation account found expression in a direct command to keep the Sabbath holy in the Exodus account. The seventh day of creation was blessed by God and calls humanity to celebrate a fruitful God. Humanity, therefore, should relate to holy time appropriately in resting from work and celebrating God in worship.

Odiaka G. Walker is a Jamaican. He received his MA in Religion at Andrews University and is currently a ThD student in the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University. He serves as a Pastor in the Jamaica Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventist from 2018 to the present. He is an Assistant Professor of Religion at Northern Caribbean University. He has published two books, *God and Human Life Course Manual* (2023) and *An Introduction to the Apocalypse of Daniel* (2024) and is editor of the book *Faithful 21st Century Pastoral Leadership and Ministry* (2026). odiaka@andrews.edu

³⁹ John Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis* (New York, NY: Scribner, 1910), 36.