**“God’s Rest” The Bible Echo 12, 18.**

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The rest promised to Abraham and his seed, and referred to in Hebrews 4:1-11, is God’s rest-the rest into which Adam entered when the Lord “caused him to rest in the garden of delight.” {BEST May 3, 1897, par. 1}

It is sin that brings weariness. Adam in the Garden of Eden had work to perform, yet he had absolutely perfect rest all the time he was there, till he sinned. If he had never sinned, such a thing as weariness would never have been known on this earth. Work is no part of the curse, but fatigue is. “Because thou hast ...eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it; cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground.” Genesis 3:17-19. {BEST May 3, 1897, par. 2}

**KEEPING THE REST**

Up to this time he had enjoyed perfect rest while labouring. Why?—Because his work was simply to “keep” that perfect work which God had prepared for him and committed to him. “This is the work of God, that ye believe.” Adam’s work, therefore, consisted in keeping the faith. He was not required to create anything. If he had been asked to create no more than one flower or a single blade of grass, he could have wearied himself to death over the task, and died leaving it unfinished; but God did the work, and placed Adam in possession of it, with directions to *keep* it, and this he did so long as he “kept the faith.” {BEST May 3, 1897, par. 3}

Note that this perfect rest was rest in the new earth, and note further that if sin had never entered, the earth would have remained new for ever. It was sin that brought a blight upon the earth, and has caused it to wax old. God’s perfect rest is found only in a heavenly state, and the new earth was most decidedly “a better country, even an heavenly.” That which was given to man in the beginning, when he was “crowned with glory and honour,” which he lost when he “sinned, and came short of the glory of God,” but which the Second Adam has in His own right, being crowned with glory and honour, because of the suffering of death, is what God has promised to Abraham and his seed, and will be given to them when the Messiah comes at “the times of restitution of all things.” {BEST May 3, 1897, par. 4}

**A BIT OF EDEN STILL REMAINS**

That perfect, new creation has disappeared-but the rest still remains. The proof that the works were finished and the rest prepared from the foundation of the world, is that “God did rest the seventh day from all His works.” The Sabbath of the Lord-the seventh day-is a portion of Eden that remains amid the curse; it is a portion of the new-earth rest spanning the abyss from Eden lost till Eden restored. For as the Sabbath rounded out the creation week, and was the proof that the work was finished, it was the seal of a perfect new creation. Now a new creation is necessary, and it must be brought about by the same power as in the beginning. In Christ all things were created, and “if any man be in Christ he is a new creation;” and the seal of perfection is the same in both cases. The Sabbath therefore is the seal of perfection, of perfect righteousness. {BEST May 3, 1897, par. 5}

**WHAT THE SIGN SIGNIFIES**

But it must be understood that Sabbath rest does not consist merely in abstaining from manual labour from sunset on Friday evening till sunset on Saturday;—that is but a sign of the rest, and like all other signs is a fraud if the thing signified is not present. The true Sabbath rest consists in complete and continuous recognition of God as the Creator and Upholder of all things, the One in whom we live, and move, and have our being, our life and our righteousness. Keeping the Sabbath is not a duty to be discharged in order to obtain the favour of God, but the keeping of the faith by which righteousness is accounted to us. {BEST May 3, 1897, par. 6}

There is no room for the objection that we ought not to keep the seventh-day Sabbath because we are not saved by works; for the Sabbath is not a work, it is a rest-God’s rest. “He that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His.” Hebrews 4:10. True Sabbath-keeping is not justification by works, and is utterly disconnected from any idea of such a thing; it is, on the contrary, justification by faith-it is the absolute rest that comes from perfect faith in the power of God to create a new man and to keep the soul from falling into sin. {BEST May 3, 1897, par. 7}

But “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God,” (Romans 10:17), so that it is idle for anybody to profess faith in God while ignoring or rejecting any word of God. Man is to live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. In every word of God there is life. If a man knew no more than one word of God, and accepted that word as God’s word indeed, he would be saved by it. God has compassion on the ignorant, and does not require that men should know a certain amount before they can be saved; but wilful ignorance is a different thing. A person’s ignorance may be the result of deliberately rejecting knowledge, and he who does that, rejects life. For as there is life in every word of God, and the life is one and the same in every word, whoever rejects but one word that clearly comes to him, thereby rejects the whole. Faith takes the Lord for all that He is,—for all that we see of Him, and for all the infinite unknown. {BEST May 3, 1897, par. 8}

**A GIFT TO MAN**

Let it not be forgotten that the Sabbath is not a burden which God lays upon people (whoever heard of perfect rest being a burden?) but a blessing which He offers them; it is the removal of burdens. “Come unto Me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” Instead of forcing it upon people, God says that it is impossible for anybody to share the Sabbath rest, if he does not believe. To the man who says, “I don’t believe that it is necessary for me to keep the Sabbath,” the Lord replies, “You cannot keep it; you shall not enter into My rest; you have no part nor lot in it.” It is impossible for a man to keep the Sabbath of the Lord without faith, because “the just shall live by faith.” The Sabbath is God’s rest, God’s rest is perfection, and perfection cannot be obtained except by perfect faith. {BEST May 3, 1897, par. 9}

“God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.” John 4:24. His rest therefore is spiritual rest, so that mere physical rest without spiritual rest, is not Sabbath-keeping at all. Only those who are spiritual can truly keep the Sabbath of the Lord. So long as Adam was led by the Spirit, he enjoyed perfect rest, both of body and soul; but as soon as he sinned, he lost the rest. But although the curse upon the earth causes weariness of body, the Sabbath still remains from Eden, the pledge and seal of spiritual rest. The abstaining from all our own work and pleasure on the seventh day-from everything by which we could personally profit-is simply in recognition of God as Creator and Upholder of all things-the one by whose power we live; but this apparent rest is but a farce if we do not really and wholly recognise Him as such, and commit ourselves fully to His keeping. {BEST May 3, 1897, par. 10}

The Sabbath, therefore, is especially the poor man’s friend; it appeals above all to the labouring man, for it is to the poor that the gospel is preached. The rich will hardly listen to the Lord’s call, for they are likely to feel content with their lot; they trust in their riches, and feel able to take care of themselves in the present, and as for the future, “their inward thought is that their houses shall continue for ever;” but to the poor man, who knows not how he is to get a living, the Sabbath comes bringing hope and joy, in that it directs his mind to God, the Creator, who is our life. It says, “Seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.” Instead of being obliged to say, “How can I get a living if I keep the Sabbath?” the poor man may see in the Sabbath the solution of the problem of life. “Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.” 1 Timothy 4:8. {BEST May 3, 1897, par. 11}

**THE BLESSED DAY AND THE BLESSED MAN**

Bear in mind that while *the Sabbath day* is the seventh day of the week, the rest which the Sabbath day brings to view is continuous. Just as a day is not a man, so there is a difference between blessing a day and blessing a man. God blessed the seventh day (Genesis 2:3), but He blesses men every day. The Sabbath is kept only by those who rest in the Lord all the time. While nobody can be a Sabbath-keeper and ignore the day upon which God has placed his blessing, it is equally true that the man who does not continually rest in the Lord does not keep the Sabbath. {BEST May 3, 1897, par. 12}

Thus, rest in the Lord is found only by faith in Him; but faith saves from sin, and living faith is as continuous as the breath, for “the just shall live by faith.” If now a man distrusts the Lord during the week, is doubting and fearing as to how he shall get along, perhaps fretting and worrying, is impatient, or harsh, or in any way unjust to his fellow-men, he is certainly not resting in the Lord-he is not remembering the Sabbath day, to keep it holy; for if he really remembered the Sabbath day, he would know God’s power to provide for him, and he would commit the keeping of his soul to Him in well-doing, “as unto a faithful Creator.” {BEST May 3, 1897, par. 13}

**THE CROSS OF CHRIST**

The Sabbath comes revealing Christ the Creator as the burden bearer. He bears the burdens of the whole world, with all its toil and sin and sorrow, and He bears it easily-His burden is light. “His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes we are healed.” 1 Peter 2:24. It is in the cross of Christ that we receive life, and are made new creatures. The power of the cross, therefore, is creative power. So when on the cross Jesus cried, “It is finished,” He was simply announcing that in Him, through His cross, could be obtained the perfect works of God, which were finished from the foundation of the world. Thus the Sabbath-the seventh day rest that commemorates creation completed in the beginning-is a blessed reminder of the fact that in the cross of Christ that same creative power is freely offered to deliver us from the curse, and make us in Him as complete as was everything when God saw it and pronounced it “very good.” The word of life which is proclaimed to us in the Gospel is “that which was from the beginning.” {BEST May 3, 1897, par. 14}

He does not fail nor become impatient or discouraged; therefore we may confidently cast all our care on Him. Thus the Sabbath is indeed a delight. In the Psalm for the Sabbath day, David sang, “Thou, Lord, hast made glad through Thy work; I will triumph in the works of Thy hands.” Psalm 92:4. The Sabbath means triumphing in the works of God’s hands, not in our own works. It means victory over sin and death-everything connected with the curse-through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the worlds were made. It is a remnant of Eden before the curse came, and therefore he who keeps it indeed really begins his eternal rest-he has the rest, the perfect rest, which the New Earth alone can give. {BEST May 3, 1897, par. 15}

**GOD’S INVITATION TO SABBATH-KEEPING**

Now we can understand why the Sabbath occupies so prominent a place in the record of God’s dealings with Israel. It is not because the Sabbath was for them exclusively, any more than salvation was exclusively for them; but it is because Sabbath-keeping is the beginning of that rest which God promised His people in the land of Canaan. It is sometimes said that the Sabbath was not given to the Gentiles, but it must also be remembered that the land was not promised to the Gentiles. The Gentiles are “strangers from the covenants of promise.” But it is true that the Gentiles-all the world-were called to come to Christ, the living water. “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters.” The promise to Israel was, and is, that “nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the Lord thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel.” Isaiah 55:5. Still further in the call, the Lord says:- {BEST May 3, 1897, par. 16}

“Keep ye judgment, and do justice; for My salvation is near to come, and My righteousness to be revealed. Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it; that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hands from doing any evil. Neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the Lord, speak, saying, “The Lord hath utterly separated me from His people.... Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the Lord, to serve Him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be His servants, every one that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of My covenant; even them will I bring to My holy mountain; and make them joyful in My house of prayer; their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon Mine altar; for Mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people. The Lord God which gathereth the outcasts of Israel saith, Yet will I gather others to him beside those that are gathered to him.” Isaiah 56:1-8. {BEST May 3, 1897, par. 17}

And to both these and those—to all to whom He proclaims peace, both near and far (Isaiah 57:19),—the Lord declares:— {BEST May 3, 1897, par. 18}

**A GLORIOUS PROMISE**

“If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words; then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.” Isaiah 58:13, 14. {BEST May 3, 1897, par. 19}

Those who call the Sabbath a delight—not a burden—shall delight themselves in the Lord. Why?—Because the Sabbath of the Lord is the Lord’s rest—rest that is found only in His presence, where there is “fulness of joy” and everlasting pleasure. It is the rest of Eden, for Eden is delight, pleasure; it is the rest of the new earth, for Eden belongs to the new earth. We have read that those who come to the Lord to keep His Sabbath, shall be made joyful in the house of the Lord, and of them it is said, “They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thy house; and Thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures,” literally, “Thy Eden.” Psalm 36:8. This is the heritage of the Lord, now is the time, to-day is the day in which we may enter upon it, for He is the portion of our inheritance, and in Him we have all things. {BEST May 3, 1897, par. 20}

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