

# The Lord's Day, Every Day: The Culmination of Sabbath Rest in Revelation

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## Introduction

The Book of Revelation, as the last book in the Bible, was uniquely written to bring together many of the most pervasive themes throughout scripture. The holiness of God, atonement of Christ, and marriage between Christ and his church are all major themes of the Bible, and on full display at the world's climax depicted in Revelation. These themes often receive a great deal of attention by scholars, and for good reason. However, there are other, lesser known scriptural motifs that find their fulfillment in Revelation and often receive less attention. Among these is the theme of Sabbath rest. Sabbath rest as a theme in scripture begins in Genesis 2, and continues as a motif throughout the days of ancient Israel shown in the Old Testament, the words and commands of Jesus in the Gospels, the outworking of the Spirit in the church age, and finally culminates with the return of Christ at the end of time. This theme is explored in many ways throughout the book of Revelation, where rest is synonymous with the victorious people of God. From the theme of rest in scripture and the culmination of rest in Revelation, Christians learn that rest is a reflection of the character of God, a mark of right worship for the people of God, and the eternal goal of the people of God.

### The Sabbath Rest in the Old Testament

The theme of God's rest pervades all of scripture, and finds its fulfillment in Revelation. To fully understand the concept of Sabbath rest in scripture, one must go all the way back to Genesis 2, when Yahweh instituted the very first Sabbath immediately following creation. Genesis 2:2-3 reads, "And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation<sup>1</sup>." The Hebrew verb used here, *sabat*, is the verb from which the later noun "Sabbath" is derived, and shows that God established Sabbath rest as a creation ordinance by modeling it himself after his work was finished<sup>2</sup>. The Hebrew word closely resembles the word for "peace," giving a positive connotation to the idea and showing that God's rest at creation was not physical (after all, God does not have a physical body and does not get tired), but rather an emotional state of

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<sup>1</sup> *ESV: Study Bible*, esv text ed. (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Bibles, 2007), 52.

<sup>2</sup> John D. Currid, *Genesis*, EP Study Commentary (Webster, NY: Evangelical Press, 2003), 93.

being<sup>3</sup>. While on all of the other days of creation God dubbed his work “beautiful,” the seventh day alone was consecrated, or made holy<sup>4</sup>. God is establishing the pattern of work, followed by rest, that will be a key indicator of humanity. Humans will follow after their creator, working to fulfill His creation mandates to be fruitful, multiply, and subdue the earth (Gen 1:28). They will then follow their maker into seasons of rest from labor. Furthermore, many texts from the ancient Near East, including the Old Testament itself, associate temple building with rest (Ps 132:13-14; 2 Chr 22:9-10). There is a symmetry between the building of an earthly temple by humans, who then rest after the work is done, and the building of earth, a divine sanctuary, by God, who rests after His work is completed<sup>5</sup>. God has created the earth to be one enormous temple, where He can dwell with humans, and where His glory is on full display (Ps 19:1). This link between the temple and rest highlights a link between rest and the right worship of God, which carries through the rest of scripture. God’s consecration of rest as an appropriate reflection of worship of Him perfectly sets the stage for the commandment Sabbath rest later in the Pentateuch.

The motif of Sabbath rest in scripture continues into Exodus, where God explicitly commands his people to take a Sabbath rest every seventh day (Exod 20:8-11). In the longest of the ten commandments given at Mt. Sinai, Yahweh defines the Sabbath as both a day free from work, and a day that is holy to God. The Sabbath was to be a weekly sign of the covenant between the people and God, a reminder of their special relationship with Yahweh, and the blessing of rest that came to them because of that relationship<sup>6</sup>. However, the phrase “keep it holy” indicates that, in addition to being a sign of the existing relationship between God and His people, the Sabbath rest was also to be a time in which the people were to grow closer to God,

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<sup>3</sup> Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 140.

<sup>4</sup> Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 143.

<sup>5</sup> There are also many interesting speculations about the role of the number seven in the creation account of Genesis 1-2, and in the accounts of the structure of the tabernacle in Exodus. Many significant words in Genesis 1 are repeated in multiples of seven, creation takes place over seven days, and Genesis 1:1 contains exactly seven words. In Exodus, the tabernacle’s consecration process lasted seven days. This has led critical scholars seeking a *Sitz im Leben* for the Genesis text to conclude that it was written with a liturgical purpose in mind. However, this is not necessarily a problem for Biblical scholars, since it merely serves to highlight the connections between Yahweh, worship, and rest that are so pervasive in Genesis and throughout scripture. (Jeff Morrow, “Creation as temple-building and work as liturgy in Genesis 1-3,” *Journal of the Orthodox Center for the Advancement of Biblical Studies*. 2.1 (2009):1-13).

<sup>6</sup> Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers. 2006), 459-460.

and develop a stronger relationship to Him through study and prayer<sup>7</sup>. The Sabbath, therefore, signifies both an existing relationship between God and His people, and a developing one. It shows that they are already His chosen, covenant people, but do not yet have a perfect, right relationship with Him. In verse 11, God Himself specifically references Genesis 2:2-3, telling the people that He is their model for rest on the Sabbath. As Vos eloquently states, “The principle underlying the Sabbath is formulated in the Decalogue itself. It consists in this, that man must copy God in his course of life.”<sup>8</sup> Building on this theme later in Exodus, God also commands the people to take a Sabbath year every 7<sup>th</sup> year, in which the land will lie fallow (Exod 23:10). The concept of Sabbath in the Mosaic Law reaches its full flowering in Leviticus 25, in which God lays out the plans for a year of Jubilee.

While God explicitly commands the Israelites to take a weekly Sabbath rest, in Leviticus 25 He goes one step farther, making sure that Israel will also take entire years and devote them to rest and justice. In verses 1-7 of Leviticus 25, God commands the Israelites to take a Sabbath year every seven years. The chapter begins with the oft-repeated phrase “The LORD said to Moses,” indicating that these instructions come from Yahweh Himself. This Sabbath year served several purposes. First, it allowed the land to lie fallow for a year, restoring nutrients and reducing sodium in the soil.<sup>9</sup> Second, and perhaps more importantly, it reminded the Israelites that all land belongs to Yahweh, its creator. Finally, it reminded the Israelites that not only did the land itself belong to God, so did their ownership of the land, which dated to the Abrahamic covenant in which God promised Abraham that his descendants would be given the land of Canaan<sup>10</sup>.

In verses 8-34 of Leviticus 25, God issues commands regarding the year of Jubilee, a Sabbath to be taken once every fifty years. While the other commands regarding Sabbath rest in Exodus are relatively simple, the commands for the Jubilee are incredibly specific, and reveal God’s intentions for Sabbath rest in the lives of His people. The Jubilee year was to begin on the appointed year’s Day of Atonement, and was to be ushered in with the blowing of a *shofar*, or

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<sup>7</sup> Stuart, 460.

<sup>8</sup> Vos, 139.

<sup>9</sup> John D. Currid, *Leviticus: EP Study Bible Commentary* (Webster: Evangelical Press, 2004) 324.

<sup>10</sup> Mark F. Rooker, *The New American Bible Commentary, Vol. 3A: Leviticus* (Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000) 302.

ram's horn. In the Old Testament, the blast of the horn, or trumpet, symbolized to Israel that the sovereign God was among them and that they were to move forward under his command, usually militarily<sup>11</sup>. In verse 10, the purpose for the Jubilee year is given. The author writes "And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you, when each of you shall return to his property and each of you shall return to his clan." In Hebrew, the word meaning consecrate is transliterated as *kiddesh*, meaning "to sanctify, hallow." By using this verb, which often refers to the Sabbath, the author is drawing a parallel between the holiness of the two occasions.<sup>12</sup> The Jubilee is to serve as a greater, more joyful, and more just Sabbath, in which the people receive rest and liberty. Once every fifty years, the Day of the Atonement, which was established to reconcile and restore the sinful Israelites to the holy and just God, was also to serve as a time when Israelites were restored to each other.<sup>1314</sup>

Just as rest and creation were intimately linked in Genesis 2, there is also a deep connection between rest and the land in Leviticus 25. During the Jubilee year, Israelites are to return to their ancestral land and clan. When taken in context with the rest of Leviticus 25, it is clear that this call to return to family and land is a commandment for all property to revert to its original owner<sup>15</sup>. Leviticus 25 continues to explore God's view of land ownership, which is begun in the creation account. God created the world, and all of it ultimately belongs to Him. God designed the land of Canaan to be inhabited by the tribes of Israel, and assigned each tribe its own portion of the land (Joshua 13-19). Although Israelites were permitted to place themselves into indentured servitude (Exod 21:1-11), or to sell their land if they were in

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<sup>11</sup> Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: DoubleDay, 2001) 2165.

<sup>12</sup> Levine, *Leviticus Commentary*. 170.

<sup>13</sup> Rooker, *The New American Bible Commentary, Vol. 3A: Leviticus*, 303

<sup>14</sup> Interestingly, there is no concrete evidence that the Jubilee was ever fully and regularly celebrated by ancient Israel. Certain verses in Jeremiah (Jer 32:7, 34:8-9, 37:12) tell of customs amongst the Hebrews before the fall of Jerusalem to release their male and female servants after a certain period of time, and to travel to the land of their ancestors at the appointed year. However, it is certainly reasonable to assume that, due to the constant faithlessness of Israel during the days of the judges and kings, this law was never kept with regularity every 50 years (Moshe Weinfeld, *Social Justice in Ancient Israel and the Ancient Near East*, (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1995), 154-155.). This further emphasizes the connection between rest and right worship. As the Israelites fell into idolatry and sin, they failed to worship God by obeying his commandments about rest.

<sup>15</sup> Peter-Contesse and Ellington. *A Handbook on Leviticus*, 378.

financial distress, during the Jubilee year all land was to return to its original God-given owners, and all Israelites in service were to be granted freedom.<sup>16</sup> These verses emphasize a key idea for Leviticus 25: that the land of the Israelites is not theirs to own, buy, and sell, but rather was given to them by God himself.<sup>17</sup> Scholars have noted the connection between the Jubilee year, like all of the laws given at Sinai, and the Covenant between Yahweh and Israel as well as the connection between Leviticus 25 and Genesis 1. The Jubilee year included a restoration of both people and land to their original states, the way God had intended them to be at Creation.<sup>18</sup>

### **Rest in the New Testament**

The theme of Sabbath rest for the follower of God does not end with the incarnation, but rather intensifies in the New Testament. Jesus himself, while incarnate on earth, both took rest for himself (Mark 6:31), and communicated that true rest was found in him (Matt 11:28-30). He died on the final week day before the Jewish Sabbath, signifying that his work on earth was complete, and rose on the first day of the week following the Jewish Sabbath, entering into the eternal rest following the completion of his earthly mission<sup>19</sup>. Therefore, over time the observance of a day of rest shifted from the observance of the Sabbath day found among the ancient Israelites, to the Lord's Day on the first day of the week to commemorate the resurrection of Jesus Christ on that day<sup>20</sup>. Like other Old Testament commandments, the Sabbath rest found new life, and a slightly different look, in the church age. However, it retained its characteristics as a day set aside for the worship of God and rest from the labors of the other days of the week.

In the New Testament, the concept of Sabbath rest is expanded as Christians in the New Covenant gained a deeper understanding of their relationship with God in the church age. In Hebrews 3:7-4:11, rest, belief, and worship are explicitly connected as the author establishes the supremacy of Christ over Moses. This passage of Hebrews is the only extensive discussion of rest in the New Testament. The two primary Greek words used for rest are *καταραυσις*

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<sup>16</sup> Currid, *Leviticus*, 326.

<sup>17</sup> Currid, *Leviticus*, 327.

<sup>18</sup> Fanucci, "Release from the Slavery of Debt: The Jubilee Year for Ancient Israel and the Modern Global Economy," 6.

<sup>19</sup> Vos, 142.

<sup>20</sup> Vos, 142.

and ἀναπαυσις, and these are used 29 times in the New Testament<sup>21</sup>. There are subtle nuances between the two terms, but καταπαυσις is most commonly used in the LXX to refer to the rest offered by God<sup>22</sup>. The author quotes Psalm 95 as a warning to modern day believers about the consequences of unbelief and disobedience<sup>23</sup>. In Hebrews 3:1-6, the author states that Jesus is superior to Moses, and in 3:7-4:11 backs this up by comparing the followers of Moses in the wilderness to the followers of Christ<sup>24</sup>. To do this, the author quotes Psalm 95, which describes the failure of the Exodus generation to remain faithful to the Lord, and to trust His promises to bring them into the land of Canaan. The concept of rest features prominently in these verses, and exactly what rest the author is referring to is complicated, since he is quoting a psalm, which refers to a yet earlier part of Israel's history, for first century believers in Christ. Much ink has been spilled as scholars have attempted to discern exactly what this promised rest means.

Rest is such a pervasive metaphor in scripture that it can be difficult to tell exactly what the author of Hebrews meant when he warned the people about failing to enter God's rest. In one sense, the Exodus generation referred to by the psalmist failed through their unfaithfulness to enter the earthly rest promised to them by God and symbolized in the land of Canaan, or even the temple of God<sup>25</sup>. The Greek word used in the LXX in Psalm 95 for "rest" is καταπαυσις, which is used elsewhere in close association with the temple. So it certainly has a spatial sense, and could be translated as "resting place"<sup>26</sup>. However, many scholars argue that there are also other meanings for "rest" in view here, and that the rest discussed by the Hebrews author means more than simple the physical spaces of Canaan or the temple. Moses is mentioned as a model of faithfulness to God in Heb 3:2-5, yet he never actually entered the land, while it seems that Joshua did not enter the rest the author is talking about, although he

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<sup>21</sup> Judith Hoch Wray, *Rest as a Theological Metaphor in the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Gospel of Truth* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 4.

<sup>22</sup> Wray, *Rest as a Theological Metaphor in the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Gospel of Truth*, 33.

<sup>23</sup> Randall C. Gleason, "The Old Testament Background of Rest in Hebrews 3:7-4:11," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 157 (2000): 281-303.

<sup>24</sup> David L. Allen, *Hebrews*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers. 2010), 271.

<sup>25</sup> Allen, *Hebrews*, 291.

<sup>26</sup> Allen, *Hebrews*, 291.

did enter Canaan<sup>27</sup>. Furthermore, by the time Psalm 95 was written, Israel had taken the land of Canaan, so in a sense they were finally at “rest” there. If rest is simply synonymous for Canaan, why were Israelites living in Canaan admonished in Psalm 95 to learn from the faithlessness of the Exodus generation and not repeat it? The answer is clearly that God’s rest is not really about a physical land, but is a spiritual state in which the believer lives in eternal rest and fellowship with God in heaven.

God’s promised, heavenly rest was open and available to the Israelites of the wilderness generation, the people alive when Psalm 95 was written, and Hebrews 4:1 attests that it was still valid for first century believers in Christ<sup>28</sup>. However, for believers in Christ, this rest has both a present and future dimension to it. Old Testament believers had the same assurance of future eternal rest that believers have today, but they did not have access to the rest of God during their earthly lives that believers in Christ have thanks to the redeeming work of Christ as high priest (Heb 2:1-4; 10:26-31)<sup>29</sup>. Hebrews 4:2 explores how one can enter the promised rest of God through Christ. It was open to both Old Testament and New Testament people through belief in Christ, either as future Messiah or incarnate Son of God. However, for the wilderness generation and others who rejected the promise, the author says that they failed to live “by faith” (Heb 4:2). This is the first mention of the term “by faith,” which will pop up again many times in the famous “Hall of Faith” in Hebrews 11<sup>30</sup>. Belief is required to enter into God’s promised rest, and this belief must have faithfulness in heart and deed attached to it. Gleason states, “The sin of the Exodus generation was a growling lack of trust in God’s life-sustaining presence to provide for their needs<sup>31</sup>.” The author of Hebrews is warning first century believers to not let the same charge be true of them, but to hold fast to their belief in Christ, and to back up their belief with acts of faithfulness. The author of Psalm 95, and the author of Hebrews, are

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<sup>27</sup> Allen, *Hebrews*, 291.

<sup>28</sup> Gareth Lee Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 202.

<sup>29</sup> Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 200.

<sup>30</sup> Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 203-204.

<sup>31</sup> Gleason, “The Old Testament Background of Rest in Hebrews 3:7-4:11,” 293.



reminding God's people that entering into his eternal rest must be preceded by faithful obedience during one's life<sup>32</sup>.

### **Revelation: The Consummation of Sabbath Rest**

The theme of rest, found throughout scripture, finds its consummation in the book of Revelation. Although the theme of rest is not immediately evident as a major theme in Revelation, the motif is actually woven throughout the book, as the final consummation occurs in which God brings history to a close and rewards those who have been faithful to Him with eternal rest in Him. The entire book of Revelation was given to John to write on the Sabbath day, while John was worshipping Christ in the Spirit (Rev 1:9). Rest is mentioned explicitly several times in Revelation, often in connection to those who have labored faithfully for God while on earth. The first such mention of rest comes in 6:11, when the martyrs for the Lord are told to rest a little longer for their number to be complete. The martyrs are given white robes to wear, symbolic of purity<sup>33</sup>. These are the saints who have paid the ultimate earthly price for their service to and worship of the Lord. Revelation 6:9 says that these saints "had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne<sup>34</sup>." As early as Revelation 6, a link is established between rest and martyrdom. However, the link in this case is temporary. The martyrs are only asked to rest until their number is complete. Later in Revelation, the Spirit tells John that rest is the eternal reward and blessing for those who die in the Lord.

Revelation marks the culmination of the sense throughout scripture that God's rest is an eternal blessing for those who die in the Lord. In Revelation 14:13, the Spirit tells John, "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on...that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them<sup>35</sup>." John is commanded specifically to write down these words, signifying their importance<sup>36</sup>. There are echoes here of Daniel 12:13, in which the Lord promises rest to Daniel "at the end of the days<sup>37</sup>" if he labors faithfully on behalf of Yahweh

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<sup>32</sup> Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 195-196.

<sup>33</sup> Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 149.

<sup>34</sup> Paige Patterson, *Revelation*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers, 2012), 185-186.

<sup>35</sup> *ESV: Study Bible*, 2483.

<sup>36</sup> Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 275.

<sup>37</sup> *ESV: Study Bible*, 750.

while on earth<sup>38</sup>. Other ancient Jewish scripture also connect work on earth with rest after death (1 En 38:2; 4 Ezra 7:75-77, 90-96)<sup>39</sup>. That these believers are eternally blessed with rest is beyond dispute, but many scholars have worked to discern exactly what this rest entails. Many commentators see in this verse a promise to all believers, whether they die as martyrs or from other causes, that they will enter into the heavenly rest discussed in Hebrews 3 and 4, and Psalm 95<sup>40</sup>. In his series of sermons, written in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, on this verse, James Durham describes what this rest will look like for Christians. They will be free from all the challenges, temptations, and effects of sin. Their minds will be wholly focused on the Lord, as they could never be on earth. They will enjoy God to the fullest degree eternally, and will see His face<sup>41</sup>. In this interpretation, rest in this verse is synonymous with freedom from persecution and sin, and the freedom to enjoy God fully. Certainly this verse carries that connotation, since it is given in the context of suffering for the Lord. However, others see a more nuanced interpretation of the word “rest”.

The context of Revelation 14:13 provides further clarity on the meaning of the “rest” promised to believers who die in the Lord. God’s people are in the midst of a great battle against Satan and his henchmen, the beasts of the sea and earth. Revelation 14:13 is the culmination of a section of Revelation in which the unholy trinity of Satan and the two beasts have attempted to hijack the right worship of God<sup>42</sup>, particularly the worship of God’s Sabbath. To do this, they have created attempted to re-write the creation account in Genesis with their own monstrous goals in mind. In Revelation 12, a woman, who is symbolic for the people of God, is described in a heavenly context, clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and a crown of twelve stars on her head. This is reflective of the fourth day of creation, when God created the sun, moon, and stars. However, unlike the perfection of the first creation, this one is horrifically marred, as the woman is being chased by a great red dragon, who John

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<sup>38</sup> G.K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 769.

<sup>39</sup> Beale, *The Book of Revelation: Commentary on the Greek Text*, 768.

<sup>40</sup> Beale, *The Book of Revelation: Commentary on the Greek Text*, 768.

<sup>41</sup> James Durham, *The Blessed Death of Those Who Die in the Lord* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Ministries, 2003), 19-22.

<sup>42</sup> Anthony MacPherson, “The Mark of the Beast as a ‘Sign Commandment’ and ‘Anti-Sabbath’ in the Worship Crisis of Revelation 12-14,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 43.2 (2005):267-283.

names as Satan, the same one who disrupted the peace and perfection of the first creation. The parallel between the first and false creations continues as the dragon calls up a beast from the sea in a monstrous mimicry of God's creation of sea creatures on the fifth day of creation. The parallels continue until, in the climax of the dragon's power and authority, those who follow the beast receive his mark in Revelation 13:16-18. Following the parallels between creation and the dragon's reign of terror, this mark of the beast represents the Sabbath of the beast in a Satanic reincarnation of the seventh day of creation<sup>43</sup>.

Through his mark, the beast is attempting to establish a new sign commandment that is very similar to the Sabbath of God. In the Decalogue, the establishment of the Sabbath rest is meant to serve as a sign of God's covenant with his people, ensure justice for the the oppressed, and connect the name of Yahweh with his number, seven. In contrast, the mark of the beast serves as a sign that people worship the beast, creates a system of economic injustice in which people without the mark are ostracized and persecuted, and connects the name of the beast with his number, the imperfect and unholy six<sup>44</sup>. The mark of the beast mentioned in Revelation 13:16 is similar in many ways to an Old Testament Sign Commandment<sup>45</sup>. It is identified with the forehead of the wearer, and symbolizes an obedience to the beast, and is connected with worship of the beast (Rev 13:12-15)<sup>46</sup>. The mark attempts to replace the Sabbath, which is a symbol of the right worship of God, with the false worship of the beast. God's answer to this disobedience to His word is clear. In Revelation 14:11, the angel says that for those who worship the beast and receive his mark, the future holds nothing but eternal torment, and there will be no rest for those who participate in the anti-Sabbath. In contrast, Revelation 14:13 promises true Sabbath rest to those who refuse the sign of the beast and die in the Lord.

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<sup>43</sup> MacPherson, "The Mark of the Beast as a 'Sign Commandment' and 'Anti-Sabbath' in the Worship Crisis of Revelation 12-14," 281-283.

<sup>44</sup> MacPherson, "The Mark of the Beast as a 'Sign Commandment' and 'Anti-Sabbath' in the Worship Crisis of Revelation 12-14," 278-279.

<sup>45</sup> MacPherson, "The Mark of the Beast as a 'Sign Commandment' and 'Anti-Sabbath' in the Worship Crisis of Revelation 12-14," 277.

<sup>46</sup> MacPherson, "The Mark of the Beast as a 'Sign Commandment' and 'Anti-Sabbath' in the Worship Crisis of Revelation 12-14," 270-271.

Those who die in the Lord will receive eternal Sabbath rest, but work must be done to determine exactly what this rest will look like. According to Chee-Chiew Lee, Jewish scriptures support the belief that the rest of Revelation 14:13 is a rest from both work and enemies<sup>47</sup>. Multiple early Jewish scriptures connect rest in God with rest from labor, and this connection was established at creation, as God consecrated the rest He took following His labor to create the world<sup>48</sup>. At other places in the Old Testament, rest is promised by God during military endeavors, and therefore means rest from the pursuit of enemies. In Deut 12:9-11, God, speaking through Moses, promises the second generation from the Exodus a resting place when they come into the land of Canaan. The LXX uses forms of the word καταπαυσις twice in this passage, both as a noun which is translated “resting place,” and a verb which is translated “he gives you rest<sup>49</sup>.” Because Israel was on the brink of war with the Canaanites, this passage is clearly intended to reassure them that one day soon they will have rest from war and fighting. Other passage in the Old Testament also promise rest to God’s people, or even the land itself, following fighting (Deut 25:19; Josh 23:1; 11:23; 1:13; 21:44)<sup>50</sup>. This certainly makes sense given the context of Revelation 14:13, in which the world is under the grip and tyranny of Satan, who is persecuting the people of God at every turn. This is the final battle of God’s people, and at the end of it the Lord promises rest to all who die having faith in Him, thereby fulfilling His promises throughout scripture that rest is not merely rest from labor, but from the struggle against deadly foes as well.

The final chapters of Revelation, while not explicitly about rest, bring together key themes from scripture and promise an eternal Sabbath for the people of God in the New Heavens and the New Earth. In these chapters, the reign of the dragon and beasts is over, and the false worship and false Sabbath they promoted has ended in an eternity without rest from torment for their followers. However, for believers throughout the ages, God restores the consecrated rest that He engaged in at creation. In Revelation 21, the New Heavens and the New Earth are established by God at the world’s consummation. Christ returns to reign, and

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<sup>47</sup> Chee-Chiew Lee, “Rest and Victory in Revelation 14.13,” *JSNT* 41.3 (2019): 344-362.

<sup>48</sup> Lee, “Rest and Victory in Revelation 14.13,” 345-346.

<sup>49</sup> Lee, “Rest and Victory in Revelation 14.13,” 347.

<sup>50</sup> Lee, “Rest and Victory in Revelation 14.13,” 347.

God Himself is with His people as their God. In this sense, all of eternity will be one great Sabbath day, made holy because of the presence of the Lord with His people. However, as John describes the new Jerusalem he says that he does not see a temple (Rev 21:22). No temple is needed because the Lord Himself is present as the temple, and the people have direct access to Him. There is a close association between the temple/tabernacle and creation throughout the Old Testament. In Psalm 132, David calls the temple the Lord's "resting place," and the Lord says in v. 14 that indeed Jerusalem is His resting place forever<sup>51</sup>. Just as God rested on the seventh day of creation, his dwelling place, so He also rested in the tabernacle or temple in the days of Israel. Furthermore, there are echoes of the seventh day of creation in Exodus 24:15-16, when the Lord calls Moses to Himself on the seventh day to give him the law and instructions for the tabernacle<sup>52</sup>.

In Revelation 21:3, John says, "And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man, He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God<sup>53</sup>.'" The noun translated "dwelling place" is σκηνη, and should literally be translated "tabernacle<sup>54</sup>." Ross says, "The dwelling of God with his people began in the Garden, was interrupted by sin, continued in the Old Testament sanctuary, found full expression in the Incarnation, and now is with his people in the Spirit- by faith and not by sight. In the coming age, the people of God will behold him in glory<sup>55</sup>." God's resting place, or tabernacle, will one day be physically and forevermore with His people. The Sabbath instituted by God at the first day of creation is now fulfilled by God in the new, restored creation, as He rests in His dwelling place, and brings his believers with Him into this eternal rest.

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<sup>51</sup> Moshe Weinfeld, "Sabbath, Temple, and the Enthronement of the Lord- the Problem of the Sitz im Leben of Genesis 1:1-2:3," in *Melanges bibliques et orientaux en l'honneur de M Henri Cazelles* (Kevelaer : Butzon and Bercker, 1981), 501-502.

<sup>52</sup> Weinfeld, "Sabbath, Temple, and the Enthronement of the Lord- the Problem of the Sitz im Leben of Genesis 1:1-2:3," 505-506.

<sup>53</sup> *ESV: Study Bible*, 3046

<sup>54</sup> This is the same Greek word John uses as a verb in John 1:14 to describe the first coming of Jesus, the incarnation of God on earth. {Allen P. Ross, *Recalling the Hope of Glory: Biblical Worship from the Garden to the New Creation* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2006), 497.}

<sup>55</sup> Allen P. Ross, *Recalling the Hope of Glory: Biblical Worship from the Garden to the New Creation*, 497.

Just as the consummation of weekly Sabbath rest on the seventh day is found at the end of Revelation, Christ's return and future reign also fulfill the Jubilee year from Leviticus 25. Like all of the Old Testament, the Jubilee contains shadows of Christ reigning, both in the current church age and in eternity to come. In the current church age, believers are restored to God, not through the law, but through the atoning work of Christ on the cross. The Gospel is a symbol of restoration of our relationship with God and freedom to the captive. However, when reading Leviticus 25 it is not possible to reconcile its beauty and freedom with the present state of the world. The present age is not a time of rest, but of work as Christians obey Christ's command to spread the Gospel throughout the earth. It is not a time of global restoration to God, but of increasing strife and evil. It is not a time of social justice, but of unspeakable acts committed by the strong to marginalize and take advantage of the weak. It is not a time of families restored to each other, but of the breakdown of the family as the most essential unit of society.<sup>56</sup> And so, while individuals certainly find their restoration to God in the person and work of Jesus Christ, much of the year of Jubilee as given in Leviticus points us to eschatology: to the return of Jesus and the eternity he will bring.

The connection between the Jubilee year in Leviticus 25 and the return of Christ in the last days cannot be overstated. In his book entitled *The Gospel in Leviticus or Holy Types*, J.A. Seiss beautifully illustrates the ways in which Christians can look forward to a true and eternal Jubilee with the return of Christ. First, Seiss points out that the Jubilee year did not begin until the conclusion of the Day of Atonement, and was announced with the sound of a trumpet. In the present day, Christ is still at work as High Priest, drawing people to Himself and redeeming them from sin. The Day of Atonement has not ended. When it does, 1 Thessalonians 4:16 says, "the Lord himself shall descend from Heaven with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first." This verse clearly points to the time when, at the blast of the trumpet, Jesus shall return to earth. Next, during the Jubilee year the land itself was restored to its original state, as God intended it to be. The land received release from

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<sup>56</sup> Joseph A Seiss, *The Gospel in Leviticus or Holy Types* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1955), 393-399.

its role as the provider of sustenance to Israel. Like the land, in the Jubilee year the people are freed from captivity and imprisonment<sup>57</sup>.

The eschatological significance of the freedom of both the land and the people is found in Revelation 21:1-4 “Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.<sup>2</sup> And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.<sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.<sup>4</sup> He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” At the earth’s finale, both the land and the people will be restored by Christ to their original state before the fall into sin. The consequences of sin, including sickness, injustice, pain, and death, will be ended and creation will no longer be groaning under the weight of sin (Rev 22:1-5). The universal family of believers will return to their original, God-given state and will be reunited with each other and with Christ (Matt 24:31). Although they have done no labor to earn it, they will be fed a magnificent feast by God himself (Rev 19: 6-10). All of the components of the Jubilee are present at the conclusion of earth’s timeline. As Seiss beautifully stated, “hail then, to the blessed year of jubilee! Hail to the bright year of God’s redeemed- year of release for them that sigh- year of the exile’s return to his home- year of rest to them that toil- year of finished salvation to the lost...The weary world waits impatiently for thy coming!”<sup>58</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The theme of rest is pervasive through scripture. It was established by God at creation, and was intended to allow humans to rest from their labors, find peace from toil and enemies, and worship the God who created and redeemed them. This theme of rest finds its fulfillment throughout Revelation, as the people of God, both martyrs and other believers, are often pictured as resting in the Lord, both temporarily and eternally, during the final battle in which Christ returns and inaugurates the great consummation. Furthermore, the explicit commands in

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<sup>57</sup> Seiss, *The Gospel in Leviticus or Holy Types*, 402.

<sup>58</sup> Seiss, *The Gospel in Leviticus or Holy Types*, 402.

the Old Testament to believers to take a weekly Sabbath rest, and a year of Jubilee every fifty years, find their fulfillment in Revelation as Christ returns and claims all lands, nations, and people for Himself. When Yahweh rests forever in his dwelling place in the New Heavens and New Earth, His people will also rest in freedom with Him forever. The peace that Yahweh had at creation is spread throughout the new heavens and the new earth as the curse of sin and death is lifted, and God's people rest eternally in his redemption and love.



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