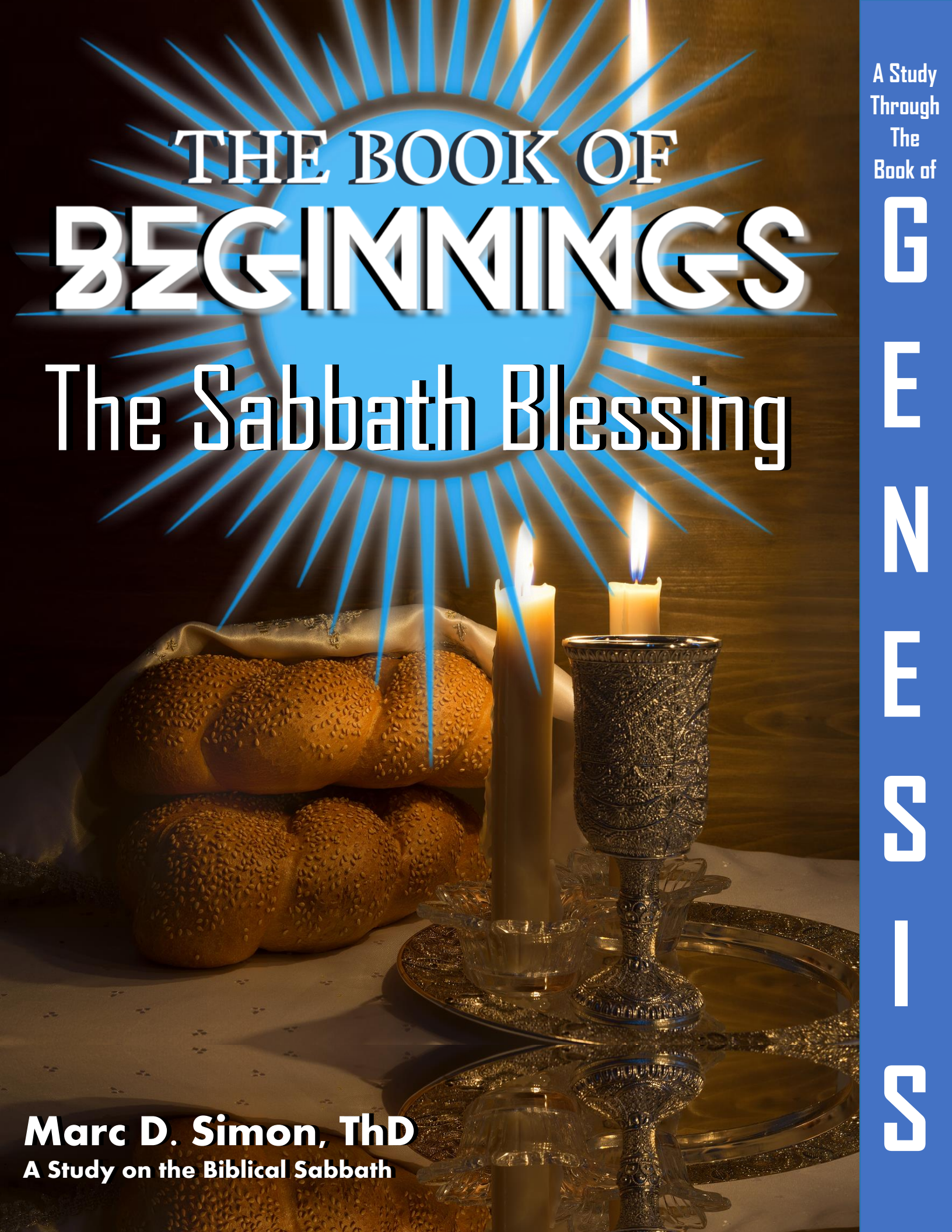




THE BOOK OF BEGINNINGS

The Sabbath Blessing

A Study
Through
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A Study on the Biblical Sabbath



*Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it He rested ("He **shabat**") from all the work of creating that He had done (Gen. 2:3).*

*So the people rested ("they **shabat**") on the seventh day (Ex. 16:30).*

The Blessing of the Seventh Day

In ancient Near Eastern and Israelite culture the number seven communicated a sense of fullness or completeness. In fact, the Hebrew word “seven” שבע is spelled in Hebrew with the exact same consonants as the word “complete” or “full” שבע. Some patterns of seven found in Genesis include:

- There are **seven words** in Genesis 1:1, foreshadowing **seven days of creation**, which unfold in **seven paragraphs**, cf. Gen. 1:1–2:3.
- Key words in Genesis 1:1 appear in the creation narrative in **multiples of seven**: God appears 35 times (**7 x 5**), heavens appears 21 times (**7 x 3**), and earth appears 21 times (**7 x 3**).
- God provides miraculous water in the desert for Hagar and Ishmael at **Beersheba** (which is literally “**well of seven**”).
- Abraham later makes peace with Abimelek by sacrificing **seven ewe lambs** at **the well of seven** (Genesis 21:27-32).
- Joseph’s rise in Egypt is marked by **seven years of plenty** followed by **seven years of famine** (Genesis 42-47).

The Sabbath is about Experiencing God's Rest, Position, and Blessing

[1] Rest

On the seventh day of creation God “**rested**” (**shabat**) from His work. But what does that mean? And is it possible that the word “rest” hints at something more than we’re accustomed to thinking?

To begin with, the Bible uses 2 very different Hebrew words to describe the “rest” which God enters on the Sabbath, and what it might truly mean. Let’s take a look.

On the seventh day God finished the work He had been doing; so on the seventh day He rested (Heb. shabat) from His work. (Gen. 2:2)

In six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth...but on the seventh day He rested (Heb. nuakh). (Ex. 20:11)

The Hebrew word **shabat** means to “cease from.” The reason God “ceases” (**shabat**) or “rests” from His work on the seventh day is not because He is tired, but because “it is finished” (Gen. 2:1), *cf. “the manna ceased (shabat)” (Joshua 5:12); “and day and night shall not cease (shabat)” (Gen. 8:22).*

[2] Position

The other Hebrew word used for God's "rest," which appears in Exodus 20:11, is **nuakh**, which literally means to "take position" or "settle into place," cf. *"The locusts came over the land of Egypt and rested (nuakh) in all the land" (Ex. 10:14).*

When God or His people "rest" (**nuakh**), it involves settling into a place of stability, peace, and safety.

"And the king dwelt in his house, for Yahweh had given him rest (nuakh) from all his enemies." (2 Sam. 7:1)

"The LORD God took the man and rested him (nuakh) in the Garden of Eden" (Gen. 2:15).

While we tend to see ourselves as the masters of our own time, and free to use it however we desire, the Israelites were commanded to acknowledge that God



was master over their time once every seven days. They did this by giving up their own agendas for a full day, and affirming God's rule over their lives. Keeping the Sabbath meant accepting that God was Lord, even over their time.

[3] Blessing

Therefore, the LORD blessed the Sabbath (Heb. shabat) day and made it holy. (Ex. 20:11)

The seventh day is the day of creation which God blesses and declares holy, cf. *Gen. 2:3*. In doing so, He marks the seventh part of created time as sacred. To enter the Sabbath was to enter the part of time that assured fruitfulness, continuity, and blessing over every aspect of one's life.

Entering the Messianic "Rest"

"Ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls." (Jer. 6:16)

In the mind of the ancient Israelite, it was devotion to the law ("the ancient paths") that gave them rest. In the words of Jesus however, it was not devotion to the law that gave one rest, but devotion to Jesus himself, who is Lord, even of the Sabbath (Matt. 12:8).

*"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you...and you will find rest for your souls."
(Matt. 11:28–30)*



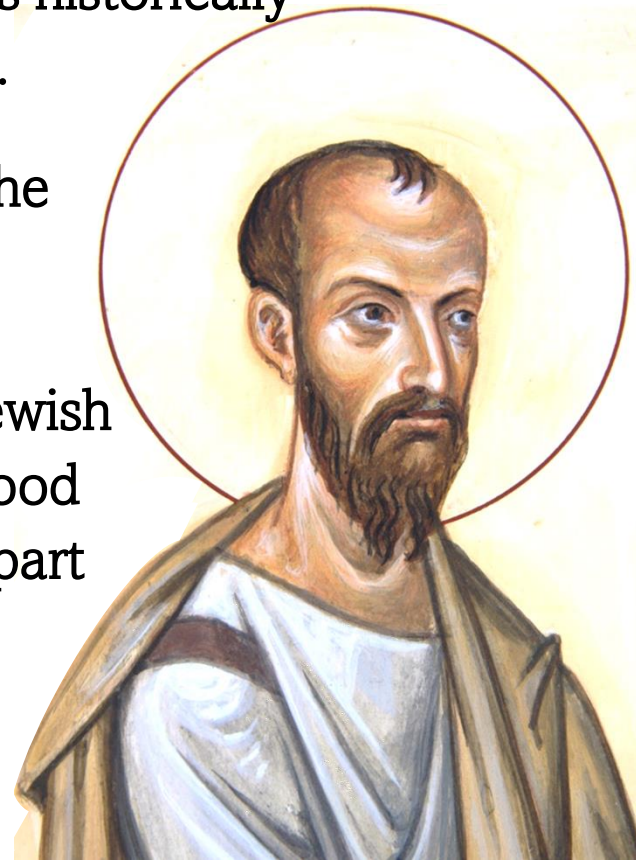
What Did Paul Really Teach About the Sabbath?

“Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.” (Col. 2:16–17)

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” (Matt. 11:28)

Many of those led to Christ by Paul were not ethnically or culturally Jewish. They had never followed Jewish customs or laws, and yet they had now come to faith in Jesus the Messiah, who was historically born into this world as a Jewish male.

Because salvation had first come to the Jewish people, many of Christ’s early disciples felt that non-Jews should embrace the outward marks of the Jewish faith (Sabbath, circumcision, kosher food laws, etc.) if they hoped to now take part in what had first come to the Jewish people.



Paul consistently argued against this idea and frequently rebuked those who spread it, for it was not the law or the Sabbath that gave us real rest, but Christ himself.

To sum up the various points we've looked at:

Observing the Sabbath has always been about one thing: putting aside our own ambitions and desires one day a week to remind us that our time and energy are not our own, but God's!

The Sabbath was about Experiencing God's Rest, Position, and Blessing while here on earth.

Marking out weekly rhythms in our own lives that honor God, whatever those rhythms may be—is an important way of reminding ourselves that we are a part of the larger Biblical

story. By creating a space in our lives to rest in the hope that is ours in Jesus we too honor the spirit of the Biblical Sabbath.

**JESUS IS
LORD OF
THE SABBATH**

MARK 2:23-3:6

