

**An Exegetical and Theological Analysis of יָשַׁבַּת (“He rested”) in Genesis 2:2 and its  
Enduring Ethical Significance for Human Flourishing**

Peter Alex Twesigye

PhD Leadership Student, Lancaster Bible College, USA

Email: [twesigyepalex@gmail.com](mailto:twesigyepalex@gmail.com)

**Abstract**

This study discusses the Sabbath's essential significance through a thorough exegetical and theological analysis of Genesis 2:2. It explores the semantic nuances of a key Hebrew term יָשַׁבַּת meaning “He rested” and shows God's cessation as an act of enthronement within a cosmic temple and wholeness. The “rest” of God has nuances of completeness. In other words, God rested only after he had completed his creation. This writer’s theological arguments and ramifications for God’s rest is that God by “resting” was honoring himself, honoring mankind, and serving as an example to mankind, setting a pattern for consecration. He used man’s own comprehensible language to exemplify the rest that is required of him. God temporarily paused creation or ceased from all his work since it had been completed; that the Sabbath was instituted as God’s restoration plan for the ground that was later to be cursed in Genesis 3:17-18; and lastly, that God’s rest ultimately pointed to Christ the Messiah and to the ongoing and future eternal rest he has prepared for his people. The study also looks at ethical implications of God's rest for human life. People would damage their mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical health if they did not rest. Additionally, Sabbath regulations indicated a mandatory rest not only for humans but also for the ground which had been cursed in Genesis 3:17–18. In light of its applicability in addressing issues of consumerism, work-life balance, ecological stewardship, and spiritual development, the eternity of the

Sabbath, its role as a covenantal symbol in Mosaic Law, its eschatological fulfilment in Christ, and its value as a gift from God were emphasized.

*Key Terms:* Sabbath, rest, exegesis, human flourishing, theology, creation

### **Introduction**

As the creation story comes to an end, Genesis 2:2-3 presents the novel idea of a seventh day that was predetermined by God. This day, which marks a turning point in the cosmic order, is clearly separated from the six days of creation that came before it. The passage sets a standard for sacred time by establishing the rhythm of creation and humanity's innate place within it. The main question of the study is: "How does an in-depth exegetical and theological analysis of Genesis 2:2 illuminate the enduring ethical significance of the Sabbath for human flourishing, particularly in light of subsequent biblical development?"

This study is important for a number of strong reasons. It addresses the various interpretations that have developed throughout time and adds to the continuing scholarly discussions within biblical theology on the exact meaning and relevance of the Sabbath in the modern world. Additionally, it provides an interpretation of *שבת* "He rested" that clearly contradicts the prevalent current productivity-driven societies, which frequently disregard the fundamental human need for rest and spiritual rejuvenation. This study gives deep insights into important modern challenges including work-life balance, environmental ethics, and comprehensive spiritual well-being by offering a theological framework for human flourishing based on divine creation.

### **Exegetical Analysis of *שבת* ("He Rested") in Genesis 2:2**

We live in a fast-paced world characterized by rigorous toil, sometimes requiring a person to work overtime. Most men and women work at more than one job as one can hardly be sufficient for the high costs of living that correspond with current high standards of living.

Work is an inevitable yet profitable obligation to all mankind. Solomon declared that all hard work is profitable (Prov. 14:23); while slothfulness only leads to poverty and bondage (Prov. 19:15; 12:24). It is understandable if, as a human, one might lack the self-will of restraint from work since toiling is our portion while on earth (Eccl. 5:18), and the ground is cursed because of man's sin (Gen. 3:17-18).

The precise meaning of the Hebrew verbs employed to describe God's operations on the seventh day are the main emphasis of this section's in-depth textual analysis of Genesis 2:2. For example, this writer is concerned that God "rested" on the seventh day, yet he is not a human that he should rest from his labor or impotent should that he cease from creating. Scholars such as Wenham (1987) and Koehler et al. (2000) summarized the *שבת* (*Sabbath* meaning "ceased", or "rested") debate in three views: as "to cease," "to desist from work" and "to observe the Sabbath" (Wenham, 1987, p. 35; Holladay, 1988). VanGemeren (1996) added the definition "make rest" to "stop working," and "remove" (p. 41). This writer concurs with Lee (2015), Miller (2016), Kidner (1967), and Skinner et al. (1976) that the verb *שבת* gives a purely negative sense to the verb "finish," that is, "desist from," "did not continue," thus implying cessation from work and not relaxation. What, then, does *ישבת* ("he rested") in Genesis 2:2-3 (NIV) mean and what does the suggested meaning imply for the modern man and woman?

### **Relationship between *ישבת* ("He rested") in Genesis 2:2 and other expressions for rest**

It is vital to distinguish between *חבש* and other Hebrew expressions for rest, such as *חונ* (*nuakh*), which refers to resting, finding ease, settle, get relief or be at peace (Brown et al., 1979; Clifford, 2012; Strong, 2010; Kohlenberger, 2015; Goodrick & Kohlenberger, 1999). While *חונ* generally means comfort or relief after effort, *חבש* particularly refers to the ultimate end of an activity. God's stoppage, then, is not a reaction to exhaustion, but a planned active act that marks the end and establishment of His creation (Strong, 2010; Kohlenberger, 2015;

Mwangi, 2025). The Septuagint (LXX), an ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, translates תָּבַשׁ as κατέπαυσεν (katepausen), which means "He made to cease" or "He caused to rest" (Goodrick & Kohlenberger, 1999; Brown et al., 1979; Lust et al., 2003, p. 308). This translation closely matches with the subtle meaning of תָּבַשׁ, emphasizing God's entire and purposeful deed.

Further, the writer of Genesis was careful not to use נָוָה first used in Genesis 8:4 in reference to the ark resting on Mount Ararat. According to Goodrick and Kohlenberger (1999), נָוָה is used 143 times meaning to "settle," "rest," "wait," "keep," "leave," "allow," "be placed," "find rest," "deposited," "lowered," "settled down," "subsided," "give rest," "leave alone," "allied," "allowed to remain," "cast," "granted rest," "laid," "set up," to reach one's aim, and in a limited sense, "to praise" (p. 1451).

According to Brown et al. (1979), the term is frequently used of "a physical settling down and remaining of a creature or object at a particular place such as man (Gen. 2:15), birds (2 Sam. 21:10), locusts (Ex 10:14), of the ark (Gen. 8:4), and soles of feet in the waters of Jordan (Josh. 3:13)" (p. 628). Sometimes נָוָה could mean complete engulfing of a spirit of another person such as was the case of Elijah's spirit engulfing Elisha (2 Kings 2:15); and the Spirit of God upon Eldad and Medad (Num. 11:25-26). The term נָוָה also means "repose," "be quiet" or "to rest after hard labor" (Ex. 20:11) or from fighting enemies (Est. 9:16), from distress (Job 3:26), and in a state of death (Job 3:17). It may also mean to set one's mind at rest as when a child is disciplined by the parent (Prov. 29:17); to leave or depart from one post to another (Eccles. 10:4); of the Lord when he abandons his people (Jer. 14:9); to refrain from interfering with another person such as God asking Moses not to intercede for the Israelites in order that he may destroy them (Ex. 32:10); and to permit or grant, for example, the abundance of a rich man permits him no sleep (Eccles. 5:11) (Brown et al., 1979, pp. 628-629).

Sometimes נוּה is used as a synonym for שָׁבַת, for example, נוּה means “rest,” the same meaning as שָׁבַת “rest” that is required on the Sabbath (Deut. 5:14, Ex. 33:14, 20:11, 23:12; Num. 10:36, etc.). The latter basically means “to cease from work” while נוּה means to settle down which may imply “rest,” but not necessarily so all the time; the term נוּה is also translated “leave” (Gen. 42:33, Lev. 7:15, Ex. 32:10, etc.). The difference between the two words is that whereas שָׁבַת commonly refers to “cease” נוּה refers to “put”, “lay”, “leave”, “settle”. According to Unger and William (1980), “the writer of Genesis 2:2-3 is not stressing rest from work, but rather God’s ceasing from his creative work since it was complete” (p. 333).

Another related term for “rest” is שָׁטַק (*shaqat*) normally translated “be at rest” or “be at peace” with connotations of not having war (Strong, 2010; Kohlenberger, 2015). For instance, Jehoshaphat is said to have enjoyed שָׁטַק translated “peace” or “rest” on all sides (2 Chron. 20:30) indicative of God’s rest. Both *shaqat* and *nuah* do not overlap each other in terms of meaning yet both seem to hold some exchange. The point is that the words חָוַן (*nuakh*), נוּה (*nuah*), חַבַּשׁ (*shabat*) and שָׁטַק (*shaqat*) all refer to the concept of rest with varying semantic ranges, therefore, attention should be given to the context (Haydock, 2016).

### Historical-Cultural Context

The origin of the term שָׁבַת (*Sabbath*, referring to the Day) is Genesis 2:2-3; but some scholars think that the Hebrews might have imitated the Babylonian day of the full moon called *Shapattu* (Weiser, 2002; Condon, 1960; Stein & Isaacs, 2023; Odukoḡbe, 2014; Haydock, 2016). However, the two days are not related. The *Shapattu* was viewed as “an unlucky day: a day of pacification of the heart (gods), that is, penitence and prayer held once a year while the Sabbath was held once a week irrespective of the moon’s cycle” (Kittel & Friedrich, 1971, p. 2). Hence, there cannot be a direct connection between the Sabbath and the *Shapattu* of Babylon; but it is possible that Israel adopted the name Sabbath from

*Shapattu* in very ancient and probably Mosaic days (Walton, 2009; Condon, 1960; Kittel & Friedrich, 1971, p. 3).

### **Theological Analysis of יִשְׁבַּת**

The exegetical insights into יִשְׁבַּת pave the way for a deeper theological understanding of God's rest and its implications for humanity. Biblical theology's most profound and fundamental ideas—the nature of divine rest and its consequences for creation and humanity—are explored through the Hebrew verb יִשְׁבַּת (*yishbot*) in Genesis 2:2. God's act of "resting" after creation was finished holds great theological weight, indicating crucial facets of His nature and cosmic plan, rather than implying a mere pause brought on by fatigue. This analysis will examine how יִשְׁבַּת represents a divine affirmation of the completion, perfection, and satisfaction of His work, rather than only the conclusion of creative labor (Kidner, 1967). It will also look at how this divine pattern is essential to creating the rhythm of Sabbath, offering a theological blueprint for human life that strikes a balance between sacred rest and intentional action. One can gain a deeper understanding of God's relationship with His creation and identify the timeless lessons for human flourishing and well-being that can be drawn from this act of divine rest by dissecting the theological intricacies of יִשְׁבַּת

### **God Rested to Honor Himself**

Traditionally, the proper noun שַׁבַּת (*shabat*) is known as the seventh day of the week. Ordinarily the term שַׁבַּת is connected to a particular day of the week when humans rest from all their labor to honor the LORD in worship. It is a day that is holy unto the LORD (Ex. 31:15); yet, it can also mean the period between two Sabbaths, that is, the whole week. (Kittel & Friedrich, 1971). The Sabbath day has its origin in the creation account as a verb שָׁבַת, meaning "to rest," referring to God "resting" on the seventh day after creation of the heavens and the earth (Gen. 2:2-3). Genesis 2:2 can be literary translated: "And God completeth by the seventh day His work which He hath made, and ceaseth by the seventh day from all His work

which He hath made” (YLT, emphasis mine). The NIV uses a different conjunction: “*By* the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work.” God blessed the seventh day and consecrated it to be a holy day unto him (v. 3). This writer agrees with Alexander and Rosner (2000) that the seventh day of creation is holy because on it “God ceased creating, not because he was celebrating or commemorating days one to six, but declaring his new state of not creating to be blessed and holy” (p. 746).

### **God Rested to Honor Mankind Above All Creation**

God did not rest as if he had been relieved of a burdensome task but rather, as in the words of Sailhammer quoted in Baker and Kohlenberger (1994), “on this day God does not ‘speak’ nor does he ‘work’ as he had on previous days” (p. 6). The absence of a “morning and evening” formula, unlike the preceding days, signals a unique quality and enduring significance for this period (Westermann, 1984, p. 115). Genesis 2:2-3 serves as a link between the cosmic creation of Genesis 1 and the more localized, anthropocentric story of Genesis 2, which focusses on humanity's place in the Garden of Eden.

### **God Rested as a Divine Act of Completion**

The verb שָׁבַת (Shabat, “rested”) used seventy-two times in the NIV literally means to rest, observe the Sabbath; to come to an end; disappear; put to an end; cease, stop; abandoned, abstain from work; blot out; bring to an end; cause to stop; cut off; discard (Goodrick & Kohlenberger, 2015, p. 1496). Brown et al. (1979) give a slightly unique, yet interesting twist to the definition. They argue that the term שָׁבַת means to cease, desist, rest, probably cease with the implication of being completed (p. 991). It is important to emphasize the nuance “complete” with which God ceased his creation acts. The Qal imperfect form with the waw-conversive (וַיִּשְׁבֹּת) emphasizes the completion of the deed in the past, a definite cessation of the fundamental creation effort portrayed in Genesis 1 (Joüon & Muraoka,

2006). When God ceased from his works, creation was complete. It was not like God was taking a ‘break’ or needed a rest due to fatigue, but rather he had completed all his work (Gen. 2:3). Like Jesus cried on the cross “it is finished” (John 19:30), God had sealed his creation for it was complete with everything good. This is the best choice of interpreting the term שבת (Gen. 2:2-3): to stop whatever one is doing after it is complete. God was, in anthropomorphic terms, commanding people to rest after completing any work to excellence.

### **God Rested as a Temporary Interruption in the Creation Act**

The term שבת (Sabbath) connotes ceasing or abandoning an enormous project. On entering Canaan, manna ceased to rain from heaven from the day after the Israelites had eaten of the fruit of the land (Josh. 5:12); when king Baasha heard that king Ben-Hadad and king Asa had captured some of his towns, he stopped building Ramah and abandoned his work (2 Chron. 16:5). In the preceding verse, the term חזל (“cease”) is translated “stopped” while שבת is rendered “abandoned” (NIV). One might be tempted to read that God abandoned his work by the seventh day of creation if we render the above translation. The better option is, “And it cometh to pass, at Baasha's hearing, that he ceaseth from building Ramah, and letteth his work rest” (YLT). Interestingly, in Arabic the term שבת means “interrupt,” “cut off” (Brown et al., 1979; Kohlenberger, 2015), implying that king Baasha cut off or interrupted his construction work at Ramah. Likewise, humanly speaking God interrupted his creation acts by the seventh day. This translation is convincing although when we compare it to the rest of Scripture it has implications. First, what is not clear from this interpretation is whether God resumed his creation acts after the interruption by the seventh day or not. Second, God has probably not created again the way he did in the first six days of creation in Genesis 1:1-2:1. Nevertheless, every now and again, God reminds us of his creative nature. He miraculously intervenes in the affairs of men when they call to him in faith.

### **God Rested as a Divine Example for Mankind**

The same verb שָׁבַת (*Shabat*) is used to refer to the enduring nature of the earth's seasons namely: seed time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night (Gen. 8:22). The adjective שָׁבֵת, according to VanGemeren (1996), has implications of "sitting quietly" an indication of inactivity probably from which יָשַׁב means "dwell" or "sit" (2 Sam. 23:7; 1 Kings 17:9; 2:36; Jer. 9:5-6, etc.) (p. 41). In Ezekiel, God is expressing disappointment at how he is being treated. He says, "You sat on an elegant couch, with a table spread before it on which you had placed the incense and oil that belonged to me" (23:41). In Deuteronomy, God commands Israel to offer first fruits of the land to him when they enter and settle in the land he is giving them as an inheritance (26:1-2). The term שָׁבַת does not mean being idle for God was not merely idle, doing nothing, rather he was applying an example for Adam to follow. This writer prefers intonations of sitting quietly in reflection as opposed to "idly," for if being idle (meaning the purpose of this dwelling or sitting is unproductive) was implied, the term יָשַׁב ("live," "stay," "dwell") would have been used. For example, after cheating Esau of his first-born blessing, Rachel asked Jacob to stay (dwell) with her brother Laban in Haran until the anger of Esau had turned away (Gen. 27:42-44); Joseph asked his father, Jacob, to dwell near him in the fertile land of Goshen (Gen. 45:10); Solomon put Shimei, his father's enemy, under house arrest never to leave Jerusalem but to build a house and dwell there. Shimei failed the oath and was put to death (1 Kings 2:36ff). The exact Hebrew term יִשְׁבַּת ("you shall dwell") used above is the same as that applied in Genesis 2:2-3 to refer to "he (God) rested". God was not idle on the seventh day, but he desisted from his full-time vocation that he had been engaged in for all the six days (Muller, 2013; Lynum, 2025; Landers, 2022; Vaida, 2023).

In other words, humanly speaking, God on the seventh day held back the urge to create in order to serve as an example to mankind to consecrate some days in order to worship the Creator and delight in his blessings (Bass, 2005; McMullen, 2024). Likewise,

when the people rested on the seventh day (for example in Exodus 16:30), it is not that they became idle, but rather they ceased from their full-time vocations to worship God on that day. Good works could still be done on the Sabbath day according to Jesus' teachings for the Sabbath was made for humanity and not humanity for the Sabbath. Indeed, a donkey could be saved when it fell into a pit; a person could be healed on the same day; and food could be eaten (Matt. 12:8-12). In the words of Carson et al., (1994) in their New Bible Commentary, "the context of Genesis 2:2-3 implies that a weekly day of rest is as necessary for human survival as sex (1:27-28) or food (1:29)" (p. 61). If God ceased from his work by the seventh day, how much more should humans cease from his own toil after completion?

### **God Rested as a Divine Command for Consecration**

In other places שָׁבַת (Sabbath) is used to mean "destroy" or "remove". For example, it was used when God commanded the Israelites to partake of leavened bread only for seven days after which they were to "destroy" or "remove" the leaven from their houses (Ex. 12:15); and when king Josiah removed from the entrance to the temple of the LORD the horses that his predecessors had dedicated to the sun (2 Kings 23:11). The usage of the verb שָׁבַת (*Shabat* meaning "rested," "destroy," "cut off") can be contrasted with שַׁבָּת (*Sabbath day*), a feminine and masculine noun absolute used 111 times (Strong, 2010; Kohlenberger, 2015). Holladay (1988) argued that it was used 101 times to refer specifically to a special day of the week, the seventh day of the Jewish calendar (modern-day Saturday), designated as the day of rest and worship; yet by extension it was any day of the year for rest (Keller, 2011; Martin 2025; Baab, 2010; Root, 2016; Kent, 2008). Sabbath day meant rest for the entire Jewish family, including the domestic animals, the slave, and the alien (Ex 20:10, 14; 23:12).

In the Old Testament, we find a close parallel relationship between the Sabbath day and the Sabbath year which was to be kept after every six years. Like on the seventh day, in the seventh year, the whole land was to lie fallow without being ploughed or harvested.

Whatever the land produced in the seventh year was sufficient for the Israelite, the alien and the slave (Ex. 23:10f; Lev. 25:6; also cf. Neh. 10:32; 2 Chron. 36:21). This rule took shape after the entry into Canaan where the land had been distributed among the families of Israel. In addition, at the end of seven years slave masters were to release everyone in bondage and land was to return to its original owners. The rationale was that no Israelite should be found poor because of landlessness (Deut. 15). According to Kittel and Friedrich (1971), however, “these rules are based in part on traditions relating to the Sabbatical year but they seem to have been theoretical only, since a year of Jubilee was never actually celebrated” (p. 6).

### **God Rested as a Divine Ordinance for the Land to Rest**

The שָׁבַת (“Sabbath day”) was not only God’s offer for humans to rest (Ex. 16:30), but also for the land to have her rest. When used of inanimate objects such as the land, the term שָׁבַת (“cease” or “rest”) can be used as a metaphor expressing an idea in the language that a reader can easily comprehend (anthropomorphism). God banished Israel from the land for seventy years so that all the time of its desolation, the land rested (שָׁבַתָהּ) (2 Chron. 36:21). In Exodus 34:21 God instructed the children of Israel to have rest on the seventh day and not to harvest on this day. The term שָׁבַת (“Sabbath”) is also used of the land resting and enjoying a Sabbath year of rest from being tilled (Lev. 26:34-35). The land did not cease to produce fruit in that year, rather the שָׁבַת here is a figure of speech indicating that the land was relieved of her main vocation toward the Israelites and instead given to the Babylonians for seventy years. The emphasis here is on the seventy years of captivity that Israel was going to undergo and not on the land resting itself.

Both Moses and Ezekiel note that the Sabbath day was to be a “sign” in Hebrew אֵימָר between God and Israel forever (Ex. 31:17; Ezek. 20:12). In Deuteronomy 5:15, the Sabbath is not based on YHWH’s rest on the seventh day, but on Israel’s history as slaves in Egypt: how YHWH delivered his people out of Egyptian bondage with a mighty hand (Holladay,

1988; Fischer & Fischer, 2021). In other words, Sabbath was a sign of how YHWH took Israel from slavery to his promised land of rest (Canaan). The Sabbath pointed both backward and forward to a particular state of God's people: from Egyptian bondage to Israel's conquest and inheritance of the Promised Land (Deut. 12:10; 25:19; 3:30) (Haynes & Kruger, 2017; Bell, 2014). Ultimately, however, the Sabbath pointed to a person, Christ, who is the "rest" for the redeemed (Matt. 11:28). It spoke of a universal rest that those in Christ will enter at the consummation of this age (Heb. 4:3-5; Isa. 66).

It was for this reason to be a holy day unto the LORD. The verb שָׁבַת is almost always accompanied by שְׁבֻתוֹן which according to Holladay (1988) means "Sabbath feast" (Ex. 16:32); "Sabbatical year" (Lev. 25:5); "most solemn Sabbath" (Ex. 35:2) (p. 360). According to Wenham (1987), the שָׁבַת (Sabbath day) was the first thing to be hallowed in Scripture thus "acquiring the same status that only God possesses" (p. 36). Bible Works LLC (2010 and Dawn, 1989) referred to the term שְׁבֻתוֹן as the Sabbath or Sabbatical observance in reference to the Sabbatical festivity.

The Sabbath, as already mentioned, was a covenant sign between YHWH and Israel (Ex. 31:14f; 35:2; Ezek. 20:12) that it was God who sanctified the people (Ex. 31:13); and desecration of it as the cause of all the people's problems (20:13, 16, 20, 24; 22:8, 26; 23:38; cf. 2 Chron. 36:21). It was a day on which the LORD rested and was refreshed (Ex. 31:17). The Sabbath commandment found in the Mosaic law entailed numerous prohibitions to work (Ex. 34:21; 23:12; 20:8-11; 31:12-17; 35:1-3; Deut. 5:12-15; Lev. 23:1-3; 19:3; 26:2). The Sabbath was related not only to the manna incident in the wilderness, (Ex. 16:22-30), but also to the Day of Atonement since in both days work was totally prohibited: Fires were not to be kindled (Ex.35:3), nor burdens carried (Jer. 17:21f, 24, 27), nor trading done (Neh. 10:32), nor the winepress trodden or beasts ridden (Neh. 13:15-22), nor highways travelled nor business pursued (Isa. 58:13). A man gathering sticks on the Sabbath was stoned to death as

an example of the seriousness of this crime of desecrating the Sabbath (Num. 15:32-36). Whatever provisions were necessary on the Sabbath were to be prepared the day before (Ex.16:22-26, 29) for the Sabbath was made clearly a holy day of rest for all people and domestic animals. Keeping the Sabbath was equivalent to living under the covenant. When a Gentile kept the Sabbath holy, he was pleasing to the LORD (Isa. 58:13f) and on the same level with a covenant Israelite (Kittel & Friedrich, 1971).

### **The Sabbath as a shadow of Christ**

Whereas it is true that the Sabbath day is very holy and significant for blessing to all who keep it, some have tended to over-emphasize the seventh day of creation above the lesson God was drawing for mankind (Mwangi, 2025; Lee, 2025; Lee, 2018; Lazinger, 2018). The term שַׁבְּתוֹן (*sabaton*) could refer to a particular day of worship dedicated to the Lord for example: “a Sabbath of rest to the Lord” (Ex. 35:2); it could be a particular day such as the seventh day: “the seventh day is a Sabbath rest for you” (Ex. 31:15); or rather any day designated for rest was a Sabbath. For example, the eighth day after particular rituals: “the eighth day also is a Sabbath rest” Lev. 23:39; “the first day” (Lev. 23:39); also, an entire year could be a Sabbath (Lev. 25:4-5). It is therefore clear that the author of Genesis was not necessarily interested in a particular Sabbath day of rest that was in Jesus’ days and is still today a center of debate for some religious factions, but rather in the resting itself. Jesus ultimately fulfilled the Sabbath in three distinct ways:

#### ***As the Creator***

The exact embodiment of God's flawless and comprehensive creation is Christ, who is the *logos* through which everything was created (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16). According to 2 Corinthians 5:17, his act of redemption is a new creation that brings ultimate order and goodness out of the chaos of sin. He is the final restoration of the creational pattern of divine rest in a flawless universe.

### *As the Deliverer*

The Sabbath represented freedom from slavery. The ultimate release from the shackles of sin and death is provided by Christ's death and resurrection (Romans 6:6-7; Galatians 5:1). According to Romans 3:20–22, his rest is the rest of accomplished redemption, which releases Christians from the need to strive for righteousness through the application of the law.

### *As the Law Giver*

Jesus demonstrates His control over the Sabbath and His focus on its purpose—to do good and bring life—through His interactions with the laws of the Sabbath throughout the Gospels, such as His healing on the Sabbath (Mark 2:23–28) (Guelich, 1991). His teaching that "the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27 NASB) demonstrated that the Sabbath's actual purpose was always restorative and humanitarian, and that it was supremely fulfilled in His ministry of giving life.

Paul makes a crucial statement in Colossians 2:16–17. According to Wright (1991), the Sabbath falls under the category of "shadows" (σκιά – skia), which are types or contours that indicate a larger reality, the "substance" (σῶμα – sōma), which is Christ. Paul contends that since Christ fulfilled the function of these ceremonial commandments, rigorous observance of them is no longer required for salvation or spiritual development. By pointing to Christ's completed work, the Sabbath signified that believers had entered a new age of rest from the weight of the law and the pointlessness of human endeavor.

The most thorough theological discussion of Christ as the realization of the Sabbath rest can be found in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The notion that a "Sabbath rest" (σαββατισμός – sabbatismos) is still available to God's people, just as God rested after creation and Israel was given a rest in Canaan, is methodically developed in Chapters 3 and 4.

According to the author of Hebrews, the earlier types of rest—creation and Canaan—were only partial shadows that could not offer total and permanent rest (Lane, 1991).

Christ's completed redemptive work on the cross has allowed Him to enter God's ultimate rest as the divine Son and High Priest (Hebrews 4:10). The Old Testament Sabbath only foreshadowed the genuine and enduring peace that His death and resurrection brought. For believers, "entering into His rest" (Hebrews 4:1–11) is both a future eschatological expectation that will be fully realized in eternity and a present spiritual reality that is experienced via faith in Christ and a cessation from self-righteous deeds (Peterson, 1994). Therefore, the Sabbath rest refers to a new covenant relationship with God, where genuine rest can only be found in Christ, rather than just a day of the week.

### **Significance of God's "Rest" for Human Flourishing**

Since humanity was made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27), it is expected to emulate the traits and patterns of the divine. Humans are made for a cycle of productive effort and restorative rest, just as God worked and then rested. Human flourishing, which includes a comprehensive feeling of well-being in many dimensions, is based on this divine plan for equilibrium.

### **Physical and Mental Well-being**

It is impossible to overestimate the importance of God's rest for both bodily and mental well-being in a contemporary society that frequently values unrelenting work and perpetual busyness. Restoring the body, avoiding burnout, and preserving good physical health all depend on deliberate rest intervals that reflect God's Sabbath (Fischer & Fischer, 2021). For the body to heal, rejuvenate, and perform efficiently, enough sleep, rest periods, and recreational activities are essentials, not extravagance.

Deliberate cessation enables the mind to process information, relieve tension, and stimulate creativity. Exhaustion, anxiety, and cognitive impairment can result from

continuous pressure and stimulation without breaks (Hwang et al., 2017). God's rest asserts that genuine productivity is maintained through intervals of deliberate inactivity, offering a heavenly validation for humanity's physiological need for downtime (Dieleman, 2025; Swoboda, 2018).

### **Emotional and Spiritual Rejuvenation**

God's rest offers a foundation for emotional and spiritual growth in addition to mental and physical well-being. Resting entails a conscious pause that permits contemplation, self-examination, and refocusing priorities (Kessler, 2012; Buchanan, 2007). In a world when emotions are high, taking a moment to detach from outside demands promotes resilience and emotional control. God's rest encourages people to have a closer spiritual relationship with the Creator. Relieving anxiety and the weight of self-reliance requires trusting in God's sovereignty and provision (Philippians 4:6-7). The seventh day's sacred status promotes a change of perspective from human aspirations to adoration and worship of God. By encouraging faith in God's provision, this reorientation lessens the worries related to independence and the unrelenting chase after material wealth (Heschel, 2005).

The "Sabbath rest" of Hebrews 4 signifies rest from works of righteousness. According to Romans 10:4, believers find rest in depending on Christ's perfect righteousness rather than trying to earn salvation via their own works. The current spiritual rest is a prelude to the ultimate rest and rejuvenation that await believers in the new earth and new heavens, where God's everlasting Sabbath will be fully established (Revelation 21:1-4). Accepting this spiritual rest greatly enhances emotional stability and spiritual health by fostering thankfulness, contentment, and a revitalized sense of purpose.

### **Sustainable Living and Relational Flourishing**

The idea ingrained in God's rest promotes sustainable living by having wider societal and ecological ramifications than just the individual (Rogers, 2022; Barnes & Minard, 2025).

The idea of limitless consumption and exploitation is contradicted by the very idea of cessation, as exemplified by God. The scriptural mandate that the land be given sabbatical years to rest and regenerate makes this clear (Leviticus 25:1–7). This idea encourages people to see creation as a divinely ordained gift that should be revered and managed responsibly rather than just as a resource to be used for profit (DeWitt, 2018; Dirks, 2015).

Additionally, relational thriving is facilitated by the allotted rest period. People can consciously invest in their family, community, and social ties by taking a break from the demands of work. This strengthens human connections, which are essential for the well-being of the whole (Wilkinson, 2022; Andreasen & Andreasen, 2016). Thus, God's rest offers a model for living a life that emphasizes harmony, reciprocity, and the complex web of relationships—with God, oneself, other people, and the natural world (De Villiers & Marchinkowski, 2021; Sherman, 2005). Ultimately, God's "rest" is significant because it invites people to conform to the Creator's plan, have faith in divine supply, and develop a healthy work-life balance that results in true, long-lasting thriving.

### **Conclusion**

The verb **ישבת** "He rested," which appears to be straightforward in Genesis 2:2, is actually a deep theological statement with long-lasting ramifications for human life. From an exegetical perspective, its root **שבת** indicates a purposeful halt, not fatigue, signifying the flawless accomplishment of God's creative endeavors. Theologically speaking, this heavenly rest creates the pattern of the Sabbath, a sacred period of time that is blessed and designated for humans to mirror God's own rhythm of intentional work followed by a period of rest. This design provides a roadmap for human flourishing and is woven throughout creation. For one's physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being, it is essential to embrace the concept of rest, which goes beyond simple inactivity. It challenges unrelenting productivity and promotes a greater regard for oneself and creation by offering an example of sustainable life.

In the end, the divine act of **יְשׁוּבָה** calls people to live a life of purposeful harmony, trust, and rhythm, which promotes holistic flourishing and a strong bond with the Creator's good plan. The subtleties of Sabbath observance in diverse cultural contexts or its reinterpretation in contemporary theological debate could be the subject of future study.

### References

- Andreasen, M. L., & Andreasen, M. L. 2016. *The Sabbath: Which Day and Why?* TEACH Services, Inc.
- Baab, L. M. 2010. *Sabbath keeping: Finding freedom in the rhythms of rest.* InterVarsity Press.
- Barnes, K. J., & Minard, C. S. L. 2025. Sabbath as Resilience. *Sabbath as Resilience: Spiritual Refreshment for a Stressed-Out World*, 47.
- Bass, D. C. 2005. Christian formation in and for Sabbath rest. *Interpretation*, 59(1), 25-37.
- Bell, L. 2024. *The Ecology of the Sabbath* (Doctoral dissertation).
- Bible Works. *Bible Works for Windows 6.0 CD-RM.* Norfolk, VA: Bible works, LLC.
- Brown, Francis Driver, S. R. and Briggs, C. A. 1979. *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament.* Clarendon Press.
- Buchanan, M. 2007. *The rest of God: Restoring your soul by restoring Sabbath.* Thomas Nelson.
- Carson, D. A. France, R. T. Motyer, J. A. and Wenham, G. J. eds. 1994. *New Bible Commentary.* Inter-varsity Press.
- Condon, K. 1960. The Lord's Day. *The Furrow*, 11(6), 343-356.
- Dawn, M. J. 1989. *Keeping the Sabbath wholly: Ceasing, resting, embracing, feasting.* Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing.

- De Villiers, P. G., & Marchinkowski, G. 2021. Guidelines for the spiritual practice of Sabbath-keeping. *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, 77(2), 6771.
- DeWitt, C. B. 2018. *Earthwise: A guide to biblical creation care*. Baker Academic.
- Dieleman, K. J. 2025. Cultivating the Sabbath Today: Christian Insights on Rest, Work, and Worship.
- Dirks, R. 2015. A pastor's journey toward Sabbath rest. *Vision: A Journal for Church and Theology*, 16(1), 50-56.
- Fischer, K., & Fischer, R. (2021). *The Rest Revolution: Reclaiming Sabbath for a Frazzled World*. InterVarsity Press.
- Goodrick, W. Edward & Kohlenberger, R. John. 1999. *The NIV Exhaustive Concordance*. Zondervan Publishing House.
- Green, K. Sabbath Rest in the Abrahamic Traditions. *Student Journal*.
- Guelich, R. A. 1991. *The sermon on the mount: A foundation for understanding*. W Pub Group.
- Haydock, N. J. 2016. *Old Testament Theology and the Rest of God*. Wipf and Stock Publishers.
- Haynes, M., & Krüger, P. P. 2017. Creation rest: Genesis 2: 1-3 and the first creation account. *Old Testament Essays*, 30(3), 663-683.
- Heschel, A. J. 2005. *The Sabbath: Its meaning for modern man*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Holladay, L. William ed. 1988. *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company,.
- Hwang, J., Kim, J., Lee, J., & Kim, H. 2017. Effects of sleep deprivation on emotional responses to stress: The role of executive functions. *Journal of Sleep Research*, 26(4), 512–520.
- Keller, D. T. 2011. Wisdom and sabbath rest. *Gospel in Life*.

- Kent, K. W. 2008. *Rest: Living in Sabbath Simplicity*. Zondervan.
- Kessler, V. 2012. The Sabbath as a remedy for human restlessness. *In die Skriflig*, 46(2), 1-8.
- Kidner, D. 1967. *Genesis: An introduction and commentary*. InterVarsity Press.
- Kittel, G., Bromiley, G. W., & Friedrich, G. (Eds.). 1971. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Volume VI* (Vol. 6). Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing.
- Kohlenberger, J. R., III. 2015. *The NIV Exhaustive Bible Concordance, Third Edition*. Zondervan.
- Landers, B. M. 2022. *Christ Will Give You Rest: A Biblical Theology of the Sabbath* (Doctoral dissertation, Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary).
- Lane, W. L. 1991. *Hebrews 1–8*. Word Books.
- Lanzinger, D. 2018. ‘A Sabbath Rest for the People of God’ (Heb. 4.9): Hebrews and Philo on the Seventh Day of Creation. *New Testament Studies*, 64(1), 94-107.
- Lee, J. E. 2018. “There Remains a Sabbath Rest for the People of God”: A Biblical, Theological, and Historical Defense of Sabbath Rest as a Creation Ordinance.
- Lee, Y. 2025. *Sabbath for the Restless: Rediscovering God’s Gift of Rest*.
- Lynum, E. 2025. *The Nature of Rest: What the Bible and Creation Teach Us about Sabbath Living*. Kregel Publications.
- Martin, K. 2025. Sabbath as Reimagination. *Sabbath as Resilience: Spiritual Refreshment for a Stressed-Out World*, 99.
- McMullen, G. 2024. *Sabbath Rest*.
- Miller, S. 2016. *Rhythms of Rest: Finding the Spirit of Sabbath in a Busy World*. Baker Books.
- Muller, W. 2013. *Sabbath: Finding rest, renewal, and delight in our busy lives*. Bantam.

Mwangi, J. N. 2025. The Meaning and Intent of the Sabbath Rest: An Exegetical Analysis of Exodus 20: 8-11. *Journal of Sociology, Psychology and Religious*, 5(2), 49-59.

*New American Standard Bible*. 1995. The Lockman Foundation.

Odukogbe, I. O. O. 2014. *Land Utilisation and Welfare of Farmers in Sabbatical Legislation of the Book of Leviticus* (Doctoral dissertation).

Robinson, G. 1980. The idea of rest in the Old Testament and the search for the basic character of Sabbath.

Rogers, S. D. 2022. Sabbath as creation care. *Review & Expositor*, 119(3-4), 237-244.

Root, K. K. 2016. Sabbath: The gift of rest. *Word & world*, 36(3), 267-275.

Sailhammer, 1994. *Genesis* cited in "Zondervan NIV Bible Commentary vol I: Old Testament," Kenneth L. Baker and John Kohlenberger III, eds. Zondervan.

Sherman, R. 2005. Reclaimed by Sabbath Rest. *Interpretation*, 59(1), 38-50.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/002096430505900105> (Original work published 2005).

Skinner, John Driver, S. Plummer, R. A. and Briggs, C. A. eds. 1976. "The International Critical Commentary: A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis." T. & T. Clark,

Stein, L., & Isaacs, R. H. 2023. *Let's Eat: Jewish Food and Faith*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Strong, J. 2010. *The New Strong's expanded exhaustive concordance of the Bible: Every word of the Bible indexed, red letter edition*. Thomas Nelson.

Swoboda, A. J. 2018. *Subversive Sabbath: The surprising power of rest in a nonstop world*. Baker Books.

*The Holy Bible, New International Version*. 2011. Biblica.

Unger, F. Merrill and White Jr. William eds. 1980. "Nelson's Expository Dictionary of the Old Testament." Thomas Nelson Publishers,

Vaida, C. 2023. Sabbath and Sunday: The meaning of the day of rest in the ancient church—

A hope for the future? *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, 79(1).

VanGemeren, A. William ed. 1996. “New International Dictionary of Old Testament

Theology and Exegesis” Vol. 4. Peternoster Publishing.

Walton, J. H. 2009. *The Lost World of Genesis One: Ancient Cosmology and the Origins*

*Debate*. IVP Academic.

Weiser, D. 2002. Fire and the Sabbath: a look at Exodus 35: 3 and the Jewish exegetical

history of the biblical prohibition against using fire on the Sabbath day.

Wenham, J. Gordon. 1987. “World Biblical Commentary” vol. 1. Waco Texas: Word Books

Publisher.

Wilkinson, M. 2022. *The Rest We Seek: A Theology of Leisure and Human Flourishing*.

Wipf and Stock.