

PLAIN TRUTH®

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CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION®

I Will Give You Rest



By Greg Albrecht

Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.—Matthew 11:28-30

The promise of spiritual rest comes from Jesus alone. No institution or religious authority is authorized to provide the rest that is solely and uniquely given by Jesus. Priests, prescriptions or programs deserve no credit for provision of rest in Christ.

We pray, study the Bible and serve others in Jesus' name. We may or may not attend a brick-and-mortar building for church "services"—but those and other activities do not produce rest in Christ. Neither our "spiritual disciplines" nor our morality guarantee access and entry into the rest of Christ.

Jesus boldly employs the personal pronoun seven times in these three verses in Matthew 11:28-30: *Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*

Jesus dogmatically insists the faith of those who follow him must be absolutely Christ-centered. All other religious mandates, pursuits, performances, activities and "disciplines" are, at best, peripheral window dressing.

Consider seven core elements of resting in Christ, from a Christ-centered focus, as Jesus mentions them in Matthew 11:28-30:

Elements #1-4 of Resting in Christ

1) *Come* 2) *to me*, 3) *all you who are* 4) *weary* and 5) *burdened*, and 6) *I*

will give you rest. Take 7) my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

— Matthew 11:28-30

1) Jesus says "**Come...**" Jesus' invitation carries a feeling of urgency, but it is still a summons and a request, rather than a stipulated, enforced mandate.

The sense behind this word is "come right now!" "Come"

is not an invitation to observe Jesus from afar. "Come" is an invitation to leave behind what one is doing and come... to Jesus. Leave religion, leave superstitions, leave false gods, leave spiritual bondage—"come."

2) Jesus declares "**Come to me.**" The invitation from God the Son is to come to him, not to religion. Come to Jesus, not to regulations and programs and activities and deeds and demands. Focus on Jesus. He is our aim.

This invitation from Jesus Christ is direct, intimate and personal—"come to ME!" No middle men or women—no laws or regulations or promises or guarantees or rituals or ceremonies. No one owns Jesus. No one has an exclusive franchise to represent him on earth. No religious denomination is authorized to purchase the grace of God and then repackage it and place its price on the freely given

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grace of God in order to get their “cut” of the action.

Grace—direct from Jesus to you. No credit card transactions. No merchants, retailers or wholesalers. No shipping and handling charges. No federal, state or denominational taxes. “Rivers of living water” (John 7:38) flow from the holy, pristine and pure artesian well of Jesus.

3) Jesus invites “...all...” Some actually teach that the gospel of Jesus Christ is limited—some teach and believe that many humans are not now nor will they ever be invited to enjoy a grace-based relationship with God.

Some presumptuously believe God has determined and predestined some humans to be lost—that is, never to be invited to enjoy an intimate and personal relationship with God, on the basis of his grace.

Jesus says “all”—he doesn’t mean “some”—he doesn’t mean just those of a particular denomination or group or only those who keep some list of requirements or pay homage to a particular creed or obey a particular dogma. He says “all” may come to him.

4) Jesus calls to the “...weary...” those who are beaten down, worn out and burned out.

The Authorized King James Version of 1611 translated this Greek word as “labor”—it’s the kind of effort we consider from a blue collar, working man or woman. “Weary” defines those who are beaten down, worn out and burned out.

In its literal sense, in the physical dimension, “weary” is about hard, manual labor that causes sweat. This labor causes muscles to tire and the back to ache. This word in the Greek describes severe physical exhaustion, but Jesus uses it to describe a spiritual condition of being weak, enervated, debilitated and feeble.

The word “weary” is used to describe the spiritual condition which results from human beings



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attempting to please God on the basis of their work. The rest of Jesus is not just a momentary reprieve before we return to meaningless work and striving. His rest is healing and transformative. His rest is a new spiritual identity, as we transform from slave to son, from shame to the grace and favor of our loving heavenly Father.

Sometimes people are weary because of the religion that holds them captive. Many do not realize it but they serve religious taskmasters—they are *prisoners of the law, locked up until faith should be revealed* (Galatians 3:23). Locked up spiritually they are blind to the fact that as they rely on observing the law they are under a curse (Galatians 3:10).

A French author once observed:
God loved the birds, so he invented trees.

Man loved the birds, so he invented cages.

The rest that Jesus gives us, by God’s grace, is freedom in Christ (Galatians 5:1). Jesus didn’t come to trap or ensnare us, so that we could be confined to religious cages.

The Fifth Element—Lifting the Old Covenant Burden

5) Jesus welcomes those who are “burdened.” The word “burdened”

describes the spiritual condition suffered by those who are deceived by religious propaganda that God will bless them if they just work harder, try harder, do more, pray more and give more. “Burdened” describes a person who is loaded down and overwhelmed with a great weight.

Those who were under the old covenant worked first and then they were paid. That’s the first and basic spiritual economic principle by which humans then attempted to relate to God. For that matter, this basic spiritual economic principle of the old covenant, still, 2000 years after Jesus’ earthly life, remains the primary way in which human religions teach their followers to relate to God.

A works-based relationship is simply this: *First*, I do something for you, and then I can expect something from you. Religion insists that *first* you and I do something for God and then God will do something for us.

Defining our relationship with God in terms of our performance is comfortable to us because it seems to leave us in control. We can determine how and when we work. We can determine how much we will earn, and when we will receive payment.

Well, at least that's how this theory is supposed to work. But it's all an illusion isn't it?

God's grace turns this whole performance-based premise upside down, doesn't it? God's grace means God gives his love and provides his favor to us without any strings—without any contractual obligation that we must fulfill first.

God's grace troubles us, because we don't like to feel obligated to anyone. The idea that God gives us his love without us first earning it is so fiercely resisted that many, if not most, reject his grace. God's grace makes workers who want to earn their own way uncomfortable.

Christ-less religion recognizes this human desire. Religion knows that humans much prefer to think that they are in charge of their lives. Religion knows if it can convince its followers that their eternal destiny is in its hands, then religion can make its followers

believe almost anything, and behave in almost any way it desires.

The old covenant was pre-Christian—it was religious, rather than Christ-centered. God started to reveal himself in a pre-Christian, elemental religious setting, but by design that old covenant religion leads to the cross of Christ and his glorious resurrection.

In the old covenant one worked first and then came payday. One works hard all week long and then comes the seventh day Sabbath. First one works six days and then one gets to rest—physical efforts earn the rest of the seventh day.

But the new covenant came along and Jesus, God in the flesh, proclaimed, "I AM God and I AM changing what I originally gave you. I AM revealing myself to you now in ways I never have. I have come in the flesh. I AM the new covenant." Jesus insists that he, the Alpha and the Omega, is the foundation of our relationship with God—not the Sabbath nor any old covenant law nor any religious stipulation.

When some read that Jesus promises to give us "rest" they immediately translate this word "rest" into what many religious authorities have taught them to think. They think rest in Christ is one and the same as a required weekly Sabbath. But the rest Jesus invites us to is not a day on the calendar.

Jesus is not inviting or requiring us to "come to the Ten Commandments." Jesus urges us to come to him, not to Moses. *For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ* (John 1:17).

Any prerequisite or

proviso that requires we first perform and then God will respond is eclipsed and upended by the new covenant, including an obligatory first or seventh-day sabbath. **The new covenant reverses the order of work.** To be sure, humans still work and produce under the new covenant, but how and when and why one works are bedrock issues for Christ followers. Some say that the seventh day is the sign that sets apart those who obey God from those who do not. No. Jesus is the sign. **The cross of Jesus is our sign—not Sinai.**

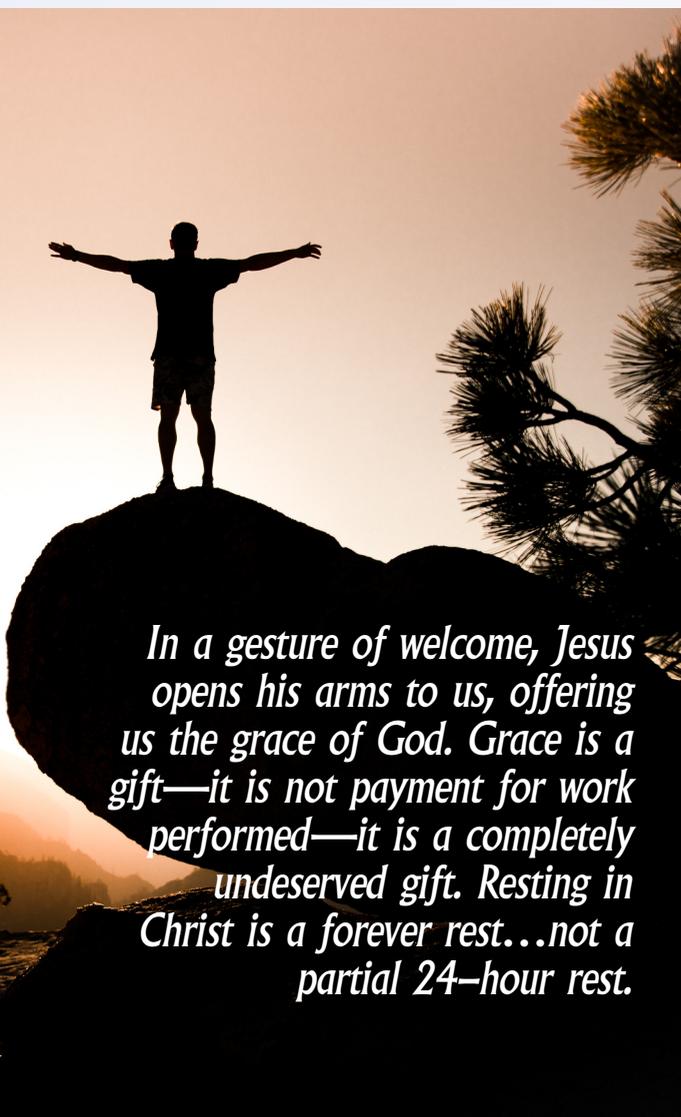
In the new covenant, early Christians started to worship on the first day of the week—they believed in resting in Christ first, and then after they rested Jesus empowered them to work the remaining six days of the week. While the *first* day of the week is no more a required observance than the seventh day the principle behind the first day was and is this: **First**, we yield and surrender to Jesus and accept the basic premise that all our righteousness is but rags. We are unable to earn anything from God. We throw ourselves on his mercies. We say "Yes" to God's grace.

Elements #6-7 – A Reiteration of the Centrality of Jesus Christ

Jesus announces "...I will give you rest."

Giving is the grace of God. In a gesture of welcome Jesus opens his arms to us, offering us the grace of God. Grace is a gift—it is not payment for work performed—it is a completely undeserved gift. Jesus invites all to a spiritual, eternal and abiding rest freely given, not a physical, here today and gone tomorrow rest earned. Resting in Christ is a forever rest, a complete rest—not a partial 24-hour rest.

Jesus says "I will *give* you rest"—not "I will reward you for your hard work and give you some time off to rest." Jesus says "I will *give* you rest"—not "OK, you worked six days, now you get one day off, but tomorrow, it's back to the salt mine."



In a gesture of welcome, Jesus opens his arms to us, offering us the grace of God. Grace is a gift—it is not payment for work performed—it is a completely undeserved gift. Resting in Christ is a forever rest...not a partial 24-hour rest.

7) Finally, Jesus urges us to take his “yoke.” “Yoke” appears in both verses 29 and 30.

“Yoke” is an archaic agricultural term used to describe the implement that is used, somewhat like a harness, keeping two oxen together as they work together, pulling a load. A yoke directs activity.

So Jesus invites us to be yoked with him, in him—for what purpose? So that we may, as we live in his rest, work!

First we rest, then we work! Some lampoon the grace of God by suggesting it is “easy-believism” and “couch potato Christianity.” Some make light of God’s grace by calling it “hot-tub religion.”

Some blasphemously attach derogatory labels to the grace of God while they demand allegiance to law rather than the gospel.

By Jesus’ own words we know his yoke is easy when contrasted with slavery to the law. The yoke of Jesus is easy but it does involve work—his work.

Work exists and is central to both the old and new covenant.

Work is not the issue. All Christ-followers work. How and why and by what power we work is the issue.

Once we trust in and accept God’s grace, once we yield to Jesus, Jesus takes up residence in our lives (Galatians 2:20) and empowers us to

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work and produce (Ephesians 2:10). Resting in Christ isn’t about a lounge chair, your favorite beverage and Sunday night football.

You better believe Christians work—but in the new covenant our production is dictated by God. He makes of us what he desires.

He is the Master Potter—we are the work of his hands. We are his handiwork, and he has fashioned us to be masterpieces of his creation.

First, we accept Jesus’ invitation to enter into his rest, and then he puts

us to work—his work—and he empowers us to do and perform his work.

The choice is ours. Will we surrender to Jesus or fight against him?

Will we insist on our religious memberships and doctrines and rituals and performances are the way in which we pay our own way or will we embrace the Jesus Way?

Will it be Christ-less religion or the rest which Jesus Christ alone may give and live in us, by the grace of God? ☐

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& BRAD JERSAK

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