

“The Last Word: *Shabbat Shalom*”

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□ The Story of John 9

- *Desire of Ages*: “There was the man himself, declaring that he had been blind, and had had his sight restored; but the Pharisees would rather deny the evidence of their own senses than admit that they were in error. So powerful is prejudice, so distorting is Pharisaical righteousness.” (472)
- “With many words they tried to confuse him, so that he might think himself deluded. Satan and his evil angels were on the side of the Pharisees, and united their energies and subtlety with man’s reasoning in order to counteract the influence of Christ. They blunted the convictions that were deepening in many minds. Angels of God were also on the ground to strengthen the man who had had his sight restored.” (473)
- “The man had met his inquisitors on their own ground. His reasoning was unanswerable. The Pharisees were astonished, and they held their peace—spellbound before his pointed, determined words. For a few moments there was silence.” (474)

□ The Sabbath of John 9 and John 5

- Sigve Tonstad: “A wonderful thing has happened [in both Sabbath healings], but the body language of Jesus’ critics loudly states that people in the audience had better restrain their wonderment. Under normal circumstances they should be crowding around the restored cripple excitedly, showering him with questions: How does it feel to walk again after thirty-eight years? They should descend on the blind man like reporters at a press conference: What is it like to see for the first time? This is not what happens. . . . The spirit of awe and gratitude that might be expected is drowned out by the narrator’s explanatory remark that it happened on the Sabbath (5:9; 9:14). All of a sudden the air is chilled by a logic that takes no joy in what has taken place. . . . [The passage] ‘is no longer soaring aloft on the wings of hope’ but has ‘plummeted to the ground with a decided thud,’ says Karen Pidcock-Lester.” (*The Lost Meaning of the Seventh Day* 185)
- John 5:16, 17.
- Tonstad: “It seems as if Jesus threw down the gauntlet by publicly ignoring Jewish Sabbath regulations. Two of the 39 prohibitions in existence specifically dealt with carrying a pallet and kneading dough. . . . But we miss the depth of the struggle if we assume that Jesus was merely picking a fight with Jewish leaders over proper Sabbath observance. It is not what they see that creates controversy; it is rather what they don’t see. . . . Clearly they see the mat and the mud, but they do not see the man. Much worse, they do not see God.” (*Adventist Review* 7-21-2011)
- Tonstad: “On one level, His active imitation of the Father stands in contrast to their tight-lipped obedience to a commandment, frozen in time. On a deeper level, His emphasis on the Father working stands in contrast to their view of God *resting*. In the minds of His critics, the memory of Creation is the basis for Sabbath holiness (Gen. 2:1-3). Jesus, however, has the audacity to connect the Sabbath and *working*, making this connection again and again (see John 5:17; 7:21; 9:4).” (Ibid)
- Tonstad: “The Jewish religious system that is reflected in the Sabbath conflicts reduces God to a distant player in human affairs. Beyond keeping the universe on course, no initiative seems imminent on God’s part. The Sabbath has come to epitomize the stalemate, anticipating the view that ‘if Israel kept the Sabbath properly even for one day, the Son of David would come.’” (*The Lost Meaning of the Seventh Day* 198)
- Tonstad: “Maintenance of the created order will not suffice when the created order is threatened by dissolution, and when human beings are in the thrall of disease and death. Rather than waiting for human beings to break the deadlock by impeccable Sabbath observance, Jesus brings the Father’s compassion to view on the Sabbath. In the words of G. Campbell Morgan, ‘There can be no rest for God while humanity is suffering.’ Jesus cannot wait until the next day because He is magnifying the original message of the Sabbath in the context of human suffering. Ministering to the person in need, reaching out to heal and to restore, lies at the heart of the divine character and mission.” (199)

Rest works.