

January 2003: Time to Rest

by Aaron Greenway

When looking back at this past year, 2002, I am in shock over the things that have happened in my life. At this time last year I had just finished my last semester at Dallas Theological Seminary, traveled to Iowa to be with my family at Christmas and then to take yet another class in the winter session. At the same time I was preparing all the details for my graduation that would occur just a few short days after my return to the States from the country of Peru where I would complete my internship in ESL (English as a Second Language). The trip itself required fund raising and much preparation, making sure all my bills were paid while I was gone. Just days before the trip I came to understand that I would have to move after I returned because of other circumstances with the apartment manager and the pastor of the church I formally attended. This all occurred in the last week of December and in the month of January. And that is only an outline of all the things that happened.

Then came the trip and I was faced with a slightly familiar culture that I had experienced just a year and a half before. The heat, the humidity, the dusty streets of Lima became a reality and I found myself in a teaching position with students preparing for college entrance exams to come to the U.S. or to go to other English-speaking countries. In the process I was involved in an Easter cantata singing a duet and in the choir as an outreach to the people in Lima. The whole experience of living with a Peruvian family, walking everywhere I wanted to go, and depending on the Lord for everything, became that reality to me. And then at the end of April, I was whisked away from my Peruvian friends back

At the beginning of creation, God established six days of work and one day of rest.

Jesus said, "Come to me who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

If we worked and put ourselves through seven days of continuous stress, where would our lives physically end up . . . not to mention spiritually?

to my home country. Four days later I walked the stage and received my diploma.

The following months I looked for teaching positions, registering my car in Texas (You have no idea the tedious process this really is), and finalizing plans with the new apartments I would move to. My music ministry would have to stay on hold until things in my life had stabilized. Finally I was accepted for two teaching positions. This does not include the position I took at the church I attend as a growth group leader not to mention all of the responsibility and challenges that have gone with it.

I also had to switch valet companies (as side income) because of intolerable things going on in the former company. This switch happened again when the restaurant I was working at fired the company I was working for due to circumstances with another valet, among other things. But because I was liked by the restaurant owner, he recommended me to the company he had just hired.

Two thousand two ended with me becoming physically ill and going to the hospital because of a bladder infection as well as dealing with a huge doctor bill. A few days ago a personal friend of mine looked into my eyes and said to me, "Aaron, you look exhausted!" I responded, "I have been through a lot this year." And I had. I am spending the remainder of my vacation resting as a result.

At the beginning of creation, God established six days of work and one day of rest. Jesus said, "Come to me who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). If we worked and put ourselves through seven days of continuous stress, where would our lives physically end up...not to mention spiritually? All of this made me think, Isn't the worship of God with the Saints on Sunday meant to be a time of resting, that is, resting in Him? Isn't it about leaving our burdens, our cares, our worries, all our aspirations with Him? This is all part of the renewing process.

Hebrews chapter four speaks about the rest of God, that the nation of Israel did not enter into God's "rest" because they were disobedient and rebellious (Hebrews 4). Do you want to know a

little secret? Those who live lives of rebellion will inevitably wear themselves out. Those who are self-focused will come to the end of themselves. There is rest in the will of God. There is peace in walking with Him. That has been part of the struggle of 2002, being faithful in all areas of my life. It has been a fight to enter into that rest with God.

Many times we are tired, worn out and have not rested because we are driven by our own ambitions. Even Jesus, when a storm rose up, took a nap in the boat (Matthew 8:23-27). Have you ever taken a nap when there was a storm outside? Is that not better than allowing the storm to stir you up to the point where you don't trust God to calm that storm? God is now calming my storms.

Facing a new year is frightening in itself. I am facing the year with my eyes closed, reflecting on the goodness of God, renewing my vision, trusting His hand to guide me, learning to love Him and obey Him more deeply. As the Michael W. Smith song goes, "Here I am to worship. Here I am to bow down. Here I am to say that You are my God!" Have you gotten to that point? Let the winter settle in. Let your heart pause. It is time to rest!