



Lesson 3 September 16th, 2017

Sabbath Observance

Study Scripture – Exodus 31:12-18

Background Scripture – Exodus 20 & 31

Key Verse:

“Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you.

Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people.”

Exodus 31:13-14

INTRODUCTION

Our Study Text is found at the end of God speaking to Moses with instructions about the construction of the Tabernacle and its furnishings. Those in charge of this task had been specifically appointed by God Himself and not by Moses. God had appointed them and filled them with His Holy Spirit for this endeavour so that whatever talents they possessed would be given a great supernatural dimension.

God now chose to repeat the Sabbath law which had already been included in the Ten Commandment but God now transforms the Sabbath from one of the tests of obedience to Him into a separate Covenant with new and unique elements to this, elevating it into not simply a positive command but into a sacramental sign between Him and His people.

Moreover it is now guarded by the ultimately powerful sanction of the death penalty for any breaking of this divine law of Sabbath observance.

It is puzzling to many as to why there is a separate covenant for the Sabbath observance. One writer addresses this matter while warning that this matter of the Sabbath covenant is not a two-track method of salvation and that not everyone who obeys the Sabbath command is automatically part of God's people. He states:

“It is a common and mistaken opinion for those who profess themselves to be Christians without obeying either the commands or following the examples of our Lord and Saviour, the Lord of the Sabbath

(1) To consider the Sabbath to be part and parcel with the Old Covenant established with Moses and ancient Israel at Mt. Sinai. The presence of a separate Sabbath covenant would seem to suggest that God was aware this argumentation would be used and

sought to prevent it by establishing a separate covenant to show that the Sabbath would forever be a sign for His people, separate from the Old Covenant that was intended to pass away and be evanescent,

- (2) And having established a separate and still lasting Sabbath covenant, God in His word set the Sabbath as a sign that remains for the people of God (Hebrews 4:9), even under the New Covenant, where the laws of God (including all ten of the Ten commandments) are written on our hearts and minds instead of merely tables of stone.**
- (3) The important of the Sabbath to God was so great that He established a separate covenant to address the Sabbath issue with Israel and to state its permanently binding nature to both the Israel of the flesh and the Israel of God”.**

It is wise to note that scholars have different opinions as to why this restatement of the Sabbath law should have been placed at this point in the instructions to Moses about the Tabernacle.

Some think God had to do this because He had to restrain the people from working on the Tabernacle on the Sabbath. They would be so enthusiastic to complete the work they had to be put under control of observing the not working on the Sabbath command.

Others believe that the Sabbath was the chief commandment in the Decalogue and this was what God had in mind to show.

Still others believe this new statement of the Sabbath as a perpetual covenant would prevent any tendency of the people to believe that the holy services of the Tabernacle and any of the special days would replace the Sabbath law.

The Day as a sign of the Covenant between God and Israel and not just circumcision as a sufficiently distinguishing mark of the Covenant, as well as the profaning of it as capital offence marks out this covenant of Sabbath observance.

It is vitally important to examine briefly the concept of the “Sabbath”. Despite the plain teaching of Scripture there has been more controversy about it and its importance among even the people of Israel as is witnessed by their non-observance of the divine command, as well as among Gentiles who prefer alternative days of worship based solely on Tradition.

Eusebius’ History of the Church book IV in chapter V, verses 3-4 records that the first 15 Bishops of Jerusalem were “of the circumcision”, that is, they were Jewish.

It seems however that early in the second Century some converts to Christianity continued worshipping on the Day of the Sun, as they did when they were pagans. The Encyclopedia Wikipedia states on this matter:



“The Apostolic Constitutions, generally dated in the fourth century and found in the Ante-Nicene Fathers collection contain evidence of both Saturday and Sunday among servants in the church.

It is known that some (perhaps many) early Gentile Christians observe the seventh day Sabbath; some of these early Christians kept the seventh day Sabbath in conjunction with a first day Sunday worship,

The Council of Laodicea around A.D. 365 attempted to put a stop to the practice. Some conjecture then, that prior to the Laodicean council Saturday was observed as a Sabbath and Sunday as a day of worship, primarily in Palestine, but after the Laodicean Council, resting on the Sabbath was forbidden. This is often considered an attempt of the early Christian church to distance itself from Judaism which had become unpopular in the Roman empire after the Jewish-Roman wars (see also Constantine and the Jews and Homilies against the Jews (Chrysostom).

The 59th section of the Council Laodicea part of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers collection, states the bible is to be read on the Sabbath. #29, (Another) states Christians must not Judaize by resting on the Sabbath but must work that day and then if possible rest on the Lord’s Day and any found to be Judaizers are anathema from Christ; #'s 49.

The Encyclopedia continues:

“In the fifth century, Socrates Scholasticus “Church History” book 5 indicates persisting seventh day Sabbath observance in the Eastern part of the empire:

“Nor is there less variation in regard to religious assemblies. For although almost all churches throughout the world celebrate this sacred mysteries on the Sabbath of every week, yet the Christians of Alexandria and at Rome, on account of some ancient tradition, have ceased to do this”.

Corruption in doctrine began because of the work of Satan. It is interesting to note that much warfare between those who persisted in Sabbath worship against the Papacy and its Sunday teachings continued for a long time, even until 1120 A.D, in the British Isles.

THE ORIGINS OF THE SABBATH

The word Sabbath comes from a verb meaning “to cease, to abstain, to desist from, to terminate, to be at an end”, It also has another meaning of “to be inactive, to rest”.

The Bible tells us that after God created the heavens and the earth, He then created man on the sixth day. When God “finished” this great, powerful, marvelous, beautiful, and unparalleled creative work, He chose to cease, to rest, to step back, and to delight in what He had created.

He then chose to create the Sabbath, blessing it, sanctifying it, and making it the holy seventh day. Note that in Genesis the day is called “the seventh day”, a terminology which links the creation with the “rest” that God had done.



Clearly God did not rest because He was tired. God is spirit, and not flesh, yet He chose “to rest”, and to bless this particular “seventh day”.

At its creation therefore, there was no link with any “Jewish” institution or people, because of course none of these existed at that time.

The hallowing and blessing of the “seventh day” carries with it the idea of “separateness”. God separated the “seventh day” from the rest of creation in a special act, notwithstanding the declared fact in Genesis 31 that the creation was “good”.

Here we must stress therefore, that it was nothing but the favour and grace of God that led god to declare that “the seventh day” was holy and blessed. God Himself set an example and rested, a very deliberate act. The Sabbath is therefore based on “God’s “rest”, and common sense should tell us that nothing in this universe will ever or can ever supplant or set aside this tremendous display of grace, power, and gracious example.

The “seventh day”, as a blessed and holy day, created by God Himself over at least two thousand years before the birth of Moses, was made for man.

WHAT SECULAR HISTORY SAYS ABOUT THE SABBATH

This argument is heightened by the fact that there is no specific or direct reference to Noah, Abraham, Joseph, or the other Patriarchs keeping the Sabbath. We know however that in genesis 26:5 god described Abraham as a man who obeyed Him, and who kept His requirements (or His charge), His commandments, His statutes, and his Laws.

Abraham certainly knew about many of God’s rules. It would appear then that the Patriarchs knew about God’s rather detailed wishes and desires. They knew that many sins such as adultery (see the case of Joseph) and stealing (see the case of Jacob in Genesis 31) was wrong. Abraham even tithed, even though the Bible did not record teaching about the necessity for this practice.

There are five schools of thought which teach that mankind had some concept of the Sabbath well before Moses. We can list these schools as the Babylonian, the Lunar, the Kenite, the socioeconomic, and the calendrical. We will examine the Babylonian school.

The Babylonian school hold that the “**sapattu**” was a Babylonian “**taboo Sabbath**”, day, which also was adopted by the Canaanites, the Hebrews, and other peoples of the Near East. One writer states:

“This day was designated specifically as the “day of quieting the heart”. The precise meaning of this expression is uncertain, but at least the concept of relaxation is implicit therein. Furthermore, the seventh, 14th, 21st, and 28th days of certain months, and not improbably of



every month, and likewise the 19th day-, that is, the 49th, the seven times seventh day from the first day of the preceding month- were regarded as “evil days”.

Upon these days the physician, the oracular priest, and above all the king, might not function in any official or professional capacity whatsoever. While there is no definite evidence that these successive seventh days were identical with the “sabattu”. It is a reasonable inference that such was actually the case.

On the basis of this evidence certain scholars have maintained that the biblical Sabbath was of a Babylonian origin”.

Certainly some of the restrictions on the Babylonian king, who as a representative of the gods was forbidden to do certain things lest he arouse their anger, seems to resemble the several biblical laws concerning the Sabbath. This would on the surface suggest a possible relationship between the two.

The Babylonian king was forbidden to eat meat roasted on coals, or any food touched by fire. This was similar to Exodus 35:3 command with respect to cooking. The king was forbidden to ride in his chariot, change his clothes, or discuss affairs of state, similar to the Exodus 16:29 command. The Babylonian priests were not to consult the oracles, and physicians were not to treat the sick. The “seven times seven” or 19th day of the month when it fell, was also significant for all Babylonian officials. For Babylon these were ‘evil days; or ‘unlucky days’ based on superstitious fear, with the restrictions meant to appease the angry gods.

Knowledge of the true Sabbath had certainly degenerated and the idea of ‘rest’, ‘blessing’, and ‘holiness’ had disappeared.

As far as “Christian” history is concerned Roman Catholicism and its predecessor organization with its structural perversions has been responsible for many changes in biblical teachings. The Roman Catholic church encompasses the greater part of Western Christianity, and is the culmination of pagan influences, philosophical and political systems and ideas from Greece and Rome, and these brought into the Church Sunday observance, Easter, Good Friday, baptismal regeneration, the use of light in worship, prayers for the dead, sprinkling and pouring in addition to immersion, the worship of saints, the power of the official religious hierarchy to make or eliminate established laws and practice, and other ideas.

Pagans worshipped on their day to honour the Sun God, and this ancient practice was an ancient one existing long before Jesus was born. One writer documents this practice which rejected the divine command to worship on the Sabbath.

“Shortly after the Flood in Noah’s time, Nimrod and his mother-wife Semiramis founded the great pagan religions. Sun worship is related to fire worship. Both are in reality a worship of the fiery serpent, the great Red Dragon, Satan the Devil. From the beginning of the tower of Babel, Sun worship spread throughout the pagan world...

Most pagan religions, with their many and varied gods and goddesses, worship the sun as their main deity...



Israel profaned the Sabbath and substituted Baal worship, which is sun worship. Sun worship was the dominant religion in all ancient civilizations, spreading from mother Babylon to India, China, Greece, Rome, Mexico, South America, Egypt, and Europe. Sun worship was a very prominent religion and Sunday was the main day of worship in the pagan Roman Empire by the time of Jesus Christ, just as it was in ancient pagan Babylon. Today, false religions do the same thing”.

To see that the time of the true Sabbath was to be a day of joy and rest we must look at what God intended, for He wanted His people to worship Him and fellowship with Him.

THE TEXT

At this point the Lord God had already spoken to Moses about those men who would be given the knowledge, skill, creativity, and responsibility to build that which was needed for God’s house of worship and those things therein.

Note that Genesis 25:8 and 29:45-46 had declared that the Tabernacle must be built so that He might *dwell among* the people.

The Lord would reign from His Tabernacle with His throne above the ark, between the Cherubim. 2 Samuel 6:2. The Lord had delivered His people so that they could worship Him and fellowship with Him. Beauty and holiness would have to characterize His dwelling place with His people.

The next portion of their discussion concerned the sanctification of the people of God, and reminding them about certain laws of God and how to obey them. The people were separate from the nations and their way of life and worship would have to be peculiar, different. To this end, the Lord God Almighty talks with Moses about the law of the Sabbath, and puts in mind the time of worship.

Verses 12-13. A strict command for the sanctification of the Sabbath day is given to Moses so he can pass it along to the people, so they all may know how to Deal with God on His special set apart holy day!

The aspect of this discussion that will take precedence over all the rest is the fact that God brings up the discussion of the Sabbath over any other discussion of other laws He had previously given to the children of Israel. God had in the past taught them how to obey the Sabbath. He had prepared food for them when they murmured, and showed them that traveled in the wilderness that He provides and that He is to be obeyed. That was done by giving them a double portion of manna, warning them that there would be none provided on the Sabbath, so they may focus



on the Lord's day of rest (Exodus 16:22 – 28). The Sabbath day is given in the Moral law (Ex.16:23) to the people, the Judicial law (Ex. 23:12), and as part of the Ceremonial law. It is important to God, and so God has made it important to us, as His people.

Even though this word about the Sabbath was given as a reminder to the people when they were about the work of setting up a tabernacle, it underscores the fact that even though the people were about the work instructed to them by God, it did not allow them to dismiss the Sabbath day's rest as previously instructed to them by God. Doing God's work does not justify breaking God's laws, His work can be done within the confines of keeping all His laws. He is the Almighty God, He has worked out His plan for His will to be done, and it is good and just.

The nature, meaning, and intention, of the Sabbath, by the declaration of which God puts an honour upon it, teaches us to value it. Divers things are here said of the Sabbath.

But note first this is the first time the term for Sabbath, *shabbatolay* or "My Sabbath" is found in Scripture. Clearly for God there is a personal nature to the Sabbath, and there is a personal connection with God involved in observing the Sabbath. Genesis 2 discussed this relationship of God to His Sabbath.

We must note also that this Day is God's idea and not a human invention. It marks out and separates the people of Israel and those who are in covenant relationship with Him.

God establishes that His Sabbath is a sign between Him and His people, which is echoed again in verse 17.

The institution of the Sabbath was a great instance of God's favour to them, and to us, and a sign that He had distinguished them from all other people; and their religious observance of the Sabbath was a great instance of their duty and obedience to Him.

God by sanctifying this day among them, let them know that He sanctified them, and set them apart for Himself and His service; otherwise He would not have revealed to them His holy Sabbath, to be the support of religion among them.

God by His grace inclines our hearts to keep the law of the fourth commandment. It is evidence of a good work wrought in us by His Spirit. If we sanctify God's day, it is a



sign between Him and us that He has sanctified our hearts; hence it is the character of the blessed man that He keeps the Sabbath, and does not end up polluting it (Isa. 56:2)

Sanctify means to set apart for God's special use so that the day sanctified and the person sanctified is distinct from what is common. Hence it means to be made like God who is completely different from everything else and who is therefore holy. This statement about sanctification is a powerful statement.

Vs 14

This verse continues the theme started in the previous verse, speaking about the ties between the sanctification of the Sabbath, and how that relates to the sanctification of His people.

The Jews, God's people, and for that matter all of God's children, are sanctified, set apart, declared to be the object of transformation. By observing one day in seven, after six days' labour, we testify and declare that we worship God who made the world in six days, and rested the seventh; and so distinguishes ourselves from other nations, who having first lost the Sabbath, which was instituted to be a memorial of the creation, by degrees lost the knowledge of the Creator, and gave that honour to the creature which is due to God alone.

God has made the Sabbath day, and it is made to be holy unto us. That is, it was designed for our benefit as it was for the Jews benefit; all of God's people, as well as for God's honour. As the Sabbath was made for man, all of God's children should understand and believe that it shall be accounted holy by us, and so we shall observe it and shall look upon it a sacrilege to profane it. This is what God meant when He said the Sabbath was made for man.

Vs 15

The Sabbath of rest is holy to the Lord. It is separated from common use, and designed for the honour and service of God, and by the observance of it we are taught to rest from worldly pursuits and the service of the flesh, and to devote ourselves, and all we are, have, and can do, to God's glory. Profane work therefore must not be done. This means that 'good' must be done on the Sabbath for that kind of activity is pleasing to God who works continually to benefit us.



Vs 16

This Sabbath rest was to be observed throughout their generations, in every age, for a perpetual covenant. This was to be one of the most lasting tokens of that covenant which was between God and Israel. It is clear that this instruction presents an example for the rest of God's children as they were brought into the adoption of being God's children.

The children of Israel are meant to keep the Sabbath, keep it as a treasure, as a trust, observe it and preserve it, keep it from polluting it, keep it up as a sign between God and them, keep it and never part with it.

The Lord God is most serious about His Sabbath's day rest. The penalty to be inflicted for the breach of this law is death. The contempt and profanation of the Sabbath day is an iniquity to be punished by the judges; and, if men do not punish it, God will, here or hereafter unless it be repented of. God is serious about separating His children from the world.

Vs 17-18

God's laws are not only backed with the highest authority, but supported with the best reason. God's own example is the great reason. The work of creation is worthy to be commemorated. So great in fact that God, the Creator, is worthy to be imitated, in that, He created a holy rest, the seventh day, after six days' labour, especially since we hope, in further conformity to the same example, shortly to rest with Him from all our labours.

At the end of God instructing Moses on His wishes, God with His own hand, an expression which underscores that the Tablets of Stones were of divine origin, wrote His laws by Himself.

CONCLUSION

The Text makes it clear that these commandments are commandments of God and do not come from brilliant and intellectual people of Israel. These laws are not like the philosophies of the world. These laws are not the product of man.



They therefore cannot be so easily discarded without frightful consequences. Those who seek to change them must realize that they are taking the side of the false God of Nimrod and the Red Dragon otherwise called Satan. To say with Rome that the Sabbath can be changed by them, and disconnected with the creation event before sin came into the world is to reject the emphatic statement of Scripture that the laws written on stone will one day be written on the heart.

Gentiles must understand that the promises were made to Israel and that Gentiles are simply grafted into that Olive Tree by the work of the Messiah who has cleansed and sanctified. Adopting the Day of the Sun instead of the Sabbath, despite the warning of Isaiah 66 cannot be good or logical for when the indignant Jesus returns to punish the disobedient He will receive worship on the Seventh Day.

So do not accept any changes TO THE WORD OF GOD. Do not follow the ways of the world but remember that you are separated to God who never changes.

Do not think you are superior to the nation of Israel. Do not let their disobedience and their punishment lead you to think that God has cast them away and has forgotten them. Do not be like them in ignoring the commandments written on those Tablets of Stone. The modern church seems to be slipping into the disasters that characterized the ancient nation of Israel. If it is not for the mercies of God we like they are threatened with being consumed.

The sign of God's covenant remains. We therefore look forward to that perpetual Sabbath rest in the New Heaven and the New Earth.

