

## The Commandments (Part Six)

### The Sabbath, Part Two

John W. Ritenbaugh

Given 10-Dec-88; Sermon #BS-TC06

I think those of you who have heard the series of sermons that I have been giving regarding the Ten Commandments, as well as the sermons that preceded that series regarding which laws shall we keep, I think that there ought to be no doubt in your minds that nowhere in the pages of the Bible is the Sabbath annulled by command or by law of the Father, by Jesus Christ, or any of the apostles. We saw several months ago, even in the most controversial statements that appear in the writings of the apostle Paul, that it was never a question as to which day *should* be kept. The question was always *how* the day should be kept.

The past several months I have been stressing the importance of idolatry in our lives as a negative force drawing us away from the worship of the one true God, and we found in that series that the first commandment has to do with *what* we worship and what we worship is the great and almighty Creator God, the omniscient and omnipotent One. The One who is alive yesterday, today, and forever; the One who is in us, and the One who is creating a great and mighty Family of which we are going to be a part.

The second commandment has to do with *how* we worship, and we were instructed in the Bible to worship Him in spirit and in truth. We are not to use aids because any kind of an aid that is used in the worship of Him would automatically be a lie. And He has purposely hidden what He looks like in order to focus attention on what He *is* and what He *does*, that is, on His character. And so we are to worship Him in spirit and in truth.

The third commandment has to do with the *quality of our personal witness* of everything that the name of God implies. We are God's witnesses, according to Isaiah 43:11-12, and it is in the witness that we make for God that God is revealed as being a part of our lives.

Now the fourth commandment, then, was given to *enable us to better worship* the one true God by providing us with the time for fellowship with Him to better understand Him, ourselves, our neighbor, and our place in His purpose. Now how to use this time, then, becomes of paramount importance.

We are going to begin in Ezekiel 20, verses 10 through 12 as we continue to lay the foundation regarding the Sabbath and how to keep it. Now we went through this as we were going through the other sermon, but I want to repeat it because it is so important in that it shows why the children of Israel went into their captivity.

**Ezekiel 20:10-11** "Therefore I made them go out of the land of Egypt and brought them into the wilderness. And I gave them My statutes [remember, at Mount Sinai] and showed them My judgments, 'which, if a man does, he shall live by them.'

He is making here a point of the contrast between what they came out of Egypt with, which was the laws of Egypt, the Egyptian statutes, and the Egyptian judgments, and God gave them His.

**Ezekiel 20:12** "Moreover I also gave them My Sabbaths [the weekly Sabbath, as well as the annual Sabbaths], to be a sign between them and Me, that they might know that I am the Lord who sanctifies them."

Our salvation, our deliverance from the flesh and into the Kingdom of God depends very greatly on whether or not we know God. Jesus Christ, in His final prayer, made it very clear when He gave a definition of eternal life. John 17:3, He said, "Eternal life is to know the one true God," know signifying intimacy with Him, experiencing life with Him. Here we are finding that God gave us the Sabbath in order that we might know Him. The Sabbath is directly connected to eternal life in that it gives us the time to come to know God in a way that we would not otherwise have.

Now you can begin to start thinking about what if we use the Sabbath in a normal way, the way the world does? Would we have time to come to know God? Oh no, we would not. Because we would use time in exactly the same

way that the world does. Indeed, before you came into the church, you used time the way the world does. We will see a little bit more of that later.

**Ezekiel 20:18-20** "But I said to their children [this was one generation later, the children of those who came out of Egypt] in the wilderness, 'Do not walk [do not live your lives] in the statutes of your fathers, nor observe their judgments, nor defile yourselves with their idols. I am the Lord your God: Walk in My statutes, keep My judgments, and do them; hallow My Sabbaths, and they will be a sign between Me and you, that you may know that I am the Lord your God.'

If you would compare this with Exodus 31, beginning in verse 13, you would find the wording there is what He says there, and that was that special Sabbath covenant that God gave to His people to identify them as His and Him as their God. So one generation later He was repeating the same thing to the children.

Now there are two things here. Either Israel completely rejected God's Sabbath for another day. Notice the "My" and "their" contrast in regard to the Sabbath. Were they already keeping Sunday? Were they already keeping some other day? It does not matter which day it was. They were keeping some other day than God's Sabbath. That is why the complaint, the accusation from God. Or they polluted what they did have of God's true Sabbath so that it was no longer God's Sabbath even though they may nominally have been giving lip service to it. Now as we can find very clearly, they went into captivity.

**Ezekiel 20:24** "Because they had not executed My judgments, but had despised My statutes, profaned My Sabbaths."

Profane means to treat as common. The Sabbath is *not* a common day. It is *not* the same as Sunday through Friday. To God, it makes a terrific difference. We are going to see that in just a bit. And so they treated the Sabbath like it was Sunday or they treated the Sabbath like it was Monday, Wednesday, or Friday. It made no difference to them, and that is the way you and I kept it before too. We kept it just like the world.

**Ezekiel 20:24** . . . profaned My Sabbaths, and their eyes were fixed on their father's idols.

Sabbath breaking and idolatry. The two go hand-in-hand. If you begin to commit idolatry, you are going to drop God's Sabbath. Because the Sabbath of the Bible is the holy day of the God of the Bible. It is not the holy day of the gods of this world. And so if you begin committing idolatry, you are going to keep, if any day at all, you are going to keep the day of the gods of this world. On the other hand, if you drop the Sabbath you have the same process in reverse. You are going to go into idolatry because you are going to lose contact with the God of the Bible, and then the only alternative is to turn to the gods of this world.

Now the gods of this world may not actually be an idol or anything in the sense of the idolatry of the Bible. It may be something like money, business. It might be something like fame and fortune. It might be something in the order of the political arena. But whatever—that idol is going to be worshipped, it is going to be chased after, it is going to be honored. You are going to be devoted to it. The Sabbath is going to be forgotten.

And so these people went into captivity, and this is what this chapter is describing, that is, the reasons why the children of Israel went into captivity. There were two areas: Sabbath breaking and idolatry.

When one looks at how one is supposed to keep the Sabbath, if you look at it from today's perspective, you are going to be faced with a mixed bag. On the surface, what one sees in the New Testament is a rigorous legalism from the Pharisees or, let us say, an asceticism from the Gentiles. We went through this in Galatians. There is an asceticism shown there in Galatians and also in the book of Colossians. Now we might call that today extreme rightism or we might even call it a reactionary conservatism.

Today, on the other hand, we are confronted with something that is entirely different, the flip side of the coin. We do not even begin to know how to keep it because from the earliest days of our life we have been taught the keeping of a day that cannot be made holy or cannot be kept holy because it was never made holy in the first place. I am talking about Sunday.

Now the cycle of six workdays and one day of worship is a legacy of this Book, the Bible. The seven-day-week cycle existed in other nations. They may have got it from contact with the servants of God very early in the history of man. But whether they got it from them or not, I do not know, but there is no other major religion on the face of this earth that has this pattern of six workdays and one day of worship. And it has been going on like that with the people of God since creation.

However, you and I, born into a kind of a world that began, let us say, roughly just about 100 to 150 years ago, a world that has gone through a radical transformation brought on by the Industrial Revolution. Let us say it began about 1850 and since that time there have been multitudes of discoveries of the scientific or, let us say, the natural physical laws in the areas of scientific disciplines in industrial and technological areas and it has brought about what we would call, I think honestly, a number of very great achievements. It has produced in the United States a lifestyle which includes a shorter work week. Whereas maybe only 30 years ago, the average work week might have been 50 to 55 hours, now it is down to 40 and under, and so we have a great deal more leisure time on our hands and yet business institutions do not look for more leisure. They keep trying to utilize time and to maximize the use of it in such a way as to keep the machinery operating and producing income for the business as much as they possibly can.

I worked in the steel mill back in the heyday of American steelmaking, when we were really, you know, the kingpin of the world in industrial areas, and they utilized the machinery of the steel mill just as much as they possibly could. The steel mill worked 21 turns a week. You cannot get any more than that. That is three 8 hour shifts a day in our steel mill. It went from 8 in the morning to 4 in the afternoon, from 4 in the afternoon to 12 at night, from 12 midnight until 8 in the morning. It went 7 days a week, 21 turns a week. That machinery, that equipment was running as often as it possibly could. Only when a machine broke down were you allowed, let us say, a break. They would allow you enough time to stick things together in a haphazard way. That was part of my responsibility. Hurry up, fix it up the best way you possibly can, the cheapest you can with what you have got to work with, and then as soon as you are done, \*boom! the machinery starts up again as soon as they can get the production workers back up. And off it goes until the equipment breaks down again.

What does that do to a person's life? Business today rules the way a person lives his life because of money. We need income, we have to work. How many of you have suffered some form of persecution because your company worked on the Sabbath day and they were dictating to you what your weekly schedule was going to be. So you ran into problems because you wanted to have the Sabbath off. Well you know what happens? It has happened; and that is, that because the world revolves around business institutions, in this Western world anyway, you begin to use your time, your life in the same way that business does. That is, you begin to operate using all the time that you possibly can, trying to squeeze as much activity as you possibly can in the time that has been given to you. You would never stop pursuing your interests. Unless you fear God and unless you believe in the keeping of the Sabbath, you would be living your life just like the world, cramming as much in as you possibly could. The only reason you stopped is because that fourth commandment tells you to do it.

Now what has happened to religion is that the day of worship, the *day* of rest, has become the *hour* of worship. Religion has been consigned by our lifestyle, this is even apart from the church I am talking about, to one hour on a Sunday morning. And then after that hour is over, the good people in good conscience, go out for a brunch and then they spend the rest of the day pursuing their own pleasure, either making money, involving themselves in activities around their home, raking the lawn, working in the garden. Or maybe they go out and seek some entertainment in movies or maybe off to a football game and watch the local professional team.

Well, they do this in good conscience. They are ignorant of what God requires and they sincerely believe that Sunday is the day of worship. My concern is you and I were caught up in this and we have dragged that into the church with us. Does God want the weekly Sabbath to be an *hour* of worship? Well, in our case, two hours. Is the Sabbath more or less treated in a profane way, that is, treated commonly the other 22 hours while you are at home? Or is it put to the kind of use that God intends, holy use or holy time. Which is it with you?

All the while that this is going on, the true Sabbath is ridiculed or ignored. Now that is the kind of situation that confronts you and me when we begin trying to keep the Sabbath.

Now God does not give a lot of specifics in the Bible as to *how* to keep it. What He does do is give a lot of broad principles, and He expects us to think, to apply those broad principles in application the use of the time that He gives to us. Where does one find those broad principles? Now it is quite natural for us to associate the Sabbath with the Old Testament. And I think that even we would naturally think that most of the instruction regarding the keeping of the Sabbath is somewhere to be found in the Old Testament, but brethren, you would be wrong—very wrong. There is hardly anything in the Old Testament except laws, commands to keep the Sabbath. But the *how* to keep it is in the New Testament. And I think that you are going to be, at the very least, somewhat mildly surprised at how much there is in the New Testament about how the Sabbath ought to be kept.

Let us go to an Old Testament scripture, first in Isaiah the 42nd chapter, because we need to understand why Jesus did what He was doing when He did the things that He did regarding the Sabbath. If you would look all the way back at the beginning of the chapter, you will find that this is a continuation of what the world calls the Servant Prophecies that appear in Isaiah. He says in verse 1:

**Isaiah 42:1** "Behold! My Servant, whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights!"

He is talking about Jesus Christ. It is a prophecy about Him. The prophecy continues.

**Isaiah 42:21** The Lord is well pleased for His righteousness' sake [The righteousness of His Servant. Now here is what He prophesized that His Servant is going to do.] He will magnify [exalt] the law and make it honorable.

Magnify, put the glass to, make it bigger, enlarge it so that we can see more of its details. Now Jesus began to do this very clearly in the Sermon on the

Mount. You are familiar enough with that to understand what He did, especially those things that are recorded in Matthew the 5th chapter, beginning, I believe it is about verse 20 or 21. He talked about hatred being the spirit of murder. And what He was doing there was showing the intent. He was magnifying the sixth commandment. That if one is in the spirit of hatred, then one has broken the sixth commandment. Or let us say, if one has hatred, he has broken the spirit of the sixth commandment. He has not actually murdered, but the thoughts are there in the heart.

The place to stop the murder is in the thoughts of the heart, and so the law He is showing reaches out into the innermost being of a human being. And if a person can become clean in those areas, then we do not have to worry about murder on the streets.

He does the same thing in regard to adultery. He says that if one is lusting in their heart, they are breaking the intent of the second commandment, and the way to stop adultery and fornication is in the heart before it ever gets out.

This is the same principle that we are going to be expounding here in regard to the Sabbath. There are many, many occasions in which Jesus taught the intent of the Sabbath as God intended that it be kept.

Now you will recall my earlier statement that when one looks in the Bible, what does one see? What is he confronted with? You are confronted with very conservative legalism. That was what was common in their day, but it was not correct. And neither is the hedonistic liberal attitude that we see the world around us keeping Sunday. The kind that we are most likely to try to involve ourselves in in the keeping of God's true Sabbath.

Christ gave us no direct commands regarding the keeping of the Sabbath. But Christ did do things right. That is important—He did things right! And what we see are examples of the way that God intends that the day be kept. Now these examples are not going to be very specific as far as your particular life and the things that might come up within it. However, the broad principles that He gives us do apply. The intent is there as to how God intends that we keep the day. So it is to Him then, to Jesus Christ that we look at how to keep the Sabbath and how to use Sabbath time properly.



Now in order to use Sabbath time properly, I think that it is important that one first understand its purpose. Once we have the purpose locked into, that gives us a good grip, a good basis for understanding how we ought to keep it. Now nothing is put in this Book that is not of import to us. God says we are supposed to live by every word that is there. And so looking at these examples can teach us a very great deal.

Let us go to Luke the 4th chapter. We are actually going to begin in verse 16, but I want you to see this in its context. Now we find in Luke 4 the temptation of Jesus Christ by Satan and this is where the famous statement is made that "man shall not live by bread alone but by every word of God." So we are talking about a period of time just prior to the beginning of His ministry. We come up here as far as, let us say, verse 14, that after the temptation,

**Luke 4:14** Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and the news of Him went out through all the surrounding region. And He taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.

**Luke 4:16** So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read.

It was Christ's custom to keep the Sabbath. That ought to be very clear. We have an example of our Savior, who did things right, that One in whose footsteps we are to follow, we are to imitate Him, ape Him in whatever He did—and He kept the Sabbath. It was His *custom* to do so. It was part of His manner of life. He lived that way.

**Luke 4:17** And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written. . . .

This is just an aside, but I think it is interesting. What Luke is recording here is the official beginning of Christ's ministry. It began on a Sabbath. At the very least, that is interesting. How significant it is, I think we will see in a little bit. In a way, it was almost essential that He began His ministry

officially on the Sabbath day. Does anybody know when it ended? His ministry ended on a preparation day! It was like He completed the cycle and it ended on the Passover day, which was the preparation day for the holy day, the Sabbath, the first Day of Unleavened Bread.

Now there are hundreds and hundreds of scriptures in the Old Testament that Christ could have read. But as He began His ministry, He picked out a specific one. He did that because it was going to describe to those people there and it is going to describe to you and me what His mission on earth is. It sets the parameters for what He is to accomplish.

**Luke 4:18-19** "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me [ordained Me] to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

We are going to start at the end of that quotation, "The acceptable year of the Lord." Christ broke the verse right in its first phrase, and he did not complete it because the next part did not apply to the mission that He was given by God to complete during His lifetime. So He is going to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

What is the acceptable year of the Lord? It is important to understand this because it begins to set the tone for the ministry of Christ, because you begin then to understand what it is that He is going to accomplish for God and for man. The acceptable year of the Lord is a sabbatical year. It could refer either to the 7th-year Sabbath, a sabbatical, or it could refer to the Jubilee year, which is also a sabbatical year. Now what happened on a sabbatical year? We will not go into all the details, but enough of them to understand what Christ is telling us that He is going to accomplish here.

A sabbatical year was the year that was looked on as a year of liberation of the oppressed, a year of liberty, a year of freedom. Now during that year, the land was to lie fallow and it was to produce food for the poor, for the dispossessed, and for animals, as well as the actual owner. A person could eat what came up voluntarily, but the instructions are specifically that it be given to produce food for the poor, the dispossessed, and the animals.

Also in the seventh year, slaves were given the opportunity to be freed from their master if they so desired. In addition to that, debts, the bondage to debts were to be remitted. Now on the Jubilee year, another thing was added, and that was the restoration of property to the original owner. Now all of these are part and parcel of what the acceptable year was about.

So here in what could be said to be Christ's inaugural address, He states His mission and in each case, it involves a setting at liberty—the poor, the brokenhearted, the captives, the blind, and the oppressed. Now look at that again. "He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor." I will paraphrase it: To free people from their spiritual poverty. "He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted." To free people from the discouragements, whatever their cause might be, that hinder a person from having the kind of freedom and liberty of life. Remember He said, "Come to Me, all of you who are weary and laden, for My yoke is light and my burden is light."

"To preach deliverance to the captives." That is, to free people from their bondage to Satan, which would of course include dying for our sins. "The recovery of sight to the blind." To illuminate the mind to life's purpose and thus take us out of that bondage. "And to set at liberty those who are oppressed," that is, the downtrodden.

**Luke 4:21** And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

It was the beginning of that fulfillment. It is not done yet, but that scripture has begun to be fulfilled. And Christ is clearly identifying His mission with the purpose for which God created, made the Sabbath. He began His ministry on the Sabbath. Everything that He said here had to do with a day or a time, an acceptable year, a setting at free. So He is clearly identifying, through the typology, His redemptive mission with the liberating intent of the Sabbath, both weekly and annual.

Before we go any further, there are two terms that I want to define for you. I am going to be using them frequently. If we do not understand these terms, then the use of the Sabbath is not going to be as good as it could be.

The first is the word *redeem*. I have already used one form of that word, that He is clearly identifying through the typology, His redemptive mission, His mission of redemption. Redeem means "to buy back." I am going to give you several ways in which this word is used. To buy back, to extricate from, to release from blame or debt, to free from the consequences of sin, to free from what distresses or harms, to release by paying a price. You ever redeemed anything in a pawnshop? You release by paying a price.

All of these applications are made in the Bible. All of them have application to the mission that Christ began to fulfill here.

The second word, the second term is *salvation*. Sometimes these two words kind of go together. They are directly related in the way that they are used but they mean slightly different things. Salvation means deliverance (that is its basic meaning), and/or preservation from danger to safety and security.

Now in this inaugural address, Christ was clearly identifying Himself, as I mentioned before, through the typology, with the Sabbath, weekly and annual, He was identifying His mission from God with the liberating intents of the Sabbath. This is what we are going to be trying to ram home here in this sermon. The Sabbath's intent from God is to keep free or to liberate those who are in bondage or it is to keep free those who have been liberated. You can begin to understand why I said earlier that when people lost the Sabbath, they went into idolatry because they no longer had the Sabbath to keep them free. They lost contact with the true God and went directly into idolatry; from idolatry into captivity. God gave the Sabbath as one of the greatest gifts that He has ever given to man to keep man from going into idolatry which is going to kill him spiritually.

Let us go back to Genesis the 2nd chapter, verse 3. We all understand that this is the end of the Creation Week.

**Genesis 2:2-3** On the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it.

You will find this blessing and sanctification of no other day. That is why Sunday cannot be kept holy. It is an *impossibility*. It takes a holy God to

make a day holy. No man is holy enough to make a day holy. Sunday was never God's day of worship. And so the only day that can be kept holy is something that has been made holy.

Now this word sanctified is from the same root as the word holy. It is set apart. The Sabbath has been blessed and set apart. Now, a blessing is clearly shown in the Bible as being something given or conferred in order to bring one into a fuller and more abundant life. We are beginning to see here the purpose for the Sabbath. A blessing was something given or conferred by God, you see, in order to bring one into a fuller and more abundant life. Now let us see this in its context because I did not realize until this week that this is the third blessing that God has pronounced in the first week, and it has meaning.

Go back to verse 22. So here we are at the end of the fifth day of creation—the recreation—and God blessed them. He conferred something upon them for their good. Now that "them" here are the animals that have been created up until this time, the birds, the fishes of the sea. Then on the sixth day, God created the land animals and went on to man. And we find then in verse 28, Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply." That applies directly to Adam and Eve and of course indirectly also then to anything else that was created on the sixth day. So on the fifth day, the sixth day, and the seventh day, the third time, God pronounces them a blessing.

Now this blessing on the Sabbath day is very interesting in that what did He do? What He did was bless a recurring period of time, something that every seventh day was going to come up, holy time, time that has been blessed by God, you see, is going to come up as long as there is a creation, as long as there is time, there is going to be a recurring blessing that comes to those who are keeping His Sabbath day. What God is promising then by this, He is showing you and me that He will be man's benefactor through all of time. It is a promise unstated, but He is blessing a segment of every week as special and He is promising to be man's benefactor through the whole course of human time, of time here, human history.

So it is an invocation of God's favor and its primary intention, we are going to see, is that God will be our *spiritual* benefactor. The physical of course is there and we cannot deny it. Has our Creator provided for His creation? It is

awesome, it is prodigious what He has provided for all of mankind! And yet His intention, His real intention is to be our spiritual benefactor, and that of course comes to those who will keep the day spiritually.

We have already seen that the Sabbath's intention from God is to have a liberating factor for those who keep it. A liberating intent, that is more specific. Also we find that God blessed it. That is, He conferred a blessing on a recurring period of time. And in the keeping of it, there are blessings.

Let us go to Exodus 20. In Exodus 20 we have the commandments as God gave them on Mount Sinai. We are going to add one more factor to an understanding of the Sabbath day. We lay the foundation here.

**Exodus 20:2** "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage."

Remember Isaiah 61:1-2. Remember Luke 4, beginning in verse 18. The liberating factor. God the Redeemer is beginning to be shown here, the One who buys His people back, the One who extricates His people from danger, the One who pays the penalty in order that we can be sprung free. So He is reminding all of us here at the very beginning of the commandments, this is the way to stay free. "Don't break My law."

All of the commandments are seen with that as a preface. Now, of course, the fourth commandment comes along, and we begin to add to that what we already know about God's intent for the Sabbath day. We begin to see how it can begin to keep us free.

**Exodus 20:11** "For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested of the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it."

The Sabbath, then, is enjoined on God's people to guarantee the continuation of liberty. Remember Ezekiel 20, when they did not keep the Sabbath, they lost their liberty. If we do not keep the Sabbath, we lose our liberty too, only the loss to us is much, much greater.

Now God has specifically used the Sabbath throughout history as a day in which He performs acts of liberation. Well, He has done this with forethought in order that you and I, again, would get the picture. On what day did the children of Israel come out of Egypt? They came out on the 15th day of the first month, which was a Sabbath. See, they left their bondage. God liberated them from their bondage.

On which day then did Israel leave Egypt behind completely? On what day were they liberated from sin, symbolically, by baptism in the Red Sea? Seven days later, the last Day of Unleavened Bread, they came out of their bondage completely and were out in the wilderness, another Sabbath day.

You see the lesson? Liberation, freedom, coming out of bondage, deliverance, extrication from danger. Was it dangerous there? Pharaoh was chasing after them. They were saved by our redeeming God. What day, brethren, did they leave the wilderness? It was the 10th day of the first month, 40 years later. You can check it. I will not go through the details. It was another Sabbath day. They left the wilderness and were now inheriting the land.

Brethren, what day did the walls of Jericho fall down? They fell down on the Sabbath day. Jericho was the first major city to be taken over by the Israelites. It was liberated in order for the children of Israel to begin to possess the land.

Just go back to one. I did not deliver this chronologically, but on what day were the Ten Commandments given, the keeping of which will keep a person free? It was on a Sabbath day, the Day of Pentecost. The Sabbath once again used to picture liberation.

Now let us go back a little bit further, this time into the book of Deuteronomy, chapter 5, where we have the commandments written as the children of Israel come out of their wandering 40 years later.

**Deuteronomy 5:6** "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage."

They are reminded of that, but there is a change in the Sabbath commandment that is very interesting. He changed the wording 40 years later.

**Deuteronomy 5:12-15** "Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but on the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall not do any work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. [here comes the change] And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out [He redeemed you, He extricated you, He brought you back, He paid the price, He delivered you from distress] from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath [because you were a slave]."

You are beginning to see the point that I made early in the sermon. The Sabbath is a day that God associates with liberation, with freedom. The liberation for you and me, brethren, is from Satan in order that we might be free to obey God. And if we do not use that time properly, we are going to go back to worshipping Satan! That is what He is telling us here. Remember on the Sabbath day, you were a slave! Now do you do that every Sabbath?

We are beginning to get a picture here. On the one hand, the Sabbath (from the last sermon) is directly connected to us today as a memorial of creation. But we are adding something here that is even more important than that. The creation, and looking back on it, answers those things that provide a foundation for faith, and that is very good. But we cannot stand still. We have to go on.

And so the Sabbath is a weekly reminder of redemption in order that we might be in the Kingdom of God. It tells us the reason that we were liberated, in order that we might be in the Kingdom of God. It tells us what we are supposed to do with the day, at least it begins to tell us that we are to use that day to remember what it was like in the world and to look at our own lives to



see what we need to do in order to keep from going back to the world, to going back to Satan. I can guarantee you that if you treat the Sabbath commonly by profaning it, you are going to go back to the world. It is the only direction you can go. You are not going to be growing toward the Kingdom of God.

So you are keeping the Sabbath because you are free and because you want to remain free. It is a continual remembrance, a reminder, a memorial of the original release from the effects of sin.

Now He tells us that we are not to work and so the Sabbath is also intended by God to be a weekly release from the hardships of life and also at the same time, to kind of smooth over all of the social inequalities that exist out in the world and come into a place where all are one. There are no social inequalities, at least there are not supposed to be, and where there is no respect of persons and where there is no condemnative attitude.

Again, in Jesus' inaugural address, He was tying His works of redemption to the freeing of man from his bondage to Satan, his world, his nature, and of being man's benefactor as the beginning of the fulfillment of His mission, His redemptive function for the Sabbath. Now what is Christ doing? He is restoring the Sabbath to God's original intent. The Jews had gotten it all out of the whack, the keeping of it all out of whack, even as today the world has Sunday all out of whack, or maybe they do not. But it leads you and me to not understanding the proper use of the Sabbath. And so by associating Himself with God's intent for the Sabbath, Christ was actually affirming His Messiahship. Because the keeping of the Sabbath prefigures the Kingdom of God on earth, and Christ is its King. He is the Anointed One of God.

Now how did Christ view the Sabbath? Did He actually uphold it? There are an awful lot of detractors who feel that Christ's Sabbath acts were intentionally provocative, designed to show that it was no longer binding. Now did He genuinely observe the Sabbath or did He deliberately break the Sabbath? That is the question.

There is no doubt in my mind that at the beginning of His ministry He low-keyed some of His Sabbath healings, because I am sure that He knew that when He began doing those things, it was going to cause a storm. Let us go

back to Luke 4. We are going to pick up the story somewhat right after the Sabbath on which He read Isaiah 61:1-2. Now this was a little while later, a Sabbath or two later. It was not the same day.

**Luke 4:31-36** Then He went down to Capernaum, the city of Galilee, and was teaching them on the Sabbath. [We have another Sabbath day or Sabbath, it says.] And they were astonished at His teaching, for His word was with authority. Now in the synagogue there was a man who had a spirit of an unclean demon. And he cried out with a loud voice [right during services while they were going on], saying, "Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!" But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet, and come out of him!" And when the demon had thrown him in their midst, it came out of him and did not hurt him. So they were all amazed and spoke among themselves, saying, "What a word this is! For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits, and they come out."

**Luke 4:38-39** [Apparently the same day.] Now He arose from the synagogue and entered Simon's house [Simon Peter]. But Simon's wife's mother [Peter's mother-in-law] was sick with a high fever, and they made request of Him concerning her. So He stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. And immediately she arose and served them.

Now there are two healings on the Sabbath day. Each one of the healings liberates, sets the person free from something. Now the first one was a spiritual healing that liberates a person from Satan and it restores order to the congregation. The second one was a physical healing that resulted in service to others, like Peter's mother-in-law. Here in a nutshell, just with some of the things that we have here in Luke the 4th chapter, are major principles by which Sabbath activities can be judged.

First of all, was Christ associating Himself with the liberating intent for God's creation of the Sabbath day. The Sabbath's intention is for redemption, setting free, extricating. It is for liberty. It is for joy. It is for peace. It is for service. This is not all. We are still laying the foundation here. Sabbath

activities are to be judged by these things. Now you might say, well, that was Jesus Christ. Yes, it was, but brethren, you are part of His Body now. Are we involved in the same work as Jesus Christ? It is very important that we understand what Christ did on the Sabbath day, to walk in His steps to the best of our ability.

So what is your activity, what does your thinking have to do with redemption, salvation, joy, peace, service? Does what you are thinking and talking about begin to fit within these parameters, the Sabbath parameters?

Let us go to Matthew 12, verses 9 through 14. We will continue to add things to this. Do you begin to see that watching television, what does that have to do with redemption, salvation? Watching a football game, baseball game, going to a movie, going to a party, a dance, a reception somewhere. What does that have to do with that? How is that going to keep you free? How is that going to keep other people free?

**Matthew 12:9-14** Now when He had departed from there, He went into their synagogue. And behold, there was a man who had a withered hand. And they asked Him, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"—that they might accuse him. Then He said to them, "What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath." And then He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched it out, and it was restored as whole as the other. Then the Pharisees went out and took counsel against Him, how they might destroy Him.

Notice the contrast here between Christ and the Pharisees. They were not there to worship. They were not asking their question out of loving concern. But they were there as the accusing authority who want to judge Christ by their regulations. Well, it is good to remember the historical context here. They were in the process of developing what eventually flushed out to 1,521 regulations regarding the keeping of the Sabbath. They had not all been written down yet. They were in the process of flushing it all out. And it did not become 1,521 until actually about 150 years after this. But nonetheless, they were in the process. So they were judging the keeping of the Sabbath.

They were judging the activity of Christ from that kind of perspective. They had turned the observance of the day into a legalistic ritual rather than one of loving service to God and man.

Now I ask you honestly, is Christ doing away with Sabbath observance or restoring it to its original divine function? What we are seeing here is very similar to Matthew 19:8, where the question was divorce and remarriage, and He said that from the beginning it was not so. God never intended that the Sabbath be used the way the scribes and the Pharisees were teaching people to keep it at that time.

It is very important that you understand something here. To recognize that Christ was not healing a man whose life was in danger, it was not an emergency situation at all. It was done to a man who was chronically ill. The withered hand had been there for a while. There is a parameter there. In other words, the good you do does not have to be of an emergency nature. If we wait around for emergencies to happen on the Sabbath in order to do good, you are missing part of the use that God has given to us to put the Sabbath to. He is talking here about problems that are chronic. It was something that He could have done on Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, but He deliberately did it on the Sabbath in order to show you and me that it is a time that we are to do good and we do not have to wait around for an emergency to do good.

There is another thing here, and that is that it illustrates the way we are spiritually. We are *chronically ill spiritually*. So the Sabbath was given to man by God to help free us from the chronic problems of human nature.

Now turn to Mark 3. Because here we have Mark's account of the same thing but Mark adds something that is good to put in here.

**Mark 3:2-5** So they watched Him closely, whether He would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they might accuse Him. And He said to the man who had the withered hand, "Step forward." And He said to them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" But they remained silent. And when He had

looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other.

By Jesus' example, by His reaction, by His words, it becomes very clear that God not only intends that good be done, but to fail to do so when the opportunity arises implies that we are doing evil and killing. How about those apples? How many times have you had the opportunity to do good on the Sabbath, but you did not do it because it was the Sabbath? Christ got angry at that, for the failure to understand that the Sabbath is a day in whose time we are to use to liberate. Something that is a discomfort, a danger. Something that someone is in bondage to and we have it within our power to be able to help that person out of it. So a person, then, who is not concerned for the physical and spiritual salvation of others on the Sabbath is automatically involved in destructive efforts and attitudes.

And I kind of mentioned things that we might be able to do in terms of some kind of a physical activity to relieve a burden from somebody. Please brethren, do not ever forget our major responsibility is preaching the gospel around the world and that has to do with salvation, that has to do with deliverance, that has to do with redemption. That is far greater and far more important than any little thing we might be able to do for our neighbor. It is not that the neighbor is unimportant, but rather that the job, the work that God has called us to do is exceedingly more important.

Now what is your responsibility within the work? How much time do you give over on the Sabbath to real heartfelt prayer and study? Or is it a day in which you spend the time lollygagging around the house, resting, sleeping, doing virtually nothing, your brain, your mind is idle. We are going to see as we go along that Jesus Christ's activities on the Sabbath were exceedingly intense. He worked on the Sabbath from morning till night. Do we do that? Well, that is for us to examine. We are going to see how specific God gets regarding these principles that He expects us to follow.

Let us go back to Deuteronomy 5 again because I want to pick up something there in the writing of the commandment. Again He tells us,

**Deuteronomy 5:12-14** "Observe the Sabbath. . . Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall not do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your ox, nor your donkey, nor any of your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you.

The Sabbath was ordained in order to show compassion toward the defenseless and the needy. Now that is who is basically named here. It is not the employer that is named. Of course he is included within it. But those that are specifically named are those who in many cases would be defenseless. And you know that that is the way it is, because American business operates that way and if you, the employee, do not conform to their schedule, then you are the one that gets fired for keeping the Sabbath. And were it not for the fact that there are a lot of compassionate, liberal people in the United States of America, there would be no law that guarantees that you at least have the opportunity to kind of force your employer to make some kind of reasonable adjustment, compensation, or whatever so that you are able to continue working. God put it right in the commandment to protect those who are basically defenseless.

Now you see, it is beginning to show you what your attitude ought to be to those who need help. It is right in the Sabbath commandment. You know, many employers might take the day off themselves but keep the business going. There are some Jews that have that reputation. They take the Sabbath off but the business keeps right on going. Because by their reasoning, the ones who are working are Gentiles anyway. But God includes right within the commandment the stranger. They are supposed to have the time off; even the animals are supposed to have the time off. Having concern then for people's human value is expressing love toward God. And so love of neighbor is the very essence of Sabbath keeping.

Reflecting back then on this illustration in Matthew 12 and Mark 3, there are two kinds of Sabbath keepers that are illustrated there. There was Christ, who was looking for ways to save life, to relieve burdens, to take people out

from under the pain of a withered hand, to give them full expression and opportunity for life, to have an income they might not otherwise have. And then there were the Pharisees who spent their Sabbath time looking for faults and thinking of methods of killing Christ.

I am going to take one more illustration and then the next one after that is a very good one. I will save that for the next time. Back to Luke 13.

**Luke 13:10-17** Now He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And behold, there was a woman who had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bent over and could in no way raise herself up. When Jesus saw her, He called her to Him and said to her, "Woman, you are loosed from your infirmity." And He laid His hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. The ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath; and he said to the crowd, "There are six days on which men ought to work; therefore come and be healed on them, and not on the Sabbath day." The Lord said then answered him and said, "Hypocrite! Does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or his donkey from the stall, and lead it to water? So ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound—think of it—for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?" And when He had said these things, all His adversaries were put to shame; and all the multitude rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him.

Now this time Jesus did not wait for anybody to ask any questions. He just went right ahead, called the woman out, and He healed her. This episode shows again very clearly God's purpose for the Sabbath. Notice what Jesus said to the woman. You are loosed, freed, redeemed, extricated, delivered. Now the ruler of the synagogue reacted immediately against this because to him the Sabbath was rules to obey rather than people to love. So the Sabbath therefore was unfit for this kind of work.

But Christ came right back (that was in verse 14) in what is now verse 15, and called the man a hypocrite, and used the same verb, only this time it is translated differently. "Does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his

ox?" Your Bible may say untie. It is the same verb. Now that is certainly no emergency. An animal can live one day without water. It might lose a little weight. If a man was going to sell him the following day or the next day, he might feel as though when the thing was weighed it did not weigh as much because it had been fasting the day before. Maybe there is a veiled poke in the ribs there, where Christ is saying you are more interested in making money ensuring that your cow or your cattle or whatever it is, is going to be up to snuff weight-wise so that you get every ounce back in shekels. And so you untie the dumb animal and get it water, but here on the Sabbath, here is a daughter of Abraham, a human being, somebody who has the potential to be in the Kingdom of God, and you do not want her loose from Satan. What a contrast!

Well, He went on in verse 16. He reused the verb again. "Should not this daughter of Abraham, for eighteen years bound to Satan, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath?" So again, Christ reacted against their tradition. But nowhere does He challenge the binding obligation of *keeping* the Sabbath. Rather, you will find in every case in which the Sabbath is involved, He is arguing for true values by which to keep it.

We will stop there and the next time we will continue to lay the foundation for a proper understanding of the keeping of the Sabbath by going into two very interesting examples in John 5 and John 9.