

The Ten Commandments
Lesson 10: Keeping the Sabbath (Part 2)
Following God's Pattern for Work, Rest, And Worship

Last week we began our study of the fourth commandment, "*Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.*" We looked at *The Meaning of "Sabbath."* It comes from the Hebrew word *shabath* which is translated "rest," "to cease," "to still," or "to rest." We also looked at *Violating the Sabbath*, taking a look at Old Testament passages of scriptures where the Israelites went against God's instructions concerning the seventh day Sabbath. God set it aside/apart as a holy day to rest and to remember what He had done for His people.

Now we will look at *Jesus Is Lord of The Sabbath*, and *Jesus, The Sabbath, And the Christian Lifestyle*.

1. Jesus Is Lord of The Sabbath

The Sabbath receives a lot of attention in the New Testament. In the centuries since Nehemiah, the Pharisees and others had made meticulous rules about what was permissible on the Sabbath and what was not. Then Jesus came and confronted those rules and heart attitudes head on. What did he do? What did he say? We will see in this lesson.

Luke 4:16 tells us that it was Jesus' custom to attend the synagogue every Sabbath. He honored that day as His Father commanded. Jesus obeyed all of the Ten Commandments, and His obedience was more than lip service or obeying the letter of the law.

- a. Let's look at Matthew 12:1-8.
 - i. Jesus and his disciples on the sabbath went through the corn, and his disciples were hungry and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat. When the Pharisees saw it, they said to Jesus, "behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day."
 - ii. Jesus reminded them about what David and his men did by eating the shewbread which was not lawful for David, nor his men. Only the priests were to eat that bread. Jesus also mentioned that the priests, as they did their work in the Temple, technically broke the Law on the Sabbath day.
 - iii. He told them that *one greater than the temple* was in that place. He said this because He was Lord over the Sabbath. He also quoted Hosea 6:6 that God desires for compassion or mercy more than ritualistic sacrifices. External observances, whether in a sacrifice or on a Sabbath day, are meaningless in someone who does not have the right attitude toward the Lord and toward other people. God looks into our hearts
- b. Mark 2:27 focuses on Jesus' emphasis on the purpose of the Sabbath—it was given for humanity's benefit and not for enslavement to rigid rules about work and rest.
- c. Matthew 12:9-14 presents another encounter following the incident in the grain field.
 - i. A man with a withered hand came to Jesus in the synagogue and they asked him, "Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath?" They were trying to accuse Jesus.
 - ii. Jesus posed a question to them in verse 11, "What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the sabbath day, will not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore, it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days."
 - iii. Jesus healed the man, and the Pharisees went out and held a council against him, how they might destroy him.

- iv. Mark 3:4-5 adds that Jesus looked at them with anger and was *grieved at their hardness of heart*.
- d. John 5:1-18 presents a Sabbath encounter about the man at the pool of Bethesda who had an infirmity for 38 years. After a brief conversation, Jesus told the man to rise, take up thy bed and walk. The man was healed, and the Jews said to the man that was healed that it was not lawful for him to carry his bed on the sabbath.
 - i. After the man told them that it was Jesus who had made him whole, the Jews sought to persecute and slay Jesus because he had done these things on the Sabbath. Jesus replied in vs. 17, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." Verse 18 reads, "Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only hath broken the sabbath, but said also that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God."
- e. In John 7:19-24, Jesus spoke to the Jews about Moses giving them the Law, and them not keeping it. They were circumcising people on the eighth day after birth, which sometimes fell on the sabbath. In verse 24, Jesus said, "*Do not judge according to the appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.*"
- f. In Luke 13:10-17, a crippled woman with an infirmity for 18 years came to Jesus on the sabbath day.
 - i. Jesus healed her on the sabbath, and the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because Jesus had healed on the sabbath. He even went back and mentioned that there were six days in which men ought to work and to come during those days to be healed, not on the sabbath.
 - ii. Jesus called him a hypocrite. He told them they take care of oxen and asses on the sabbath by loosening them and watering them. Why shouldn't this daughter of Abraham, whom Satan had bound, not be loose of her infirmity.
 - iii. All of His adversaries were made ashamed, and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him.

In every encounter that Jesus faced concerning the Sabbath, He focused attention on the heart instead of on external appearances. How do these truths that Jesus taught in Galilee and Jerusalem make their way into our lives today?

2. Jesus, The Sabbath, And the Christian Lifestyle

What were the main points that Jesus sought to teach His disciples about the Sabbath? What did He repeatedly seek to get the Jewish leaders to see about God's intentions? How did He lead the early church and His apostles? Let's look for answers to these questions and the ways they apply to our relationship with Jesus.

The apostle Paul understood the meaning of the Sabbath both as a former Pharisee and as a Spirit-filled Christian and apostle of Jesus Christ. He dealt with matters concerning the Sabbath in synagogues and churches throughout the Gentile world. He presented truths for the Roman believers that are still applicable to each Christian's daily lifestyle.

- a. Paul gives some truths concerning the Sabbath in Romans 14:1-13.
 - i. In an effort to guide the Roman Christians into the kind of lifestyle that pleases the Lord, Paul addressed certain issues that had the potential to cause conflict and confusion in the local fellowship. The two main issues were diet and the days of religious significance. (Rom. 14:1-6)

1. Concerning special days, there were two points circulating throughout Rome. The Gentile Christians wanted nothing to do with any of the pagan holidays and festivals, days honoring idols. These days could include immoral practices. New believers would not want to participate in those celebrations now that they were followers of Jesus Christ. On the other hand, many Jewish Christians regarded the Sabbath as especially holy. These people also celebrated the coming of the new moon along with various feast days that were observed in the Old Testament.
2. There were differences of opinions concerning what to eat and what not to eat.
- ii. The applications to the subject of Sabbath observance are found in verses 5-6 of Romans 14.
 1. Part of Paul's answer was, "Let every man be persuaded in his own mind." He also said that whether we regard the day or don't regard the day it is unto the Lord. Whether we eat certain foods or not eat certain foods it is unto the Lord.
- iii. In verses 7-13 we find:
 1. None of us liveth to himself or man dies to himself. Whether we live or die, we live or die unto the Lord. Christ both died and rose and revived that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living. All shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Paul recommended that we not judge one another and that we don't put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way.
- b. In Colossians 2:6-23, after clearly declaring that Jesus is the *root, foundation, and fullness of one's faith*, Paul pointedly speaks of the temptation to add religious regulations to that faith in an attempt to be more spiritual or more "complete."
 - i. The believer is "complete" in Christ—having put off the old life, being fully forgiven and delivered from "*principalities and powers*," and living in the victory Christ has won.
 - ii. Because of Christ, following external forms such as strict rules concerning food and drink or the celebration of certain festivals, the monthly "*new moon*," or "*sabbath*" is useless and meaningless.
 - iii. Christ is the one that makes life real. Being linked to Him as the Head brings, life, health, and growth to the "entire body" of believers.
 - iv. Just as Jesus questioned mere external form and focused on the heart of God's commands, Paul asked, "*Why... do you subject yourselves to regulations—'Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle'*" (NKJV) when these regulations were related only to external, perishable things?
 - v. There is more to following God than a checklist, and there is more to the weekly schedule than living only one day for the Lord. He is our life all day, every day.

So, how do we apply the matter of the fourth commandment, as Christians? We must see the more complete revelation that He has given in Hebrews 4.

- c. First, some background on Hebrews 4. The author of Hebrews is calling those he addresses to faith in Christ and to confidence in His salvation. He exhorts them not to turn back to the external laws of Judaism—the rules, regulations, and observances that cannot provide salvation or true rest. He says that they should turn to Christ and trust Him as the fulfillment of all those laws and observances and that they should live by faith in Him. He is calling them to a "*Sabbath rest*" that is more than a weekly observance; it is a daily lifestyle.
 - i. As we look at Hebrews 4:1-16 and especially verse 9, God wants His people to enter into rest.
 1. The people of Israel in the wilderness had the opportunity to trust the Lord to bring them into Canaan, the Promised Land, the place of "rest." But they became embittered and rebellious against the Lord and refused to believe in Him and His ability to see them through. Therefore, He swore that they would not enter into His

rest. Note: the small area of land near the Mediterranean Sea, however, was not intended to be a final resting place for His followers.

2. The author of Hebrews declares, “*there is a special rest still waiting for the people of God*” (Hebrews 4:9 NLT). What type of rest does this verse refer to? This rest refers to the contentment we feel when we experience all that God has for us.
 3. The Promise Land was that “rest.” But as wonderful as it was, God has more in store for all generations that follow Him. He wants them to experience life in Him—a life of grace and mercy, of His power and ability, of faith in Him and the experience of His victory. His is the “Sabbath rest” that God wants us to enter and experience daily by faith.
 4. This rest means that we have “rested from our own works.” It means experiencing Him in His finished work of salvation and His ongoing work of sanctification.
- d. What about days of unrest? What causes unrest? There are two major contributors: **(1) doubts about salvation and (2) distresses (sometimes defeats) in trials and temptations.**
- i. What should we do? According to Hebrews 4:14-16, we should remember who Jesus is and how He has provided full salvation for us. We must focus on Jesus and His work—He is our great high priest, the Son of God in whom we can place our confidence. We must hold fast to Him, remembering that he has been through every kind of temptation.
 - ii. He can handle whatever we are going through. And because we know that Jesus is accessible to us now, we can turn to His throne of grace and receive the well-timed help that we need, whatever the trial or temptation. This is what resting in Him means, and this is for every day—a Sabbath rest that treats Him and life as holy, set apart every day of the week.
- e. The fourth commandment not only says, “*Remember the Sabbath,*” but it also states, “Six days you shall labor.” Here we see the Sabbath principle of “Work six days—rest one.” This is the pattern that God has had in mind since the creation. Work was His will for us before the Fall, before the aspect of sin infected the earth. What are some of the goals of labor, according to Ephesians 4:28?
- i. Not stealing, making an honest living, producing with your own hands that which is good, and having to give to others that are in need.
 - ii. Paul made it clear that honest labor is the call of every Christian.
 - iii. Both employees and employers (“slaves and masters”) must remember that the focus is the Lord—obeying and serving as though they served Christ and expecting reward from the Lord. Jesus is Master of both employee and employer, and both must answer to Him.

God wants a balance in our lives, a balance between work and rest. He wants to see us living in His Sabbath rest, trusting daily in Him, and He wants us to live His Sabbath principle, working where He has placed us and making sure that we take time for spiritual, physical, emotional, and mental rest and refreshment.

Homework: Review this lesson. Prayerfully read Hebrews 3—4, seeking spiritual application.

Lesson Topics: For Me to Follow God. We will look at *seven actions* that God desires to see in each of His children. They are characteristic of a life of Sabbath rest.