

THE NEW COVENANT AND THE TRANSITION FROM SABBATH TO LORD'S DAY - Putting Deeper Meaning Into Sunday Worship

Part 2 - Teaching #1846 - Sunday, Decemer 6th, 2015, 10:00 a.m.

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Romans 14:1-9 - "As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. [2] One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. [3] Let not the one who eats despise the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains pass judgment on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him. [4] Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand. [5] One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. [6] The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God. [7] For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. [8] If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. [9] For to this end Christ died and lived again, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living."

There were two key background points in last week's teaching. The first was the Sabbath was set apart as a reminder - a visible witness - that there was one true God who, alone among all the idols, was the actual Creator of all things. The key text here was **Exodus 20:8-11**. This is the reason we have **weeks** on our calendars. We also saw that the Sabbath was never fulfilled simply by people quitting labor to do their own thing. The key text here was **Isaiah 58:13-14**.

So point number one was ***THE FOUNDATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SABBATH WAS THE SETTING FORTH OF A VISIBLE WITNESS THAT THERE WAS ONE TRUE GOD WHO WAS THE CREATOR OF ALL THINGS***

And point number two was ***AFTER ESTABLISHING THE PROPORTIONS OF ONE DAY IN SEVEN TO KNOW OUR CREATOR GOD AND BECOME SANCTIFIED AND TRANSFORMED BY HIM, THE CENTRAL THEME OF THE OLD TESTAMENT SABBATH IS FURTHER SHARPENED***

But even these points alone don't even approach the most important things we need to remember when pondering the meaning of the Sabbath and its transition into the New Testament Lord's Day. Today we continue with points three and four.

3) **ALL THAT THE OLD TESTAMENT SABBATH MODEL BEGAN FINDS ITS COMPLETION IN CHRIST JESUS, THE LORD OF THE SABBATH**

There are several pivotal passages, first from the gospels:

Matthew 12:1-8 - "At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. [2] But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, "Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath." [3] He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, and those who were with him: [4] how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? [5] Or have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless? [6] I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. [7] And if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. [8] **For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath.**"

Jesus battled with the religious leaders over the Sabbath more than any other single issue. He healed on the Sabbath. He and his disciples picked corn to eat lunch on the Sabbath. He did good on the Sabbath. In all these issues they accused Him of breaking the Mosaic law. And here's the important point. He **was**. Never once did Jesus **deny** He was stretching the limits of obedience to Old Covenant Sabbath laws.

None of that is the real issue. The real issue is pressed home by Jesus in the blazing words of **verse 8** - "**The Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath!**"

That's the new issue. **That's** what these Jewish leaders didn't get. Jesus takes the Sabbath, and in bold, sweeping, divine, and absolutely majestic words says, ***"I own the Sabbath. The Sabbath is mine. It has my stamp all over it. The Sabbath has always been a spotlight pointing very specifically to Me! I am the new definition of the Sabbath. That's because it has always been about Me!"***

The Sabbath is forever **Christ-centered**, not **Moses-centered**, and not **Israel-centered**, and not **temple-centered**. No one understands the Sabbath properly until he understands it finds its completion and focus

in Jesus Christ. He, and He alone can say, ***"I am LORD of the Sabbath! Your Old Covenant wine skins are radically out of date to hold this new Sabbath wine!"***

That term, ***"Lord's Day,"*** isn't the invention of zealous evangelicals. People heard Jesus say those words. His followers heard Him call the Old Testament Sabbath the ***"Lord's" - "I am LORD of the Sabbath."*** The name ***"Lord's Day"*** is no accident. ***You will always be a legalistic Sabbath thinker unless you see it fulfilled - completely fulfilled - consummated - in the atoning death of our Lord on the cross.*** The rest of the Sabbath is a ***rest from works righteousness.***

The Old Testament Sabbath was a temporary pointer to New Testament salvation in exactly the same way the Old Testament sacrificial system was a temporary pointer to New Testament salvation. It is simply stunning to me how many contemporary books on Sabbath keeping overlook this fundamental point.

Very quickly, there's another very important passage in John's gospel:

John 5:8-17 - "Jesus said to him (the lame man by the pool of Bethesda), ***"Get up, take up your bed, and walk."*** [9] And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked. Now that day was the Sabbath. [10] So the Jews said to the man who had been healed, "It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to take up your bed." [11] But he answered them, "The man who healed me, that man said to me, 'Take up your bed, and walk.'" [12] They asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Take up your bed and walk'?" [13] Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, as there was a crowd in the place. [14] Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, "See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you." [15] The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him. [16] And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath. [17] **But Jesus answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I am working."**

Again we see the conflict over the Sabbath issue. The key phrase to note is the one that seems to make little sense - ***"But Jesus answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I am working" (17).***

Those are fighting words to the Old Testament Sabbath keepers. Jesus clearly says he is ***"working" (17)***. What does Jesus mean? I think He means the Father didn't just sit idle after the six days of creation. He rested from the ***initial creation*** on the seventh day. But creation has gone amuck. God got up from His Sabbath rest and began a new work. Not the work of ***creation*** but the work of ***redemption***. And Jesus says His works of healing, restoration, and forgiveness are the ***expression*** of God's work right now.

This work of redemption - this making of a ***new creation*** - found its victory in Christ's death and Resurrection. There was a ***rest*** - a ***Sabbath*** - at the end of the ***first*** creation. But this Old Testament Sabbath was only a pointer to a deeper New Testament rest. We now enter into the fulfilled, deeper ***rest*** of the completion of ***redemption*** - the ***second*** work of our Creator God:

Ephesians 1:19-23 - "...that you might know.... ***what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might [20] that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, [21] far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. [22] And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, [23] which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.***"

Hebrews 10:12 - "But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, ***he sat down at the right hand of God....***"

Christ's Resurrection and ascension mark the ***completion*** of the second work of God - the work of ***redemption***. Christ ***"sits down."*** This is the fulfillment of the Sabbath reminder of Israel's deliverance in the Old Testament - the reason for their Sabbath keeping as we saw in **Deuteronomy 5:15** - ***"You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day."***

That Sabbath was just a shadow - more accurately, just a ***reminder*** ("remember") - of the ***ultimate*** deliverance and the ***ultimate*** Sabbath rest of redemption. We don't ***work to save ourselves***. We rest in the ***finished*** work of Jesus Christ. We join in the ***ultimate*** Sabbath rest, celebrating our deliverance by our mighty Redeeming God.

Every time this parking lot fills up on the Lord's Day we give testimony to the ***delivering work of God in Christ Jesus***. When we walk from our car into this sanctuary, while others are sleeping or shopping or fishing or golfing or

visiting, we **proclaim the reality of Christ's uniqueness in a world full of religious work and moral effort.** Church, this is **His** day because **He** did the work and sat down - just as our Creator sat down at the completion of the work of creation.

4) **EACH LORD'S DAY REMINDS US OF THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD TO KEEP ALL OF HIS PROMISES TO HIS REDEEMED CHILDREN**

Hebrews 4:9-11 - "So then, there **remains** a Sabbath rest for the people of God, [10] for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his. [11] **Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.**"

"Let us therefore strive to enter that rest." We're not all the way home yet. The **new creation** is fully purchased, but not fully **delivered**. This fascinating text says we **rest** and we **strive** at the same time.

The **Lord's Day**, the **fulfilled Old Testament Sabbath**, is full of promise. Just as the Old Testament Sabbath looked with anticipation to the fulfillment of the New Testament Lord's Day, so the **Resurrection of our Lord** anticipates the **final consummation** of our Lord's victory.

This is the future-oriented life-blood of the whole concept of Sabbath/Lord's Day in the Scriptures. It works like this. Just as the **Old Covenant Sabbath** was the promise anticipating the **delivering/redemption** of the **New Covenant Lord's Day**, so the **New Covenant Lord's Day** is the promise anticipating the final **deliverance/restoration** of this entire, broken, fallen, restless **creation**.

Every Sunday you come into church you walk through a world of tsunamis, earthquakes, wars, corruption, refugees, starvation, disease, abortion, and homosexuality and heterosexual immorality. Who among us has not, in the quiet of his or her own soul, screamed out, **"Where are you God? What are you doing?"**

Every Sunday - every **Lord's Day** - you come into this church you have to wrestle all over again with your own incompleteness in Christ Jesus. You and I all long for the day John described when we see Him face to face in **perfect likeness**. We long for the day when we fail Jesus no more. We long for that ultimate, permanent, complete, eternal Sabbath.

And every Lord's Day we walk in the fulfillment of a promise God made through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We walk in the fulfillment of a million butchered lambs and rams. We walk in the fulfillment of temples filled with smoke and incense but unchanged hearts, longing for the coming of a Redeemer.

And each Sunday service, no matter how dull or ordinary, whispers into the listening ear, **"See. I keep all my promises. My plan isn't done yet. But the day you're celebrating testifies to the completion of the purchase of it all."**

This is what we sang about in that opening Christmas carol that was never even written to celebrate Christ's **first** birth. The first advent of Jesus wasn't the theme of those great words by Issac Watts. We've adapted it to our Christmas celebrations, but look at the words as we sang them. It's all about our Lord **second** coming - His **second** advent.

"No more let sins and sorrows grow - Nor thorns infest the ground. He comes to make His blessings flow - far as the curse is found!" We're still longing for that day!

So, what about our opening question and text? Do just weak Christians think the Lord's Day is special? Does the Apostle John call Sunday the Lord's Day because He was weak in faith? Is that what Paul was teaching in Romans 14?

No. Not a chance. We need to think with our **whole** Bibles. The whole context of Romans 14 deals with the foods, diets, and days and seasons (plural) in which the ceremonial regulations of the Jewish system functioned. We know from the rest of the writings of Paul that he taught in the churches on the Lord's Day (**Acts 20:7**) and gave instruction for worship on the Lord's Day (**1 Corinthians 16:1-2**).

But those converting to Christianity from Judaism, as well as a host of other religions, came with their own history and baggage. These Judaising believers were the ones Paul called **"weak in faith"** (**Romans 14:1**). They kept trying to conceptualize a Sabbath by Old Covenant theocratic command without seeing it abolished in the death of the great final deliverer from their deepest bondage - Jesus Christ and His sin pardoning work on the cross. And this all apart from their works.

Paul is being firm, but loving in his words. Apart from its fulfillment in Jesus Christ Paul knew commitment to Old Testament Sabbath keeping - along with a host of other regulations - was a desperate religious effort - clinging to powerless relics of an era made obsolete through Christ's fulfilling work on the cross. So Paul didn't want them squabbling over spiritually lifeless issues. All of these were dead, dangerous, legalistic issues untethered from Christ.

Christ has emptied the legalistic keeping of the Old Testament Sabbath. Remember the bright promise of every Lord's Day. You can't see all the way into it yet but the same One who completed creation and rested, who completed redemption, Christ's resurrected body being the first sign of the new creation, the One who sat down at the right hand of the Father, will usher in the full inheritance - that glorious day when there will be nothing but one complete, long and bright eternal joy sustaining celebration of our delivering Lord.