

CHURCH-GOVERNMENT LIFE TRUTH # 3 THE CHURCH HONORS THE SABBATH

The command to “keep the Sabbath holy” is no more than a suggestion in the church today. In fact, some preachers even say that honoring the Sabbath is not even taught in the New Testament. Other preachers teach that man needs a day of rest and suggest that Christians pick their own day. Was this the intent of Christ; that we choose our own day to rest? Or is there more to this rest than we seem to understand?

In the Old Testament, the Sabbath was on Saturday, the last day of the week. God created the world and everything in it in six days. Then He rested on the seventh day. His resting on the seventh day from work became part of the creation order. The Sabbath Commandment states in *Exodus 20:11 (NIV)* ¹¹ *For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.*

The Sabbath has been around since creation. The LORD blessed it as a holy day. The Apostles, inspired by the Holy Spirit, moved the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday in the New Testament. We see hints of this move in the New Testament and we see concrete evidence in history itself. Christian churches still meet today for worship on Sunday. Why? Because this is the tradition passed down to us by the early church and the apostles.

Philip Schaff wrote a book called the History of the Christian Church Volume I. In it he said, “The LORD’S DAY (SUNDAY) took the place of the Jewish Sabbath (Saturday) as the weekly day of public worship. The substance remained, the form was changed. The institution of a periodical weekly day of rest for the body and the soul is rooted in our physical and moral nature, and is as old as man, dating, like marriage, from paradise.” Phillip Schaff went on to say, **“The universal and un-contradicted Sunday observance in the second century can only be explained by the fact that it had its roots in apostolic practice.”**

Phillip Schaff said of the Sunday observance, “The due observance of it, (The Lord’s Day) in which the churches of England, Scotland, and America, to their incalculable advantage, excel the churches of the European continent, is a

wholesome school of discipline, a means of grace for the people, a safeguard of public morality and religion, a bulwark against infidelity, **and a source of immeasurable blessing to the church, the state, and the family. Next to the Church and the Bible, the Lord's Day is the chief pillar of Christian society."**

Throughout history, until this generation, the Sabbath was considered a **"chief pillar of Christian society"** and a **"safeguard for public morality and religion."** Is this generation a pillar of morality? Perhaps, we need to reconsider our position on the Sabbath and the blessings associated with this Commandment. Is the moral decay of our society somehow tied to our disobedience to God's command to honor the Sabbath and keep it holy?

The pastors of our founding era felt that the observance of the Sabbath, as stated in the Ten Commandments, was as important to obey as the law to not steal. To neglect the Sabbath **would bring the destruction of a nation; for it is God who makes us holy, and it is He that blesses us for our obedience to His commands.**

THE SABBATH IS TO BE A DAY OF REST

Exodus 20:8-11 (NIV) ⁸ "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. ¹¹ For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

THE SABBATH IS FOR CORPORATE WORSHIP

The Sabbath was made for corporate worship. We see this in the New Testament as the Jews would attend the synagogue together on the Sabbath. We are not meant to meet on our own or choose our own day to rest. We are to do it corporately. We who are many form one body and together we become the mighty army for God.

CAN THE SABBATH BE ANY DAY WE CHOOSE?

Romans 14:5,6 (NIV) ⁵ One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. ⁶ He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord. He who eats meat, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God.

We do not pick our own day to honor the Sabbath. The stipulations in the command are to work six days and then rest on the seventh. This passage in Romans was referring to the Jews who wanted to continue some of the Old Testament festivals they had grown up with; not for salvation purposes, but because they were still very meaningful to them. This happens today when we celebrate December 25th as Jesus' birthday. December 25th is most likely not the day that Jesus was born. However, we still choose to celebrate this day to honor His birth. Paul is NOT saying to pick your own day to have a Sabbath. That view would be inconsistent with the New Testament teaching to have corporate worship.

THE CHURCH MEETS TOGETHER FOR WORSHIP AND INSTRUCTION

Mark 6:2 (NIV) ² When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. "Where did this man get these things?" they asked. "What's this wisdom that has been given him, that he even does miracles?" When Jesus came on the scene, the Jewish people were meeting in synagogues for corporate worship on Saturdays.

The writer of Hebrews tells the believers to not give up meeting together. *Hebrews 10:25 (NIV) ²⁵ Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching.* If we all picked our own Sabbath, some might meet on Monday, others Tuesday, and so on. This would not be meeting together as God intended.

Jesus refers to corporate worship in the Sermon on the Mount. He speaks of the altar in *Matthew 5:23-24 (NIV) ²³ "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave*

your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift. When did the nation come to the altar? It was on Saturday. Their day of worship.

Many passages in the New Testament refer to Christians coming together. *1 Corinthians 14:26 (NIV)* ²⁶ *What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church.* The Scriptures clearly teach corporate worship in the New Testament. It is not consistent with the Bible to assume that we can meet on any day we want.

THE CHURCH MEETS ON THE SAME DAY

Sometimes the church faces issues that need to be addressed. *Matthew 18:15-17 (NIV)* ¹⁵ *"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over."* ¹⁶ *But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.'* ¹⁷ *If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.* How could we tell it to the church if everyone was meeting on different days?

Notice these passages and their intent for us to come together on the same day. *1 Corinthians 11:18 (NIV)* ¹⁸ *In the first place, I hear that **when you come together as a church**, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it.*

1 Corinthians 11:20 (NIV) ²⁰ ***When you come together**, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat,*

Romans 12:4-5 (NIV) ⁴ *Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function,* ⁵ *so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.*

1 Corinthians 12:25-28 (NIV) ²⁵ *so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other.* ²⁶ *If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.* ²⁷ ***Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.*** ²⁸ *And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of*

miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues.

*Ephesians 4:11-13 (NIV) ¹¹ It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, ¹² to prepare God's people for works of service, **so that the body of Christ may be built up** ¹³ **until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.***

*Ephesians 4:16 (NIV) ¹⁶ From him the **whole body**, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, **as each part does its work.** How can we reach unity and all do our part to minister to the body if we are not meeting together? The implication in Scripture is that we come together as the church.*

*Acts 20:7 (NIV) ⁷ On the first day of the week **we came together** to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight. The phrase to break bread means that they took the Lord's Supper together. We are to meet together corporately to take the Lord's Supper together as Christ commanded us to do. This is to be done corporately as a church body.*

Those who read Romans 14 and conclude that Paul was referring to the ability to choose any day to worship as the Sabbath are denying the overall teaching in the New Testament that believers are to come together for corporate worship.

HOW DID THE FOUNDERS OF AMERICA VIEW THE SABBATH?

The founders were so concerned about this nation honoring the fourth commandment of the Ten Commandments that they established a law to help us obey it. The Blue Law was designed to enforce moral standards in America, particularly the observance of Sunday as a day of worship or rest. It also restricted Sunday shopping.

The law was changed in the 1980s. The first change stated that businesses would only be open during non-church hours and that no alcohol could be sold. Today, however, almost everything is open and alcohol can be sold. Sunday is

now the second-busiest shopping day of the week. Would the founders be pleased with our decision to do away with the Blue Law? What would they think of the Sabbath being treated just like any other day of the week?

A book entitled Political Sermons of the American Founding Era, gives us a glimpse of what the founders believed was important to sustain our great nation. This country has experienced the blessings of their faith and commitment to God. It is now our responsibility to be just as diligent by passing the same blessings on to the generations after us. Unfortunately, we have gotten off course. Christians need to return to the Godly foundation our forefathers left for us.

In the book, Pastor Timothy Dwight said, **“To destroy us, therefore, in this dreadful sense, our enemies must first destroy our Sabbath, and seduce us from the house of God.”** (Ellis Sandoz, *Political Sermons of the American Founding Era: 1730-1805*, 2 vols, Foreword by Ellis Sandoz (2nd ed. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1998). Vol. 2. Chapter: 48: Timothy Dwight, *THE DUTY OF AMERICANS, AT THE PRESENT CRISIS*)

One of the greatest tools that Satan uses in our generation to seduce us from the house of God involves our love for entertainment and sports. Today Christians often skip church to go and watch their favorite sports team. The founders felt so strongly about honoring the Sabbath that they enforced a law to protect it. Sunday used to be a day of moral instruction and was considered a chief pillar in a Christian society. Look at the moral decay in the world today and then think about how we treat the Sabbath with contempt. Perhaps, the founding fathers understood something that we are overlooking to our own destruction. These men would not have broken the Sabbath for any reason in their generation. They would have treated the day as God had intended; a day to worship God and rest.

Pastor Dwight goes on to say, “Among the particular duties required by this precept, and at the present time, **none holds a higher place than the observation of the Sabbath.** The Sabbath and its ordinances have ever been the great means of all moral good to mankind. The faithful observation of the Sabbath is, therefore, one of the chief duties and interests of men; but the present time furnishes reasons, peculiar, at least in degree, for exemplary regard to this divine institution. **The enemies of God have by private argument, ridicule, and influence, and by public decrees, pointed their especial malignity against the Sabbath; and have expected, and not without reason, that, if they**

could annihilate it, they should overthrow Christianity. From them we cannot but learn its importance. Enemies usually discern, with more sagacity, the most promising point of attack, than those who are to be attacked. In this point are they to be peculiarly opposed. Here, peculiarly, are their designs to be baffled. If they fail here, they will finally fail. **Christianity cannot fall, but by the neglect of the Sabbath.**

Pastor Joseph Sewall wrote a sermon called Nineveh's Repentance and Deliverance. In it he states, "Do your utmost that the worship of God may be maintain'd in the power and purity of it, among this people. Let all due care be taken that men may fear this *glorious and fearful name*, the Lord our God, and not presume to take it in vain; for *because of swearing the land mourns*. **Let the Lord's-day be strictly observ'd; for God hath set the Sabbath as a sign between him and his people, that he is the Lord who sanctifieth them.** (Ellis Sandoz, *Political Sermons of the American Founding Era: 1730-1805*, 2 vols, Foreword by Ellis Sandoz (2nd ed. Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1998). Vol. 1. Chapter: 2: *Joseph Sewall, NINEVEH'S REPENTANCE AND DELIVERANCE*)

OLD TESTAMENT TEACHING ON THE SABBATH

Numbers 15:32-36 (NIV) ³² While the Israelites were in the desert, a man was found gathering wood on the Sabbath day. ³³ Those who found him gathering wood brought him to Moses and Aaron and the whole assembly, ³⁴ and they kept him in custody, because it was not clear what should be done to him. ³⁵ Then the LORD said to Moses, "The man must die. The whole assembly must stone him outside the camp." ³⁶ So the assembly took him outside the camp and stoned him to death, as the LORD commanded Moses.

It is very clear that the Lord was serious about obeying the Sabbath in the Old Testament. Is He as serious about our obedience in the New Testament? What other sins brought the death penalty in the Old Testament? Adultery, not honoring your parents, intentional murder. Serious sins had serious consequences. Not keeping the Sabbath holy was one of those sins. The Apostles and founders of our nation felt that the Sunday Sabbath should be

honored as well. We know this from their faithful example of following God's Word.

There is no verse in the New Testament that specifically says, "Honor the Sabbath." But there are enough hints in Scripture that reveal the authority to obey is still there. Here are some of the "hints" that I have found in the New Testament:

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS ARE REINSTATED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Our generation is removing the Ten Commandments from public buildings. Some are even seeking to remove God from our nation altogether. The church and Christian families have already removed some of the commands from their own hearts. Why would the founders of our nation be so impressed to put the Ten Commandments on our buildings and in our courthouses? Did they only believe in nine of the ten or did they believe that all ten were equally important? They believed in all ten. They believed in obeying them as the commands state. They did so because the Ten Commandments are reinstated in the New Testament.

Look at what Jesus said to the man about how to gain eternal life. *Matthew 19:16-19 (NIV)* ¹⁶ Now a man came up to Jesus and asked, "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?" ¹⁷ "Why do you ask me about what is good?" Jesus replied. "There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, obey the commandments."

Jesus said, "If we want to enter life we must obey the commandments." Jesus goes on to tell us that we are to obey the Ten Commandments. ¹⁸ "Which ones?" the man inquired. Jesus replied, "'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, ¹⁹ honor your father and mother,' and 'love your neighbor as yourself.'" Jesus reinstates the importance of obeying the Ten Commandments. Every single command He listed is one of the Ten Commandments. Some might argue and say, "But He didn't specifically list the Sabbath command." This is a true statement, but Jesus also didn't list idolatry, so are we free to commit idolatry in the New Testament? The fact is he listed only commandments that are in the Ten; reinstating their importance in the New Testament. Just because he did not list all ten definitely does not negate the importance of each one.

The book of James also reinstates the Ten Commandments in the New Testament. *James 2:10-11 (NIV)* ¹⁰ *For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. ¹¹ For he who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker.*

The law that we are to obey in the New Testament is the Ten Commandments with the teachings of Christ. Our ability to obey the commands reveals that we have been born again. James says, "*If we stumble at just one point in the whole law we are guilty of breaking them all.*" The law he is referring to is the Ten Commandments. We must obey the "whole" Ten Commandments just as the generations before us. We know that James is not referring to the sacrificial law or as some call it, the ceremonial law. Christ fulfilled that with his death on the cross. Jesus was very clear with Peter that civil law, including dietary laws, were fulfilled as well.

The passage in James specifically mentions murder and adultery, but it also includes the whole law in verse 10. This means that we could interject any commandment into the teaching. Would idolatry work in the argument? Yes. Would stealing work in the argument? Yes. Would the Sabbath work in the argument? Yes. That is the point of the teaching. The whole law is important and none of the commands are to be forgotten or changed from their moral intentions.

Paul reinstates the Ten Commandments in *Romans 13:8-10 (NIV)* ⁸ *Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law.* ⁹ *The commandments, "Do not commit adultery," "Do not murder," "Do not steal," "Do not covet," and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: "Love your neighbor as yourself."* ¹⁰ *Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.*

We are told by Jesus that the whole law can be summed up in these two commands: Love God and love your neighbor. The first four commands of the Ten Commandments are how we love God and the last six commandments are how we love our neighbor. None of the commandments are to be excluded or changed. Love is the fulfillment of the law. The Ten Commandments help us apply the principles of love.

In this passage, Paul lists specific commands in the Ten Commandments and then says, “**and whatever other commandment there may be.**” He was not excluding honoring your parents, honoring the Sabbath, or misusing God’s name. **He said that whatever other commandment there may be we are to obey it to show that we love God and our neighbor as the law intends.**

Jesus, Paul, and James reinstate the importance of obeying the Ten Commandments in the New Testament. Look at what Jesus said in *Matthew 5:17-20 (NIV)* ¹⁷ “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. ¹⁸ **I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.** ¹⁹ *Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.* ²⁰ *For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.*

We are to practice and teach the Ten Commandments to others. Jesus begins to expound upon the Ten in the Sermon on the Mount. He brings up several of the Laws and then teaches us the heart of the matter and elevates their meaning. The verses that immediately follow this passage are Jesus expounding on some of the Ten Commandments.

Paul lists a law that we are to obey in *Romans 3:28-31 (NIV)* ²⁸ **For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.** ²⁹ *Is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles too? Yes, of Gentiles too,* ³⁰ *since there is only one God, who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through that same faith.* ³¹ **Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law.** What law are we to be upholding? The sacrificial? No. Jesus’s sacrifice was once and for all and no more sacrifices are needed. The Civil laws? No. The Lord was very clear that the dietary laws were done away with and that we can eat meat. What law, then are we to be upholding? The moral law as has been revealed is reinstated in the New Testament. The moral law is the Ten Commandments.

JESUS HONORED THE SABBATH

The Scriptures clearly point out that Jesus obeyed the Sabbath command when it says in *Luke 4:16 (NIV)* *16 He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the **Sabbath day** he went into the synagogue, **as was his custom**.* What was the custom of Jesus? His custom was to be in the synagogue every Sabbath to worship with fellow believers. He remembered the Sabbath day and kept it holy.

The example of Christ is our greatest evidence of what we need to be doing in *1 John 2:6 (NIV)*

⁶Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.

Where would Jesus be on the Sabbath? What would he be doing on the Sabbath? What did He do and not do on the Sabbath?

Some misinterpret the teachings and actions of Jesus and they claim that He revealed to us that the Sabbath is no longer to be obeyed. This is heresy and completely untrue. The sacrifice of Christ had to be a sinless sacrifice to break the bondage of sin. If Christ broke any command prior to His sacrifice He would not have been a sinless sacrifice. Hebrews 4:15 tells us that Jesus was without sin. Therefore Jesus honored the Sabbath.

The issues that Jesus dealt with were the legalistic views of the Pharisees. Rules that were written by the Pharisees as to how the term "work" would be interpreted placed a heavy burden upon the people. Jesus consequently talked a lot about the intent of the Sabbath in the New Testament.

In John, Jesus claimed to be "working on the Sabbath." Some interpret this as a passage that excludes the Sabbath command in the New Testament. In John, Chapter 5, Jesus healed a paralyzed man on the Sabbath and the Pharisees accused him again. *John 5:16-17 (NIV)* *¹⁶So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jews persecuted him. ¹⁷Jesus said to them, "**My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working.**"*

Is Jesus saying that working on the Sabbath is permitted? No. He is not saying it is okay to work on the Sabbath; He is claiming to be equal with God. The verse says, "*My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working.*" The Jewish belief is that God does not rest on the Sabbath anymore because He

is always working. God rested at creation to establish the sacred day and to reveal to His creations His intent for the day. The belief that God no longer rests is seen in the fact that the sun still rises on the Sabbath, babies are still born on the Sabbath, and the rain still comes on the Sabbath. These actions have been interpreted as God always working since God does not need to rest.

The Pharisees knew that Jesus was claiming deity. *John 5:18 (NIV)* ¹⁸ *For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.*

The Pharisees considered Jesus healing people as working on the Sabbath. Jesus clarified that for us in *Matthew 12:12 (NIV)* ¹² *How much more valuable is a man than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."*

Jesus was a sinless sacrifice. Jesus was "not working" on the Sabbath. He was God.

JESUS' FOLLOWERS HONORED THE SABBATH

This is powerful evidence that Jesus intends for us to obey the command today. If Jesus meant to reveal to us that we no longer needed to rest on the Sabbath, then His followers would have followed this teaching. The evidence that they did not is not only historical but it is also Biblical. The Bible states how His followers obeyed the Sabbath.

The Bible reveals how people rested on the Sabbath while Jesus was with them. But Scriptures also reveal that people followed this command after His death. *So for three years they walked with Christ and heard His teachings and followed His lead.* If Jesus was teaching His followers that they no longer needed to rest on the Sabbath, why does the Bible specifically point out that they rested in obedience to the command?

After Jesus was crucified, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome went to purchase spices to anoint the body of Jesus. Scriptures clearly state that they waited until the Sabbath was over to buy them. Why? Why would they wait? Why did they not just go and purchase the spices? They knew

that would cause another to work on the Sabbath, so they rested in obedience to what Christ had taught them. *Mark 16:1 (NIV)* ¹ **When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body.**

Luke's gospel points out the fact that they rested on the Sabbath, as well. Not only did the women wait to purchase the spices until after the Sabbath, but they waited to prepare the spices and perfumes until the Sabbath was over. *Luke 23:56 (NIV)* ⁵⁶ **Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment.**

These passages are evidence that Christ still desires for us to honor the Sabbath. The followers of Jesus obeyed the fourth commandment by resting on the Sabbath. We know this from both history and Scripture. In Biblical times, dead bodies decayed so quickly that people made spices and perfumes to cover the odor. The women could have said, *"This is an emergency we need to prepare Jesus' body."* Instead they obeyed what Jesus had taught them and they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment. Why does Scripture point this out in the New Testament? To reinstate the importance of this commandment for us today!

Some may argue that the disciples did not know they were free from the Sabbath law since these two passages occurred before the resurrection. However, other passages in Acts reveal to us how the disciples continued to honor the Sabbath. Jesus spent over forty days with the Apostles and taught them after His resurrection. *Acts 1:3 (NIV)* ³ **After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.** This would have been a great opportunity for Christ to reveal to His disciples that they no longer needed to heed the commands of the Sabbath and its stipulations.

Here is the command as stated in *Exodus 20:8-11 (NIV)* ⁸ **"Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. ¹¹ For in six days the LORD made the**

heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

We have already seen how the followers of Jesus would not work or purchase things on Sunday. In this passage, we get a glimpse of how serious it was to keep from doing anything too strenuous on the Lord's Day. Many disciples called Sunday the Lord's Day to distinguish it from the Jewish Sabbath. They followed the same stipulations of the command for Sunday.

The Day of Pentecost happened on a Sunday. Pentecost is also called the feast of weeks; feast of harvest; the day of first fruits to be celebrated 50 days after the Passover. *Leviticus 23:15-16 (NIV)*¹⁵ **"From the day after the Sabbath, the day you brought the sheaf of the wave offering, count off seven full weeks.**¹⁶ **Count off fifty days up to the day after the seventh Sabbath, and then present an offering of new grain to the LORD.**

The day after the Sabbath would be Sunday, because the Jewish Sabbath is Saturday. The Jews were to count fifty days after Passover to know what day to celebrate Pentecost. It would then fall after the Saturday Sabbath. In the Old Testament, the first Passover occurred when the nation of Israel was delivered out of the hand of slavery from Pharaoh. Fifty days after the first Passover, God gave Moses the law and established Israel as a nation. Now fifty days after Christ's death, on Passover, He establishes the church.

The Bible reveals to us that the disciples moved the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday and began meeting together for worship. Acts 2:1 (NIV)¹ *When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.* Here we see the disciples were worshipping together on Sunday. The Holy Spirit falls on them and establishes the church.

The Bible says in *Acts 1:12-13 (NIV)*¹² *Then they returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a **Sabbath day's walk from the city.***¹³ *When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were...*

Scripture reveals that on this Sunday they went to the room to meet together; only walking a Sabbath day's walk. A Sabbath day's walk was about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile. Anything beyond that was considered strenuous and working on the Sabbath.

We know that the day of Pentecost fell on Sunday, the day after the Saturday Jewish Sabbath. Why would the Scriptures reveal to us that they only walked a Sabbath day's walk? It was to show that the day changed but the stipulations to the command remained.

BELIEVERS ENTER THE SABBATH REST

Jesus came not to exclude the fourth commandment, but to reveal to us how it should be obeyed. The Sabbath was made for man. God's intentions, even at creation, are for us to be blessed by our obedience on the Sabbath. There is a passage in Hebrews that addresses the topic of Sabbath rest for the people of God. It has a lot to do with our humility and our willingness to enter that rest.

It says in Hebrews 3:14-19 (NIV) ¹⁴ We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first. ¹⁵ As has just been said: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion." ¹⁶ Who were they who heard and rebelled? Were they not all those Moses led out of Egypt? ¹⁷ And with whom was he angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the desert? ¹⁸ And to whom did God swear that they would never enter his rest if not to those who disobeyed? ¹⁹ So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief.

In verse 18, the word disobeyed can also be translated disbelieved. The writer is warning believers to stand firm until the end in their obedience to Christ. He uses an illustration from the Old Testament to point out that their unbelief produced disobedience and they were not able to enter into the rest.

Many of these people had rested on the Sabbath as the law requires, so the rest that Hebrews is speaking of is a heavenly rest. Believers will one day enter into a heavenly rest, or a completed rest, as God rested when He completed His creation.

The key to entering this heavenly rest is obedience verses disobedience. Unbelief produces disobedience and belief produces obedience.

Hebrews 4:1-5 (NIV) ¹ Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. ² For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith. ³ Now we

who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said, "So I declared on oath in my anger, 'They shall never enter my rest.'" And yet his work has been finished since the creation of the world. ⁴ For somewhere he has spoken about the seventh day in these words: "And on the seventh day God rested from all his work."⁵ And again in the passage above he says, "They shall never enter my rest."

Who will never enter into God's heavenly rest? Those who do not combine the message with faith and walk in obedience to God's commands. The passage continues in *Hebrews 4:6-8 (NIV)* ⁶ *It still remains that some will enter that rest, and those who formerly had the gospel preached to them **did not go in, because of their disobedience.***⁷ Therefore God again set a certain day, calling it Today, when a long time later he spoke through David, as was said before: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts."⁸ For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day.

What is this believers' rest and how do we enter it? *Hebrews 4:9-11 (NIV)* ⁹ ***There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God;***¹⁰ *for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his.*¹¹ ***Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience.***

We are told that we need to be making every effort to enter into this Sabbath rest, but what is the key? The key is that as God rested from His work we must also rest from our own work. As it says, "for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his."

Jesus said it this way in *Matthew 11:28-30 (NIV)* ²⁸ "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

The yoke of God is His authority in our lives. When an oxen has a yoke placed on his neck, it is a heavy wooden harness with ropes tied to it. It allows the master to steer the animal where he wants him to go. This is where the Old Testament Sabbath and humility intersect to produce obedience in us. Humility is to be totally dependent upon God and His ability to sustain, provide, protect, and bless. God is the one who fills us with His Holy Spirit and enables us to walk in obedience. Without taking His yoke upon us, and receiving the Holy Spirit, we would not obey God's commands. **The Sabbath is a sacred day.**

When we humble ourselves and treat the day as God designed, we are blessed by Him and enabled to obey His commands.

Exodus 31:13 (NIV) ¹³ Say to the Israelites, You must observe my Sabbaths. This will be a sign between me and you for the generations to come, so you may know that I am the LORD, who makes you holy . God's Word promises us blessings as we remember the day and keep it holy. God promises to make us holy. We have been freed from fulfilling other Old Testament ceremonial and civil law, but we have not been freed from the Ten Commandment law to "keep the Sabbath holy."

When we work on the Sabbath, or cause others to work on the Sabbath, we are revealing our arrogance and trust in ourselves. When we treat the day as God intended, we show the world who we are trusting and that we acknowledge Him for blessing us. God is the one who has blessed America and He is the one who protects America. If we fail to obey God, we will lose His protection and blessings. We will have the curses the covenant promises to all who disobey God's commands. Curses like debt, lack of protection, and losing our freedoms.

To do as we please on the Sabbath is evidence of our unbelief in who God is and His provision for our lives and our nation. We have become proud. We feel like we do not need to follow all ten of His commandments anymore. The Apostles, early church, great preachers, and the founders of America all understood the importance of entering into the rest of obedience.

The Apostles believed in obeying all Ten of the Commandments. The founders of our nation believed in obeying all Ten. Their generations saw God do amazing things and experienced His blessings. Our generation disagrees with obeying the Sabbath and we are experiencing God's curses. Which side should we choose? Those who believed we should obey all Ten or our current generation? I'm choosing to side with the Apostles and founders of America. When the church rests on the Sabbath it is a sign to the world. It is also a time for God to make us holy and strengthen us for the week ahead.

Exodus 31:14-17 (NIV) ¹⁴ "Observe the Sabbath, because it is holy to you. Anyone who desecrates it must be put to death; whoever does any work on that day must be cut off from his people. ¹⁵ For six days, work is to be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day must be put to death. ¹⁶ The Israelites are to observe the Sabbath, celebrating it for the

generations to come as a lasting covenant. ¹⁷ It will be a sign between me and the Israelites forever, for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day he abstained from work and rested."

This is to be a sign forever! One of the greatest witnesses we can have as the church is how we keep the day holy. What would businesses do if Christians stopped eating out on Sunday? Many of them would most likely close from the lack of Sunday business. What would sporting events do if all of those who claim to be Christians stopped supporting them on Sunday? They would move to Saturday or another day of the week. We could be a powerful witness to the world by the way we treat the Sabbath. We are to work six days and then rest on the Sabbath in obedience to God's command. He is our God. He is the one who sustains us, provides for us, and protects us. He has promised to bless us for our careful obedience to His commands.

Look at this passage in *Isaiah 58:12-14 (NIV)* ¹² *Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings.* ¹³ *"If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as you please on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a delight and the LORD's holy day honorable, and if you honor it by not going your own way and not doing as you please or speaking idle words,* ¹⁴ *then you will find your joy in the LORD, and I will cause you to ride on the heights of the land and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob." The mouth of the LORD has spoken. **It says that the nation will be called repairer and restorer if we obey the Sabbath.*** The command of the Sabbath is to rest. How will the nation be able to repair and restore when it is resting on the Sabbath? God will do it through us if we will rest from our work and allow Christ to live through us. God is the one who sanctifies and restores. He does it for those who will submit to His authority and call Jesus Lord.

Can we change any of the Commandments? Can we change what adultery is? Can we change what coveting is? Can we change what false testimony is? Can we change the stipulations in the command to keep the Sabbath holy? No we cannot! We are not to take away or add to God's commands.

Let's follow the example of the Apostles, founders, and other great generations who experienced the blessings of God. Let's again honor the Sabbath! Something very powerful happens to believers who delight in the Sabbath and

do not go their own way. God makes us Holy as we rest in His presence and worship Him.