

Take Time For God

Text : **John 5: 2-18 / Exodus 20: 8-11**

INTRODUCTION :

A. Expound the story of the pool called Bethesda.

1. Tradition :
 - a. The Jews believed an angel stirred the water.
 - b. The first one to enter the water after the stirring would be miraculously healed.
2. The lame man :
 - a. Had been sick for 38 years.
 - b. He wanted to be healed, but could not get into the water fast enough.
3. Jesus :
 - a. **John 5:6 ... Do you wish to be healed ?**
 - b. Healed the man and left immediately.
4. The Jews' reaction :
 - a. They condemned the man for carrying his mat home on the Sabbath.
 - b. They sought to kill Jesus for violating Sabbath.
5. The application :
 - a. The Jewish leaders could not see the good, didn't rejoice that a man had been healed.
 - b. Too involved in rules. Such has been the nature of man since the giving of the Sabbath.
 - c. **They defeated God's purpose for the Sabbath.**

B. **Read ... Exodus 20: 8-11**

1. There has been confusion and controversy about this command since it was first given.
2. The Jews took something God meant for their good and made it a burden.
3. Even in modern times people make it a burden rather than a blessing.
 - a. Some forbid any work or vigorous play on Sunday.
 - b. Remember the **Blue Laws**
 - c. **The state of Connecticut still has a law on the books making it a Crime to kiss your child on Sunday. ... It's considered privilege.**

C. Notice what God actually said :

1. Definition of terms :
 - a. "Sabbath" : to cease, desist, rest. (*Strong's Enhanced Lexicon*)
 - b. "Holy" : ^{1A} kind. ^{1B} pious, godly. ^{1C} faithful ones (*ibid*)
2. Thus what God said was : **"Do not forget to observe the day of rest faithfully."**

TRANSITION :

God clearly states the MEANING of the Sabbath and why He gave it :

Read ... Exodus 31: 12-17

1. Vs.- **13** ... It was a sign to remind Israel of who God is and what He did for them.
 Cf- **Deut. 5: 15**- You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out of there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; **therefore** the LORD your God commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.
2. Vs.- **17** ... It provided a day of rest and refreshing.
 - a. * **The God of the universe does not become fatigued as men do ... refreshed.**
 - b. God took time to stop, and He commands men to do likewise.
 - c. It was a day to be out of man's schedule ... **not accomplishment. A SET ASIDE DAY**

I. The reasons for the Sabbath are linked to it's meaning.

A. **1st Reason :** To provide a time for **rest** and to be refreshed.

1. Life builds up a level of STRESS.
 - a. The stresses of life take their toll on the body as well as the spirit.
 - b. Over time, life "**gets our goat**." (Remember that old expression. People used to put a goat in the stall with a race horse to calm it down. Others would steal the goat to make the horse become disquieted. Thus, "**He got my goat**.")
2. This first reason for the Sabbath is rather PHYSICAL. (**human body has a "duty cycle"**)
 - a. God wants man to take time to reset the rhythm and the focus of life.
 - b. God knows the bodies He created for us **NEED REST**, periods of cessions of effort.
3. The Sabbath rest was to include the freemen, the slaves, animals and even the **LAND**.
Exod. 23: 10- You shall sow your land for six years and gather in its yield,
11- but **on the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, so that the needy of your people may eat; and whatever they leave the beast of the field may eat. You are to do the same with your vineyard and your olive grove.**

B. **2nd Reason :** It was a way for God to make his nation **distinct** from all others.

1. The Sabbath was a **SIGN**, a reminder of God's special relationship with Israel.
2. No other nation on earth observed the Sabbath. (**observable distinction**)
 - a. Other nations had feast days, but **ONLY** Israel had a weekly holiday.
 - b. The Sabbath originated the concept of a weekly day off.
3. Other nations (foreigners) could not do business with Israel on Saturday.
 - a. City gates were locked up.

b. Jewish-owned businesses in other lands were closed.

* **There are lessons in this for us today.**

1) God wants His people to be clearly distinguishable from others.

2) God gives specific ways He wants His people to be different.

For Israel : Circumcision, the Sabbath. (God still wants a distinct people.)

C. 3rd Reason : (eternal principle) To remind us that our lives are not just about work.

1. Left to his own devices man will go until he burns himself out.

2. Man was created to work, but not JUST to work.

a. God placed man in HIS garden to cultivate and keep it. (**Gen. 2:15**)

b. Life is about more than money, investments and accomplishing things.

3. This command is very hard for some people to obey.

a. Type “A” personalities think they have to be accomplishing something all the time.

b. American culture extols the striving for THINGS as a virtue.

Note : Culture is almost always wrong. The majority establishes culture, but the majority is not truly Christian. The majority of people (culture) in Sodom ... (antediluvian)

3. You are not your job; it’s just what you do.

D. 4th Reason : The Sabbath reminds us that we are only temporary on the earth.

1. Our bodies need rest, but one day there will be ultimate rest – **We’ll step into eternity.**

2. The people of God anticipate a glorious eternal future in Heaven, but others can’t.

3. Even God rested and so will man. (**Whether he wants to or not his labors will cease.**)

E. 5th Reason : The Sabbath is a day of sacred worship.

1. **Isaiah 58: 13- If because of the Sabbath, you turn your foot from doing your own pleasure on My holy day, And call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of the LORD honorable, and honor it, desisting from your own ways, from seeking your own pleasure and speaking your own word, 14- then you will take delight in the LORD, and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth; and I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”**

2. We’re not told how Israel worshipped, just that they did.

a. Daily sacrifices in the temple were doubled.

b. Not many gathering places. (**Often worshipped in their homes as a clan.**)

c. Lydia met with a group on the river bank at Philippi. ... **Acts 16: 13**

3. The synagogues were established during the exile as an expediency, not a command.

a. Synagogues were not used as “mini-temples.” (Sacrifices, etc.)

b. There were multiple synagogues in major cities, even in Jerusalem.

4. Augustine (early church leader) wrote, “*The Sabbath should be a little taste of heaven.*”
5. The Sabbath is a day when we should :
 - a. Pray more.
 - b. Center our minds on spiritual things.
 - c. Meditate on Heaven and our eternal destiny.

II. What did Israel do with this beautiful gift ?

A. They reduced it to a ritual observance.

1. What God had meant as a blessing, they turned into a **BURDEN**.
 - * **They tried to out-Sabbath God.**
2. What God gave as a sign of their special relationship with Him, the Jews turned into a vehicle for legalistic **JUDGMENT** and condemnation.
 - a. In Hebrew the command contained **39** letters. They squared the number of letters ($39 \times 39 = 1521$) and made **1521** rules to govern Sabbath-keeping.
 - 1) Jesus wasn't the only one they gave a bad time about violating the Sabbath.
 - 2) * Taunted each other ... “*Just look what you're doing on the Sabbath.*”
 - b. There is a Jewish tradition that says, “If every Jew keeps the Sabbath perfectly for two consecutive weeks, the messiah will come.”

B. Jesus explained their mistake to them.

1. **Mark 2: 27-** Jesus said to them, “**The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.**”
2. God made the Sabbath **FOR** man ... not to serve the Sabbath.
3. David showed that **LIFE** was a higher law than any ceremonial. (cf- **I Sam. 21: 6**)
 - * **It is okay to exercise love and mercy on the Sabbath, but not to serve self.**

III. N.T. Understanding : Ten Commandments are still there .

* **Not** as Ted Turner once espoused : “*The Ten Suggestions*” .

A. **Read ... Mark 2: 23-28**

1. What does it meant, “The Sabbath is made for man.”
 - a. You **NEED** a day of rest.
 - b. You **NEED** one-on-one time with God. (Every **quarter**, every **week**, every **day**)
2. This is a good rule for marriage as well.

B. Whatever your discipline for the Sabbath, don't bind it on others.

1. **Rom 14** ... In Christ there is liberty, but liberties cannot be bound on others.
2. Christians must respect others and also their opinions. (**liberties they claim**)

C. The law of the Sabbath commands **rest, but it also commands **work**.**

1. “**Six days shall you work.**” God wants man to be productive.
2. Work is NOT a consequence of the fall.
 - a. Men were created to cultivate and keep God’s garden. (**Gen. 2: 15**)
 - b. Christians are created in Christ to do God’s works. (**Eph. 2: 10**)
 - c. Jesus will NOT allow us to be His disciples if we do not serve daily. (**Luke 9:23, 14:27**)
3. Christians are to work gladly as a service to God. **Col. 3: 23f** (**galley slaves**)

IV. What about Sunday ? (The Sabbath is Saturday.)

A. In the New Testament Christians clearly assembled together on Sunday.

1. The Church at Corinth and the churches of Galatia met on the first day of each week.
I Cor. 16: 1- Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. 2- On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come.
2. The church at Troas met on the first day of the week.
Acts 20: 7- On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight.
3. The RESURRECTION of Jesus was the pivotal event in human history - changed everything.
 - a. Jesus came forth from the grave on the first day of the week.
 - b. Christians assemble on the first day to remember His resurrection. **I Cor. 11: 20f**
4. Historically, this practice has continued until the present.

B. The Sabbath was a shadow of something to come.

Read ... Heb. 4: 1-10 interjecting exegesis.

CONCLUSION :

A. Rest is one of the great goals of life.

1. Rest is found when one finally comes to true faith.
2. The Sabbath is when one ceases from all his work.
3. When one receives the rest that is in Jesus Christ, he ceases from all his work.

4. **There is no greater frustration than trying to do the impossible.**
No one has ever or can ever keep the Law perfectly.

B. Christ's rest is given, not earned. (Vs. 3 – We who believe enter that rest.)

1. No one can ever put God in his debt. (**If I go to church every service and ...**)
2. Entry into God's / Christ's rest is based upon FAITH ... a **decision** to trust Jesus.
3. Either one trusts the Christ to save him or he doesn't.

C. Many who have come to Christ have NOT RECEIVED HIS REST.

1. They have repeated the **MISTAKE** of the Pharisees.
 - a. They are trying to impress God with their lives, by deeds, by personal goodness.
 - b. They try to impress God with their knowledge and their doctrinal purity.
2. They just know God will accept them because they are so much **BETTER** than others.
3. They are **FRUSTRATED** because they know they are not good. **THEY HAVE NO REST.**

D. In Christ there is rest because HE has completed the work for us.

1. The one who enters HIS REST ceases from working to impress God.
2. God will never be impressed with us, but He is impressed with Jesus.
3. When we are able to trust Jesus to save us, there's no pressure to perform. **There is rest.**
* **When someone asks the true Christian, "Are you Okay with God. If you were to die right now do you KNOW you would go to Heaven." Without hesitation he would resound, "Yes indeed !" THAT IS THE TRUE SABBATH !!**

INVITATION :

A. Have you entered the true rest, the reality that the 4th command foreshadowed ?

1. Rest doesn't come from :
 - a. knowing all the right doctrines and memorizing the formulas.
 - b. keeping commands and doing good deeds.
2. You can only have rest when you cease from your efforts and trust Jesus to save you.

B. I urge every one of you to accept the Sabbath that Jesus offers.

1. Jesus invites you saying, "**Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.**" (*Sabbath*) (**Matt. 11: 28**)
2. Jesus promises :
 - a. Tell your friends and family about your faith and I'll be your advocate before God.
 - b. Forsake the world to serve Me and I will always be with you.
 - c. Seal your covenant with Me by being baptized and My blood will cleanse you.

- d. Trust completely in Me and I will give you the peace of knowing you are saved.
- ** **Yes, there are things from which you must refrain and things you must do, but You do them **BECAUSE** you are save, not in order to be saved. (love & loyalty)**