

The Sabbath of Moses

Exodus 31:12-17

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Always in the ministry through the years that the Lord has given me, I have been encouraged to see Scripture in detail, as you well know. Sometimes bearing down with amazing relentlessness on one verse or one phrase. And I love to do that. I'm greatly challenged and thrilled to dig deeply into the smallest piece of divine revelation. But at the same time, I realize that nothing is more exhilarating, nothing is more encouraging, nothing is more compelling than to understand the big picture. In understanding the Bible, it's fine to understand the details if you understand how the details fit into the big picture. So when you can sort of talk about sweeping themes of Scripture, it's very, very helpful to create context in which we can place the details.

And that's essentially what we're doing as we've come to Genesis chapter 2 and are looking at the issue of the seventh day. We're looking in to a detail. But the deeper we go into this detail, the more it throws us into a wider, broader view. You'll see that as it unfolds tonight in our message and in the subsequent messages in the weeks ahead.

We have finished our series on the origin, origin of the universe as indicated in Genesis chapter 1. By the way, that series has had an amazing, amazing response and I think it will continue to have that when it is aired on Grace To You, it will literally fill up an entire month of broadcasting, I think, after the first of the year. But when we finished chapter 1 and we get through the creation, also adding the elements of chapter 2, we come to the beginning of chapter 2 and it says, "Thus the heavens and the earth were completed and all their hosts and by the seventh day, or on the seventh day, God had completed His work which He had done and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made."

Thus we are introduced to the day after creation...the seventh day. And that introduces us to this whole issue of the seventh day. We know it is a major issue. We understand that it has connections to the Jewish Sabbath. We understand that there are groups today, such as Seventh Day Adventists and Seventh Day Baptists, would you believe?, and other groups that still adhere to a Saturday observance of worship. And there are many people who have transitioned the seventh day to the first day and they are what we call Sunday Sabbatarians who want Sunday to be treated with all the same devotion and the same prescription as the Old Testament seventh day Sabbath. That introduces us then to the necessity of having to get a grip on the seventh day and its significance.

Now last time we addressed the issue of the seventh day in Genesis 2:1 to 3. It is mentioned there three times. And the creation account makes this reference to the seventh day three times and identifies it as a day in which God has ceased all His creative work. Now we covered the meaning of that in our prior message. If you weren't here, I really encourage you to get the tape on this...so...it is so very foundational. But to remind you of the essential teaching that we gave, we need only to direct

you to the fact that this day God blessed and sanctified, according to verse 3. That is to say God declared it holy.

Now the incomparable character then of this seventh day is indicated by the fact that "holy" is used to designate it and it's the first time the word "holy" is used in Scripture. First usage of the Hebrew word meaning holy, or sanctified. It means to set apart, to exalt, to elevate above the usual level. And the seventh day becomes elevated, it becomes set apart, it becomes lifted up, it becomes exalted for three reasons indicated by three verbs.

First of all, because the heaven and earth, verse 1, were completed. That is to say creation was finished. Secondly, in verse 2 because God having completed His work rested, meaning not to work...also including the positive idea of delight and satisfaction. It was a special day because creation was finished and because God was fully satisfied, as we saw back in the end of chapter 1, the very end of the chapter in verse 31, He saw what He had created and it was very good. We also noted that God rested because there was nothing else to do, there was no further work until the Fall of man when God had to go to work again to preserve and uphold His creation now fallen, and tending toward death. And He also had to begin the work of redemption.

So, we concluded then that the seventh day of rest in Genesis has no relation to man's rest. It doesn't say anything about man resting. It doesn't have any connection to man's worship. It isn't commanded of Adam to observe it. Mankind is not told to observe it. There is no command for man to rest every seventh day in Genesis. There is no Sabbath rule given here. There isn't any Sabbath rule given anywhere in Genesis, not even in the Abrahamic Covenant which was God's unique covenant of blessing for the nation Israel. But it is a special day set apart because God completed His creation, because He rested and then verse 3, because He blessed the seventh day.

And in what sense did He bless it? Well, He blessed it by identifying it as a memorial. Every seventh day, we showed you last time, that goes by stands as a testimony, as it were, a memorial to the great fact that God created the universe in six days. There is no reason, and I pointed this out last time, there is no reason for men to count time in seven-day periods. There is no reason for that. There is no...it doesn't make mathematical sense to divide 365 days or even 360 days in the Jewish calendar into sevens, it doesn't work. There's no compelling reason to do that. Tens would seem to fit much better. The only reason we possibly could have arrived at a universal, worldwide designation of time in seven days is because that is testimony to a six-day creation after which God rested and established that seventh day as a constant on-going end of every week memorial to His six-day creation. So that every time Saturday comes along, it gives us opportunity to be reminded of the fact that God created the universe in six days and it was finished.

So, when Saturday rolls by, we remember God the creator. And when Sunday comes, we remember God the Savior because that is the day Jesus rose from the dead having accomplished our redemption. Through the years in western Christian society we have recognized that man works on a five-day week and he takes those two days, I think we've lost obviously the intent, but that we would think that maybe originally the intent for some was that we might spend Saturday remembering God as creator and enjoying that creation and spend Sunday worshiping God for the gift of Christ who died and rose again for us. And so with that we closed our thoughts on Genesis.

Now the seventh day comes up again and the next time it comes up it shows up in the book of Exodus. It shows up in the Mosaic Law, the Law of God given to Moses, sometimes called the

Mosaic Covenant, sometimes called the Sinaitic Covenant because Moses was in Mount Sinai when God gave it. The children of Israel were at the foot of Mount Sinai. It is sometimes called the Old Covenant. The New Testament writers refer to it as the Old Covenant.

But in that Mosaic, Sinaitic, Old Covenant there was a Sabbath law given. We're going to look at that. That's very important for us to understand. And then once we've seen that, we can move on and show how the New Testament deals with that Sabbath law whether it's in or out, and how if at all it relates to Sunday and the celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. But we have to start by understanding the Sabbath in the context of the Mosaic Law. We can ask the question...are we still under Sabbath law? Are we still under some seventh-day obligation? Is the first day of the week our Sabbath and should it have all of the compunctions and all of the prescriptions of the Old Testament Sabbath? Or should it not? Well, we have to understand the Mosaic Law and the New Covenant to answer those questions, and let's begin with the Mosaic Law.

So, we turn now from the seventh day of creation to the seventh day Sabbath of Mosaic Law. In Exodus chapter 19 and 20 God met Moses on Mount Sinai. And this is very familiar turf to any student of the Bible. God met Moses on Mount Sinai. And God gave him there His Law. He established the divine standard of righteousness. In the Law of God you have really an articulation of righteousness. You have a prescription of righteousness. You have righteousness defined in all of its dimensions for man. And the standard of righteousness is what is required, mark this, to satisfy God. God is not satisfied with anything less than perfect adherence to His complete righteous law. And in the Mosaic Law you have God's righteous standard laid out completely. And this is required to satisfy God. Any breach of that law, any violation of that law, any disobedience to that standard produces death, judgment and damnation. This is a very serious issue.

Now this Mosaic Covenant, Sinaitic Covenant or Old Covenant can best be understood in four features. This will help you to grasp this. I don't know that I've ever taught it in this kind of sequence, but this helps me as I struggle to try to organize it in my mind and I hope it will help you. I want to sort of help you to understand the nature of this Mosaic Law by giving you four features of this law, the first three of which develop in increasing detail. Okay, just hang on to that.

The first way we understand the Law is in a two-fold summarization of the Law. Here it is. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself." There is the summation or the summarization of the entire Law of God.

Now we only can have relationships in two directions. We can have a relationship with God and we can have a relationship with other people. And so all the Law of God covers those two categories. And all that can be said about our relationship to God is summed up in one statement, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength." That is to say, if you love God perfectly with every element of your human capacity, if you love God completely with heart, soul, mind and strength, you would fulfill every obligation to God. So that is the summarization of that part of the Law of God which relates to Him.

The second is obviously relating to the issue of human relationships. And if you love your neighbor as yourself you will fulfill that aspect of God's Law. Perfect love toward God fulfills all obligations toward God. And perfect, unselfish, utterly sacrificial devotion to others fulfills the human part of God's Law.

Now by the way, this two-fold summarization of the Law is given a number of times in the Old Testament. You will find it in Deuteronomy 6:5; Deuteronomy 10:12, 11:1, 13:32, Deuteronomy 19:9, Deuteronomy 30 verse 6, you will find it also in the New Testament, Matthew 22:37 to 40 where Jesus gives this and also the Apostle Paul says this in Romans 13 verses 7 to 10. So the first broad view that you get of the Mosaic Law is that half of it relates to God and half of it relates to people and if you love God perfectly and love people perfectly, then you will fulfill it all. Perfect love to God precludes doing or being or thinking or saying anything that would dishonor Him. And perfect love to others precludes doing anything that would harm them or demean them or belittle them or injure them or wound them or show any level of indifference toward their need. Therefore those two become the fulfilling of the Law. That's what the Apostle Paul says in Romans 13. Perfect love fulfills the Law toward God and toward your fellow man.

Descending into further detail, however, is the second way you view the Mosaic Law. The second way you view the Mosaic Law is not a two-fold summary but a ten-fold summary. This ten-fold summary is known to us as the Ten Commandments, often called the Decalogue, decabeing Latin for ten. This is the sum of the Law. Often this is called the Tablets of Stone in the Old Testament, sometimes called The Tablets of the Ancients, Deuteronomy 9:9, 11 and 15, most commonly called the Ten Commandments.

Now here you have...the first half of the Ten Commandments are about how we love God perfectly, and the second half of the Ten Commandments are about how we love man perfectly. The first half of the Ten Commandments refer to our relationship to God. The second half of the Ten Commandments refer to our relationship to each other. And we get further detail about God's moral law as we look at the Ten Commandments. And you can look at them right there in Exodus chapter 20, they unfold from verse 1 right on down through verse 17. And we won't take the time to go through them all, you're familiar with them. The first half deals with our relation to God, the second half deals with our relation to man.

So you have then, first of all, a two-fold summarization of the Law. Then you have a ten-fold explanation of the Law. Thirdly, we go from two-fold to ten-fold to let's just say manifold. As we descend down this increasing ladder of detail, we get to the expanded laws which further define and explain the two-fold commands and the ten-fold commands. And if you...when you look at verse 1 of Exodus 21 you start to get all kinds of detail. Starting in chapter 21 and running all the way to the end of chapter 23 you have all kinds of detail relating to human relations and divine relations. For example, it starts in chapter 21 and verse 2 with how you treat a slave, and it ends in chapter 23 verse 33 with how you treat God, about not serving other gods. So you have here an expanded version, as it were, in far more detail of the Ten Commandments which are an expanded version of the two-fold commands which we identified first of all.

I would add to this that this is not all the manifold explanation. You can basically take the entire book of Leviticus because the entire book of Leviticus unfolds more and more of this manifold Law of God.

Now the expanded version...I'll back up a little bit. The Ten Commandments further explain the two commandments and the manifold Law of God further explains the Ten Commandments.

Now let me just go down the Ten Commandments for a moment. First of all, number one is "No other

gods." That's simple, you're not to have any other gods. But as you look at the explanation of that, for example, in Exodus 22 it says you're to make no sacrifices to another deity. In Exodus 34 it says you are not allowed to worship any other deity. In Leviticus chapter 20 it says, "I am the Lord your God alone." And in Deuteronomy chapter 10 you are to fear the Lord your God and Him only. So, you see, you get further and further explanations of that first commandment.

The second commandment again related to God is to not worship idols. And Leviticus 26:1 says you're not to make any kind of idol or graven image. Deuteronomy 29 further goes on to say if you do this then you will not be forgiven for it. Deuteronomy 32 explains in verse 21 the anger of God about that. And Leviticus 19 further describes the great crime against God of turning toward false gods. So you get a continued expansion of this not only in Exodus in that section, not only in Leviticus but as I noted further in to Deuteronomy.

The third commandment is not to profane God's name, to take His name in vain. Exodus 34 warns that if you do that, iniquity will be visited on succeeding generations. Leviticus 22:32 further warns not to profane His holy name in any way. Leviticus 24:16 says that you can be executed, put to death for such profaning or for such cursing of God.

The fourth of those first commandments we'll talk about in a moment, but it is, "Remember the Sabbath," and it's dropped right in the middle. The first four relate to God, 5 through 10 relate to man and the Sabbath one is dropped in at number 4. We'll comment on that in a moment. I'll just suffice it to say that when it says "Remember the Sabbath," that too is expanded. In Exodus 31 it is called a perpetual covenant. It is...it is serious enough that violation of the Sabbath is cause for death, execution, being cut off and so forth.

You come then to a fifth commandment and there's a turning from being focused toward God which is the first three, and then that middle Sabbath command and then from 5 to 10 you have to do with human relations. The first thing in human relations that God requires is that you honor your...what?...father and mother. And Exodus 21 further explains the death penalty if you curse your parents. Exodus 21:15 gives the death penalty for striking your father. Leviticus 19:3 further expands on the need for reference for father and mother. Deuteronomy 21:18 to 21 talks about rebellion against parents.

And then the next command dealing with human relations, command number six in total, is not to kill. And you find further explanations in Exodus about killing in a quarrel and a fist fight. Exodus 21 talks about killing by beating with a rod. Exodus 21 talks about what happens when someone is killed by an ox, and so forth. First offenses, several offenses and all kinds of explanations about killing.

The seventh command is not to commit adultery. And Leviticus 20 adds to that, not to do with another man's wife. Leviticus 20 says that. Leviticus 20 also says not with your father's wife, that is not incest. Leviticus 20 also says not with a daughter-in-law, not within the family. And then Leviticus 18:16 to 30 a number of different situations which God forbids adultery.

The eighth command then is not to steal. And Exodus 22:1 talks about stealing an ox. Exodus 22:2 to 4 talks about a thief caught while breaking in, talks about stealing someone else's animals in Exodus 22. And it even talks about in Exodus 22 what happens when you catch a thief a long time after his crime is committed. There's much further detail about stealing.

The ninth command is not to bear false witness. That is not to lie. And you have Leviticus 6 speaking about lying and swearing falsely. Leviticus 5 talks about swearing thoughtlessly. Exodus 23 talks about giving false report, giving false testimony under oath. Deuteronomy 19 deals with the same thing, false witness and the punishment for a false witness.

And then the tenth command is not to covet. Deuteronomy 7 embellishes that. Don't covet gold. Exodus 34, don't covet land. And I'm just giving you some illustrations.

So, what you have is two commandments expanded into ten commandments, expanded into manifold explanations so that those commandments are applied in all kinds of situations in life.

Now that was the Mosaic, Sinaitic Covenant given to Israel and what it did was articulate God's standard of righteousness and the required behavior was to completely keep that law to satisfy God. Any breach, any violation as we are reminded in Deuteronomy and again in Galatians 3, if you break the law in one case, you have broken the whole law and you are cursed by God. So the standard is absolute, unbending.

Now this expanded version, this manifold version of the Covenant with all of its detail given in Exodus and Leviticus and Deuteronomy was brought together, copied down and placed in a receptacle and that receptacle was placed on the side of the Ark of the Covenant. You remember in the tabernacle and in the temple later on, the tabernacle had, of course, an outer courtyard and then an inner holy place, and then an inner Holy of Holies. And inside the Holy of Holies, you remember, was the Ark of the Covenant. Beside the Ark of the Covenant was placed this great manifold explanation of the Ten Commandments. Notably, folks, I don't know if you remember this, the Ten Commandments were placed in the Ark. So in the Ark you have the Ten Commandments and outside you have this manifold explanation. Deuteronomy 31:26 says this, "Take this book of the Law and place it beside the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord your God that it remain there...and here's the reason...as a witness against you."

Boy, that's not a very nice covenant, is it? And it was designed to damn people. It was designed to show people their...what?...their sin. The Ten Commandments which is the expansion of the two commandments, the Ten Commandments are the words of the Covenant, they're often called that. The Ten Commandments are the words of the Covenant which God made with Israel after Sinai and the expanded version of the Covenant God made with Moses at Sinai, the interpretation of the Ten Commandments covers all kinds of life situations. And in Exodus 24:7 that expanded version is called the words of the Covenant, Exodus 24:7, the words of the Covenant also. So you have the Covenant defined in two commands, ten commands, manifold commands. The book of the Covenant was placed inside the Ark, the expanded words of the Covenant outside the Ark for the purpose of an ongoing permanent testimony against the people.

Now why did God want to make testimony against them? Because it was absolutely critical that people understand their condition before God and that was a condition of alienation and separation by sin. And the idea of that was not simply to drive them to despair and guilt and remorse and shame but to drive them to a lack of confidence in themselves, a recognition of their inability to please God and a desperate level of repentance in which they called upon God for mercy and grace and forgiveness which He would provide by grace. So we see those are the three features that we start

with in this sort of descending cascade of more detail.

There's one other key feature in the Old Covenant and that is the Sabbath. And I want you to turn to Exodus chapter 31 so that we can understand how the Sabbath fits into this. We don't really have to strain at this because it's laid out for us in very direct terms. In Exodus 31 I'll look at verses 12 and 13, jump down to 16 and 17 and we'll cover the verses in the middle later on.

"And the Lord spoke to Moses saying, But as for you, speak for the sons of Israel saying, You shall surely observe My Sabbath." Now stop there for a minute.

The Sabbath day has already been instituted in the Mosaic Law. I told you it was the fourth command. And it sort of sits in the middle. The first few had to do with God, and there don't need to be more than three. And the latter have to do with relationships to mankind, and it was necessary that there be six of those. But stuck right in the middle is the Sabbath requirement and here is the explanation of that requirement.

"You shall surely observe My Sabbaths, for this is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations that you may know that I am the Lord who sanctifies you. Therefore you are to observe the Sabbath for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death." Well that indicates how serious God was about it. "Whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people."

Verse 15 essentially repeats the same thing. Go down to verse 17, "It is a sign," now that's twice He said that, "It is a sign between Me...and notice this...and...whom?...Me and whom? The sons of Israel forever. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth but on the seventh day He ceased from labor and was refreshed." Now remember, the seventh day account in Genesis, there was no prescription for man to observe the seventh day. It was not identified as a day of worship. Adam wasn't told to worship on that day. Nobody was told to do that. And it wasn't reiterated and commanded in the Abrahamic Covenant. So this is the first introduction of any necessary observance on the part of mankind of a Sabbath day. And in this case it is a sign not of universal character but a sign between God and the nation of Israel.

Sabbath was called a perpetual covenant...a perpetual covenant. End of verse 16, "Throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant." In fact, it even says in verse 17 it's a sign between Me and the sons of Israel forever.

Now I believe the Sabbath command was placed in the middle of the Decalogue because it was the non-moral symbol of the Mosaic Covenant. And I'll explain what I mean by that. Sabbath was placed right in the middle. In itself it is not moral. Whether you work or don't work, what you might do on a Saturday does not necessarily have moral consequence. It is a non-moral command but it is a symbol and I'll show you a symbol of what in a moment.

The Abrahamic Covenant, let's go back to the Abrahamic Covenant of Genesis 12 through 18. That was a covenant of blessing promised to those who were faithful. God said to Abraham, "Everyone who is faithful I'll bless." And He makes that promise. "Everyone who is obedient to Me I'll bless."

Well what did that mean? What was the standard? What do I have to do to get that blessing? You

can say that...you know, I'll bless you and I'll bless your people and I'll give you the land and I'll pour out mercy upon mercy and goodness upon goodness if you're faithful and if you're obedient. But what does that mean? Well, the Mosaic Law defines the standards of that obedience.

Both had a sign. The Abrahamic Covenant had a sign, what was it? Circumcision. That occurred one time, eight days after a male child was born, according to Genesis 17:9 to 14. The sign of the Abrahamic Covenant was circumcision, it occurred one time. The sign of the Mosaic Covenant was Sabbath and it was perpetual, perpetual. Go back to verse 13 again in 31 of Exodus, "This is a sign," verse 14, "It is holy to you." "The seventh day," verse 15, "is a Sabbath of complete rest, holy to the Lord." Verse 16, "You have to observe it and celebrate it through all your generations as a perpetual covenant, it is a sign between Me and the sons of Israel forever."

Now let me explain how it worked as best we can understand. I don't think it's too hard to understand. Every single Sabbath day, every single Sabbath day was to remind the people that they had an obligation to keep the Ten Commandments. They had an obligation to keep the two commandments which summarized the Ten. They had an obligation to keep the manifold commandments which explained the Ten. Every Sabbath day was a reminder of that. You might say as every day the Jewish male realized his circumcision, he was reminded of the potential blessing of the Abrahamic Covenant. Every Sabbath day he was reminded of his obligation to God and to God's Law. Sabbath law then was designed by God not as a means of achieving righteousness, but as a constant reminder of the need to obey God's righteous Law. So now we have another component added. Initially in the book of Genesis it is set apart as a reminder that God is the creator. Now it is set apart also as a reminder that He is not only the creator but He is the holy God of righteousness who holds us accountable to obey His Law.

Sabbath law was that constant, relentless reminder of the need to obey God's righteous Law. And Sabbath was never to be violated. In Numbers chapter 15 verse 32, "Now while the sons of Israel were in the wilderness they found a man gathering wood on the Sabbath day." It sounds harmless enough. "And those who found him gathering wood brought him to Moses and Aaron and all the congregation and they put him in custody because it hadn't been declared what should be done to him. And the Lord said to Moses, 'The man shall surely be put to death. All the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp.' So all the congregation brought him outside the camp and stoned him to death with stones just as the Lord commanded Moses."

Humph...pretty serious...pretty serious. Well God was very serious about the observance of this day. God didn't want it blurred. God didn't want it turned into a day like any other day. God wanted it to be a day that had all the normal activities of life sucked out of it so that it became a day for contemplation. It became a day when you weren't constantly given to the tasks and responsibility of your hands and feet and even your mind, the occupation that you engage yourself in. In those days, of course, there was a kind of busyness, a kind of physical busyness that occupied people's lives just in the battle for bread and bringing their crops in in an agrarian society and taking care of their animals and solving the problem of where am I going to get food for my family for the day.

God didn't want the Sabbath to be a day like that. He wanted it to be a day when the normal duties of life were completely set aside. They were sort of vacuumed out and so there was this day of contemplation. And the point was to contemplate one's status before the holy law of God. And when you remembered the Sabbath day, all you had to do was glance up and remember your obligation to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. And to look down and remember

that you needed to love your neighbor with a perfect love as well. And you were reminded again that you were to have no God but the true God and make no graven image and so forth. And you were reminded not to kill, and steal, and covet and commit adultery and so forth. All of that was to be the focus of thought. That was God's intention. That day stood as a sign in the middle of that covenant. Everything stopped and so that people might contemplate not only God as creator, and God as lawgiver, not only that God had given us such a magnificent creation but that we had violated that creation and continued to violate the creator by breaking His Law. It was to produce penitence. It was to produce the contemplation that leads to repentance.

Now the concept of Sabbath didn't just end at that point. The Old Covenant, Sinaitic Covenant, Mosaic Law prescribed many, many observances. Sabbath, as we identify it, that is to say the seventh day of the week and what was required on that day was certainly central to it, but it was not limited to that. When God started identifying things, there were a number of what Leviticus 23 verse 2 calls holy convocations. The first of those holy convocations, according to Leviticus 23:3, was the seventh day. It is a day, he says, that is a Sabbath of complete rest, a holy convocation. You shall not do any work. It is a Sabbath to the Lord in all your dwellings.

Now Leviticus 23 is very important because it doesn't end there. That's just the first in the prescription of Sabbaths. That goes through verses 1 to 3. Then in verse 4 of Leviticus 23 it says, "These are the appointed times of the Lord, more holy convocations," more of them. And he starts out there in verse 5 with Passover. So you go from the weekly Sabbath to the Passover. And then in verses 6 to 8 you have following the Passover the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The Passover is on the fourteenth day of the first month. And then on the fifteenth day of the same month there is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the Lord. You do that for seven days. On the first day you shall have a holy convocation, not do any laborious work. There again, on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread there is a Sabbath, there is a rest from all labor. "For seven days you shall present an offering by fire to the Lord. On the seventh day it is a holy convocation, you shall not do any laborious work." So it is sort of bordered on the first and last day by a Sabbath of rest...the Feast of Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

And then in verses 10 and following you have the Feast of Firstfruits. And as you read about that you find again the prescriptions are given about what is to be done in the feast of firstfruits all the way down to verse 14. That too is another kind of holy convocation. And then starting in verse 15 you have the Feast of Pentecost. "You shall also count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath from the day when you brought in the sheaf of the wave offering; there shall be seven complete Sabbaths. You shall count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath, you shall present a new grain offering to the Lord." And now you've got that familiar 50-day period and you have the Feast of Passover and there are Sabbaths counted in between and then you have this next holy convocation called Pentecost.

Going down to verse 23 after he describes more about Pentecost, you come to verse 23 and now you have the next holy convocation which is the Feast of Trumpets. In verse 23, "In the seventh month on the first of the month you shall have a Sabbath." There's another prescription, another rest, he calls it, another Sabbath. Verse 24, "A reminder by blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation, you shall not do any laborious work." Now are you following this? You didn't just have a Sabbath every seventh day, you had Sabbaths coming all the time in sequence, including the Feast of Trumpets.

Now you go down to verse 27 and exactly on exactly the tenth day of the seventh month is the day of

Atonement, Yom Kippur. Isn't that coming up? Is it tomorrow? Or soon in the Jewish calendar...the Day of Atonement. And it will be a holy convocation and you shall humble your souls and present an offering of fire to the Lord and neither shall you do any work on this same day, it is a Day of Atonement to make atonement on your behalf before the Lord your God. And it says, you know, if somebody doesn't humble himself and observe the Day of Atonement, kill him, cut him off, that's what it means, kill him. Any person, verse 30, who does any work on the same day, that person I'll destroy from among his people. You shall do no work at all. It is to be a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your dwelling places. It is to be a Sabbath of complete rest to you and you shall humble your souls. And the ninth of the month at evening, from evening to evening you shall keep your Sabbath. Now that Sabbath is the Sabbath called the Day of Atonement.

Starting in verse 33 you have the Feast of Booths. It says in verse 34, "On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, the Feast of Booths for seven days to the Lord. On the first day is a holy convocation, do no laborious work." Here you've got another Sabbath going on here. "On seven days you present an offering by fire to the Lord, the eighth day you have another holy convocation, you present an offering by fire to the Lord and you assemble and do no laborious work." Verse 37 says, "Look, these are the appointed times of the Lord which you shall proclaim as holy convocations to present offerings by fire to the Lord, burnt offerings, grain offerings, sacrifice and libation, each day's matter on its own day." Now look at this, "Beside the Sabbaths of the Lord and besides your gifts and besides all your votive and freewill offerings which you give to the Lord."

In other words, this is all in addition to that normal week by week by week by week Sabbaths. When you talk about Sabbath law, folks, you're talking about a pretty complicated system. Then you have, as if that isn't complicated enough, you have some further prescriptions for holy convocations that God gives them. Numbers 28:11 is what we call the New Moon convocation. "At the beginning of each of your months you shall present a burnt offering to the Lord, two bulls, one ram, seven male lambs, one-year-old without defect." Now you can get a little idea of why we call the priests butchers, this stuff is going on all the time. Further prescriptions are given about the responsibility they have at the beginning of each month. This too is considered a Sabbath, this too is considered a time set apart unto God for the offering of sacrifices.

Then additionally, not only do you have that but you actually have a prescription in Leviticus 25 for Sabbath years. In Leviticus 25 it starts in verse, well, let's start in verse 1, "The Lord spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai and said, 'Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them when you come to the land which I will give you, the land you shall have a Sabbath to the Lord.'" What do you mean? "Six years you sow your field, six years you prune your vineyard and gather its crop. During the seventh year the land shall have a Sabbath rest, a Sabbath to the Lord, you shall not sow your field nor prune your vineyard." Every seventh year they had to leave the ground alone. You don't even reap the after growth, you don't even reap the grapes of untrimmed vines. The land has a complete sabbatical year. "All of you shall have the Sabbath products of the land for food, yourselves, your male, your female slaves, your hired man, your foreign resident, those who live with you even your cattle and animals that are in your land shall all have its crop to eat." You don't...you don't do any planting, any farming, any anything in that Sabbath year.

Now there's another Sabbath in verse 8 here and that's what we call the Jubilee. You count off seven Sabbaths of years, that's 49, seven times seven...seven times seven years so you have the time of the seven Sabbaths of years, namely 49 years and then you have this Sabbath known as Jubilee. By the way, there is no record that it was ever observed in Israel...no record. It is reasonable to assume

that the Babylonian Captivity was God's judgment to give the land a rest by taking the people out of it that they never gave it as they had been commanded.

But when you're talking now about Sabbaths, let me just go over this just briefly, you're talking about a weekly Sabbath, you're talking about the Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Firstfruits, the Feast of Pentecost which will prolong events, the Day of Atonement, the Feast of Booths, the New Moons each month, the Sabbath years each seventh year and the Jubilee year, all of those are Sabbaths. All of those were special holy convocations and breaking any of those was deadly serious before God. In fact, breaking any Sabbath was considered open rebellion against the Covenant of God's Law. Such was punishable by death, along with crimes like murder, homosexuality, bestiality, idolatry, incest, etc. In fact, in Numbers 9:13 it says that the failure to observe the Passover was considered by God a capital offense.

Now let me just tell you something. Old Testament Sabbath law was not a laid-back day. It was not focused really on worship. It was focused on one's inability to keep the Law and it was focused on the need for mercy and grace from God. It was a focus on spiritual thoughts of one's sinfulness and one's violation of God's holy Law. When you hit the Sabbath at point four in the Ten Commandments and you looked up, all you could see was your failure. And you looked down, all you could see was your failure. When it comes to Sabbath observance in the Old Testament, it's not willy-nilly, it doesn't...it's not flexible, it is fixed and specific. And to transport all of that into the New Covenant is a major stretch. And the Law of God applied to all the Sabbaths, not just the seventh day, all the rest of these Sabbaths fall under the same prescriptions.

Now let me just give them to you quickly. Here's what you couldn't do on the Sabbath. Exodus 16:29, "And the Lord said to Moses, 'Remain every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day.'" Stay home. Exodus 16:23, here's a second thing you couldn't do, this is what the Lord meant, "Tomorrow is the Sabbath observance, a holy Sabbath to the Lord, bake what you will bake and boil what you will boil and all that is left over put aside to be kept until morning." Bottom line, you can't cook on the Sabbath. You can't leave home and you can't cook.

Exodus 20 verse 10 adds something else. "On the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God and you shall do not any work. You or your son or your daughter or your male servant, your female servant, your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you don't work." Exodus 35 says in verses 1 and 3, "These things are the things the Lord has commanded you to do. You shall not kindle a fire in any of your dwellings on the Sabbath day." That's why even today orthodox Jews have a timer to turn their lights on on the Sabbath because they won't throw a switch. You can't build...you can't cook if you can't build a fire.

It also says in Jeremiah 17:27, "If you do not listen to Me to keep the Sabbath day holy by not carrying a load and coming in through the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day." You can't carry a load anywhere. Nehemiah 10 says, "For the people of the land who bring wares or any grain on the Sabbath day to sell, we will not buy from them on the Sabbath or a holy day." You can't buy anything, you can't sell anything.

So, you can't go out of your house. You can't bake, you can't cook. You can't do any work. You can't build a fire. You can't carry a load. You can't buy, you can't sell anything. So you can't eat out either. You can't eat out cause you can't go anywhere. You can't even have it delivered cause you can't buy it unless they bring it free.

It further says, according to Isaiah 58, "It is because of the Sabbath," this is verses 13 and 14, "it is 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 of the Lord honorable and shall honor it, desisting from your own ways from seeking your own pleasure and speaking your own word." Your agenda is out on the Sabbath.

So, you can't go anywhere. You can't cook anything. You can't do any work. You can't build a fire. You can't carry a load. You can't buy anything. You can't sell anything. You can't do anything you want. You can't make any plans. What are you going to do? You're going to sit there and think how wretched you are.

Now here's what you can do. You can remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. You can avoid sin. Secondly, you rest, Exodus 31, complete rest. Thirdly, you can celebrate the perpetual covenant. He says to Israel in Exodus 31:16, "Celebrate the fact that God has made a perpetual covenant with you," in other words, celebrate the fact that God has given you a holy and righteous standard. You can delight in the Lord, Isaiah 58:14, "Then you will take delight in the Lord."

Now this was to occur, according to Leviticus 23:32 from evening until evening. That's why the Jews go from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday. It should be noted that this instruction that I've just given you, the do's and don'ts of Sabbath in connection with the Day of Atonement and everything was interpreted by the Jews to apply to all Sabbaths, all of them...and there were many, as I showed you. If you violated the Sabbath, several Scriptures said you were to be put to death, others said you were to be cut off from Israel...same thing.

Now, that is a complicated system designed to overwhelm the people with their obligation to God and to cause them to have to...they didn't go to the...to the place of worship, they couldn't leave their homes. They just were there contemplating the failure to keep the Law of God. The idea was to drive them to penitence.

There's a sense also, if I can turn the corner a little bit, that Sabbath, and I'll wrap this up in just a few minutes, Sabbath can be seen as sort of a partial restoration of Eden's paradise before the Fall. One writer, Dale Ratzliff(??) who has written a book called Sabbath in Christ, says, "As we look at what the covenant people were either told to do or not to do on the Sabbath and then reflect back upon the first seventh-day rest at the end of creation week, there seems to be a connection. It appears that the Sabbath laws given to the Israelites were designed to cause them to behave very much as Adam and Eve behaved in Eden. While this fact is not clearly brought out in the scriptural record, it is strongly implied in the wording of the fourth commandment, for in six days the Lord made the heavens and earth, sea and all that is in them and rested on the seventh day, therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy, Exodus 20:11," that's tied to the commandment to keep the Sabbath holy. Ratzliff further writes, "Nearly all the prohibitions given in connection with these Sabbaths would have been completely meaningless to Adam and Eve on the first seventh day before sin entered."

In other words, all these prohibitions and prescriptions would have been meaningless to them. On the other hand, when...what Israel was commanded to do on the Sabbath would have been done normally by Adam and Eve, therefore no command would have been needed. For example, they didn't go out of their dwelling place. They didn't leave the Garden till after sin entered. They didn't

bake or boil. We don't have any record of them ever using fire in their Eden home. We can assume they ate their food fresh from the Garden. They didn't do any work. They didn't have to work until after the Fall and after they had sinned and they had to cultivate in some way that created labor, whereas before that such cultivation was not laborious but was pure delight. They didn't carry a load because there was nothing to carry anywhere. They didn't have to store their crops for winter, or store things because they might decay, that wasn't how it was. They...there was no indication they ever needed to build a fire. They didn't even have any clothes, so they must have been in a temperate climate. They didn't buy or sell, there wasn't anything to buy and nobody to sell it. And their...they didn't do what was their pleasure because their pleasure was God's pleasure. And they did rest because there was no work to do and they did celebrate because all they did was live with the light and so they delighted in the Lord in the fullest and purest and highest sense.

So in a sense, I think he's right. You can say that the Sabbath is a little bit of a throwback to what Eden must be like and in so doing that it again faces us with the reality that we are a long way from Eden. Ratzliff says the Sabbaths of the Old Covenant appear to be mini rest stops, like a pretend game, he says, where Israel behaved like Adam and Eve on that first seventh day. The difference being that Adam and Eve were in open fellowship with the creator, the Israelites, on the other hand, didn't even desire such fellowship. And also within the Sabbath idea were indications of a future hope.

Sabbaths did point back to creation. They pointed back to a perfect environment in Eden. But they also pointed forward and they pointed to the restored paradise when tired souls would be refreshed in the glorious Kingdom of Messiah. Can't you imagine that the Jews in their rest would say, "Wouldn't it be wonderful if the day would ever come when we would have nothing but rest? We could rest from our struggles with sin, we could rest from our struggles with temptation. We could know God perfectly. We could live in perfect delight, perfect peace, perfect harmony, perfect joy with God."

And I think Sabbaths was about history, but it was also about hope because there you are on the Sabbath and you're remembering something of the rest of Eden and what it must have been like for Adam and Eve in the perfection of that Eden before the Fall. And you're realizing in the sort of emptiness of that Sabbath when all the earthly things are set aside, you're realizing how far you are from that Sabbath of Eden and how far away you are from God and how much you break His Law and how profoundly sinful you are. And at the same time you're looking forward and you're longing for that true Sabbath, that...that day when the real rest and delight and joy will come when sin is conquered and the curse is reversed and paradise lost is paradise regained. Sabbath gave them reason not only to look back but it gave them reason to look forward to await the time when they could return to the wonderful land of their fathers, they could return to the land of milk and honey and the time when maybe, as the prophet said, the desert would blossom like a rose and the King would be here and the great prophet would come in righteousness and would dominate and peace. And they would enter in to their final rest.

So you see, the Sabbath was really at the core of Israel's life. And keeping the Sabbath, and I'll end with this, keeping the Sabbath was the test of love to God. It was the test of loyalty to God. It was the test of obedience to God. It was the day when you could do an inventory on your life. It was never inaugurated before the Mosaic Covenant, but it was at the core of that Mosaic Covenant and it was time to contemplate, time to contemplate.

And what would they have contemplated? They would have looked back to the Abrahamic Covenant and they would have said, "You know, in the Abrahamic Covenant we were promised blessing, we were promised the land, we were promised prosperity. And all we had to do was obey God and then God gave us His commands and whether you took the two or the ten or the many, we can't keep those commands. And we're in a desperate situation. And every time we have a Sabbath we have to sit and think about that and we can remember the paradise of Eden and we can long for the paradise of the future, but the fact is in the middle here we need forgiveness."

You know what? There was no forgiveness in the Mosaic Covenant. There wasn't a covenant of forgiveness. No forgiveness, no mercy, no grace, no enablement, no help, just condemnation. In the midst of that they had to cry out to God for mercy. God would hear their cry and save them by the terms of the New Covenant, the sacrifice of Christ. But under the Old Covenant, loyalty to God was marked by observance of the Sabbath as the sign of conformity to the Law of God. And the true Jew not only kept that day to conform to the Law, but he kept that day to contemplate his condition and his devotion to God.

That brings us to the next question. How does this apply to us in the church? And we'll see that transition next time.

Lord, what a wonderful day we've had today and Your Word thrills us. We thank You that You didn't leave us under the terms of the Old Covenant, but that there is the New Covenant, the only Covenant that can save, the only Covenant that provides forgiveness of sins, the New Covenant in Christ who died for us that you might forgive us all our sins and provide for us in Christ a permanent relationship to Yourself and an entering in to the true rest. We thank You that the New Covenant is a better Covenant because it provides three things...forgiveness, salvation and an eternal relationship with You that the Old Covenant could not provide. It promises us paradise regained. We thank You for it. Lord, continue to direct us, to be obedient and grateful for all that You've done for sinners. We pray in our Savior's name. Amen.

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