

Biblical Theology by Dr. Chuck Baynard

Lesson 39 (HCLD See lesson 38)

Preparation: Begin and end each study time with prayer. Pay particular attention to the background reading and pray over each passage asking God to reveal Himself to you.

Background Reading: Read all the Scripture verses in footnote # 1 & 2.

Question: How is the sabbath or the Lord's day to be sanctified? Why is the charge of keeping the sabbath more specially directed to governors of families, and other superiors?

Answer: The sabbath or Lord's day is to be sanctified by an holy resting all the day,[a] not only from such works as are at all times sinful, but even from such worldly employments and recreations as are on other days lawful;[b] and making it our delight to spend the whole time (except so much of it as is to betaken up in works of necessity and mercy)[c] in the public and private exercises of God's worship:[d] and, to that end, we are to prepare our hearts, and with such foresight, diligence, and moderation, to dispose and seasonably dispatch our worldly business, that we may be the more free and fit for the duties of that day.[e]¹ The charge of keeping the sabbath is more specially directed to governors of families, and other superiors, because they are bound not only to keep it themselves, but to see that it be observed by all those that are under their charge; and because they are prone oftentimes to hinder them by employments of their own.[f]²

If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, *from* doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking *thine own* words: (Isaiah 58:13 AV)

Hard to argue with the Bible, yet that is exactly what the modern church does when a majority of believers attempt to find a fig leaf to hide their sin behind as point that this is an Old Testament practice that has no relationship to the Christian Church and worship on the first day of the week.

First this is a divine word from God and it will not pass away. While it is true some ceremonies were fulfilled and the ceremonial law as such has been abrogated, the Sabbath doesn't fit in the ceremonial law. It is also true that there are portions of the law that were written as judicial law specifically for the theocracy of ancient Israel which do not apply to the church today as written. However all Scripture is of God and even that which is fulfilled or even abrogated remains and the church must see that the lessons and equity of that law continue. This whole paragraph is really an aside as neither of these categories fit the Sabbath.

Let us consider a few passages from the New testament that testify that the Sabbath indeed makes the transition from the Old Testament and the shadow of the ancient church to the New Testament and the church as she exists in our day.

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. (Luke 4:16 AV)

Jesus kept the Sabbath and went to the synagogue to worship on the Sabbath day. While this happened to be the seventh day, the emphasis was on Sabbath then and remains true for the church today. The change to the first day of the week removes none of the responsibilities of the obedience to the law required in the Jewish system concerning the Sabbath. Two things need to be considered at this point. On the con-side of the argument would be that at this point Christ was under Old Testament law and being sinless would have to attend or break the commandments of God. This is not a Biblical truth. There is not one verse of Scripture that established synagogue worship for the Jews. We can surmise

¹ a. Exod. 20:8, 10 b. Exod. 16:25-28; Neh. 13:15-22; Jer. 17:21-22 c. Matt. 12:1-13 d. Isa. 58:18; 66:23; Luke 4:16; Acts 20:7; I Cor. 16:1-2; Psa. ch. 92; Lev. 23:3 e. Exod. 16:22, 25-26, 29; 20:8; Luke 23:54, 56; Neh. 13:19

² f. Exod. 20:10; 23:12; Josh. 24:15; Neh. 13:15, 17; Jer. 17:20-22

when and where the practice came into existence, but it is inference only without historical or Scriptural support. What we do know is that Christ didn't condemn the practice but attended synagogue on the Sabbath giving at least His approval in His silence on the matter.

On the pro-side of things however we find that in disproving the con-side in that Christ acknowledged the synagogue and took part in their services that Christ gives weight to the form of worship of the New Testament church being patterned after the synagogue rather than the temple worship of ancient Israel. Christ sets the stage for a paradigm shift in the worship of God that will find fulfillment in the death and resurrection of Christ where the veil is rent and temple worship fulfilled completely there being no longer a need for a high priest or sacrifice, Christ Himself becoming the perfect sacrifice and the high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

And upon the first *day* of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight. (Acts 20:7 AV)

From this passage we find justification in the Bible for moving the day of worship from the seventh day to the first day of the week as we keep the tradition of the apostles. Of great importance here however is that the apostles did set aside one whole day for worship or a Sabbath in the full spirit of the setting aside the day portrayed in the Westminster Confession of Faith. Paul preached until midnight.

Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first *day* of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as *God* hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. (1 Corinthians 16:1-2 AV)

While this deals with the tithe or gifts of the believer, note that there is another purpose for the first day of the week, and it isn't the gathering together of gifts for the saints. As Paul has given order, in other words this isn't optional, let it be done.

And it shall come to pass, *that* from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD. {from one new...: Heb. from new moon to his new moon, and from sabbath to his sabbath} (Isaiah 66:23 AV)

Back to the Old Testament foundation, and the word from God that worship is to continue in this same orderly fashion, that is from one Sabbath to the next in normal progression of days. God Himself commanded worship and that worship to be in the form God commanded alone, without addition or adulterations from the vain imagination of man.

Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day *is* the sabbath of rest, an holy convocation; ye shall do no work *therein*: it *is* the sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings. (Leviticus 23:3 AV)

In this passage we see the Sabbath declared both a holy day and a day of rest. The Old Testament saints rested and worshiped God pointing back to the creation and the promise of God. The same continues in the New testament church pointing not only to the rest of God in creation but more especially of entering into the promise and rest of Christ from His completed work of atonement.

Our Puritan forefathers understood this relationship of worship and rest. While the culture of the day would have seen the majority engaged in hard manual labor who would have indeed thanked God for a day of rest, they also saw the necessity of one day in seven to be reminded of the things of God and to give thanks to God for all of the grace God had shown them, both in their earthly lives and more especially in the salvation they knew in Christ. Distractions of the lust of the flesh accompanied by the ability to travel and afford the luxury of various recreations have dulled the sense of the modern saint. The so-called blue laws of the USA are a vivid reminder that the church once believed these things and that civil governors respected the command of God. In a complete rejection of God the church has allowed first the civil government to wander into the world of the devil and the saints to follow closely on the heels of the secular leadership. The precious freedom the Western world defends so aggressively are not freedom but a return to the bondage of sin.

The Westminster Assembly saw all of God's law as being grace as much as being command. Thus they believed obedience was not a yoke placed upon them as the law was used by the Pharisees to burden the people, but rather seeing how it was all for their own good and a gift of God, was fully of grace. They could not even imagine any not willingly then taking up the yoke of the Lord and of but the mere return of a portion of the love given, obey in every respect that which God so mercifully commanded. All to them was not of labor, but grace and love. Thus we see the fourth commandment given more attention in many ways than the first three in the Westminster Standards. The proper understanding of the fourth commandment finds only reverence for the God who so gracefully provided needed rest for the body, and time of refreshment and renewal of the soul.

In our day when the number one killer among the developed nations is from the stress of the market place one would think that appreciation of God's love for us in providing this day be set aside would command attention. Unlike the Westminster Assembly however we find the one most needing physical rest, is also devoid of spiritual nourishment. One must search hard and long for a true Sabbath keeper.

The Westminster Divines point out that recreation is especially to be avoided on the Lord's day. Yet how many attend their favorite sporting event with no thought of it being sinful? The proof of the pudding so to speak is seen in any church service on any Sabbath when the time parallels a major sporting event, most of which are scheduled for the Sabbath. It is most sinful when the church has conceded this to the world and has early services, especially in the summer months so families can attend services early and be about their recreation the rest of the day. How sad to count the number of churches that no longer have evening worship because the people would not attend a second service. What a corruption of the holy worship demanded by God when the church has drive in services, or come as you are services on the beaches of the world and call it worship. How can they preach the Gospel of God, and send the new convert immediately into sin in violation of God's fourth commandment? The church, the bride of Christ is unfaithful in her betrothal as was ancient Israel. Do we think God will look more favorably on those who have the most light and the highest of blessings? Surely those who dare call themselves ministers of the living God and engage in such will be the first to feel the heat of hell. They play games with God, and thereby declare they are not of the election to eternal life, but of everlasting condemnation and the torment of hell forever and ever.

Make no mistake these sins are serious, and while so lightly taken by the church in many places, all will be held accountable by God. Infidelity of the bride is far more sinful if we lay such upon the scales, than murder or other crimes against man. Yet of the murderer the religious hypocrite will say such shall not enter the gates of heaven, when the truth of God declares that it is the whoremonger, the sexual deviate who will be given over to a reprobate mind. It is such as this the Lord mentions when He says there will be those that come to them on that last day and say "*Lord, Lord in your name we have, and I shall turn to them and say depart for I have never known you.*" Aw what an awesome warning to those of the church who would so befoul the bride of Christ. This is what Sabbath keeping is all about. If we could pull from the ten and say which is more important, surely here is the one to top the list. While the first three speak of the same thing in going after strange gods, the Sabbath breaker has brought that strange woman into the bedroom of God's own house.

Can we see the analogy of the wife who dares invite her lover into the family home, and even that none too discretely? This is the equivalent of Absalom taking David wives to the roof of the palace, that all may know he had fully taken his father's place as king. Open breaking of the Sabbath is no less a declaration by man of his fully taking charge of his life and religion over God's rightful place as his Creator.

Friends when we first slip the first moment of the Lord's day into the hand of Satan, that church has begun a slide down the slippery slope into apostasy that she may well find is impossible to stop. I believe I have shown that the Sabbath is valid today, and that God still holds His people to this standard. While much of the above may appear to be extreme and is focused on the church rather than the individual, I do this to point out what the Westminster Divines also point out that this issue is laid more heavily on the shoulders of the governors of families than of the people alone. When the storehouse contains rotten meat, why are we surprised when the people get sick? How dare any called of God step into the pulpit and not teach Sabbath keeping?

With such disregard of God's law and the violation of His command, and the defilement of that which He has hallowed, and the tossing aside of the great grace given us, can we wonder why the church as a whole is so ineffective? Friends we have surrendered the fortifications to the enemy without his firing the first shot. The road to recovery will be long and uphill for the church to regain even a portion of the respect of man and the reverence for God she once maintained. The first step of this journey is the return of the Sabbath to its rightful place in God's family, His gift of grace and love, returned to Him in worship in spirit and truth. From here alone will the prayers of the saints rise as missiles from hidden silos to rain on the stronghold of the evil one, as in prayer and fasting the church prepares for the sudden return of her Master, even Jesus Christ. Judgment begins in the house of God, and here is the first charge. Are you guilty?

Suggested Sermon Outline

See lesson 38 -- The Westminster is much longer with several more questions than the Heidelberg on this commandment.