

Lord of the Sabbath

Program #41

Sabbaths for Living Righteously

Kenny Kitzke

LawstSheep Ministries

I have spent forty weeks this year proclaiming the Sabbaths of the LORD and praising the Lord of the Sabbath, my Savior, Jesus the Messiah. Both He, and the commanded days on which His Father seeks pleasing worship, have changed my Christian walk in a most fruitful and joyful way. So, please understand if I seem overly zealous over this aspect of being a disciple and follower of Jesus.

You might suspect that I would be out of preaching material by now! The truth is that the difficult decision is what topics and teachings to leave out as this Gregorian calendar year and this annual 52-week repeatable series comes to an end.

I am going to proceed with studying some Sabbath-like commandments given to Israel for the well-being of the chosen people of God. They relate more to loving one another and living righteously before the LORD than for the loving worship which He seeks from His worshippers.

I speak of the seventh-YEAR rest and release and the fiftieth-YEAR of Jubilee of the LORD. Listen to the command the LORD gave to His people Israel for living in the promised land which He gave to them forever as found in Ex. 23: 10:

Six years you shall sow your land and gather in its produce, but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, that the poor of your people may eat; and what they leave, the beasts of the field may eat. In a like manner you shall do with your vineyard and your olive grove.

Here we see the LORD as a farmer and gardener as well as the God of Israel and the God of love and compassion for the poor who need to eat. God commands that every seventh year a farmer not sow his field or gather a harvest from it. Instead, he is to let it rest and lie fallow. It appears that the LORD knows that the land which He created, like men, need a rest every seventh period of time whether a day or a year.

The farmer is to allow his field to seed and produce naturally. Likewise for the vineyard and the olive tree grove. And, He gives us the reason. Its produce is not for the land owner; it is for the poor, and even the beasts, to eat and live. God is truly good, isn't He?

Now, you may say this is interesting Brother Kenny, but I don't see anything here about a Sabbath. Well, let us look a bit deeper and see just how important to life itself and for a community of believers that Sabbath-keeping is to the LORD. Read Lev. 25: 1-7 as the LORD Himself gives His instructions to Moses for His people Israel:

And the LORD spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, saying "Speak to the children of

Israel, and say to them: 'When you come into the land which I give you, then the land shall keep a Sabbath to the LORD. Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard, and gather its fruit; but the seventh year there shall be a Sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a Sabbath to the LORD. You shall neither sow your field nor prune your vineyard. What grows of its own accord of your harvest you shall not reap, nor gather the grapes of your untended vine, for it is a year of rest for the land. And the Sabbath produce of the land shall be food for you: for you, your male and female servants, your hired man, and the stranger who dwells with you, for your livestock and the beasts that are in your land---all its produce shall be for food.

Are you as amazed as I was to read this? Here we have the Almighty One, the God of Abraham, the one we Christians claim to worship, giving a command to His people to ensure that His land, which He gave to them, yes, even the ground of the earth KEEP A SABBATH rest to Him!

What shall we disciples of Christ make of this? Shall we say, the Almighty gave this command only to the nation and people of Israel and for land in the middle-East? Shall we say that the land we own and tend is ours, we will do with its produce as we please?

Shall we say that this is an Old Covenant command and I am under the New Covenant and live by grace and not by God's law? The law of God has been nailed to the cross of Christ. He did all that needs to be done. I need to do nothing more! God does not care if MY land has a rest, or whether I personally ensure that the poor in my household, servants, workers and even strangers dwelling with me, should have sufficient food to eat? God forbid!

If you own a Christian farm, vineyard or orchard, are you sure you want to ignore the command of the LORD? Do you say that all which the land can produce is MINE? I'll work it and my servants as hard as I desire? The extra produce can be sold to make ME wealthy? Do you claim to follow Jesus as a Christian but refuse to share your produce and bounty abundantly with the poor?

I am sorry to be the bearer of disturbing news to you. Unfortunately, it goes with the good news we so like to cite as Christians. May I remind you of what our Lord of the Sabbath, and our Savior, said in Mat. 5: 17-20:

Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

The Law is a reference to the first five books of the Bible. All in Christ has not been fulfilled. The Sabbaths, both the weekly and the annual ones, and even every seventh-

year, were given in that Law for His people by the LORD Himself. Dare you ignore them? I will not draw back from teaching them. I long to be in the kingdom of heaven and dwell with God and His Son and receive His just reward. It does not surprise me that the Son of Man kept these Sabbath laws perfectly. What else would you expect the Lord of the Sabbath to do? Why would you not want to do what He did and follow Him?

Further, Satan tempted Jesus to show that He was the Son of God by turning stones into bread. The answer Jesus gave Satan in Mat. 4: 4, gives us another warning about how we are to live as the children of God:

But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"

Here Jesus was quoting from Deuteronomy 8. This was the Law of God from the Old Testament which Jesus reiterated we, His disciples, should also live by. A dear professing Christian friend maintains that he keeps the "Law of Christ" and does not have to keep the Law of Moses. Well, there is an error here brethren. The Law that Jesus kept perfectly was not the Law of Moses. It was the Law of God spoken directly to Moses to be given by Moses to God's people. I do not apologize for following Him living by every word out of God's mouth. His Law is holy and good. And, this seventh-year Sabbath law is too.

How does your charitable giving stack up to God's command spoken by His very own mouth? Research by Christian polling organizations reveal that Christian charity averages a couple of percent of income from their labor. Perhaps you even give five times more or about 10%?

Now, if one in every seven years you were to give all your produce away, that would be 14% given to the poor and the needy among you, and the rest to animals. Add this to the tithe of 10% for the Levites, and the typical man of God was commanded to give 24% of his produce away. In prosperous America, modern "Churchianity" seems not to measure up very well to God's command on charity. Do you wonder why?

Now, I know full well that times have changed. We do not live in the promised land of Israel. We are not all farmers. You may feel that paying taxes in America takes the place of your need to help feed the poor since government welfare is to take care of the hungry with food stamps. I am not going to try to judge you in this or boast of my giving. But, I will tell you that God took His Sabbaths seriously and made them for man. Jesus said so.

But, Brother Kenny, what would you eat in the seventh year if you did not gather in your harvests to your barns? This Law of God makes no sense! Well, once again we find that God's ways are not man's ways and God's foolishness is even wiser than man's wisdom. In Lev. 25: 20-22, I want you to listen to God's own voice for the answer:

And if you say, "What shall we eat in the seventh year, since we shall not sow nor gather in our produce?" Then I will command My blessing on you in the sixth

year, and it will bring forth produce enough for three years. And you shall sow in the eighth year, and eat old produce until the ninth year; until its produce comes in, you shall eat of the old harvest.

Do you believe God? What farmer has not heard of or seen “bumper” crops and extraordinary harvests? Do you believe in His Son as Lord of the Sabbath? Do you believe He can do what He says He will do in your life? Are His words and His plan truly sinking into your mind and your ways? Do you have some belief from Scripture that shows when the Lord of the Sabbath returns as King of kings that during His reign, He will change His tune and tell the farmers of that age to keep and enjoy all they can produce for THEMSELVES?

Let's make sure we have this straight. If you will follow the commanded seventh-year Sabbath, the LORD promises to provide three times your normal produce in the sixth year. It gives you enough to eat in the sixth, seventh and eighth year. By the ninth year, once again, all your produce is yours to eat and trade or sell to live successfully for six years. God is awesome and able to do these things for those who will trust and obey Him.

I come from a family of farmers on my mother's side. Though they were Sunday-keeping Roman Catholics, my uncles followed the fallow land law every seventh year. I wonder where they got this idea? Did some regional Bishop come up with this radical, non-sensible dogma? Did the Agriculture Department of the State of Wisconsin do a study to convince them? Did the Wisconsin Legislature pass a Sabbath land-rest law? Or, was it something they kept in their heart from what God spoke by His very own mouth?

Sure, there were tough years financially on the farm. But, I don't remember any time that my God-fearing uncles and their families went wanting for food. In fact, I recall eating the best tasting food I ever had on the farm; and even all that I wanted. It came out fresh and wholesome from my aunt's pantry. And, guess what else? They would not sow or reap on the weekly Sabbath. Of course, they had been falsely taught that the Sabbath day for the disciples of Christ was Sunday.

Jesus, the self-proclaimed Lord of the Sabbath, taught that this was the way for His Christian followers to live. We need to trust God, our Father, who loves us as His very own children. Recall what He taught in Mat. 6: 25:

Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?

Well, I am sorry to admit to you how many Christians I know who would say they could not survive if they would take off one day a week from their normal labor. They are 24/7

workers, earning their “daily bread.” How many would take a Sabbatical every seventh year and simply not work but instead enrich and revitalize their lives, perhaps learning new skills? Not many, I am afraid. Perhaps a few tenured professors or religious leaders might take a sabbatical?

And, I wish I had a nickel for every hour that professing Christian business leaders demanded their workers to work all seven days using forced overtime just to finish a customer order rather than hire sufficient workers to get the order done in a six-day work week. Or, what about those who ask their employees to not take a deserved vacation in order to complete an important project? By whose Law do they live? Are they trusting God in every word from His mouth? Or, are they doing what seems right in their own eyes and complying with the commerce law of worldly men?

I also find some Sabbath-related commands in Deut. 15 that would turn our modern day banking industry on its ear. In Deut. 15: 1-5 we read:

At the end of every seven years, you shall grant a release of debts. And, this is the form of the release: Every creditor who has lent anything to his neighbor shall release it; he shall not require it of his neighbor or his brother, because it is called the LORD’S release.

Although this command is not directly connected with Sabbath terminology, the seventh-year of the LORD’S release is indicative of God’s idea of the seventh day or year being made and given for man to love Him and to love his brother and neighbor as himself.

Yet, how many of us have ever read, much less studied or practiced, these commanded ways of God? They are foreign, and even outlandish, to us. They are more rare among the people of God today than the seventh-day Sabbath and seven annual holy Sabbath days of the LORD. Even most orthodox Jews don’t obey them. I must confess that I have not done very well in obeying God’s intentions in such matters either. But, I can humbly say before God that I have tried to apply them among my brethren from time to time.

Well, if those Sabbath commands of the LORD have indeed been destroyed and faded away as the laws and ways of men took over, the next one I will cover is about as rare as a white elephant. That is the commanded Jubilee of the LORD. We find it in Lev. 25: 8-9:

And you shall count seven Sabbaths of years for yourself, seven times seven years; and the time of the seven Sabbaths of years shall be to you forty-nine years. Then you shall cause the trumpet of the Jubilee to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement you shall make the trumpet to sound throughout all your land.

Now, I must confess that although I have kept the LORD’S Day of Atonement holy for over a decade, I have no idea which of them, if any of them, was the one on which to

sound the trumpet of the Jubilee. Not only don't I know, I am not sure if anyone knows. Of course, some men or women, zealous for the LORD and His Law, have tried to determine which Day of Atonement falls in a Jubilee year. I praise them in this but have not been convinced yet in my own mind who has the right answer.

What is nevertheless of interest is what was supposed to happen among God's people in a Jubilee year. We find it in Lev. 25: 10-12:

And you shall consecrate the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a Jubilee for you; and each of you shall return to his possession, and each of you shall return to his family.

Talk about a family reunion! Here, every fiftieth year, God commands you to return to your original possession apparently of the head or patriarch of your family. This today would be more remarkable than ever since families have increasingly grown apart geographically and emotionally. Just think how God must value families! Is it any wonder He seeks to be Father to us in the family of God? Praise the Almighty and Eternal One!

Now, reading further, we see this link back to the year of land rest and of release. In Lev. 25: 11-12 we read:

That fiftieth year shall be a Jubilee to you; in it you shall neither sow nor reap what grows of its own accord, nor gather the grapes of your untended vine. For it is the Jubilee; it shall be holy to you; you shall eat its produce from the field.

Did you catch that? On the fiftieth year, the year after the seventh, seventh-year land rest, you again do not sow or reap. But this year you shall eat its natural produce and the entire year is a Jubilee of the LORD and holy to you. What a great year that would be!

Are you beginning to comprehend how God watches over you for your own good through all His Sabbath commands? Can you see the obvious links to the annual holy day Sabbaths of the LORD? Would you better understand what God intends for His people to do to live rightly and righteously before Him? Have you caught the connection of the Jubilee to the Day of Atonement? Have you grasped the connection of the Jubilee to the Day of Pentecost (the fiftieth day) which also occurs after a count of forty-nine days?

The command goes on even further to influence how you are to deal righteously with your neighbor in Lev. 25: 13-17:

In this Year of Jubilee, each of you shall return to his possession. And if you sell anything to your neighbor or buy from your neighbor's hand, you shall not oppress one another. According to the number of years after the Jubilee you shall buy from your neighbor, and according to the number of crops he shall sell to you. According to the multitude of years you shall increase its price, and according to the fewer number of years you shall diminish its price; for he sells to

you according to the number of the years of the crops. Therefore you shall not oppress one another, but you shall fear your God; for I am the LORD your God.

Here we see God also upsetting the real estate world! The price of land bought from, or sold to, a neighbor is to vary depending upon the Year of Jubilee and how soon that land will be returned to its original owner. Would God give such details if He was not serious about His people living this way and obeying His Sabbath laws?

He commands us not to oppress one another, especially the poor and the weak in our gates and community. He warns us that it is out of the fear of God that we should not disobey these commands. And, having sent His only Son to save us from God's wrath, we need to believe on the Messiah, the Lord of the Sabbath, and follow Him as our example in life. Do not close your ears. Do not close your eyes. Believe every word of God. Jesus WAS a Sabbath keeper. Will you follow Him? Will you be holy as He is holy?

I have preached mightily about the Lord of the Sabbath and how the weekly and annual Sabbaths, and the Feasts of the LORD, teach us about Jesus. They reveal Him in His first and second coming. They reveal God's plan of salvation to those who have ears to hear.

Well, what about this Year of Jubilee? How does it pertain to Jesus, the holy One of Israel? In every way, my friend! And, I suspect in a way that every believer in Him would love to understand better. That is, when will He return? Do I know when? Well, yes and no. Allow me to explain.

First, let us make sure of the link between the Lord of the Sabbath and His return to the Year of Jubilee. It is in the Year of Jubilee that LIBERTY is to be proclaimed throughout the land of Israel to all its inhabitants. I believe this will be fulfilled in Christ upon His return to Israel to the Mount of Olives.

Jesus told us about His role as it was prophesied so long ago by the Prophet Isaiah. Jesus was in the synagogue on the Sabbath day and stood up to read from the word of God. According to Luke 4: 18-19, He read:

The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind. To set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.

Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

Do you see the connection of the Lord of the Sabbath to the Year of Jubilee? Jesus was sent by God to "proclaim liberty to the captives" and to "set at liberty those who are oppressed." These are words directly out of the command of the LORD for the Jubilee

found in Lev. 25: 10. Read them and see with your own eyes. Don't believe me! Believe Jesus and His return to Israel as King of kings to rule the world for 1,000 years. To whom was Jesus speaking but to the Jews in the synagogue? Who are the blind but the children of Israel and the Jews? It is God's own plan and by His power that most of them remain blind awaiting the time of the Gentiles to be fulfilled.

They will, except for a remnant, remain blind until they look upon the one whom they pierced. All the Jewish doubting Thomas's will finally see and believe. When will that be? When He descends in glory to the Mount of Olives in the same way that He ascended. And, can we know what future day that will be? Yes, if we understand the Feasts and Holy days of the LORD! Right now, I have no doubt that it will be on a future Day of Atonement in a Year of Jubilee. I have read the words of God and this is what they say.

I also must point out the often missed link between the gospel that Jesus preached (which was about the coming Kingdom of God on the earth), and the gospel preached in mainstream Churches. Their gospel is mostly about Jesus and what He DID historically. Here the truth shouts out to those who have ears to hear of what He WILL DO in the future! To what does the acceptable year of the Lord refer? Isn't it the Jubilee year, the year that Jesus will return to captive Israel?

How often have you heard Church preachers tell you that no man can know when Jesus will return? They warn you about anyone who dares predict the day that Jesus will return to the earth the second time. And, they cite Mat. 24: 36 ("concerning the day they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory") that:

But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only.

But, their understanding is clouded for they have not studied or kept the Feasts of the LORD like the Apostle Paul did. Regarding Christ calling up His church body from this earth to meet Him in the air, and His coming back to the earth with His saints, Paul wrote authoritatively in 1 Thes. 5: 1-4 concerning this future day of the Lord:

But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need that I should write to you. For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief.

Paul tells his brethren in Christ that they can and do know the Day of His second coming. The secret is to realize that Christ will call up His church on the Day of Trumpets and will return to the earth on the Day of Atonement. Which year? I believe it will be on a future Year of Jubilee. This is when the captives of Israel will be set free and the long awaited Kingdom of God will begin on the earth.

So can we know what year this will be on our Gregorian calendar? Yes. Notice that only the day and hour of His return is unknown; the year is not included! If we know for sure the Year of Jubilee we can be pretty sure of the year of Christ's return. I have explained in previous programs why, despite knowing the year, why no one knows the DAY or the HOUR. Has the Holy Spirit revealed this Year of Jubilee to me? No, I only have reasoned guesses. I do suspect that this generation, including you, listening to this broadcast, will be alive and changed and be in this return. He is coming quickly. Amen!