

Lord of the Sabbath

Program #6

Holy Convocation

LawstSheep Ministries

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Hello, this is Brother Kenny, welcoming you to a weekly radio program honoring the Lord of the Sabbath, Jesus, the Christ, the promised Messiah of Israel. I pray that you have found delight in Him this Sabbath day.

The prophet Isaiah, who so precisely predicted the coming of the Messiah, also relayed a promise of God to Israel concerning Sabbath keepers. We find it in Isaiah 58: 13-14:

“If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of the LORD honorable, and shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding pleasure, nor spreading your own words, then you shall delight yourself in the LORD; and I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

By devoting the Sabbath TO the LORD, and not to your own pleasure, and still call the Sabbath a delight, the LORD will cause you to ride high on the hills of the earth. That is a wonderful promise from God to us.

Today, I am going to discuss the LORD'S command for having a holy convocation on the weekly Sabbath. But, before I do, I want to recap the prior five programs that dealt with the fundamentals about the Lord of the Sabbath and why the Sabbath was made by God for mankind.

In Program #5001, we used a Johari window to identify those who know Jesus as Lord of the Sabbath AND remember the Sabbath day that Jesus said was made for man. What we discovered is that two out of three people do not know Jesus AT ALL. Of the one of three that do know Jesus as LORD, few of them keep the Sabbath that Jesus said was made for them. Those who know the Lord of the Sabbath AND who keep the Sabbath day are a tiny fraction of all the people alive on the face of the earth.

So, if you, like me, are one of the few to delight yourself on this Sabbath in the LORD of the Sabbath, you may already feel like you are riding high on the hills of the earth. This is how I tend to feel as each Sabbath day comes around.

In Program #5002, we studied how could Jesus refer to Himself as Lord of the Sabbath? The answer is that as the pre-incarnate Messiah, as the Word of God, was the one through whom the heavens and earth, and all things, were made at the creation. It was the Word of God that spoke and made, blessed and sanctified the seventh day of the week.

In Program #5003, we investigated why Jesus said that the Sabbath was made for man

and not man for the Sabbath. We looked into several scriptures that showed that Sabbath keeping by men existed BEFORE the Ten Commandments were given to Israel. If the Sabbath was made and sanctified for all men as Jesus said, it is no surprise that God included the Sabbath as a major commandment to His chosen people and nation; Israel. Or, do we dare think that Jesus was misguided and meant that ONLY Israel was to benefit from and observe the LORD'S Sabbath day?

In Program #5004, we looked at the foundational valid requirements for anyone who wants to honor the Lord of the Sabbath by using the day that He made for them. Written in stone, by the finger of God, the Fourth Commandment required that the Sabbath 1) be remembered each seventh day of the week and 2) that it be kept holy to the LORD and be set apart as a day of rest from the work of the prior six days.

In Program #5005, we investigated what the LORD meant when He commanded His people not to do ANY work on the Sabbath? I suggested that it was primarily your normal vocational work (commanded the other six days) that you were to totally cease doing on the Sabbath. Such work done for your own financial purpose or personal pleasure would be unlawful on the LORD'S Sabbath day. If you did some vocational-like work voluntarily, and ONLY to help others in need on the Sabbath, it might also be blameless but should be an exception.

However, endless debates or judgments of just what WORK is, and is not, lawful to do on the Sabbath misses the more important laws of mercy, justice and faithfulness for others. So, I have decided to leave some contentious issues of exactly what work is prohibited and turn instead to what type of work activity IS to be done to keep the Sabbath holy.

If you missed any of these prior programs, and would like to have them, I can make the scripts available to you on the Internet. I am sorry I cannot provide audio tapes of the broadcast to you. I do not make broadcast copies. I do not sell any tapes.

To get the written scripts, you need to send an E-mail to LawstSheep Ministries at LawstSMinistries@aol.com and request those that interest you. If you would like to receive the script of future programs automatically, just provide me your E-mail address and I will add you to the group. It is easy and costs nothing extra for anyone. If you do not have Internet access, ask a friend and I am sure they will help you. Once again, the E-mail address, which must be typed exactly, is LawstSMinistries@aol.com. The letters can all be in lower case.

During Program #5004, I noted that a wife is not mentioned in the list of those within ones gates (like sons, daughters, servants, strangers and even cattle) who are NOT to do ANY work on the Sabbath. As a brain teaser I asked why would the LORD omit the mention of a wife? Steve from Akron, Ohio opined that it was a family authority context where both a husband and wife were contemplated. Since a husband was not specifically addressed, there was no need to specify a wife.

The next week, George, of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, opined that as a wife and mother, it could be that her work for her husband and family would be excused in the same way the priests who worked on the Sabbath at the Temple or synagogue would be blameless. If a husband needs a meal, if a child needs a tear in their clothing mended, it would be at her discretion whether to place such needs above the rest from her normal weekly work that she should observe for herself on the Sabbath day.

These are both possible explanations, each with some merit. I offer two others. A household could be under the authority of a woman and not a man. If a husband had died from illness, accident or war, his widowed wife would be left in charge of the household, including children, servants, strangers and even cattle. To include a wife in the list would imply that there has to be a husband and father present with authority to require obedience to the Sabbath command. I doubt it would be God's intent for a woman-led household not to keep His Sabbath day holy.

I think you can see that even today the same scenario is quite possible. With man's laws concerning divorce becoming more lax, and divorce rates high and growing even among believers, it is increasingly likely to find a family headed by a woman.

Still another possibility is that, when the law was given to Moses, it was commonly allowed for an Israelite to have more than one wife. And, divorcing ones wife was also quite easy, and not necessarily deemed sinful. Yet, it was not intended so originally according to God. Those married in Christ are told to cleave to one another and a wife is not to leave her husband or be sent away. God hates divorce. God has restored His intention at creation of one man and one woman becoming one flesh in marriage to procreate and to fill the earth. It is God's way.

So, at the time of giving the Law to Moses, would God write your "wife," or your "wives?" If He listed "wife," it would have condemned the forefathers who had multiple wives, even at the same time. If He listed "wives," it would have suggested that having multiple wives was consistent with the Ten Commandments and His intention.

Well, I am sure you realize that I am speculating, teasing my brain, and yours, trying to understand God and why He says what He does. If you think you have a better answer than Steve, George or I, let me hear from you by the Internet or by mail.

Turning from what we are not to do on the Sabbath, to what the LORD wants us to do, we find in Leviticus 23 a requirement not found in the Fourth Commandment. It is given in Lev. 23: 3:

Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work on it; it is the Sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings.

We see two new words used in this directive from the LORD. One is "solemn" describing the kind of rest the LORD envisions as appropriate. The second refers to holy

“convocations” which are to be proclaimed at their appointed times by Moses.

First, let us deal with this word “solemn.” Here we have three different Hebrew words all translated as “solemn” in English. Different English Bibles translate the concept differently. Rather than having any connotation of being SAD periods of rest, a better understanding is that the convocations should be awe-inspiring and taken seriously with a refreshing rest from normal work, done willingly with gladness.

The English word “convocation” comes only from the Hebrew word *miqra*, *mik-raw*. Unfortunately, while it is quite clear that in Hebrew it means a called out, publicly announced or proclaimed meeting, or an assembly of people, this meaning does not give us much information about the details of what is to take place at such a “convocation.” A holy “convocational” meeting does suggest it is to be set apart activity UNTO the LORD.

To get a better idea of what takes place during a holy convocation, we have to peel back the onion and look further into Scripture. One clue can be found in Psalm 92, described as “A Song for the Sabbath Day.” Look at Verses 1-4:

It is good to give thanks to the LORD, And to sing praises to Your name, O Most High; To declare Your lovingkindness in the morning, and Your faithfulness every night, On an instrument of ten strings, On the lute, And, on the harp, With harmonious sound. For You, LORD, have made me glad through your work; and I will triumph in the works of Your hands.

From these verses, we can classify some activities that would be good to do on the Sabbath at a holy convocation:

- give thanks to the LORD
- sing praises to His name
- declare His lovingkindness in the morning
- declare His faithfulness every night
- use stringed instruments in harmony.

Note that the LORD made King David glad through His work and King David would triumph in the work of the LORD’S hands. All of this suggests a special time of gladness, thankfulness and joy while gathered together on the Sabbath. It suggests both morning and evening activity during a Sabbath day.

And, in Ezekiel 46: 3, we find another description of what the people are to do on the Sabbath:

Likewise the people of the land shall worship at the entrance to this gateway before the LORD on the Sabbaths and the New Moons.

While the Temple stood, both the princes of Israel (probably referring to the leaders of the tribes of Israel) and the people of the land of Israel were to come to the Temple and worship before the LORD on the Sabbaths.

In our Program next week, we will begin to explore the subject of worship. Is there a right and wrong way to worship the LORD? The answers may surprise you as much as they did me.

I have identified a number of requirements given to Israel for keeping the Sabbath both within their own dwellings and for worship at the Temple. But, we know that not many years after Jesus rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, the commanded animal sacrifices at the Temple, and even the Temple itself, ceased to exist, just as Jesus had prophesied.

So, I am going to skip ahead to see what Jesus Himself did to keep the Sabbath holy. We have several examples of Jesus meeting with other Jews for the weekly Sabbath and at the annual feasts of the LORD during His ministry.

I will mention just two examples. One occurred when He traveled to His childhood town of Nazareth. His disciples followed Him there. We read in Mark 6: 2:

And when the Sabbath had come, He began to teach in the synagogue.

This is a fascinating story where His childhood friends and family came to hear Him teach at the synagogue and were offended at His apparent wisdom and His words about their reaction. It led to the famous quote by Jesus that, “A prophet is not without honor except in his own country, among his own relatives and in his own house.”

But, my main point is that when the Sabbath came around each week, Jesus went to the local synagogue for a holy convocation. He would teach. He would heal. Unfortunately, this term “convocation” is used only in the Old Testament. So, we have to look for other formal meetings, or assemblies, that took place on the Sabbath in the New Testament.

Another account happened in Capernaum, by the Sea of Galilee. Jesus had just called two fishermen to be His apostles. They were Simon and Andrew, brothers by flesh. This is when Jesus uttered His famous saying, “I will make you fishers of men.” He also called the sons of Zebedee, James and John, the “sons of thunder” and also brothers and fishermen. According to Mark 1: 21-22 this is what happened:

Then they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath, He entered the synagogue and taught. And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

Is it any surprise that the Lord of the Sabbath could go into a meeting on the Sabbath and teach with authority? Later in this account, we find Jesus casting out an unclean spirit from a man in that synagogue. Because of his teaching, healing and casting out unclean spirits on the Sabbath, His fame spread throughout the region of Galilee.

After leaving the synagogue, we find Jesus going to the house of Simon and Andrew and

healing Simon's mother-in-law of a fever on the Sabbath. The Sabbath day was not over when the synagogue meeting was over.

I mention this because Jesus did more on the Sabbath than make an appearance at the synagogue for a group meeting. He continued on with His Apostles in fellowship at their home. Attending a Church service for an hour or so may have many similarities to a holy convocation on the Sabbath that Jesus attended. Do not be deceived that a holy convocational meeting completely satisfies the Sabbath command.

As a boy, I was raised in the Roman Catholic Church. I was told that to miss a 45-minute mass on Sunday (without a valid excuse) was a mortal sin. That, if I died without confessing that sin, I would go straight to hell. The contrast between making a brief appearance at a Church service, and keeping the Sabbath holy for an entire day, for twenty-four (24) hours, as commanded by the LORD, is like the difference between night and day. Would not we, the followers of Christ, want to follow His example?

It is not unusual for me in observing the Sabbath, to spend 2, 4, 8 and even 12 hours praising and serving the LORD and being with brethren. This includes fellowshipping in someone's home even after a praise and worship assembly of all the believers. It may include visiting and doing good for those in need who could not assemble with us for worship or fellowship because they are ill, or even imprisoned. Is this kind of "work" a burden on the Sabbath? No, it is a delight! It truly is better and more rewarding for us to give rather than to receive. It is just as Jesus did and taught according to the Apostle Paul in Acts 20: 34-35.

Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me. I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And, remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

Here you see Paul speaking. He was a Sabbath keeper BEFORE accepting Jesus as Lord. He remained a Sabbath keeper AFTER Jesus ascended into heaven. Paul showed the dual aspects of Sabbath keeping by his own life. He both labored for six days at a profession to support himself and those with him in ministry. Then he rested from that income producing labor on the seventh day. That allowed him to do the good work of teaching and fellowshipping with other believers on the LORD'S Sabbath day.

Well, we could look at still other accounts of how Jesus kept the Sabbath holy, including convocational group meetings. But, time is getting short today. So, I will only point out one other note in Luke 4: 16 concerning the same account of Jesus which I already mentioned when He was in Nazareth:

So, He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read.

Indeed, Sabbath keeping was customary for Jesus. It included attendance weekly at the

synagogue, the place designated by the people of God for local assembly. Such meetings are part of commanded Sabbath keeping. I believe it is sin to not keep the Sabbath holy.

But, I also wish to point out that just as there are exceptions regarding working on the Sabbath, I believe there are exceptions for participating in a holy convocation of believers on the Sabbath. Such things as sickness, isolation whether geographically, as in living on a large ranch in Texas, or sailing on the ocean, or being in a hospital bed or prison cell, seem to be forgivable reasons for not attending an assembly every Sabbath day.

I actually wonder if the reason the holy convocation taught by God is NOT in the Fourth Commandment itself is because one can remember the Sabbath and keep it holy WITHOUT such an assembly? What do you think?

However, the benefit of assembling with others on the Sabbath is found both in Scripture and in the hearts of those who do so. I know that in my own life, people whom I meet with each Sabbath for hours of formal and informal worship and fellowship activity, have often become as close and uplifting to me as even my own flesh family. Each week we share our joys and our sorrows, sometimes including highly personal matters of the heart, things not even known by most other friends or family.

As you probably know, the first disciples of Christ were all Jewish. They all kept the Sabbath. They all knew the commands of the LORD regarding Sabbath keeping. I suspect all of them knew that Jesus claimed to be Lord of the Sabbath. I feel certain He helped show them the proper way to observe His Sabbath day by word and example, even if the religious leaders of His time had distorted its original intent by their own traditions.

Before closing, I will take the last few minutes to address an issue that often comes up for those of us who keep the Sabbath day of the LORD. Some claim that Jesus has become their Sabbath rest, and they no longer need to keep the Fourth Commandment. It was a law for the Old Covenant and for Israel, not for the disciples of Jesus. Not for the church of Jesus, the Christ. They will say that observing the Sabbath is nowhere taught or commanded in the New Covenant.

Let us take a careful look at the word of God. Specifically, Hebrews 10: 24-25:

And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much more as you see the Day approaching.

Do you see the entire picture here? This is a letter written to Hebrew believers in the Messiah. They all had practiced Sabbath keeping as a custom. But, since the Christ had come, apparently some had begun forsaking their assemblies together. Clearly, the inspired writer suggests they continue such assemblies and even more so as the Day approaches. Most understand this “Day,” rendered with a capital letter, to refer to the Day of the LORD referring to the second coming of Christ as King of kings.

More pertinent and convincing is the Greek word translated “assembling” in that verse. It is Strong’s #1997, episunagoge, *ep-ee-soon-ag-o-gay*. This is its ONLY appearance in the entire Greek New Testament. Strong’s renders it a complete collection; specifically a “Christian” meeting (for worship): assembling (gathering) together.

Perhaps you have some doubt that this refers to the holy convocations commanded for the Sabbaths of the LORD? It doesn’t mention the Sabbath explicitly. Perhaps it just means Christians should not forsake having a social lunch together once in awhile on any day of the week they find convenient?

When a word is only used once, it is impossible to have Scripture interpret Scripture by context. So, our next best hope is to look at the construction of the word. First, “epi” is a primary preposition: properly meaning a superimposition (of time, place, order). And, “sunagoge” *soon-ag-o-gay* is the Greek word for a Jewish synagogue, a place where there is an assemblage of persons who believe in the God of Abraham.

Can there be much doubt that this is the type of meeting that Jesus customarily attended each Sabbath day? Can it be other than a day which was superimposed in time, and at a place which fits with the Sabbath day holy convocation at the synagogue. It is on the seventh day, it is in a place where God is named, a synagogue, a proclaimed public gathering. And, it is of special priority to be different than the other six days. It was a day, appointed by God, to assemble, congregate, gather or meet with others of the faith.

So, what is the conclusion? I feel it is clear that those who had always kept the Sabbath were not to quit their holy assemblies after Jesus had come as the promised Messiah. If God, had intended to abolish Sabbath keeping after Jesus had died and rose to heaven, or to change which Day that was made and kept as the LORD’s day, I cannot imagine why His closest disciples never got the message. In fact, those who stopped holding such appointed and commanded assemblies were chastised by the writer of Hebrews by inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God.

In these first six programs, I hope I have done a reasonable job in explaining the basics of why I keep the Fourth Commandment on the seventh day of the week. I find the word of God convincing and convicting. I find Sabbath keeping not only commanded by God, kept by Jesus and His disciples, but personally beneficial for me and my household. I could never forsake it, any more than I could forsake the Lord of the Sabbath.

Until next Sabbath, when we shift gears to worship that pleases God, this is Brother Kenny, wishing you grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord, Jesus, the Christ.