

Lord of the Sabbath

Program #2

Made for Man

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Yes, indeed. According to the Gospel of Mark, in Chapter 2, verse 27, we find that Jesus said, “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.” When I quote the Bible, I am using the New King James Version, unless otherwise noted.

When Jesus said that the Sabbath was made for man, what did He mean? Surely, He was speaking the Truth. Surely, He must have thought it was important to include this Truth in Mark’s Gospel. Have you ever wondered what was behind His statement? Can you cite other scriptures that relate to, or support, this claim made by Jesus? Can you cite other scriptures that describe the importance of the Sabbath day to God? Do the scriptures describe any reasons why it is good for man to observe the Sabbath day made for man by our Creator? If not, stay tuned for some answers.

Let’s start searching to discover from scripture just when the Sabbath was made? Does the Holy Bible tell us this? I suspect many would say the Sabbath was made by God when He gave the Ten Commandments to Moses on Mt. Sinai. This is not correct. That IS NOT when the Sabbath was first made by God.

The Sabbath was actually made by God at the end of creation week! Let’s check it straight from our Bible beginning in Genesis 2: 1-3.

Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. And, on the seventh day God ended 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.

It seems pretty clear that God blessed the seventh day because it was the day God rested from His creative work which He had finished during the previous six days. On the fifth day, God had blessed the creatures in the sea, and the birds in the firmament above the earth. He commanded them to be fruitful and multiply.

On the sixth day, God created the living creatures on the earth. And, then, God did something truly spectacular. God created man (male and female) in His own image and likeness. God blessed the man and woman, the first humans He had made, also telling them to be fruitful and multiply to fill the earth; and subdue it. All that God had made and blessed He then declared to be “very good.”

So, what shall we conclude about God making a seventh day and blessing it? Can we reasonably conclude it too was something good? How could we conclude anything else about whatever God Himself blesses?

However, note that God did more than bless the seventh day as something good that He made going forward in time. God also sanctified the seventh day. And, what does it mean to be sanctified? The root of the Hebrew word translated as sanctified imparts the meaning of something made clean; as ceremonially or ethically and morally clean. What is sanctified by God may be understood to as something consecrated, or dedicated, or hallowed, or made holy unto God's purpose. People, a piece of ground, a building like the Temple, Temple utensils and, yes, certainly a specific day of the week can be, and indeed is, by His written word, sanctified by God.

Now, can we better see why making, blessing and sanctifying this day was so important to God? When we remember and keep His day of rest holy unto Him, we can't help but be in awe of Him as the Almighty Creator of all things. And, we too are all blessed by the good things that God created for man and sanctified.

When you eat a fresh, well-prepared fish, don't you know that God made it for man to eat? It is healthy and nourishing for you. Read any scientific dietary book and you will see the benefit of eating fish. Do you remember that after His resurrection, Jesus ate a fish with his disciples?

When you eat a piece of tasty, and energy-filled meat, whether poultry from birds or meat from herds like cattle, deer, or sheep, which God declared clean for human food, don't you just know that God had blessed these living creatures and put man in dominion over them to be raised for your pleasure as food for your physical benefit?

Do you wonder why many of God's people say "grace" before they enjoy a meal together? It is an appropriate time to thank God for the blessings of good things to eat which He has provided for us in the creation. We acknowledge the blessing of God, the goodness of God, the greatness of God, that He created such things as food for us to sustain our life. We need to thank God for our daily bread and for all the blessings He showered on us by His grace. Oh, people, praise God, and praise our Lord for He has given us abundant life!

So, it is hardly a surprise that we find a Sabbath command among the written Ten Commandments given to His People Israel through Moses in Exodus 20: 8-11.

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work:

Here we notice an indication of an earlier creation of this special, sanctified day. Can you "remember" something that has not already been in existence? Scripture does not indicate that God specifically commanded Adam and Eve, Noah, or other Genesis Patriarchs to keep the seventh day as a day of rest for themselves. But, it is certainly possible that He did.

I hope some day I will find out from Noah himself whether he stopped his work of

building the ark each Sabbath day. I hope some day I will find out from Noah whether on the Sabbath day he stopped planting, harvesting or pressing grapes from his vineyards to make wine. I will not be surprised if Noah says, "Yes, the seventh day was my Sabbath day of rest from such daily labor, for it was the day sanctified by my God at creation!" Will you be surprised if this is Noah's answer to you?

Certainly by the generation of Abram, from the family of Shem, son of Noah, we find God commending Abraham in Genesis 26: 5 as one who "obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My laws." Thus it appears that God made His commandments and laws known as far back in time as to Abraham. Which Patriarchs before Abraham had been given God's commandments? Was the seventh day rest from work one of those early commandments of God for man? We can't say for sure but the implication is clear in scripture.

Occasionally, someone will point out that Genesis does not refer to this seventh-day of rest which God sanctified as the Sabbath day. That is true. Also, no command to remember God's rest day was specifically stated to have been given to Adam and Eve to keep holy. That is true also. But, if we study the words of Exodus 20: 8-11, I do not know how there can be any doubt that the Sabbath day refers to the seventh-day of creation. If you have any doubts about this, or any other possible explanation that they are not the same day in God's eyes, please contact me.

Also, we have a similar inference in the Fourth Commandment where it commands us to keep the Sabbath day Holy. This implies it was previously sanctified as holy and was kept long before God gave the Ten Commandments on Mt. Sinai. This is exactly what we had learned that God did when reading Genesis 2.

The fact that man was created before the Sabbath day also gives credence to Jesus' claim that the Sabbath was made for man, implying that man already existed and then God made the Sabbath day for him as a day of weekly rest. This sequence of making man and then making the day of rest as clearly stated in the Bible is also consistent with Jesus' denial that man was made for the Sabbath since the Sabbath did not exist when man was made.

We get further confirmation that the Sabbath day of rest was made for all mankind, not just for the nation of Israel. We see this in Isaiah 56 a prophecy about the future salvation for the Gentiles, even for eunuchs. In Isaiah 56, verses 3-5, we read:

Do not let the son of the foreigner who has joined himself to the LORD speak saying, "The LORD has utterly separated me from His people;" nor let the eunuch say, "Here I am, a dry tree." For thus says the LORD: "To the eunuchs who keep My Sabbaths, and choose what pleases Me, and hold fast My covenant, even to them I will give in My house and within My walls a place and a name better than that of sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off."

Here we see Isaiah speaking about foreigners and their sons (Gentiles, not of Israel) and eunuchs (excluded from Israel by law) receiving an everlasting name in the House of God. One of the things these everlasting eunuchs must do, however, is to keep My Sabbaths.

Isaiah goes on in Verse 6 to talk specifically about the sons of foreigners (clearly Gentiles) who join themselves to the LORD, to serve Him, and “Everyone who keeps from defiling the Sabbath,” will be made joyful in My House of Prayer. In Verse 7, we also see that the LORD says, “For My house shall be called a house of prayer for ALL NATIONS.”

If you are of a mind to think that the Sabbath was made for ancient Israel, or just the Jews of today, I would hope you can reconcile your mind with the word of the LORD given by God’s prophet Isaiah. The LORD says otherwise! He refers to “Everyone who keeps from defiling the Sabbath” and that ALL NATIONS, will be in His house. Are you willing to listen? Are you willing to change your mind based on what Scripture reveals? I had to change my mind about the meaning and value of the Sabbath once I examined my prior beliefs and willed to serve the LORD as He commanded with my whole life.

I have no doubt that God will eventually gather the outcast of Israel to Jesus to be their Lord and King. But, as a Gentile, I rejoice that I too can be gathered to Jesus as Savior and Lord and King in the coming Kingdom of God on earth. We can see this plainly in the words of Isaiah in Chapter 56, Verse 8:

The LORD God, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, says, “Yet I will gather to him others besides those who are gathered to him.”

I find great comfort in this prophecy. Besides the outcasts of Israel, any man, including any Jew or Gentile, who serves the LORD and keep His Sabbaths will also be gathered into God’s house and Kingdom. Amen, brethren!

All well and good, so far? Contact me if you have doubts. I would like to hear your questions or concerns. But, am I sure the seventh-day Sabbath still applies to us today, even if we are Gentile Christians? Is it a blessing of God made for all our good still today? Or, was it only for God’s people Israel while living in the Promised Land?

Well, for those disciples of Jesus who keep the seventh-day holy (all twenty-four hours), I think you will get a resounding “yes.” In fact, it seems more important and helpful to us in these modern times than perhaps it was a thousand, or more, years ago.

In older times, much of the labor that the heads of the house were engaged in was farming or fishing or hunting or shepherding to produce food and drink for their families. It was tough outdoors work. In those days, it often was toiling and time consuming just to keep a family dry, warm and fed.

I suspect that after six long, grueling days of manual work in the fields, woods, dales,

gardens, orchards, lakes, seas and rivers, a day of physical rest from work was most welcomed by the men, especially those who were fathers with families. And, home and family chores such as making cloth, or clothes or candles and cooking or home schooling the children were physically and mentally demanding for the women as well. So, I suspect that wives, and especially mothers with children, were just as happy as their husbands to see a Sabbath arrive and to enjoy a day of rest from their daily labor.

But, let's be honest and realistic. When you look at the busy schedules of people in these more modern times, you see many people who are literally exhausted when they hit the pillow each night. Oh, it may not be from hard physical labor as in olden days. Our over-weight problem in America is consistent with that observation. It can be from mental exhaustion and emotional stress. It seems that so many people I see have a constant barrage of activities to carry on mostly every day from the time they get up in the morning to the time they go to sleep at night. For many people, life is as hectic as it ever was; and perhaps more stressful than the lives of their parents and forefathers.

I have been retired for several years. And, a number of my Christian friends are too. You would not believe how busy all of us are. When several of us desire to get together for a breakfast, lunch or dinner to reminisce about old times, we often struggle to find a common free day in the next couple of weeks. None of us seem confined to our rocking chairs on the porch watching the world go by.

We are perplexed at how we can be just as busy as when we worked for income full time. It was not unusual as professionals or managers to work more than 60 hours each week. We realize that with age we are slowing down and everything takes a bit longer to do. Sometimes I walk into a room three times before I remember why I wanted to go there! That takes extra time; besides being embarrassing.

However, when I look at the younger generation, especially those with families, I often find them even more busy than I am. The work and other activities that they handle takes your breath away! Many men have two jobs to make a decent living. Many wives work part-time, or even full-time, to help make ends meet. This adds greater burdens to their taking care of their children properly and performing other home, religious and social duties. While much of my "busyness" comes from things I choose to do, it seems that my children are more busy because of things they must do that they do not even wish to do.

Well, I am sure you get the picture and could give a hundred examples of people being extremely busy and stressed-out by modern life. This, despite all the supposedly time and work-saving conveniences that technology has provided to us.

So, let me share with you a discovery I made. I simply can't wait until Friday sundown comes around. I put all my daily work and activities aside. I stop and relax. I rest. I catch up on any sleep deficiency from the prior six busy days. I don't even do my daily exercise routine on the Sabbath.

I let the cares of the world and its demands on my life disappear for one whole day each week. It is so refreshing. It is no burden to keep the Sabbath. It is a welcome delight. My batteries seem to get recharged and I am more ready to face another six days of work and resume the frantic running from one thing to another.

And, even better than taking a deserved break from the hassle of modern life, I do a number of nice things that are so easily ignored for a lack of time during the normally hectic work week. Among them are Bible study, attending a fellowship and worship meeting, calling or writing friends and family and helping those less fortunate than myself. Each Sabbath, I suddenly have over eight hours to do some good works that might otherwise simply not get to the top of my “to do” list. What a blessing the Sabbath is that God made for me! It seems like God was indeed able to look down through the tunnel of time and know that His Sabbath would always be a blessing to every man.

Besides having a little rest from laborious work, besides having the time to do some things my heart knows will lift other people up, while expecting nothing in return, there is another benefit of Sabbath keeping that seems to be getting more valuable each year.

I am referring to having fellowship with other Sabbath keeping friends each week and talking on the things above. By dedicating our discussions to the study of the word of God, and the praise of God in songs and hymns, we seem to keep on a very uplifting plane. And, this continues for much of the Sabbath day, including having a meal together.

For in Colossians 3, we receive an admonition for the Apostle Paul. “If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.”

Have you ever felt like not watching the news, or reading a newspaper, because so much of the news concerns tragic or disgusting stories? Sure, there have always been wars, murders, rapes, deceit and theft in society. But, more and more frequently, what was once viewed as immoral, things like divorce, premarital sex, homosexuality, the use of drugs or alcohol, is now commonplace, especially among and by the youth.

These sins, according to the Bible, are essentially part of a normal or typical lifestyle. It seems that the moral fabric of the United States, and most supposedly advanced Western nations, is swirling down the sewer of immorality. It is not just a case of more and more people doing what is wrong. It is a growing case of amorality, one where the doers, especially the younger generation, simply do not have any conception that what they do is sinful or even wrong. Without an exposure to the word of God, in a Church or a weekly Sabbath meeting, how will they ever learn God’s ways of right and wrong?

With people at work, or in the marketplace, or neighborhood, the conversation often turns to sports, politics, television shows, Hollywood stars and the latest gossip or scandals in any of them. It is so commonplace, it is difficult even when gathered with disciples of Jesus, not to hold these same type of conversations. I have caught myself, and many

good Christian friends, telling the kinds of ribald jokes or stories heard every night on television even when they are gathered in assembly before the Lord.

Add to this all the tragic news of natural disasters, life threatening or debilitating illnesses, and the fears of war and terrorism. Well, it sometimes makes you pray more fervently, "Thy Kingdom come!" Stop the world, I want to get off before it all comes crashing down. The Bible predicts a terrible time of trouble, unlike anything that has come before, that will one day come upon the whole earth. It is hard to be joyful with the constant harangue of what is taking place in the world all around us and where it is heading.

It has always struck me that the words we find in Hebrews 10: 24-25, written a couple of thousand years ago, were very important and prophetic, even to us today:

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.

I see three things of note here: 1) this seems to be about Sabbath assembly, and it is saying that even though the Messiah had come, the believing Hebrews were not to quit their assembling of one another on the Sabbath, 2) our Sabbath fellowships are indeed aimed at stirring up love and good works in each other and 3) assuming the day referred to (which is capitalized in most Bibles) is the day of the Lord's return, that we will need to have the love and affiliation of others who may be ridiculed and even persecuted for their belief in the Lord of the Sabbath and keeping the Sabbath day that God made for man.

Well, the time has flown by for this week's program already. This is Brother Kenny saying, please join us next week at the same time and place on your radio dial. We will begin exploring from the holy Bible why Jesus would claim to be Lord of the Sabbath. You may be surprised about this connection and learn from the context of why it was said and to whom. Perhaps your picture will become more clear as we put together some seemingly disconnected pieces of Scripture.

And, I pray that all of you who already keep the Sabbath holy will tell your brethren and friends of like mind, especially any who are temporarily or permanently home-bound and cannot assemble with other Sabbath-keepers, about this broadcast meant mostly for them. Until next week, may our God bless you with peace and joy and love. We humbly ask this in the precious name of Jesus, the Christ. Amen!