



## “Understanding the Sabbath” Luke 13:10-17

**Idea:** The Sabbath is an earthly symbol of heavenly rest.

**Intro:** <sup>8</sup>“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. <sup>9</sup>Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, <sup>10</sup>but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. <sup>11</sup>For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. – Ex 20:8-11

I grew up in a fairly fundamental Baptist family. My dad was raised in an independent Baptist church in Michigan, and my mom came from a Pentecostal background. So, as a kid, I was taught that it was important to do no work on the Sabbath. I can remember many restaurants and businesses in my hometown in Northwest Arkansas being closed on Sundays because it was the “Sabbath.” While we did not always attend church on Sundays, we rarely did work in the yard out of reverence for this day. It is highly likely that many of the people in our church here were taught the same thing.

Later, as a young adult and as a student of the Bible, I began to wonder about this practice as a Christian. I realized that most Christians, including my family, did not take the fourth commandment literally. Often, I would see them doing things like mowing the lawn, feeding the cattle, working on the car, going shopping, and hanging out at the lake. I also noticed that the Sabbath commanded in the Old Testament was to be observed on the seventh day of the week, which is Saturday, but we supposedly were observing it on Sunday, which is the first day of the week. Have you ever thought about these things and wondered why our practice as Christians is different from what we find in the Old Testament? We ought to have a strong commitment to being a people of the Book. Our deep desire should be to fully obey what God has instructed us in the Bible. So, are we being disobedient by worshiping on Sunday and working on either Saturday or Sunday?

I believe there is some confusion regarding the Sabbath in the evangelical church because we have not done a great job teaching on it. In our next stop in Luke’s Gospel, we find Jesus teaching in a local synagogue on the Sabbath. In the synagogue that day, there was a woman who had been crippled for eighteen years by demonic oppression. Jesus healed her, which angered the ruler of the synagogue because He did it on the Sabbath. From this passage, I want to us to think deeply and critically about the Sabbath and the rest God’s people were to observe.

[Read Luke 13:10-17.](#)

**Inquiry:** The term Sabbath (σάββατον) comes from the Hebrew word *shabbat* (שַׁבָּת), meaning “to cease” or “desist.” The primary meaning is that of cessation from all work. The Sabbath was a command given to Israel as part of the Ten Commandments (Ex 20). It, however, was more than that. The Sabbath was actually a part of the structure of creation because God Himself rested on the seventh day, and then He gave it to humanity, especially His covenant people (Gen 2:2-3).

The people of God in the old covenant was the nation of Israel. It was the people who descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The people of God in the new covenant are those who by faith descend from Jesus Christ (Heb 12:24). As we read through the Bible, we discover that some of the old covenant teachings in the Old Testament are absorbed and altered by the new covenant. For example, Christians no longer follow laws concerning circumcision, sacrifices, and food (Acts 15:1-35; Gal 2:11-21). Instead, new believers understand that these elements simply foreshadowed the greater that was to come in Jesus Christ.

While many of the laws found in Leviticus and Deuteronomy have been eclipsed by Christ, the Ten Commandments were not. Jesus never negated the command to have no other gods before the God of the Bible. Likewise, He did not revoke the prohibition against idols, profaning God’s name, honoring parents, murder, adultery, theft, bearing false witness, or coveting. He did, however, often get Himself into trouble with the religious leaders over the Sabbath. On one occasion, as Jesus and His disciples walked through a grainfield, His disciples plucked the heads of grain and ate. The Pharisees saw what they did and objected to their violation of the Sabbath. Jesus responded by pointing out that David had violated one of the laws by eating of the bread reserved for the priests. Then, turning directly to the situation at hand, Jesus asserted: *“The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath”* (Mark 2:27-28). He was clearly claiming the right to redefine the status of the Sabbath, a right that belongs only to God.

Today, I want to speak to understanding the Sabbath. As we consider these verses in Luke 13 and look at the Bible’s larger teaching on the subject, we will discover that the Sabbath pointed to something greater. It is an earthly symbol of heavenly rest that is found in Jesus Christ. As we seek to understand the Sabbath from a new covenant position, we will ask three questions:

- What is the Sabbath?
- Why is the Sabbath important?
- How should we observe the Sabbath?

Let’s begin by asking “what is the Sabbath?”.

## **1. The Sabbath was celebrated weekly on the seventh day in recognition and worship of God as Creator and Redeemer.**

One of the earliest things we find in the Bible is that God set aside and blessed the seventh day as a holy day of rest.

*<sup>2</sup>And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. <sup>3</sup>So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation. – Gen 2:2-3*

Moses clarified for the Jews the weekly observance of this special day in the Ten Commandments. We read his clarification from Exodus 20:8-11 earlier. What we discover from these two passages and others like them is that the Sabbath was observed weekly on the seventh day because God rested on the seventh day after creation, thereby making the day holy. It was a day of worship and rest in God as their Creator.

Moses further explained this weekly holy day for Israel just before his death.

Read Deuteronomy 5:12-15.

Moses reiterated that God was Creator, but he added here a reminder that God was also Israel's Redeemer. He was the One who redeemed them out of slavery in Egypt. They would soon enter the Promise Land. Therefore, the weekly observance of worship on the Sabbath reminded the Jews that God was both their Creator and their Redeemer.

Now, that we better understand what the Sabbath is, let's ask why it is important. Today, we set on the new covenant side of the cross, while Moses and the prophets set on the old covenant side of it. So, it can be difficult to understand how the Sabbath should fit into our worship and practice.

## **2. The Sabbath foreshadows redemptive rest in Jesus Christ as Redeemer.**

In the Gospels, we see that the habit and practice of Jesus was to observe the Sabbath as a day of worship in the synagogues. Here in Luke 13, Jesus is worshiping in a synagogue with other Jews, and we have seen Him do this many times in the previous twelve chapters. While Jesus did observe the Sabbath, His ongoing failure to comply with the minute restrictions and the conflict that ensued lead us to consider the broader message of the Sabbath Day.

As we continue reading through the New Testament, we discover the early church shifting away from worship on the Sabbath to worship on the Lord's Day (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 16:2). They moved their day of worship as a church from Saturday to Sunday. Now, was this transition an arbitrary move to simply distance their faith and practice from that of the Jewish tradition? No, it was not. They purposely shifted because of their theological conviction that Jesus as Creator and Redeemer made their salvation possible through His death, burial, and resurrection. Jesus was crucified on a Friday. He died around 3pm just before the Sabbath began (Luke 23:44-46, 54). He was buried quickly and remained in the tomb on Saturday. Then Jesus arose from the grave on Sunday, the first day of the week (Matt 28:1; Mark 16:2; Luke 24:1; John 20:1). You see, those early followers of Jesus Christ understood what their Jewish brethren could not see. They saw in the Sabbath Rest a foreshadowing of the greater rest to come in Jesus Christ as Redeemer. They recognized that the Sabbath and many other matters of the Law were nothing more than shadows of something far greater, which had now been revealed in Jesus Christ.

Church, as we seek to understand the Sabbath, may we recognize that the Sabbath foreshadowed redemptive rest in Jesus Christ as Redeemer. Therefore, as new covenant Christians, we dare not simply shift the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday. No, the Sabbath Day has been replaced by Jesus Himself. This new reality forces us to consider a third question. How should we observe the Sabbath?

## **3. The Sabbath is observed by resting in Jesus Christ as Redeemer.**

Jesus said, *"For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished"* (Matt 5:18). We just declared that the Sabbath has been replaced by Jesus Himself. So, if the Sabbath has been replaced and God's Word will not pass away until it is accomplished, then where did the Sabbath go? The Sabbath went to the cross and was resurrected on the third day because the Sabbath is Christ and the salvation that He achieved for sinners. This is the very point that the author of Hebrews is making in Hebrews 4. The author argues that Jesus is greater than Moses, and as the great high priest He has made a sufficient sacrifice for our sin. Again, the shadows of the Law were never enough.

<sup>8</sup>For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken of another day later on. <sup>9</sup>So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, <sup>10</sup>for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.

<sup>11</sup>*Let us therefore strive to enter that rest...*

– Heb 4:8-11a

Today, on this side of the cross, we rightly observe the Sabbath by resting in Jesus Christ as our Redeemer. This means if you have turned from your sin and faithed into Jesus as your Lord and Savior, then you are resting in Jesus Christ. He is your Sabbath rest. If you have not yet turned from your sin and to Jesus as Lord and Savior, then He invites you to “*strive to enter that rest.*”

*Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.* – Heb 4:16

Today, do you need to find rest for your soul in Jesus Christ? There is an open invitation for you. Will you come?

With this new covenant understanding of the Sabbath here are three practical implications of Christian worship:

- Christian worship on Sunday is not a simple shift of the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday.
- Christian worship prioritizes gathering weekly on the Lord’s Day for the preaching of the Word, fellowship of the body, and observance of the ordinances.
- Christian worship is not focused on resting from work out of reverence but focused on resting in Jesus as Redeemer.

**Conclusion:** This afternoon, if you go out to eat for lunch or decide to work in your yard, there are some Christians who would say that you are sinning by breaking the Sabbath command. Based on what I have shown you today, I do not believe that is a true and accurate statement. They simply have failed to see the Sabbath for what it is, a shadow of what was to come. And they have failed to see Jesus as its fulfillment. Now, with that said, there is a principle for needed physical rest in the Sabbath that we ought to observe for our own health. Working six days and resting one is good for the body as the Lord designed, but the good rest that comes to our souls is not found in the weekly observance of the Sabbath. It is found solely in our resting in Jesus Christ as Redeemer. Are you resting in Him? When we gather weekly on Sundays as the church, we are expressing our dependence on Jesus as the rest for our souls. He is our Creator and our Redeemer. He is our Sabbath.