

Fundamentals of Belief
#12A: Sabbath, the Seventh Day

Edited Sermon Transcript
Jon W. Brisby; 1-13-2001

For today, brethren, we want to continue in this long series that we have been going through for more than a year, on the Fundamentals of Belief of the Church of God, The Eternal. I thought originally that we might average perhaps two sermons per fundamental and with twenty-six fundamentals, we might have less than fifty sermons. That already is not working out because, as I have gone deeper and deeper into this series, I think each fundamental is starting to average more like three and four sermons, rather than two.

I can't tell you what is going to happen. I am really playing it by ear as I get to them, based upon the significance of the material and maybe, more than anything, the amount of attack that may have been levied at certain beliefs. I think that has probably been the guideline I have been using up until now. I have spent more time on those that have been especially challenged in the past.

We do want to continue now, in this series. We are up to fundamental of belief number twelve. Let me read to you number twelve:

We believe that from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset, the seventh day of the week is the Sabbath of the Lord our God. On this day we must rest from our labors following the commands and example of the Apostle Paul, the New Testament Church, and Jesus.

Fundamental number twelve of our beliefs has to do with keeping the weekly Sabbath. As we go through this, I want to accomplish at least two or three different things in addressing this fundamental. First, we want to go through what I call the fundamentals of the fundamental.

We want to look at the command to keep the Sabbath. We want to look at the origin of the Sabbath. We want to look at the requirement and whether it really applies to Christians today. So we want to look at the building blocks concerning this command to keep the weekly Sabbath.

Then, depending on how much I get accomplished, what I want to do ultimately is give at least one full sermon on what I will call the nuts and bolts on how to keep the Sabbath.

We are not going to get into any of those things today, but just to give you a prelude so you know what will be coming up. There have been a lot of questions asked by people earnestly desiring to keep the Sabbath appropriately. There have been many questions on what is appropriate. "Is this ok? Is this ok? Is there a problem with this on the Sabbath?" So I do want to take the opportunity in this series then, to try and answer a lot of the questions I have heard come up.

Today, we want to start by talking about the origin of the Sabbath—the fact that it is a command of God and who that command applies to. First, our fundamental says, "We believe that from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset, the seventh day of the week is the Sabbath of the Lord our God. . . ."

Well, first let's take this phrase, "the Sabbath of the Lord our God," because what that fundamentally tells you in our belief is that the Sabbath belongs to whom? It belongs to God. Who is the author of the Sabbath? Who created it? It was God.

It was not the Sabbath of the Israelites. It was not the Sabbath of the Jews. It certainly wasn't the Sabbath of Moses. It was the Sabbath of the Lord. It was the Sabbath of the Eternal God Who created it.

Let's begin in Genesis 2:1. Here is the origin of the Sabbath day. It happened at the very time of creation, when all things were brought into being that you and I recognize on the face of this earth. When the re-creation of the earth occurred and God carried out all seven days of creation, we find, on the seventh day of creation, something else was created also. It was the Sabbath day.

Genesis 2:1–3:

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.

When the Eternal God, Who made all things on this earth including you and me, shows by His own actions and personal example that He has sanctified something and set it apart, who are we, as human beings, to challenge, try and denigrate, or to say in any way that the Sabbath is not significant for us?

No, it is only a fool, brethren, who will say that the Sabbath does not apply to humankind today. The very God Who made all that exists created it on the seventh day of His week of creation. By His own personal example, He rested and sanctified the Sabbath day, set it apart and said it was different. There is no human being who can change that very fact.

"God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it . . ." That day is unlike the other six. It cannot be compared. It was different; it was earmarked; and it was set aside for a special purpose.

Let's notice the command in Leviticus 23:1–3. You are very aware of Leviticus 23 because it contains the commands for the keeping of God's Feast days.

And the [Eternal] spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, Concerning the feasts of the [Eternal] . . .

What we begin to see in this chapter is a list of those Feasts—special holy convocations—which God set aside and established for someone to observe. What is the very first one that is called a "Feast?" What is the very first one on the list?

. . . say unto them, Concerning the feasts of the [Eternal], which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are my feasts.

They weren't the Feasts of Moses, and they were not the Feasts of the Israelites or the Jews. ". . .these are my Feasts," God said.

"Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day is the sabbath of rest, an holy convocation . . ." We are going to get to that—not today—when we begin to talk about how to keep the Sabbath. We are going to find out about the significance of holy convocations and how to properly worship God on the Sabbath.

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 [Eternal] in all your dwellings.

It is the Sabbath of that same Eternal God Who brought all into existence, the One that we recognize today as Jesus Christ Who was the God of the Old Testament. He was that *YHVH*. It is He Who brought all things into existence. It was He personally whose hand performed the re-creation, those seven days of creation that brought this earth back out of chaos—that *tohu* and *bohu*.

It was He Who made the earth, recreated it and established the Sabbath day; and He said that the Sabbath is His. It belongs to Him, and He commanded someone to keep it as a Feast.

Mark 2:

I want to emphasize verses 27 and 28 of Mark chapter 2, but we are going to start in verse 23:

And it came to pass, that he went through the corn fields on the sabbath day; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn. And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful? And he said unto them, Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungred, he, and they that were with him? How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the shewbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him?

We don't want to emphasis this particular altercation because we will do that in a future sermon, but just to lead into verse 27:

And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.

Who is it that is Lord, Master, Commander, and even Author of the Sabbath day? "Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath." Moses was not that Lord. The Israelites, the Jews were not that Lord; it is the Holy God Who made us all.

We fundamentally need to understand that. If we appreciate the origin of the Sabbath, how it came to be, who it belongs to, who set it in motion, who hallowed it and sanctified it to be special, then that will flavor our entire approach as we look at the specific commands on keeping the Sabbath. We will understand to whom it applies and, specifically, how to keep it appropriately before God.

First of all, how do we know that today—this day the world calls "Saturday"—is the seventh day of the week? As our fundamental says, "We believe that from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset, the seventh day of the week is the Sabbath . . ." How do we know for sure?

We believe that there has been nearing six thousand years of history since that re-creation occurred. In the way that history has been corrupted—through all of the centuries, generations, dark ages and lost times, when there are no historical records—how can we be certain that time hasn't been lost? How do we know for sure that the day we are keeping—even right now at this moment—is truly that same seventh day of the week that God initiated, blessed, hallowed and sanctified almost six thousand years ago?

Look at how easily man has lost track of so many things; and he obviously corrupts so much that he touches. So, how can we be certain? There have been a number of people who have tried to use that as an excuse to avoid liability and responsibility of obeying God's command to keep the Sabbath. They say, "There is no way we can know what day it really is. Yes, we have a seven-day week today, but how do we know that it is actually the very same week that God initiated almost six thousand years ago?"

It is very simple, brethren. Jesus Christ was perfect, was He not? Did He not fulfill God's law in every way and in every respect, when He walked in the flesh? If we believe we have a Savior, then we believe that Christ was perfect and that He was not guilty of sin. He did not violate a single law of God. The one thing we know for sure is that we do have historical calendar information and knowledge since the time of Christ.

Mr. Armstrong said that Christ died in 31 A.D. That is debatable, but what is not debatable is the fact that we do have a chronology—all the way from that time forward—of the days of the week. Those seven days of the week have been kept in harmony by the Jewish calendar to this date.

Other historical sources, as well, will support the fact that time has not been lost, at least from the time of Christ. Now, there is no way that from the time of Christ back to creation, we could ever find historical certification to know that somehow those days of the week had not been changed. However, because of Christ's example, we can have absolute confidence that we are keeping the seventh day of the week the same in the series that God created at creation.

Christ kept the Sabbath. He kept the Sabbath perfectly. He knew what it was. Even if you allow for the fact that perhaps men had corrupted it before then, you can bet that Jesus Christ would have been keeping the proper day. Then, if you look at the historical records for the last two thousand years, you can be absolutely confident in knowing that the very same holy week—ending every week with the seventh day which God sanctified as the Sabbath—has been preserved since then.

There is no way that you should doubt whatsoever, brethren, that we have continued to have the entire week that God intended from the very beginning. It is absolutely the same.

We have tracked time precisely over the past two thousand years, minimally from the Jewish calendar. Now, certain dates in time have been changed. There have been a number of times in history where dates on the annual calendar have been adjusted, but that has not corrupted the knowledge and consistency of the seven-day week.

No matter what annual day or month of the year you might assign to a particular weekday, it doesn't change the fact that the chronology of weeks has been kept intact all of that time. That is why our fundamental of belief says we believe that from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset is the seventh day of the week.

Next, our fundamental says, "On this day we must rest from our labors following the commands and example of the Apostle Paul, the New Testament Church, and Jesus." We are going to get to those examples a little bit later, but right now, we want to focus on the part that says, "On this day we must rest from our labors following the commands . . ."

This begs the question, is the Sabbath really commanded? So what if God created it? So what if God sanctified it? What does that mean to human beings? Is there really a command that obligates us to do something special, to set aside or to observe the Sabbath day?

Well, let's notice. The first thing I am not going to do is turn to Exodus 20. Exodus 20, you know, is where the Ten Commandments are listed, and we all know that the Sabbath day is the fourth command. For those who want to say that the Ten Commandments were given to Israel and do not apply to non-Israelites, then we want to address the question, when were God's commands really put into force? Did it really occur on Mt. Sinai?

I know we have gone through a number of these things before, but I want to do a brief history and review again. No, God made His commandments, laws and statutes long before He codified them in writing on Mt. Sinai. When did that law really come into being?

Let's notice just a preview; Genesis 26:2 will show us something very interesting. Here, God is giving an instruction to Isaac. Isaac was one of the forefathers. Abraham's son was Isaac, Isaac begat Jacob and Jacob begat the twelve sons who became the Israelites and all of the descendants that came out of Jacob and his sons.

So when we are speaking of Isaac and his time, we are talking obviously about a time that predates the time of the Israelites and especially predates the time of the giving of the law on Mt. Sinai. Notice what God said specifically to Isaac and what was recorded through the Holy Spirit in Genesis 26:2–5:

And the [Eternal] appeared unto him, and said, Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of: Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I sware unto Abraham thy father; And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed [Then, notice verse 5.]; Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.

Abraham, He said, kept the commandments, the statutes, and the laws of God. Now, how can that be? How could Abraham have kept commandments, laws and statutes that weren't even in existence until generations later when his progeny received the codified laws and Ten Commandments on Mt. Sinai?

Impossible, isn't it? Unless the laws, statutes and commandments of God were in existence long before the time of the Israelites on Mt. Sinai, which is exactly what the truth is. When were those laws, statutes and commandments—ordained of God—brought into force upon this earth?

Brethren, it was from the very beginning—from the time that this Creator God Who became Jesus Christ, Who, as the God of the Old Testament, God of the second part, recreated this earth and put man upon it. He created the Sabbath; we already saw that, and He sanctified it, did He not? Well, when do you think the command to keep the Sabbath and all of those other laws and statutes that are part of the Ten Commandments were created? At the very time of the creation. How do we know that?

Genesis 4:4–7—this is the story of Cain and Abel; you know it very well:

And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the [Eternal] had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And the [Eternal] said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well . . .

Now, wait a minute. God is saying to Cain, "If you do well," something. "If you do well," according to what standard? What is "to do well" and "not to do well?" Doesn't it require some kind of a yardstick—some way to measure the difference between good and evil, wrong and right, in order to decide whether somebody is doing well or not?

If God had not instituted laws, commandments, statutes and judgments from the very beginning to monitor and guide human beings, how was God even able to talk to Cain at this very moment about the difference in doing well and not doing well?

If you follow the logic of human beings to its necessary conclusion, you find they do not have a leg to stand on. Those laws were in force from the beginning. Let's notice it:

And the [Eternal] said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?

Obviously, God said that in order to be accepted, there was some sort of a rule. There was some sort of a guideline that had to be followed by human beings in order to receive acceptance and approval of God. Well, what kind of rules would they have been? They were the holy, unalterable commandments, laws and statutes of God, and they were in force from the beginning.

"If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well [What?], sin lieth at the door." What is sin, brethren? You know it. You can quote it by heart. 1 John 3:4 says: "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law."

So, if Cain was guilty of sin, he was guilty of the transgression of the law. What law was Cain breaking? If there were no law of God established at the time, even from the very garden of Eden and from the birth of Cain, what law would God now, at this point in time, be measuring him against and holding him accountable for? Is it a rational God Who would hold men accountable for something they have no knowledge of? Not at that time in history, brethren.

Yes, men are separated from the knowledge of God's law by our own rebellion, and human beings are paying the price for it. You can well expect that Adam and Eve were taught the laws, commandments and judgments of God. Those laws contained a requirement to observe, keep and hallow the Sabbath day.

. . . if thou doest not well, [transgression of the law] lieth at the door [the transgression of God's holy laws]. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.

It means that natural law within human beings, which you and I share—our carnal, human natures—desires to rule over us and to dictate the breaking of God's laws. That is what we want to do by nature. What God put us on this earth to do is to rule over that carnal nature—to deny the natural inclinations of the flesh and instead obey that which God established as the perfect yardstick and the model by which we are to live. It is His holy laws and commandments.

Yes, God reminded the Israelites of those laws; but He reminded them not just at Mt. Sinai, but quite a bit sooner. For anyone who thinks the Ten Commandments

were first given and that law originated for the very first time at Mt. Sinai, look at the example of Exodus 16:4–5, 22–30:

"Then said the Lord unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you . . ." Here we are in the desert within a number of weeks after the Israelites had departed from Egypt, had crossed through the Red Sea, and now they have run out of food. The provisions they took with them out of Egypt have been depleted, and now they are murmuring against Moses, fearing they are going to be left as carcasses in the wilderness from hunger.

Then said the [Eternal] unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no.

Now, if the law wasn't given until weeks later on Mt. Sinai, isn't God jumping the gun a little bit by referring to a law that He says here, applied to the Israelites? Unless that law did exist and preexisted, as we have already noted.

Which law are we talking about? Which specific law are we talking about that predated the codification of the Ten Commandments on Mt. Sinai? Those who want to say, "Well, I admit that back at the time of Adam, Eve, Cain and Abel, there was the law against murder; but I am just not going to accept the fact that the command for the Sabbath applied to them. It only applied to the Israelites." It predated the time of the codification of that law as well, because that is precisely the law that we are speaking of here.

. . . that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no. And it shall come to pass, that on the sixth day they shall prepare that which they bring in; and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily. (Verse 22) And it came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man: and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. And he said unto them, This is that which the [Eternal] hath said, To morrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the [Eternal]: bake that which ye will bake to day, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning. And they laid it up till the morning, as Moses bade: and it did not stink, neither was there any worm therein. And Moses said, Eat that to day; for to day is a sabbath unto the [Eternal]: to day ye shall

not find it in the field. Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the sabbath, in it there shall be none.

This gift of manna from heaven—that which is called "angel's food," that which was going to save the Israelites in the wilderness from hunger, replenish them and keep them in a wilderness where there was no food for all of those millions of people, the men, women, small children and all of their households—had rules established. In the very feeding of the children of Israel, God reemphasized the requirement to hallow the Sabbath day. He used the gift of manna—which at the beginning they appreciated because they thought they were going to starve to death.

So at this time, God was going to feed them by raining bread from heaven and, simultaneously, the gift of that bread would be in accordance to a preexisting law concerning the Sabbath. He emphasized that there would be no manna rained on that seventh day of the week. It was separate and special, and He wanted the Israelites to become aware of it because they had been in Egypt for all of these generations and had lost knowledge of the appropriate way to worship God. They had forgotten the value of His Sabbath day, as all human beings virtually had done at that time.

This was a way to begin to remind them of the requirement to hallow the day that He had set aside and made special at the very time of the re-creation. This was not the institution of the Sabbath as a brand new principle that no one had ever heard of before. It was the reestablishment of the Sabbath and a reminder to the people of God—those whom He had called out of Egypt, which represents sin.

Coming out of sin, coming out of transgressing God's law, required what? It required the keeping of a law—the holy Sabbath day—which had preexisted that nation. So He gave twice as much on the preparation day—which was Friday to us, the sixth day of the week—to emphasize another important principle that we are going to talk about in the future, under the topic of how to keep the Sabbath. The Sabbath always has a preparation day.

In the very giving of manna, He emphasized the rules concerning the proper way to keep the Sabbath. You prepare on the sixth day of the week. He gave twice as much on that day, enough for two days, and made the one exception so that manna would not stink or rot, as it did on every other day of the week. There was enough to hold over, to keep it appropriately on that hallowed, seventh day.

Everything He did, even to feed the Israelites physically, pointed to the sanctification of the seventh day of the week and how holy and unique it was. The Israelites could not deny it because even though they did not believe and attempted to go out and gather manna on the seventh day, they learned the lesson that there was none.

When they tried to hold over more manna on every other day of the week, except the Sabbath, they found it was rotten and full of worms on the following day. Only on the seventh day of the week could you hold over some from the previous day. God was speaking long and loudly to them about how to sanctify His holy day.

Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the sabbath, in it there shall be none. And it came to pass, that there went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none. And the [Eternal] said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws?

This was prior to Mt. Sinai again. Yet, God is referring to established commandments and laws that were already in existence. "How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws?" What was included in those commandments and those laws that predated the time of Mt. Sinai and the Israelites? The Sabbath was included absolutely, because that is exactly what they were violating right here, which caused this very statement from God.

How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws? See, for that the [Eternal] hath given you the sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day. So the people rested on the seventh day.

The codification of the law at Mt. Sinai was not the institution for the first time of the Sabbath, but merely its confirmation in writing. It was a codification of that which already existed and had preexisted that time and went back all the way to the creation. From the very time God Himself set the very personal example by resting from His labors on that day, that is what made it hallowed and sanctified and what set it apart and made it special.

It has been special, holy and hallowed every seventh day of the week for almost the last six thousand years, whether human beings have observed it, known about it, understood it, or not. It has been a hallowed, special day.

Exodus 20:8–11:

Now we are ready to look at Exodus 20 and the Ten Commandments for keeping the Sabbath. Here is the fourth command; and even in the way God inspired it to be written, as it was given, how is it worded? "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy."

He did not say, "I am instituting the Sabbath day for the first time, so begin to keep it holy." No, the very wording inspired by God through His Holy Spirit was to emphasize again that this was not a new occurrence. This was not something instituted for the first time whatsoever. This is a reminder of a preexisting command that dated all the way back.

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the [Eternal] thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the [Eternal] made heaven and earth . . .

What do we find? The very significance for the substantiation of the importance of the Sabbath hearkens right back to the very institution of the creation of that Sabbath day. Why should men keep the Sabbath day? Why should they rest from their labors?

All their households have to keep the Sabbath. Your sons and daughters who are under your control in your homes, visitors, strangers within your gates are required, as long as they are in your domicile, not to be breaking the Sabbath. That is a requirement God places upon us, but I don't want to get ahead of myself because we will talk a lot more about that in a future sermon.

Why was God commanding this? What justification did He use to require this of His people now? He hearkened right back to the origin of the Sabbath.

For in six days the [Eternal] made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the [Eternal] blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

He hearkened back to His own personal example. In essence, He is saying, "I am not asking you to do anything that I didn't do. I set the example first. I rested on the seventh day," after He brought those heavenly bodies into alignment, to begin day and night. The evening and the morning were the first day. The evening and the morning were the second day and the third, fourth, fifth and sixth. The very first time those astrobodies revolved from sundown to sundown the seventh time, He hallowed it from the very beginning. He rested from His labors, and He set it as an example for human beings.

For in six days the [Eternal] made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore [That being the case, that God did that Himself—set the example—then, He says,] the [Eternal] blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

He hallowed it. He made it special. He set it apart and it is holy. At Mt. Sinai, we also find the Sabbath became that which would be the sign between God and His people, even though the Sabbath applies to all human beings. By virtue of being created, living and breathing upon this earth that God made, being a part of that process of the establishment of all that exists by virtue of those seven days of creation, all human beings are subject to these laws.

However, the only ones who are going to keep the laws, commandments, statutes and judgments of God are going to be those who have a true fear, love and respect for Him; and most human beings do not. Again, because we were born, as God has willed it, with carnal human natures that oppose everything God stands for, so human beings do it their own way.

The very first thing they give up is the Sabbath. They might have an appreciation for the law against murder or stealing because they don't want somebody to kill or rob them. So they will support the idea of those kinds of laws and commands. They will call them moral laws.

However, they won't support a law or command to keep the Sabbath given precisely at the same time in creation, because human beings do not find any value in the Sabbath day. To human beings, it is an infringement upon their right and their time to do the things they need to do and want to do, the things that are valuable and important to them.

So human beings have repudiated the Sabbath more than any other command because they find no value in it humanly. Human beings have separated themselves because they reject the revelation of God and they reject the laws that guide and affect all human beings on this earth. By virtue of the rejection of that law, we are paying the price, because there are penalties built in for lawbreaking.

Breaking the Sabbath is a penalty the entire world is paying, even right now. We don't begin to understand the significance of those penalties and what prices are actually being paid. When Christ returns, perhaps we will understand fully all the ramifications of Sabbath-breaking.

Because of our natural human natures, there is no way any of us would value the law in keeping the Sabbath day, except that you received a call out of this world. You received an understanding, a miracle within your very mind that gave you an appreciation for something which, by nature, you never would have.

That is the only way you will have an appreciation, a desire, to keep God's Sabbath day. It is as valid and applicable to human beings as every other law that has been made, but it is unappreciated by all—except those who have been called.

There are a number of groups out there that are "Sabbath keepers." We will find out that there is a whole lot more required in keeping and hallowing the Sabbath than that which is done by "Seventh Day" groups.

The Sabbath is a sign between God and His people. The people that God separated out as a nation, to be special, unique and to fulfill a particular purpose was Israel.

Exodus 31:12–18:

And the [Eternal] spake unto Moses, saying, Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep . . .

Now, why wasn't He out telling the other nations—the pagan nations of the world—that they also should keep the Sabbath? I have already told you that the Sabbath applies to every human being on the face of the earth and there are penalties for breaking it. So why wasn't he out communicating with all of these other nations? Here, He is isolating Israel, and He is saying:

Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations . . .

Was this to say that from this time forward, the Sabbath only applied to the Israelites, and everyone else was off the hook? No, what it means, brethren, is that God was calling this nation to be special and He was going to enter into a unique covenant relationship with the Israelites. He was not going to enter into a special relationship with any other people—only Israel.

All of the other nations were cut off from Him, separated from the God Who made them. For the purpose of writing lessons even for you and me in these last days, He called this nation and set them apart. However, He said, "If you are going to have a personalized relationship with me, if you are going to be different from all the other nations that are separated, ostracized, from my presence, then you are going to have to obey my commands, unlike all of the other nations of the world. If I am going to be close to you, if I am going to be your God, save you, protect you and bless you, then these are the things you are going to have to do."

These things have been incumbent upon all humanity, but have not been able to be fulfilled, except by those whom God has worked with. Even carnal Israel was unable to keep the Sabbath, as we find out through the history of the generations of that ancient nation.

"Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep . . ." Notice it is plural, which we will talk about a lot when we get to the Fundamental of Belief that speaks about the Holy Days. You find that the requirement to keep the Sabbath included not only the seventh day of the week, but also all of the Feasts of the Eternal listed in Leviticus 23. The weekly Sabbath was only the first, but we will not get ahead of ourselves.

Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the [Eternal] that doth sanctify you. Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you . . .

We have already found out that it is holy unto God. He said, if you are going to be my people and if I am going to be with you in a close personal relationship, then it is going to be holy to you as well.

. . . for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the sabbath of rest, holy to the [Eternal] . . .

We already found He said that as a command, it was to become holy unto Israel. Why? Because it is holy to the Eternal.

. . . whosoever doeth any work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death [That is how serious it was. That is how serious Sabbath-breaking is.]. Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant.

The Sabbath, you see, signified a unique and special unity between God and man. It is only those human beings that have an appreciation and fear for the living God Who made them and created in those seven days of creation all that exists, who will fear and truly be able to keep the seventh day and hallow it as God hallowed it by His own personal example. Those who are set apart and given that opportunity by Him will appreciate it.

"It is a sign between me and the children of Israel . . ." How long—just temporarily? Maybe just for a few generations? Maybe just for a few hundred years? Maybe just until Jesus Christ came and "did away" with the Sabbath? No.

It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days the [Eternal] made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested . . .

A reference again to the very example of the living God Who showed by His own will and personal practice exactly what He wanted human beings to do. On the seventh day He rested. Are we too good for God? Are we better than He is?

If the God Who made us sets the personal example by keeping the Sabbath, what should we be doing, brethren? Should we do any less?

. . . on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed. And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God.

This is when it was codified. This is when that law which existed from the very beginning was finally codified in writing, written on tables of stone among nine other commands, by the very finger of God.

Notice next, brethren, Ezekial 20:11–13, 19–20:

And I gave them my statutes, and shewed them my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them. Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths . . .

This is rehearsing again exactly the benevolence that He had shown to the Israelites in calling them out, making them a special nation, sanctifying them, setting them apart and giving them His priceless law. They were not to be a burden, an obligation to bring them down and oppress them; but the laws, statutes and commands of God were to be a blessing. They were to be something that would give great joy, peace and blessings if that nation appreciated them, including the Sabbath day.

Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the [Eternal] that sanctify them.

Keeping the Sabbath, brethren, was a sign of the sanctified people. How much sense does it make if that were still not true today? If the Sabbath is that important to God, if it is that which He instituted Himself by His own practice at the beginning of the re-creation, then it must be something critically important in the mind of our Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. He told Israel that it would be a sign that sanctified them and set them apart in a special relationship with God.

But the house of Israel rebelled against me in the wilderness: they walked not in my statutes, and they despised my judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them; and my sabbaths they greatly polluted: then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them in the wilderness, to consume them.

Although we won't have time to go through all of the examples—I'm trying to keep this as synoptic as possible—one of the significant failures of Israel, generation after generation, which caused them to endure the wrath of God in captivity, was, among other things, Sabbath-breaking. In order to have a relationship with God, it is so important and critical to hallow and respect the Sabbath that He set aside and made holy.

I am the [Eternal] your God [the same God Who created the Sabbath by keeping it Himself]; walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them; And hallow my sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that ye may know that I am the [Eternal] your God.

What is this saying, brethren? Sabbath-keepers then, have a relationship with God that other human beings do not. True Sabbath-keepers—which doesn't include the definition commonly used today, as we will see in future sermons, but true, legitimate Sabbath-keepers—are sanctified. They are set apart and are not like the rest of the people in the world.

It then begs the question, brethren, if this was a command for Israel at this time; that they were the holy nation set apart to be sanctified; and it was through the keeping of the Sabbath day that they would have a close, personal relationship with God; that they would be set apart, and it would be a sign of sanctification to hallow them; then who is the Israel of today? Who is that Israel to whom this same offer applies?

The Apostle Paul, who most people today that claim to be Christian want to use to champion their cause for doing away with the Sabbath day and all of God's other laws, is the very one to whom we turn to substantiate the validity of the Sabbath.

Romans 2:28–29:

For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly . . .

Paul was making a distinction between those who were born with the DNA of an Israelite, versus those now, in this transition, to whom Jesus Christ's Church was opened by His very sacrifice. Membership was offered to those who would come and worship God in Spirit. From that time forward, it had little to do with the birthright of being a physical Israelite. It was all of those who would be grafted in and made a part of spiritual Israel, as we are going to see.

For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly [It is something more than flesh, blood and physical heritage.]; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

We are talking about someone who has an opportunity for a relationship with God, just as ancient Israel did physically. Yet now, it is moving into a spiritual plane. Those laws have moved along with them and apply in the same manner to Israel of the Spirit just as much as they did to Israel of the flesh.

Galatians 6:15–16:

"For in Christ Jesus . . ." Who are we talking about? Are we talking about the ancient Israelites and the God of the Old Testament? Well, yes, in a way we are talking about the God of the Old Testament, but now He is the very Being Who has divested Himself of His divinity. He came, was born on this earth; He lived and completed His ministry; and He died, was resurrected and became our Savior.

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.

Who now is the Israel of God? Are they only those who were born physical Israelites? No, who are we talking about? Those who are in Jesus. That is what we saw at the beginning of verse 15. "For in Christ Jesus"—that is the whole topic. Who is, therefore, the Israel of God, but those who are in Christ Jesus by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit?

That is who Israel is today. That is the real significance of Israel—the sanctified people God has set apart and given an opportunity to have a special relationship with Him through our High Priest, Jesus Christ.

Back up to Galatians 3:26. Remember now, who is Paul writing to? He is writing to the Romans. He is writing to the Galatians. These are Gentile churches. These are not those who are of the physical lineage of Israel at all. They are Gentile by flesh, but what does he tell these Gentiles in Galatians 3:26?

For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus [the children of God]. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

So it comes through baptism. A relationship with Jesus Christ consists of being baptized into Christ and receiving the Holy Spirit—the very same Spirit the Father and the Son share between themselves. That is the Spirit that you and I share,

brethren, when we became baptized. If we have been developing, cultivating and making more room for that Spirit in our lives, then that is exactly what we have been made a part of—spiritual Israel.

". . . ye are all the children of God . . ."—even these Gentiles who were not Israelites by nature and who did not have Israelite DNA whatsoever.

For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed . . .

Abraham's seed. How did we get back to talking about Abraham's seed, which refers back to his progeny, through Isaac and Jacob, who were the Israelites? I thought we were talking about the New Testament Church of Jesus Christ. It is all one and the same.

. . . if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

What promise? The promises that were given to the Israelites. The promises of salvation in God's kingdom, the Promised Land—the spiritual significance of the fulfillment in the Spirit of that which was given to the ancient Israelites in the flesh.

So it is the Church, brethren, who is spiritual Israel. When we read those commands that say the Sabbath is a sign between God and His people, Israel, for all generations forever, who is fulfilling that requirement to keep the Sabbath holy and to hallow it today? It is the Church, spiritual Israel, who is required to hallow it, even more so than ancient Israel. God knew that ancient Israel could not worship Him from the heart in Spirit and in truth, because they were carnal. They did not share His Spirit, and they could not appreciate or value the Sabbath day whatsoever.

However, the Church, those who are part of the Body of Christ, who share the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, are those who can, not only physically keep the Sabbath, but also appreciate, value and love those laws, statutes and commandments. The Sabbath, being a perpetual covenant between God and His people, still applies as a commandment to the Church who is spiritual Israel.

Hebrews 4:3–10 is one of the significant sections of scripture which shows certifiably that the Sabbath has not been done away for God's people today:

For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day . . .

Here, again, is a reference to the very example of the living God Who set the precedent for all mankind. I think it is too easy for us to take for granted the significance of something that God Himself has done before He ever commanded it of a human being.

He set the example—the same way, as we will see later on, that Jesus Christ did. He told His disciples, "I am not expecting you to do anything that I have not showed you by example in my own life."

Here, that same God, before He became flesh and blood, when He was God of the second part—the One through whom the Father created all things—set the example Himself of Sabbath-keeping. I wonder if the Sabbath is important to that God.

. . . As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works. And in this place again, if they shall enter into my rest. Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached [Who? Israel.] entered not in because of unbelief: Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

What is that a reference to? David recorded that in Psalm 95. What is the apostle saying to the Hebrews in this epistle? He is setting the stage for saying, if that rest, the Promised Land and all the benefits and blessings that were supposed to come, had been completed and fulfilled absolutely for ancient Israel, then there would not have been a prophecy given through David hundreds of years later, generations down the line, from the time the Israelites entered into the Promised Land.

He would not then, through David, have been speaking again about the example of Israel and how they failed to receive the promises of the rest. That is exactly what the apostle is emphasizing here to try to make the point that the Sabbath has not been done away—even at this time following the very sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. For if Jesus had given them rest . . .

That is the Greek word *katapausis*, or from *Strong's*, *katapauo*. The term "rest" here, means "to settle down, to give rest"—what you might commonly think of; to rest, to relax.

. . . if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day [Meaning, He would not have written in this prophecy of David in Psalm 95 a future reference to a rest that Israel did not fulfill at all.]. There remaineth therefore . . .

What is the conclusion to the matter? Why is the apostle bringing this up and saying this to the Hebrews now, at this time?

"There remaineth therefore a rest . . ." Just a relaxation, right? No, this is not the Greek word *katapausis* or *katapauo*. This is the Greek word *sabbatismos*, mistranslated absolutely by the translators of the *King James*. "There remaineth therefore a [*sabbatismos*] . . ." Not a general rest or relaxation, but a keeping of the Sabbath. What is the whole point of what the apostle is saying here?

"There remaineth," because there was not a fulfillment of the rest promised to Israel. They were unworthy; they hardened their hearts because of unbelief; and they did not fulfill all of those promises, including the benefits that came from keeping the Sabbath. Because they broke the Sabbath and all of the laws and statutes of God, they did not receive that which God had promised to them.

He makes the point, because it was unfulfilled. It is certified in Psalm 95 by that which David recorded under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, something is unfinished, and because it was unfinished and Israel of old did not receive it: "There remaineth therefore [a keeping of the Sabbath] to the people of God."

Are you part of the people of God? Are you part of the Church? Are you part of the Body of Jesus Christ? If you are, then there remains for you, brethren, a keeping of the Sabbath, because the Sabbath has not gone out of vogue. It is not out of date.

The very significance of the Sabbath day has not even been fulfilled or completed. The Sabbath not only points back to the time of creation when God rested on that seventh day from His work, but more significantly, forward to a time in the future when something of greater magnitude is going to occur. That is the second coming of Jesus Christ and the ushering in of the millennial reign of Christ to take control of this earth—when the entire earth will finally have knowledge of God and be offered an opportunity for reconciliation with our Maker in a thousand-year period of rest. A thousand-year millennial reign of Christ is exactly what the Sabbath day represents, which we keep every seventh day from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset.

It is not just a memorial of something past—the creation—but it looks forward to the future. The reason the Sabbath was not done away is because what the Sabbath pictures and points to has not even been fulfilled or completed yet. Until the time Jesus Christ returns, no one can even begin to argue that the Sabbath is outdated or has used up its lifespan or usefulness. No, it still points to and pictures something week by week that has yet to be fulfilled and that we look forward to.

If we are a part of the Body of Christ, if we are being led by the Holy Spirit, if we are the children of God and if we are God's people, then there remains for us a keeping of the Sabbath. That is the point that humanity, even those who claim to be Christians today, does not understand whatsoever, brethren.

That Sabbath is still a sign between God and His people. The apostle was saying here that the Sabbath is still a sign between God and His people for a perpetual covenant forever through the generations of Israel. Spiritual Israel is who you are, brethren. That is exactly who you are.

There remaineth therefore a [*sabbatismos*, a keeping of the Sabbath] to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.

How many times can we see the examples where God points us to His own personalized example and says, "This is important. This is exactly what I expect

anyone to do who wants to have a personalized relationship with me. It cannot be done without following my example and keeping the Sabbath." That is how critical it is.

Yes, that Sabbath pictures the coming Millennium—the reign of Christ—and it will still be kept even when Jesus Christ returns. Let's notice Isaiah 66:22–23:

For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the [Eternal], so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another [This is a future prophecy of that time of Christ's return.], and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the [Eternal].

If the Sabbath was instituted and commanded from the beginning; if it was reaffirmed and codified on Mt. Sinai for the Israelites, who were called out to be a special nation to have a relationship with God, to have a covenant perpetually with that God; if it pointed to the fulfillment of spiritual Israel, those who would be part of the Body of Christ and share His Holy Spirit; and there remains a keeping of the Sabbath; and there is yet going to be a fulfillment of the keeping of the Sabbath for all flesh on this earth in the Millennium, I wonder if there might be something important about Sabbath-keeping. Do you think so? Do you think, just maybe, that God really has hallowed and sanctified His Sabbath and expects those who want to be in His Church to fear Him and to show that fear by, among other things, keeping the Sabbath? You better believe it, brethren.

It absolutely is required. Keeping the Sabbath shows our appreciation and hope for the fulfillment of God's plan of salvation for mankind. When we keep the Sabbath week by week, we should automatically think, every single week, about the return of Jesus Christ. We should think about His return to establish a perfect government, when all wars, pestilence, famine, killing and hatred will be eliminated.

There will be peace and rest upon this earth. All humankind will have an opportunity to understand the things that you have been called to understand now as a priceless gift. All human minds will be opened to the value of the knowledge of God and the opportunity to worship Him in Spirit and in truth, and they will be keeping the Sabbath.

Those who have a fear and appreciation for the gift, when they receive what you now have, brethren, will be keeping the Sabbath.

One other point before we close today. The Sabbath is not to be kept only when it is convenient. We are going to say a whole lot more in the future when I really drill down on the principles that are involved in proper Sabbath-keeping, but I want to make this one point so that you can think about it.

The Sabbath is not to be kept, if and only, when it is convenient. See, there are no exceptions to Sabbath-keeping. It is that holy; it is that special—there are no exceptions.

That seventh day of the week is so hallowed, special and important to God; and He emphasized it to the Israelites who were very much of an agrarian society, depending upon their crops. So, if anything would make the point to them, it would be the potential for saying, "Wait a minute, we are going to try to keep the Sabbath as often as we can, but surely, you know, when we get to harvesting time, we have to harvest our crops right at the right time. What happens if it falls on the Sabbath? Surely, there is an exception here. We want to keep the Sabbath most of the time because we understand it is important, but there must be an exception."

Exodus 34:21:

"Six days thou shalt work, but on the seventh day thou shalt rest: in earing time and in harvest thou shalt rest." Without exception—there are no exceptions to the rule. Not because your boss requires you to work on the Sabbath and you can't get out of it. Not because you have a special family function and you can't miss it. Not for any other reason does God give us an excuse for not keeping His Sabbath and putting it first.

Remember, this is the God Who set the example Himself by resting the entire period of time. I am sure God could have come up with a lot of other things He could have been doing. God of heaven and earth and all that exists set you and me the example by keeping the Sabbath Himself. He emphasized and said, "No exceptions." That is how special and hallowed the Sabbath day is.

Next time, we are going to look at the examples of Jesus Christ, the Apostle Paul, and the New Testament Church; and ultimately, we are going to get into some of the specific details—the do's and don'ts—in keeping the Sabbath day.