

## Fundamentals of Belief #12B: Sabbath or Sunday for Christians?

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This afternoon, we want to continue again in our long series we have been going through on the Fundamentals of Belief of the Church of God, The Eternal. We are addressing fundamental number twelve on the weekly Sabbath.

There are twenty-six fundamentals, as I have said before. The first twenty are exactly the original twenty that Mr. Armstrong wrote for the Radio Church of God, which is the basis of this remnant body. The remaining six are ones that have been added in the last number of years to address specific issues that have come up and become contentious within the Body. When we get up to those, obviously I will spend a lot of time going through them. I look forward to going through all of these.

The value of this series, brethren, is that it gives a reminder to many of you who have been in the Church for many years about the basis of our confidence in those doctrines we were originally taught years ago. For those of you who are newer within the Body or have grown up in it, but never may have fully studied those things out, it gives you a good foundation for understanding—maybe for the first time—some of those fundamental principles.

I have learned, even from the feedback I have gotten from a number of you, not to take too much for granted. In some ways, I have worried about certain topics—that I was going to be too simplistic, or that certain things I would go through would be things automatically understood and accepted or redundant.

I have found by the feedback a number of things I took for granted that many of you commented on. Like, "Wow, I didn't know that," or "I had forgotten that particular facet of the substantiation for our beliefs." I have tried not to take any of those things for granted and at least provide a series, especially on tape, that can be used to go back and to go through and substantiate in detail the basis for the things we do and what we are holding onto today.

We are on fundamental number twelve now, the weekly Sabbath. Last time, we went through and looked at the most significant aspects for the reasons why we keep the Sabbath and not any other day, and why we hold onto and hallow that day. We went through the command for the Sabbath. We saw that the Sabbath day was not something commanded for the first time on Mt. Sinai. It was actually ordained by God from the very beginning—the re-creation of the earth. God was the One Himself who hallowed that day and made it holy by His own personal keeping—the seventh day and none other—from sundown to sundown.

Let's read again fundamental 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.

We have gone through the fundamentals; we have shown you the commands, highlighted the significance of the Sabbath all the way from the beginning, and shown you that it does apply. It applied to ancient Israel, but it applied long before and long after Israel, to the Church, and it will be kept even when Jesus Christ returns in His Millennial reign.

The Sabbath is not out-of-date. It does not go out of fashion whatsoever. That Sabbath was made for man, and it was made for a reason. It is to our benefit to understand and keep it. There are great blessings that come from being obedient in Sabbath-keeping and curses that automatically befall those who break the Sabbath.

Before getting into the examples, because we do want to substantiate the fact that Christ, the Apostle Paul, and the New Testament Church all kept the Sabbath as well, it would not be complete if I did not go through and give you some alternatives. In substantiating why we as the Church always kept and continue to keep the Sabbath holy today, we need to ask the question, as opposed to what?

Most of those in the world who profess to be Christians, you recognize, claim to keep and hallow Sunday. We need to stop and go through some of the examples and see if there is any basis for Sunday-keeping whatsoever. Since most who call themselves Christians observe Sunday, is there any authority for making the first day of the week holy? Did it become the Sabbath? Did a change occur? Is there any evidence in the Bible, or otherwise, that the Sabbath actually changed from the seventh to the first day of the week, so that true Christians today are obligated to hallow the first day rather than the seventh day?

I will start by telling you that there are only eight verses in the New Testament that contain the phrase, "the first day of the week." We want to look at most of those—specifically, six out of the eight. We will see if there is any command to keep the first day of the week; or if not, what is said about the first day of the week. Here is one of them.

Matthew 28:1:

In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.

What does this statement tell us? Well, Christ had already died. In fact, He had already been in the grave three days and three nights. He had been resurrected at this point, and the account that Matthew is writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit was written a number of years after these events.

He has chronicled in his gospel what occurred; and here, several years down the road when he is writing this, he still calls the Sabbath what—the first day of the week? No, it is the day preceding the first day of the week. There is a distinction between the Sabbath and the first day of the week.

"In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week." We certainly can say that by the time Matthew recorded this, there had not been a change to make the first day of the week the Sabbath, or else he would have called the first day of the week "the Sabbath," wouldn't he? Yet, at this late date, he still is referring to the day before the first—which is the seventh day of the week—as the Sabbath, distinctly apart from the first day.

After the death and resurrection of Christ, when supposedly the law was nailed to the cross, Matthew still records that the Sabbath precedes the first day of the week.

Notice another example in Mark 16:1–2:

And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him. And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun.

Here again, even Mark as one of the synoptists chronicles also, a number of years since these events, that there is a distinction between the first day of the week and the Sabbath. I recognize that someone can claim, "Well, that is because they were Jews, and out of history and habit, they always referred to the Jewish Sabbath as the Sabbath. That doesn't mean there wasn't a change that occurred which made the first day of the week that which God hallowed for Christians to keep."

The other thing that we note in the use of references to the first day of the week in the New Testament is that the first day invariably is a workday. We will not find a single example where the first day of the week is not referred to as a workday. We are going to look at a couple of scriptures that are a little bit more confusing—scriptures that people try to use to say that Sunday is a worship day. But what we are going to find is that the first day of the week continues to be a workday, not a rest day.

The majority of those who claim to keep Sunday now do not even keep it as a rest day. I think generations ago, there used to be a lot of devout Sunday keepers who were very religious about how they kept their "worship day." They would not work or do a lot of things on that day. Today, it is very hard to find anyone who doesn't continue to do exactly their own will, even if they go to a church service in the morning.

Churches seem to make so many accommodations for people; they will have services the night before, later in the day or all over. That way people can get all their other activities in, but still have a chance to sit and do their twenty minutes or so on a pew. They put their money in a collection box, leave and feel good about themselves spiritually that they are serving God. At least in the old days there used to be a little bit more conviction among those who were keeping Sunday. That is not so today.

The first day of the week was a workday. One of the verses we won't focus on is Mark 16:9, which is one of those that references the first day of the week. It is the controversial scripture that we have already handled in past sermons concerning

Christ's resurrection. It says, ". . . when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week . . ." We recognize that, by the time Mary Magdalene and the others arrived at dawn on Sunday morning, Christ had already been resurrected. The placement of the comma is the difference in that scripture, as we understand.

We have already gone through that in at least two sermons, and I won't repeat all of that today. Those sermons demonstrated and proved very specifically that Christ was resurrected at the going down of the sun at the end of the Sabbath. Saturday evening as the sun was going down is when Christ was resurrected. So when these women arrived at the sepulcher early the next morning on the first day of the week, they found that He was already gone. There was no one who saw Him in the process of rising out of the tomb and being resurrected.

When they arrived, He had risen and that is the meaning of it. That is the other thing we find in Luke 23:56:

"And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments . . ." This is after they laid Him in the tomb; and then, they let off to keep the Sabbath. They were returning to complete the preparation of the body according to the tradition, with all of the spices and ointments, because they had not had time to do that in order to put Him in the tomb before the sun went down and the High Day began. So now they are returning. "And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the sabbath day according to the commandment."

That, you understand, is the difference which confuses everyone who misunderstands the order that occurred here. That High Day which was beginning when they laid Him in the tomb was the First Day of Unleavened Bread, which was a Thursday that year. Friday after that Sabbath was when they prepared the spices, and then they rested the weekly Sabbath that followed. It was after that weekly Sabbath was completed that they were going to do something.

Continuing in Luke 24:1:

Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them.

This was a workday for them. This was the day after they had rested on the Sabbath. They were bringing the spices and ointments to complete the preparation of the body that they thought they were still going to find in the tomb.

John 20:1 repeats the same story, referencing the first day of the week. It is a parallel, so we won't spend any time on that, but let's move to John 20:19:

"Then the same day at evening . . ." The same day as what? The same day they found the sepulcher empty, which was the first day of the week—Sunday.

Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.

Here is one of the scriptures that Sunday keepers love to twist and say, "See, here they were gathered together on the first day of the week in a worship service. This was when Christ came and joined them miraculously in their midst. This was when Christ was hallowing Sunday as the new day to be kept by Christians." Is that what was really going on here? What does it say?

It says that the disciples were assembled, why? Why were they assembled there? Were they there to keep a worship service in recognition of the resurrection of Christ? Keep in mind, brethren, this is the evening of the same first day that they found the tomb empty that morning. The women went to tell the disciples that the tomb was empty and most of them didn't believe it. So here, this same evening, it says they are assembled together.

Is it because they have now decided they are going to worship and hallow the first day of the week in recognition of the resurrection of the Christ? Most of them didn't even believe at this time that He had been resurrected. They really didn't know. They just knew that the body was missing.

The disciples were assembled, why? For fear of the Jews. It doesn't sound like they were assembled together in this house or building because they were conducting a worship service whatsoever. No, they were hiding. They were huddled together—hiding—for fear of the Jews. That was the purpose of their assembly. It wasn't a worship service on Sunday whatsoever.

. . . when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.

What was happening was that Christ returned after being sanctified by His Father in heaven as the wave sheaf on that very wave-sheaf Sunday, which we accept in that picture of the plan He has revealed to us. He did arise at the end of the Sabbath, the evening before. Remember, Mary Magdalene was not allowed to touch Him at the time, because He had not been sanctified by His Father yet. He arose, was sanctified by His Father in heaven, returned and then allowed His disciples to touch Him.

He returned on the very same day after being sanctified and accepted as the wave sheaf, becoming the High Priest. Then, He appeared before His disciples. All of that took place on the first day of the week. Was there any new hallowing of the first day of the week as a holy day, to be kept as a Sabbath? Absolutely not.

The historians will tell you that the reason they keep Sunday is because it was when Christ was resurrected. They believe that Christ was resurrected on Sunday morning. We have gone through all the evidence to show you that is not what happened. If you accept the concept that Christ rose on Sunday morning, you might have an argument for the fact that, maybe, it would be worth hallowing. However, what if we prove that He didn't rise on Sunday morning whatsoever?

We have already been through those scriptures in the previous sermons I gave on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We proved that He did rise at the very end of the seventh day as the sun was setting, and not on the first day of the week at all. So if Christ was not resurrected on the first day of the week, how can the first day of the week ever be considered a day to which the Sabbath was changed?

This assembly was not a worship service commemorating the resurrection, because the disciples did not even believe fully at this time that He had been resurrected. They were not convinced until He appeared and began to teach them what had happened.

Let's turn to another scripture that is used as a supposed indication of Sunday worship.

Acts 20:7–14:

And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.

Oh boy, maybe this is a good indication that the Sabbath was changed to Sunday. Here, we have Paul preaching on the first day of the week. Is that what really happened?

And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight. And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together.

What you find is really occurring here, brethren, is that this was a hold-over assembly for those who were keeping the seventh-day Sabbath. Paul was preaching to them on the Sabbath because these people were very interested in getting all of the instruction they could from him during the short period of time he was with them before he left.

The clear indication is that Paul continued to preach to them past the going down of the sun. When does the first day of the week begin? Remember, the first day of the week, like every day, begins at the going down of the sun. It says that he continued his speech until midnight on the first day of the week. When is midnight on the first day of the week? It is not at the end; it is still at the beginning. The night portion of the first day of the week is the beginning of the day. The day portion ends the first day of the week.

Obviously, what occurred is that they held over from the weekly Sabbath and Paul continued to teach them, as if in a Bible study—the same way we often have Bible studies on other days of the week besides the Sabbath. He continued to preach to them and teach them past the end of the Sabbath into the first day of the week, and it says here, "And there were many lights in the upper chamber . . ." This was at night. This was on the first day of the week, and it was at night. The first day of the week had just begun, and he preached all the way up until midnight. Let's notice the rest of the story:

And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead [This is another admonition against our droopy eyes during Sabbath services.]. And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him. When he therefore



was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed.

This is still on that same first day of the week. Paul preached until midnight, and this incredible resurrection from the dead occurred. ". . . even till break of day . . ." So the sun is coming up now, and what is Paul going to do? If he is hallowing this first day of the week as a holy day when we are to worship God and rest from our labors, then Paul should be setting the proper example for keeping and hallowing the first day of the week, don't you think? But now the sun has come up, and what is Paul doing? Continuing on:

And they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted. And we went before to ship, and sailed unto Assos, there intending to take in Paul: for so had he appointed, minding himself to go afoot. And when he met with us at Assos, we took him in, and came to Mitylene.

What is really happening here? The disciples were assembled on a peninsula in Asia Minor for this Sabbath meeting that carried on until midnight. The others who accompanied Paul, including the disciple who is writing the account, actually went by ship the night before. They were going to sail around this peninsula to the other side. Paul stayed with the brethren here, so he would have that much more time to be with them before departing. He decided that he was going to meet the others by walking across the peninsula to this other city.

Because it was a long peninsula that sticks out into the Mediterranean Sea, it took them all night to sail around this peninsula. Paul was able to meet them, probably not too many hours later, by leaving the next morning. The distance across that peninsula, brethren, is 19 ½ miles. What you find is that on this supposed holy worship day of rest, Paul, in his example, walked 19 ½ miles across this peninsula.

Does that make any sense? If God intended that to be a worship day, especially for the Gentile churches whom Paul had raised up, would his example have been appropriately conducive to hallowing Sunday as the Sabbath? Not at all. No, the first day of the week continued to be a workday, and it obviously was for Paul because it is the day he took this long journey. It was a travel day. It was a hold over from the keeping of the Sabbath day, where they had been together. He continued to preach to them, giving a Bible study into the wee hours of the night and until dawn. He then walked 19 ½ miles across the peninsula to meet up with his traveling companions on the other side.

It is not evidence whatsoever of any change in God's plan to treat Sunday as a workday. Again, since we know Christ wasn't resurrected on Sunday, how could it ever be a day that was going to be hallowed in commemoration of Christ's resurrection? If Christ wasn't resurrected on Sunday, how can it ever be that which we should set aside for worship?

Let's notice the last scripture that is used to contend for a Sunday worship service—1 Corinthians 16:1. We are told that this is proof positive they were having a worship service and sending around the collection plate on a Sunday morning.

1 Corinthians 16:1–3:

Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week [Here is the supposed command of Paul that is interpreted as ordering Christians to keep Sunday.] let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem.

What was Paul commanding here, and what was taking place? Was Paul commanding them to set aside Sunday as a worship service and to take up a collection for the ministry? Is that what was happening? Not at all. Notice it again. "Now concerning the collection for the saints . . ."

Was this a collection, an offering, for the support of the ministry? No, this was actually a collection for those members of the Church who were having serious problems and were in danger of starving in Jerusalem. A collection of goods was being put together from the more prosperous areas in Asia Minor in order to send to and help out those who were suffering in the Church in Jerusalem.

Now concerning the collection for the saints [Not a collection for the ministry, not a Sunday morning collection plate offering.], as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store . . .

What were they laying by in store? They were probably putting together a number of dry goods that would hold over and be preserved for days or weeks—however long it would take to get to Jerusalem. They were dry goods being

stored up. Paul is saying in advance to gather all of these things together on the first day of the week, so that they are ready. Then, when they are ready to be transported, he could send word to a person selected to actually take those goods to Jerusalem for the benefit of the saints.

Now, what does this really tell us about the significance of the first day of the week? It is more confirmation, brethren, that the first day of the week was a workday. This was not a hallowed day of worship and rest whatsoever. This was the day they were being commanded to take all that they would be offering for their needy brethren and to compile all of those goods. There was a lot of heavy labor in preparing these food items.

"Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store . . ." That means they were going to get out there with the muscle to start loading up all of these goods. ". . . as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." He didn't want to wait and have this gathering happen at the last minute when he was there, ready to travel on. No, he wanted all of that prepared ahead of time, put in place, stored up, so that it was all organized and ready to go when he arrived. The first day of the week was when they were doing all of this work to gather it.

"And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem." It was then going to be taken and transported to those needy brethren in Jerusalem. This was not a Sunday morning collection for the ministry, but a gathering of goods for the poor saints in Jerusalem. It was a workday of gathering, not a worship day whatsoever.

Those are the eight places in the Bible that mention the first day of the week. Did you see any one of them, brethren, which indicated a command to change from keeping the Sabbath day on the seventh day of the week to the first day of the week? Neither did I.

It is interesting also that historical accounts, even of the Protestant Reformation, quote certain of the Catholic writers. One of the substantiations they use to try and refute what the Protestants were doing is that they take credit for the keeping of Sunday as a worship day. They say it was purely Catholic in origin. Therefore, they criticize the Protestants who keep Sunday by saying that, even though they broke away, the fact they continued to keep Sunday shows they were actually showing deference to the authority of the Catholic church.

It was the leaders of the Catholic church, early on, who were the authors for the change to Sunday. There is no Biblical substantiation for a change to Sunday; it was the making of men. The fact that the Protestants also adopted and continued to keep Sunday, even after they broke away from the Catholic body, was considered by the Catholics as a continuation for the substantiation of their authority—that the Protestants still showed deference to the Catholics by virtue of continuing to keep a day that they authorized and initiated.

How much more plain can we make it, brethren, that God was not the author of Sunday worship whatsoever? The Sabbath, as we have already seen, was the day that God hallowed. God hallowed the seventh day of the week and by His own example, He made it holy and set it as a rest day. He commanded it for all men, but He also said that the only ones who would be keeping it would be those who were His, the very Body of Christ.

They would be those who respected and loved the laws of God, because the Sabbath is a sign between God and His people. Men reject the Sabbath. The men of this world reject all that God has made holy. Therefore, the only ones whom you will find truly, legitimately keeping the Sabbath day are those who fear and respect the God who made us all.

Let's look now at some of the examples. Our fundamental says that we are ". . . following the commands and example of the Apostle Paul, the New Testament Church, and Jesus." If we haven't found any evidence for a change from Sabbath to Sunday as the day of worship, can we find examples of Jesus Christ, the Apostle Paul, and the New Testament Church continuing to keep the seventh-day Sabbath?

Let's notice it, beginning in Luke 4:15. What was Christ doing in His lifetime?

Luke 4:15–16:

And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all. And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read.

What is Jesus Christ doing in this personal example? He is going to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as His custom was, ". . . and stood up for to read."

Verses 30–32:

But he passing through the midst of them went his way, And came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the sabbath days. And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power.

You find Christ, by His own personal example, keeping the Sabbath and teaching on the Sabbath day in the synagogue.

Luke 6:6:

"And it came to pass also on another sabbath, that he entered into the synagogue and taught . . ."—further substantiation of Christ's custom and what He was doing personally.

Now we get to the one that is very interesting. I want to make a number of comments about this.

Luke 13:10–16:

And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself. And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. And he laid his hands on her: and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work: in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day. The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?

This was one of the things that I remember being astonished by a number of years ago on a tape that I heard by Mr. Raymond Cole. He gave an explanation that I had never heard, and I am very certain none of you ever heard either before he gave it to you. The significance of this story goes far beyond a mere substantiation that Christ was keeping the Sabbath. How important was this example by Christ, in the healing of this woman who had been infirm for eighteen years? What was Christ really saying, and what was He really doing?

I didn't see this written—this explanation that Mr. Cole gave—anywhere in any of the old material. Yet, when I heard it, it hit me like a ton of bricks. I said, "That is significant." What was it? Mr. Cole explained that Christ intentionally healed on the Sabbath day because He was picturing, in prophecy, the coming of His Millennial reign when all mankind would be loosed from the bonds of Satan.

Isn't that what the plan of salvation is all about? Isn't that what the Sabbath really pictures? It is not just a memorial of the day God hallowed in creation. It is a day that represents, week by week, the promise of a time when man is going to be reconciled to God. All of the pain and suffering that comes from our own human minds under the sway of Satan the Devil, who has bound us, will be removed. All of the prices and curses that we are under and paying now are going to be lifted in that glorious Kingdom when Christ will be ruling as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

It is that which is pictured, brethren, by the seventh millennial day. Six thousand years have been set aside for man to prove, through their own inane rebellion, the curses that come upon us by pursuing our own minds and hearts. The seventh day, the seven-thousandth year, is that time of rest, peace and reconciliation of God and man. It is the time when Jesus Christ Himself, having dethroned Satan the Devil, will be King of Kings and Lord of Lords, ruling all nations of the earth and restoring all things in a glorious, harmonious opportunity for men.

All will have an opportunity to be loosed from the bonds of sin, having been called to understand this way of life, to have the peace, security and benefits that come from obedience to that way. They will have the very opportunities that each one of you has received right now, brethren. That is exactly what Jesus Christ was doing by this very example of healing on the Sabbath day. He was picturing the coming healing.

As this very woman, who was infirm for eighteen years, was loosed physically from the bonds of Satan who had bound and bent her in a bowed fashion for all of those years, Christ intentionally healed on the Sabbath to picture the very coming of the Millennium. Did you understand that before? I didn't, and I read this example a dozen times.

I remember sitting and hearing that tape when Mr. Cole explained this, and it really hit me. I said, "You know what, that is the gift of the Holy Spirit revealing new things. That is not new knowledge or understanding that contradicts, in any way, any of the things we were taught before in the Church." Tell me that you do not

recognize it as adding an incredible amount of depth to what Christ was accomplishing. That was an unfolding of the scriptures for us to understand that much more.

How does that contrast to the other ministers who once believed and taught what we still do? They still profess some acceptance of the Sabbath and Holy Days and certain of those doctrines, but they have rejected the very authority of Jesus Christ and His revelation in these last days.

I am telling you, brethren, their's is a dead ministry. I will get all kind of criticism from those who want to take exception with that statement. I am not afraid of it. Their's is a dead ministry. The only thing they have to hold onto is a certain amount of past glory that they try and continue to preach. They try to preach something that is going to attract people to their cause, but their glory was in the years when they were receiving inspiration from the Holy Spirit and when they had not rejected the true doctrines.

The only thing they have left now, brethren, is to continue to repeat the same old things, or else to preach new things that contradict. You do not receive a lively, growing, inspiring ministry from those men. They have nothing to offer because it is not led by the Holy Spirit.

The minister you have here, who has been preaching to you for all of these years, continues to give you new understanding by the Holy Spirit, and so he has for years. This was just one of the ones that compelled me—this explanation of this healing, the significance of the Sabbath, and what Christ was doing—actually laying down a prophecy in how He healed, picturing His Millennial reign to come. It was significant.

However, I know a lot of people missed it. I remember asking a number of people in the next weeks and months when I would see them, "Did you hear what he said? Did you catch that?" It went right over many people's heads. They didn't recognize how significant that kind of understanding was.

I am here to tell you, brethren, that if you value the work of God through His chosen servants, then there is significance to the things you are hearing. They are coming from the very mind of Jesus Christ and not out of the mind of a man. There is new growth and new opportunity to hear and grow spiritually in the things you are

learning. Please don't underestimate that, even if some of them are hard to understand. The writings of Paul were hard to understand, but they were absolutely the words of God.

What needs to happen, then, if we have difficulty understanding? Criticize the speaker as needing to change to come down to our level more? Or, is it a growth opportunity for each one of us? We should be learning how to hear, respond and absorb the things we are being taught. It was inspiring for me to begin to receive the words from Jesus Christ through a truly faithful servant.

I sat as a teenager in the apostate Worldwide Church of God, in "the house of God"—this grandiose theater—and I heard from the highest evangelists who were still left in that organization. I sat, fumed and twisted in my seat because the things they were preaching were dead, and there was no life in their words whatsoever. One minister, who had been a pastor in the church that I was in as a teenager in Houston, Texas, had given a sermon which had become famous at the Feast of Tabernacles in Squaw Valley one year.

I heard him then, when he became the pastor in Houston, repeat that sermon. It was his most famous, well-acclaimed sermon, so he repeated it; and then I heard it twice when I was in Pasadena when he came out there. I probably heard that sermon four or five times in total, and you know what I concluded? There is no more inspiration. There is nothing new. There is no new inspiration giving them that flood from Jesus Christ. They have to go back and try to live off their past laurels, their past glory; so they repeat the old sermons they once gave when they were inspired. The inspiration isn't there anymore.

How stark was the contrast when, by the mercy and intervention of God, I finally found Church of God, The Eternal. I found living proof of Christ's continued work through a human servant. The words were alive. They continued to preach the truth, and it was in total harmony with the things we had always been taught, but it was an expansion. It was a growth on everything we had learned, giving us more depth and more understanding that we never had before.

The things you are learning today, brethren, are not even things you can go back and find in the old literature. We are well past that now—building on that as a foundation. The fundamentals I am going through for you now, are going back to remind us of that foundation. However, the things you are receiving week after week



from the ministry of Mr. Cole are adding and expanding upon that foundation in ways we never had before. It is living and growing. I hope, with all that is within me, that you appreciate it. Sorry for that tangent, but I do feel that it is important.

Christ was substantiating the value of the Sabbath—not just because He was a Jew and doing that which He had done all of His life by custom. He was certifying, by this very act of healing on the Sabbath, how important and valuable the Sabbath day was and what the Sabbath day pictured for the future.

The Sabbath was not done away, because the purpose of the Sabbath has not been fulfilled yet. The Sabbath pictures the Millennial reign of Christ which is yet to come. The Sabbath will still be required and hallowed as long as that earth continues to revolve on its axis and orbit the sun. The seventh day is hallowed as the Sabbath day, and those who have a relationship with the true God will keep it.

John 13:15–16—for anyone who doesn't believe it and wants to say, "Well, Christ just kept the Sabbath because He was a Jew, but it isn't required of the Church today." What did Christ say? This is the time of the last Passover that He took with His disciples. It is specifically in connection with the foot washing service, but it actually goes far beyond that, as I will show you.

John 13:15–16:

For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.

Yes, He was speaking here specifically in terms of the foot washing service, but that was only the last of many examples He set during His entire life. In that three and a half year ministry with His disciples, everything He did was an example; and He was teaching them the exact way they were to behave and live.

The Sabbath was not done away. He kept it, and He said He was giving them an example. You don't believe that? What about 1 John 2:3? This book obviously was written decades after the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This was probably in the neighborhood of 90 AD, John being the last surviving of the disciples and apostles. Here, he is writing in his very old age, and what do we find John recording under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit?

1 John 2:3–7:

"And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." It doesn't sound like he was teaching the new and improved church—those who had grown after all of these decades of fifty years or so—that now they had no requirement to keep the commandments anymore.

And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

What is one of those commandments? The fourth commandment is the one to keep the Sabbath.

But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

What was John telling us we are to do if we want to be true Christians—not those who just profess Christ as our Lord and Savior, but a real Christian? "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." How did Christ walk in the flesh? Was He a Sabbath-keeper or wasn't He?

John was substantiating by this very statement that Christ wasn't doing what He did just because He was following the customs of the Jews. Everything Christ did was an example for how His people, those who would be part of the Body of Christ, were also to behave.

". . . ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." If Christ kept the Sabbath, then what should we be doing? Unless we just want to profess Christianity and not really act upon it.

Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning.

So it is with us, brethren. We had a commandment, as well, from the beginning of the work of the last days, from a servant whom God raised up to teach us. All of those things were part of the foundation of the truth that came directly from Jesus Christ—not out of the study of Mr. Herbert Armstrong, and not because

he studied the works of other men, as so many try to tell us. They claim that he stole what he believed and taught from this source and that source and kind of put it all together in a nice package and sold us a bill of goods that we all fell for.

We received a commandment from the beginning, and it was the commandment of Jesus Christ. It included the keeping of the Sabbath day and the Holy Days. It included the understanding of the value of those days, what they picture in the overall plan of salvation and what God is working out on this earth. It is still in vogue. It still applies. It hasn't been done away with. Its purpose has not even been fulfilled yet.

So yes, Christ kept the Sabbath day, and not only that, He said the things He did were an example. The Apostle John even certified that what Christ did was an example for us, and if we want to have a part of Christ, then we need to be walking and doing exactly what He is doing. That means we have to be Sabbath-keepers. Why else did God say the Sabbath was a sign between Him and His people?

Those who have a real love and respect for Jesus Christ are also going to be keeping the Sabbath, because Christ is a Sabbath-keeper. What about the Apostle Paul? Did Paul keep the Sabbath day?

Let's notice Acts 13:14, 42-44:

But when they departed from Perga, they came to Antioch in Pisidia, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and sat down. (Verse 42) And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath.

Maybe Paul was just keeping the Sabbath because he was raised a Jew and was continuing to do the customs of his family. No, Paul was the one who raised up the churches of the Gentiles. It would be awfully confusing, don't you think, if this so-called new religion of Christianity were to repudiate the commandments of God, including the Sabbath day.

Some might explain it as: "What Paul was doing was going into the synagogue to seek out people he could rob away, because once he got them on the hook, then he was going to teach them Sunday. Then he wouldn't be going in on the Sabbath anymore. When he came into a city, he would start in the synagogue, get them on the

hook, and then he would tell them that they weren't going to meet on the Sabbath anymore because Christ was resurrected on Sunday morning, so that is the new holy day. He would then tell them that from now on, the next week, they would start meeting on Sunday." Is that what Paul was doing? Not at all.

". . . the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next sabbath." It seems like Paul was going to continue to come back on the Sabbath.

Now when the congregation was broken up, many of the Jews and religious proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas: who, speaking to them, persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God.

If Paul was supposedly the apostle who repudiated the Sabbath, he certainly missed a golden opportunity to try to teach them that the Sabbath had been done away.

Acts 17:1–3:

Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews: And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.

Now here, the very message Paul is bringing to them is that of the risen Christ, and yet he continues to preach to them Sabbath after Sabbath after Sabbath—not on Sunday. If he was preaching that the risen Christ rose on Sunday morning and that now Sunday was the hallowed day, there should have been a transition, right? Yet, Paul's consistent habit is that he continues to teach on and hallow the Sabbath day.

Acts 18:1–4:

After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth; And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them. And because he was of

the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers. And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks.

Here, he is dealing with Gentiles, not with Jews at all; yet he continues to uphold the Sabbath and to teach both Jews and Greeks on the Sabbath day. That is the personal example Paul set.

So was Paul just doing that which was his own personal custom, but at the same time, although it might have been confusing, saying, "Don't do everything I am doing. I am a Pharisee, so the rules are a little different for me; but you Gentiles, you don't have to do the same things I am doing"? What did Paul say?

1 Thessalonians 2:13–14:

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe. For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus . . .

What were the Churches in the New Testament period doing? You know the Church in Judea was continuing to keep the Sabbath. So here, it was an example, even for the Gentile Churches, that they were to follow (and had followed) the Churches of Judea in the manner of their worship.

"For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judaea are in Christ Jesus . . ." These Sabbath-keeping Churches in Palestine absolutely were setting the very example that all the Gentile Churches were to follow. They were Sabbath-keepers.

Philippians 3:16–17:

"Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule . . ." Lest any of us, brethren, begin to think that this little congregation over here can have their own doctrine, and this congregation can do it a little bit different; we are all God's people, even though we have a little bit different beliefs on different things. What did Paul say?

Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.

Paul was saying that he was an example. He wasn't just doing the things he did because he had been raised and had grown up to become a Pharisee. He was setting an example for the Gentile Churches, and everything he did was an example for those Churches—those Churches which were in Jesus Christ. So Paul had the behavior of one who was walking in the way of Jesus Christ—not in Pharisaic tradition whatsoever.

Keeping the Sabbath, therefore, was not part of a Pharisaic ritual. It was part of the requirement that Christ Himself exemplified in His own life and that Paul continued to exemplify for the Church. He said it was an example.

Notice Philippians 4:9:

Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me [Paul, using himself as an example], do [likewise, just as Paul did; likewise, just as Jesus Christ did]: and the God of peace shall be with you.

1 Corinthians 4:15–16:

For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me.

Paul is saying, "I have begotten you through the gospel." Was he being arrogant? Was he taking credit for that which Christ did? Not at all. Paul was the instrument Jesus Christ used to raise up those Churches.

There is no qualification there. This is not the one that most of our anti-authority, former members want to quote. They quote the one that says, "Follow me as I follow Christ." They want to categorize and say, "See, only as long as we think you are following Christ; that is the only command." Paul must have left it out. Somehow he forgot to add that qualification, because he said very simply and strictly here, "Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me."

What was he saying? Was he saying to follow a man and do whatever he tells you? No, because he said in Galatians 1:8: "...though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." So no, he is not telling you to follow the ideas and concepts that come out of the mind of men—even himself—because no one can change the truth.

He is saying, "I am a faithful servant—a steward—and I have been following the example of Jesus Christ; so do what I am doing, because I am setting you the proper example." Should any of us be able to tell if that example were ever to change? Yes. How? It would be different; it would be a change; and it would be a departure from what we were taught previously. The way to distinguish, to make sure you are not led down the Tully trail, is to know the difference in what was taught from the beginning. That way, you can have something to measure it against in the future.

If you don't see a change, if you see exactly the same example, the consistency, the upholding of the very foundation of the truth as we received from the beginning, then you can trust it. If you see it continue to grow—you see that foundation and that building upon the foundation expand and become even more significant, never repudiating the foundation, but growing upon that foundation—then you know that example has continued to be consistent. You can follow in confidence—not because you are following a man.

If you are following a man now, brethren, it is because you don't recognize Christ as the One who is leading and guiding His people. If you recognize that it is the operation of Jesus Christ, then you don't get hung up with concerns about following a man. If you can't see Christ because Christ isn't here, then please run, brethren—don't walk—and get away from us as quickly as you can. If Christ is not here, then He doesn't want you here.

Christ is here and is teaching, just as Paul claimed to be the faithful servant of Jesus Christ, and thereby was not ashamed to say, "Follow me, hear, and respond because I am teaching you the truth." Those things didn't come out of the mind of Paul at all, but it was what he had been taught. He delivered it to the people whom God called, chose, and placed within the Body.

If that is what you see going on in the ministry you are hearing that is serving you, then you can have that same confidence—not worried that you will ever be blinded if a man changes. You will know a change, won't you? If you hear

something different from what you heard before, won't you know? However, if you hear exactly the same thing, but an expansion that makes it even more full, then you should have full confidence in what you are hearing and be willing to accept it and continue in it.

That is why Paul said without equivocation, "Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me." He wasn't saying to follow him instead of Christ. He was just asserting the fact that he had been and continued to be a faithful representative and that you could follow his example. Paul was a Sabbath-keeper, brethren, and he said to follow him because his example was exactly that which is required of all true Christians.

The Gentile Churches, as well as the Judean Churches, kept the Sabbath. The promises of salvation are offered to all who will live and love God's Sabbaths.

Let's notice Isaiah 56:2; this is a fascinating passage because it refutes, better than anything, this concept that the Sabbath was done away for Gentiles.

Isaiah 56:2–8:

Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it; that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil. Neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the [Eternal], speak, saying, The Lord hath utterly separated me from his people . . .

Who are we talking about? We are not even talking about a physical Israelite here. We are talking about someone else whom God is addressing, even along with physical Israelites, concerning His Sabbaths.

"Neither let the son of the stranger [a non-Israelite], that hath joined himself to the [Eternal] . . ." There were those who respected and saw the value of that way of life the ancient Israelites had received. They received the blessings by being with them and abiding in that covenant as well.

If He offered those benefits to those who were not physically a part of Israel, how much more would it apply to us in the Church—spiritual Israel—which is made up of both physical Israelites and Gentiles from around the world?



Neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the [Eternal], speak, saying, The [Eternal] hath utterly separated me from his people: neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree. For thus saith the Lord unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths [We are talking about non-Israelites who are keeping the Sabbath day.], and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant; Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off.

We are talking about the promises of salvation to Gentiles, those who were not born of physical Israel but were offered an opportunity to be a part of the Body. Hallowing God involved Sabbath-keeping.

Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the [Eternal], to serve him, and to love the name of the [Eternal], to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.

Who do those promises ultimately apply to in God's plan? To all people.

The [Eternal] God, which gathereth the outcasts of Israel saith, Yet will I gather others to him, beside those that are gathered unto him.

Yes, it is an expansion beyond physical Israel. They were only a type, brethren, of that which is being worked out in the Church. The Sabbath represents the fulfillment of that plan, when all to whom God will offer that opportunity are going to receive their chance for salvation—most of whom will not even receive that opportunity until the very end, after the Millennial reign is over.

Israelites and Gentiles alike are going to have that opportunity. The blessing shown in this very example comes from having a relationship with God, accepting the very covenant that was offered to Israel, and becoming Sabbath-keepers—the sign between God and His people. Whether they are physical Israelites or physical Gentiles, those who have been offered an opportunity by a call to come into that Body are going to prove their love and devotion to God; and, by virtue of keeping

and hallowing the Sabbath day, that they want those promises yet to be fulfilled in the Kingdom of God.

Not all people claiming to keep the Sabbath today are acceptable to God.

Isaiah 1:11—this is where we say it is not just a matter of laying claim to continue to keep the Sabbath. There are a lot of groups out there, many of them splinter groups from the Worldwide Church of God, who continue to "keep the Sabbath." You find many more than not these days, because they have not had success on their own; they have not been able to fulfill the end-time commission to preach the gospel to the world. None of them are getting the world's attention whatsoever. They are miserable failures, if the truth be known.

So now, they are clamoring to try and gain some sort of a stronger base. Many of them are again accepting the idea of an amalgamation with other groups. They say, "After all, we are all still Sabbath-keepers, and we all still keep the Holy Days—even if we don't agree on when to keep Pentecost or we don't agree on the rules for marriage and divorce. We don't agree on the significance of healing or the calendar, but those things shouldn't keep us apart. We are still all God's people because we are Sabbath-keepers." Is that enough?

Is having a pretense of keeping the Sabbath enough to keep you in good stead with God? In this example in Isaiah, someone is highly criticized, even though they are making a pretense of keeping the Sabbath.

Isaiah 1:11–20:

To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me [Someone is making sacrifice to God, and God is not accepting it at all.]? saith the [Eternal]: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When ye come to appear before me . . .

In what? In their Sabbath services. That is what they are doing, brethren.

. . . who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting.

This is likely a reference to their Passover service.

Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean . . .

He is saying there is something wrong with your orientation of mind. Even though you are going through the motions of showing up at a Sabbath service, having the service, the hymns and special music, and making a pretense of worshiping God, He is saying He doesn't accept it whatsoever.

Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil . . .

What is the greatest evil of these who make a pretense of keeping Sabbaths? What is it they are doing that God hates? They have rejected revelation as the means by which they understand truth. They have turned to their own minds, their own interpretation of scripture through the efforts of human beings—a technical orientation to truth that God never intended because it is not the way we received truth.

Who is God going to respect who comes before Him in a worship service and has rejected the very foundation of Jesus Christ Himself? Do you think Christ is going to be there? Do you think Christ is going to honor those in a worship service who have rejected Him by rejecting the foundation of truth? Not at all.

Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the [Eternal]: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

This is looking forward to a time when Israel, the Church, will be called out of their deception and pollution, when they will again embrace the truth they once held and honored.

"If ye be willing and obedient . . ." The majority of those in the Church today who were once called to understand that truth are not willing and obedient whatsoever. They have rejected the very foundation of their calling and are now embracing their idols.

If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the [Eternal] hath spoken it.

Amos 5:21–23:

"I hate, I despise your feast days . . ." It is not enough to just find some Sabbath-keeping group out there that happens to be having a worship service on the seventh day of the week. That is not sufficient to honor God. I wouldn't step foot in one of those convocations myself. I would probably be less likely to step foot in a worship service on the seventh day of the week than I would on a Sunday, although I wouldn't step foot in either one.

I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols.

They are singing hymns just like we are singing hymns, brethren, but that is not enough for God to accept it. *Oh, isn't that sweet. These people are gathered together in the name of God, and they are singing hymns.* Is that all that is required by God? No. "Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols."

Someone who is professing to keep the Sabbath day is not acceptable to God. What could cause a people's worship service not to be accepted by God? Let's read Ezekial 20:13–16, 27–32:

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 . . .

It doesn't say they necessarily quit keeping them altogether, but it does say, among other things, they polluted the Sabbath.

. . . my sabbaths they greatly polluted: then I said, I would pour out my fury upon them in the wilderness, to consume them. But I wrought for my name's sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, in whose sight I brought them out. Yet also I lifted up my hand unto them in the wilderness, that I would not bring them into the land which I had given them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands; Because they despised my judgments, and walked not in my statutes, but polluted my sabbaths: for their heart went after their idols.

What is it, therefore, which is synonymous with polluting the Sabbath? Idol worship. Do you think any of our former brethren are guilty of idol worship? You better believe it. You reject Jesus Christ as the foundation of revelation anytime you begin to say that you come to the knowledge of the truth by picking up your Bibles, concordances, Greek and Hebrew Lexicons, and that you are going to study the words and figure out what the truth is.

Aren't we smart and intelligent; we found out that Mr. Armstrong was wrong on this, based upon our own Bible study. So we are going to grow in grace and knowledge; we are going to repudiate what we once believed; and we are going to do what we now believe is the truth.

Is that growing in grace and knowledge, or is that worshiping the idol of human minds and scholarship at the expense of the divine revelation of the very Christ whom we claim to serve? That is exactly what has happened in the Church, brethren.

Show me someone who will not accept divine revelation as the foundation for the way we came to understand the truth, that it was Herbert W. Armstrong whom God used to teach us that truth—show me someone who rejects that concept—and I will show you an apostate who is worshiping an idol and polluting the Sabbath. That is exactly what they are doing.

. . . but polluted my sabbaths: for their heart went after their idols. (Verse 27) Therefore, son of man, speak unto the house of Israel, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Yet in this your fathers have blasphemed me, in that they have committed a trespass against me. For

when I had brought them into the land, for the which I lifted up mine hand to give it to them, then they saw every high hill, and all the thick trees, and they offered there their sacrifices, and there they presented the provocation of their offering: there also they made their sweet savour, and poured out there their drink offerings.

They didn't stop worshiping; they didn't become nonreligious; they just tried to convert the truths of God into a format they thought was better, all the while professing that they were offering it to God and expecting Him to accept them in every way. Well, God doesn't accept the ideology of men at the expense of the commands that He gave, preserved, and told us to keep.

Then I said unto them, What is the high place whereunto ye go? And the name thereof is called Bamah unto this day. Wherefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God; Are ye polluted after the manner of your fathers? and commit ye whoredom after their abominations? For when ye offer your gifts, when ye make your sons to pass through the fire, ye pollute yourselves with all your idols, even unto this day . . .

Yes, brethren, even unto these last days, the same thing is being perpetrated by the very holy nation that God formed—the Church.

(Verse 32) And that which cometh into your mind shall not be at all, that ye say, We will be as the heathen, as the families of the countries, to serve wood and stone.

Just because men become fascinated with a concept of their interpretation of the scripture, of the proper way to serve God, does not make it true at all. If it is not founded on divine revelation that came through a chosen servant, it is worthless, brethren; it is vanity and an idol.

We must keep the Sabbath, but we must keep it as God commanded. Adding our own interpretation will not be accepted by Him whatsoever. Corrupting and polluting His Sabbath is worse than not keeping the Sabbath at all. It is idolatry, brethren—the very thing ancient Israel was guilty of.

Isaiah 58:12–14:

"And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places . . ." What are the waste places today? They are the destroyed body that was once a great and thriving church, when it was well-rooted and grounded in the revelation of Jesus Christ that we received originally. Now that church is a great waste place.

And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in.

Yes, the truth was at the beginning. We need to restore that, brethren—not think that we are going to find truth by repudiating and destroying the foundation of our calling.

. . . The restorer of paths to dwell in. If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the [Eternal], honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways . . .

Putting away those idols, destroying them, and accepting instead what God commanded.

. . . not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the [Eternal]; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the [Eternal] hath spoken it.

There are blessings promised to those who will, in the right mind and heart, keep God's Sabbaths, who will fear Him and respect the revelation He gave through His Holy Son.

How then, brethren, can we appropriately keep those Sabbath days? How can we be sure that we are not pursuing our own will, our own ways, and seeking our own pleasure on His Holy Days?

Those specifics of the Sabbath will be the topic of the next sermon.