

## Message #121 of *Scripture Beneath The Surface*

### *"Remember The Sabbath Day"*

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Hello! Thanks for being with us. Today I'd like to talk about Sabbath keeping. This is a very little understood concept in today's Christian church. There are various doctrines prescribing how the Sabbath should or should not be kept, but there is little explanation of what the Sabbath really is or what its purpose was intended to be. Let me give you some description concerning a Sabbath, as described in the Bible.

A Sabbath is a time period when work comes to an end. When God created the heavens and the earth and all things within them, he did this in six creation days. Genesis tells us that after six days of creation God determined that all the work he had accomplished was good, and then he ceased from his work. The Bible actually says that God rested. Now, this does not mean that God entered into physical rest. God doesn't have to rest physically. He ceased from his works, not because he was tired, but because he had finished his work. In essence, he stopped working. He no longer continued to create. He was finished with his work of creation and he stopped trying to create anything more. The time of God ceasing from his work is referred to as the seventh day of God's creation in which God rested from the work he had done. He ceased from his work.

In six days of creation God had laid the complete foundation for the ultimate destruction of Satan's sinful rebellion. He no longer needed to do his own work, for he had finished it. The world, from this initial beginning, would run like clockwork until such time as the complete plan

of God had been unfolded. God's work was finished on the sixth day. The world, now that it had been put in motion, would continue until the end. But, God's work was finished.

And, what I would like you to zero in on is that God ceased from his own work. It was his own work that he ceased from. This is described in the Bible as being the rest of God. The rest of God was ceasing, not just from work, but ceasing from his own work. And this is the most important aspect of the Sabbath rest. Not just that God rested, but that he ceased from his own work. It is this ceasing from personal work that is at the very basis of entering into God's rest. Hebrews, chapter 4, tells us that when we have ceased from our own works, then, and only then, do we enter into God's rest. We don't enter into the rest of God unless we cease from our own works.

Notice that Hebrews 4:10 specifically says that it is the ceasing from our own works, and not just from work. The Sabbath rest is not accomplished by ceasing from work. It is only accomplished by ceasing from our own work. Now, you might think this is the same thing, and in the physical sense it could be considered the same. But, this only seems to work from the perspective of the Old Covenant which was given to the nation of Israel. But a very important scripture gives us insight into actually entering God's rest. In this same chapter of Hebrews, verse six, it actually explains that Israel did not enter into God's rest. Of course, we know from a historical perspective that the nation of Israel observed Sabbath keeping. Yet, Hebrews 4:6 tells us that they still had not entered into God's rest. The reason for this verse is that the rest of God cannot be entered into by ceasing work for one day a week. If a person ceases his own work for one day, and then proceeds to do his own work the other six days, then they have not really ceased from their own work. Sure, they may have ceased from their own work for one day, but this does not fulfill the requirement of entering into God's rest. God's rest is not entered into by just keeping one day.

And this concept is at the very basis of the problem in Christianity today. There are many Christians who try to enter into God's rest by keeping one day as a Sabbath in which they cease to work physically. But if you have ceased work for one day, and then start doing your own work again, then you have not accomplished the same rest that God accomplished when he ceased from his own works. When God ceased from his own work he did not resume it again on the first day of the week. The works of God were finished from the foundation of the earth. God didn't do his work for six days, then rest one day, and then resume his work. His work was finished. It was done. There was no more work of God. Six days had fulfilled the complete creation and final work of the world, and God was finished. He didn't stop and start again. He didn't create, rest, and then create again. He ceased from his own works.

In this world mankind continually seeks his own work. He plants, and he harvests. He tears down, and he builds up. He invents machinery and tools, and he uses them to enlarge his dwelling and to increase his goods. This is the work of man for himself. When God gave the Old Testament covenant to the children of Israel, his intent, his purpose, was that this tiny nation might be the physical demonstration of his will. The nation of Israel was called to be a physical

demonstration to the rest of the nations. In all the commandments and ordinances of the Law, Israel was to fulfill them from a strictly physical viewpoint. As I have discussed previously in other messages, Israel was to demonstrate outwardly in physical form the concepts of a spiritual God. God is a spirit. But man is flesh. God used the children of Israel to give an outward physical demonstration of the precepts and promises of God that would eventually be forthcoming to all the other nations. When the Old Testament covenant of the Law was finally fulfilled in Israel, the New Testament covenant of Grace was given to all nations of the world. In addition, the Holy Spirit was given to all those who accepted Jesus Christ under the New Testament covenant of Grace.

At the time of Christ the Old Testament came to its intended end, being fulfilled by Jesus. Its purpose had been accomplished, just as God had intended. With the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ the New Testament covenant of Grace was instituted. This covenant was no longer based in a system of written Law. 2 Corinthians, chapter 3, tells us that the Law of Commandments was a ministration of death, which was engraved in tables of stone. It also says that this ministration of death was done away in order that we might have life through the ministration of the Spirit.

Now, this concept, of the Law of Commandments being done away in order to bring about God's new covenant of Grace is difficult for Christians to fully comprehend. Just as the Jews, in the days of the early church, attempted to bring Christianity back under the Law of Commandments, there are many groups all through our Christian history who have attempted to bring Christians back under some form of the Law. It is no different now in our current day. It is important to recognize that the Law was a ministration of death, and that this same Law is referring to the Ten Commandments. It is only the Ten Commandments which were engraved in tables of stone. Most Christians have a difficult time envisioning how the Ten Commandments could be done away with, in that they seem to be the essence of God's will. But notice that the New Testament gives us instruction through Jesus Christ that all the Law could be fulfilled by two great Commandments. These two commandments are first, "to love the Lord God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength." And second, "to love your neighbor as yourself."

Yet, it is difficult for Christians to understand how to enter God's rest. There is still the attempt by many Christians to observe one day as a day of rest and the remainder of the week as workdays. Of course, there was no other way to look at this under the Law, in that Israel was the physical manifestation of God's commandments. The only way they could enter into rest was to cease physical work. They couldn't cease physical work every day. They couldn't stop working ever again, because the only way they could stop working is to stop their physical work. But as it said in Hebrews 4:6, the Israelites had not entered into God's rest even though they had observed Sabbath keeping. They had ceased working physically one day a week, but they had never ceased from their own work completely.

When God ceased from his own work completely at the end of six days of creation, he did not resume his work the next day. This is the essence of where Christianity has missed the mark. As Christians we no longer seek to please God by physical works. Physical works are part of our faith, but our accomplishment of that which pleases God can only be accomplished by that which comes from the heart. If Christians are to cease from their own works, and thereby enter into God's rest, then they must not resume their own works after one day. The rest of God is only accomplished when we cease our work completely.

In our current Christian society, God's rest is seldom entered into. There are those who cease physical work on Saturday or Sunday, thinking that they have ceased from their own works. However, just as Israel had not been able to enter into God's rest by their attempt at Sabbath keeping, those Christians of today who attempt to enter into God's rest by keeping one day above another are also not entering into God's rest. God's rest is only entered into when you stop trying to accomplish righteousness by your own works. There is a need for Christians to stop trying to live their own lives, to build their own homes, to make their own futures, and to enlarge their own borders. God is calling his church to enter into his rest. In order to completely enter into God's rest, it is time for Christians to cease their work and to focus on the will of God. Today's Christians go to church on Saturday or Sunday, in an attempt to give one day unto God, and then spend the rest of the week living for themselves. Their focus is the worship of God and accomplishing his will on the weekend, and then focusing on themselves and their own will the rest of the week. Christians, in general, have not given up trying to accomplish their own works, but want to revert back to the Law of Commandments and just give God one day. God wants us to enter into his rest. In order to accomplish that, we are going to have to give up our own will, and give up our own desires, and give up our own goals in order that the will, and the desire, and the purpose of God will be accomplished through us.

Christians are plagued with desires of the flesh, just as non-Christians. However, Christians make the attempt at turning away from sinfulness. Yet, God wants more from his people than just trying to abstain from sin. God wants his people to give up their lives for him. He wants his people to serve him, and him only. He wants his people to cease trying to accomplish their own goals, but rather to focus on his goals. Not only does God want us to seek righteousness through Jesus Christ instead of in our own strength, but he wants us to totally cease from our own purposes, from our own wants, and from our own lives. Just as God ceased from his own works, God is looking for a people who will cease from theirs. God isn't looking for a people who will keep Sabbath one day a week. He is looking for a people who will keep Sabbath every day until the day they die.

1 Peter 4:1-2 says, "for as much then as Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourself likewise with the same mind: for he that has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin; that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God."

You see, we are not called to live the rest of our time according to our desires of the flesh. We are called to live the rest of our lives according to the will of God. Now, most people would

claim that they are already living their lives according to the will of God just because they don't drink, don't smoke, and don't carouse. But, entering into God's rest requires much more than ceasing from work. God isn't looking for a group of Christians to lay around on the weekend. He is looking for children who will give up their own works, who will set their own lives aside permanently in order to accomplish God's will for them. God is looking for a people who reject this world and all its delights in order to accomplish his will. God is looking for a people who are willing to cease from their own wants, from their own desires, and from their own goals in order to accomplish the work that God laid down at the foundation of the world.

Let me read Galatians 2:20-21. It says, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. 21 I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness comes by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."

Can you hear the essence of these verses? They are telling us that if we are crucified with Christ, then the life we are living is not supposed to be our own lives, but is supposed to be the life of Christ who lives in us. This does not mean that Christ lives through us on Saturday or Sunday and then must take a backseat Monday through Friday. For Christians to serve Christ by just trying to be good and worshiping him on the weekend is a mockery of God. As the verses I just read told us, we are to be crucified with Christ. If we are crucified with Christ, then how can we possibly continue to live out our lives every day without the focus being completely on Christ?

2 Peter 3:10-11 says, "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are in it shall be burned up. 11 Seeing then that all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons should you be in all holy conduct and godliness?"

Children of God, this is what God is calling us to be. He is calling us to be holy and godly in all aspects of our lives. He is calling us to enter into his rest and to cease from our own works. The only work that has any eternal value is the work that God wants to do through us. If we will cease from our own goals and purposes in this life, and if we will set ourselves aside that God might work through us, not just part of the time, but all of the time, then we will finally have fulfilled the commandment to enter into God's rest.

Of course, I'm not talking something that is easy. I know that. Satan uses every device imaginable to deter us from giving our lives over to Christ. The whole temptation of Satan centers around our flesh and those delicacies and precious things of earth by which our physical bodies are stimulated. We have so many things we want to do. We have so many goals we want to accomplish. We have our careers, we have our planned vacations, we have our retirement packages.

Now take a look at this. Isaiah 2:6-8 refers to God's perspective of Israel. It speaks of the house of Jacob. However, because the Christian church is living out the same history as Israel, these

verses can be taken as an admonition to us. I'll read these verses, and as I do notice how they relate to us as well as to Israel. It says, "Therefore you have forsaken your people the house of Jacob, because they are replenished from the east, and are soothsayers like the Philistines, and they please themselves in the children of strangers. 7 Their land also is full of silver and gold, neither is there any end of their treasures; their land is also full of horses, neither is there any end of their chariots: 8 Their land also is full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made."

Now, these verses referred to Israel's desire to delight themselves in the same things that the neighboring nations delighted in. From the East and from the West Israel had taken from the nations the things that God despised. They took the gold and silver to themselves. They took the other nations treasures for themselves. Horses and chariots and idols, and all kinds of works that their own fingers made. It's easy to see the comparison of horses and chariots with our modern love affair with automobiles. We have gone so far away from God. We have forgotten what it means to cease from our own works. How sad that we Christians claim to have entered into God's rest when there is no end to our own lives.

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Jesus told us that we must take up our cross and follow him to Calvary. The only thing that took place at Calvary was the death of the body. It was the body of Christ that died that day, but it was the power of God that ascended from the grave. If we ever have a perfect example, we have it in Christ who ceased from his own work in order to accomplish the work of the father. Jesus told us that he did not do his own works nor speak his own words, but only those of the Father. In every way Jesus Christ denied himself. He was the ultimate example of ceasing from his own works. He was the ultimate example of how we could enter into God's rest.

We only become the children of God because we are in Christ. We are members of his body. The promise to Abraham was only to Abraham's seed. And as Paul explains in Galatians 3:16, the promise was not made to many seeds, but only to one seed. Jesus Christ was that one seed of Abraham to which the promise of Abraham was made. Jesus Christ was the seed of Abraham that would inherit the blessing. Abraham did not directly inherit that blessing, even though the promise was made to him. But Abraham, and all those who believe God's word, are eligible to receive the promise. However, the only way Abraham, or for us, to receive the promise of eternal life through Jesus Christ, is to be in Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:27 tells us that Christians are members of the body of Christ. It means we are the individual body parts of Jesus. Jesus is the head of the body, and the rest of us are the individual members. We are the eyes, the mouth, the hands, the ears, the legs, and the feet of Jesus. Jesus is alive on the earth through his people. As the head of the body, Christ moves the rest of the body to do his will on the earth. It is only by being part of the body of Jesus Christ that we are partakers of his will. He is the head of the body, and we move and have our being in him. We only have eternal existence as members of his body. If we are not part of his body, we have no life. Now, think of this. Does Jesus only accomplish his will on Saturday or Sunday?

Does he sit in the background Monday through Friday while you accomplish your will in the earth? If that's the way you look at Christianity, then you might ask yourself the question, "am I part of the body of Christ, or am I just pretending to cease from my own works? Does Christ live in me, or do I live? Have I entered into God's rest, or, am I just resting up on the weekend to get a jumpstart for Monday?"