

## Exodus 35:1-3 (LD 38) “Fire-Ban”

**For the Children:** Some people enjoy things that others might find boring. If you like playing chess, you won't mind taking a break from school-work to play a game. Another person who finds chess boring, might even prefer to do some study! Many people around us find church-services boring. They would rather work – and much rather play. If we really love worshipping the Lord, hearing His Word, praying with His people and having fellowship together, that will be much better to us than working or playing. Then we won't mind giving up those other things so we can spend the Lord's Day concentrating on Him. **Questions:** Why was lighting a fire on the Sabbath forbidden in the OT, but not a problem now? What were the purposes for which God gave the Sabbath? Did Jesus do away with the Sabbath, or only change some aspects of it?

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### Introduction:

#### First Point: The Command

- 1) **A Clear Command:** V. 1 introduces all the commands that follow by reminding Israel that “These are the things that the Lord has commanded you to do. What follows in v. 2 is a command to have a “holy” (day), ie., a day “set apart” from the other 6 days of work. It is to be a “Sabbath” – a cessation of work, involving complete rest to the Lord. V. 3 then applies this by prohibiting the kindling of fires for cooking (and by implication, the collection of fire-wood) on the Sabbath. See Num. 15.
- 2) **Never Withdrawn:** Not only is the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment never withdrawn in the NT; it is even quoted. Passages like Mt. 12:1-14 and parallels, Mt. 24:20 and Heb. 4 simply connect the commandment to Christ. They do not abrogate it. Indeed, Mt. 5:13-20 indicates that the whole OT stands until the end of the age - though some things in it are fulfilled before other things.
- 3) **Not Wholly Fulfilled:** The OT Sabbath has some elements that have been fulfilled by Christ's coming – therefore the day changes and the involvement of priests, Temple and ceremonies falls away. But what remains is the celebration of creation and redemption. Now the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment is seen more clearly in its connection to Christ. The importance of worshipping God without distraction also remains.

#### Second Point: The Penalty

- 1) **A Serious Penalty:** The penalty for Sabbath-breaking in the OT was death. See v. 2 with Num. 15:32f. For toilsome work can easily distract from worshipping God and meditating on His works. Of course, cooking today is not generally toilsome.
- 2) **The NT Equivalent:** In the NT, church-discipline replaces execution. However, the seriousness of the issue remains. If we repent for Sabbath-breaking, there is forgiveness; but that is no excuse for willful violation.

#### Third Point: The Purpose

- 1) **Rest to the Lord:** One purpose of the Sabbath is to give honour to the Lord. We do not cease all activity. We stop those things that hinder our focus on the worship of God. The 2 biggest distractions are our weekly work and recreation. See WCF 21:8. We are to give a witness that the Lord is much more important than these activities.
- 2) **Rest for Us:** However, the day is also appointed for our benefit. It is to our advantage, not only to rest from our labors, but also to worship the Lord, remember His creation and redemption, receive His Word and sacraments, pray and be prayed for, give for those in need and receive help.
- 3) **Rest as a Witness:** In all this, it is important that we give a witness to how we rest in Christ; and how serving the Lord is our top priority – and chief delight. See Is. 58.

### Conclusion: