

ECCLESIOLOGY:
The Doctrine of The Church:
The Sabbath Verses Sunday
Exodus 20:1-17

INTRODUCTION: In 2004 I began to preach on the doctrine of the Church every Pentecost day I am on scheduled to speak. So this is year six. A while ago I heard Chuck Swindol say about a series he did that took a bit long that a little girl, I think it was, asked her dad, "Was I five or six when pastor Chuck began this series?" Well, if I started when you were five, you would now be eleven. Actually, this is only the sixth message on this very important doctrine.

So to refresh your memory we have discussed what the Church is. We said emphatically that it is not a replacement of Israel, nor is it a political entity. The Church is made up of all believers from Pentecost in the NT until now. It is viewed both in its universal aspect and the local aspect. We also briefly discussed the denominational church. Then we began to look at the history of the Church as given in the Gospels, Acts and now the Epistles.

In the section on the Epistles I felt I should do a message on the Church's relationship to Israel, and in this section I want to address the Sabbath question. Should Church age Christians keep the Sabbath? I have learned since that it will take me at least 2 messages to cover this subject and that means I cannot do this in any amount of detail. But I do want to cover what I believe are the main points.

You will remember that the fourth of the 10 commandments is the commandment to keep the Sabbath. Let me add here that it is appropriate to speak on the 10 commandments on Pentecost because, according to the Jews, the law was given on Pentecost day.

Now many messages have been preached on this difficult subject of the Sabbath verses Sunday. Should Christians, in the Church age, keep the Sabbath? Or is Sunday the Christian Sabbath? That is the question before us this morning. This is by no means a simple question to answer. And so, I want to give what I have found over the years of teaching and preaching. So we will consider the relation of the Church to Israel in light of the Sabbath and Sunday.

Now in our outline on the Church we are continuing our studies of the Church as given in the NT epistles. And we are looking at the Church's relationship to Israel. We will look at it first in the OT, and then in the New.

C. In The Epistles

3. The Relation of the Church to Israel

Regarding the Sabbath OT

-What the Sabbath is

So, our very first task is to identify the Sabbath. Is Sunday the Sabbath? If you keep one day in seven, regardless of which day that is, is that the Sabbath? The Muslims keep Friday. The Jews keep Saturday. The Christians keep Sunday. If they are all sincere, are they all keeping the Sabbath?

The answer is that the Sabbath is the seventh day of the Week, which is Saturday. God began creation on Sunday, and it is the first day of the week. God rested on the seventh day, and it is the Sabbath. There is only one day a week that is the Sabbath, and that is the seventh day. Let us read Exodus 20:8-10. The day God rested is the day we call Saturday. So I do not believe that saying Sunday is the Christian Sabbath is correct.

We find the first mention of the seventh day in Genesis 2 (read 1-3). The word 'to rest' here is literally that God 'sabbathed'. To 'sabbath', in verb form, means to cease from working or to rest. What is surprising is that calling this seventh day the 'Sabbath', the noun form of word translated to rest, did not occur until some 2500 years later. Nor is there any record of Sabbath keeping ever commanded by God until it is called the Sabbath.

-When was Sabbath keeping instituted?

We want to address a second question: When was the Sabbath instituted? The word 'Sabbath' as a

noun and a name for the seventh day first occurs when Israel had come out of Egypt and God began to feed them with manna. So let me summarize for us briefly Exodus 16:13-36. Israel had murmured against Moses and Aaron because of the food they were getting on their journey in the wilderness. That they had been in bondage in Egypt was forgotten and their stomachs spoke loudly. In the evening God sent quails and they had meat, but in the morning, for the very first time they received manna to eat from God.

And in 16:23, we have the first mention of the Sabbath in the Bible (read). I also believe that this gives the institution Sabbath keeping and that it had not been commanded earlier. Nehemiah 9:13-14 seems to agree that Sabbath keeping began at Exodus 16:22-26 or Deuteronomy 5:12-15 (Read Neh. 9:13-14).

Some argue from Genesis 2:1-4, that the Sabbath keeping was instituted at creation. The word 'sabbath' *shabat*, means to cease or to rest. And so in 2:2 it says God rested or literally, He *Sabbathed*. The word 'to rest' is to 'sabbath' in Hebrew. Look at this in its verb form in Genesis 8:22 (read). So the meaning is 'to cease' or 'to rest' in its verb form. However, the noun form is not found until Exodus 16:23. And here, for the first time in the Bible is man instructed to cease from work for that day.

So, let us consider the context of this passage. Israel had come out of Egypt. It is the fifteenth day of the second month since they came out of Egypt. So that is about a month after, since they left on the evening of the 14 day of the previous month. Now they are murmuring to Moses and saying, "We are going to starve out here!" (Ex. 16:3). So God told Moses that He would give them bread to eat. And He told Moses that He would give them bread every morning and they were to gather only enough for a day's provision. This would be the case until Friday, and then He would rain down a double

portion for each family and they were to gather twice as much that day to tide them over the seventh day (Ex. 16:4-5).

I expect that the manna first fell on the first day of the week, Sunday, the day creation began. Now let us read verses 22-23 (read). There is the very first occurrence of the word 'Sabbath'. And it is called a 'Sabbath rest'. Literally it says, "Tomorrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath." In Hebrew, "Tomorrow is the Shabatone of the Shabat." The word Sabbath means to rest, or to cease from labor.

Now let us read verses 24-31 (read). Verse 27 indicates that it was a new thing for them not to be allowed to do anything on the Sabbath, and so some went out this day just as on others but found no manna. After this incident they learned that when God said "Rest" he meant it, and so verse 30 says, "So the people rested, (or Sabbath) on the seventh day." I believe that it is here that the Sabbath is officially instituted as a day of rest. Remember, this is 2500 years after creation.

-Why was the Sabbath given?

So, we ask, why was the Sabbath instituted as a day of rest? The reason that it was to be on the seventh day is given to us in Exodus 20:8-11, which we read earlier. Verse 11 says, "For *in* six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them *is*, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it." Why was it to be the seventh day? Because in that day God had ceased from His work.

That gives us the reason why it was to be the seventh day. But why was Israel instructed to rest on that day? For this we go to Deuteronomy 5. Here we have an account of the giving of the 10 commandments to Israel. And in verses 12-15 we have the formal instructions regarding the Sabbath. Let us read 12-14. Here are the divine instructions to Israel on keeping the Sabbath.

But there is something very interesting appended to this instruction in verse 15 (read). Here, the Lord gives the reason why He instituted the Sabbath for Israel. It is to commemorate the rest He gave them from Egyptian bondage. So the Lord says, "THEREFORE the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day." Wherefore? Why did God institute the Sabbath for Israel? Every Shabat they were to remember their bondage in Egypt and God's great deliverance in giving them rest from that bondage and hard labor! They ceased from their hard, rigorous labors in Egypt. So the rest was to be kept on the seventh day because God ceased from His work on the seventh day. But the reason they were commanded to keep this day was to remember that they ceased from their labors in Egypt when God delivered them.

-How the Sabbath was to be kept

Next, we need to see how the Sabbath was to be kept. Today we have various groups who insist on Sabbath keeping, but my question is: Do they keep the Sabbath? When the Lord gave instructions in the 10 commandments on keeping the Sabbath He said, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy" (Ex. 20:8). Now just what did He mean when He instructed them to keep it holy?

Well, look at Exodus 16:29 (read). The Lord instructed that no one was to go out of his place. They were to do no work at all (Ex. 20:10). And what constituted work? Exodus 35:3 says they were not even to kindle a fire on the Sabbath. In Numbers 15:32 we have an account of a man picking up sticks on the Sabbath. Let us read the account (Numb. 15:32-36). Exodus 31:15 and 35:2 clearly state that anyone who does any work on the Sabbath is to be put to death. So, I ask you, do you know anybody who professes to keep the Sabbath, who actually keeps it? I asked a Seventh Day Adventist man who insisted that we must keep the Sabbath, how far he went to church on the Sabbath. When he told me I

said, "My friend, you should have been stoned a long time ago."

-Was the Sabbath commandment universal?

So, let us ask one more question: Was Sabbath keeping a universal commandment? Our question here is did God command mankind with regard to the Sabbath, or did He give the Sabbath to Israel to keep? In Exodus 16, where God first commanded the Sabbath He spoke specifically to Israel (read 16:28-29. Now listen to Exodus 31:13-17, "Speak also to the children of Israel, saying: 'Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you. You shall keep the Sabbath, therefore, for *it is* holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does *any* work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people. Work shall be done for six days, but the seventh *is* the Sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does *any* work on the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever; for *in* six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed."

Ezekiel 20:12, "Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD that sanctify them." And then verses 19-20, "I am the LORD your God: Walk in My statutes, keep My judgments, and do them; hallow My Sabbaths, and they will be a sign between Me and you, that you may know that I am the LORD your God."

So, my own conclusion is that Sabbath keeping was instituted some 2500 years after creation, and that it was a special sign between God and Israel. It was a commemoration of having been delivered from the bondage of Egypt. It was to

be so strictly kept that anyone who violated it was to die! There is a word to Sabbath keepers of today.

Regarding the Sabbath NT

That is a very brief look at the OT, and now we want to begin a look at the NT. Let me raise a few questions before we proceed: Why do we keep Sunday instead of the Sabbath? Or, when was the Sabbath day changed from Saturday to Sunday? Is Sunday not the day of the Sun god? Was it not the Roman Catholic church that instituted Sunday keeping instead of the Sabbath? If we are to keep the 10 commandments, why do not keep the 4th one?

-Was the Sabbath meant for the Church age?

Well, let us begin with this question: Was the Sabbath meant for the Church age? It is most crucial to understand that the Church is not Israel, nor is it a replacement of Israel. I do not want to spend time on that here. You may request the message I gave on Pentecost in 2008 where I deal with that question. Today, and for the last 2000 years, Jew and Gentile become one in the Church. But this Church age will end at the rapture and once more we will have a Jewish time period. That is why Matthew 24, dealing with the tribulation says that they are to pray that their flight will not be on the Sabbath. I believe that is not applicable to the Church because the Church will not be on earth at that time.

It is also interesting that although 9 of the 10 commandments are given in the NT, the commandment to keep the Sabbath is not given. Never is it set out for the Church which was born on Pentecost after Jesus ascended to heaven.

-When was the Sabbath changed to Sunday?

So, let me ask another question: When was the Sabbath changed from Saturday to Sunday?

Answer? It never was! Saturday is still the Sabbath! Go to Israel and you will find out what day the Sabbath is. If you want to travel on the Sabbath you need to find an Arab taxi driver, as we did when we were there.

-Did the Catholic Church change the Sabbath?

So I ask another question: Did the Catholic Church change the Sabbath as they claim they did? The answer is a resound no! We just said the Sabbath had never been changed. It is still Saturday. It is true that the Roman ruler, Constantine, who supposedly became a Christian (which same he did not) did institute Sunday keeping for pagan Rome in 321 AD. Folk such as the Seventh Day Adventists camp on this fact.

As most who hold to the view that the Catholic Church changed the Sabbath to Sunday, A. Jan Marcussen quotes from the book, "The Convert's Catechism of Catholic Doctrine," pg. 50, third edition which goes like this: "The Catholic church by virtue of her divine mission changed the day from Saturday to Sunday." "Question - Which day is the Sabbath? Answer - Saturday is the Sabbath. Question: Why do we observe Sunday instead of Saturday? Answer - We observe Sunday instead of Saturday because the Catholic Church, in the Council of Laodicea (A. D. 364), transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday."

In the next message I want to set the record straight that it was not the Catholic Church that changed the Sabbath to Sunday nor did they begin the practice of Sunday keeping.

-Is not Sunday the day of the sun god?

Our next question is this: Is not Sunday the day of the sun god? Did not Constantine require rest on the day of the venerable sun? Are not Sunday keepers sun god worshippers? A. Jan Marcussen, in his book, "National Sunday Law" says this from the time when Sunday keeping was instituted in Rome, "The year is 321 A.D.

Constantine, yielding to the suggestion of church leaders passes the first Sunday law! Here it is, straight from out of the record." He then quotes from the Edict of March 7, 321 A.D. "Let all the judges and town people, and the occupation of all trades rest on the venerable day of the sun" (36).

The word 'sun' is not s-o-n. It is s-u-n. The name 'sunday' comes from the Teutonic god of the sun, after which the first day of the week is named even to our day. So we must ask, are we not actually identifying with the sun god by keeping Sunday? The answer is a resound, 'No!' We are not identifying with the s-u-n god, but the capital S-o-n captital G God.

Let me explain. Our word 'Sunday' comes from the Teutonic god of the sun. Monday, from their moon god, Tuesday from their Tiu god, Wednesday from their Woden god, Thursday from their Thor god, Friday from their Frigg god, and Saturday from their Seturn god. So I ask, do the Jews and the Seventh day Adventists not identify with the Seturn god by keeping the Sabbath? Of course not! You could keep no day of the week if that were the case. So you see how ridiculous this argument is.

CONCL: So we bring this message to a conclusion. What is the Sabbath? It is the seventh day of the week set out as a sign between God and Israel, in which Israel was to remember that God had given them rest from their bondage in Egypt. Sabbath keeping, as I understand it, was instituted in the time of Moses, when God first began to feed them Manna from heaven in the wilderness. And the Sabbath was to be kept holy, that is it was not to be defiled by doing any slightest bit of work. Those who even picked up sticks on the Sabbath, were stoned to death.

It is my conclusion that the Sabbath was never changed to Sunday. The Sabbath is still Saturday. However, in the NT, the Sabbath is never commanded for the Church. Nor did the Catholic Church change the Sabbath to Sunday. That is ludicrous! We will see in the next message that by the time Constantine came on the scene, the true Church was already meeting on Sunday. And we want to be clear that Sunday

keeping does not make one guilty of worshipping the sun God of the Teutonics.

That leaves us with numerous NT questions to answer and we will seek to do that in the next message.