

Sermon #54 — *Discovering Christ in Leviticus*

Title: **“THE SABBATH OF REST”**

Text: Leviticus 23:1-3

Subject: *True Sabbath Keeping*

Date: Sunday Morning — June 30, 2019
 Bible Class

Reading: *Hebrews 4:1-16*

Introduction:

This 23rd chapter of Leviticus describes the seven feasts the Lord God required Israel to keep as “*holy convocations*” throughout the Old Testament. These “*holy convocations*” were typical, ceremonial feasts by which the whole work of redemption is pictured.

1. The Feast of Passover (v. 5) was a picture of our redemption by Christ.
2. The Feast of Unleavened Bread (vv. 6-8) was a portrayal of faith in Christ.
3. The Feast of Firstfruits (vv. 9-14) typified the resurrection of Christ and our resurrection with him.
4. The Feast of Weeks (Pentecost) (vv. 15-22) portrayed the ingathering of God’s elect by the irresistible power and omnipotent grace of God the Holy Spirit.

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5. The Feast of Trumpets (vv. 23-25) was a typical picture of the proclamation of the gospel.
6. The Feast of Atonements (Expiations) (vv. 26-32) typified “*the times of the restitution of all things, of which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets, since the world began*” (Acts 3: 21).
7. The Feast of Tabernacles (vv. 33-43) portrayed that eternal glory awaiting us when the whole work of grace is complete and all God’s elect are brought into heavenly glory, when the Lord God shall forever be our Tabernacle.

SABBATH OBSERVANCE PROMINENT

Reading this chapter, you cannot avoid observing the fact that each of these feasts involved the observance of the sabbath. In fact, the opening verses (vv. 1-3) of the chapter show us that the sabbath was prominent in all Old Testament worship. **There was no worship of God without the observance of the sabbath in the Old Testament.**

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(Leviticus 23:1-3) “And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, (2) Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, *Concerning* the feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim *to be* holy convocations, *even these are* my feasts. (3) Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day *is* the sabbath of rest, an holy convocation; ye shall do no work *therein*: *it is* the sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings.”

My subject is “**THE SABBATH OF REST.**” If you will read the rest of this chapter, carefully marking the instructions here given for sabbath observance, you will see at least these seven things were required for the keeping of the sabbath.

1. Affliction of Soul — Cessation of Work (vv. 7-8, 21, 25, 28-29, 35, 36)
2. Atonement (vv. 27-28)
3. Consecration (v. 38)
4. Remembrance (v. 43)
5. Celebration (vv. 40-41)
6. Feasting

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7. Worship

The fact that the sabbath is given such a prominent place and is intimately connected with all these feasts of worship is very important. The Lord is here giving us a very instructive picture of redemption and grace.

These seven feasts give us a vivid type of all God’s saving operations of grace for his elect. — The sabbath portrayed that rest which remains for the people of God. Yes, it was a ceremonial day to be observed by Israel; but it was also a type of that which was (and in a sense is) yet to come. **The sabbath overshadowed all the feasts of worship.** It typically encompassed all that great and glorious work of God’s salvation in Christ, which this chapter foreshadows, when it is finished.

GOD’S REST

The sabbath is God’s rest, into which all who believe enter now by faith in Christ; but which, as to its full and actual accomplishment, yet remains

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(Hebrews 4:1-11). — **Soon we shall enter into our everlasting rest that shall never be disturbed.**

In one sense, the believer enters into rest. In another sense, he labors to enter into it. We have found our rest in Christ; and we labor to enter into rest in glory. We have found full repose in what Christ has done for us; and our eye rests on that everlasting sabbath into which we shall enter when all our present toils and conflicts are over. We rest in Christ by faith. **Yet, even while we live in this world, day by day, we labor to enter into rest, to truly rest in Christ by faith.** — *“Lord, I believe. Help thou, mine unbelief”* (Mark 9:24).

And, while resting in Christ, we labor as workers together with God, in the full assurance that, when all our earthly toil is over, we shall enjoy unbroken, eternal rest in those mansions of unfading light and unalloyed blessedness where labor and sorrow can never enter. — **Blessed prospect! Blessed hope!** — Here we have but a foretaste of the eternal sabbath awaiting us when time

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shall be no more — that sabbath which shall never be broken — that “*holy convocation*” which shall never be dissolved.

FIRST SABBATH

The weekly sabbath began, you will remember, at the end of Creation. The Lord God worked six days and then rested on the seventh day. God did no work on the sabbath. It was the Lord God himself who kept the first sabbath (Genesis 2:2-3).

The sabbath is never mentioned again until we get to the Book of Exodus. Only after Israel’s deliverance from Egyptian bondage do we find men observing the sabbath day (Exodus 16:23-29). Then, when he gave his law on Mount Sinai, the Lord God reminded his people that **the sabbath was at the heart of all his work** (Exodus 20:8-11).

ONLY A SHADOW

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We often hear Sunday referred to as “the sabbath.” Perhaps you think that “sabbath” is just an old-fashioned word for Sunday. But that is completely wrong. Sunday is the first day of the week. Saturday is the seventh day. That was the sabbath day. Sunday is not the sabbath, never was the sabbath, and never can be the sabbath!

I stress this fact because many would bring us under the yoke of legal bondage by constraining us to keep a carnal, legal sabbath in this Gospel Age. Such legal sabbath keeping is strictly forbidden in the New Testament.

The sabbath was but a shadow, a symbol, of something else that was to come. What is it that God teaches us in giving all the laws regarding sabbath observance in the Old Testament? What are all those Old Testament sabbath laws intended to portray? That is what I want to show you from the Scriptures in this message.

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Proposition: As there was no worship of God without the observance of the carnal sabbath in the Old Testament, so there is no worship of God without the observance of the true sabbath today.

SABBATH OBSERVANCE FORBIDDEN

Sabbath keeping is not a matter of indifference. It is not one of those areas about which the Scriptures give no specific instructions. In fact, the instructions given in the Word of God about sabbath keeping are very specific and very clear.

Like circumcision, the passover, and all other aspects of legal, ceremonial worship during the Old Testament, the legal sabbath day was established by our God to be a sign, picture, and type of grace and salvation in Christ. This is not a matter of speculation and guesswork. This is exactly what God says about the matter in Exodus 31:13.

Exodus 31:13 Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall

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keep: for **it is a sign between me and you** throughout your generations; **that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you.**

Because sabbath keeping was a legal type of our salvation in Christ during the age of carnal ordinances, like the passover and circumcision, once Christ came and fulfilled the type, the carnal ordinance ceased.

In the New Testament, we are strictly and directly forbidden to keep any of those carnal ordinances (Colossians 2:8-23). In fact, we are plainly told that those who attempt to worship God by observing carnal, legal ordinances are yet under the curse of the law. They have not yet learned the gospel.

1. **Circumcision is forbidden as an ordinance of divine worship** (Galatians 5:2, 4).

Those who have their babies sprinkled to bring them into the church and kingdom of God, to seal them into the covenant of grace, attempting to

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symbolically retain the carnal ordinance of circumcision, by their act of sprinkling that child, deny the gospel of salvation by grace alone. They deny the necessity of heart circumcision by the Spirit of God, the new birth, which circumcision symbolized.

2. **Passover observance is forbidden since Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us** (1 Corinthians 5:7).

Those who continue to offer up sacrifices to God, either for atonement, or as acts of penance, or to gain a higher degree of divine favor, or to prevent his anger, by their sacrifices deny that Christ’s death at Calvary was an effectual satisfaction of divine justice for the sins of his people. If something must be added to his blood and his righteousness by me, then his blood and his righteousness are totally useless.

3. **In exactly the same way, those who attempt to sanctify themselves by keeping a carnal sabbath**

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day, deny that Christ is enough to give us perfect acceptance with the thrice holy God.

CHRIST OUR SABBATH

As Paul puts it in Colossians 2:23, they make an outward show of spirituality and wisdom; but it is all will-worship. Such pretenses of humility are nothing but the satisfying of the flesh. Not only that, the whole matter of sabbath keeping is specifically and strictly forbidden by the Holy Spirit in Colossians 2:16-17. Since the Lord Jesus Christ has, by his death at Calvary, blotted out the handwriting of the ordinances that was against us, since he nailed God’s broken law to the cross and put away our sins, he alone is our Sabbath. We rest in him.

Colossians 2:16-17 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath *days*: (17) Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body *is* of Christ.

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I repeat, all carnal sabbath keeping, any form of it, is strictly forbidden on the basis of the fact that in Christ all true believers are totally free from the law (Romans 7:4; 10:4).

Yet, the New Testament does speak of a sabbath keeping that remains for the people of God.

The children of Israel perished in the wilderness because of unbelief. They could not enter into God’s rest in the land of Canaan, they could not enter into that typical picture of God’s salvation, because of unbelief (Hebrews 4:1-6).

Hebrews 4:1-5 Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left *us* of entering into **his rest**, any of you should seem to come short of it. (2) For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but **the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.** (3) For **we which have believed do enter into rest**, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my

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rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. (4) For he spake in a certain place of the seventh *day* on this wise, And **God did rest** the seventh day from all his works. (5) And in this *place* again, If they shall enter into **my rest**.

Though that unbelieving generation perished in unbelief, the purpose of God was not, and could not be, hindered. **There is an elect multitude who must and shall enter into his rest.** — Look at Hebrews 4:6.

Hebrews 4:6 Seeing therefore it remaineth that **some must enter therein**, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief.

That typical rest given by Joshua in the land of Canaan was not the rest purposed and purchased for God’s elect. It was only typical of that blessed rest of faith which is ours in Christ (Hebrews 4:7-8).

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Hebrews 4:7-8 Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, Today, after so long a time; as it is said, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. (8) For if Jesus (Joshua) had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day.

Now, look at verses 9-11.

Hebrews 4:9-11 There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. (10) For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God *did* from his. (11) Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.

The word translated “rest,” which is used over and over and over in Hebrews 3 and 4, means to repose back, to lay down, to be at peace, to cease from work, to be at home. But, if you have a marginal reference in your Bible, you will notice that the word translated “rest” that is used in verse 9 is an entirely different

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word. The word here translated “*rest*” (σαββατισμος — sabbatismos) means “a keeping of a sabbath.”

It is this remaining sabbath rest that I want to talk to you about in the time that remains.

Proposition: Christ is our Sabbath. — I want to show you from the Scriptures how that the Old Testament sabbath day finds its fulfilment and complete accomplishment in Christ. And I want you to see how we who believe keep the sabbath by faith in him.

Divisions: Let me show you three things in the next few minutes that I trust will be helpful to you.

1. The Lord Jesus Christ has entered into his rest because he has finished all his work (Isaiah 11:10).
2. Every sinner who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ keeps the sabbath by faith, by entering into his rest (Hebrews 4:3).
3. We must labor to enter into that great, eternal rest of heavenly glory (v. 11).

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CHRIST’S REST

1st — I want you to see that **The Lord Jesus Christ has entered into his rest, and his rest is glorious, because he has finished his work** (Isaiah 11:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; Romans 8:34; Hebrews 10:11-14).

Isaiah 11:10 And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.

Our Savior’s rest in heaven is his glory. Again, I call your attention to the marginal translation of the last sentence of Isaiah 11:10. It reads, **“His rest shall be glory!”**

As God the Father rested on the seventh day because his work of creation was finished, so God the Son rested in the seventh day of time and entered into his rest forever because he has finished his work of making all things new for his people.

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Romans 8:34 *Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.*

Hebrews 10:11-14 *And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: (12) But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God; (13) From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. (14) For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.*

Look at Matthew 28:1. This is a very remarkable verse of Scripture. I wish you could all read this text in its original language.

Matthew 28:1 *In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week,*

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came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.

The verse quite literally reads, “*In the end of the sabbath* (σαββατων — sabbaton), *as it began to dawn toward the sabbath* (σαββατων — sabbaton).”

I take the verse to mean this — **When the Lord Jesus Christ died at Calvary and rose again, the old sabbath of the law ended and the new sabbath of grace began!**

Behold our exalted Savior! Do you see him seated yonder upon his throne in heaven? There he sits in the undisturbed, undisturbable serenity of his absolute sovereignty! His rest is his glory (John 17:2; Philippians 2:9-11; Isaiah 45:20-25).

He has finished his work (John 17:4; 19:30).

- His Work of Righteousness
- His Work of Redemption

Because Christ has finished his work, the salvation of his people is certain (Hebrews 9:12). —

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“Therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein”
(Hebrews 4:6).

- The works were finished before the foundation of the world in God’s purpose.
- The works were finished in time when the God-man took his seat in heaven as our forerunner (Hebrews 6:20).

There is no more work to be done. Christ did it all. Since he has finished his work, he sat down in his glory. There he is resting! — *“Therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein”* (Hebrews 4:6).

OUR SABBATH

2nd — I want you to see from the Scriptures that **every sinner who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ keeps the sabbath by faith, by entering into his rest** (Hebrews 4:3, 9-10).

Hebrews 4:3 For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although

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the works were finished from the foundation of the world.

Hebrews 4:9-10 There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. (10) For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God *did* from his.

We keep the sabbath of faith, a spiritual sabbath, not a carnal one. We rest in Christ, trusting his finished work, by faith entering into his rest. **The believer’s life is a perpetual keeping of the sabbath.**

None of us keeps it perfectly. Our best faith in this world is still unbelief. But we do keep this blessed sabbath rest sincerely, ever looking to Christ, ever coming to Christ, ever resting in Christ.

Let’s look at **Matthew 11:28-30** again.

Our all glorious Christ gives rest to every sinner who comes to him in faith.

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Matthew 11:28 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

“I heard the voice of Jesus say,
‘Come unto me and rest,
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down
Thy head upon My breast.’
I came to Jesus as I was —
Weary, and worn, and sad:
I found in Him a resting place,
And He has made me glad!”

The Lord Jesus Christ has given and continually gives us rest. The rest of...

- Complete Pardon (Isaiah 45:22; Ephesians 1:6).
- Perfect Reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:17; Colossians 1:20-21).
- Absolute Security (John 10:27-30; Philippians 1:6; 1 Thessalonians 5:24).
- Special Providence (Romans 8:28).

As the ceremonial sabbath portrayed a strict, universal consecration to God, so this blessed

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sabbath of faith involves the perpetual consecration of ourselves to our God and Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 11:29-30).

We keep the sabbath of faith when we willfully, deliberately take the yoke of Christ. If you would keep the sabbath, it involves much, much more than living in religious austerity one day a week.

- To keep the sabbath is to bow to Christ’s dominion.
- To keep the sabbath is to learn of him what to believe, how to live, what to do, how to honor God.
- To keep the sabbath is to bow to his will.

How can a troubled, weary, heavy laden, tempest tossed sinner obtain this blessed sabbath rest? I can tell you, both from experience and from the Word of God, there is only one way you can enter into his rest. You’ve got to quit working! You have to trust Christ alone for everything!

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(Leviticus 23:31-32) “Ye shall do no manner of work: *it shall be* a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. (32) *It shall be* unto you a sabbath of rest, and ye shall afflict your souls: in the ninth *day* of the month at even, from even unto even, shall ye celebrate your sabbath.”

LABOR TO REST

3rd — Let’s look at Hebrews 4:11. I want you to see that **we must labor to enter into that great, eternal rest of glory with Christ in heaven.**

Hebrews 4:11 Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.

There is a great, eternal sabbath to be obtained.

Hebrews 4:9 There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.

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- An Eternal Remembrance of Redemption
- An Eternal, Perfect Consecration to Christ
- An Eternal Rest!
- An Eternal Feasting!
- An Eternal “*Holy Convocation*” of Worship!
- An Eternal Celebration of Grace!

Some have already entered into that rest.

Hebrews 4:10 For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God *did* from his.

- Many could not enter in because of unbelief.
- Those who have entered in have ceased from their own works.
- Christ has entered into his rest.
- We have entered into his rest.
- We shall enter into his rest!
- And there are some who “*must enter therein.*”

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“Let us therefore labor (strive) to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief” (Hebrews 4:11; 2 Corinthians 5:5-9).

The salvation and eternal rest of God’s elect is not, **John Gill** wrote, “a precarious thing. God has promised it and provided it for his people. Christ is in the possession of it and is preparing it for them. And the Spirit of God is working them up for the selfsame thing. And Christ will give them an abundant entrance into it. But the Gospel rest is here meant, that rest which believers now enter into and is at this present time for them (Hebrews 4:3). And though true believers are entered into it, yet their rest, peace, and joy in Christ, is not full. They enter by degrees into it and by believing enjoy more of it. And this is to be labored for by prayer, hearing the word, and attendance on ordinances. And this requires strength, diligence, and industry, and supposes difficulties and discouragements through the corruptions of the heart and the temptations of Satan. And this is designed to

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quicken and awaken a godly jealousy in God’s people, over themselves.”

(2 Corinthians 5:5-9) “Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing *is* God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. (6) Therefore *we are* always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (7) (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) (8) We are confident, *I say*, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. (9) Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.”

APPLICATION

Philippians 3:7-14 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. (8) Yea doubtless, and I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them *but* dung, that I may

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win Christ, (9) And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: (10) That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; (11) If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. (12) Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. (13) Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but *this* one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, (14) I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

The penalty for not keeping the sabbath is still death.

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John 3:36 He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.

If you would be saved, you must keep and satisfy the whole of God’s law. And there is only one way you can keep God’s holy law — by faith in Christ!

Romans 3:31 Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.

Faith in Christ is the blessed sabbath rest of grace. Come to Christ and rest forever!

Amen.