

## Sermon #65 — *Discovering Christ in Leviticus*

Title:        **SABBATH KEEPING**

Text:        Leviticus 25:1-22

Subject:    *The Jewish Sabbatical Year*

Date:        Sunday Morning — September 8, 2019

Reading:    *Hebrews 3:7-13 and 4:1-11*

Introduction:

Are you weary in your soul, laboring under the heavy, heavy load of guilt and sin? Would you like to be free of your burden? Would you like to lay down and rest? What would you give if your very heart and soul could find rest before God?

**The Son of God calls weary, laboring, heavy-laden sinners to himself, and promises rest to all who come** (Matthew 11:28-30).

(Matthew 11:28-30) “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (29) Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. (30) For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

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**It is this rest, promised in the gospel to all who come to Christ, promised to all who believe on the Son of God, that was typified and portrayed in the Old Testament sabbath. It was God's purpose in giving all the sabbatical laws of the Old Testament that they should be a sign of this blessed rest of faith that is found in Christ.**

I want, as God the Holy Ghost will enable me, to talk to you about **SABBATH KEEPING**, true **SABBATH KEEPING**. You will find my text in the 25<sup>th</sup> chapter of Leviticus. When you have found Leviticus 25, just fold the page over or put a marker there. We will get to it shortly.

Like circumcision, the passover, and all other aspects of legal, ceremonial worship during the Old Testament era, **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.

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

**CHRIST'S SABBATH**

1<sup>st</sup> — **Our great Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ has entered into his sabbath, 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. I call your attention to the marginal translation of the last

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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 (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 10:11-14).

(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

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

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

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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

(Daniel 9:24) Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, <sup>1</sup> to **finish the transgression**, and <sup>2</sup> to **make an end of sins**, and <sup>3</sup> to **make reconciliation for iniquity**, and <sup>4</sup> to **bring in everlasting righteousness**, and <sup>5</sup> to **seal up the vision and prophecy**, and <sup>6</sup> to **anoint the most Holy**.

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

- 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).

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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!

**FAITH'S SABBATH**

2<sup>nd</sup> — 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 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.

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We do not keep a literal, carnal sabbath of any kind. Ours is a sabbath of faith, a spiritual sabbath. 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. In fact, we are plainly told that those who attempt to worship God on the grounds of legal ordinances are yet under the curse of the law. They have not yet learned the gospel.

As Paul puts it in Colossians 2:23, those who pretend to keep a literal (legal) sabbath in this Gospel Age (for any reason) 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 strictly forbidden by the Holy Spirit in Colossians



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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.

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).

**But we do keep the sabbath day. It is our soul's great delight to do so.**

(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 11:28-30) Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (29) Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. (30) For my yoke *is* easy, and my burden is light.

“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).

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- Special Providence (Romans 8:28).

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

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into his rest. You've got to quit working! You have to trust Christ alone for everything! God will never accept the works of your hands. But he has accepted the work of his Son's hands. Will you rest your soul upon the finished work of Christ alone?

“Nothing, either great or small;  
Nothing, sinner, no;  
Jesus did it, did it all,  
Long, long ago!

When He, from His lofty throne,  
Stooped to do and die,  
Everything was fully done;  
Hearken to His cry —

‘*It is finished!*’ — Yes indeed,  
Finished every jot.  
Sinner, this is all you need.  
Tell me, Is it not?

Weary, working, plodding one,  
Why toil you so?

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Cease your doing, all was done,  
Long, long ago!

Til to Jesus' work you cling  
By a simple faith,  
Doing is a deadly thing.  
Doing ends in death!

Cast your deadly doing down,  
Down at Jesus' feet.  
Stand in Him, in Him alone,  
Gloriously complete!"

— *James Procter*

**ANOTHER SABBATH**

3<sup>rd</sup> — But, *third*, I want to show you that **there is another sabbath, a sabbath that yet remains, a sabbath that is yet to come, the eternal rest of glory.** I want to talk to you now about that sabbath, that sabbath, the sabbath that remains.

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This sabbath that is yet to come, that sabbath Paul refers to when he says, “*There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God*” (Hebrews 4:9), is typically set before us in Leviticus 25. Here the Lord God, in giving the law to Israel, required them to keep a sabbatical year every seven years.

(Leviticus 25:1-7) And the LORD spake unto Moses in mount Sinai, saying, (2) Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye come into the land which I give you, then shall the land keep a sabbath unto the LORD. (3) Six years thou shalt sow thy field, and six years thou shalt prune thy vineyard, and gather in the fruit thereof; (4) But in the seventh year shall be a sabbath of rest unto the land, a sabbath for the LORD: thou shalt neither sow thy field, nor prune thy vineyard. (5) That which groweth of its own accord of thy harvest thou shalt not reap, neither gather the grapes of thy vine undressed: *for* it is a year of rest unto the land. (6) And the sabbath of the land shall be meat for you; for thee, and for thy servant, and for thy maid, and

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for thy hired servant, and for thy stranger that sojourneth with thee, (7) And for thy cattle, and for the beast that *are* in thy land, shall all the increase thereof be meat.

Every seventh day the children of Israel were required to keep a sabbath day. In the seventh month of every year, as they observed the feast of tabernacles, they were required to keep a sabbath week. Every seventh year they were required to keep a sabbath year.

**How anxious our God is for us to be assured of the rest awaiting us!** In the Mosaic Age of types and ceremonies, he held it constantly before the eyes of his people. In this Gospel Age, he keeps before us the blessed hope of that eternal sabbath yet to come called “*the glorious liberty of the children of God.*” How we ought to long for that day of our God, when we shall at last rest forever (2 Thessalonians 1:7).



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(2 Thessalonians 1:7) And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels.

Leviticus 25 stands before us as a beacon, as a lighthouse, drawing us to that blessed haven of eternal rest in heaven. As we sail through the tempest tossed, troubled seas of time, may our hearts be ever more encouraged with hope and drawn toward that rest.

**This sabbath year could not be kept until the Jews came into the possession of Canaan** (v. 2).

(Leviticus 25:2) Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye come into the land which I give you, then shall the land keep a sabbath unto the LORD.

Remember, this law was given at Sinai. But it was a law that God would not allow the children of Israel to keep until they were in possession of their land of promise. They kept other sabbath days week after

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week throughout their wilderness journey, as we now keep the sabbath of faith, resting in Christ. But this great sabbath year could not be kept in the wilderness. It must be kept only in Canaan.

So it is with us. We rest in Christ now, by faith. But there is an eternal sabbath yet to be fulfilled in heavenly glory, when our God makes all things new, in which we shall rest perfectly forever.

**This sabbath year, like the weekly sabbath, was a sabbath to “keep unto the LORD.”** — The Lord God delighted in the picture; and he would have his people delight in the prospect. — O blessed, delightful hope!

**Here is a picture of full, complete rest, an utter cessation of labor and toil** (vv. 3-5).

(Leviticus 25:3-5) Six years thou shalt sow thy field, and six years thou shalt prune thy vineyard, and gather in the fruit thereof; (4) But in the seventh year shall be a sabbath of rest unto the

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land, a sabbath for the LORD: thou shalt neither sow thy field, nor prune thy vineyard. (5) That which groweth of its own accord of thy harvest thou shalt not reap, neither gather the grapes of thy vine undressed: *for* it is a year of rest unto the land.

**“Six years shalt thou sow thy field.”** — Until the sabbath year comes we must work and toil. **The sweat must ever drop from our brows while we live in this sin-cursed earth.** These six years represent the days of our lives here. Here we serve our God and serve one another. We do so gladly; but there is toil and labor in our work. Not so in eternity!

The sixth year was a time of great expectation. What hope the Israelites had the sixth year, as they sowed their seeds. They expected, because God promised it, that the harvest at the end of the sixth year would be a harvest of three years!

**“But in the seventh year shall be a sabbath of rest unto the land, a sabbath for the LORD.”** — The

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seventh year rang out the glad tidings of heavenly glory, saying to all the people, “There is a day coming when there shall be no more curse.” No work was to be done in that year. No seed could be sown. No vines could be pruned. No one was allowed to reap anything, not even that which grew of itself.

Everything involved in this sabbath year was designed to give a picture of complete, total rest. It was a typical picture of that which shall be our state when the Prince of Peace has made a new heavens and a new earth. — Try to get the picture.

Walk through Israel’s land during the seventh year. Every man is sitting with his family under his vine and fig tree, sipping lemonade. No ox is in the yoke. No wine is in the winepress. No man is in the field. There is a strange stillness throughout the land. Everyone is resting, leisurely meditating upon the goodness of God, reflecting upon deliverance, giving praise and thanks to him who brought them into this good land. The whole year round, month after month,

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for twelve sweet months, they leisurely worship God without a care in the world.

Yes, in eternity, “*his servants serve him.*” They never cease serving him. Yet, there is no labor, no toil, no sweat to their labor.

(Ezekiel 44:18) “They shall have linen bonnets upon their heads, and shall have linen breeches upon their loins; they shall not gird *themselves* with anything that causeth sweat.”

In addition to these instructions, the Book of Deuteronomy tells us that **in this year there was to be a general release of debts** (Deuteronomy 15:1-2). — We have been released from all our debts. How we rejoice in the free and total forgiveness of our sins through the blood of Christ in the experience of grace. — But what shall it be to be released from all the consequences of them!

**There was to be a public reading of the law** (Genesis – Deuteronomy) in the feast (Deuteronomy

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31:10-11), for the instruction of the people. All Israel (men, women, and children) were taught of God as his law was opened to them. — Eternity will be for our souls an ever-increasing, never-ending, learning of Christ!

**The seventh year sabbath portrayed the blessed oneness, unity, and communion of God's saints when he has made all things new** (vv. 6-8).

(Leviticus 25:6-8) And the sabbath of the land shall be meat for you; for thee, and for thy servant, and for thy maid, and for thy hired servant, and for thy stranger that sojourneth with thee, (7) And for thy cattle, and for the beast that *are* in thy land, shall all the increase thereof be meat. (8) And thou shalt number seven sabbaths of years unto thee, seven times seven years; and the space of the seven sabbaths of years shall be unto thee forty and nine years.

In this great sabbath year no one claimed anything as his own. The rich and the poor, the stranger and the

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sojourner as well as the children of Israel, even the cattle and beasts, fed alike upon that which grew of itself throughout the land.

- In glory, blessed be God, we shall be made perfect in one.
- We shall be in perfect harmony with our God, with one another, and with all God's creation.

Still, there is more. Look at verses 18-22. Here, after speaking about the jubilee year, **Moses picks up the matter of the sabbath year again, showing us God's gracious, absolute promises concerning it.**

(Leviticus 25:18-19) Wherefore ye shall do my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them; and ye shall dwell in the land in safety. (19) And, and ye shall eat your fill, and dwell therein in safety.

Yes, these words stand as a command of law at Sinai. But I cannot avoid reading them in the light of the gospel as blessed promises of grace. — **The commands of the law are the promises of the**

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**gospel! — The commands of Sinai are the promises of Calvary!**

- “*Ye shall do my statutes.*”
- “*Ye shall dwell in the land in safety.*”
- “*The land shall yield her fruit.*”
- “*Ye shall eat your fill.*”

**GOD’S PROMISE**

In preparation for this great sabbath year observance, **the Lord God inspired Israel’s faith with a promise from which we ought to learn much** (vv. 20-22).

(Leviticus 25:20-22) And if ye shall say, What shall we eat the seventh year? behold, we shall not sow, nor gather in our increase: (21) Then I will command my blessing upon you in the sixth year, and it shall bring forth fruit for three years. (22) And ye shall sow the eighth year, and eat *yet* of old fruit until the ninth year; until her fruits come in ye shall eat *of* the old *store*.



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Israel's unbelief and ours was anticipated by our gracious God, who knows our frame and remembers that we are dust. These verses read much like our Savior's admonition in Matthew, "*Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.*"

**Here, the Lord God promises his special providence and bounteous blessing, to supply everything for his own.** He assures us that he is both able and willing to protect us and provide for us now and forever. His heart is full of love for us. His arm is full of strength for us. The Lord God would not allow those who trusted him enough to commit all things to him to lose anything by doing so.

(Exodus 34:24) For I will cast out the nations before thee, and enlarge thy borders: neither shall any man desire thy land, when thou shalt go up to appear before the LORD thy God thrice in the year.

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- Let us serve our God in the six years of labor he has given us.
- As we serve him, he will keep us, provide for us, and protect us. — *“Them that honor me I will honor.”*
- Soon, very soon, we shall enter into his rest!

That is what the Word of God teaches us about sabbath keeping. Sabbath keeping is resting in Christ.

- In the Commencement of Life (Matthew 11:28)
- In the Course of Life (Matthew 11:29-30)
- In the End of Life (2 Timothy 4:6-8)

(2 Timothy 4:6-8) I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. (7) I have fought a good fight, I have finished *my* course, I have kept the faith: (8) Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

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- In the Consummation of Life (2 Peter 3:10-14)

(2 Peter 3:10-14) “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. (11) *Seeing then that* all these things shall be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought ye to be in *all* holy conversation and godliness, (12) Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? (13) Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. (14) Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.”

Amen!