

## Message #62

## Exodus 31:12-18

While we were on vacation, I watched a program about the Amish community and someone who broke free of it. They are a strange lot and they are a people who have invented some bizarre codes of life. For example, you cannot have any good thing God has created to be enjoyed if it doesn't meet your approval. You cannot own a car. You cannot own a tractor. You cannot have electricity. You cannot have running water in the house. Girls cannot have any seams in their clothes and you must renounce all of the wonderful things God has given us to enjoy. This is a very confused, legalistic group of religious people who do not grasp the grace of God. They have their strict codes and they have their Sabbath Day observances.

There is a term that I never want God to use concerning me or this church. It is one of the most horrible things God could ever say about anyone and that is "You were a legalist."

Actually there are two types of legalism. One is a Pharisaical legalism and the other is what we would call a fundamentalist legalism. **Pharisaical legalism interjects its man-made rules and regulations into salvation and fundamentalist legalism interjects man-made rules and regulations into spirituality.**

Legalists are people who put a great deal of emphasis on external conformity to rules. A legalist will emphasize his own rigid code of laws and he will always try to get people to conform to those laws. In our time one of the most obvious displays of this legalism pertains to those who try to get people to observe what they call "the Sabbath Day."

The Apostle Paul was clear to point out that we were to never put ourselves back under the OT Law (Galatians 3:13) and we were never to allow anyone to try to judge us in regard to a Sabbath Day (Galatians 4:4-11; Colossians 2:16).

**If ever there has been a maze of confusion in the world of theology, it is concerning the subject of the Sabbath Day.** The Sabbath Day has been the subject of controversy and trouble. But I don't know of any passage that is clearer on this subject of the Sabbath Day than this one right here in Exodus. **It is so clear that that the Sabbath Day is not for the Church; it is for Israel.**

Now one of the critical questions that most neglect when studying this subject is why did God wait for several hundred years before He gave His Law? God was perfectly capable of dealing with men long before Moses, so why did He wait so long to even give data on the Sabbath if the Sabbath is so critical to man?

**Well, the simple answer is the Sabbath is a specific part of the Law given to the nation Israel.** It was not given to people other than Israel. It totally amazes me how this point is overlooked; but if you read the Bible with any contextual sense, this point is very clear.

I do not know how anyone can read Nehemiah 8:16-9:1, 7-14 or Ezekiel 20:5, 10-11 and actually conclude that the Sabbath was for anyone other than Israel. It is beyond my reason to figure out how anyone can read these passages and say that the Sabbath Day is for the Church.

It seems to me that the subtle and perhaps even satanic reason for this misunderstanding is that not many truly understand the importance of the program God has with Israel and the program God has with the Church. They are two very different and very distinct programs.

One of the simplest ways to show the difference is that we, as the Church, are looking for the Rapture and Israel, as a nation, is looking to inherit land. Israel is not only looking for land, she is fighting for land.

When we come to this text in Exodus it is very clear that:

**THE PURPOSE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT SABBATH WAS TO BE A SIGN BETWEEN JEHOVAH AND ISRAEL.**

God never said this was a sign between Jehovah and the Gentiles. This was a reminder to the nation Israel that she, as a nation, had been separated unto God.

The Sabbath Day was part of the Old Testament Law and it was a day of complete physical rest from any sort of physical activity. No fire was to be kindled; no food was to be prepared; no journey was to be undertaken. There was to be no buying or selling; no burden borne; no work was to be done. Whoever broke any of these legal mandates of the O.T. Law was in grave danger of being put to death—Numbers 15:32-36; Exodus 31:12-17; 35:3; 16:22-26; Neh. 10:31; 13:15-21.

Now when we read the New Testament, it becomes crystal clear that the Law ended with Jesus Christ and specifically it ended with His work on the cross—John 1:16-17; Romans 6:14; 7:6; Galatians 3:19-25; Colossians 2:14.

**When Jesus said that He was Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:27-28; Luke 6:5), He specifically meant that He had absolute authority to change and even abolish the Sabbath Day.**

Two key points that Sabbatarian's miss is that: 1) there is absolutely no record of early Christians observing the Sabbath Day; and 2) there is no mention of keeping the Sabbath Day in any of the Grace Age church epistles.

In **Colossians 2:10-17** the point is that a believer in Jesus Christ is complete in Christ and the Law has been nailed to the cross and therefore the Sabbath is no more (Col. 2:16-17).

In **Galatians 4:9-10** believers are warned not to put themselves back under enslavement to the Law.

Now when we come to this text in Exodus, we may make the following four observations:

**OBSERVATION #1** – The LORD spoke this truth about the Sabbath Day to Moses. **31:12**

Do not overlook this key point in this matter pertaining to the Sabbath Day. God did not speak this Sabbath Day stuff to Paul. God did not speak this to John. God did not speak this to Peter. He spoke this to Moses.

Now we would naturally think that if this were such a critical factor for the Church, at least one of the Apostles would have addressed it. When Jesus Christ revealed the Gospel to Paul, we would think that He would have mentioned the importance of the Sabbath Day. Also when Jesus addressed the seven churches of Revelation, we would expect that He would say don't forget to remember the Sabbath Day.

The truth is the Sabbath Day was revealed to Moses because it was connected to Israel, not the Church. Clearly we see that in **verse 12**.

**OBSERVATION #2** – The LORD told Moses to speak this to the sons of Israel. **31:13a**

Do not overlook this point. He did not tell Moses to speak this to the Church or to Gentile nations. He said you speak this to the “sons of Israel.”

Frankly, I don't know how God could be much clearer on this point. This Sabbath Day is for Israel, not for the Church.

J. Vernon McGee said whenever someone would come to him and ask him when was the Sabbath Day changed, he would say, “it was never changed.” It was done away with as far as the Church is concerned. We do not worship God on Saturday because on Saturday, Jesus Christ was dead. We worship on Sunday, which was the day that Christ arose from the dead. The Sabbath Day is not given to the Church, it was given to Israel.

**OBSERVATION #3** – The LORD told Moses specifically what to say to Israel. **31:13b-17**

As near as I can determine, there are eight specific Sabbath Day related messages given specifically to Israel:

**Israeli Message #1** - The “Sabbaths” plural are to be observed by Israel. **31:13c**

Now there were various Sabbath days that Israel was required to keep and they were required to keep all of them. There were the Sabbath of years and there were the jubilee Sabbaths (Leviticus 25).

**Israeli Message #2** - The Sabbaths are a sign between God and Israel to their generations.  
**31:13b**

The nation Israel was to shut down as a sign of the special relationship she had with God as a nation. This was a national shut down day.

**Israeli Message #3** - The Sabbath is so that Israel may know that God is the one who sanctifies her. **31:13c**

This Sabbath Day was to be a day in which the nation Israel realized that they were the nation that had been set apart by God. It was a day to realize that God had chosen Israel and set Israel apart from all the nations of the world.

Now this right here shows how much this has been distorted. First of all, if you are Israel and you do observe some religious Sabbath, there is no way she spends the day thinking about the fact that God has set this nation apart and blessed this nation from all nations of the world.

Most Jewish people who celebrate the Sabbath today wish God would do something for them. Most do not think about how special and set apart she is before God. This was a national statement. This is not a Church statement.

The statement for the Church is when people go to church to worship God, not when they sit at home and don't do anything. We have specifically been set apart by God and as we sit here on our couch in our home, we testify of this to the entire nation.

**Israeli Message #4** - The Sabbath is to be observed because it is holy to Israel. **31:14a**

This day is "holy" to Israel, not to the Church. These Sabbath days were very important to Israel. Sabbath days for Israel were very sacred days.

**Israeli Message #5** - If the Sabbath is profaned by any Israelite, he shall be put to death.  
**31:14b**

The assumption here is that God has total charge of both civil and religious government in Israel. When God was working with Israel, He had total charge over religious and civil leaders and they were responsible to carry out His Word and will, including put people to death who violated the Sabbath Day. One commentator said he loved to ask people who claimed they kept the Sabbath whether or not they kept every element of it all the time. Because if they didn't they were to be put to death. For example, if they ever turned up the heat in their house when it was cold or turned their furnace on or cooked on a stove, the Law required they be executed (Ex. 35:2-3).

This point proves this is given to national Israel and not the N.T. Church. First of all, if the Church put someone to death for violating some Sabbath Law, those responsible would be put in jail and punished by the court. You would not be blessed for killing a Sabbath violator; you would be punished.

Every now and then we read of some weird religious cult that tries to impose these legal codes on their members and actually have executed people. These are religions that do not realize that we are not Israel and we are not under the Law.

However, for national Israel to not put someone to death, who violated the Sabbath Day, meant you could end up severely punished by God. This fact alone proves this is not for us.

**Israeli Message #6** - If someone works on the Sabbath, he is to be cut off from the people. **31:14c-15**

No work, no activity was the mark of this national day between God and Israel. For the Christian, Sunday is an active day. Why was this such a critical day? Because this day for Israel showed that the nation was actually interested in God. God was responsible for choosing Israel as a nation and it was a sign that basically showed God that Israel was interested in Him and His Word.

**Israeli Message #7** - The Sabbath is a perpetual covenant sign to be celebrated by Israel. **31:16**

The keeping of the Sabbath Day was a sign for Israel that she was in a covenantal, national relationship with God.

Now an application we could make is that when we worship on Sunday at church, we show that we are in a covenant relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ.

**Israeli Message #8** - The Sabbath is a sign forever between God and Israel. **31:17**

Notice the emphasis again; this is a sign between God and Israel, not God and the Church.

**OBSERVATION #4** – The LORD finished speaking and gave Moses two tablets that contained the testimony that had been written by the finger of God. **31:18**

God made certain that His nation had His Word in written form. This written Word was for Israel. This Word was literally written with the “finger of God.” God’s written Word is to be taken very seriously. To disregard the Word is to disregard God.

God has made certain that we have God’s written Word for the Church.