

31 – Whose Day Is It Anyway? - Mark 2:23-28 (31 of 62)

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Ethics Individual

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Bible Text: Mark 2:23-28; Exodus 20:8-11

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Now those who say that it is not, often try to prove that general point from the specific illustration of the sabbath itself. Actually, this interesting thing that we will notice taking place in Reformed circles, there are those who say that the Old Testament law God is not binding at all, and then there are those who say the Old Testament law is binding unless the lawgiver says otherwise. And if it were just that simple, perhaps the discussion could go along with some clarity but, you see, there is also a mediating position that those who would tell us that the law of God in the Old Testament, for the most part, is passed away except for the 10 Commandments. The 10 Commandments somehow retain their validity but the case for explanations and applications of the 10 Commandments do not. Now this mediating group has an argument with the group represented by those more or less in the reconstructionist camp and would say the Old Testament law God is binding until the lawgiver says otherwise, that's for sure, but that mediating group also has an argument with the group that says the law of God is not binding at all unless it's repeated in the New Testament. As is always the case, if we try to take a mediating position as the man walking down the middle of the road, get hit by trucks going both ways.

Now it's interesting that within the debate between the extreme position that the law of God is not binding today unless it's repeated, and a position that says the law of God is binding in terms of the 10 Commandments alone, that particular gestation comes down to one question and the reason it comes down to one question is because those who think that the Old Testament law is no longer binding unless it's repeated in the New Testament yet readily conceive that 9 of the 10 Commandments are repeated in the New Testament and therefore it turns out that the dispute they have with the those holding to a mediating position is only over one commandment and that one commandment is the sabbath commandment and so we're going to ask ourselves not only because of the specific difference between those two schools of thought about the sabbath commandment but as a general illustration of whether the law of God is binding today, is there such a thing as the Christian sabbath.

There are three particular texts in the New Testament I'd like us to look at at the opening of our consideration this morning which would seem to answer that question unequivocally. Turn in your Bibles, please, to Romans 14 and I'll read for you verses 5 and 6 to begin with. Romans 14:5-6, Paul says, "One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let each man be fully assured in his own

mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord: and he that eateth, eateth unto the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, unto the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks." It would seem in this passage, then, that Paul says some people make a special deal out of certain days, others don't, let each man do it in the way that seems best to him.

In Galatians 4:9-11 Paul says, "but now that ye have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how turn ye back again to the weak and beggarly rudiments, whereunto ye desire to be in bondage over again? Ye observe days, and months, and seasons, and years. I am afraid of you, lest by any means I have bestowed labor upon you in vain." The idea of observing special days seems to Paul to smack of a legalistic principle of salvation. He says, "I'm afraid of you in that regard."

And then finally Colossians 2:16-17. Colossians 2:16-17 says, "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a feast day or a new moon or a sabbath day: which are a shadow of the things to come; but the body is Christ's." Paul here says, "You are not to be judged in terms of observance of a sabbath day because that was only a shadow of something later to come, a shadow of the person and work of Jesus Christ himself."

In light of those three New Testament passages, some people would say why do you even pose the question is there a Christian sabbath? Couldn't anything be clearer that we are not under a continuing sabbath obligation in this dispensation? These three New Testament texts have settled the question. Well, I guess you can tell from the way that I'm introducing it that I'm not convinced that those three texts in fact settle this particular issue and I think if we are to look at the scripture more broadly and to take into account all that God's word has taught us on the subject, we'll actually come to the opposite conclusion; that, in itself, will demand our returning to these three passages at the end of this morning's lesson to find out what they perhaps genuinely mean.

But first of all, I want you to turn to our text for this morning now. Mark 2:23-28 where I'd like to show you that, in fact, there is a Christian sabbath or Lord's Day in this dispensation. Mark 2:23-28. While you're turning to that, I might explain that the people who maintain that we're not under obligation to the Old Testament sabbath commandment maintain that unless a view is repeated in the New Testament, it's no longer binding upon us. Keeping that in mind at Mark 2:23 verse we read this,

23 And it came to pass, that he was going on the sabbath day through the grainfields; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears. 24 And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful? 25 And he said unto them, Did ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was hungry, he, and they that were with him? 26 How he entered into the house of God when Abiathar was high priest, and ate the showbread, which it is not lawful to eat save for the priests, and gave also to them that were with him? 27 And he said unto

them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: 28 so that the Son of man is lord even of the sabbath.

Thus far the reading of God's word.

The sabbath is made for man, Jesus says, and he declares that the Messiah is the Son of man, and as such, is Lord of the sabbath. Christ maintains that he has a lordly prerogative over the sabbath in virtue of being Lord over whatever pertains to man. Since the sabbath was made for man and Jesus is the Lord over men and what pertains to them, then he is Lord over the sabbath as well.

Jesus speaks here not of anything distinctive to Israel as a nation, he speaks rather of what pertains to man qua man, to man just in virtue of being a man, and he says the sabbath was made for the good of man and not man for the sake of keeping the sabbath. That doesn't mean man is free from keeping the sabbath, of course, it simply means that we have to have the proper perspective, that man was not created for the sake of the day, the day was made for the good of man, and since Jesus is Lord over all men, as such he is Lord of the sabbath as well.

The sabbath, consequently, was made not distinctively for Israelites. Jesus doesn't say here as you might expect him to say, the sabbath was made for Jews, the sabbath was made for God's special and chosen people, the sabbath was made for Israelites and for them alone. He says, no, it was made for man. Nor does Jesus say, "I am the Lord only of Israelites. I am the Jewish King alone." As you know very well, Jesus comes into the world asserting his Lordship over all of creation and over all mankind and consequently when Jesus says, "The sabbath was made for man and therefore I am Lord of the sabbath," he implicitly restricts the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the creative intentions of God, the good that he intends for mankind, we restrict those things when we end up saying, "Oh no, the sabbath is only intended for Israelites." In the Old Testament, the sabbath was made not simply for the Israelites in the land but the Israelites were to give rest even to the stranger within the gate, according to the law. Even those who may not share the faith of Israel and may not be those who have citizenship in Israel were to be given rest because that rest was intended by the Creator for humanity and not intended simply for his chosen people for religious purposes.

In a sense, Jesus' claim is a very fantastic one. What he's saying is that he's Lord over creation and who is the Lord over creation? Who created heaven and earth? Well, Jehovah did. The creation account in Genesis 2:1, 2 and 3 specifically emphasizes God's Lordship over the world, after all, the creation account says that he controls all things, he declares the character of all things, he is present to bless or to curse all things and the sabbath rest from the creation belonged to the Lord. The Lord is the one who set aside the sabbath day. It was consecrated unto him and it was Adam's blessing to enter into the Lord's rest, to enter into Jehovah's rest. The Lord doesn't need to rest. The Lord never gets tired. The Lord never needs refreshment. Man does. And when man enters before the fall into that refreshing rest of the Lord, that, in itself, is a symbol of the consummation of God's intention for creation. Adam was to work sin-free and then enter in on a periodic

basis every sabbath day, enter into the rest of his Lord which was a sign of God's blessing upon him. It was a blessing for Adam. It was not a blessing to the Lord nor was it necessary to the Lord, it was rather necessary to and a blessing upon Adam that God invited him to rest even as God had rested at the end of the creative week.

So we read the Old Testament and we see that the creation account stresses how Jehovah is Lord over all, Lord of creation. He makes all things, he declares the character of all things and then he invites man to enter into his rest. In a very real sense, we could say in terms of Old Testament theology that Jehovah is Lord of the sabbath and he expects man, as his image now, to follow his own example. God says, "As you work, you are my image, therefore you image my way of doing things." In Exodus, the 20th chapter, therefore when the law of God specifies that the sabbath day is to be hallowed, we read that man in so doing imitates his Creator. Exodus 20:11, the law says six days you will labor and do all your work but the seventh is the sabbath unto Jehovah your God in which you are not to do any work. Verse 11, "for in six days Jehovah made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore Jehovah blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it." Because God operates on that principle of six days of labor and then entering into rest, you are to work the six days and then enter into rest and when you do so, you acknowledge that Jehovah is the Lord of your life; that you work according to his bidding and according to his pattern and you try to imitate his way of doing things; you acknowledge that he is the Lord of Creation that will provide for you; that if you take one day off in seven, you are not going to starve, you're not go wanting because the one who has made all things will not let his people down if they observe the sabbath day and in so doing show that they trust him and look to him as the gracious provider of everything they have.

He is the Lord of the sabbath and he invites men to enter into his rest. In light of that way of thinking, which I think is hard to miss just in terms of general principles of Old Testament theology, turn now to Hebrews, the fourth chapter, verses 1 to 4. Hebrews 4:1-4. The author of Hebrews speaking now to the New Testament people of God says, "Let us fear therefore, lest haply, a promise being left of entering into his rest, any one of you should seem to have come short of it. For indeed we have had good tidings preached unto us, even as also they: but the word of hearing did not profit them, because it was not united by faith with them that heard. For we who have believed do enter into that rest; even as he hath said, As I sware in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For he hath said somewhere of the seventh day on this wise, And God rested on the seventh day from all his works." You see, the author of Hebrews envisions us as Christians with whom the gospel is united with faith, as entering into the rest of God. The Old Testament people of God did not enter into that rest; God swore in his wrath, "They shall not enter into my rest because of their unbelief and sin." But those of us whose sins have been covered, those of us who have been made right with God through the gospel, who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, we do enter into the rest that the Lord offers because we come and submit our lives to the Lord Jesus Christ who is the Son of man, and as such is the Lord of the sabbath, the rest that God offers to people showing for salvation that would have been ours from the very beginning if Adam had not fallen into sin.

Now to suggest in light of the Old and New Testament teaching about God and the rest that he offers to men, to suggest that the sabbath has passed away is to say that Jesus is Lord over what does not exist anymore. Jesus makes a very striking point when he says the sabbath was made for the sake of man. You've seen why that is and how the Old Testament teaches that and Jesus says, "And therefore I am the Lord of the sabbath for the next three years. But after I die on the cross and rise again, then you can just forget about that anymore. God is no longer interested in what was made for your good, the sabbath day made for man. God is no longer interested in lording it over man's life in terms of the use of his time. God is no longer interested in terms of my lordly prerogatives in your life. I'm going to be the Lord of the sabbath for a short period here." No, when Jesus declared he was Lord of the sabbath, he wasn't saying something as trivial or trite as that. To suggest, therefore, that Jesus is Lord over what does not exist is, in fact, insulting to the sovereignty of our Savior. There can be no cancellation of the sabbath unless the one who is Lord of that day says so. And now, if I were convinced that the Lord Jesus Christ had cancelled the sabbath as the law that is binding on his people, I would have no difficulty whatsoever. My difficulty is it seems to me that Jesus is asserting his sovereignty over that day and does not cancel it, and so we have no right to do so either.

What he says, by contrast, is in Hebrews 4:9: there remains a sabbath rest for the people of God. Jesus doesn't cancel the sabbath, he rather comes to make it possible for men to enter into the sabbath rest of God that was intended for Adam before he fell, that was symbolized by Israel entering into the land in the days of the wilderness wandering, and which is now going to be fulfilled in the days in which Christ ministers on earth. And yet we know very well that those who are believers in Jesus Christ still suffer the effects of sin, we still fail in terms of living up to God's requirements, we still know the frustration of a sinful creation. We haven't fully entered into the rest of God, our bodies have not been redeemed, we have not been totally sanctified and glorified in the eyes of God, and so we must continue to press on so that we might fully enter into that rest. And when shall we do so? When the Lord calls us home to glory, and even better, when the Lord returns and renews all of creation. Then we will enter fully into the rest of God, the rest that would have belonged to mankind, would have belonged to Adam had he not fallen into disobedience against God.

Hebrews 4:9 says there remains a sabbath rest for the people of God, and if there remains that sabbath rest and if Jesus is Lord of the sabbath, how dare we say that there is no Christian sabbath? It makes no theological sense whatsoever in terms of the Old and New Testament teaching. We are yet to enter into the new creation. We are still pressing to enter into the full rest God promises and therefore it follows quite naturally that that day which is to be set aside as holy by Christians would be called in the New Testament, what? Revelation 1:10. You probably know what is that day of rest and worship called for Christians in light of the Lordship of Jehovah over the sabbath day in the Old Testament, in light of Jesus saying he is Lord of the sabbath, in light of what Hebrews says that we must still press and enter into that sabbath rest, Revelation 1:10 speaks of the Lord's day.

What is the Lord's day? It's the day over which Jesus Lords it. It is that day over which Jesus has asserted his sovereignty as the Lord. The Lord's day is the Christian sabbath and that day has the same special kind of relationship to the Lord as does the Lord's supper which we read of in 1 Corinthians, the eleventh chapter. Christ instituted a meal to be set aside from common use and he made it part of his worship and called it the Lord's supper. Likewise, the Lord's day has been set apart from common use and made part of God's worship and it's called the Lord's Day. He instituted both of these observances having authority to do so because he is the Lord.

I think it's interesting that throughout the gospels you will find that Jesus is always concerned to defend himself against the charge that he has broken the sabbath. Jesus is extremely concerned that men realize that he is only violating the traditions of the elders and the perversions of the Old Testament law but he is not violating the Old Testament law. Why is that important for him if it's not a continuing moral demand upon men? Jesus is Lord of the sabbath. Jesus protects the sabbath. Jesus restores the sabbath to its proper observation and Jesus bids us to continue observing the sabbath even as he did, as a sign that we will yet enter into the rest of God eschatologically and finally.

Well, at this point we need to change gears because after a while of listening to this way of thinking, you might say, "But we don't keep the sabbath. We don't. The sabbath is Saturday. The sabbath is the seventh day and Christians worship on the first day, so how can you say we continue to have a Christian sabbath?" Of course, we could reverse it, we could say that the sabbath of the old covenant was the day of the Lord to the Jews in the old covenant and what we follow today is the day of the Lord as it was always intended to be, a first day observation, because now Christ has accomplished redemption and we have a more privileged position in terms of entering into God's rest. We could call the Jewish sabbath the Jewish Lord's day, or we could take the Christian Lord's day and call it the Christian sabbath. They're going to amount to the same thing but the question is why the change of day? In terms of the theology that I've been setting before you, why would there be a change of day? I want to suggest that if you really understood the Old Testament law, you would know that the day was going to change. The Lord's day changed from the seventh to the first according to the anticipation of the old covenant and was authoritatively established by the example of the apostles.

All right, this is not arbitrary, it is something which the Old Testament would lead us to expect if we understood its theology and there's three ways in which I'm going to try to lay that before you this morning, first of all, in terms of the festival of Firstfruits or Pentecost as it was set before the Jews in the Old Testament. You know, the New Testament teaches us that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the firstfruits of the dead, 1 Corinthians 15:20. The New Testament teaches us that the fruitfulness of the gospel begins on the day of Pentecost, Acts the second chapter. And so that this resurrection or firstfruits from the dead and this Pentecostal fruitfulness were being typified in the Old Testament feast of Pentecost or Firstfruits. It was called both. It was called the feast of Pentecost or it was called the feast of Firstfruits.

Now when was the feast of Firstfruits or Pentecost celebrated? When was the old covenant feast typifying the resurrection from the dead and typifying the fruitfulness of the gospel age celebrated? Turn in your Bibles to Leviticus 23:11 and 16 to get an answer to our question. Leviticus 23:11 and 16, "and he shall wave the sheaf before Jehovah, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it." Verse 16 now, "even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meal-offering unto Jehovah." The Old Testament specified an eight day worship festival, an eighth day typifying resurrection and fruitfulness for the people of God. You'll notice it is specifically the day after the sabbath. It is the day after the seventh seven, the 50th day, penta-cost.

So if we understood our Old Testament theology, we would have expected something special on the day after the sabbath in terms of the age of resurrection in gospel fruitfulness. Moreover, if we go back and offer you a second way in which we could see this, Christ's Incarnation in the New Testament is called his tabernacling with his people. John specifically says this in his first chapter, that Jesus came and tabernacled, the word tabernacled among us. In the second chapter of John's gospel, Jesus says, "Destroy this temple, I will raise it in three days," claiming that in his own body he was what the tabernacle or temple looked ahead to.

So the Old Testament feast of Tabernacles was an anticipation of our Savior and his work, and when was the feast of Tabernacles to be celebrated? Look at Leviticus 23:35 and 39. Leviticus 23:35 and 39, "On the first day shall be a holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work. Howbeit on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruits of the land, ye shall keep the feast of Jehovah seven days: on the first day shall be a solemn rest, and on the eighth day shall be a solemn rest." The feast of Tabernacles also had this eighth day pattern, the day after the sabbath pattern.

The bringing in of the redemptive age was likewise typified in the Old Testament feast of the Jubilee which was God foreshadowing the coming of the redemptive age. And when was the Jubilee? By the way, I want to remind you in Luke, the fourth chapter, when Jesus preaches his first public sermon in the synagogue in Nazareth, what does he preach about? The Jubilee. He turns to Isaiah's scroll to chapter 16 and he says the Spirit of the Lord is wanting to declare release to the captives, to declare the acceptable year of the Lord, quoting Isaiah about the great Jubilee to come and Jesus says, "In this day, this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." Jesus declares he is bringing in the Jubilee. Well, when was the Jubilee celebrated? Was it celebrated in the sabbath year? The Jubilee was the year after the sabbath. After you have a sabbath year and a sabbath of years indeed, after you've had seven sabbath years, 49, then in the 50th year, the year after the sabbath you enter into the Jubilee.

This begins, to me anyway, I hope to you as well, to be really compelling. If you understood the symbolism of entering into God's rest and the anticipation of tabernacling among his people, the anticipation of the firstfruits from the dead, the anticipation of the pentecostal fruitfulness of the gospel and the year of Jubilee, you would expect that to take place, when? The day after the sabbath.

Let me give you one more way in which we see this in the Old Testament. On what day did God release his people from the bondage of Egypt? I don't think anybody who studied their Old Testament can miss this: that is the paradigmatic illustration of what God would do in sending his Son. God will release us from the bondage of sin. The exodus is the great day of redemption and release for God's people of the old covenant, and it is what we are looking forward to as God will release us.

If you turn to Exodus, the 12th chapter, you'll get an answer to this particular question: when did God release the people from the bondage of Egypt? Exodus 12:6, then 14 to 16. This is the midst of the instructions for the Passover feast. Exodus 12:6, "and ye shall," well, let me read verse 5 to put it in context, "Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old: ye shall take it from the sheep, or from the goats: and ye shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month; and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it between the evenings." All right, so we read, first of all, that the Passover lamb was to be sacrificed upon the 14th day of the month. What's the 14th day of the month going to be? It's going to be the second sabbath from the beginning of the month which was the beginning of the year for the Israelites, religiously speaking, as well. Verses 14 to 16, "And this day shall be unto you for a memorial, and ye shall keep it a feast to Jehovah: throughout your generations ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever. Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel. And in the first day there shall be to you a holy convocation, and in the seventh day a holy convocation; no manner of work shall be done in them, save that which every man must eat, that only may be done by you." In the instructions for the Passover, we learn that the Passover was a sabbath observance. Well, you know from the first account of the Passover historically when God passed over the houses of his own people, that it was in that night that the firstborn died or the firstborn were delivered, and the next day because of the sorrow throughout Egypt, Pharaoh said, "I have had it with these Israelites. Let them go." And Israel is prepared. Israel was to stay with clothes and shoes on and staff in hand ready to take off as soon as Pharaoh says go.

When did Israel then exodus from Egypt? When were they released from bondage? On the day following the sabbath for the sabbath was the Passover sacrifice and in that night the firstborn died and on the first day of the week they then fled. And by the way, that first day according to the Old Testament law, Leviticus 23:6, became the feast of Unleavened Bread. The feast of Unleavened Bread, how can you forget John, the sixth chapter, how Jesus claims to be the bread sent down from heaven which if any man eat, he will give eternal life? All of this symbolism is so beautiful in terms of scripture and it's intended to show us that the day of new creation, the day of redemption from sin, the release from the bondage of sin, the day of resurrection, the day of gospel fruitfulness, pentecostal power, was going to be on the first day of the week, the day following the sabbath.

So we see that the Old Testament anticipated that the Lord's day was truly the first day of the week, and when we turn to the New Testament, that's precisely what we see confirmed by apostolic authority. The apostles were the commissioned representatives and the spokesmen for Jesus Christ. In Galatians 1, Paul makes that very clear. He says, "In light of my apostolic calling, I do not speak with the authority of men, I rather speak with the authority of Jesus Christ himself." And what did these representatives of the risen Christ do? Well, they observed the first day of the week, the day of Christ's resurrection, as their day of worship.

Two illustrations of that. Acts 20:7 says, "And upon the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul discoursed with them." And 1 Corinthians 16:2 is another indication that apostolic pattern was the worship on the first day of the week. Paul says, "Upon the first day of the week let each one of you lay by him in store, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come." Paul says you are to take your offerings on the first day of the week. They gathered on the first day, they broke bread on the first day, they had preaching done to them on the first day, and they collected their offerings on the first day. The very fact that these first day worship assemblies were taken for granted and without controversy in the New Testament assumes apostolic warrant for no one, of course, would challenge the word of the apostles in light of the authority of Jesus Christ behind them.

Now if this change of day were not divinely sanctioned, they would have been engaging in worship that arises from man's own initiative, they would have been engaging in the worship that did not have the authorization of God behind it. And interestingly in Colossians 2, one of the crucial passages we're going to go back to eventually, Paul condemns that as will-worship. Paul condemns the idea that any of us may worship according to our own imagination or initiative. Indeed, the second commandment forbids man worshiping according to his way of thinking and not worshiping as the Lord alone has directed. So in the New Testament the fact that the apostles worshiped on the first day of the week, that that was done so without controversy, that they did so in terms of Old Testament anticipation, and that that was the day of Christ's resurrection, and they are the authoritative representatives of Christ and all worship must be by God's authority and not by our own initiative, that settles the issue. Don't you see that there is just a ton of evidence behind this, that the new sabbath for God's people, in fact, closer to the real meaning of the sabbath would be the first day sabbath, the day of resurrection and that's why we worship as we do by apostolic illustration.

Somebody says however there are those three passages that we read and they seem to be rather negative about observing one day over another and so how can we account for that? Well, we can account for it, I think, in two ways, first of all, by understanding that the sabbath commandment of the old covenant had a twofold significance, and then secondly, by understanding that at least one of those passages I read probably doesn't refer to the weekly sabbath at all, and I think that's something we can demonstrate when we come to it. But first let me talk to you about the twofold significance of the Old Testament sabbath. There was in the old covenant a creation sanction for the sabbath observance of the Jews, that is to say there was a moral dimension that was common to

all men, but in that same sabbath observance there was a redemptive ceremonial significance to be found also so that the sabbath, unlike many commandments, the sabbath cannot be purely categorized as a ceremonial law or as a moral law because two elements entered into it. Now before that bothers you too much, I have yet to find anybody in the evangelical church that is bothered by the fact that marriage is a moral requirement. If you're going to enter into a sexual relation with somebody, you must be married. And yet the Bible also teaches us in Old and New Testament that marriage is what? It is symbolic of the relationship of God's saving relationship to his people. All right, so we have in Ephesians 5 the relationship of Christ and the church is one of a husband to a wife. Does that mean that we don't have to keep the marriage laws of the Bible today because, after all, it's really talking about spiritual things, not earthly things? Absolutely not. There can be two elements to that. God teaches us to be what is a creation requirement through a moral requirement, something about his relationship to his people which is, if you will, redemptive and ceremonial. Likewise, the sabbath has two aspects to it and, again, this can be argued from the scriptures and is not simply some theologian's speculation that is brought to bear on it.

First of all, let me show you that the sabbath had a creation or moral dimension. In essence, the 20th chapter, what is the reason that is offered in verse 11 for the sabbath rest of God's people? It is because God, the Creator, created in six days, then entered into the rest that he bids Adam to enjoy. And so it is based on a creation motif that Exodus 20 bids us to keep the sabbath. Moreover, we can see that for sabbath in the old covenant was instituted prior to Mount Sinai. It was not specifically a Jewish rite. How do we know that? Well, two ways. Genesis 2, I think, establishes that because God didn't need to rest. When God hallowed the sabbath day, it was for the sake of man entering his rest and therefore before the fall without the redemptive dimension being there, man entering into the consummation that creation was all about. It was for the sake of man and so from creation on there was a hallowing of the sabbath day and in Exodus, the 16th chapter, four chapters before we get to the law revealed at Mount Sinai, in Exodus 16, we already see that the Israelites are instructed by God that when the manna is given they're to collect twice as much on the day before the sabbath because God does not let them collect it on the sabbath day, and miraculously the manna which in any other time, if they collected two day's worth on the third day, the Bible says on the fourth day worms got into it and made it rot and stink and no one wanted to eat it. So they were to take a daily provision and only a daily provision of manna except on the day before the sabbath. On the day before the sabbath, they were to take two day's provisions and they found that on the sabbath it did not have worm infestation, did not rot and stink. All right, now this again is before the declaration of the law at Mount Sinai. The sabbath is prior to Sinai.

Thirdly, the sabbath was for Gentiles too and this is a very crucial point. I've already mentioned it in passing. In Exodus 20:10 rest was extended to the stranger within the gate, rest was for the sojourner in the land. And in Nehemiah, the 13th chapter which, I think, would do us good to read, in Nehemiah 13 we see that the law was to be enforced upon those who were Gentiles. Look at Nehemiah 13 and I'll begin reading at the 19th verse. Nehemiah is quite concerned...well, let me read from verse 15. He says, "In those days saw I in Judah some men treading wine-presses on the sabbath, and bringing in

sheaves, and lading asses therewith; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all manner of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the sabbath day: and I testified against them in the day wherein they sold victuals. There dwelt men of Tyre also therein, who brought in fish, and all manner of wares, and sold on the sabbath unto the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem. Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the sabbath day? Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the sabbath. And it came to pass that, when the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the sabbath, I commanded that the doors should be shut, and commanded that they should not be opened till after the sabbath: and some of my servants set I over the gates, that there should no burden be brought in on the sabbath day. So the merchants and sellers of all kind of wares lodged without Jerusalem once or twice. Then I testified against them, and said unto them, Why lodge ye about the wall? if ye do so again, I will lay hands on you. From that time forth came they no more on the sabbath. And I commanded the Levites that they should purify themselves, and that they should come and keep the gates, to sanctify the sabbath day." Nehemiah says, "The merchants, even the Gentiles from Tyre, I didn't allow to profane the sabbath day." In the old covenant, the sabbath was not simply for Israel, it was for the Gentiles as well.

One more consideration here. Fourthly, remember the sabbath was of such significance that violation of it required capital punishment. Exodus 31 and Exodus 35 both indicate that those who broke the sabbath were guilty of a capital crime. God does not often characteristically make a ceremonial provision in capital matters. The sabbath is put in the same category, then, as murder and adultery, witchcraft and such things, kidnapping, homosexuality. Such moral perversion called for the death penalty so the violation of the sabbath calls for the death penalty.

Now in addition to the creation or moral dimension that we see in the sabbath commandment of the Old Testament, I told you there was a ceremonial or redemptive or what I will now call a new creation dimension also and how do we see that? Well, whereas Exodus 20 gives us a motive for sabbath keeping that God, the Creator, operated in this pattern, when we look at Deuteronomy 5:15 now the motive that is offered is because the Lord has released you from bondage in Egypt, you shall keep the sabbath day. Because God has redeemed you and has set you aside, you are to keep the sabbath day. Indeed, Exodus 31 and Ezekiel 20 both indicate that the sabbath was to be a sign unto Israel throughout Israel's generations that God had sanctified Israel unto himself, clearly a redemptive motif here. Israel from all the nations of the earth has been set aside by God. God has loved Israel in a way he hasn't loved the others and the sabbath is a sign of that because the sabbath is what? The sign of entering into the consummation rest of God that God offers to the Israelites. And thirdly, I think we see that ceremonial or redemptive dimension in Hebrews 4:10 when the author as we've seen says there yet remains a sabbath rest for the people of God. Even in our day, there is a symbolic or typological significance. When we come here and worship on the Lord's day, we are in small, in microcosm anticipating that day when the new creation will be the rest of God into which we will enter.

So I hope this is convincing to you. The sabbath has a twofold significance: it indicates creation and therefore is a moral requirement on all created men, the sabbath was made for man, as Jesus says, and yet the sabbath was also a redemptive provision, a sign of God's taking his people and setting them aside, it is a sign by which we look forward to entering into God's consummation rest. The reason why that's possible is because the sabbath would have been with Adam even if he had not fallen into sin. In terms of the creation motif, Adam was to work with the probation and he would have entered in fully to the rest of God. Totally apart from blood sacrifice, totally apart from redemption, the created man, unfallen, obedient to God, would have entered into the consummation rest of God.

Now in our day, men who are created yet fallen still need to press into that consummation rest but we cannot do so apart from redemption, cannot do so apart from blood sacrifice, cannot do so apart from regeneration by the Holy Spirit, and so it turns out that both in terms of creation and redemption, the goal is the same, pressing into the consummation rest of God. And that's why it doesn't strike me as somehow contradictory or uneven or mixing oil and water that there is both the moral as well as the ceremonial, both the creation and the new creation aspects of the sabbath commandment.

So let's ask ourselves: what do we do with these passages we began with this morning? In Romans 14:5-6, Paul is in the midst of discussing what theologians like to call a matter of adiaphora and in that context of adiaphora will be one man who has scruples against eating meats offered to idols or eating meat over against eating herbs or what have you; in the midst of the adiaphora setting Paul says and there are some people who regard days in ways that other people don't, and if they find that good for their spiritual well-being and they want to observe those days, let them but they aren't to impose that upon others. Now the question is was Paul talking about all days? What's he saying? There's no distinction of days, that every day, the observance of any day is adiaphoron. Well, of course, he couldn't possibly have contended that in the context of what he teaches elsewhere because we see by apostolic example we are to set aside the Lord's day to hear the preaching of the gospel, to rest and to gather together to collect our tithes and offerings and what have you. The New Testament does not completely throw out the sanctions of days or Revelation 1:10 would have no meaning.

What could the Lord's day be if there's no distinction of days? Then we'd have to say, "Well, every day is the Lord's day," and that's what some antinomians piously like to tell us and I don't buy that. I'm not at all flattered or I don't think they should be flattered to say, "Well, we think every day is the day of the Lord and so we observe every day like the Lord's day." Oh yeah? What that really means is we want the sabbath day to be lowered to the same standard of doing our own pleasures and our own works every day. They don't mean, "We want to raise every day to the level of forgetting out own earthly toils and cares and entering into the service of God all day long every day." Now let's not buy this pious hypocrisy that says every day is the Lord's day. The New Testament says there is a Lord's day specifically set aside and so when Paul in Romans 14 is talking about specifically for that day, he's certainly not talking about the Lord's day and that, I think, we have to demand contextually.

In Galatians 4:9-11 Paul says something which is conceived upon by people to conclude there is not a Christian sabbath as well. There we saw Paul saying that he was afraid of the Galatians because they followed after the [unintelligible] rudiments of the Old Testament law. It's as you observe days, months, seasons and years. Days, months, seasons and years. That is to say they were following the ceremonial cycle of Israel. They said, "You're following after the shadow. I'm afraid of you. You're looking only at the rudiments." And what were all those things pointing to? They were pointing to Christ. And on top of it not only are you following the ceremonial aspect of the festival cycle of the ceremonial side of the sabbath command, you're doing so as a way of earning brownie points before God. You're doing so thinking you then will be saved in terms of your own observance of these things. Paul says, "I'm afraid of you in this regard." Now I'm certainly not endorsing a Judaizing approach to the sabbath or to the festival seasons of Israel all of which were symbolic of the Savior to come. Remember we said the sabbath even as particular day and not just moons and seasons and so forth that are observed by the Jews, but the sabbath has that ceremonial dimension but it like has a moral dimension that Paul is not repudiating.

Finally in Colossians 2:16 and 17, the one that is perhaps the most directly stated as an explicit argument used by anti-sabbatarians, we find I think the strongest argument against using as a foundation for anti-sabbatarianism. Colossians 2:16, read it one more time says, "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a feast day or a new moon or a sabbath day: which are a shadow of the things to come; but the body is Christ's." Now whatever Paul is talking about in this verse has got to mean the same thing. Paul is giving us a category of things which we are not to be judged with respect to and he speaks of meat, drink, feast day, new moon, sabbath, five items.

So what is he talking about, we pose this to our anti-sabbatarian exegetes of the New Testament. Well, Paul must be talking about feast days, we know those as the festivals of Israel. New moons, well, they had some festivals on new moon too. And the sabbath, that's what we're against. You say, "Oh, but wait a minute, what is that meat and drink? Well, that must refer to the dietary laws of the Old Testament. So what Paul is saying is the ceremonial law is the past way and he took them there to the sabbath day as well," and you know that is the completely impossible interpretation of this verse. Why is that? You won't know the answer to that question if you're not familiar with the Old Testament law. I didn't know the answer to it until I became more familiar with the Old Testament law either. But Paul couldn't be talking about the dietary provision for the Old Testament. Why is that? Because the Old Testament doesn't prevent any particular drink. Yes, it does forbid certain meats. You might be able to get your interpretation going with that word, but where does the Old Testament dietary law forbid drink? It doesn't and since it doesn't, interpretation that demands that to bring consistency to the verse can't be correct.

You say, "Well, then what does it mean?" Well, lo and behold if you'll do a word study in the Old Testament you'll find out that there was such things as meat offerings, drink offerings, festival day offerings, new moon offerings and sabbath offerings in the Old Testament. Those words are all used of offering for a sacrifice in the Old Testament and

Paul says, "Don't be judged with respect to those meat offerings and drink offerings and sabbath day offerings because they were all nothing but a shadow of the substance to come, the body or reality of which is Christ." And of course, we have no problem with that. He's not dismissing the sabbath day observance as the Lord's day, he's dismissing the sacrifices of the Old Testament, the offerings of the Old Testament all of which were symbolic of the work of Jesus Christ. And obviously I would say the same thing. Anybody who follows those today and makes them a moral requirement has forgotten the Savior and his work and we should be fearful of people who do that sort of thing theologically, fearful of those that don't see Christ as the fulfillment of the Old Testament ceremonial law.

So is there a Christian sabbath? Let's come back Mark, the second chapter, where Jesus says, "The sabbath was made for man and therefore the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath." Is there a Christian sabbath? Well, I think that is asking is there a day over which Jesus is Lord? Is there a special day set aside from common use over which Jesus lords it? To say that there isn't is to suggest that he was making a very brash and large claim about something that would only tritely be around for maybe three more years. Now John Revelation 1 says that even after the resurrection of Jesus Christ there was a day on which he received a revelation very precious to us, I hope, a revelation on the Lord's day and that Lord's day has continued to be observed by Christians.

Before we conclude, what should you do on the Lord's Day? If I have convinced you that there is a Christian sabbath, then what is it that God requires? You know, books have been written on this subject and I don't pretend that I can cover all of that in just a short period that we have this morning but I think in two or three minutes I can conclude that basically what the sabbath requirement is for the people of God, the sabbath requires or is a prescribed day of rest, worship and work. Rest, worship and work, and yes, I have said that intentionally to provoke your curiosity. How can it be a day of rest and a day of work? Very briefly it's a prescribed day of rest. Exodus 20 says you shall cease from all of your labor. Six days you shall labor and indeed all of your work but the sabbath which in Hebrew means "cease," the sabbath is the Lord's day and in it you shall do no labor. It is a day of physical rest. Moreover, it is a day of worship. Leviticus 23:3 says that on the sabbath, it is to be a holy convocation to you, a holy day of worship for God's people. In Matthew 12:5, Jesus said the priests profane the sabbath day and yet are not guilty, indicating they appear to work and truly they do work but that's the kind of work God calls us to engage in on the sabbath day. And so worship is prescribed for the sabbath, and finally it's a day of work. When Jesus in John, the fifth chapter, was challenged for healing on the sabbath day, he countered his opponents by saying, "My Father continually does work and so do I. Yes, I work on this day because my Father is working on this day." But what kind of work was he talking about? All the works that we are bidden to engage in on the sabbath, first of all, works of necessity. Works of necessity. In Exodus 12:16 when the requirements were being laid down for following the sabbath it says that preparation of food is to be made on that day. So people sometimes ask, "Well, should my wife work and prepare food on that day?" I think the theologian John Murray was exactly right when he answered someone's going to have to. And the Bible says, yes, that work of necessity is appropriate, moreover and maybe more importantly the Bible

says works of compassion and mercy are called for on the Lord's Day. I'll just read one more passage and then we'll have to call it quits today. Matthew 12:12, again in the context of Jesus being challenged for healing on the sabbath day, he says in verse 11, "What man shall there be of you, that shall have one sheep, and if this fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much then is a man of more value than a sheep! Wherefore it is lawful to do good on the sabbath day." If your work is a matter of doing good, a work of healing to the physical bodies of people, a work of evangelism or giving the gospel to shut-ins or whatever it may be in terms of expressing compassion and mercy to people, that is a work that is lawful on the sabbath day.

And so there is a continuing sabbath for the people of God. We are yet to press into it and so in this age we continue to remember how our Creator made us, and we are to follow his example. We are to remember how our Savior has remade us on the first day of the week, the day of resurrection, and how we are going to enter into that rest at the consummation eventually. And on this day that has been set aside as the Lord's day, we do rest ourselves from our physical work, we work with the Lord and we do works of necessity and works of compassion and mercy. The only question now is whose day is it? Do you continue to look upon this day, Sunday, as your day to decide whether to go to brunch, to go to the ball game? What is it going to be in the afternoon, your time, your day off or is it rather the day on which you are to be worshiping the Lord and recognizing his sovereignty over all of your affairs, a day in which you should say, "This belongs to God. I'll rejoice and be glad in it."

Let's pray.