

A Day to Keep Holy (part 1)

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[0:00] Well, here we are again, gathered to worship God. Seems like we were doing this about seven days ago, weren't we? And the plan is that seven days from now we'll be doing this again.

I wonder if the uniqueness of that has ever struck you. It's really quite remarkable. Why do we meet for worship every seventh day?

Or for that matter, why do we even have a seven-day week? Why not a ten-day week? Five-day week?

Why seven? Well, there's no astronomical reason. Nothing in the heavens has nothing to do with the sun, the moon, the planets, the earth. Now, many of the divisions of time that we have has something to do with the celestial stars and so on.

For instance, we have 24-hour days. Why not 23? Why not 30? Because 24 hours is precisely the time that it takes for the earth to spin around on its axis one time.

[1:13] So we have 24-hour days. Why do we have 365-day years? Why not 200 or 600? Because that's the time it takes for the earth to orbit around the sun.

So, why do we have seven days in a week? And we look up in the skies and we look at the earth and we look at the moon and we can look and look and look and look and there's no correlation whatever found for a seven-day week.

Rather, it's simply because of the sovereign will of the Creator who determined that we would have a seven-day week.

And He didn't put it in the stars or the earth or the sun or the moon. He is the Lord of time. And He wants it that way. He established a seven-day week at creation and it's still with us today.

Check your calendars, kids. There's seven blocks in a week, aren't there? That's the way God planned it. That's the way it is.

[2:27] And that's God's fingerprint, as it were, upon creation. His fingerprint is still seen today on the seven-day week.

And He also established a weekly day of rest and worship, a day to keep holy every seven days. A Sabbath day.

A Sabbath means rest. And that's why we're gathered here for worship. That's why we were here seven days ago. And why we'll be here seven days from hence, God willing. The Lord of time.

Lord over our work. Lord over our rest. So, today we're considering a special day to keep holy. And we want to see it as the good gift that it is from God. That we might treasure it and delight in it as we keep it holy week by week. So, this morning I don't think we're going to get beyond just an overview of this day that takes us literally from Genesis to Revelation.

[3:35] I'm not even sure we'll get to Revelation this morning. But we begin in Genesis 2. We go back to the beginning, the book of beginnings. And in Genesis chapter 2, we'll see in verses 1 through 3, God's own example and institution.

You remember chapter 1 tells us how God created everything in six days. And chapter 1 ends with the creation of his highest creation of man made in his image.

Man made on the sixth day. And then we read this in chapter 2, 1 to 3. Thus, the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array.

By the seventh day, God had finished the work he had been doing. So, on the seventh day, he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy.

Because on it, he rested from all the work of creating that he had done. Notice, first of all, God's own example. Parents often give instruction to their children by saying, imitate me.

[5:03] Mow the yard like you see me mowing it. Not kicking up all the stones into the windows, but away from the house. Do things like I do.

And here we have God teaching his son and daughter to follow his own example. He rested on the seventh day, didn't he? From all his creating work.

Now, the word there for rested is the verbal form of the word Sabbath. In other words, it says to us that on the seventh day, he Sabbath from all his work of creating.

He rested. God's action in seven days at creation was to set an example for man who was made in his image. You see, God didn't need six days to create the universe, did he?

He didn't need the seventh day to rest and be refreshed. No, he did this to establish a pattern for man to imitate in his own cycle of work and rest.

[6:06] What God does, then, is to be reflected in his image-bearer, man. Now, God not only rested, he did two other things.

Notice them there in the scriptures. He did two other things to the seventh day. He blessed it and he made it holy or sanctified it. And in so doing, he instituted a Sabbath, a day of rest for man.

So, first we saw his example. Now we have the establishment, the institution of a day of rest for man. Notice it says God blessed it.

When God blesses something, he makes it a channel of blessing for man. He makes it a conduit of good things for man.

Before you eat, you probably bow your head and pray and ask God to do what? To bless the food? You're asking him to take this food and make it work to your good, to your health, to the good of your body, to your life.

[7:18] God blessed the food. Now that's what God himself did to the seventh day. He blessed it. He made it a source of blessing and inestimable good for man.

The second thing God did to the day was to make it holy, to sanctify it. Now when something was made holy in the Bible, it was set apart from common use to be used for God in his religious service.

There was a whole priestly order of men that were set apart from the other men in Israel, set apart from the common ordinary work, in order to give themselves to the work of serving God in the temple.

The high priests and his priests, set apart. They were holy, set apart. And even their clothes were holy, weren't they?

The clothes that they wore in the temple were set apart from their other clothes. So there's their wardrobe and you see all these clothes. Some of them are for going out and shopping and doing all these things.

[8:35] But then there's some clothes that are to be left at the temple. They're holy. And they were to be used only in service to the Lord in the temple. And so they're set apart from ordinary use to a special use.

That's the idea of making something holy. It was true of the forks and the pots and the pans, the utensils that were used in the temple. They had certain ones that were used in the home and certain ones that were set apart, sanctified, made holy for worship of God.

Now that's what God did with the seventh day. He not only blessed it and made it a conduit of good to man, He set it apart from the other six days. He made it holy.

He says this day is to be different from those other six. You work over here on these six. But on this day it's to be set apart for something different, for rest and worship.

It's to have a different use. And why did He do this? Well, He tells us because. It's the answer to why.

[9:44] Because on the seventh day He rested from all the work of creating that He had done. So He Himself, by His example, had done this. Now, because He had done it, He now sets it apart for man.

And man is to do as He has done. He makes it a Sabbath, a day of rest.

And in the Bible, a day of rest is always a day of worship. There's no such thing as days of rest that were not days of worship. He made it a holy day to rest so that they could worship.

And worship made up the prominent part of that day. Now, He made it holy. That means He made it a holy day.

He made it a holiday. That's where our word comes from. From a holy day. And that, then, is to say something to us about the spirit in which we come to this holy day.

[10:54] Kids, it means that you should come to the day of worship that God has set apart the same way you come to your summer holiday. The way you come to your spring holiday.

Your winter holiday. It's not, oh, we have to do that. But it's rather, we get to do that. And so, God's holy day is a holiday from work.

The Creator says, take the day off. Rest. And be refreshed in worship. It's a day to leave the briefcase at the office and the tools in the shed.

It's a day to stop your work and rest in mine. And glory in my works of creation. And what I have just accomplished in creation.

It's a day to catch our breath before going at it again another six days. It's a weekly retreat that God Himself, out of the kindness of His heart, has given us since the creation.

[11:58] Yes, God wants us to work. But He does not want us to be slaves to our work. And so, He guarantees that at least one day in six, in seven, we will not be found working, but resting.

And it's rest unto worship then. It's not just inactivity. It's not calling us just to be inactive. That's not to keep the day holy. It's to rest in order that we might give ourselves to worship.

To be with our family and our friends and the people we hold dearest on the earth. Singing the praises of Jesus. Celebrating the wonderful works of God.

Back here, it was the works of God in creation. And there were to be shouts of joy and thanksgiving as they made their way to the worship of God.

Well, it's set apart for the worship of God. And that's why Isaiah 58, 12, God calls the seventh day, my holy day.

[13:05] The Lord's holy day. It's His. This day is His, He's saying. This is mine. Now, it's His in a unique way.

You see, from the very beginning of time, all the days of the week were God's. He made them all. They've come from Him. They're through Him. They are unto Him. They're to be lived for Him.

All the days of the week are to be lived to Him. And yet, He distinguishes this day as different from the other six. This one is mine in a different way than the rest of them because He sets it apart from the others.

And He says, this is my day. This is for me. So we worship God every day.

But this is in a special way. A day that's especially to be set apart for the worship of God. And it's God's own distinction, not ours.

[14:06] He says, it's my day. Remember who is He? He's the Lord. He's the one who's Lord of time, Lord of work, Lord of worship, Lord of rest. He's the Lord of Sabbath.

So a weekly Sabbath is seen from the beginning of our Bibles to be a creation ordinance. That means that it was instituted at creation. It's established from the beginning.

And every creation ordinance in Genesis continues in force all the way through until Jesus comes. There's the institution of marriage, for instance, and procreation.

That law will continue in force till Jesus comes back. And then there will not be giving in marriage, will there? But until then, it's a creation ordinance.

It goes right through the whole of human history of this age. So it is with the institution of work. Man is to work.

[15:08] And that's repeated and goes right on through until we die and rest from our labors, as Revelation tells us. Well, we did get to Revelation, didn't we?

So, this is a creation ordinance. The Sabbath, then, is not just a Jewish thing. It was made for man before there were such things as Jews.

There is no Abraham, father of the Jewish nation. And yet already, God has established one day, the seventh day, as a day to rest and worship.

Now, that's where we begin. Now we turn over to Exodus, chapter 20. As we're making our way through the Bible, we come then from the creation to the Exodus out of Egypt and the law that God gave to who?

To his redeemed people, to his treasured possession that he had already redeemed by grace and now he hands them a law to explain to them how he wants them to live as his redeemed people.

[16:15] And we pick up the reading of the Ten Commandments in verse 8 of Exodus 20.

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh is a Sabbath to the Lord your God.

On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or

maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates.

For, because, here's why, in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day.

Therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. This clearly looks back to what happened at creation in Genesis 2.

The very words are the same. What did God do back there? He blessed it and made it holy. He rested. Where? At creation.

[17 : 21] At creation. Genesis 2. Not here and now at Mount Sinai. This is not the first time that we hear these words. No, he blessed it at creation for man.

He set it apart at creation for man. And here, he makes it written down in stone. That's the difference here.

Now it's in stone with his own finger for all to see that that is indeed what God wants. He wants his image bearers to imitate him in this work six, rest one.

Work six, rest one cycle and pattern. It's precisely because of what God did there at creation that we must remember to keep this day holy.

Now again, it's remember. That's pointing back, isn't it? It's going back to that earlier legislation that came out of creation from God. Remember this day by keeping it holy.

[18 : 26] We keep it holy because God made it holy. He made it holy so we keep it holy. That's another distinction between Genesis 2 and Exodus 20.

God made it holy now we keep it holy. We don't make it holy. He set it apart and now we just keep it apart. We don't blur this distinction and just let it become another one of the days of the week.

We keep it apart as God tells us to remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. So here we have God's own commentary in Exodus 20 looking back and explaining Genesis 2.

The maker works six and rests on the seventh. and here in the Exodus Sabbath.

Yes, we're looking back and remembering creation but just turn over quickly to Deuteronomy chapter 5 where we have the second giving of the law where they're ready to go into the promised land and don't worry about where we're at in the outline or we'd be here till tonight.

[19 : 36] We're just gonna cut off right in the middle of it. But over in Deuteronomy 5 and verse 15 you have the core command given first.

Deuteronomy 5 12 Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy and then you have the same six days you shall labor do all your work but the seventh is a day of rest a Sabbath to the Lord your God and so on.

But then down in verse 15 we see something new added to this fourth commandment. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm.

Therefore the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath. Oh, there's another reason to observe this day now. Because of God's creation we are to look back and to ponder and meditate and rest in God and enjoy His work of creation and praise Him for it but now we're also to praise Him for redemption.

He's redeemed us out of Egypt and bondage and so this day becomes a day not only to look back to creation but to look back to the greatest redemption God's people had ever in the Old Testament experienced.

[20 : 56] A day for praising God for creation and redemption both not either or it's like a woman who gets married on her birthday and so every day that that birthday comes around she now has two reasons to celebrate whereas for a long time it was the one she celebrated her birthday and for a while the people of God were celebrating creation alone and then they're redeemed out of Egypt and this day becomes a day to remember our creation our creator and our redeemer now too.

You see it's growing in richness it's growing in meaning and so it's a progressive filling out of this day of worship we worship God our redeemer and our creator.

Well let's go on to Mark chapters 2 we're turning a lot of pages now we're going quickly just to the next development that we want to draw attention to in Mark chapter 2 passage that was read we're going to concern ourselves with verses 27 and 28 Jesus was a friend of the Sabbath he was no enemy to the Sabbath he's the only man to ever perfectly keep the Sabbath day holy and that means there's a righteousness in him for all us Sabbath breakers so here's Jesus the perfect

Sabbath keeper and yet the Pharisees charge that was leveled against him more than any other charge was what you're breaking the Sabbath and we got to see that here in the scripture reading today how will Jesus respond to that that charge well this way he wasn't breaking the Sabbath he was not breaking anything about God's commandment what he was breaking was their silly little rules that they had added on to

God's commandment the Talmud contained 1500 rules for Sabbath keeping and they had it all if a man lost his false teeth he couldn't pick them up and carry them because that would be to carry a load on the Sabbath the steps of how far you can walk the weights that you could carry it was all laid out 1500 of these rules and you know what Jesus did he violated them on purpose he stepped right over them they drew the line and Jesus walked over it right in public right in front of their face it infuriated them they wanted to kill him because of that we saw in our text don't get the idea because of that that Jesus is somehow trashing the Sabbath commandment the Gospels were written well after Jesus' death burial and resurrection and as the writers are writing back about the life of Christ and what he did and what he said and what he defended they didn't treat the Sabbath as something well we don't need to deal much with that because that's put away anyway no they deal with it a lot they show us what our Savior's heart was toward this creation ordinance and so what does Jesus say well he says it's not the command of God that my disciples have broken they said well they're picking they're harvesting on the Sabbath they were going through the fields and they just picked a few heads of grain and just rubbed the chaff off and threw it in their mouth why do your disciples break the Sabbath Jesus says they haven't broken the Sabbath and he proves it to them from the Old Testament itself and then he says to them with authority the Sabbath was made for man not man for the Sabbath and the son of man is lord even of the [25:10] Sabbath the Sabbath! the Sabbath who blessed it on the seventh day of creation who set it apart and made it holy he's the lord of time and work and rest and he's standing on the earth and he's claiming to be lord of the Sabbath and he's telling them the Sabbath was never something that man was made for it was rather!

man the Sabbath was made for man not man! there was no Sabbath around when God made man when did God make the Sabbath on the seventh day he made it for the man not man for the Sabbath and when he says he made it for the man he means for the advantage it's a word of advantage for his benefit for his good for his blessing for his happiness well of course Jesus was there on the seventh day of creation and set it apart and blessed it to make it a channel of good to man and here he is saying it was made for man it was made for his advantage for his good and so Jesus is emphasizing the beneficial nature of the Sabbath day and he did so precisely because the Pharisees had turned the day into anything but a happy holiday anything but a blessing for man by those 1500 additional regulations and rules for the day they had perverted the Sabbath they had twisted its intentional meaning and beginning and they made it an oppressive hardship for man a day of gloom instead of gladness as if man existed for the good of the Sabbath sacrifice man's delights for the good of the Sabbath no no it's not that way at all Jesus says you've got it backwards men and so Jesus upholds the ongoing validity of the Sabbath but he defended its original intention he keeps it as a day of blessing for man even as he initially instituted it to be J.C.

Ryle has it put well when he says he no more destroyed the Sabbath than a man who rakes the moss off of his roof destroys the house no the house is left in place he's just clearing off the rubbish that's growing on it and so Jesus is clearing away the rubble as he did for many commandments in the Sermon on the mount right!

clearing away the rubbish of pharisaical hypocritical legalistic religion and that's how Jesus dealt with the Sabbath because they had destroyed its purpose in other words taking a handful of grain and rubbing the chaff off and putting it in your mouth is not the same as driving your combine into the field and working on the seventh day that's what he's saying these men aren't working on the Sabbath it doesn't violate anything of God's command to rest from your labors they are resting from their labors and they're just gathering up food necessary food walking through just popping some grain in their mouth so he purposefully and publicly cast these extra rules aside and upheld the true Sabbath and he says I'm doing this as the

[28:59] Lord of the Sabbath I have authority to do this you see I'm Lord of rest and work and time it's my day men I blessed it I set it apart and I determine how it's to be used and I never had your rules in mind when I set up my day it was to be a benefit to man not a curse and so Jesus uses his authority not to abolish it why would he abolish something that he himself set up for the good of

man but rather he uses his authority to uphold to explain and restore the Sabbath from the perversions of the Pharisees and it simply tells us that if we do not regard the day of worship as a blessing!

as a happy holiday from our work then we're out of touch with the very reason God gave us this day in the first place we are to call the Sabbath a delight and the Lord's holy day honorable the last passage and I'll only mention it and quote from it is Hebrews 4 verses 8 to 11 you can read the whole section Joshua gave rest to the people of God in the promised land but that wasn't their final rest it was just a type of the final rest when we get to heaven and their rest from our labors and then the writer to the Hebrews says there remains then a Sabbath rest for the people of God if ever any book was written to show that the Christian new covenant is better than the old it's the book of Hebrews and yet it's in the book of Hebrews that the author says there remains then a Sabbath rest for the people of God in the new covenant and so our own keeping those Sabbath week by week is is not only remembering creation and redemption but also looking forward to that future eternal Sabbath that final Sabbath rest and now in the gospel in the new covenant creation celebrating creation we'll have to get into this next week and celebrating redemption are not just the first creation and the first redemption it's now the new creation we look back and we celebrate the new creation in Christ and his resurrection from the dead and we'll see that's why we're here on the first day of the week not the seventh and we'll see that but we're celebrating the new creation we're celebrating the redemption that has been accomplished once and for all and we're resting in Christ's work and not in our own works and so this day of rest and worship continues right on in to the new covenant until we finally step over the threshold of death into what the Bible refers to as rest rest from our labor well we've we've jumped over a lot let me just say one more thing and we're done Tom and Katie have been married for three years they have no children yet but they've both developed and come right along in their careers they're quite busy and each has developed their own special interests that take them away from the other and it's all caught up on them they've drifted unintentionally they've just drifted apart not that they're living apart they still live in the same home they're not always arguing but something's missing the spark is gone and they both realize it and one day Tom says to Katie dear things are not right are they no they're not we've drifted haven't we yes we have there's a coldness isn't there yes there is I don't want to go on like this do you no I don't but what can we do about it and they think together and then Tom says to her well let's just block out our Saturdays for each other and spend the whole day together not going our separate ways as we usually do let's let's just be together to relight the fire of love and restore our relationship like it used to be yeah that'd be great let's do that and so Saturday rolls around and they enjoy a leisurely breakfast together and do the dishes together maybe a chore talking enjoying each other's presence and then about 1030 Katie checks her watch and says oh I've got to go I'm sorry I've got to work out at the gym and then lunch with the girls and then yeah some shopping to do I should be back around five and Tom says but wait a minute dear [34:22] I thought we agreed that this day would be for us remember so that we can rekindle that love that we've lost and rebuild our relationship now what's Katie going to say to Tom oh that's nothing but legalism Tom is she going to say that not in your life if she loves him she'll say you know you're right honey I guess I've been used to this for so long I forgot and I'm going to cancel all my appointments we do need the whole day together we do love each other and we need this time together to rebuild our relationship and brothers and sisters there's a lover of your soul who wants to set aside a whole day to free you up from what usually clutters your time and life and I say clutter but in a good way fills up your life as well as clutters so that you'll just have time to spend together with him to rekindle your heart's love to rebuild that relationship to strengthen it to maintain it and it's not legalism to say

I gladly set this day aside every week to build my relationship with the God who created everything out of nothing and the God who sent his son to redeem me from my sin and to make me a part of the new creation that he's bringing in that's already begun but it's not yet finished I want to know him and I sing more love oh Christ to thee and I skedaddle to church on the day of worship because I want more love to that Christ and he comes in that worship service and he pours out his love to his bride that's not legalism and your attitude towards the Lord's day is a revealing thing J.C.

Ryle says let us never forget that our feelings about Sunday are sure tests of the state of our souls the person who can find no pleasure in giving God one day in you you would not have delight in the Sabbath above if you find no pleasure he didn't say some he said no pleasure in this this is boring

when will it be over when can I get out to my things if so it's a signal to you you're not yet ready for the eternal Sabbath that's why Jesus says you must be born again you need a heart change he's the only one that can fix grow in your relationship to him what's your attitude towards the Lord's day towards keeping it holy set apart does your heart leap for joy at the return of each Lord's day is it day of all the days the best day of all the week the best emblem of eternal rest am I tolerating it or enjoying it calling it a delight or a miserable thing am I making the most of this day when I think about the purposes for which it was established for rest and worship let's pray Lord of Sabbath we bow in your presence and confess our sins and we're so thankful that you're the perfect law giver and the perfect law keeper and you have a righteousness to give to us sinners so cover us for our bad attitudes towards the one day in seven that you give us to worship rest from other things the normal activities and forgive us that we haven't seen the goodness of God in it we haven't delighted that you would give us this day off we haven't seen what a benefit it is to us we've not counted it our best day forgive us change us make us like the Lord Jesus in every way and thank you for him our joy today is in him as we again rejoice in his great work of salvation finished work he's now resting from that redemption accomplished and we rest in him from our works we turn away and believe that his works are enough we thank you for him in Jesus name amen