

Do You REALLY Keep the Sabbath Holy?

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December 6, 2025 - Polson, Montana

Introduction:

On November 15th I gave a message entitled "The Sabbath: 10 Purposes".

Today, I ask the question: *Do You REALLY Keep the Sabbath Holy?*

Of course most of us realize that mainstream Christianity does not [EVEN] believe Sabbath Observance is required, let alone keeping the day holy. Google AI says the following:

Whether you "have to" keep the Sabbath depends on your faith tradition, but for most Christians, the Old Testament Sabbath (Saturday) isn't a binding command, replaced by a spiritual "rest in Christ," though many observe Sunday (the Lord's Day) for worship and rest; Jewish tradition, however, holds Saturday Sabbath as a core requirement. The New Testament frees believers from the Law of Moses, emphasizing Christ as the ultimate fulfillment, making Sabbath observance a matter of personal conviction for Christians, not a strict rule.

For Christians:

- **Not Required (Generally):** Most Christian denominations teach that the ceremonial laws, including the Saturday Sabbath, were fulfilled in Jesus and are not mandatory for New Covenant believers.
- **Freedom in Christ:** The New Testament encourages Christians to find their true rest in Jesus, not in a specific day or ritual.
- **Personal Choice:** The Apostle Paul suggests believers should decide for themselves if they observe a special day, without judgment from others (Romans 14:5).
- **Sunday (Lord's Day):** Many Christians observe Sunday as a day of worship and rest, commemorating Jesus' resurrection, but this is a tradition, not a strict biblical command for all believers.

Key Takeaway:

The command "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8) is foundational, but Christian interpretation sees its spiritual fulfillment in Christ, shifting focus from legalistic day-keeping to living in Christ's rest, while Jewish tradition maintains Saturday observance.

After my study of the Nicolaitans in Revelation 2 I would say forsaking the law and doing what one pleases is a modern day form of Nicolaitan teaching. It casts any obedience to the law as legalism.

[Note: For more information on legalism see the table in Additional Resources from my message on the 10 Purposes of the Sabbath.]

Concern: Have we allowed the false mainstream Christian teaching that we decide how to keep the Sabbath to impact how we keep it? And as a result, have we watered down our Sabbath observance?

Also, have we allowed the mainstream Christianity concept of the new covenant to shape our thinking that we have the freedom and personal choice in how to keep the Sabbath?

In the process do we profane or desecrate the Sabbath rather than keep it holy?

Specific Purpose of this Message:

Today we will look at what it means to keep the Sabbath Holy.

Need:

Is it possible that we have only viewed the seventh day Sabbath as the day we do not work on and have overlooked the command to keep it holy?

Exo 20:8-10 NKJV 8 "Remember the Sabbath day, **to keep it holy.**
9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work,
10 but the seventh day [is] the Sabbath of the LORD your God. **[In it] you shall do no work:** you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who [is] within your gates.

To do this study today I would like to go through the Letter from United Church of God President John Elliot sent out this past week in the December 4th Home Office Update entitled the Sabbath and God's Holy Law:

Every Friday, sunset is racing toward you at approximately 12 miles per minute. All along its rapidly advancing line, a miracle is taking place. God is creating holy time, just as He did during Creation week (Exodus 20:11).

Exo 20:11 NKJV For [in] six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that [is] in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

As it begins circumnavigating the globe, the line of sunset speeds across the Pacific Ocean, first touching "Millennium Island," so nicknamed for its earliest time zone. Interestingly, the Millennium represents the "rest" that Jesus is bringing to humanity during His 1,000-year reign with us (Revelation 20:4,6).

Revelation 20:4-6 NKJV - 4 And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then [I saw] the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received [his] mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.

5 But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This [is] the first resurrection.

6 Blessed and holy [is] he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.

When those of you in New Zealand and East Asia receive the sunset of Sabbath's beginning, those of us in the Americas will be asleep awaiting our Friday "Preparation Day." A question to consider before it arrives is: "To what degree will I keep this Sabbath holy?"

The Sabbath command was magnified by the one who became Jesus the Christ.

When God gave the Ten Commandments, He stated: "**Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy**" (**Exodus 20:8**). What does that statement mean? How are we to fulfill God's command to "keep it holy?"

The Ten Commandments and all the Law remain in force today (Matthew 5:18).

Matthew 5:17-19 NKJV - 17 "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.

18 "For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.

19 "Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches [them], he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

The Ten Commandments *alone* did not *fully* exemplify God's mindset, nor did they *completely* codify God's Law for the New Covenant saints. Consequently, Jesus came, in part, to "fill-full/magnify" them to their full spiritual intent (Matthew 5:17).

From the Outline of Biblical Usage:

- A. to make full, to fill up, i.e. to fill to the full
 - 1. to cause to abound, to furnish or supply liberally
 - a) I abound, I am liberally supplied
- B. to render full, i.e. to complete
 - 1. to fill to the top: so that nothing shall be wanting to full measure, fill to the brim
 - 2. to consummate: a number
 - a) to make complete in every particular, to render perfect
 - b) to carry through to the end, to accomplish, carry out, (some undertaking)
 - 3. to carry into effect, bring to realisation, realise
 - a) of matters of duty: to perform, execute
 - b) of sayings, promises, prophecies, to bring to pass, ratify, accomplish
 - c) to fulfil, i.e. to cause God's will (as made known in the law) to be obeyed as it should be, and God's promises (given through the prophets) to receive fulfilment

Jewish leaders of His day were considered examples of obedience to the letter of the Law within their culture. But Jesus said that unless our righteousness exceeds theirs, we will not even be in God's Kingdom (Matthew 5:20).

Matthew 5:20 NKJV - 20 "For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds [the righteousness] of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

Why? Eternal life in God's Kingdom was not a part of the holy Covenant God made with physical Israel. **Jesus magnified the codified Law and Commandments into a new Covenant with better promises** (Hebrews 8:6).

Hebrews 8:6 NKJV - 6 But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.

He took the Law to a new level, a spiritual level (Hebrews 8:10)

Hebrews 8:10 NKJV - 10 "For this [is] the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

for which obedience is possible only with the coming of the Holy Spirit (2 Thessalonians 2:13).

2 Thessalonians 2:13-15 NKJV -

13 But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the **Spirit** and belief in the truth,

14 to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

15 Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.

Far from just being ten commands that on the surface are to prevent offense to God and neighbor, **Jesus magnified and filled-full each of them**. He explains that we are to keep His Law of love like He does (John 13:34).

John 13:34-35 NKJV - 34 "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

For us, the spiritual intent behind keeping the whole Law is to love God and neighbor fervently (Matthew 22:37-40, 1 Peter 1:22).

Matthew 22:37-40 NKJV -

37 Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.'

38 "This is [the] first and great commandment.

39 "And [the] second [is] like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'

40 "On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

1 Peter 1:22-23 NKJV -

22 Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart,
23 having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever,

Every aspect of God's holy Law to Israel remains (Romans 7:12),

Romans 7:12 NKJV - 12 Therefore the law [is] holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.

along with a "righteous requirement" that God expects us to fulfill (Romans 8:4).

Romans 8:3-5 NKJV -

3 For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God [did] by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh,

4 that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those [who live] according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.

It is through God's magnified commands that we see and imitate His mindset (Philippians 2:3-7, Galatians 5:22-23).

Philippians 2:3-7 NKJV -

3 [Let] nothing [be done] through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.

4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

5 **Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,**

6 who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,

7 but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, [and] coming in the likeness of men.

Galatians 5:22-23 NKJV -

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

The Sabbath command was magnified by the one who became Jesus the Christ.

"If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing *your pleasure* on My holy day, and call the Sabbath *a delight*, the holy day of the LORD *honorable*, and shall *honor Him*, not doing your *own ways*, nor finding your *own pleasure*, nor speaking your *own words*, then you shall delight yourself in the LORD" (Isaiah 58:13-14, emphasis added throughout).

Isaiah 58:13-14 NKJV -

13 **"If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, [From] doing your pleasure on My holy day, And call the Sabbath a delight, The holy [day] of the LORD honorable, And shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, Nor finding your own pleasure, Nor speaking**

[your own] words,

14 Then you shall delight yourself in the LORD; And I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, And feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the LORD has spoken."

DD - Notice the blessing that comes with delighting and keeping the Sabbath holy!

Thus, the Lord delights in the one who keeps the Sabbath holy by pursuing the mindset of God through the help of the Holy Spirit. Rather than bicker about the need to keep the Sabbath holy, perhaps we should each be asking, "Did I keep last Sabbath holy 'enough' and a delight in God's eyes" (Isaiah 58:14)?

All humans are imperfect and we need to "upgrade" our Sabbath observance to fully keep it holy in accordance with both God's original and His magnified commands. When we observe the Sabbath properly, it is a two-way sign identifying the true God and identifying His true children (Exodus 31:13-17).

Exodus 31:13-17 NKJV -

13 "Speak also to the children of Israel, saying: 'Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it [is] a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that [you] may know that I [am] the LORD who sanctifies you.

14 'You shall keep the Sabbath, **therefore, for [it is] holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death;** for whoever does [any] work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people.

15 'Work shall be done for six days, but the seventh [is] the Sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does [any] work on the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death.

16 'Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations [as] a perpetual covenant.

17 'It [is] a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever; for [in] six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed.'

"

Let's consider a few ways to do that. Scripture states that we are to:

- Keep it holy (Exodus 20:8).
 - Exodus 20:8 NKJV - 8 "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.
- Call the Sabbath a delight (Isaiah 58:13).
 - Isaiah 58:13 NKJV - 13 "If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, [From] doing your pleasure on My holy day, And call the Sabbath a delight, The holy [day] of the LORD honorable, And shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, Nor finding your own pleasure, Nor speaking [your own] words,
- Honor God (Isaiah 58:13). See above.
- Rest from all work (Exodus 31:15, Luke 23:56).
 - Exodus 31:15 NKJV - 15 'Work shall be done for six days, but the seventh [is] the Sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does [any] work on the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death.

- Luke 23:56 NKJV - 56 Then they returned and prepared spices and fragrant oils. And they rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment.
- Teach and learn from God's word (Mark 6:2).
 - Mark 6:2 NKJV - 2 And when the Sabbath had come, He began to teach in the synagogue. And many hearing [Him] were astonished, saying, "Where [did] this Man [get] these things? And what wisdom [is] this which is given to Him, that such mighty works are performed by His hands!
- Attend a holy assembly (Leviticus 23:3, Hebrews 10:25).
 - Leviticus 23:3 NKJV - 3 'Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day [is] a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work [on it]; it [is] the Sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings.
 - Hebrews 10:24-25 NKJV - 24 And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, 25 not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as [is] the manner of some, but exhorting [one another], and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.
- Do good, save lives (Luke 6:9), etc.
 - Luke 6:9 NKJV - 9 Then Jesus said to them, "I will ask you one thing: Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy?"

It is a time to think and act like God, and to be with God and His begotten family.

God has sanctified you and made you holy (1 Peter 2:9).

1 Peter 2:9 NKJV - 9 But you [are] a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, **a holy nation**, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

God has sanctified His Sabbath and made it holy (Genesis 2:3).

Genesis 2:3 NKJV - 3 Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.

NLT: And God blessed the seventh day and declared it holy, because it was the day when he rested from all his work of creation.

Peter said, "As He who called you is holy, you also *be holy in all your conduct* (1 Peter 1:15).

The Sabbath's approaching edge of sunset is sweeping toward us. In advance of its arrival, you and I should take off our dirty "sandals" with which we tread the rest of the week and come to this holy time before God (Acts 7:33).

Acts 7:33 NKJV - 33 'Then the LORD said to him, "Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground.

The way that we observe the Sabbath should be in contrast to what we have done and thought during the first six days of the week.

In preparation for its arrival, wrap-up those physical and mental weekday matters and make plans to observe the holy Sabbath in the manner God wants His holy children to do (Deuteronomy 5:12).

Deuteronomy 5:12 NKJV - 12 'Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you.

A good review of this weekly Holy Day is in our booklet, [*Sunset to Sunset: God's Sabbath Rest*](#).

Praying for you and for God's blessings as we keep His Sabbath day holy together,

John Elliott, President

Conclusion:

Let's be sure we are keeping God's Sabbath Holy!

Additional Resources:

This table on Legalism is from my message on the 10 Purposes of the Sabbath:

Google AI re legalism:

Legalism in the Bible is the false teaching that salvation and God's favor are earned by following a set of rules or laws, rather than through faith and God's grace. It emphasizes human performance and outward behavior modification over heart transformation, often adding human-made rules to God's commandments. The Bible condemns this approach, teaching that people are saved by grace through faith, not by the works of the law.

(HOWEVER...) What is the opposite of legalism in Christianity?

AI Overview

The opposite of legalism in Christianity is antinomianism, which is the belief that God's law is irrelevant for believers because salvation is by grace through faith alone. While legalism seeks salvation through strict adherence to rules, **antinomianism rejects the need for obedience**, claiming that grace frees believers from the law entirely. The balanced Christian view is a middle ground between these two extremes.

Antinomianism

- **Belief:** Christians are not required to obey God's moral law because they are saved by grace.

- **Focus:** Disregards or downplays the importance of obedience and the law, sometimes leading to a licentious lifestyle.
- **Outcome:** Creates a false sense of freedom that dismisses the seriousness of sin and the need for a transformed life.

The balanced Christian view

- **Belief:** Salvation is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, not by works.
- **Focus:** Embraces the freedom from condemnation through Christ, ***while still seeking to obey God's law out of love and gratitude***, not as a means of earning salvation.
- **Outcome:** ***Encourages a life of obedience*** that is empowered by the Holy Spirit, leading to genuine transformation rather than a striving for perfection through self-effort or a reckless disregard for sin.