

A Declaration of Those Things Which Are Most Surely Believed Among Us

An Expository Study of **The Gospel According to Luke**
Chapter 13- Luke 13:10- 17
247- Jesus Confronting the Hypocrisy of the Pharisees
about the Sabbath

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Luke 13:10-17

10 And He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath.

11 And there was a woman who for eighteen years had had a sickness caused by a spirit; and she was bent double, and could not straighten up at all.

12 When Jesus saw her, He called her over and said to her, "Woman, you are freed from your sickness."

13 And He laid His hands on her; and immediately she was made erect again and *began* glorifying God.

14 But the synagogue official, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, *began* saying to the crowd in response, "There are six days in which work should be done; so come during them and get healed, and not on the Sabbath day."

15 But the Lord answered him and said, "You hypocrites, does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the stall and lead him away to water *him*?"

16 And this woman, a daughter of Abraham as she is, whom Satan has bound for eighteen long years, should she not have been released from this bond on the Sabbath day?"

17 As He said this, all His opponents were being humiliated; and the entire crowd was rejoicing over all the glorious things being done by Him.

To the Glory of God

The issue of the Sabbath and just how to "keep it" has been a very important function in the lives of those who seek to love and serve God faithfully for at least 3400 years. It was the central issue with these

Pharisees during the earthly Ministry of Jesus Christ. And these men saw Jesus as not only *marginalizing* this sacred institution- but of trying to publicly and eternally end its practice. And that made Jesus evil in their minds and that made Jesus dangerous and that made Jesus Someone Who these religious hypocrites had to stop.

So every time the religious elite came into contact with Jesus – it wasn't long before the issue of the Sabbath came up and they wasted no opportunity in trying to trap Jesus into saying or doing something that they could use to prove that what they thought about Jesus was true.

And that is because the Sabbath was the single most sacred religious issue that these men dealt with on a day to day basis, and it dominated their thinking and conversation.

And to get an idea of just how foundational and basic the Sabbath was to the Jews- we need to look at God's Word from **Exodus 20**- so please turn there with me- **Exodus 20**. You see, in order to understand why Jesus did what He did here in Luke 13- we have to see how the Pharisees had gotten the Sabbath all wrong, and that Jesus was certainly not breaking the Sabbath- He was simply returning it back to its original intent:

Exodus 20:8-11

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 a sabbath of the LORD your God; *in it* you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you.

11 “For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy.

So the foundation behind the Sabbath is not some interest in God wanting people to do things or to not do things- but the foundation of the issue of the Sabbath is Creation itself and the way in which God made the Universe.

So those who are trying so hard to make their belief in God and the Bible work out alongside their belief in Darwinian Evolution- they have a problem here because the Sabbath Day is clearly connected to Creation, and here God tells Moses that the reason why the Sabbath

Day is holy is because God rested on the "Seventh Day" after taking six-24 hour segments of time called "Days"- to sovereignly create the Universe "ex-nihilo", or in other words God took nothing but His Will and His Word and clay and God created everything that exists through a series of instantaneous supernatural miracles in 6 different segments of time comprising 24 hours called "Days".

Another way of saying this is that the entire foundation behind the Sabbath Day is the fact that God rested on the Seventh Day and you simply cannot have a Sabbath Day that begins with an "Evening" and ends with a "Morning" without having a corresponding "Seventh Day" that also begins with an "Evening" and ends with a "Morning".

And the point of me saying this is that both of those things, both the "Sabbath and Day" and the corresponding "Seventh Day", are measurable events of time and not long protracted eons of millions or billions of years as Darwinian Evolution requires.

So during the time when the partial and inferior Revelation of God called The Old Covenant was in place- the Seventh Day or the Sabbath-*the Shabat* in Hebrew, was the single most important time for a believer. And the Jewish Leaders took this very simply and partial Revelation of God and they institutionalized it and added to it until "keeping the Sabbath" was impossible to keep on a practical level.

Now by the time that Jesus began His Ministry- the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes had manipulated the Word of God to the point where the average Jew of that day had absolutely no idea if what he was doing or what he refrained from doing was right and was in keeping with the Sabbath until he consulted with these people.

So to help us answer this issue- I want us to try to get an overview of the Biblical teaching on the Sabbath. Now from the Passage in **Exodus 20**- we see at least five things that deserve a special comment.

1. Remembering

First, Israel is to remember the rest day. The word "Sabbath" means *rest*. So to "Remember the sabbath day" means, "*Don't forget to take a day off.*"

2. Keeping It Holy

Second, "Keep it holy" means set it aside from all other days as being unique and special. Specifically, as verse 10 says, it **"is a sabbath of the LORD your God"**. In other words, this rest is not to be aimless rest, but "God-centered rest". So our attention is to be directed to God in a way that is more concentrated and steady than on the other days. So we are to keep the day holy by keeping the focus on the holy God.

3. One Out of Every Seven

Third, the holy rest day should be one out of every seven. Verse 9: **"Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; in it you shall not do any work..."** Work six, rest one. Work six, rest one. That's the pattern prescribed in the Ten Commandments. Note it does not say that the Sabbath ("rest day") has to be the last day of the week or the first day of the week. The concept of weeks is not even mentioned. The Command is simply work six, rest one. Every seventh day should be a Sabbath.

4. No Fudging

Fourth, no fudging on the Commandment by saying, *"Well, I will keep it, but I will put my maid to work, or set my ox to threshing with a carrot in front of his nose at 6 PM the evening of the Sabbath so that it will thresh the grain all day while I rest."* God says, "No". God said, **"... in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you."**

You miss the entire point if you try to keep the business running by using servants or animals or relatives. So what is the point?

5. God's Rest after Creation

Fifth, verse 11 leads us to the basic point of the Commandment. It is based on God's Rest after Creation:

For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy.

And Moses took this from **Genesis 2:2&3** when, under the inspiration of God the Holy Spirit, he wrote:

Genesis 2:2-3

2 By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done.

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.

So, from both **Genesis 2:3** and **Exodus 20:11** we know that God did two things about the Sabbath or the Seventh Day:

- A. God *Blessed* the Day
- B. God *Hallowed* the Day

Now to find out the Truth of this- we should start with this observation:

The week exists.

.. and that is not to be taken for granted. "Days" exist because that's how long it takes the earth to rotate. "Months" exist because that's how long it takes the moon to wax and wane. "Years" exist because that's how long it takes for the earth to revolve around the sun. But why do "Weeks" exist?

Weeks do not correspond to any phenomenon in all of Creation. So the answer is this:

Weeks exists because of **Genesis 2:2,**

By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done.

Now the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1911, article on "Week") says:

"Those who reject the Mosaic recital will be at a loss, as . . . to assign it [the week] to an origin having much semblance of probability."

... in other words, other attempts to explain why we reckon time in weeks are not compelling. The week goes back to the story of creation in the Bible. God worked six days and rested on the seventh. That set the pattern of the week.

So let's examine what this means. What does it mean for God to "*Bless the Day*"? It means that God makes the Day to be an important time of blessing. For example- when God blesses a man- the man becomes rich with blessings. When God blesses a land- the land becomes rich with blessings. So when God blesses a Day- that Day becomes rich with blessings.

So that is when God blesses a Day. But what does it mean that God "*Hallowed the Day*?" The word "hallowed" is the very same word as "sanctified." So to "*Hallow the Day*" means to set the day aside for special focus on that which is holy. And there are only two things in all the Universe that are holy:

- God
- The Works of God

So let us consider these two words together. God *blessed* the Day and He also *hallowed* the Day. So how do these two things fit together? God sovereignly set the Day aside- He *sanctified* it so the Day would be a wonderful source of blessing. And so God made the Day to focus on Himself and His Works. So the hallowing is included in the blessing and the blessing is included in the hallowing.

So the way we are to understand this is that when we take the Day to hallow God and to focus our attention on Him- we receive more blessing than if we had kept on busying ourselves with secular affairs all week long- thinking that professional advancement and money are the path to true joy and lasting happiness.

And the reverse is also true. When we judge God to be worth taking the Day to seek our blessing in God rather than in the products of human labor- we hallow God and we honor His Holiness as being the infinitely greater wealth.

The reason given in both **Genesis 2:3** and **Exodus 20:11** why God blessed and hallowed the seventh day is that:

... on it God rested from all his work which he had done in creation.

So what does it mean that God "rested?" The fact that God rested doesn't mean that God was tired- but that God was finished. It means that He was completely satisfied that His Work of Creation was complete and was "very good." So God's rest on the Seventh Day means that He wanted to now stand back as it were in leisure and savor the beauty and completeness of His creative Work that brought Him great Glory.

And this is the real basis of His *hallowing* and *blessing* The Day of Rest. So God is saying in effect:

"Let My highest creature- the one in My Image- stop every seven days and commemorate with Me the fact that I am the Creator Who has done all this. Let him stop working and focus on Me- that I am the Source of all that he has. I am the Fountain of Blessing. I have made the very hands and mind with which he works. Let one day out of seven demonstrate that all land and all animals and all raw materials and all breath and strength and thought and emotion and everything come from Me. Let man look to Me one day out of seven for the blessing that is so elusive in the affairs of this world."

Now the beautiful thing about the Sabbath is that God instituted it as a weekly reminder of two things;

- A. That all true blessing comes from God's Grace, not our own labor.
- B. That we hallow God and honor God and keep the day holy if we seek the fullness of His blessing by giving our special attention to Him on that day.

But it would be a mistake to conclude from these two texts that the only blessings we should focus on during our Sabbath observance were the blessings of Creation. **Deuteronomy 5** gives us a second version of the Ten Commandments. And here the basis of the Sabbath observance is different. Verse 15 says:

You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out of there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to observe the sabbath day.

In other words the mighty Hand and the outstretched Arm of God were not wearied by the work of Creation. They are full of strength. And so God's rest was not for recuperation- but for exultation. Now the same God has shown His Power- not just to create- but also to save. So the focus of the Sabbath is on God- not simply as the Source of Creation- but as also the Source of our Salvation as well. "**Your God brought you up out of the land of Egypt . . . THEREFORE he commanded you to keep the sabbath day.**" So us taking one day in every seven- and keeping that Day about the Lord- reminds us and shows the world- that GOD is our Creator and our Deliverer- that we did not make ourselves and we cannot sustain or save ourselves without His Grace. So we are to be still and know that He is God.

Now what did the Lord say at the exodus from Egypt?

Exodus 14:13b&14

13 ... Do not fear! Stand by and see the salvation of the LORD which He will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever.

14 "The LORD will fight for you while you keep silent."

And **Exodus 31:13** stresses again the Truth that the Sabbath signifies our utter reliance on God's Grace.

But as for you, speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'You shall surely observe My sabbaths; for *this* is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you.

So the Sabbath is also a sign. It points to the Truth that we are never to forget. And the Truth is that God (and not we ourselves) has sanctified us. He has chosen us and set us apart and worked to make us distinct among all the peoples of the earth.

So in summary then, **Exodus 20:11** and **Deuteronomy 5:15** and **Exodus 31:13** teach that the Sabbath is a way of remembering and expressing the Truth that God is our Creator and our Deliverer and our Sanctifier. And it shows that we are dependent on Him for all we have in the world- for our deliverance from enemies, and for our holiness. And while it is true that God has indeed designed that we work and that we work hard- our work doesn't create nor does it save nor does it

sanctify us. For these things- we depend solely on the undeserved blessings of God. All things are from Him and they are through Him and they are to Him. And lest we ever forget this and begin to take our strength and thoughts and our labors and accomplishments too seriously- we should keep one day in seven to cease from our labors and focus on God as being the Source of all blessings. That is what the OT taught about the Sabbath. And the Pharisees of Jesus' day didn't get this at all.

Now before we leave the Old Testament, there is one other passage that clarifies a common misunderstanding of the Sabbath. It is **Isaiah 58:13&14**. Please go there with me- **Isaiah 58**.

Now it is truly a shame that for so many people- "Sabbath Keeping" is thought of solely in terms of what you *can't* do. Because its original intention was certainly intended to be good news- not bad news. The Sabbath Command is, in fact, a Command to experience joy- listen to the Prophet Isaiah speak:

Isaiah 58:13&14

13 "If because of the sabbath, you turn your foot From doing your *own* pleasure on My holy day, And call the sabbath a delight, the holy *day* of the LORD honorable, And honor it, desisting from your *own* ways, From seeking your *own* pleasure And speaking *your own* word,

14 Then you will take delight in the LORD, And I will make you ride on the heights of the earth; And I will feed you *with* the heritage of Jacob your father, For the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

Now this tells us that God's Purpose for us on the Sabbath is that we experience the highest and most intense joy that can be experienced, namely, that we "**take delight in the Lord.**" And yet what we see again and again is professing Christians- who prefer little human-sized earthly pleasures from things that have no close relation to God at all to substitute for taking delight in the Lord.

If you worked seven days a week in the hot sun to keep life and limb together, with scarcely any time for leisure and reflection, would you consider it burdensome if your God came to you with Omnipotent Authority and said, "*I don't want you to have to work so much. I want you to have a day a week to rest and enjoy what really counts in life.*"

And I promise to meet your needs with just six days of work"? That is not a cruel command. It is a gracious gift. It is a blessing.

Now the reason that so many people feel that Sabbath keeping is a burden is partly because we already have so much leisure time- we don't feel the need for the Sabbath rest. But more important, I think, is the fact that not many people really enjoy what God intended us to enjoy on the Sabbath- which is Himself. Many professing Christians enjoy sports and television and secular books and magazines and recreation and hobbies and games far more than they enjoy direct interaction with God in His Word or in worship or in reading Christian books or in taking meditative strolls or in ministering to other people.

Therefore, it is inevitable that people- whose hearts are set more on the pleasures of this world than on the enjoyment of God- will feel that the Sabbath Command is a burden and not a blessing. This is what John was talking about in **1John 5:3**,

For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.

The measure of your love for God is the measure of the joy you get in focusing on Him on the Day of Rest. For most people- the Sabbath Command is really a demand to repent. It invites us to enjoy what we don't enjoy, and, therefore, shows us the evil of our hearts, and our great need to repent and be changed.

So not only was Jesus confronting their real bad theology about the Sabbath here in **Luke 13** which would prohibit them from "doing good" on the Sabbath in the name of not working- He was also exposing their real bad theology about women- because part of the reason why these men would have all released an ox on the Sabbath and yet would not release this woman was because they thought more about the ox than they did the woman.

So Jesus collided with the Pharisees over the Sabbath. And I make the suggestion that Jesus did this on purpose because this is a huge issue in all four of the Gospel records. For example- **John 5:18** says,

For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.

So this was a huge issue that was all tied up with Jesus' Divine Claims, and Jesus went about to say several radical things that should shape the way we should think about our celebration of the Lord's Day. Please turn with me to read **Matthew 12:1-14**.

12 At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath, and His disciples became hungry and began to pick the heads of grain and eat.

2 But when the Pharisees saw *this*, they said to Him, "Look, Your disciples do what is not lawful to do on a Sabbath."

3 But He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he became hungry, he and his companions,

4 how he entered the house of God, and they ate the consecrated bread, which was not lawful for him to eat nor for those with him, but for the priests alone?

[At this point in the same story **Mark 2:27** records, **"And he said to them, 'The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.'"**]

5 Or have you not read in the Law, that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath and are innocent?

6 But I say to you that something greater than the temple is here.

7 But if you had known what this means, 'I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT A SACRIFICE,' you would not have condemned the innocent.

8 "For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."

9 Departing from there, He went into their synagogue.

10 And a man *was there* whose hand was withered. And they questioned Jesus, asking, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"—so that they might accuse Him.

11 And He said to them, "What man is there among you who has a sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will he not take hold of it and lift it out?"

12 How much more valuable then is a man than a sheep! So then, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."

13 Then He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand!" He stretched it out, and it was restored to normal, like the other.

14 But the Pharisees went out and conspired against Him, as to how they might destroy Him.

Now from this- I want you to consider three observations and five things Jesus says:

Observation #1. When the Pharisees accused Jesus' disciples of law-breaking (in verse 2) because they picked grain and ate it, Jesus did not even attempt to argue that picking grain and eating it was not Sabbath breaking. In fact, the way He answered them virtually assumed that it was against the law.

Observation #2. In verses 3-4 he refers to King David and his men taking bread from the House of God that was not lawful for them to eat, and in verse 5 he refers to priests who work on the Sabbath and profane it. In other words, the needs of David's men and the needs of the temple service took precedence over ceremonial bread and Sabbath rules.

Observation #3. Jesus heals a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath knowing his enemies are trying to trap him. He *intentionally* provokes the controversy.

And Jesus also makes five statements to explain what He is doing.

- ✓ *Statement #1.* Verse 6: **“Something greater than the temple is here.”** And by implication: Something greater than David is here. So David and his men, and the priests who serve the temple are innocent, then all the more so are my disciples. I am greater than David and I am greater than the temple.
- ✓ *Statement #2.* Verse 8: **“The Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath.”** In other words, I am not just a greater King than David. I am the Maker and the Owner and the Rule-Giver for the Sabbath. This world and all that is in it is Mine- the Sabbath is Mine.
- ✓ *Statement #3.* Verse 7: **“I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.”** This quote from **Hosea 6:6** means that love always takes precedence over ceremonial laws. So go learn how the Old Testament itself gives guidelines for how to use God's Law *lovingly*- to God's Glory.
- ✓ *Statement #4.* **Mark 2:27: “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.”** This is another way of saying that doing good for people is not against the Sabbath- even if it takes the sweat of

your face to pull a man out of a pit. Which is then expressed explicitly in...

- ✓ *Statement #5.* Verse 12: **“So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.”**

Now as we move into what the early Church taught about this- it is clear that the concept of a weekly “Day of Rest and Devotion” was not rejected- but was simply changed from Saturday to Sunday. Now this is nowhere specifically Commanded- but there are two verses that suggest it happened very early on- under Apostolic Authority. The first one is **The Acts 20:7** which says:

On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul *began* talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight.

Now this seems to be a formal gathering for the Lord's Supper on Sunday evening- the first day of the week and *not* on Saturday- which was the traditional Sabbath.

And Dr. Luke uses the Roman way of reckoning days from midnight to midnight. (Cf. **The Acts 4:3; 23:31f.**) So it looks as though the switch to Sunday for worship had already begun by this time- while Paul was still alive. So that puts this as early as 65-66 AD.

The other verse that points in this direction is **1Corinthians 16:2**. There Paul is trying to prepare the Corinthians for a collection that he is taking up from the churches for the saints in Jerusalem and he says:

1Corinthians 16:2

On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come.

So it seems that the first day of the week is now the day when Christians are performing special religious exercises.

And this is why the early Church took the first day of the week as its day of worship and turned away from the seventh day. The seventh day marked the victory of the first Creation. The first day marked the victory of the new creation with the Resurrection of Christ. And here are some of the clues:

In all four Gospels- a very unusual way of expressing the first day of the week is used to describe the day of Jesus' resurrection. It's usually translated:

“On the first day of the week” (John 20:1 and Luke 24:1, Mark 16:2,
... and the literal Greek for that is

Të de mia tön sabbatön

... or in **Matthew 28:1**- it reads:

eis mian sabbatön

.. *which literally means,*

“the number one of the Sabbath.”

... which is

“the day which is number one in the sequence of days determined by the Sabbath”¹

Words for “first” occur over 150 times in the New Testament. But only in reference to the Day of the Resurrection do we get this unusual usage.

Now why is this significant? It's significant because there are only two places outside the Gospels where the writers refer to the “first day of the week” as being significant for the Church, and in those two places this peculiar usage occurs. **The Acts 20:7, “On the first day of the week (*En de të mia tön sabbatön*), when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to leave the next day...”** And **1Corinthians 16:2, “On the first day of every week (*kata mian sabbatou*), each of you is to put something aside and save as he may prosper, so no collections be made when I come.”**

This is simply astonishing from a statistical standpoint. There are 150+ uses of words for “first” (even “first day” when not referring to the first day of the week **Matthew 26:17; Mark 14:12; Acts 20 :18; Philipians**

¹ Jewett, *The Lord's Day*, p. 75

1:5) and only in reference to the first day of the week as the Christian gathering-day is there the identical and rare construction used to describe when Jesus rose from the dead.

The point is that the Christian Church made the change from the seventh to the first day for worship because it was the day that the Lord Jesus rose from the dead—the day He vindicated the completion of His Father's redeeming Work. So the new creation, the new humanity, were purchased and established- but not consummated.

So we can see that from the very earliest days of the Church- before the end of the Age of the Apostles- Christians set aside the first day of the week- Sunday- as their usual and normal day of rest and worship.

Now the upshot of all this is *not* that there is no special day for the followers of Christ, but that there is certainly a new *kind* of freedom and a new criterion for what is permissible (foreseen in **Hosea 6:6**). Jesus did not try to settle whether His disciples' behavior fit the mold of the law. He put the issue on a new plane in three ways:

- A. The Sabbath is for expressing Jesus' Rule and Authority- not Moses'— the Sabbath is for worshipping Christ.
- B. The Sabbath is for *relieving* Man and *blessing* Man- not burdening him. It is a good thing- not a bad thing.
- C. The Sabbath is for showing mercy and for doing good- to God's Glory because God has shown us Mercy and has done us Good.

Now consider **John 5:16&17**. In those two verses- Jesus had healed a man on the Sabbath and told him in **John 5:8**,

Jesus said to him, "Get up, pick up your pallet and walk."

And this got the man in big trouble for carrying his bed on the Sabbath. In **John 5:16** John writes,

For this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath.

To this, it says (in verse 17),

But He answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working."

Now what does this mean? It means this:

While it is true that God rested from His created Work- He is ever working on His Redemptive Work- toward a *new* creation and a new humanity. "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working." You unsaved Jews do not understand what I am doing. I and my Father are creating a new world and a new humanity, and when we are finished- we will celebrate with a new Sabbath.

And that Work of Redemption and new creation was finished decisively on the Cross. And three days later Jesus rose from the dead to celebrate the victory He had won and the new creation He had decisively obtained and inaugurated. Now He could take His seat with his Father on the Throne of the universe and enter his Sabbath rest.

So what was so wrong with the Pharisees? Why couldn't they see the Old Testament the way Jesus did? Why didn't they see David's eating the bread of the Presence and the priest's Sabbath work in the temple as an indictment of their Sabbath traditions the way Jesus did?

According to Jesus the Pharisees could only condemn the innocent because they never had understood. He quotes it in verse 7: God says, "**I desire mercy and not sacrifice.**" In other words the whole Law exists for the sake of mercy. All the law is summed up in this one word:

Luke 10:27

"YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND; AND YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF."

The Pharisees couldn't see the true meaning of the Sabbath because they were not saved and did not have a heart of love.

Mark 2:27

The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.

So if your heart isn't a heart for both God and Man- if it is not a heart of love- you cannot see the meaning of the Sabbath. For the

Sabbath is a gift of love to meet man's need- never an oppressive burden to make him miserable or proud.

So Jesus didn't come to abolish the Sabbath but to dig it out from under the mountain of legalistic sediment, and give it to us again as a blessing rather than a burden. It is a day for showing mercy and a day for doing good (verse 12). It should not be governed rigidly by narrow definitions of what is work and what is not. It is a day to focus on the Lord. And now Jesus is the Lord of the Sabbath (according to verse 8), so it is a day to focus on Jesus. And it is impossible that a day focused on Jesus should be a burden to the believing heart—"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest!"

So the final, eternal, blood-bought Sabbath rest has begun. And we truly enter into the Sabbath and we make it holy and we receive the blessing of it when we cease from our own "works" and trust Christ and His finished Work for us on the Cross. This is the great and final meaning of the Sabbath.

Christ has become our eternal rest- our Sabbath. And this is what **Hebrews 4** is saying to us,

Hebrews 4:3-10

3 For we who have believed enter that rest, just as He has said, "AS I SWORE IN MY WRATH, THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST," although His works were finished from the foundation of the world.

4 For He has said somewhere concerning the seventh *day*: "AND GOD RESTED ON THE SEVENTH DAY FROM ALL HIS WORKS";

5 and again in this *passage*, "THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST."

6 Therefore, since it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly had good news preached to them failed to enter because of disobedience,

7 He again fixes a certain day, "Today," saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before, "TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE, DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS."

8 For if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day after that.

9 So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God.

10 For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His.

Notice that this is past tense. We have already entered. But wait- just about the time you think that we have arrived at the final solution- that believing and trusting in Jesus is keeping the Sabbath- the writer of Hebrews then adds verse 11 to the mix that says:

Hebrews 4:11

Therefore let us be diligent to enter that rest, so that no one will fall, through following the same example of disobedience.

In other words, we have entered our rest and we must yet enter into it. Redemption is accomplished. But it must now be applied and consummated. So our eternal Sabbath is begun but it is not fully present.

And this is why the early Church did not abandon the celebration of one day in seven as a day belonging especially to the Lord- even though they fully realized that loving and trusting in Jesus is keeping the Sabbath.

For example- in **The Revelation 1:10** it is called “**the Lord’s Day**.”

“I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day.”

... so the men who led the early Church knew that the final rest was still future. A day was still needed to bear witness to a self-reliant, self-sufficient world that our work does not save us or define us- Christ does.

So what did Paul mean then, when he wrote to the Colossians (in **Colossians 2:16&17**),

16 Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day—

17 things which are a *mere* shadow of what is to come; but the substance

17 belongs to Christ.

He meant:

Christ Himself is our final Sabbath rest. “**Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest**” (Matthew 11:28). Christ has come and

purchased our eternal rest, and becomes our Resting Place. The burden of saving ourselves is lifted. There is rest for our souls.

But the shadow remains because Christ has not yet returned. Someday there will be no more weeks because there will be no more night or month or years. The Sun and the moon will not be needed, because “**the Lord God will be their light**” (**The Revelation 22:5**). There will be only Sabbath and no other day.

But, not yet. We taste the final rest only in part as we trust in Christ. Therefore, the Sabbath Principle was not abandoned by the early Church. The shadow of Christ across this weary world still offers shade, namely, the first day of the week—the Lord’s day. And the meaning of that day is that Jesus is risen, and Jesus is Lord and Jesus is Creator and Jesus is Redeemer and Jesus is the only place of rest for the soul. It’s a day for worshipping Jesus. It’s a day for saying by what we do and don’t do that Jesus, not our work and not the money we get from our work, is our treasure and our meaning. It is a special day for the honor and the glory of the Lord. A day for mercy and for man.

So, does **Romans 14:5** refer to the Lord’s Day when it says,

One person regards one day above another, another regards every day *alike*. Each person must be fully convinced in his own mind.

I answer with Paul Jewett who said:

“It is unconvincing . . . to press Paul’s statement in **Romans 14:5** so absolutely as to have considered John [the apostle] a Judaizer for having called one day in the week the Lord’s Day (**Rev. 1:10**), thus giving it the preeminence.” (*The Lord’s Day*, p. 78).

Jewett takes the Apostle John’s conviction as having Apostolic Authority and assumes that John is not among the “weak” of **Romans 14:2**. That is, John does not call one day in the week “the Lord’s Day” as one option among many. He calls it “the Lord’s day” because he and the early Church treat it in a special way among all days.

So I cannot escape what seems to me compelling evidence that the Lord’s Day remains till Jesus comes and that it is set apart for the glory of Christ and the good of our souls. May the Lord give you wisdom and

freedom and joy as you display his work and his worth on His Day. So in summary- I offer these four points that will help us to *not* be like the Pharisees:

1. Accept the gift of one day's rest per week on Sunday. Humble yourself to believe you need it. And be willing to admit that your wealth and your significance and your true advancement in life depend far more on God's Labor than on yours.
2. Devote Sunday to focus your attention on God in a unique and special way. Keep a holy day and devote yourself to those things that deepen your love for God.
3. Except where you think obedience to God requires otherwise, let that day of rest and Godward focus be on the first day of the week as a witness to the world that Jesus Christ is the Lord of your sabbath and of your life.
4. Find ways to "do good" on Sunday by pouring out of your heart the same blessing and sanctifying power that God has poured into you without neglecting your assembling together so we may provoke one another to love and to good works.

Amen. Let's pray.