

The Fourth Pointer on the Spiritual Roadmap: Keeping Jehovah's Day Holy (1)

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Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor the stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it. [Exodus 20:8-11](#)

The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath. [Mark 2:27-28](#)

Young people, we have seen that God's law requires us to acknowledge Him to be the only God, to worship Him rightly, and to use His name rightly. In obeying these commands, we show that we are traveling on The Way of Thankful Obedience, which ends in the glory of His name, and in heaven.

But we have not yet finished with the dangerous intersections and crossroads—there are several more to come! And now we approach an intersection with a road down which so many travel, The Road of Sabbath Desecration. What pleasurable attractions we can find, if we travel down this road! We can stop at the Sunday Sports Show; visit the Sunday Travel Museum; and stay at the Man-Is-Made-For-Sunday Hotel. Some justify traveling on this road, because it has churches on it, and they stop in to visit these churches. That isn't really so bad, is it? Sadly, the names of the churches give away the real problem: there is the False Doctrine Church (doctrine is preached, but it doesn't glorify God), the All-Tolerant Church (everything goes, because we are all going the same place anyway), the Entertainment Church (you leave feeling really good, unless you came to serve God), and the McDonald's Church (the one where you get your sermon fast, so you can be on your way doing your own thing).

Should we turn on this road? It looks like a very nice road to take. We are tempted!

The problem is this: to get on this road, we must turn off the road we are traveling on at the moment—The Way of Thankful Obedience. We are tempted to try it—just to see if the two roads will intersect again, and if we can get back on The Way of Thankful Obedience later. What a nice detour it might be! But God, in His grace, gives His children road signs warning us not to turn left onto The Road of Sabbath Desecration. One sign says, "God's Glory - straight ahead. Man's Glory—turn left." Very clearly we are told that we will not reach our destination if we turn. The next sign says, "Bridge Out Ahead on The Road of Sabbath Desecration." Why do so many ignore this warning sign? After making the left hand turn, and traveling down the road a little way, they will see that the sign was true. They have the option only of turning around, and going back to The Way of Thankful Obedience, or speeding towards the bridge that is out, and falling into a deep chasm, to their own peril and destruction.

Let me make it more clear. God hates sabbath desecration. He made that clear to Israel in the Old Testament: "Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people" ([Exodus 31:14](#)). This warning of death is found also in other Old

Testament passages. God meant it! At one point in their wilderness wanderings, the children of Israel found a man picking up sticks on the sabbath day. Either they did not remember God's command, or they were not sure He meant it, or they thought picking up sticks was not really to be considered work, for they did not know what to do with the man. God's answer was: "The man shall be surely put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp" ([Numbers 15:35](#)).

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Some say, "But all that was in the Old Testament. We live in the New Testament. Because Christ fulfilled the law of the sabbath, we have freedom to do as we please on Sunday."

It is true that Christ fulfilled the law—the moral law, that is. But this does not mean we are no longer required to obey this law. Rather, it means He obeyed it perfectly, that He might bear God's wrath against us for disobedience. This ought motivate us to obey it as best we are able.

It is also true that Christ abolished the ceremonial law (the laws in the Old Testament that governed Israel's worship). In the New Testament, no man is physically put to death by the church for desecrating the Sabbath. Also, the New Testament church must have a different outward form of observing the sabbath than did Israel (for example, Israel worshiped with sacrifices, and worshiped in the temple in Jerusalem; we may worship anywhere, and are forbidden to bring animal sacrifices).

The New Testament also teaches us that Jesus Christ, having rose from the dead the first day of the week, changed the day of rest from being the seventh, to being the first; from being Saturday, to being Sunday. Paul did find many Jews in the synagogues on the sabbath, that is, on Saturday, because they had not yet come to believe that Jesus was the Christ, and that He fulfilled and abolished the laws of the Old Testament. Those who, by God's grace, came to faith in Christ as the Savior, worshiped on the first day of the week ([I Corinthians 16:2](#)). Worshiping on Sunday rather than Saturday is symbolic - it shows that we have begun to enter into the rest of salvation in Christ. We rest the first day, then work the next six.

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But is it true that we never need to observe a day of rest, and never need to keep a day holy, as God's day? Is it true that Christ abolished the idea of the sabbath, and our need for a day of rest?

If so, He abolished the fourth commandment. If He abolished the fourth commandment, why not argue that He abolished each of the other nine commandments? If He did that, why not argue that we can live as we please? The answer is this: because Scripture, also in the New Testament, teaches us that the ten commandments of God's law are still in force.

The fourth commandment itself indicates this. Notice the reason God gave: it has to do with creation: "For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is; and rested the seventh day." This fact did not change when Christ died and rose again. Creation ordinances, such as marriage of one man and one wife for life, and such as the need to observe a day of rest, abide as long as this creation abides. The fourth commandment is still in force.

The words of Jesus also indicate this: "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath." That is, God did not make the sabbath day first, as His ultimate goal of creation week, and then decide to make a man to enjoy the sabbath day. Rather, He made man first. After creating man, God made the sabbath. Why did He make the sabbath? Because He knew that His creature, man, was a frail creature, who needed rest from work; and He knew that man needed an

opportunity to enjoy the spiritual rest of fellowship with God. The sabbath was made for man—in light of man's needs. And man is as frail, weak, and sinful today as ever he was.

Young people, we need the day of rest. We need it as a day to rest from our earthly labor. But even more, we need it as a day to draw nigh to our God, to delight ourselves in Him, to praise and serve and love Him rightly, and to enjoy the rest of salvation He gives in Christ.

Until Jesus Christ returns, we need this day of rest. Until Jesus Christ returns, God requires us to keep this day holy, and put aside our earthly work. Until Jesus Christ returns, God teaches us that He hates the desecrating of His day, and those who desecrate it must repent (turn back to The Way of Thankful Obedience) or will perish (fall off the road into a deep chasm, to their own peril and destruction). *God* will see that they are brought to death!

It is important that we ask the question, then: how, practically, must we keep the sabbath day holy? What *must* we do on Sunday? What *may* we do on Sunday? And what is *forbidden* us to do on Sunday? These questions we will answer in our next article.

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