

The Ten Commandments - Part 24: The Simplicity of Keeping the Sabbath (9/24/2022)

The following text is a message from Corner Fringe Ministries that was presented by Daniel Joseph. The original presentation can be viewed at <https://www.cornerfringe.com/media/kvcmdn2/the-ten-commandments-part-24>

***Portions of this document have been edited from the video message to better present a comprehensive, written document. Special attention was given to preserving the original context, but this document is not verbatim. Scripture verses are in the red text with other quotes in blue. Therefore, it is recommended that this document is printed in color. The Hebrew words are generally accompanied by the transliterate, English word. In most cases, the Hebrew is to be read from right to left.**

Shabbat shalom everyone. Today we are going to begin to look at what I call the beautiful simplicity of what it means to actually keep the Sabbath. This will mean a lot more to you today the further we get into this message.

When Christian believers come to the revelation of the legitimacy of the Sabbath, literally, and they're awakened to the truth that Jesus wants them to keep the Sabbath - He's calling them to do this because it is within the Ten Commandments, and they have that awakening, typically what happens is they say, "Okay, great, I understand the relevancy, and I see it in Scripture, but what does that look like? How do you do that?" So, we're going to begin today to start to peel back some layers in regard to what that looks like.

I want to begin today's discussion by taking you back to the Torah, back to the Ten Commandments in Exodus, and this is commandment we read: **"Remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy." (Exodus 20:8)** This is how God introduces the fourth commandment. It's very straightforward; it's very specific: remember to keep it holy. Now, here's the beautiful part of this: God wastes no time; He leaves no ambiguity regarding what He is thinking and how we should do that because immediately He rushes in with this following statement - and we'll break this into two parts: **"Six days you shall labor and do all your work," (Exodus 20:8)**. The first thing the Lord does is He lays out this structure, this framework of time specifically related to six days. The first six days of the week He has carved out for you do all your labor and all your work.

I want to highlight two words here: the first word is "labor," it's *āḇad*, עָבַד, in the Hebrew, and the word labor is a good translation. This word *āḇad* is a verb. The same Hebrew word as a noun would be describing a slave. *Eved*, עֶבֶד, is a slave; it's a servant. So, you're thinking in the context that for six days you're going to be in this servitude, and you're going to do all your work. The word work is *melawkaw*, מְלָאכָה. It's a very pointed term referring to your occupation, and specifically to your place of employment. Wherever you generate revenue so that you can put food on the table, so that you can put a roof over your head, so that you can pay the bills, wherever that is, that is your *melawkaw*. That is your work.

So, the Lord carves out these six days and tells us what we are going to do. But then He goes on and says this: "**but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God.**" (Exodus 20:10). Notice that He doesn't say it's the Sabbath of you. This is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. Now listen to me carefully because when you go to Mark chapter 2, we realize that the Sabbath was made for man, but the Sabbath belongs to the Lord. So, the Sabbath was made for man, but it belongs to the Lord. And when you understand the relationship that really exists, it will make sense because you were bought at a price. You belong to the Lord. It makes perfect sense. The further we get into this, you'll see more and more relational aspects.

So, this is the Sabbath of the Lord your God, and then He says, "**In it you shall do no work** [*melawkaw*]:" (Exodus 20:10). Any mystery as to what God is asking us to do is all removed. What does He mean when He tells us we need to keep it holy? It means you cease. And what does Shabbat mean in the Hebrew? It means cease. You stop on the seventh day. And here's the thing: on the seventh day, on the Sabbath, the entire world stage should be devoid of Christians in the workplace, in the places of trading, doing commerce, and buying and selling. They shouldn't see any Christians. They're gone. They disappear. And think about this, because prophetically we have Yom Teruah coming up, and we have Rosh Hashanah, we have the day of the King, Yom Ha Melech, with that trumpet blast, and what happens? Yeshua is coming back for his saints, and they're going to meet the Lord in the air. What happens? There's a separation. He is taking His righteous away from the world. He separates the sheep from the goats, and that's on Shabbat.

So, you should understand you're supposed to be practicing, rehearsing, that reality right now. We're supposed to be, as Christians, declaring this to the world. They should be going, "Where is so-and-so?" "Where do all these people go?" "How come they don't work on Saturday?" And some of you already get that because I know I'm writing letters for you to give to your employers.

Let me peel back another layer. This construct of the week that God has created - six days, this is where we do *melawkaw*, and then on the seventh day we cease. I want to take you back to the Garden of Eden; this is a story we know well. Satan came in and deceived Eve. Adam and Eve end up partaking of the forbidden fruit, and then what happens? God goes looking for him, but He doesn't find him. Of course, God knows where he is. God calls out, "Where are you?" Adam's hiding himself because Adam and Eve know that they're naked. And the Lord responds and says, "Who told you you're naked? Have you done what I told you not to do?"

This is not hilarious; it's very serious, but you can't help but crack a smile as He goes to Adam and talks to him. "What is this you have done?" And Adam is like, "Yeah, the wife that you gave me, she gave me food to eat. This is totally not on me; it's all my wife." Blame the wife, right? If we learned anything from Genesis, it's that. I'm kidding.

Then God goes to Eve and says, "What is this you have done?" Then she points to the serpent and says, "The serpent deceived me." Then God goes to the serpent, and this is where the chiasmic structure starts to begin. There's a chiasmic structure there.

So, now He proclaims a curse on *Hasatan*, on the serpent. Then He moves in a backward fashion and

goes back to Eve and proclaims a curse upon Eve, and then He goes back to Adam and proclaims a curse upon Adam. And this is where we're going to pick this up, so pay very close attention. This is what we read: "**Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life.**" (Genesis 3:17). "Cursed is the ground." Because of sin, at the very beginning, the ground is cursed. Why does that matter? That's where all sustenance comes from, and it's interesting because that's what you'll be working for. Six days of the week you'll be working for that sustenance, but on the seventh day you're supposed to stop. It's interesting that on the seventh day you're supposed to rest, and you must trust that the Lord your God is going to provide for you.

Let me take this a step further. It says, "Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil" - *issabon*, in pain and sorrow. You know, there's only three times this word is found in Scripture. The first time it was spoken to Eve in that she would literally experience *issabon* when she brings forth children; she would experience the pain and the sorrow. The second time we find it right here in this passage referring to the curse laid upon the ground. What we find is that during the week we are going to experience trials, tribulations, and pain and sorrow because the ground has been cursed. The next time you're at work and are thinking, "What am I doing here? I can't handle it anymore," remember this sermon. You're experiencing the curse. And most of you, I know, cannot wait to get to Sabbath: "Get me out of here; get me out of the curse."

What's fascinating when you look at this is that for six days of the week you will experience pain and sorrow. But guess what? On the seventh day, the Sabbath, the curse is lifted. When we engage in that, God has delivered us. Shabbat is about liberty and freedom. If you read about the Jubilee, it's the declaration of liberty and freedom. It's a Shabbat. That's what it is, and we're set free from the curse. We practice this, and it's not simply practice, but we experience this. We're to experience this reality every single week. And then you take it to another whole level where you bring it back onto the prophetic level where the six days of this work week mirrors the six thousand years of this earth, which is filled with pain, sorrow, toil, and tribulation. And the beauty is, when Yeshua comes back on the Sabbath millennium - and this is when He comes back, He sets us free. Revelation 21 literally says, "**And He will wipe away every tear from their eyes.**" (Revelation 21:4). There will be no more pain; there will be no more sorrow; there will be no more death. It'll all be gone. And this structure of the work week, as we would call it, is highly prophetic of the time of this age into the next age. This is amazing!

With that said, I'm going to tell you this - this is one of the most important points I can make regarding the Sabbath: for you to actually observe the Sabbath in the way that God is calling you to observe it is going to take faith. You will have to have real faith. This is the type of faith that I promise you will be tested. You will be tested. It never fails when I warn these Christians that start keeping the Sabbath. I send them a warning. I tell them, "You're going to be tested. You need to hold the line. It's coming, it's coming. Make no mistake." And they always circle back and tell me: "Daniel, it's exactly what you said. My employer was begging me to come in on Shabbat." You know, there could be a situation where, "Oh, you know what? We have a special project. I'm sorry, you're going to have to come in on Shabbat, just for a couple hours. We just need you for two or three hours." Maybe you own your own business, and maybe you have clients pressing you saying, "You know what? If you don't meet us on Saturday, you're going to lose our business."

I'm going to tell you right now that the devil is going to come after you and give you every excuse and every reason to break the Sabbath. He will lay forth a ton of material and financial blessings for you if you just sacrifice and compromise the Shabbat. What I'm telling you is you will have to say to your employer, "I'm sorry. If you're telling me you're going to give me a promotion, but this promotion requires that I work on Saturday, I'm going to turn it down." Even if the employer were to come back and say, "You know what? I'm sorry, but if you can't work Saturdays, you're just not going to work here." You are now going to be put in a situation of deciding who you trust. Do you trust your employer more than the Lord? Do you trust the strength of your own hands more than the Lord? And that's the moment the devil comes in and sows fear and insecurity. You have to figure out what you are going to tell your wife? I'm going to have to tell her I'm not going to work because of the Sabbath, and now I'm going to lose my job. How are we going to live? This is a reality. There will not be one week that will go by without having the test of you deciding who you love. Do you love the things of the world? Do you love comfort and security? There have been people that I have talked to that lost a lot of job security and comfort in this life in order to keep the Sabbath. That's faith. That is real faith. So, you will be tested; take it to the bank.

There's a famous rabbi here in America; his name is Rabbi Herschel. He makes a statement about the Sabbath that's one of the most profound statements you're going to hear, and I want to read it to you. He says this: [Unless one learns how to relish the taste of Sabbath... one will be unable to enjoy the taste of eternity in the world to come. \(Rabbi Herschel\)](#). That is profound! I want you to feel the weight and gravity of this statement. He is saying that if you're not going to be of the opinion to cherish, to treasure, to look forward to meeting with the Lord, to protecting, to keeping the day holy, and doing everything you can to do that, there's no way you are going to be able to taste the Shabbat in the age to come. It will never happen. That's what's so terrifying. This is what's so scary about this reality.

I'm going to tell you I can back this statement up all day long in the Bible. In fact, we're even going to get into some passages today that will do it. This whole concept of you obeying the Lord, hearing His voice, and keeping the Sabbath holy, is not something that is temporary. We're talking about something that is eternal. If you can't spend one day with the Lord and reject the world, heaven will drive you nuts. You won't be able to handle it. You won't want to be in the Kingdom. And guess what? Your rejection of God's commandment is already declared regarding what you think about the kingdom of God. Do you know that in the Jewish traditional realm, "Sabbath" is a synonym for the kingdom of God? That is because they understand the depth of this. It's incredible.

With that said, I want to take you to the prophet Jeremiah. We talked about this last week, but just to reiterate that the backdrop here is that things are not going well. The people of God are not listening to God; they're in rebellion. So, God does what He always does: He sends grace and mercy through His prophets, and His prophets tell them, "Turn back, turn back!" We're going to pick this up in chapter 17: **"Thus says the Lord: 'Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the Sabbath day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem.'" (Jeremiah 17:21, emphasis added)**. "Thus says the Lord." Don't you dare bear a burden on the Shabbat. Don't bring it in to my gates of Jerusalem. Verse 22: **"nor carry a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath day, nor do any work [melawkaw], but hallow the Sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers. (Jeremiah 17:22, emphasis added)**. Did you catch that? Go back to verse 21,

where we find the Lord covers a lot of ground, and in verse 21 the Lord addresses His house first, His city Jerusalem: "Don't you dare break the Shabbat, don't profane the Sabbath and bring that into My house and into My gates." But He doesn't end there; He even takes it into their houses: "Don't carry a burden out of your own houses." He covers a lot of geography - wherever you're at, wherever you live - don't you dare bring out a burden. Don't you carry a burden.

Now let me pose a question: what is the Lord really conveying here? What does it mean to bear or carry a burden out of your house or into the gates of Jerusalem? Well, it depends on who you ask. If you ask the rabbis, you're going to need to sit down because the rabbis have a lot to say. There's an exhaustive list of commands that they have applied to the Shabbat. I'm going to give you a little snapshot of what they look like so you can understand the temperature here. And the reason I'm doing this is that there's a lot of false perception you discover as you're sharing with friends or family, or as other people are learning about the Sabbath. When other Christians hear the term Sabbath, my experience is that they oftentimes just think of this laundry list of rules that goes on and on and on. And they believe these things are Jewish, and I'm not Jewish; therefore, don't try to heap up all of this stuff on me.

Well, I want to take you to the Mishnah. If you're not familiar with the Mishnah, traditional Orthodox Judaism, not Messianic Judaism, believes that there were two Torahs delivered at Mount Sinai: one Torah we have was written, but they say there was also another Torah delivered orally, and eventually that would become redacted and become written down at the turn of the third century. Traditionally, this is accustomed to being by a man named Judah HaNasi. So, he would write it all down, and now we have this in the form of what we call the Mishnah, which makes up the core aspect of the bigger work, which is known as Talmud.

The reason why the Mishnah is important is that it gives you a snapshot, an insight, into what Yeshua and the apostles, and the apostle Paul, dealt with regarding rabbinical Judaism. So, I'm going to take you to Tractate Shabbat, and this is their understanding of Jeremiah 17:21-22, which pertains to not bearing a burden. This is the commentary, or at least just in part: [\[Acts of\] transporting objects from one domain to another](#) (hence carrying a burden), [\[which violate\] the Sabbath are two, which \[indeed\] are four \[for one who is\] inside and two which are four \[for one who is\] outside. How so? \[If on the Sabbath\] the beggar stands outside and the householder inside, \[and\] the beggar stuck his hand inside and put \[a beggar's bowl\] into the hand of the householder, or if he took \[something\] from inside it and brought it out, the beggar is liable, the householder is exempt. \(The Mishnah, Shabbat\).](#)

Let me simplify this for you: If on the Shabbat there is someone who's hungry, who's begging, who has no sustenance, goes to any particular house for any reason, and he says, "Sir, could you help me?" and he sticks his bowl into the hand looking for something for the householder to put in - if the householder puts something in and the beggar pulls it out, the beggar has broken the Shabbat. This is the mentality. This is how they see this. It goes on: [\[If\] the householder stuck his hand outside and put \[something\] into the hand of the beggar, or if he took \[something\] from it and brought it inside, the householder is liable, and the beggar is exempt. \(The Mishnah, Shabbat\).](#) So if you have somebody in need come to your house who said, "Could you help me?" and you took whatever it was, a loaf of bread or something, and

you brought your hand outside and put the item it in his hand, you've broken the Shabbat according to rabbinical enactments and according to the rabbinic sages. You won't find this kind of dialogue anywhere in the Torah. It doesn't exist. You won't find it. Nowhere. Therefore, it is important that we stick to the beautiful simplicity of what God is commanding.

Let me take this a step further. I'm going to take you to the third century. Remember that this is when the Mishna was redacted, so this is fresh. An early church father known as Origen had a run-in with some rabbinical enactments, and he had some exposure to how the rabbis looked at this commandment, specifically to the term, bear a burden, and he says this: "'Bear no burden on the Sabbath-day,' seems to me an impossibility. For the Jewish doctors, in consequence of these [prescriptions] have betaken themselves, as the holy apostle says, to innumerable fables." (Origen of Alexandria). In other words, Origen's drawing on the apostle Paul and what it says in his letter to Titus. He says, "Do not give heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men." (Titus 1:14). Origen has this experience with the rabbis, and he was saying, "This is what Paul warned us about; Paul warned us about this." Then he goes on to describe the experience of what he learned: "saying that it is not accounted a burden if a man wears shoes without nails, but that it is a burden if shoes with nails be worn;" (Origen of Alexandria).

So, you think about shoes back in the day. The sole would sometimes be nailed with a couple of nails to the top of the shoe to keep it together, and the concept here is the rabbis can look at two people and decide: if this guy has six nails in his shoe holding it together, and this other guy doesn't, well, now you've broken Shabbat. When you think of this kind of reasoning, you think of what Yeshua says in Matthew 23: "(You) strain out a gnat, but swallow a camel!" (Matthew 23:24). These people bind heavy burdens hard to bear, but they're not willing to lift them with one finger. You don't find any of this mentality within the Torah. This is additional stuff.

He goes on: "and that if it [shoes] be carried on one shoulder they consider it a burden; but if on both, they declare it to be none." (Origen of Alexandria). Okay, so if I have a pair of shoes, and they're both hanging on one shoulder, you've broken the Shabbat. You're bearing a burden. You've broken the commandment. But if I take one, and I move it to the other side, now I'm a little bit more balanced and I'm okay.

Me bringing this stuff to the table is not to disrespect Orthodox Judaism because we love our Orthodox brothers and what began as, I believe, a real move to keep this holy. The thing about it is that the devil leverages that to his advantage to turn that into something God never intended it to be. And pretty soon we're talking about whether your shoes have nails or don't they? All the focus comes off of being with Him, and that's not okay. That's not what Shabbat is about, and I want to make that abundantly clear. The way the Bible expresses the observance of Shabbat is beautiful simplicity. It really is.

On the heels of that, I want to take you back to John 5. This is where Yeshua went out and healed a guy who had an infirmity of 38 years. He couldn't get himself into the pool when the angel would come down and stir the waters in the pool at Bethesda. So, he's there, and Yeshua meets with him and tells

him that He's going to heal him. So, He heals him on the Shabbat, and He tells him to pick up his bed and walk. I'm going to take you to verse 10 because the Jews catch up with this guy: **"The Jews therefore said to him who was cured, 'It is the Sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your bed.'** (John 5:10). Let this sink in: why did they say it wasn't lawful for him to carry his bed? Because their interpretation of what it means to carry a burden, or in Hebrew, a *massa*, is right there, and in their mind, in their interpretation, you're breaking the Shabbat. You're bearing a burden. But here's the deal: Rabbi Yeshua had a completely different understanding, and given the fact that He is the Lord of the Sabbath, we are going to side with His understanding. He is our rabbi; that's who we listen to, and the Lord of the Sabbath commanded him to pick up his mat and walk.

So, He did two things they didn't really care for: number one, He healed on the Shabbat, which is the most Sabbath thing you can do. If you want to get into what the Sabbath really means, by getting healed on the Sabbath, you've embraced the Sabbath to its fullest extent. But then He also commanded him to pick up his mat and walk. There were two things the rabbis had an issue with. But to Yeshua, this is not breaking the Sabbath.

I want to quote something that just kind of envelops this whole discussion regarding rabbinical enactments or rabbinical laws. When you go to the Mishnah, the Second Order - there are six orders, or six divisions, of the Mishnah - the Second Order begins with Tractate Shabbat. It ends with Tractate Hagiga. I want to read this because it comes right from the Mishnah, and this will sum it up. They say: **The laws of the Sabbath, festal offerings and sacrilege - lo they are like mountains hanging by a string, for they have little Scripture for many laws. (the Mishnah, Hagiga).** I want you to think about that because that is these rabbinical enactments. The strings that it is talking about are Scripture. Ironically, it's talking about the Commandments, and they even acknowledge what they have done to these strings. The strings are what we find in the Torah; it's what we find in Scripture. They have hung mountains from strings. And I'm going to tell you that I am not looking to try to wrap my arms around a mountain; I simply want to grab the string with my hand. That's all I'm looking to do. That's all Yeshua wants you to do. We need to do exactly what He is commanding; that has to be the focus. We can't get tripped up by man's interpretation; we must stay focused, amen? Mountains on strings; man, I am thankful Yeshua is my rabbi.

With that said, let's go back to Jeremiah 17:21: **"Thus says the Lord: 'Take heed to yourselves, bear no burden on the Sabbath day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem; nor carry a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath day, nor do any work, but hallow the Sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers.'** (Jeremiah 17:21). Again, God is calling His people to repentance. Isn't it interesting that in this call to repentance, one of the explicit things that is mentioned is the Sabbath? He gives this call to His own people, "You need to turn back." Sabbath is explicitly brought to the table. That would be in addition to the idolatry and all the other things that they're doing regarding breaking the Ten Commandments.

Verse 23: **"But they did not obey nor incline their ear, but made their neck stiff, that they might not hear nor receive instruction."** (Jeremiah 17:23). Again, that terrifies me because as I said before I read the

book of Jeremiah and realize that's where we're at right now. I realize in this country, in this atmosphere, that God is going out and is begging His people to repent, and we're not doing it. We're not turning, and we're not listening.

The text goes on, **"And it shall be, if you heed Me carefully,' says the LORD, 'to bring no burden through the gates of this city on the Sabbath day, but hallow the Sabbath day, to do no work [melawkaw] in it, then shall enter the gates of this city kings and princes sitting on the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they and their princes, accompanied by men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and this city shall remain forever.'" (Jeremiah 17:24).**

Do you understand the implications of this statement? That's incredible! He is declaring that if they keep the Sabbath, Jerusalem will never fall. It will be immovable. And look at the term "forever," *olam*. It means forever; all eternity. We're starting to see a pattern: when it comes to talking about the Sabbath, we see a pattern repeatedly. We saw the same pattern back in Isaiah 56 where God specifically attaches a promise of eternity to Gentiles who grab hold of the Sabbath. They will be given the names better than that of sons and daughters. They will live on for eternity, everlasting. And here we see the promise again; He's telling His own people: if you do this, you stop bearing burdens on the Shabbat, kings are going to come in. This city will be exalted.

Then it goes on in verse 26: **"And they shall come from the cities of Judah and from the places around Jerusalem, from the land of Benjamin and from the lowland, from the mountains and from the South, bringing burnt offerings and sacrifices, grain offerings and incense, bringing sacrifices of praise to the house of the Lord."** (Jeremiah 17:26).

Did you see it? The Lord is telling you if you cultivate the atmosphere where you get the people of God to embrace the Holy Sabbath, what is going to happen? People are going to come from every direction; they're going to be bringing in the sacrifices of praise to the Lord. And what does the Lord inhabit? The praises of His people. Do you see what the Lord desires, and what the Lord is looking for? He wants a relationship. He wants to be with you. And the devil is trying to whisper to you the exact opposite: "He doesn't care; He doesn't want to be with you. You don't have to keep the Sabbath. The devil tells you to go to work; it's better that you go to work than meet with God."

God will inhabit the praises of His people. They will come from every direction. The glory will be given to God. When we come together on the Shabbat, glory is given to Yeshua; His name is glorified. This is so significant. This is huge.

Moving on to verse 27: **"But if you will not heed Me to hallow the Sabbath day, such as not carrying a burden when entering the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day - okay, now we're going to get the implications of not following this - then I will kindle a fire in its gates, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched. (Jeremiah 17:27).** Unbelievable! This is specifically attached to the Sabbath and the breaking of the Sabbath. If You want to bear burdens on this day and want to ignore My commandment, I'm going to burn My own house to the ground. I'm going to burn My own

city to the ground. I will kill you; I will take you out. It's a fire that will not be quenched.

That same terminology is used at the very end of Isaiah 66. That terminology is used of the wicked regarding the fact they are destroyed forever. Again, here we have this context of an everlasting promise and a blessing specifically attached to obeying the Sabbath. And now we have an eternal judgment attached to it regarding failure to keep it. This is not a subject you want to gloss over. This is not a commandment you want to put on the shelf and think about it later.

So, what happened in the book of Jeremiah? Did the people turn? The people didn't turn. Actually, as you continue, what do you discover? God made good on the threat, and we read this in II Chronicles. We'll pick it up here: **"Then they burned - they, meaning the Babylonians - they burned the house of God, broke down the wall of Jerusalem, burned all its palaces with fire, and destroyed its precious possessions. And those who escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon, where they became servants to him and his sons until the rule of the kingdom of Persia. (II Chronicles 36:19).**

This was a holocaust. Jews were slaughtered by the Babylonians, and the ones that were not slaughtered had the privilege (and I say that in the negative) of being able to witness their families gutted by the Babylonians who showed no mercy. They had to live with those images as they were taken into captivity to a completely foreign, distant land.

You know, when you really try to get into the historical context and the horrors that the Jewish people experienced at the hands of the Babylonians, it is a terrifying reminder of the Holocaust where millions of Jewish people were slaughtered. One of the things we're told is this happened because they wouldn't keep the Sabbath. What does God have to do to get through to us? What does He have to do to get through to the church? As we look at these horrible atrocities that happen, you would think it would spark revival, love, and a passion for His commandments and His word.

Move on to verse 21: **"To fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her Sabbaths. As long as she lay desolate she kept Sabbath, to fulfill seventy years." (II Chronicles 36:21).** Think about that statement for a second. The Lord takes His own people who are precious to Him, killed many of them, destroyed many of them, and the rest of them were taken into captivity. Then it follows up specifically with "now the land can rest. Now the land can have a Sabbath." That makes me pause; it makes me step back. What does this mean to the Lord? The Sabbath is a central expression to the faith.

So, we've looked at what happened before the Babylonians came in and slaughtered the Jewish people. God spoke a warning through the prophets. We briefly looked in II Chronicles at the destruction of them, and now we're past it. Now the land has kept her Sabbaths, and I want to pick it up as you come to Ezra and Nehemiah. God sends Nehemiah as a shepherd to the Jewish people. They're coming back. God, by His grace and mercy, has brought His people home to the land He swore to give to their fathers, and they have come back. They start setting up, and they start to dig their roots down again. And in this process, it's important that the Lord has shepherds governing and making sure things are just so.

Nehemiah is in there, and Nehemiah sees all sorts of atrocities. He sees the fact that they have taken on pagan wives; they're intermarrying, and they were commanded in the Torah, "Don't do this, because they will turn your sons from following Me." They have kids that don't even speak Hebrew anymore. You guys are marrying pagan women, and these pagan wives aren't following the Lord.

If that weren't enough, Nehemiah also recognized, he was enraged, that no one gave contribution to the Levites for them to dedicate themselves to the Lord. So, the Levites left, and they went back to their lands. Nehemiah is enraged. Then there was one thing specifically Nehemiah saw that he had to deal with, and we'll pick this up in Chapter 13, verse 15: "In those days I saw people in Judah treading wine presses on the Sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and loading donkeys with wine, grapes, figs, and all kinds of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day. And I warned them about the day on which they were selling provisions." (Nehemiah 13:15).

So no sooner do the Jews come back into the land that they fall into the same trap that got them into trouble in the first place. They're breaking the Sabbath. They're bearing burdens. Now here's the thing: what does it mean scripturally to bear a *massah*, to bear this burden, in the gates of Jerusalem? Notice, we're told they were bringing in sheaves, loading donkeys with wine, grapes, and figs, and bringing all kinds of burdens. They were loading up their animals with all these things for what purpose? To sell. *Melawkaw*. They were doing business; they were doing commerce. Buying and selling is not allowed on the Shabbat; it's an abomination to the Lord. And Nehemiah saw this, and he's moving to rectify this.

What does this mean on a practical level in today's atmosphere? It means you don't go to the grocery store; you don't meet your friends at the restaurant, you're not buying, you're not selling, you're not going to the mall, you're not buying clothes, and you're definitely not going to work and getting into that environment. We cannot buy or sell. This is that beautiful simplicity of God's commandment. It's very simple.

Verse 16: "Men of Tyre dwelt there also, who brought in fish and all kinds of good, and sold them on the Sabbath to the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem." (Nehemiah 13:16). Aha, I like this; this is important. The men of Tyre - these are not Jews; these are not God's people. This is the world, and the world's coming in and wanting to do business with God's people, specifically on the Sabbath, because you know what? The world doesn't care. The world doesn't hold the Sabbath as holy. They don't hold God as holy. They don't follow the Lord; it doesn't matter. And I'm going to tell you that this is going to happen at some point even if you're a good Sabbath keeper, you're going to come into a moment of conflict, and maybe even compromise, if you don't hold the line. It's going to happen.

So, Nehemiah sees this, and how does he respond? "Then I contended with the nobles of Judah and said to them, "What evil thing - *ma ha davar a ha ra*; it literally says in the Hebrew, what evil thing - is this that you do by which you profane the Sabbath day?" (Nehemiah 13:17). This is where this discussion has to go for the Christian. Inevitably, this is what it comes to because when Christians are confronted with whether to keep the Sabbath or not, the question is, "Is it sin if I don't keep Shabbat?" Read Scripture because you will find no ambiguity. It is evil, and last time I checked, as I read here, Christians are

supposed to avoid evil like the plague. We're supposed to avoid the curse like the plague. We're supposed to avoid rebellion like the plague. To profane Shabbat is pure evil.

That puts things in a different context for me personally on what we're supposed to do and not supposed to do on the Shabbat. It matters. It may not matter to you, but I promise you this; it matters to the Lord, and you will be weighed in the balance. Those Jews that got slaughtered in Babylon, which is a horrific holocaust - let that be your picture. Let that be your template; God took out His own people. That terrifies me. They were people He loved. And it is not that He didn't show them grace and mercy; He tried. He sent His prophets, men of God, anointed with the Ruach HaKodesh, and told them to turn back and keep the Sabbath. They didn't believe it, and they went down in a brutal fashion.

I want to build on this concept of breaking Shabbat being a sin. You may not like that, but it's a biblical fact. I want to bring this into the New Testament, and we're going to go to John 9:14: **"Now it was a Sabbath when Jesus made the clay and opened his eyes."** You've got to pay attention to John because he's very specific to mention two things. He didn't have to mention these things; he could have just said that Yeshua healed on the Sabbath, but no. He said He made clay, and He opened the man's eyes. Understand that under rabbinical act, both of those things are sin. The fact that He would be needing clay would be considered bearing a burden. You're working, you're laboring, on the Shabbat. Jews would have been all over that because they believed you can't heal on the Sabbath. We know this from Luke 13. The ruler of the synagogue was upset with the people coming to be healed by Yeshua. He said, "Six days you can come and be healed; come and be healed on one of them, but not on the Sabbath." And Yeshua rebukes him, "You hypocrite. Does not every one of you go to lose his ox or donkey on the Sabbath in order to give it some water?" And so, you see what He does here is very specific.

Moving to John 9:15—**"Then the Pharisees also asked him again how he had received sight** - this was a man who was blind from birth - **and he said to them, "He put clay on my eyes, and I washed, and I see."** It was that easy. It was the power of the Lord.

Verse 16: **Therefore some of the Pharisees** - notice it doesn't say all. Nicodemus was a follower of Yeshua. We know this guy; his heart was right. The Apostle Paul is a Pharisee who eventually came into the truth of Yeshua. It says, **"some of the Pharisees said, 'This man is not from God.'" (John 9:16).** They're literally accusing Yeshua of not being from God. Why? Because they see his actions as not keep the Sabbath.

I want to stop here because there's two layers to this statement you need to appreciate. Let's begin with the first layer. The first layer is that traditionally, historically, I can show you that throughout Judaism the litmus test is Shabbat. If you have a guy in your community who rebels against the Sabbath when the Lord has given the Sabbath to them to keep holy, his rebellion is the fruit: "You will know them by their fruits." Shabbat is a litmus test, and if they're not keeping Shabbat, man, there's no way they're walking with the Lord because Shabbat is the very sign that you are walking with the Lord.

Let me just throw this up here quickly: Rabbi Posner says, **"According to the Talmud, Shabbat is equal to**

all the other commandments. Shabbat is so central to Jewish life... that the term shomer Shabbat (which just means Sabbath observer) is synonymous with "religious Jew" in common parlance." Rabbi Menachem Posner.

So, you look at the Pharisees' statement: "This man is not from God because he does not keep the Sabbath." In a very real way, it's a litmus test. If a guy can't keep the Sabbath, what makes you think he could keep any of the other commandments, or would? This is a reoccurring thing where you're getting to express your relationship with the Lord on a weekly basis. It's legitimate. What is illegitimate is their interpretation of what is lawful and not lawful to do on the Sabbath. That's where the breakdown begins to happen.

It's interesting that when they made this statement, another group rose up against the Pharisees, or more specifically some of these Pharisees, and totally disagreed with them. Another group rose up and believed Yeshua was from the Lord. They believed what He did was of God; they confessed it. But how they respond is mind-blowing. Look at how they respond: "Others said, 'how can a man who is a sinner do such signs?'" (John 9:16). Let me ask you this: what was the charge? The charge was this guy doesn't keep the Sabbath. The people who confessed Yeshua as Messiah, as the Lord, knew that God was walking through Him. They came back with, "How can a man as a sinner...?" In other words, they were recognizing and confessing that if a man isn't keeping the Sabbath, he's a sinner. It is sinful. But their argument is, He didn't break it; He didn't break the Shabbat. And there was a division among them. We're going to close here right now, and we'll pick this up next week; there's more to talk about.