

Podcast 115: Sabbath Day

Today, Denver answers the question, "On Mount Horeb, the Lord gave a commandment to 'Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy' (Exodus 12:7 RE). How do we keep a day 'holy?' What does the Lord expect or desire of us in keeping this commandment? Why do we no longer worship on Saturday?"

First, this from The Old Covenants, Isaiah 20:7 RE:

Cry aloud, spare not, lift up your voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression and the house of Jacob their sins. Yet they seek me daily and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness and forsook not the ordinance of their God. They ask of me the ordinances of justice, they take delight in approaching to God. Why have we fasted, say they, and you see not? Why have we afflicted our soul and you take no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast you find pleasure, and exact all your labors. Behold, you fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness. You shall not fast as you do this day to make your voice to be heard on high. Is it such a fast that I have chosen? A day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Will you call this a fast and an acceptable day to the Lord? Is not this the fast that I have chosen: to remove the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke? Is it not to deal your bread to the hungry, and that you bring the poor that are cast out to your house? When you see the naked, that you cover him, and that you hide not yourself from your own flesh? Then shall your light break forth as the morning, and your health shall spring forth speedily, and your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then shall you call and the Lord shall answer, you shall cry and he shall say, Here I am. If you take away from your midst the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity, and if you draw out your soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul, then shall your light rise in obscurity and your darkness be as the noonday. And the Lord shall guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in drought, and make fat your bones; and you shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water whose waters fail not. And they that shall be of you shall build the old waste places. You shall raise up the foundations of many generations, and you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of paths to dwell in. 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 of the Lord honorable, and shall honor him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words, then shall you delight yourself in the Lord. And I will cause you to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it.

DENVER: Teachings and Commandments 46, paragraphs 2-4 states:

*Wherefore, I give unto them a commandment, saying thus: You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your might, mind, and strength, and in the name of Jesus Christ you shall serve him. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. You shall not steal, neither commit adultery, nor kill, nor do anything like unto it. You shall thank the Lord your God in **all** things. You shall offer a sacrifice unto the Lord...in righteousness, even that of a broken heart and a contrite spirit.*

*And that you may more fully keep yourself unspotted from the world, you [should] go to the house of prayer and offer up your sacraments upon my holy day. For verily, this is a day appointed unto you to rest from your labors, and to pay your devotions unto the Most High. Nevertheless, your vows shall be offered up in righteousness on **all** days and at **all** times, but remember that on this, **the Lord's day**, you shall offer your oblations and your sacraments unto the Most High, confessing your sins unto your brethren and before the Lord. And on this day, you shall do none other things — only let your food be prepared with singleness of heart, that your fasting may be perfect, or in other words, that your joy may be full. Verily, this is fasting and prayer, or in other words, rejoicing and prayer.*

*And inasmuch as you do these things with thanksgiving, with cheerful hearts and countenances (not with much laughter, for this is sin, but with a glad heart and a cheerful countenance), verily I say that inasmuch as you do this, the fullness of the earth is yours — the beasts of the fields and the fowls of the air, and that which climbs upon trees and walks upon the earth, yea, and the herb, and the good things which come of the earth, whether for food, or for raiment, or for houses, or for barns, or for orchards, or for gardens, or for vineyards. Yea, **all** things which come of the earth, in the season thereof, are made for the benefit and the use of man, both to please the eye, and to gladden the heart, yea for food and for raiment, for taste and for smell, to strengthen the body and to enliven the soul. And it pleases God that he has given all these things unto man, for unto this end were they made, to be used with judgment, not to excess, neither by extortion. ([Emphasis added.] T&C 46:2-4 RE)*

What a happy thought is contained in all of that: commandments that constrain us from evil, blessings and opportunities intended to benefit us, make us cheerful, and provide for our needs—everything. But it begins with the self-discipline to keep the commandments and to no longer be a threat to one another, to no longer introduce elements of disobedience and chaos continuously into this world—because mankind has been continuously off the mark. Therefore, we *aren't* glad at nature because we threaten one another. We aren't rejoicing at the peace that this world gives to us, with enough and to spare, *because* we hoard, *because* we are not generous and kindly and loving one towards another. We're fearful, and we find this world a threatening place—because *we* make it so. God, on the other hand, never intended that it should be so.

We just finished the Easter celebration last weekend; and as a result of celebrating Easter, I wanted to take some comments from the account of that very first day when the Lord came out of the grave. The fact that Easter is in the springtime, I don't think is any accident. I think it's intended to align with the testimony of nature about the promise of eternal life, the promise of the renewal that comes every spring, and I think the Lord intended that His death and His resurrection should associate with spring. And I think it's appropriate that that be the subject that we look at today.

The incident that I want to look at is recorded only one place in Scripture. And even though it only appears one place in the Scripture, I think it's one of the most thought-provoking and potentially-rewarding discussions about the Lord than appears anywhere else. I'm talking about the incident that Luke records of two disciples who were walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus on the day that the Lord rose from the dead. I'm going to be using the Luke material throughout this as the exclusive source, if Luke talks about it. If someone else talks about it and Luke didn't, then we'll look at that. But the distance that they're going to walk is beyond what was then viewed as a Sabbath day's journey, so they couldn't take this walk on the Sabbath. They had to wait until the first day of the week when the Sabbath was over, which was also the day on which the Lord would be resurrected.

The incident appears in Luke chapter 24. And it begins (in chapter 24): *Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared*" (Luke 14:1 RE). He doesn't tell us this, but there's a detail you can find over in John chapter 20: *The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark* (John 11:1 RE and Testimony of St. John 12:1 RE). All that Luke says is it was very early in the morning. John lets us know that this was not only very early in the morning, it was still dark out.

If you brought your Scriptures it might be useful to use them as we go along. So, there is a walk that's going to take place in which two disciples (we have the names of only one of the two) are walking back to Emmaus, and this is what the account reads, beginning in verse 13:

And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs. [That's about seven miles which, clearly under their tradition, would have been too far.] And they talked together of all these things which had happened. And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know him. (See also Luke 14:2 RE)

Their eyes were holden. The Lord is with them; He's resurrected; He's walking along with them and they don't recognize Him. Christ has the capacity to withhold His identity. As Paul reminded us in Hebrews chapter 13, verse 2: *Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares* (Hebrews 1:58 RE). From this incident on this day with the Lord, we learn that the "strangers" can include the Lord Himself. And so, when he says to be careful how you treat "the least of these my brethren" (Matthew 11:23

RE), you ought not be surprised if, on the day of judgment, one of those “*least*” was the Lord Himself, and your eyes were holden that you should not know Him.

And he said unto them, What manner of communications are these that you have one to another, as you walk, and are sad? (Luke 14:2 RE)

Clearly a rhetorical question. This is the risen Lord joining this fellowship in their walk and He's asking them, "What are you talking about?" That ought to tell you something about Him. The Lord doesn't make any effort to displace their attention from the subject they're discussing. He joins them right where they are, on the subject that they're focused on, as a ready participant in the subject that's already on the table. That tells you something else about us—He really does want to help us where He finds us. *Our* concerns are really His concerns.

When it comes to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which according to Joseph Smith comprehended all truth, it is our own fear that limits our capacity to gain from what's being offered. And it's a measure of our ingratitude when, declining the invitation that Joseph extended to search deeper and deeper into the mysteries of God, we elect to withdraw fearfully, and conclude that we're just not interested in what might have been had. It's actually a trick of the devil to get people to close their minds and close their hearts, because they fear what they may be learning will do damage to them.

You see, when Adam and Eve partook of the fruit and then Satan called to their attention the fact that they were naked, and that's the beginning of the mischief that gets visited on humanity by the adversary—who seeks to bind and control and to limit the freedom of all mankind, to imprison them—he pointed out to them that they ought to be ashamed. And when, therefore, they heard the voice of God speaking, they withdrew—not because of shame but because the shame triggered within them fear. They were afraid to come into the presence of that Being who they knew to be just and holy, because now they were in a state in which, fearfully, they were naked.

And their “nakedness” came to them as a consequence of understanding the difference between what they were and what they are. And that knowledge came to them by partaking, out of season, of the fruit that they weren't scheduled to receive a command to partake of until after a day of rest had been observed. So now, not only are they naked before God, they're also violating the Sabbath and beginning the labor of the mortal existence—out of time, out of sequence, out of season. And that's the way a great number of errors are made in humanity.

You see, we're commanded not to partake of some things out of season, and then we are commanded *to* partake within season. And when we get the timing wrong, we wind up with difficulties and problems that ought not to have been visited. Well, the other references on that same statement, about the opposite of *love* is *fear*, is 2 Timothy 1:7 and Moroni 8:16 (2 Timothy 1:2 RE and Moroni 8:3-4 RE).

Repentance is a critical thing. It is *the* message of the Book of Mormon. It is the greatest message that's contained within the Book of Isaiah; and it is *the* message of all the true prophets. The thing that stirs you up to repenting is actually two things: The first thing is to awaken to your *awful* situation, and the second thing is to arise—and that is to connect with *the* Source which will cure what is wrong with you, because we're not self-curing. We are filled with that same shame that came to us in the beginning as a consequence of doing what we were not supposed to be doing.

But the greatest way in which the adversary keeps us in a state of slumber is to prevent us from looking about and becoming awakened to the awful situation in which we find ourselves. Hugh Nibley commented on more than one occasion that there is nothing quite so terrible as being awakened out of a deep sleep. No one really likes *that*. I mean, when it comes right down to it, unconsciousness is a very good thing, particularly when what you are looking at is what we have here.

QUESTION: So... "In the Elijah talk, you made reference to the fact that Adam and Eve partook of the fruit out of order—that they were to wait until after the Sabbath; that partaking prior to the Sabbath caused work to be done on the Sabbath. Can you explain and expand on this subject, please?"

ANSWER: The problem was not that they were never going to be told to partake, to not to ever partake of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, it's that they were forbidden to partake so that there could be a day of rest—a Sabbath. Everything was supposed to stand down. And then after they stood down for the day of rest, on the first day of the next week They were then to introduce the knowledge of good and evil in a way that would've been benign, in a way that would've transitioned from the original, paradisiacal state into a state in which knowledge of good and evil, and mortality itself, could enter the world—much as it will be present during the Millennium among the righteous.

But instead, in an act of defiance that resulted in them being kicked out of the Garden because of transgression, and an act that caused labor then to occur on the Sabbath, they partook out of season—in obedience to the one who seeks to *always* counsel people to rebel against the order of Heaven, to disobey and to set at naught the commandments and instructions of the Father, even when doing so means harm to yourself or to others, because the adversary is only interested in the destruction of people, even those who trust and rely upon him. He has no good end in mind for them. And so, they partook out of the ordinary course. As a consequence, there was a Fall.

The Fall introduced—on the Sabbath day—the mortal experience. And so, the seventh day, the day of rest, would then require six days of labor to precede their next day of rest—which always put the Sabbath out of sync because of the original rebellion. Which is why the Lord was resurrected on what they thought was the *first* day of the week. It was, in fact, the first day of the week according to their reckoning and the seventh day of the week according to the original creation—had everything been honored in the original commandment and instruction. And so, the worshipers moved the Sabbath day from

Saturday to Sunday, to that first day of the week, which was in reality simply restoring back the original, violated time frame. And the early Christians observed as the seventh day of the week, the correct day of worship—the day that we worship on, which is Sunday and not Saturday. Although the tradition of following, in a number of places, remains to do so on Saturday.

It's more important that you keep a day holy, that you set it aside as a day of worship, than it is to figure out the chronology of everything that's gone on. If it was so important for us to get exactly the right day of the week aligned with everything, then we'd all be John Pratt. [Audience laughter.]

The Book of Mormon's religious structure—and I'm not talking about the era of the judges where there were governmental and church functions that were going on, and you really don't have a distinct separation of the two adequate in the record. What you have— The best description of this was given in Alma about how they functioned. The priests came and would teach them on Sunday. Everyone would drop what they're doing; they'd come; they'd be taught; and then when they were done with their Sabbath observances, everyone would go back and they'd work and they'd labor. There was no professional clergy; there was no hierarchy. They had a high priest, who was apparently an itinerant that traveled around.

The more you consolidate power and authority into an office, the more you tempt the adversary to gain control of the office—because the one thing about salvation is it is entirely other-worldly. If you can get gain in saving the souls of men, you will be unable to save the souls of men—because faith, and the first principle of faith, is obedience to God and sacrifice of *everything*. Without the willingness to sacrifice *everything*, it is impossible to gain the faith that will save your soul.

I got some questions on the internet. There are some of you who are here and were told you could ask questions, and I want to leave a little time for that. I'm only going to answer one of the questions that came in that hasn't already been addressed in the talk, and it's an obvious question from an obvious source.

A Seventh-day Adventist inquired if I keep the Sabbath. So that cuts right to the rub, doesn't it? The answer is yes, I keep the Sabbath. But let me explain to you why I do keep the Sabbath *as I do*.

In the Creation, God had a plan for six days of labor and one day of rest. And that one day of rest was to be continually observed—would later be memorialized in the Law of Moses—but on the day of rest, Adam and Eve managed to get the boot out of the Garden of Eden. And so, instead of a day of rest, they were laboring. The reckoning of the week was disturbed by the fact that we lost the first one, and the calendar resulted in a day's disparity from the Fall of Adam and Eve. When Christ was resurrected, He was resurrected— Instead, it's called the first day of the week because it was the first day of the week reckoned according to the Fall of Adam. But Christ's atonement was intended to fix the Fall

of Adam, to put everything back right again, to repair the damage that had been done. And therefore when Christ was resurrected, His resurrection coming (as it was) one day late, was actually *just on time*. And He repaired not only the damage done in the original Fall, He repaired the Sabbath as well; hence, the observance of the day of resurrection as the day of rest—called the first day of the week instead of the seventh because that’s how time had been reckoned from the Fall of Adam until the resurrection of Christ.

I observe the Sabbath as the day on which Christ was resurrected—as a symbol of His repair of the premature Fall and the loss of the *original* day of rest, going back to the time of Adam and Eve. But yes, I keep the Sabbath. Now, having said that, the original Christians would let you worship on Saturday and would let me worship on Sunday, because as long as you keep the doctrine of Christ and you accept the law of Christ, we’ll figure it out together over time, and eventually one will persuade the other. Not perhaps by argument and debate, but by the quiet example that persuades the heart that there’s something more to be preferred in one than in the other.

It is not possible to list all commandments. In one sense there are only two: love God; love your fellow man. All others are extensions of those. If you love God, you will do what He asks of you. Whenever something comes to your attention He would have you do, you do it! For example, Christ was baptized and said to follow Him. So, because of your love of God, you follow Him.

But Christ also showed repeatedly that the second commandment was greater than the rules. Keeping the Sabbath day holy, for example, was subordinate to loving and freeing His fellow man. He freed men from sin on the Sabbath by forgiving sins. He freed them from physical injury or disease by healing them on the Sabbath. Both were considered work at the time, and therefore an offense to the commandment to keep the Sabbath day holy.

Your individual path back to God will begin with following the teachings of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. At some point, however, you will find that individual service, and obedience to God’s will for you, will create disharmony between you and institutions. *It can’t be avoided*. If you’re following Christ, you will find the same things *He* found. Helping someone in need will take you away from church meetings on occasions. You can’t make a list and keep it because as soon as you do, the list will interfere with loving God and loving your fellow man.

So, the whole matter can be reduced to this: Follow Christ, receive the ordinances, accept the Holy Ghost who will teach you all things you must do. Any list beyond that will inevitably result in conflicts and contradictions.

Paul’s teachings, in Romans Chapter 14 (Romans 1:67-72 RE), is the only way we can become “one” as a people. I respect your motivation more than your actions because *they* are pure. But we err when we judge another’s actions and attribute to them motive. Pure motive cannot be known by observing actions. If we could judge motive from acts, then we would condemn Nephi for murdering Laban and stealing the brass plates. We would

condemn Abraham for lying about the status of his wife Sarah, claiming her to be a sister. We would condemn Jesus for violating a clearly-understood teaching about the Sabbath and not doing any labor upon the Sabbath. *We* would be wrong. Nephi was constrained to implement God's judgment; Abraham was acting on the direction of the Lord; and Jesus was honoring the Sabbath by keeping it holy, even if that came at the expense of performing labor.

Adam and Eve could not have children while they were in the Garden of Eden. They lacked the capacity to bear children in the innocent state in which they then existed (see 2 Nephi 1:10 RE). They had been given the gift of childbearing as an endowment from God. The endowment of the capacity did not mean they had the means or understanding at the time to act upon it. Without the Fall, they would not have been able to act on the endowment. They were like little children, who have been born male and female with the capacity to one day become parents, but who are immature and innocent, and therefore unable to bear children.

The great offense was in Satan's control of the timing. Had they remained in the Garden throughout the Sabbath day of rest, then they would have received the commandment to partake of the fruit in the Lord's timing. At this point they would have moved from their innocent state into a condition not unlike the Millennial day. The Fall would have transitioned to a terrestrial state rather than a telestial state.

Adam and Eve were ordained for a priestly role in the Garden of Eden, and were in God's presence while serving in that capacity. Once cast out, the challenge forever after has been to recreate Eden and have God's presence return to the earth—not just to visit but to take up His abode here. That's the reason for establishing temples by God's people repeatedly in history. But the objective has always been the same: the return of Eden, the return of God, and the redemption of the earth from the Fall.

The problem was not partaking of the knowledge of good and evil—that was *always* the destiny of Adam and Eve. The problem was partaking in violation of the Sabbath. We lost the day of rest, mankind made himself—rather than God—the center of creation, and the original Sabbath day did not return until Christ's resurrection.

It is apparent that Christ never intended to re-establish Eden in the Old World. He made some considerable advancement to that end among the Nephites. Who knows what was done among the others He visited in the post-resurrection ministry? But the burden of prophecy is clear: There will be a final Temple of God in which He returns to dwell on earth. That will require priestly men and women to perform the obligations imposed for Divine worship, opening the heavens, and having the Gods, angels, and mankind associate with one another.

God always intended to have mankind gain knowledge of good and evil. But God also intended that the center would be occupied by God, not by man's ambition and self-will. Christ did nothing but what the Father directed be done. He said nothing other than what

the Father commanded Him to say. He suffered the will of the Father in all things. Christ performed the priestly service that Adam and Eve neglected to perform.

The foregoing excerpts are taken from:

- Teachings & Commandments Section 46, paragraphs 2-4, with additional comments recorded by Denver on June 6, 2020;
- Denver's talk entitled "Christ's Discourse on the Road to Emmaus," given in Fairview, Utah, on April 14, 2007;
- His talk entitled "The Mission of Elijah Reconsidered," given in Spanish Fork, Utah, on October 14th, 2011;
- The Q&A Session following Denver's conference talk given in Grand Junction, Colorado, on April 21, 2019;
- Denver's comments during an assembly on "Missionary Work," in Eden, Utah, on July 2, 2016;
- Denver's *Christian Reformation Lecture Series*, Talk #2, given in Dallas, Texas, on October 19th, 2017;
- His Blog Post from March 1, 2010, entitled "Keep the Commandments," subsequently recorded by Denver on June 6, 2020;
- His Blog Post from August 5, 2020, entitled "Trivial Pursuit," subsequently recorded by Denver on June 6, 2020;
- His Blog Post from March 6, 2010, entitled "Adam and Eve," subsequently recorded by Denver on June 6, 2020; and
- His Blog Post from May 3, 2020, entitled "Email about Adam and Eve," subsequently recorded by Denver on June 6, 2020.