

Great Controversy Sermon Series

Sermon 42: Reform Movement

Last time we saw that Sunday-keeping is the mark of the papal authority. What authority? The Catholic Church claims that they have authority to change God's Ten Commandments. They say that this authority was given to them by God.

Protestants do not recognize this authority; they only accept the Bible and the rule of faith and Christian practice. The word Protestant comes from protest, that is, Protestants protest the papal authority over the Bible. Yet as there is no command in the Bible for the keeping of Sunday, Protestants' keeping of Sunday shows that they honor papal authority.

Sunday keeping is the mark of the papacy. In the last days, just before Jesus comes, there will be a group that is in contrast to those who receive the mark of the beast:

Revelation 12:17 And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

This group keeps all of God's commandments including the Sabbath which the fourth commandment enjoins. In the last days, there will be only these two groups.

No one now has received the mark of the beast because the Sunday/Sabbath controversy is not sufficiently known. There must be a reform on this. This reform movement is foretold in the Bible.

Isaiah 56:1 Thus says the LORD: "Keep justice, and do righteousness, For My salvation is about to come, And My righteousness to be revealed. ² Blessed is the man who does this, And the son of man who lays hold on it; Who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, And keeps his hand from doing any evil." ³ Do not let the son of the foreigner Who has joined himself to the LORD Speak, saying, "The LORD has utterly separated me from His people"; Nor let the eunuch say, "Here I am, a dry tree." ⁴ For thus says the LORD: "To the eunuchs who keep My Sabbaths, And choose what pleases Me, And hold fast My covenant, ⁵ Even to them I will give in My house And within My walls a place and a name Better than that of sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name That shall not be cut off. ⁶ " Also the sons of the foreigner Who join themselves to the LORD, to serve Him, And to love the name of the LORD, to be His servants -- Everyone who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, And holds fast My covenant -- ⁷ Even them I will bring to My holy mountain, And make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices Will be accepted on My altar; For My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations."

Many people say, "These verses are only valid for ancient Israel, not now." But let's look at the next verse:

Isaiah 56:8 The Lord GOD, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, says, "Yet I will gather to him others besides those who are gathered to him."

These verses predict the gospel spreading to the Gentiles and they declare a blessing on those who keep the Sabbath.

The obligation of the Sabbath stretches beyond the cross beyond the resurrection and ascension of Christ.

Isaiah said this:

Isaiah 8:16 Bind up the testimony, Seal the law among my disciples.

The command is given to seal the law. How would Isa seal the law among the disciples of God?

In old times people sealed important documents and letters. They would roll up the document and then flatten it. From each end it would be folded and then wrapped with a string and the string knotted. Under and over the knot clay was place and it was squeezed together. Then the clay was sealed with a seal. Thus the contents of the document were kept secure.

In the slide we see a seal. On one side we see a metal seal and on the other side we see the imprint left by the seal in the clay. In the seal there is the person's name and his position. Sometimes the territory of authority of the seal's owner was written. For example in the next slide we have King Ahaz's seal. The writing says, "Ahaz, [son of] Jotham king Judah." Thus his name, Ahaz, his position, king, and his territory of authority, Judah, appear in the seal.

In my hand is an imitation letter. Actually the part you see is the envelope of the letter. The letter was inside of it. On the envelope there is cuneiform writing.

Sometimes in the middle of a covenant or treaty there was a seal. In the next slide we have a treaty. This treaty is between the Hittite king Suppiluliumas and the Ugaritic king Niqmadu.

We once went to Hatusha. David bought this imitation tablet. We see a seal right in the middle of it.

O.K., is there a seal in the covenant that God has made with us? Yes. The seal of God's law is found middle of the ten commandments in the fourth commandment.

In the fourth commandment we have the Lawgiver's name and title. The fourth commandment explains that God is the Creator of heaven and earth and thus He should be worshipped above all else. Outside of the 4th commandment, there is nothing in the law that shows the authority of the lawgiver. When the papacy removed the Sabbath from the law, it removed the seal of the law.

Jesus' disciples are called to restore the Sabbath as a memorial to the Creator and the sign of His authority.

God's seal means keeping God's commandments. The fourth commandment of the Sabbath especially points to the Creator. At the end of time, the following was asked:

Revelation 6:16 and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! ¹⁷ "For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

The answer comes in the 7th chapter of Revelation:

Revelation 7:1 After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree. ² Then I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God. And he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea, ³ saying, "Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads."

In the last days there will be two groups: One of them receives the mark of the beast in their hands and in their foreheads and the other group receives the seal of God in their foreheads. One worships the beast and his image and the other group keeps God's commandments. We can easily understand that to receive God's seal means to keep God's commandments including the Sabbath.

Isaiah 8:20 To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.

Isaiah 58:1 "Cry aloud, spare not; Lift up your voice like a trumpet; Tell My people their transgression, And the house of Jacob their sins. ² Yet they seek Me daily, And delight to know My ways, As a nation that did righteousness, And did not forsake the ordinance of their God. They ask of Me the ordinances of justice; They take delight in approaching God.

These words are not addressed to unbelievers but to God's people. Which commandment was abandoned?

Isaiah 58:12 Those from among 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 Streets to Dwell In. ¹³ " If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, From doing your pleasure on My holy day, And call the Sabbath a delight, The holy day of the LORD honorable, And shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, Nor finding your own pleasure, Nor speaking your own words, ¹⁴ Then you shall delight yourself in the LORD; And I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, And feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father. The mouth of the LORD has spoken."

This prophecy is valid in our time as well. There is a breach in the wall. Rome changed the Sabbath. But this breach is being repaired. But this truth is not popular because it requires a sacrifice. Then excuses abound:

“We always kept Sunday. Our forefathers kept it. Many good and religious people kept Sunday. If they were correct then we are correct. This new Sabbath will put us out of harmony with the world. We won’t be able to influence them. What can a handful of people who keep the Sabbath do?”

Thus the Jews rejected Jesus. Their forefathers made animal sacrifices. Why can’t the children find salvation by doing the same? In Luther’s time, the papists urged that if true Christians found salvation formerly in the Catholic Church then that religion is sufficient for salvation. Thinking thus there would be no advancement in faith and practice.

“Sunday is an established doctrine” they say. “For centuries it was kept everywhere.”

Against this we have that the beginning of the Sabbath goes all the way back to creation.

Genesis 2:1 Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished.² And on the seventh day God ended 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.

They say, “If the Sabbath were important why don’t our scholars accept it?”

The Jews said the same thing against Jesus:

John 7:48 "Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed in Him?"

The sanctuary doctrine clearly points to the ark in the heavenly sanctuary. The reason the sanctuary doctrine is rejected is precisely this: people don’t want to keep God’s commandments, especially the Sabbath because it doesn’t serve their purposes. They could lose money. They would be despised and ridiculed. They would lose honor in society. But for true believers, the honor that the world gives is nothing compared to the honor that God bestows.

Many people don’t search the Scriptures for themselves, they follow what their teachers say. Do not be like that friends. The reformation continues. In the end:

Revelation 15:2 And I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God.³ They sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: "Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty! Just and true are Your ways, O King of the saints!