

# MARK JENKINS MINISTRIES

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Labor To Rest

Dear Friend,

Over the years I have discovered that there are a number of issues in which many Christians have very strong, personal, convictions. In some cases scripture supports their convictions, but all too often those convictions are the product of man's ideas that have been misconstrued from the scriptures and passed on from one generation to the next. One particular issue is the observance of the Sabbath day. Before anyone gets the idea that I'm saying the observance of Saturday or Sunday as the Sabbath is wrong please allow me to set the record straight, **that's not what I am saying.**

What I am saying is that instead of understanding the meaning behind the observance of the "Sabbath", according to the law, and appreciating the message God was trying to convey, it has become another ritual for most Christians. By taking an Old Testament mandate and applying it to New Testament church believers not only is the true meaning lost, but another rule has been created to ensnare believers in a trap of serving a form of what they think Christianity is supposed to look like. Ironically, the very message of the Sabbath and our freedom in Christ from the dictates of the law are totally lost in our religious observance of the Sabbath.

Furthermore, if you really want to stir things up, start asking Christians if the Sabbath is Saturday or Sunday. Some have strong convictions about attending church on Saturday instead of Sunday. Not only has the entire meaning been lost for those contending over this point, but the enemy has successfully ensnared Christians in another trap with one more divisive issue to fight over.

Before you start thinking that I am going to take sides on the issue, rest assured I'm not. Instead, I would rather understand what the whole issue of the Sabbath day rest is really all about for New Testament Christians.

In an effort to understand what the Old Testament observance of the Sabbath was intended to say to us now that we are born again Children of God, let's begin

by taking a look at the law regarding the Sabbath. The first mention of the word “Sabbath” was in Exodus 16:23.

***“And he said unto them, This is that which the Lord hath said, tomorrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord: bake that which you will bake today, and seethe that which you will seethe today, and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning.”***

This was Moses speaking to the children of Israel regarding the manna. They were instructed to gather the manna six days, but not on the seventh day. Instead, they were instructed to gather enough on the sixth day for their families to eat for two days. They were also supposed to prepare the manna on the sixth day so that no work would be done on the seventh day. In the event someone did try and collect manna on the seventh day no manna would be found. (Exodus 16:27)

***“And it came to pass, that there went out some of the people on the seventh day to gather, and they found none.”***

Later, when God gave the law to Moses, one of the commandments in the law regarded the observance of the Sabbath. (Deuteronomy 5:13-14)

***“Six days thou shalt labor, and do all thy work: (14) 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, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy ox, nor thy ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou.”***

It should come as no surprise that a commandment such as this would have a punishment for anyone who might break it. In case you are wondering what such a punishment might be, it certainly was no slap on the wrist. I would think that the degree of severity for breaking such a commandment would tell a person just how God felt about the matter.

With that in mind, let’s look at one account of a man who was found picking up sticks on the Sabbath. (Numbers 15:32-36)

***“And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man that gathered sticks upon the Sabbath day. (33) And they that found him gathering sticks brought him unto Moses and Aaron, and unto all the congregation. (34) “And they put him in ward, because it was not declared what should be done unto him. (35) And the Lord said unto Moses, The***

***man shall be surely put to death: All the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp. (36) And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died; as the Lord commanded Moses.”***

**Wow**, that seems a bit extreme, doesn't it? Just because one man decided to reach down and pick up some sticks on the Sabbath, he was stoned to death. Think about it, all a person had to do was **nothing** and they were fine. Don't work; in fact don't do anything, even something as simple as picking up a little wood. How must they have felt with the threat of death looming over their heads for doing anything at all? I would imagine people did more worrying than resting on the Sabbath. Knowing how forgetful people can be at times, I'm sure there were some who were fearful that they might forget and do something that would violate the law.

Why do you think the punishment was **so severe** for doing something as simple as picking up sticks? Not every punishment under the law required death to the person who broke the law. Death was the punishment for breaking such commandments as killing someone or committing adultery. So, the punishment for breaking the Sabbath by doing any action of work, seems a bit extreme in comparison.

In understanding why the punishment was so extreme, I believe we are going to understand something about our redemption that not enough Christians apprehend or take advantage of. Like so much of the Old Testament, the Sabbath rest was foretelling something that would be available for us on this side of the cross. **In other words, their physical observance of the Sabbath was painting a picture of the rest we were to enter into through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.** Notice how the writer of Hebrews warns against not entering into this rest. (Hebrews 4:1)

***“Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.”***

The writer didn't say; “Do your best to enter into His rest”. Or, “Entering into His rest is really no big deal, don't think a thing about it.” No, the writer went so far as to say; “Let us therefore **fear**, lest,...any of you should seem to come short of it” (a promise of entering His rest).

Clearly entering into His rest is not automatic. His instruction to us goes so far as to say we need to “fear” the possibility of falling short of entering into His rest. Why fear? I believe these words are strong for a reason. Apparently, the

tendency must be to not enter into His rest, which would mean that the person was not resting in the finished work of the cross. That person would still be trying to earn, through their actions, righteousness instead of receiving it by faith.

Any attempt on our part to make ourselves acceptable to God, or to do enough good deeds to be accounted as righteous, are all in vain. Perfect church attendance or busying yourself in all the activities related to church means absolutely nothing when it comes to your righteousness in Christ. Sadly, believers who are raised going to church week after week can easily associate being actively involved in the church as somehow equating to greater acceptance before God. That could not be further from the truth!

Here is an example of what I am trying to say. Let's take a person who did not grow up in church and instead lived a horrible life filled with all kinds of bad things. Eventually, they ended up in jail for killing someone. While in prison they hear a preacher preaching the message of the gospel and they make Jesus Christ Lord of their life. Here's a person who had done all kind of heinous crimes and even killed someone, who has just been born again. My question to you is this, "Is this person, who is still in prison, **just as righteous** as the born again church attender who has never missed a service and has spent their entire life actively involved in the spreading of the Gospel? The answer is; **Yes!**

How can this be? It's because our actions cannot make us more righteous. **It is the redemptive work of the cross by Jesus that makes us righteous in His righteousness.** This is the whole reason for the Sabbath rest, so that every person throughout the ages would know that our actions can't save us. Only the finished work of the cross can save us.

In closing, look at this one final verse and let this sink into your heart.  
(Hebrews 4:11)

***"Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest..."***

Yes, there is some work involved, but it isn't work trying to make ourselves more righteous. It is work to believe that our righteousness is a free gift given to us in Christ Jesus and we can't earn any of it. That's the only "labor" we are told to do; labor to enter into His rest.

Praise God! Jesus has become our Sabbath rest.

~ Jesus Loves You!

*Mark Jenkins*