

CHAPTER 12 THE DISCIPLINED LIFE: CORPORATE WORSHIP

We have clearly established that all of life is worship. In addition to this fact, we know that there should be distinct times of private personal worship. Reading the Scriptures, followed by deep meditation upon their truths, and utilizing these truths as launching points for fervent and sincere prayers are the essential disciplines of Christian devotion. Our secret time alone with the Father is necessary for a vibrant and healthy relationship with him. As prophesied through Malachi, God is a father, and he is worthy of great honor. We honor him first and foremost with our most valuable resource, our time. When we offer him our personal time, free of every distraction, we invest in our relationship to him and this bond is strengthened. Time spent with God alone is a beautiful expression of love and devotion, for all our “times are in his hand” (Psalm 31:15), and he is worthy of such honor.

Now we look to our distinct privilege of regular public worship. As discussed in chapter 9, the church is both individual and corporate. A single individual believer is called the “temple” of the Holy Spirit and the collective plural of many believers are also called the “temple” of the Holy Spirit. Since the temple was the place where God was distinctly present and distinctly worshiped we can conclude that our language about worship should reflect these two distinct realities. Since the Holy Spirit fills the church individualistically and corporately, we must speak of individual worship and corporate worship.

Command of the Corporate Sabbath Worship

The church gathers together to worship as a corporate body. What grounds do we have for worshipping together? Let us begin with the Old Testament. There were many special days of festivals and worship within Israel’s calendar year. The most fundamental of them all was the one special day in seven, the Sabbath, which was the seventh day of the week. It was codified as a very important (normative) command. The fourth within the Ten Commandments.

Exodus 20:8-11 Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work. *For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day.* Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

Some have thought that the command to rest on the Sabbath was only a command to rest and had nothing to do with worship. This is evidently not the case since it is clear that their rest from regular work was for the purpose of the LORD. It was a Sabbath “to the LORD”. To associate one particular day with the holy name

of Yahweh was to hold one day as uniquely holy as an act of worship. The fourth commandment is a command to worship God with our time.¹ Notice the reason for Sabbath observance. It was modeled after God's example. Since God rested from his work of creating on the seventh day, Israel was to rest from her work on the seventh day. There is another reason Israel was to rest from work.

Deuteronomy 5:12-15 Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. ¹³ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁴ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter or your male servant or your female servant, or your ox or your donkey or any of your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. ¹⁵ *You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt*, and the LORD your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.

It is clear that another reason for keeping the Sabbath was to remember redemption. Because God worked with an outstretched arm by redeeming them from their slavery in Egypt, Israel was to keep the Sabbath out of honor to God. Therefore, the Sabbath was a rest from normal work for the purpose of worshiping God in his work of creation and re-creation.

But how do we know that the people participated in corporate worship on the seventh day of the week? Could they not have ceased from work and communed with the Lord privately? We have to remember that there was only one tabernacle (later temple) in the whole nation of Israel. Nowhere in the Scriptures does God command the people to transverse the nation once a week and make a pilgrimage to the tabernacle. Yet, it is clear that the weekly Sabbath was associated with corporate worship.

Leviticus 23:3 Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, *a holy convocation*. You shall do no work. It is a Sabbath to the LORD in all your dwelling places.

¹ It is interesting to note that our present calendar is divided by its parts in to days, months, and years because of creational realities. Our day is based on the rotation of the earth, our month and year is based on the position of the earth's revolution around the sun. But, there is not natural reason why our weeks divide into seven days. Many cultures divide on different systems. The seven day week is a witness of God's commanded. It is a witness God's Lordship over creation by modeling his pattern of creation and rest within a seven day cycle. Most reasons for modern calendar divisions are natural consequences of creation, but the seven day principle of our modern week is grounded in God's supernatural work of creation.

Once a week the people were to rest from normal work for the purpose of assembling together in a holy convocation.² Yet we know that the national convocation of the people was not required except for three times a year. Therefore, some system was required for people to meet in smaller yet corporate worship settings every week as Leviticus 23:3 commands. There are many reasons think that the Levites dispersed across the land to hold various Sabbath services in fulfillment of this verse. These services are essentially what the synagogue service is today for practicing Jews.

There were other holy days in the biblical calendar. The seventh day Sabbath was central and all other days stemmed from it. Leviticus 23 surveys the whole year and it is represented below.

Holy Days	Their Time	Our Time	Meaning	National Assembly
Sabbath	Every 7th Day	Weekly	Creation / Redemption	No
Passover	Abib 14th	March/April Spring	Redemption by blood	Yes
Unleavened Bread	Nisan 15-22	March/April Spring	Holy Living	No
Firstfruits	Abib 16th	Pentecost Spring	Stewardship	No
Weeks	Sivan 1st	September Fall	Stewardship	Yes
Trumpets	Tishri 1	September Fall	Preparation for atonement	No
Day of Atonement	Tishri 10	October Fall	Redemption by	No
Booths	Tishri 15-22	October Fall	Remember God guided through wilderness	Yes

We know that during the time of the New Testament the Sabbath day synagogue worship service was an important time for Jesus.

² The word here for “convocation” (מִקְרָא) means assembly of people. Apparently it is an assembly closely associated with a reading for the same word can mean assembly or reading. Ezra stood behind a wooden platform with his companions and they and taught the assembly from the reading. Nehemiah 8:8 says, “They read from the book, from the Law of God, clearly, and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading (מִקְרָא).”

Matthew 4:23 And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people.

Luke 4:16 And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. ¹⁷ And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written

Jesus was evidently part of the synagogue community because he was scheduled to read in the Scriptures in a rotation. Jesus was on the roles as a regular participant in God's ordained public worship services of his day.

Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath and He Is Working

Jesus valued the Sabbath but he had the right to free it from human traditions which tend to corrupt the world of God. He taught that the Sabbath was made to serve man. It was a gift from God to free us to relax, cease from all the work we have to do, and enjoy fellowship with God himself.

Jesus taught that doing necessary works and works of mercy were permitted on the Sabbath. For example, he healed a cripple man and told him to carry his mat on the Sabbath. He knew that the Pharisees would be angry from this and he did it on purpose.

John 5:10-12,15-18 ⁸ Jesus said to him, "Get up, take up your bed, and walk." ⁹ And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked. Now that day was the Sabbath. ¹⁰ So the Jews said to the man who had been healed, "It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to take up your bed." ¹¹ But he answered them, "The man who healed me, that man said to me, 'Take up your bed, and walk.'" ¹² They asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Take up your bed and walk?'" ...The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him. ¹⁶ And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath. ¹⁷ But Jesus answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I am working."¹⁸ This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

Jesus clearly explains why he was doing deeds of mercy on the Sabbath. He said that the Father was working on the Sabbath, therefore he was working on the Sabbath. Later on, Jesus will explain that he is doing all his works to show that he is the way to eternal life. Therefore, God has ceased from working in original creation

but continues to work, even on the Sabbath, in re-creation. Redemption is a 24/7 job to God.

Matthew 12:1-12 At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. ² But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, "Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath." ³ He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, and those who were with him: ⁴ how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? ⁵ Or have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless? ⁶ I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. ⁷ And if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. ⁸ For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath." ⁹ He went on from there and entered their synagogue. ¹⁰ And a man was there with a withered hand. And they asked him, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"--so that they might accuse him. ¹¹ He said to them, "Which one of you who has a sheep, if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out? ¹² Of how much more value is a man than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."

Notice how the people were in the synagogue on the Sabbath. This shows a strong connection that regular public worship once a week was tied to the synagogue. Jesus is teaching the people what the Sabbath was meant to do good. Even though the people were to relax from doing regular work on the Sabbath they could still do work that was necessary for life and work that was merciful to others in need. For example, the disciples were doing some work by picking heads of grain to eat food. It was a work needed for them to eat. In the same way David was not allowed to eat the bread of the presence but it was needed at the time. In the same way the priests did work when offering animals to sacrifice on the Sabbath but it was needed work at the time. Most importantly, Jesus explains where he gets his authority to teach about the Sabbath. He said he was "lord of the Sabbath". This is an imposing statement considering the Sabbath was Yahweh's day. As we saw in Exodus 20 the Sabbath was a 'Sabbath unto Yahweh' but in Matthew 12 Jesus claims that he is the lord over the Sabbath. Clearly Jesus is saying he has the right to tell the people what to do on the Sabbath because he is Yahweh and it is his day.

The Lord of the Sabbath and The Lord's Day

In the Old Testament the Sabbath was one day of the week uniquely dedicated to God. After his death and resurrection Jesus changed many things. For example we

are not to sacrifice animals anymore since Jesus offered himself as the true sacrifice that all the other animal sacrifices were only images of.

Hebrews 10:10-11 And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. ¹¹ And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God

We cannot go back to observing the holy days of the Old Testament. Going back to special days listed in Leviticus 23 would be like going back to the sacrifices listed in Leviticus 1-7. Now that Christ's atonement is complete certain things have changed for us New Testament believers. Paul warned his people that going back to observing Sabbaths would be like ignoring Jesus.

Colossians 2:16-17 Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a *Sabbath*. ¹⁷ These are a shadow of the things to come, but the *substance belongs to Christ*.

The Old Testament Sabbath was a shadow that pointed to Christ. Just like animal sacrifices pointed to the true substantial sacrifice of Jesus, the rest of the Sabbath pointed to the true rest found in the salvation of Christ.

Matthew 11:28-30 Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Hebrews 4:9-10 So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God. ¹⁰ for whoever has entered God's rest has also rested from his works as God did from his.

Because the Old Testament calendar days were shadows that pointed to Jesus, Paul consistently warns the church from getting wrapped up into these ceremonial days again and again.

Galatians 4:9-12 But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more? ¹⁰ You observe days and months and seasons and years! ¹¹ I am afraid I may have labored over you in vain. ¹² Brothers, I entreat you, become as I am, for I also have become as you are. You did me no wrong.

Romans 14:5-6 One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. ⁶ The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. The one who eats, eats in honor of the Lord, since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, abstains in honor of the Lord and gives thanks to God.

Some Christians hold some days as more important than others while other Christians hold many days alike. This is the general rule that Paul was preaching to the church. At the same time we know that the Apostles held one day of the week to be special from all the other days. We know this because of the detail given to the day of the Lord's resurrection. Jesus was resurrected from the dead the day after the Sabbath. Since the Sabbath was called the seventh day, Jesus' resurrection day is sometimes called the eighth day or the first day.

Matthew 28:1-2,6 Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. ² And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it.... ⁶ He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay

John 20:26 Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you."

We know this was a special day to the Apostles because they all made explicit effort to say Christ's resurrection was the first day of the week. And we know that they made a point to assemble on this day.

Acts 20:7 On the first [μῆρ] day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight.

1 Corinthians 16:2 On the first [μῆρ] day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come.

Later, we learn that this first day of the week was called "the Lord's day". The apostle John held one day in seven to be special by choosing to call it the Lord's day.

Revelation 1:10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet

We know from Matthew 12 that Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath (7th day) and we know from Revelation that he is Lord of the (1st day) too. It is interesting that Jesus is explicitly Lord over these two special days. We are told that the church should not keep the seventh day as special but we are also told that the church did recognize the first day as special.

We Honor God by Doing What He Desires?

If God is our great Father and Master, how would we be expected to honor him? Imagine your family wanted to honor you on your birthday. How would they plan out the day to make it special for you. If you hate seafood and horror movies you will probably be insulted if they scheduled those two events into the day. the church gathers on the Lord's Day. By definition it is "his" day. A day to celebrate his life, his resurrection from the dead and enthronement above all in heaven and earth. It would be just as offensive to plan the day without direction concerning his desires.

Leviticus 8:4 And Moses did as the LORD commanded him, and the congregation was assembled at the entrance of the tent of meeting.

Leviticus 8:9 And he set the turban on his head, and on the turban, in front, he set the golden plate, the holy crown, as the LORD commanded Moses.

Leviticus 8:13 And Moses brought Aaron's sons and clothed them with coats and tied sashes around their waists and bound caps on them, as the LORD commanded Moses.

Leviticus 8:17 But the bull and its skin and its flesh and its dung he burned up with fire outside the camp, as the LORD commanded Moses.

Leviticus 8:21 Moses burned the whole ram on the altar. It was a burnt offering with a pleasing aroma, a food offering for the LORD, as the LORD commanded Moses.

Leviticus 8:29 Moses took the breast and waved it for a wave offering before the LORD. It was Moses' portion of the ram of ordination, as the LORD commanded Moses.

Leviticus 8:36 Aaron and his sons did all the things that the LORD commanded by Moses.

Leviticus 9:6-7 "This is the thing that the LORD commanded you to do, that the glory of the LORD may appear to you." ⁷ Then Moses said to Aaron, Draw near to the altar and offer your sin offering and your burnt offering and make atonement for yourself and for the people, and bring the offering of the people and make atonement for them, as the LORD has commanded."

Leviticus 9:10 But the fat and the kidneys and the long lobe of the liver from the sin offering he burned on the altar, as the LORD commanded Moses.

Leviticus 9:21-24 Aaron waved for a wave offering before the LORD, as Moses commanded. ²² Then Aaron lifted up his hands toward the people and blessed them, and he came down from offering the sin offering and the burnt offering and the peace offerings. ²³ And Moses and Aaron went into the tent of meeting, and when they came out they blessed the people, and the glory of the LORD appeared to all the people. ²⁴ And fire came out from before the LORD and consumed the burnt offering and the pieces of fat on the altar, and when all the people saw it, they shouted and fell on their faces.

Leviticus 10:1-3 Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it and laid incense on it and offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, which he had not commanded them. ² And fire came out from before the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD. ³ Then Moses said to Aaron, "This is what the LORD has said, 'Among those who are near me I will be sanctified, and before all the people I will be glorified.'" And Aaron held his peace.

This story makes it crystal clear that approaching the Lord in worship is no trivial matter. He is holy. He must be held in honor. If we intend to have close communion with God we must always remember that he is special and distinct from us. the way we demonstrate this in our lives is by simply obeying his word, and having a heart that wants to do his will, a heart that wants to please him , a heart that loves him.

Disciplines of Corporate Worship

1. Discipline Attendance
 - Physical Attendance
 - Mental Attendance
2. Discipline of Prayer

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- 3. Discipline of Confession
- 4. Discipline of Singing
- 5. Discipline of Listening
- 6. Discipline Eating and Drinking
- 7. Discipline Church Court Apostasy Keys of Kingdom
- 8.