

Is Keeping the Sabbath All That Makes Us Unique?

We are called to an impressive responsibility in this time of history, to be the people of God who are preparing to inherit all things (Revelation 21:7). As such we are called the elect (Matthew 24:22, 24, 31; Romans 8:33; 11:7; Colossians 3:12; etc.), the first-fruits (Romans 23; James 1:18; Revelation 14:4), the ecclesia (I Timothy 3:15; Acts 11:26; 12:1; etc.), the called and chosen (Matthew 20:16; 22:14; I Peter 2:9; Revelation 17:14), those written in the Lamb's book of life (Philippians 4:3; Revelation 3:5; 20:12, 15), and brothers of Jesus Christ (Romans 8:29). Having God's spirit within us carries with it unique responsibilities that so few in this world possess:

1. *The requirement to keep God's law, not just in the letter but in the spirit* (Romans 7:6; 8:4)
2. *The need to exercise the spiritual gifts that have been given to us through that spirit* (I Corinthians 12; Romans 12:4-8; I Peter 4:10)
3. *The fulfillment of God's will throughout our personal lives in terms of our servile work, prayer, study of His words, mediation, and fasting* (II Timothy 2:15; 3:16; Acts 17:11; I Thessalonians 4:11; 5:17; James 5:16; Ephesians 4:28; Psalm 1:2; 63:6; Philippians 4:8; Acts 13:2; 14:23)
4. *A zeal to reach out and serve our fellow man in every way we can, first to the brethren but also to everyone we meet when expedient* (Galatians 6:9-10), as ambassadors of a nation that has yet to arrive (II Corinthians 5:20), and as witnesses to that future Kingdom and the Eternal's way of

life (Acts 14:3; 22:15; 26:22,) to practice "... pure religion, undefiled ..." (James 1:27).

That is a mighty calling, one not reserved for the faint of heart but for those whom God knows can survive the rigors of Satan's and the world's assaults, and come through the fire not burned up, but instead refined and purified (I Peter 1:7; Revelation 3:18). No one who is lukewarm or hesitant of this calling could possibly survive the onslaughts of a world very unfriendly to the ways of the Creator and Sustainer (Luke 9:62).



The Sabbath — A Sign

By giving us the Ten Commandments, the Eternal revealed who He is so we will not be left without a witness to His character, so we might emulate it in our own lives.

All of us have come to recognize that, perhaps more than anything else, keeping the Sabbath and Holy Days is a major — perhaps *the* major — thing that differentiates us from the Sunday-keeping world around us. Some would add our shunning of Christmas, Easter, Halloween, birthdays, and some other celebrations which are of pagan origin. Indeed, the Fourth Commandment has been termed the “test commandment,” because keeping the day at the proper time and in the proper way separates a person from modern-day Sunday-keeping churchianity. Oftentimes a Sabbath keeper is discriminated against by employees who want access to a person's work seven days a week. In countries that are predominantly Moslem, Buddhist, Hindu, or of some other majority religion the problem can become even more serious, even life-threatening. In China, present-day leaders are exercising a vendetta against home fellowships,

whether they be Sabbath or Sunday keeping, attempting to force the faithful to attend State-sanctioned fellowships for the sake of controlling the people. In countries like Iran and Saudi Arabia, being a Sabbath keeper, much less a Christian of any persuasion, brings the risk of imprisonment, torture, and very possibly death.

Despite the threats from political and religious leaders, God's ecclesia understands well the calling they have received to be "... a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy" (I Peter 2:9-10; see also Exodus 19:5-6). When God tells us to do something, we *do it*, as Christ did the will of the Father when He walked the earth (John 6:38). It is the *doers* of the law that are justified, not the hearers only (James 1:22; Romans 2:13).

The Torah tells us,

"Speak also unto the children of Israel, saying, 'Truly my Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the Lord who sanctifies you. You shall keep the Sabbath therefore, for it is holy unto you; everyone that defiles it shall surely be put to death, for whoever does any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord; whosoever does any work on the Sabbath day shall surely be put to death. Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations for a perpetual covenant. *It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever*, for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed'" (Exodus 31:13-17; see also Exodus 20:8-11; Leviticus 19:3, 30; 26:2; Deuteronomy 5:12).

The Sabbath is a *sign* [Hebrew *ot*, "sign, mark, symbol, signal or event that communicates"] between God and His people *forever* [Hebrew *olam*, "everlasting, forever, eternity"]. It is a signal that communicates to the world around us that the keepers of the day are special and singled out, whether the person recognizes this truth or not. A Sabbath keeper is different. He or she indeed stands out in this world, like a light shining brightly to all the world, as Christ said, "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lamp-



The setting of the sun on the sixth day signals the beginning of the rest that our Creator has so wonderfully granted us, to recharge our physical and spiritual selves.

stand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:14-16; see also Luke 11:33).

Yet, the Sabbath Is Just the Beginning

Notice what Jesus said in Mathew 5:16 above: "Let your light shine before men that they may see your good works" Keeping the Sabbath is one of those signs, indeed, but is it the only sign? Not hardly! Immediately after this statement, Jesus said, "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill" (Matthew 5:17). Then in verse 19 He makes the point that "Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them shall be called great in the

Kingdom of heaven.”

Therefore, while keeping the Sabbath and Holy Days identifies us as God’s people, that is only one part of the light which shines from us to the world. It is the entire law — the Ten Commandments — that comprise this light that beams forth from us. Let us look closely at these wonderful laws of living that make us what we are.

“I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image — any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor

your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath



The Law of God literally resides within one’s heart if he or she possesses the holy spirit.

day and hallowed it. Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you.

You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor’s” (Exodus 20:2-17).

These words were etched in tablets of stone at Mt. Sinai, but once the spirit of God enters a person these very laws are then etched into one’s very heart.

“Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah — not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more” (Hebrews 8:8-12; see also Jeremiah 31:31-34).

This is the law within our hearts that turns us from evil and enables our entire being — our body, mind, and spirit — to “... be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (II Thessalonians 5:23). It is the law which we are to do and teach, and thus “... be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:19). Jesus summarized these commandments as two “great commandments”:

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” (Matthew 22:37-40; see also Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18).

Then, in a sweeping statement, Jesus gave a “new commandment” in John 13:34-35, “... that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love one for another.” The Greek word for *new* in John 13:34 is *kainos*, meaning “new in character or mode,” not that the law is removed or done away, nor has our love for one another changed, but with the spirit of God within us, and with Christ’s examples of love, we can now practice agape love in a more profound and proper way.

Agape love as a “new commandment” is emphasized in Scripture in different ways, such as in the Parable of the Sheep and Goats in Matthew 25:31-46, where those who fed the hungry, gave drink to the thirsty, took in strangers, clothed the naked, and visited the sick and those in prison actually did these good deeds unto the Father Himself. True religion which is undefiled is “... to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world” (James 1:27). We see here a pattern of selfless service to those in need, especially to those who are helpless, an attitude of reaching out beyond the self and considering others to be better than oneself, as is Jesus Christ’s and the Father’s very nature (Philippians 2:1-5). It is the very substance of the fruits of the spirit spelled out in Galatians 5:21-22: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Practicing the Law in the Spirit

What, then, are these evidences of God’s spirit dwelling within us that make us shine like lights to the world around us, that give evidence that we are sons of the Most High God because we truly love one another ... and those in the world with whom we associate? **Let us examine what Jesus and Scripture say about how we must keep the Law of God, to**

identify us beyond keeping the Sabbath.

I. You shall have no other Gods before Me (Exodus 20:3).

This commandment is closely related to commandment II below, and reiterated in Jeremiah 25:6, “Do not go after other gods to serve them and worship them” Anything that comes before the true God in your life is a god, because it replaces the One who made all things and sustains your very life. A good example of someone putting a false god before the true God is the rich young ruler of Matthew 19:16-24. The young man asked Jesus what good thing he needed to do to achieve eternal life. He was told to “... go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.” The man had great possessions and went away sorrowfully, unwilling to release himself from the worldly possessions he had amassed.

The fact that this commandment states that “You shall have no other gods before Me” implies that there are other gods — real spirits in the spirit realm — which do exist that a person might indeed follow. Indeed, Satan wants you to follow him and practice his carnal lusts. Such a reality is implied in Deuteronomy 32:7-9. Here the division of the nations within their appointed boundaries was carried by the Most High as a result of confusing the languages at Babel. Then He set the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the “sons of God” ... not the “children of Israel” as many translations have it. (The Dead Sea Scrolls prove that “sons of God” is the correct translation.) These spirits, leaders of the 70 nations as outlined in Genesis 10, were not righteous, and to this very day continue to exert control under the auspices of the prince of these evil sons of god, Lucifer (Satan) himself (Ephesians 6:12; I Peter 5:8).

These spirits desire to be honored and worshipped, but we as sons of Yahweh must resist these imposters. There is one true God for us (Deuteronomy 6:4). Note that a correct translation reveals that this verse says Yahweh, or Lord, is Israel’s only God, while not denying the existence of other gods. The *Geneva Bible* says, “Heare O Israel, the Lord our God is Lord onely. We will be known to worship only the one true God of Israel, who is the Maker of heaven and earth.”



False gods take many forms, not just statues of gold but anything we place before the Creator.



We must not allow ourselves to stoop to the level of desecrating the names of our Savior.

II. Do not make for yourself graven images (Exodus 20:4-6)

Ancient societies, and some present-day societies as well, made gods of people, birds, fish, frogs, bulls, or other creatures, even the sun, moon, and stars, and believed that they could invoke spirits to inhabit these caricatures of God's creation made of gold, silver, brass, stone, or wood. We read of Nebuchadnezzar having made a great golden figure about 100 feet tall, which he required all people to bow down to and worship (Daniel 3:1-5). There were many images and worshipers of Baal throughout Canaan and surrounding lands (Numbers 22:41; Judges 6:25-30; I Kings 16:31; 18:19-40; II Kings 3:2; 10:18-23, 25; 11:18; 17:16; 21:3; 23:4; II Chronicles 23:17; 24:7; 28:2; 33:3; 34:4/ Psalm 106:28; Jeremiah 2:8, 23; 7:9; 9:14; 11:13, 17; 12:16; 19:5;

23:13, 27; 32:29, 35; Hosea 2:8, 13, 17; 11:2; 13:1; Zephaniah 1:4), as well as of Milcom, the god of the Amorites (I Kings 11:5, 33; II Kings 23:13; Zephaniah 1:5), Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Sidonians (Judges 2:13; 10:6; I Samuel 7:3; 12:10; 31:10; I Kings 11:5, 33; II Kings 23:13), Tammuz (Ezekiel 8:14), and various gods of the Syrians, Philistines, Egyptians, and all nations. They oftentimes had many gods representing different aspects of the natural world, especially the sun. Thus we see people attempting to fill the natural void to worship something (Ecclesiastes 3:11), even if these are material things or represent Satanic entities.

As lights to the world, we resist these evil forces of the spirit world (Ephesians 6:12; James 4:7-8), and worship the true living God of all creation. One can make idols of most anything — cars, houses, ranches and farms, stamp collections, books, pets ... even one's own children, spouse, and friends if they are placed above the living Creator God.

III. You shall not take the Lord God's name in vain (Exodus 20:7).

The word *vain* here is the Hebrew *saw*, meaning "worthlessness, vanity, falseness." To use the Creator's name in a worthless, vain, or false way is an extremely serious matter, for God tells us the guilty party will not be "guiltless." Using God's several names — God, Lord, Yahweh, Jesus, Yahshua, Elohim, Father, Savior, Creator, Healer, or any other name — in a trite, grievous, or cursing manner (I cannot write them here) is forbidden, for His name is to be honored as the Creator and Sustainer of all that is (Genesis 1; John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2-3; Ecclesiastes 12:1, 6; Isaiah 40:28; Romans 1:25; I Peter 4:19).

Note how serious a matter it is to blaspheme against the spirit of God, which is His power. Matthew 12:31 states, "Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the *blasphemy* [Greek *blasphemia*, 'slander, railing, reproach'] against the spirit will not be forgiven men." Claiming that God's power is not capable of creating all that is — including mankind in His own image — and healing, placing kings in power, and guiding and protecting the saints is a horrible assault on the personage of the One who placed us here on the earth.

Castigating one's own Maker is totally illogical and irredeemable. Therefore, God's people as lights in the world will not curse, using any of God's names frivolously, but will uplift and honor His name by using His Names carefully and obey what He says.

IV. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy (Exodus 20:8-11).

This commandment has already been discussed.

V. Honor your father and your mother (Exodus 20:12).

This wonderful commandment is not just a platitude about being nice to one's parents, but it extends to defining one's very lifespan: "... that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you." Honoring one's parents therefore must have some positive impact on the physiology of the human body, but more than that such honor means "... that it may be well with you in the land which the Lord your God is giving you" (Deuteronomy 5:16; see also Ephesians 6:1-4). May be well refers to one's interpersonal relationships with others, one's family life, as well as prosperity in one's business. How can this all be?

Science has given us good indications of why honoring one's parents is so vital for a good, healthy, long life. According to S. Zeiger in "Parent-Child Relationship Problems" (www.kids.love to know.com),

"The parent/child relationship plays a critical role in a child's development. When kids have dependable, reliable, consistent and stable relationships with their parents, they have a secure base from which they can explore and experience their world, leading to healthy growth and development Kids also use their relationships with their parents as models for relationships with others. If they do not have a strong, positive relationship with their parents, it will be much more difficult for them to develop strong, positive relationships as they interact with others."

Not having a positive relationship with one's parents leads to strife and stress, a matter so serious

that God gave the command, "And he who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death" (Exodus 21:17). The son or daughter guilty of such an affront would be a threat not only to family peace and civility, but to the fabric of Israelite society as a whole if such attitudes were allowed to multiply.

Failing to honor one's father and mother obviously brings stress and contention within the relationship, and it is well known that stress and anxiety cause a number of harmful, life-shortening effects on the body (from K. Cherney, www.healthline.com, July 20:2018):

- **Central nervous system.** Long-term anxiety will cause the brain to signal the release of stress hormones, such as adrenaline and cortisol, and if released regularly this will lead to headaches, dizziness, and depression.
- **Cardiovascular system .** Blood pressure will likely be increased, as well as heart diseases.
- **Digestive and excretory systems.** Nausea, diarrhea, loss of appetite, and various digestive issues can stress the body.
- **Immune system.** With continual anxiety, hormones such as adrenaline flood the body on a regular basis and weaken the immune response, leaving the body more vulnerable to infections and illnesses.
- **Respiratory system.** Asthma and pulmonary diseases may be increased.

Contrast these responses to a poor relationship with one's parents with the benefits of a positive relationship (from K. Cherney, www.healthline.com, September 7, 2018):

- Positive thinkers face stressful situations more effectively by, rather than focusing on frustrations they cannot change, devising plans of action and asking others for assistance and advice.
- Having optimism improves immunity to diseases, through the powerful body-mind connection.
- Overall health is improved including less risk of cardiovascular diseases, less depression, and longer life.
- Resilience in life is improved as the person faces a crisis with strength and resolve, rather than fall apart. In the face of a challenge, ways to fix a problem are examined, and rather than giving up hope, resources

are marshaled to overcome it. In the face of natural disasters, positive emotions provide a buffer against depression.

We can now see how honoring one's parents cultivates hope, determination to overcome, and joy in life which leads to better health, immunity, and consequently longer life, just as the commandment promises. Moreover, a study by Andrew Steptoe at University College of London found that, while studying nearly 10,000 men and women from 2002 to 2013, and answering four questions that evaluated how they enjoyed life,

“Nearly seven years after their last answers, people who reported more enjoyment (or the highest satisfaction scores on all three occasions) were 24% less likely to have died than people who reported no enjoyment. Those who said they were happy on two of the occasions had a 17% lower mortality” (A. Park, “The First Real Proof That Your Outlook Affects Longevity,” <http://time.com/4599529/to-live-longer-you-have-to-stay-happy/>, December 13, 2016).

VI. You shall not murder (Exodus 20:13).

We know well that killing someone is a heinous sin, whether done by intent or accidentally, and is discussed at length in the statutes mentioned in Exodus 21:12-25 and Numbers 35:6-22. Yet it is made clear in I John 3:14-16,

“We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death. Whoever *hates* [*miseo*, “regard with ill-will, detest, abhor”] his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.”

Even hating your brother is akin to killing him, so God's people will be known by their attitude towards those who might give a person every reason to hate them ... according to the world's standards. Notice what Jesus Christ said in Matthew 5:38-48.



Children must honor their parents, which is only sensible; they gave them life in the first place.



The promise for keeping the Fifth Commandment: long life, and an abundant one as well.

“You have heard it said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away. You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and

sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.”

We are to take on the attitude of Jesus when He said, if your fellow man sins against you repeatedly you shall forgive him not just seven times, but seventy times seven times (Matthew 18:21-22). Moreover, we are to ...

“Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse Repay no one evil for evil Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord. Therefore, ‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty give him drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:14, 17, 19-21).

By having this attitude of doing good towards one’s persecutors, the carnal tendency to lash out towards perpetrators of evil will be quenched. You will not hate your fellowman but show mercy and love to him, identifying yourself as God’s people even beyond the keeping of the Sabbath command.

VII. Do not commit adultery (Exodus 20:14).

Faithfulness within marriage is strenuously protected by God’s laws, in several ways. Not only is a marriage partner not to defile the marriage covenant by committing adultery (Leviticus 18:20; 20:10), incest (Leviticus 18:6; 20:11), homosexuality (Leviticus 18:22; 20:13) bestiality (Leviticus 18:23; 20:15-16), or interacting with or marrying someone who is near in kinship (Leviticus 18:6-18; 20:11-12, 14, 17, 19-20), but even the priests were to marry only virgins of the priestly line (Leviticus 21:13-15). Israelites were to marry only within their own tribe (Numbers 36:6-9), and never a Canaanite, unless a

soldier might desire a woman he found during a campaign, and then only under certain conditions (Deuteronomy 21:10-14). Only if a husband found some uncleanness in his new wife could he divorce her (Deuteronomy 24:1). The marriage bed, defined and protected from the very beginning of this eon by Elohim’s words to Adam (Genesis 2:24), forms the foundation of human society for every nation ... and nations cannot survive without its maintenance in purity and permanence.

Jesus Christ enlarged upon this seventh commandment by making plain the spiritual intent of the law.

“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart Furthermore it has been said,



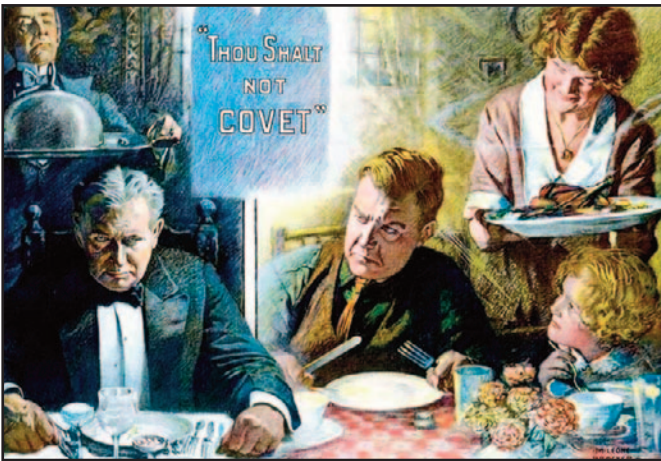
Jesus taught the Pharisees, and all of us, the importance or remaining true to our spouses, and the horrible consequences of such sin.

‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery” (Matthew 5:27-28, 31-32).

It is clear that we as God’s people show our identity in Christ by not even allowing our minds to dwell lustfully upon someone who is not our spouse. It is the same as adultery, and this attitude identifies



Passing gossip to another person is a major way that people bear false witness, and in the process they murder the character of others.



We should never desire the property of others, but be thankful for the blessings God has showed upon us, whether we are rich or poor.

up as God's people, even beyond the keeping of the Sabbath.

VIII. You shall not steal (Exodus 20:15).

As for the other commandments, Moses related many statutes regarding stealing (Exodus 22:1-15; Leviticus 6:1-5; 19:11; Deuteronomy 5:19). Many other scriptures address stealing (Proverbs 6:30; 9:17; 30:9; Jeremiah 7:9; Ezekiel 33:15; Hosea 4:2; Obadiah 5; Malachi 1:13), and Jesus Christ and the disciples condemned stealing, such as Paul when he said, "Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need" (Ephesians 4:28).

To not *steal* [Greek *klepto*, "to take away stealth-

ily"] means to respect the property of one's neighbor, which Jesus related is one of the essentials of living when he addressed the rich young ruler (Matthew 19:16-22; Mark 10:17-22; Luke 18:18-23). He went on further in Matthew 22:36-40 by saying that loving your neighbor as yourself, along with all of the other commandments, is the essence of the entire Law and Prophets. Thus, a servant of the Creator will be known for respecting the property of others, and will not covet what he has, for coveting is the first step towards stealing.

IX. You shall not bear false witness (Exodus 20:16).

This commandment says a person is to tell the truth, to not give false or erroneous testimony regarding anyone or any thing. Such a command is especially important in judgements concerning death and injury, to both body and reputation, and is encoded in statutes throughout Scripture (Exodus 23:1-3; Leviticus 5:11; Numbers 5:12-31; Deuteronomy 5:20; 17:2-11; 19:15-19; Psalm 27:12; Proverbs 6:19; 12:17; 14:5, 25, 19:5, 9, 28; 21:28; 24:28; 25:18). Jesus had much to say about false witnesses and witnessing truthfully (Matthew 15:19; 18:16; 19:18, etc.), and during his mock trial in front of the Sanhedrin He had to face false witnesses (Matthew 26:60; Mark 14:56-57).

God Himself, and Jesus Christ, are perfect witnesses, and can never lie (Jeremiah 42:5; John 8:14; 18:37; Revelation 3:14). So a child of God will not bear false witness, even to his own hurt, which strength of character will become known to those around him as evidence that he or she is truly one of God's elect.

X. You shall not covet (Exodus 20:17).

Coveting [Hebrew *hamad*, "to covet, lust, desire"; Greek *epithumeo*, "to set the heart upon, to desire, to long for," or *zeleuo*, "to be zealous, earnest, eager"], or desiring something that belongs to someone else, is a grievous sin, for it leads to breaking the other commandments, such as stealing, and adultery; in fact, breaking one commandment breaks them all (James 2:10). Jesus Christ warned the people of the great danger of *covetousness* [Greek *pleonexia*, "an

inordinate desire for riches, grasping, overreaching, extortion”].

“Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses” (Luke 12:15).

Then He went on to relate the parable of the rich farmer (Luke 12:16-21) who desired to pull down his barns and build new and bigger ones to store his abundant crops and goods. Then he said within himself, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years, take ease; eat, drink, and be merry” (Luke 12:19). Jesus castigated this farmer by calling him a fool, for his soul would be required of him that very night — he would die — and then who would be responsible for his great riches? Therefore do not lay up treasures for yourself, but be rich towards God.

Coveting precedes the breaking of the other commandments: worshipping false gods, lying, committing adultery, stealing, and in indirect ways breaking the others. It is a most insidious attitude that motivated Satan the devil to sin. He was “... the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty” until iniquity was found in him due to merchandising (Ezekiel 28:12, 18). He coveted the position and power of the Most High God, and said, “I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the

Most High” (Isaiah 14:13-14).

More Than Sabbath Keepers

Thus, the saints, by refraining from coveting but instead loving one another in an attitude of service, like Jesus did when He washed the feet of the disciples at the last Passover (John 13:5-17), reveal themselves as God’s people beyond being Sabbath keepers. While the Sabbath does identify us as God’s “unusual people,” that is only the beginning. We are recognized by the unconverted world around us as keepers of the total way of God in how we treat them and our families. We do not make idols of anything, use profanity, dishonor our parents, steal, murder, cheat on our spouse, lie, cheat, or covet what is not ours. Our lives are lived in purity, serving others in our servile work and in our aid to the widows, orphans, or anyone in need.

Our lights shine as beacons of hope and joy within a world of darkness and hopelessness. We savor the earth with the salt of our works, coming from a pure heart and a sound mind. We are the pioneers in waiting of a new Eden upon the earth, looking upwards towards the return of our Elder Brother to finally bring peace and renewal to this tired and broken earth.

