

THE SABBATH and THE LORD'S DAY

1. The word "**Sabbath**" comes from a Hebrew verb meaning "to cease, stop, desist; to come to an end, rest." The basic meaning of this verb is illustrated in such passages as Genesis 8:22 (the seasonal and day/night cycles have no Sabbath!); Jeremiah 31:36 ("cease"); and Job 32:1 (these men gave their mouths a rest!).
2. Based on this definition of the word, the SABBATH Day was a "**Cease From Work Day**." It was a day when God's people were to **cease** and **stop**. They were to cease from their normal daily routine. It's important for God's people to have a break from the business and busyness of the daily work schedule. The Sabbath afforded such a break.
3. On the Sabbath Day God's people were to cease and stop working so that they might **THINK** and **REMEMBER** their God.

According to Exodus 20:8-11, they were to **STOP** and **REMEMBER their CREATOR**. They were to realize that everything they had (even breath to breathe and strength to work) came from their Creator-God (compare 1 Cor. 4:7), and that apart from Him they would have nothing. They were to REST so they might REVERENCE their CREATOR.

According to Deuteronomy 5:15, they were to **STOP** and **REMEMBER their REDEEMER**. They were to remember the awful slavery in Egypt and the wonderful deliverance that God wrought for them. They were to REST so that they might REVERENCE their REDEEMER.

4. What day of the week was the Sabbath? In Genesis 1 and 2, it is clearly stated that **the seventh day of the week was the Sabbath Day**. New Testament confirmation is found in Hebrews 4:4, "For He spake in a certain place of the *seventh day* on this wise, And God did *rest the seventh day* from all His works." Thus, Saturday (the seventh day of the week) was the day of rest for God's people.
5. Nowhere in the Bible do we read about the Sabbath Day being changed to some other day. Many believe that the Sabbath Day (Saturday) was changed to the first day of the week (Sunday). Again, nowhere in Scripture is such a change mentioned.
6. Genesis 2:1-3 states that God rested on the seventh day (Saturday) having finished His work of creation (cf. Exodus 20:11). It should be noted that although **God** observed the Sabbath, there is no command given in Genesis 2 that instructs man to observe the Sabbath. Indeed, throughout the book of Genesis there is no record of any Sabbath observance on the part of men. There is no record that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, or Joseph observed the Sabbath. Job lived in the patriarchal period or thereabouts, and although we read of him offering sacrifices, etc., there is no mention of any Sabbath observance. After the flood God gave some key commands to Noah and his sons (Genesis 9), but nothing is

said about Sabbath observance. There is no record of any men observing the Sabbath until the days of Moses.

7. The first record of any kind of Sabbath observance is found in Exodus 16. These manna-gathering instructions were given just prior to the giving of the law at Mt. Sinai. God was preparing His people for the Sabbath command they would soon be given. The first "Sabbath-breakers" are found in Exodus 16:27-28.
8. The Sabbath was a **sign** between God and **the nation of Israel** (Exodus 31:13). It was a set-apart day to remind them that they were a set-apart people. It was a perpetual reminder to Israel of their separation unto God. The heathen (other nations) did not observe the Sabbath.
9. The penalty for breaking the Sabbath law was **death** (Exodus 31:14; 35:2). In Numbers 15:32-36, there is an account of a man who was stoned for breaking the Sabbath (cf. Exodus 35:2-3).
10. The **land** was to observe a Sabbath. The land was to be worked for six years and rested on the seventh year (Lev. 25:1-7). God would provide for His obedient people (Lev. 25:18-22). However, God's people did not obey this law and did not rest the land during these Sabbath years. God's judgment against His people involved the seventy year Babylonian captivity. During these seventy years God gave the land rest to make up for all the time that Israel failed to observe the sabbath year rest. The Lord enforced His sabbath upon the land. God saw to it that the land got its rest!

"And I will bring the land into desolation: and your enemies which dwell therein shall be astonished at it. And I will scatter you among the heathen, and will draw out a sword after you: and your land shall be desolate, and your cities waste. Then shall the land enjoy her sabbaths, as long as it lieth desolate, and ye be in your enemies' land; even then shall the land rest, and enjoy her sabbaths. As long as it lieth desolate it shall rest; because it did not rest in your sabbaths, when ye dwelt upon it" (Leviticus 26:32-35)

"And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia: To fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years" (2 Chronicles 36:20-21).

"By causing the land to remain uncultivated for seventy years, God gave to the land a time of rest and refreshment, which its inhabitants, so long as they possessed it, had not given it" (Keil-Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament, see under 2 Chronicles 36:21).

11. There were special holy day "Sabbaths" connected with some of Israel's feasts (see Leviticus 23:7,8,21,25,28,30-32, etc.). On most of these "non-working" days no regular

occupational work was to be done. The regulation for the day of atonement was even stronger: even minor household chores were forbidden (verses 28-32).

12. Prophecy reveals that in the future the Sabbath observance will take place during the Tribulation (Matthew 24:20), and also during the kingdom age (Isaiah 66:23).
13. In the gospels the word "**Sabbath**" occurs 50 times. In the book of Acts it occurs 9 times. In the epistles (Romans through Revelation) this word occurs only once (Colossians 2:16).
14. It is worthy of note that whenever the ten commandments are repeated in the New Testament (e.g. Matt. 19:18-19; Romans 13:9, etc.), the Sabbath commandment is never included in the list.
15. In the gospels, the Lord Jesus Christ observed the Sabbath Day (Luke 4:16; 13:10, etc.) since He was "under the law" (see Galatians 4:4).
16. The Sabbath Day was meant to be a **blessing** to man. It was a special day given to God's people so that they could stop and remember their Creator and Redeemer and think about their relationship to Him. However, the Jewish religious leaders had added so many restrictions to the Sabbath that the day had become a great burden rather than a great blessing (see Mark 2:23-28 and compare John 5:8-10,16). This is the condition into which the Sabbath had degenerated at the time of our Lord's earthly ministry and this is why the Lord Jesus Christ, "the Lord of the Sabbath," was involved in so many Sabbath controversies during His public ministry.
17. In the book of Acts the Sabbath is set forth not as the "Christian day of worship;" rather, it was used as a **day of evangelism** (see Acts 13:14-16; 13:42; 16:13; 17:2; 18:4). For Paul and the other Christian evangelists, the Sabbath day was indeed a **work day** , as they labored for souls!
18. On what day did Christian believers gather together? "*And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Troas in five days; where we abode seven days. And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight*" (Acts 20:6-7). Apparently Paul stayed seven days so that he could be with the believers on Sunday (see verse 6). Note what took place on this day: the disciples **came together** , they **broke bread** (communion), they **heard the Word of God preached** , etc.
19. "*Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come*" (1 Corinthians 16:1-2). Paul requested that a special offering for the poor saints of Jerusalem be collected on the first day of the week which was Sunday. Why on this day? Because

this was the usual day that believers gathered together.

20. There is only one New Testament verse which refers to Sunday as "the Lord's Day." *"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet"* (Revelation 1:10). It was on a **Sunday** that God gave John this great vision. This is not a reference to the future "day of the Lord" (Isaiah 13:6,9; 1 Thess. 5:2) which occurs **after** the church age. The vision that John saw in Revelation 1-3 pertains to the church age.
21. The Lord Jesus Christ arose from the dead very early on the first day of the week (Sunday). *"Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils"* (Mark 16:9 and compare Luke 24:1). There are some (such as former cult leader Herbert Armstrong) who say that Christ arose on **Saturday** and not on Sunday. On the contrary, the Bible teaches that Christ rose again on the third day (1 Cor. 15:3-4; Luke 24:7). According to Luke 24:21, the two disciples with whom Jesus walked on the road to Emmaus considered Sunday (even Sunday late afternoon) to be "**the third day** since these things were done" (compare verse 1). If Christ rose again on the third day, and if Sunday was considered the third day, then He must have risen on Sunday, the first day of the week, not on Saturday.
22. Beginning with that first resurrection Sunday, the Lord Jesus seemed to "train" His disciples to gather together on the first day of the week. On the first resurrection Sunday the Lord appeared to the group of disciples, but Thomas missed this "Sunday Evening Service" (John 20:19-23). According to the Jewish method of time computation (the inclusive method), the Lord appeared to the disciples exactly one week later (verse 26- "after 8 days"). On this Sunday Thomas was in attendance (verses 26-29). It was also on a Sunday that the Holy Spirit came and the church was born (see Acts chapter 2 and compare Leviticus 23:15-16). The day of Pentecost occurred 7 weeks after the Lord's resurrection. The disciples were getting into the habit of gathering together on the first day of the week in celebration of the day when Christ victoriously arose from the dead!
23. The Lord's Day is seen prophetically in Psalm 118:22-24, *"The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the LORD'S doing; it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it"* (compare Acts 4:10-12). **"This is the Day that the Lord hath Made!"** What day is the Psalmist referring to? It was the day when God did a marvellous thing in bringing forth His Son from the dead. The rejected Stone (cf. John 1:11) was made the **Head of the Corner!**
24. The Lord's Day, therefore, should be a day of great gladness and rejoicing (Psalm 118:24). It is a day for believers to gather together for worship, for the breaking of bread in remembering our Lord and what He has done on our behalf (1 Cor. 11:25-26), for the collecting of gifts and offerings (1 Cor. 16:1-2), for the preaching of God's Word (Acts 20:6-7), etc.
25. There is no verse in the Bible that commands believers to worship on the first day of the

week. We do not do this because of any command. We do this simply because this has been the practice of Christians from the very beginning, based upon the life-changing fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Sunday is not the "Christian Sabbath." The first day of the week is nowhere referred to as the Sabbath. Many refer to Sunday as the Sabbath but this is not Biblically correct. There is a Sabbath rest for the people of God (Hebrews 4:9), but this Sabbath rest is not for Saturday or for Sunday--it is for **every day of the week!**

26. There is a real sense in which every day of the week is the Lord's Day. We are not to serve the Lord one day out of seven. We are to serve the Lord **seven** days out of seven! In this sense the New Testament teaches that every day is equal (Rom. 14:5).
27. Should believers today observe the Sabbath? The answer is YES! There is a Sabbath rest for the people of God today (Heb. 4:9). Believers in Christ need to **rest** and to **cease from their own works** (Heb. 4:10) so that the living God might work in and through them (Philippians 2:13; Heb. 13:21). This "faith-rest life" should be the **daily** portion of every believer. May we enter into this rest! May unbelief not hinder us!
28. On what day should we as believers rest? Notice the emphasis in Hebrews 3 and 4 on the word "**today**" (see Heb. 3:7,13,15; 4:7). When should we rest? We should rest "**TODAY**" (today and every day). There remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God and we are to enter into this rest **TODAY and every day**, seven days a week!
29. The **rest** to which Hebrews 4:1-11 refers is not the rest that the believer enters into at **death**, as so many commentators teach. The promised land was not meant to be a picture of heaven, which the words of many hymns might suggest. Joshua and Caleb entered a land full of enemies. They entered because of their faith in a God who would **work** on their behalf (see Exodus 14:14-"The Lord shall fight for you" and Numbers 14:9-"the Lord is with us"). If the "**rest**" of Heb. 4:11 refers to heaven then this verse would be a command to commit suicide! The person who enters into God's rest is the person who **ceases** from his own works (Heb. 4:10), **mixes** the promises of God with faith (Heb. 4:2), and **allows** God the freedom to outwork and manifest His life (Heb. 13:20-21).
30. According to Colossians 2:16-17, the Sabbath which was given under the law in the Old Testament was meant to be a picture of a greater Sabbath. It was but a shadow which would find its substance and fulfillment in the person of Jesus Christ. *"Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ."*

The following chart may help to illustrate how the O.T. Sabbath foreshadowed and pictured a greater Sabbath:

The Sabbath Under Law	The Sabbath Under Grace
The believer was to rest on the seventh day (Exodus 20:8-10).	The believer is to rest seven days --" <u>today</u> " and every day! (Heb. 4:1-11).
God's work of creation took 6 days (Exodus 20:11).	God's work of the new creation (redemption) took approximately 6 hours --the time that Christ spent on the cross (see Mark 15:25,33-37).
After His finished work of creation God rested (Genesis 2:1-3).	<p>After His finished work of redemption Christ rested and "SAT DOWN" (John 19:30; Hebrews 1:3).</p> <p>Note: Contrast the priests in the tabernacle who could never sit down because their work was never finished (Heb. 10:11-12).</p>
The Old Testament believer was to stop working on Saturday (Exodus 20:10).	The New Testament believer is to stop working and to cease from his own works every day of the week (Heb. 4:1-11). It is a <i>Faith-Rest Life</i> based on the finished work of Christ, in the power of God the Holy Spirit.

Yes, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God today! Are you observing it? Are you entering into it by faith? Is Hebrews 13:20-21 true of you? Are you resting and enjoying the happy, healthy, holy working of God in your LIFE--**TODAY**?

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