

THE WORD OF

TRUTH

Bible Study Course

Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

John 8:32

28

HOW TO OBSERVE THE SABBATH

"God bless you" is a common and a welcome salutation exchanged between Christians all over the world and we all greatly desire to receive the blessing of God.

No Christian would ever think of placing himself in a position where he will miss that special blessing from the Creator he worships. Yet there are millions of Christians throughout this world who deliberately place themselves outside of one of the richest blessings that God wants to bestow upon His faithful saints.

God said that He has blessed the Sabbath day; that means the Sabbath has a blessing for those who observe the commandment of God to keep it holy. He has not done this for any other day and especially NOT Sunday, the day dedicated to the worship of the sun.

In this lesson we shall see what it means to keep the Sabbath holy and how we may please God in this essential area of devotion and adoration. We shall also learn that in so pleasing Him, we may receive His smile of approval and His commendation --- "Here are they that keep the commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus." (Rev.14:12). What a blessing, if we should hear from the lips of Jesus --- "Well done thou good and faithful servant." (Luke 19:17).

1. What did Jesus say it was lawful for man to do on the Sabbath?

Matthew 12:10-13 (note v.12) _____

Compare: Luke 6:9,10 _____

Note: Jesus healed many people on the Sabbath day. Apart from the occasion cited above, another account is given in John 5:1-9. Jesus seemed to go out of His way to frustrate the religious leaders (Pro. 21:17) and point out their lack of love and compassion for the suffering. God is love (1John 4:7-10) and Jesus came to reveal the Father to mankind. Part of that revelation was to remove the burdensome view man had developed over the Sabbath. He wanted to show them that the *God of love has made a Sabbath of love*. Praise God! It is lawful to do acts of love and kindness and charity on the Sabbath day. The Lord of the Sabbath wants His beloved people to reflect His beautiful character to others on His holy day showing the Sabbath to be filled with the radiance of heaven.

2. God surely accepts well doing on the Sabbath, but what specific direction has He given to man regarding other Sabbath activities?

Leviticus 23:3 _____

Note: A "convocation" is an assembly of people. A holy convocation would be an assembly for the worship and praise to the great and Holy God, Jehovah.

A day of "rest" does not mean that we spend the Sabbath day in bed, or idle away the hours. Jesus rested after His work of creation, not because he was tired, but because He set us an example (Gen.2:2; Isa.40:28; 1Peter 2:21). He knew that man would work himself intemperately and become engrossed in worldly pursuits, so He made the Sabbath for man, that he may have a continual reminder of his Creator and that this world's interests are not to eclipse his vision of that Creator (Mark 2:27; Ex.20:8,11; 1 John 2:15-17). If we cannot lay aside our daily toil to keep the Sabbath, according to the commandment of God, how can we say that we love God more than this world? (Luke 6:46).

KEEPING THE SABBATH IS A STATE OF MIND

3. Where did God say He would place His law when He made His covenant with man?

Hebrews 8:10, compare 2Corinthians 3:3 _____

4. What is the attitude of one who no longer conforms to the world and lives to please Christ?

Romans 12:2 _____

These texts are but a review of principles well established in earlier lessons, namely that the man who lives for God is completely changed in his thinking. This world is no longer his primary interest, he is changed in a manner that is consistent with the law of God written upon the heart. Let us see a few examples to illustrate that keeping the law of God (which also includes the Sabbath) is a state of mind. It cannot be observed the way God requires, unless it comes from a willing heart of love and surrender. Only a holy people have the state of mind where they can obey to the point of keeping a holy Sabbath (1Peter 1:14-16; 2:9).

The appearance of compliance without the love of it is not acceptable to God (Mark 7:6-9). Thus God's people will be known by their loving and willing obedience sealed in their mind (Isaiah 8:16). Forced allegiance to God is an impossibility. God's people will never be identified by a pretentious, mechanical, or unwilling compliance to any of His laws. This conformity is known as hand service, as distinct from heart (mind) service.

Not breaking the Sabbath is just like gaining the victory over any other sin --- we ask God to give us the power to keep it holy. We also ask Him to put within us the love of the Sabbath, just as He has placed within us a love of Him who has redeemed us (John 6:44). The love for the Sabbath and for all of the Commandments of God will grow as we endeavour to implement them in our lives and this can only be done as we ask for and use the power of God, a power that He so freely bestows, to achieve it (Luke 11:9-13; James 1:5).

To illustrate the "state of mind" condition Christ is working to accomplish in His people (by writing His law into their hearts) notice the following few references:-

5. What is stated in the seventh commandment?

Exodus 20:14 _____

6. How did Christ indicate that adultery has its roots in the mind or thoughts and is not just confined to the literal act?

Matthew 5:27,28 _____

7. What is given in the sixth commandment?

Exodus 20:13 _____

8. Indicate what God describes as the deep seated condition, or state of mind, which is a transgression of the commandment "thou shalt not kill" ?

1John 3:14,15, compare 1John 2:9-11 _____

From these examples we see that when God puts His law into our hearts He is touching the very essence of our thinking, that part of us that reasons and makes decisions. He wants us to think like Jesus does, obeying even in the smallest thought, or in the face of the greatest opposition (Phil. 2:5,8).

9. What is the state of mind of those who observe and reverence the Sabbath of the fourth commandment, the way God intended?

Isaiah 58:13 _____

Compare John 14:15 _____

In contrast see v.24a _____

Note: To turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, is not an instruction to cease walking *in* it, but is an instruction to cease trampling *upon* it. To tread it under foot, is to have no regard for the Sabbath. Notice that this expression is used in a similar sense, when speaking of the person who has no regard for the sacrifice of the Son of God (Heb.10:29). God wants us to stop trampling upon His commandments and stop slighting His grace.

In brief, those who keep the Sabbath are doing God's things on the Sabbath, embracing -- words, actions and thoughts. They find the Sabbath a delight, it is holy and they see it as holy and they are pleased to honour their Creator on His holy day. They are not carrying out some worldly pursuit or interest. The cares of this life, the business of the workaday week is laid aside that full devotion and focus may be directed to the Creator on the day that commemorates creation.

The business, personal and non sacred interests associated with the preservation of this life, while they may not be a sin in themselves on any other day, if conducted, discussed, planned, or contemplated on the Sabbath, will constitute a violation of the fourth commandment and is a sin. Just as giving loose reign to the thoughts of adultery and hatred (not seeking God to cast them out) is a sin, so giving the mind to secular interests on the Sabbath is a sin.

10. In contrast to those who love the Sabbath, there is another group in the Church body who find the Sabbath an encumbrance. What is the state of mind of such false witnesses?

Amos 8:5 _____

Note: These pretentious, or false Christians, say they are Jews (spiritual Israel, lesson 22) but are not, they are liars and will not be a partaker of the kingdom of Christ (Revelation 3:9; 21:27; 1John 2:4).

REST FROM DAILY WORK

11. What does the fourth commandment say concerning God's requirements in respect to secular work on the Sabbath day?

Exodus 20:8-11 _____

Note: It is not just we, ourselves, who cease work on the Sabbath, but this commandment embraces our household, our guests, our employees and our business enterprises. Even the horse that ploughs the field has rest. This means that when we stop work to keep the Sabbath, those working for us and companies we may own, or invest in, also do no work for us on that day. They are to be free to observe the Sabbath according to their own conscience.

Concerning animals; some animals require certain attention on the Sabbath. For example: to not milk a cow or goat on one day would leave the animal in great distress and pain. The animal should be milked, but minimum labour should be expended. There should be no extra cleaning or maintenance, etcetera, this should wait for another day. The attention to the animals is to relieve suffering, remembering that the Sabbath is God's day and in helping the animals we are keeping within the guidelines, He has set, for true Sabbath observance. The proceeds from the takings on the Sabbath day, could not, in the true spirit of the holy Sabbath, be taken to swell our own account.

What Do We Do On The Sabbath ?

Further to Q.9 and Q.11, we may ask about the legitimacy of certain activities not related to earning our income. These activities may appear, to some people, not to come under the definition of the work that God says is to be discontinued during the Sabbath hours. There would be people who may even consider some of these activities to be recreational.

As an illustration only and not intended as a definitive list, consider the following:-- sport, hobbies, games, television, radio, playing our favourite secular music, visiting non Sabbath keepers (conversation cannot be maintained on Sabbath themes), working on the car, house maintenance, mowing the grass, cleaning the house, sewing, cooking (discussed in detail later), putting out the garbage, paying the telephone bill, buying food and any other non essential activity. These things cannot harmonise with a reverent and holy Sabbath observance wherein the mind is focused on the Creator only. While the right conducting of these activities is not a sin on any other day, on the Sabbath they may be the means Satan uses to lessen the sacredness of the Sabbath to us and divert our thoughts away from that which pertains to God. The things that are Caesar's give unto Caesar and the things that are God's give unto God (Matt.22:17-21). On the Sabbath, the whole mind should be given to the contemplation of our Creator and that which reveals Him (Isa.58:13). Thus we may draw nearer to Him on the Sabbath than on any other day.

What then do we do on the Sabbath? We may conduct and attend meetings where the Word of God is studied and discussed and associate with those who love the Lord Jesus Christ and delight to dwell on His sacred themes. We may spend time amidst the scenes of nature viewing the handiwork of God (from a creation perspective and not from an evolutionary understanding). This is refreshing to the soul and draws the heart out after Him who made all of these things. This activity is especially beneficial to children. The Sabbath is a family time, when father, mother, son and daughter, brother and sister come closer in the love and the atmosphere of

heaven, where each one draws from their Creator and reflect His divine image to the other.

Another uplifting activity that brings a great blessing on the Sabbath is to tell others of the Saviour. This may be done verbally, or through tracts and leaflets given out in our neighbourhood. Visiting the sick and showing kindness to the needy is a blessing to both the giver and the receiver. However, this does not mean helping our neighbour with a job, like repairing the fence or repairing his car, when that job could have been done some other time, or may wait until after the Sabbath has passed.

There is always the occasion of the emergency --- fire, storm damage that is threatening, sudden breakdown that would interrupt a harmonious Sabbath, spills, breakages and the like. The point to remember about deciding what is approved in the eyes of God as a Sabbath work, is to ask ourselves --- *can it be done on some other day, having due regard to proper hygiene and safety?* If the answer is yes --- *then leave it to some other day.* The next day after Sabbath is a perfectly good time and totally approved of God.

Trading

12. How does the Sabbath commandment affect buying and selling on the seventh day of the week?

Nehemiah 10:31; 13:15-22 _____

Note: This not only includes our normal trade associated with our livelihood and industry, but embraces even the purchase of food and domestic items. These purchases and trading should be done on another day.

13. How does God view buying and selling on the Sabbath day?

Nehemiah 13:18 _____

Note: We avoid all buying and selling during the hours of the Sabbath. However, should a crisis arise, such as an accident on the Sabbath, Christ would not deny the needed treatment for the unfortunate soul. Just as He healed on the Sabbath, so today, He would approve of making a purchase necessary for the relief of the suffering. It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath. God made the Sabbath for man, not man for the Sabbath (Mark 2:27).

Preparation

14. How does God introduce the commandment concerning the Sabbath day? Look at the first few words of the statement...

Exodus 20:8

Note: The instruction to "remember the Sabbath day" is to advise that adequate preparation be made, that work that may be avoided on the Sabbath does not become a pressing necessity for want of earlier preparation. For example: attending to animals, making secure against storm, purchasing adequate food and petrol, cleaning shoes, preparing clothing, cleaning the house, preparing food, preparing the car, like repairing the flat tyre that occurred earlier in the week, etcetera.

15. Which day of the week is designated as the "preparation day"?

Luke 23:54-56

Note: This passage simply states that the "preparation day" was followed by the Sabbath. Hence the sixth day of the week, Friday, is the preparation day. Notice that some of the followers of Jesus made preparation for His burial on the day before the Sabbath, then, after the Sabbath, returned to complete the work. Also note that Jesus' followers considered the hours of the Sabbath to be sacred and would not, on that day, prepare for burial the body of the Lord of the Sabbath.

16. When is the right time to make needed preparation of food to be used on the Sabbath?

Exodus 16:22-26

Note: To seethe is to boil. Cooking may be done on the preparation day before Sabbath and kept over to be eaten the next day. God has promised that it will not spoil (v.24) if properly stored. During the winter when hot food is beneficial, the previously prepared food may be heated, but the bulk of cooking preparations, the Lord says, are to be done outside of the Sabbath hours. This will involve the minimum of labour on the Sabbath. What a blessing, the whole household is free to enjoy the rest and sacredness of God's holy day.

17. Further to the issue of cooking, what other injunction has the Lord given to His people concerning the Sabbath?

Exodus 35:3

Note: How are we to understand this counsel regarding the prohibition on the lighting of a fire? God is all compassion and desires us to delight in the Sabbath, this would be hard to do if the weather was cold and there was no fire. The people would be wishing the Sabbath over, that a warm fire may be lit. Would God deny His people warmth on the Sabbath? He also counsels us to supply food and warmth to the needy; in some cases a fire may be used for this (James 2:15,16; 1 John 3:17,18; Isaiah 58:7-9). Would He do less than this for His saints on the Sabbath? The pillar of fire that followed the Israelites as they wandered through the wilderness provided warmth and light at night and became a cloud to shield them from the heat of the sun during the day including on the Sabbath (Exodus 13:21,22; Isaiah 4:5,6).

God is also more willing to give good gifts to His children than earthly parents are willing to give good things to their children (Matt. 7:11; Job 4:17). God would not have His people despise the Sabbath, feeling cold because of the weather and wanting the Sabbath to end so they may light a fire. Let them have a fire and enjoy the comfort and serenity of the Sabbath as they give thanks and praise God.

In view of His dual regard for the welfare of His children and the sacredness of the Sabbath, God's counsel to not light a fire on the Sabbath, can only be understood to be a prohibition on the use of fire (or of power) for some activity not approved for the Sabbath.

If we are concerned about the use of electrical power on the Sabbath, because the power employees are paid on the Sabbath, consider that if the whole area serviced by the power industry were Sabbath keepers the power stations would still be running seven days a week. They, like other essential services, are required all the time. The Sabbath becomes an issue when that power is used for the wrong purpose, such as performing non-Sabbath related work. This of course is the point to be made with the use of fire on the Sabbath. For a universal Sabbath keeping community, the power stations output would be at a minimum, staffing would be minimal and a maintenance roster could be drawn up with due regard for the Sabbath.

However, the reality is our community is such that true Sabbath observance is in the extreme minority and the power stations are operating at normal industrial output on the Sabbath. As a Sabbath keeper, if I wish to use the power on the Sabbath, the guidelines have been given in the counsel concerning the kindling of a fire on the Sabbath.

Also to be considered, as a power user on the Sabbath, am I contributing to the work of another person on the Sabbath, thus causing that person to break the Sabbath? The power I use on the Sabbath is the power I would use even if the power industry kept the Sabbath. Hence, as a power user on the Sabbath I am not requiring the worker, on the Sabbath, to do any more than he would do had he kept the Sabbath. How the power workers and their administration manage the Sabbath issue at their end is something for which they personally will be accountable.

18. A man was gathering sticks on the Sabbath, presumably to light a fire. How was this act seen by God?

Numbers 15:32-36 _____

Note: Notice the previous two verses 30 and 31 -- the man that does presumptuously shall be cut off from the people of God. To do presumptuously is to take it upon oneself to follow one's own self will and go against the Commandment of God, with the obvious result. God could not leave that act of defiance unchecked. He would not have denied the man a fire on the Sabbath had it been needful.

If we expect that a fire may be needed on the Sabbath, all wood cutting, stacking and preparation should be completed *before* the Sabbath. To collect or cut the wood on the Sabbath, would be a violation of the Commandment. This kind of preparation is comprehended in the Commandment to remember the Sabbath day. However, this does not exclude giving aid in an *emergency for the help of others*.

Bearing Burdens On The Sabbath

19. What did Christ say concerning the carrying of a load on the Sabbath day?

Jeremiah 17:21,22 _____

Note: The next point of concern will now surely be --- how heavy is a burden? Consider the following question...

20. Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath. What then did He instruct the man to do?

John 5:8,9; Matthew 9:6 _____

Note: After Jesus healed the man, he was told to carry his bed (mat) home. At this time such burden bearing was acceptable. But suppose that on the following Sabbath the same man decided to rearrange his room and so carried his bed from one corner to the other. A much

shorter distance to be sure, but completely unnecessary. The man would have broken the Sabbath.

We hasten to add, that it would be very unlikely that the man would break the Sabbath, as his heart would be overflowing with love, appreciation, thanks and praise to the God of heaven who gave him new life. He would want to please his Saviour by observing the words of Jesus (John 14:15).

FELLOWSHIP AND WORSHIP

21. What is part of the blessing to be gained in meeting with the holy convocation?

Hebrews 10:24,25 _____
 Acts 13:14-16, 42,44 _____

Note: One of the joys that delights the Christian is to hear the Word of God preached and taught and to be able to give a personal testimony of their own experience that others may be admonished to seek the Lord (Heb.2:12; Psalm 22:22; 119:97-105).

22. What was Paul's usual worship activity on the Sabbath?

Acts 17:2-3; 18:4 _____

Note: Paul entered the synagogue to teach the people of salvation through the crucified Messiah. It was not out of loyalty to the Jewish faith that he did this, for Judaism was now superseded by the "Lamb of God" to which all of the Jewish rites and services pointed. Notwithstanding, the Jews could have been the evangelists of the world, telling others of the wonderful Saviour in Jesus.

23. When we enter the place of worship, what should be our attitude?

Leviticus 19:30; 26:2 _____
 Compare: Habakkuk 2:20 _____

Note: The name of God is Holy and Reverend, for He is a GREAT GOD and a GREAT KING (Psalm 111:9; Psalm 95:3).

24. When we partake of the worship of the Great and Mighty God, what should be the intent of the heart?

Psalm 95:1-7 _____

2Chronicles 7:14-22, notice v.14 _____

James 4:10 _____

Note: Entering into the worship of the wonderful God of all creation is to be approached with awe and reverence, with a sense of the MAJESTY of Him with whom we have to do (Heb.4:13). God will not be trifled with (Jeremiah 15:6,7; Psalm 81:11-14; 2Chronicles 15:2).

If we seek Him with all the heart He has promised that we shall find Him (Jeremiah 29:12-14). And what a glorious blessing it is. To find Christ is to know the working of God upon every aspect of our life, it is to be acquainted with God, to know Him (Jeremiah 9:23,24). So imbued with the indwelling of Jesus we worship the Father in the manner that pleases Him (Ephesians 1:17-19; John 4:23,24; 14:6).

A home Church, held in a private home, where a group of *believers* may assemble to worship and praise God, is no less the sanctuary of the Lord than any other place of worship, and may be more so.

Where two or three are gathered together in the name of Christ He is there in the midst of them (Matt.18:20), for the presence of Christ alone constitutes His Church (review lesson 22 and 23, Q.19). The home church meeting should be conducted with the same degree of reverence as the Lord requires in every service dedicated to Him.

25. What did Jesus usually do on the Sabbath day?

Luke 4:15-19 _____

Note: Paul followed the example of his Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. As Christ's custom was to worship on the Sabbath, so Paul (and all of the faithful disciples of Jesus) did as Jesus did.

While Jesus worshipped at the synagogue on the Sabbath, there came a time when He could no longer remain in the midst of the corruption of apostate Jewry and He, with His disciples, withdrew into another place, away from the established system (Jn.11:54; 2Cor.6:14-7:1).

Paul also faced the same dilemma and with his fellow believers, moved away from the synagogues and from those who rejected and opposed the straight teachings of the Gospel (Acts 19:8-11). He and his company then worshipped Jesus in a home Church (Acts.18:4-7). Paul and his companions were not a part of the mainstream Church and though their sanctuary was the home of a believer, God demonstrated His acceptance of the praise offered to Him from this faithful home Church, when He wrought special miracles through His obedient servant, Paul (Acts 19:11,12).

26. When Jesus spoke to the woman of Samaria, how did He express that His faithful followers will not be worshipping from the traditional establishments?

John 4:19-24, notice vv.20,21 _____

Note: "Mountain" and "Jerusalem" are terms referring to the place of worship. God's faithful Church, spiritual Israel, is comprised of those who live up to all the light they have. They worship Him in spirit and truth, therefore they are not persuaded by the traditions of men found in the "Mountains" and "Jeruselems" of a man made religion. In order to keep the commandments of God it may be necessary to place ourselves in a position where we are free to keep them without the dissuasion of men (Deut.4:28,29; 2Cor.6:14-18). We are not saved because we belong to a certain church, but because we have covenanted with God to obey and serve Him in truth (John 4:23,24). This covenant is made available by the blood of the Son of God, which blood has paid for our sin and cleansed us from all unrighteousness (1John 1:7,9).

THE HOURS OF THE SABBATH

27. What hours of the day embrace the Sabbath?

Leviticus 23:32 _____

28. What do we understand by the term "even to even"?

Mark 1:32 _____

Note: From this description it can be seen that the Sabbath begins at sunset on Friday evening and concludes at sunset on Sabbath (Saturday) evening.

The use of midnight as the dividing point between the days was introduced to simplify the recording of events, particularly when those events took place close to the point of transition between the days. While this greatly assisted those in the business and legal world there is no reason that it should impact on the start and finish times for the Sabbath as given in Scripture.

29. When Christ made the earth, how did He define the days?

Genesis 1:5 _____

Note: A day consisted of a dark part and a light part, the dark portion being first, followed by the light portion, thus giving rise to the term -- "the evening and the morning were the day". A day is determined by one rotation of the earth, a period of twenty-four hours.

Each day of the creation week is not some indeterminate period of time of many years long. If it were, then when God blessed that first Sabbath day, what did He bless? The seventh day Sabbath loses all meaning under such a concept. The attempt to blend evolution and creation by describing the days of creation as long periods of time is totally incongruous, they just do not agree. Christ literally spoke the worlds into existence in a moment of time (Gen. 1:3,6,9,11,14,20,24; Ps. 33:6-9). To answer the question concerning the light before the sun was created, this was the light from Christ Himself (Rev. 21:23).

THE INVOCATION

As the Sabbath approaches toward sunset on Friday evening, let us lay aside the thoughts of the week. There is a great blessing when father, mother and children gather in the family home to read a portion of the Sacred Writings, sing hymns of praise and kneel in prayer to invoke the presence

of God in their home as they welcome in the Sabbath. Such an invitation Jesus cannot refuse. The family circle under the protecting arms of Jesus is a sacred and holy habitation and an extension of the courts of heaven.

THE BENEDICTION

At the close of the Sabbath, when the sun has set, again gather the little band of worshippers together to thank our dear Father God for the blessings received on the Sabbath, to ask His benediction and seek his presence and guidance in the new week that lies ahead (Numbers 6:23-27).

THE BLESSING

30. What blessing has God placed in the Sabbath for the obedient?

Isaiah 58:14 _____

Note: The heritage of Jacob is the promise of eternal life given to every soul counted as the seed of Abraham (Mic.7:18-20 lesson 22).

31. The Sabbath was brought out of Eden to be observed in the fallen world. What will be a part of the life of the redeemed in Eden restored?

Isaiah 66:22,23, compare Micah 4:8 _____

TAKE COURAGE DEAR CHILD OF GOD

All who would depart from evil make themselves a prey (Isa.59:15). When

you decide to keep the Sabbath of Jesus Christ, you can be sure that Satan will try to make it as awkward and as distasteful as possible; but do not be discouraged, call upon God for help as you would call upon Him to help you to keep any of the other Commandments. There may be a testing time to establish your sincerity, determination and faith in God, but hold to what you have learned to be right and the reward will be yours. It is our prayer that the Lord of the Sabbath be with you and bless you as you worship Him on the *only* day He calls His own. See Romans 8:35-39.

God loves me and wants me to come to know Him. He encourages me, stop trampling upon the Sabbath, stop doing your pleasures on My holy Day and call the Sabbath a delight.

Give the Sabbath its due regard as honourable and the holy of the Lord, thus honouring Him as Creator. I do this by doing His things and not doing the things, or speaking the words that are of an earthly nature or are of the flesh.

Thus by so keeping the Sabbath holy He promises my experience with Him will be lifted and be the delight I am really looking for. My heavenly Father says, He will exalt me in the earth and give me the heritage of Jacob. That heritage is eternal life in His paradise home. There, He and I will live forever keeping the Sabbath I've learned to love and delight in here.

Isaiah 58:13,14, 66:22,23

