

MINISTUDY Remember the Sabbath Day

Most churches of modern Christianity envision Sunday as having replaced the biblical seventh day Sabbath. They believe that the Fourth Commandment is no longer obligatory upon Christians today. Then there are those who feel it is not necessary to keep any specific day at all. To them, every day is a "spiritual" Sabbath.

Let's look directly into the Bible for the truth about God's Sabbath.

1. When, how and by whom was the Sabbath "made"? Gen. 2:1-3; Mark 2:28.

Jesus Christ is the Lord of the Sabbath because He made it! Christ, as other scriptures prove conclusively, was the Lord God of the Old Testament era and the very Creator of all things.

Christ created the Sabbath by the act of resting on the seventh day of creation week. He put His divine favor upon and set apart for a special use and purpose a 24-hour period of time that was to occur once every seven days following that first Sabbath.

2. For whom did Jesus say the Sabbath was specifically made? Mark 2:27,

"The Sabbath was made for man," declared Jesus. It was set apart at creation for the benefit of the whole human race which would descend from Adam.

3. How did Christ intend the Sabbath to serve man's needs? Ex. 20:8-11; Deut. 5: f2-15.

Notice that God made the seventh day of the week holy - and He commands us to keep it that way. The Sabbath, then, is holy time. And it was made to be a great blessing for all humanity.

The word Sabbath means rest in the original Hebrew. Simple physical and mental rest and refreshment after a grueling work week is an obvious reason for the Sabbath. Human beings need periodic rest and deliverance from the trials and troubles that seem to result from just living.

But the true meaning and purpose of the Sabbath goes far beyond physical, mental and perhaps even emotional respite. For the seventh day Sabbath is inextricably interwoven into God's transcendent purpose for creating man.

Modern man desperately needs this period of time in which to have spiritual contact with God - time in which to think more about God, to worship Him (both in private and in fellowship with others), to meditate upon man's place in the universe - to grasp more fully God's purpose for his existence.

4. Was the observance of the Sabbath day to be a special sign of identification between God and His people Israel? Ex. 31:12-17. Did God also make Sabbath observance a separate covenant with His people? Verse 16.

In order that Israel would especially remember that the eternal God is the Creator, Sustainer and Supreme Ruler over all His creation, God singled out Sabbath observance as the one great sign by which they could always be reminded of who He is and who they were. It was the one law of God that would make Israel especially stand out from all the other nations.

And so God doubly commanded Sabbath observance by making it a separate covenant with His people Israel. (The Sabbath was already one of the Ten Commandments, which were given to Moses shortly before when the old covenant was ratified.) It was to be an

everlasting covenant, which would identify the people of God of all generations, including "spiritual Israel" today - the true Church of God. Notice further:

5. Doesn't the Bible plainly reveal that a real Christian is one who has become a spiritual Israelite - one of Abraham's "seed" through Jesus Christ? Gal. 3:28-29; Rom. 4:16; 9:4.

God made the special Sabbath covenant with Abraham's physical seed. It was to be obeyed throughout their generations. Today, all Spiritbegotten Christians have become Abraham's spiritual seed and are therefore under the same obligation to keep the Sabbath day!

6. Was Jesus Christ a Sabbath keeper? Luke 4:16, 31.

Jesus regularly attended church services on the Sabbath day "as His custom was." Thus he fulfilled His own command to convoke for worship services every Sabbath day (Lev. 23:3). This is the day He would obviously observe since He is the One who originally- made the Sabbath and ordained that it be kept holy!

T- is there biblical evidence that the early New Testament church also observed the Sabbath? Acts 13:13-15, 42-44; 14:1; 17:1-2; 18:1-11_

9. Was it Paul's "manner"(Acts 17:2), even as it was Christ's custom (Luke 4:16), to keep the Sabbath because he felt like it, or because Jesus Christ dwelt in him? Gat. 2:20. does Christ's will remain the same forever? Heb. 13:8.

It is quite plain that the apostle Paul observed the seventh-day Sabbath. And if Christ lives His life in us today through the Holy Spirit as He did in Paul, then we will also be keeping the same day Jesus and Paul kept.

9. What are all Christians warned in Hebrews 3:8-13? Was rebellion, especially Sabbath breaking, the reason God prevented those ancient Israelites from entering His "rest"? Ezek. 20:12-13, 15-16.

Because Israel had become rebellious and polluted .. sabbaths, He did not allow t e generation that came out of Es .t to enter the promised land - a symbolic type of the Kingdom of God. Nevertheless those Israelites under Moses were headed toward the ro
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God's Spirit- begotten children today are aiming at the goal of entering into God's Kingdom.

The word rest in Hebrews 3:11 is translated from the Greek katapausin and is defined as rest or place of rest. It denoted for ancient Israel "rest" from the rigors of the wilderness by entering the promised land (notice Joshua 1:13). This is a type of the Christian's spiritual "rest" - being born into the Kingdom of God!

10. Was it primarily because of their unbelief - lack of faith - that the Israelites disobeyed and therefore were prevented from entering God's "rest" for them - the land of Palestine? Heb. 3:19; 4:1.2.

Because the Israelites disbelieved God and therefore lacked faith in Him, they "hardened their hearts." They went on to profane God's Sabbaths when He made that the very testing point ("that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no" - Ex. 16:4); therefore God said of that generation, "They shall not enter into my rest" (Heb. 3:11).

And none but faithful Joshua and Caleb of that generation did enter the promised land. But the children born along the way during the 40 years did enter with them.

11. But if New Testament Christians believe and obey God, may they enter their "rest" - eternal "rest" in God's Kingdom? Heb. 4:3, first nine words.

The equation is clear: True belief in God equals active obedience. If a person truly believes God's Word, he will be obeying it!

12. Will true Christians be keeping God's weekly Sabbath day as a symbol of their future "rest" in God's Kingdom? Heb. 4:9.

The vital meaning of this verse has been obscured by the King James rendering of the word rest. Everywhere else in chapters 3 and 4 of the epistle to the Hebrews, the English word rest is translated from the Greek word katapausin. However, in verse 9 of chapter 4, rest is translated from the Greek sabbatismos, meaning literally (as most Bible margins show) keeping of a Sabbath. Correctly rendered, this verse reads: "There remaineth therefore the keeping of the Sabbath to the people of God."

So, because of the future "rest" (katapausin) - the Kingdom of God - spiritual Israel is to enter, there remains for them a sabbatismos - the keeping of the Sabbath day. This means that Christians will enter the future "rest" of God's Kingdom even as they now keep the weekly seventh-day Sabbath, which looks forward to it!

13. What further encouragement are Christians given about entering God's eternal "rest"? Heb. 4:10-11 - Where may they go for the help needed to obey God? Verses 14-16.

God's seventh-day Sabbath is not to be treated lightly or forgotten, for the Sabbath is both a memorial and a shadow. It is a memorial of creation and a foreshadow of the coming eternal "rest" that Spirit-begotten Christians will enter when born into God's eternal Family.

14. Did God command the entire nation of Israel to assemble ("convoke") on the Sabbath? Lev. 23:3; Num. 28:25. What are New Testament Christians admonished regarding the assembling of themselves? Heb. 10:25-26.

As early New Testament Christians assembled together on the Sabbath day, likewise God's Church in this age assembles for worship services on God's holy Sabbath. The Worldwide Church of God has congregations all over the world. Every Sabbath, God's people meet to receive spiritual instruction and inspiration from the Word of God as expounded by the ministry of His Church (Eph. 4:11-13). If you would like more information about these Sabbath services, then write to our Good News office closest to you. (See inside front cover for the addresses.)

Also, for an in-depth study of God's Sabbath, write for the free booklet, Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?

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