

## 18.02.2012 LORD OF THE SABBATH

***And He (Jesus) said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath." Mark 2:27, 28 (also Matt 12:8, Luke 6:5)***

The week our study is on the Sabbath.

1. **The Sabbath day was instituted on planet earth at Creation, before the Fall of Man.**
2. **The Sabbath Day is God's seventh day**

*Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Genesis 2:1, 2*

Man was created on the 6<sup>th</sup> day. So the 7<sup>th</sup> day of Creation was man's first full day.

3. **The Sabbath Day is a sanctified day; a holy day. It is God's holy day (see Isaiah 58:13).**

The word 'Sabbath' for the seventh day is first used in Exodus 16:23. It is nearly always called the 'Holy Sabbath'. (See Exodus 20:8, 31:14, 15; 35:2, Lev 23:3, Deut 5:12, Isa 58:13, Nehemiah 9:14, Jeremiah 17:22, 24).

***"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy."***

**God is a holy God. His day, the Sabbath day, He declares holy. And He calls His people to be a holy people who worship Him on His holy day. Only the holy can keep God's Sabbath holy.**

4. **The Sabbath is a Day to be perpetually remembered.**

The Sabbath is a sign to mankind of the perfect work of God. He prepared a perfect creation for mankind. When man fell into sin, God did not leave him to eternal death. No, He had prepared a perfect salvation for man. Before sin, the Sabbath was a sign of God, the perfect Creator. After the Fall, the Sabbath is a sign not only of God the Creator, but of God the perfect Redeemer.

***'Surely 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 to you... Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever; for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed.'*** Exodus 31:13-17

5. **The Sabbath is a day of Rest.**

*Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made. Genesis 2:3*

Man is called to rest on the Sabbath as a sign that he is resting in the perfect work of God on his behalf. He physically rests on the Sabbath day as a witness to the world that he has 'rest for his soul' Matthew 11:28-30. He rests as a celebration of the finished work of God's creation and Christ's salvation every Sabbath. And then, throughout the remainder of the week, he claims the salvation of God daily: the blood and intercession of Christ, the gift of the in-dwelling Spirit to make salvation real in his experience.

### **The Sabbath Rest: Creation**

***Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labour 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 day and hallowed it. Exodus 20:8-11***

**Rest before Sin.** Adam and Eve were created on the 6<sup>th</sup> day. At the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> day, God looked upon His creation and declared it 'very good'. On the 7<sup>th</sup> day, God rested (as a sign that He had completed a perfect creation). God invited Adam and Eve to rest with Him.

The 7<sup>th</sup> day was actually Adam and Eve's FIRST day. So the first thing Adam and Eve did after they were created was to rest. This was a sign that they were resting in the finished perfect work of God, and that they could do nothing to add to the perfection of God's work.

***Note the timeline for God: God works and then rests.***

***Note the timeline for Man: Man first rests in the finished work of God and then goes forth rested and refreshed to work.***

Every Sabbath is a celebration of the fact that God is our Creator, that He knows each of us personally (Psalm 139). It is a celebration of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of mankind.

### **The Sabbath Rest: Salvation (Redemption and Restoration to Holiness)**

***Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God... And remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day. Deuteronomy 5:12-15***

After the entrance of sin, mankind lost its rest in God. The consequence of sin was labour and restlessness. Rest is closely allied to peace. It is when we have true peace, the peace of God, that we can have rest for spirit, mind and body. When we live in a relationship with God, we have rest (see Exodus 33:14). Separation from God leads to a loss of peace, and therefore, to a life of restlessness.

Psalm 38:3 is an example of the above. David has sinned and is here describing the heavy burden of his sin. The word 'rest' here also has the meaning of health and peace. Like David, a sinner who is aware of his guilt, loses peace, rest and health. *'There is no soundness in my flesh because of Your anger, nor any rest (health, peace) in my bones because of my sin.'*

**God's solution to the problem of sin – Redemption and Restoration.**

***"Come unto Me, all you who labour 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."***Matthew 11:28

***There remains therefore a rest to the people of God...***

The redemption that has been provided for mankind in Christ Jesus is a complete redemption. When He died on the Cross, He said, 'It is finished'. He had completed a perfect redemption. He rested in the tomb on the Sabbath following His work of redemption as a sign that He had finished a perfect work. He calls all mankind to remember and rest in the finished work of God for our redemption.

So, despite the Fall, God still calls mankind to rest. **The rest Christ offers is rest for our souls.** Christ is telling us that He has taken away the curse of sin – He calls us to accept Him as Saviour, and in doing so, find rest for our souls. **Note the emphasis; He wants us to have rest for our souls, not just physical rest. This is the true Sabbath rest, resting in the finished work of God.**

We are called to believe that God has completed a perfect redemption in His Son, Christ Jesus. And we are called to accept this perfect Gift in Christ Jesus.

**What about Work?**

***For he who has entered God's rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His.***  
**Hebrews 4:10**

The Jews were concerned about work. And who could blame them? They knew that part of the curse of sin was that man had to toil and work physically by the sweat of his brow. It was but a small step (but a massively wrong step) for them to think that they had to work in the life of the spirit, their spiritual life. So they asked Jesus, *'What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?'*

And Jesus' answer to them seems beyond belief even today, *'This is the work of God - that you believe on Him whom He hath sent'.* John 6:28, 29

'What?' you can hear the Jews thinking, 'Only believe? That can't be true.'

But it *is* true. That is the only work we are called to do. When we by faith accept Christ Jesus as our personal Saviour, we are accepting:

1. That He has pardoned all our sins.
2. That 'in Christ' we are declared righteous (justification – Rom 3:24).
3. That 'in Christ' we are made righteous (sanctification – Acts 26:18, Ezekiel 20:12).

4. That 'In Christ' we are glorified (sitting in heavenly places in Christ Jesus – Ephesians 2:6)

As we daily renew our relationship with Christ, we are making it possible for the in-dwelling Holy Spirit to produce in our lives the very righteousness of God (1 Thessalonians 5:23, 24; Galatians 5:22, 23).

**Every Sabbath is a celebration of the absolute assurance of salvation to all who believe in the Name of the Son of God.**

*And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God. 1 John 5:11-13*

**There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His. Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience. Hebrews 4:9-11**

### **The Sabbath in the Ten Commandments**

Why is the Sabbath the most important of the 10 commandments?

**It is the most important of the commandments because in it we find the method of keeping all God's commandments.** We do not work to keep the commandments, because we recognise that it is impossible of ourselves to perfectly keep any of God's requirements. *'Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? No one.'* Job 14:4.

No, we follow the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment and rest in God; we allow the Holy Spirit to produce the perfect righteousness of God in our lives. That is why Paul says in *Hebrews 4:9-11* *'There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His. Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience'*.

### **The Sabbath is for all Mankind**

*Thus says the LORD:*

*"Keep justice, and do righteousness, for My salvation is about to come,  
And My righteousness to be revealed.*

*Blessed is the man who does this, and the son of man who lays hold on it;*

*Who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, and keeps his hand from doing any evil."*

***Do not let the son of the foreigner who has joined himself to the LORD speak, saying,***

***"The LORD has utterly separated me from His people";***

***Nor let the eunuch say, "Here I am, a dry tree."***

***For thus says the LORD: "To the eunuchs who keep My Sabbaths, and choose what pleases Me, and hold fast My covenant, even to them I will give in My house and within My walls a place and a name better than that of sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off.***

***"Also the sons of the foreigner who join themselves to the LORD, to serve Him,  
And to love the name of the LORD, to be His servants—***

***Everyone who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, and holds fast My covenant—***

***Even them I will bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on My altar; For My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations."***

### **The Perils of Profaning the Sabbath**

God lays out to us, so that can be no doubt, the consequences of disobeying His commandments. Not because He is an arbitrary God, but because He knows that following His will gives us abundant life here on earth.

### **Refusing to Rest (the physical workaholic)**

The Sabbath does not bring us just spiritual blessings. The physical blessing of pausing weekly from work and having time to spend privately with God, with family and with other believers brings us physical, mental and social blessings.

The Bible appears to be very particular about our taking time to rest and stopping our daily round of physical work (Exodus 16:23-29, Exodus 20:8-11, Amos 8:5). But this is for our benefit and it is to be shared with our entire household.

Some use the argument that God is mainly interested in our spiritual state i.e. if we are resting in Him, it is not so necessary to abstain from physical work.

While it is true that there must be a spiritual keeping of the Sabbath, nevertheless, we must do all that God commands, and this includes physical rest.

Another issue in unbelief is that we often work on the Sabbath because we do not believe in the power of God to keep us financially if we refuse to take a job that requires Sabbath work. We do not believe the promise, 'them that honour Me, I will honour' (1 Samuel 2:30).

If we are in service professions like the health professions that require service to others even on the Sabbath, we need to search our hearts that we are not making this an excuse to work on the Sabbath day.

**Another issue in physical abstinence from work is that it is a WITNESS to the world.** You may keep the Sabbath in your heart and no-one may know about it. But if your colleagues see you not coming in to work on the Sabbath and going to God's house to worship Him on the Sabbath, you are witnessing to them that you worship a God who you believe is worthy of worship; a God who is your Creator, Redeemer and Friend.

### **Refusing God's Rest (the spiritual workaholic)**

***"Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion." Psalm 95:7***

Some of the best Sabbath keepers in Israel never entered into God's rest. They rested according to the letter of the Sabbath commandment; no-one worked in their homes, not even the servants or the livestock. Regarding zeal for the Sabbath day, that it be kept holy, no one could fault them.

But Paul in Hebrews 3 and 4, tells us that they never really kept the Sabbath as God wanted them to keep it. God wanted them to keep it in the light of the gospel of Christ. He wanted them to enter

into His rest, which was primarily a spiritual rest. But they were so busy working for their salvation that they refused to believe the good news of the Saviour who was to come and give them rest.

*For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it. Hebrews 4:2*

They were not interested in spiritual blessings as much as they were in the physical blessings of Canaan – the land of milk and honey and wheat and grapes. They did not accept that their true inheritance was Christ. By a life of entire dependence on Him, He would be able to do marvellous things for them and in them, which would result in the nations surrounding them being brought to a knowledge of God.

How is it with you today? Are you resting joyfully in Christ, or wearily working out your own salvation? Have you chosen the Rest of God or have you refused it? Your decision has eternal consequences – eternal life or eternal death. Let us therefore, be diligent to enter into God's rest. Hebrews 4:11

### **The Hypocrisy of External Religion**

Isaiah 58 is a chapter that warns us of the perils of external religion without a heart-relationship with God. In contrast, among the many consequences of turning to God and executing mercy and justice, is a return to true Sabbath-keeping.

***“ If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on My holy day,  
And call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of the LORD honourable,  
And shall honour Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure,  
Nor speaking your own words;  
Then you shall delight yourself in the LORD;  
And I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth,  
And feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father.  
The mouth of the LORD has spoken.” Isaiah 58:13, 14***

### **Celebrating the Sabbath as a Community of the Redeemed**

While the experience of entering into God's rest is primarily a personal experience between me and my God, it is also important to share that experience with fellow-believers and praise and worship God together for His perfect work for us and in us.

In this, we have the great example of Christ Himself, who went to synagogue every Sabbath 'as His custom was' Luke 4:16. There are those who think that the coming of Christ has exempted us from worshipping together on the Sabbath day, but Paul is very clear in Hebrews 10:23-25:

***‘Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching’.***

## **The Sabbath and the New Covenant**

*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... this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. **For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.**"*

*Behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; a King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely; now this is His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. Jeremiah 23:5, 6; 33:16*

*I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. **I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.** Ezekiel 36:25-27*

God has made an unconditional covenant with the faithful; both Jew and Gentile (see Isaiah 56:4-7). Because of the death and resurrection of His Son Christ Jesus, all who believe in Him have new life, new hearts, a new desire for holiness and God Himself will make us holy through the work of the Spirit in our lives (Romans 4:5).

**The Sabbath is therefore a sign and celebration of the New Covenant; of the righteousness of God which is made available to us by faith in Christ Jesus.** No-one who refuses the gift of God in Christ Jesus can call himself holy. But all who accept Christ Jesus are declared holy 'in Him' and their desire is to allow the Holy Spirit to make that holiness real in their lives.

## **The Sabbath and the time of the End**

*Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth, to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water." Revelation 14:6, 7*

In the light of the end-time that we live in, we are particularly called to worship God and reveal to the entire world that He is worthy of worship. In an hour when men blasphemously judge God, we are called to declare our loyalty to Him, to express our worship publicly, to declare His gospel and character to the world by our testimony; the testimony of the spoken word and the witness of the Spirit-filled life. We are called to acknowledge Him as our Creator, the Giver of all life. And as redeemed humankind, we are called to testify that He is indeed the Saviour of the world. All this we can do as faithful and loyal witnesses to God. In doing so, we are reflecting on earth the worship God receives in heaven – see Revelation 4:8, 11 and 5:9-14.

**The keeping of God's Sabbath is our testimony to the world that we worship a God who is worthy.**

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**Reflection for Parents, Teachers, Church leaders and Ministers:**

In my role as leader, teacher, parent, am I conveying the beauty of the Sabbath doctrine, the holiness of the Sabbath and the joy of the Sabbath to the children God has given me and to the members of the church that I teach and minister to?

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