

The Doctrine of the Sabbath (2)

Listed Scriptures

Ex 16; Neh 13; Mt 11:28-30; Acts 16; Heb 3-4

Lesson Aim

- 1) To explore the commandment of the Sabbath and its implications
- 2) To encourage the students to observe God's holy day

Memory Verse

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

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

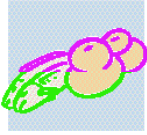
Romans 14-1 Corinthians 2

Note to teachers: This quarter's lessons do not contain the Bible Background section since they pertain more to the history of our church.

W A R M U P



What is the difference between Sabbath and Sabbath rests? Do we know the blessings and curses associated with this day? How do we appropriately observe the Sabbath when we go on a family vacation and there's no church around? In today's lesson, we will not only learn about the origin of the Sabbath, but also discuss the importance and significance of observing this hallowed day.



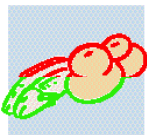
Part 1

The Origin of the Sabbath

The Sabbath was established when the world was created. After creating the world in six days, God “blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made” (Gen 2:3). Thus, we know that the Sabbath day is not only the seventh day, but also a blessed and holy day.

After the Israelites were led out of Egypt, God once again reminded His people to observe the Sabbath (Ex 16:14-29). In the wilderness, the Lord enforced the Sabbath rest by withholding manna on that day. He commanded His people, “See! For the LORD has given you the Sabbath; therefore he gives you on the sixth day bread for two days. Let every man remain in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day” (Ex 16:29).

Finally, Sabbath was set into stone when God commanded it as one of the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai. There, the LORD commanded, “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” (Ex 20:8-10). God demanded a complete rest for everyone, regardless of their gender or social status. No one, including animals, could work because “in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth...and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it” (Ex 20:11).



Part 2

The Purpose of the Sabbath

In the Old Testament, the Sabbath was a day to rest from all work in order to commemorate God’s creation, His deliverance and His covenant. The Sabbath reminded the Israelites of God’s mercy and grace in giving life and rescuing them from Egypt (Deut 5:14). It was a sign of a perpetual covenant between God and the children of Israel (Ex 31:12-17). It was also a day of sanctification and separation from the world. Just as God says in Ezekiel, “I gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between them and Me, that they might know that I am the LORD who sanctifies (Ezek 20:12).

Starting from the New Testament, the meaning of the Sabbath was taken to a higher level. By declaring, “the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath” (Mk 2:27), Jesus Christ showed the Sabbath not only as God’s holy day, but also as a gift of rest from the Creator. Moreover, instead of remembering God’s physical deliverance of the Israelites, we now commemorate God’s spiritual deliverance from the bondage of sin (Jn 8:34; Rom 8:2). Most importantly, because Jesus Christ died for our sins, we can now be sanctified and enter the kingdom of heaven through Him. Thus, the Sabbath day now prefigures the eternal days of rest to come. As Hebrews 4:9-10 tells us, “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.” Therefore, we keep the promise of eternal rest in mind when we observe the holy day of God.



Part 3

Sabbath Blessings and Curses

Since the Sabbath is a day set apart by God, those who observe it will be blessed (Gen 2:3). Isaiah tells us, “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 honorable... then you shall delight yourself in the LORD; And I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the hearth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father” (Isa 58:13-14).

The Bible also tells us that disaster will come upon those who disregard the Sabbath. The Lord Himself warned, “But if you will not heed Me to hallow the Sabbath day, such as not carrying a burden when entering the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day, then I will kindle a fire in its gates, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched” (Jer 17:27). Because the Israelites failed to keep the Sabbath, Jerusalem was left desolate for 70 years (2 Chron 36:17-21) and the Israelites were taken captive to Babylon (Neh 13:15-18; Jer 17:19-23).



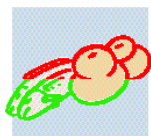
Part 4

Sabbath Under Law vs Sabbath Under Grace

Sabbath under law strictly prohibited any work. Before the Sabbath day, people were expected to prepare everything in advance so that they could concentrate on

worshipping the Lord. Once you entered the Sabbath, people were not allowed to collect Manna and firewood, start a fire or cook anything (Ex 16:25-29; Num 15:32-36; Ex 35:3). Even doctors could not heal on that day (Mt 12:10; Lk 13:14). In order to ensure obedience, those who broke the Sabbath were put to death (Ex 20:9-10, 35:1-2).

When Jesus Christ came to earth, He had the authority to change the format of worship as the Lord of the Sabbath (Mk 2:28). Thus, He made the Sabbath more merciful and flexible. Legal restrictions were lifted, and good deeds, such as saving animals and healing people (Mt 12:9-13), were permitted. The requirement for animal sacrifice was also canceled, since Christ died and bled for us once and for all. However, we have an even greater obligation to worship the Lord on the Sabbath day, since He died to atone for our sins.



Part 5 *Sabbath Rests*

The Sabbath, or seventh day, is also called the “Sabbath of the LORD” (Lev 23:3). In contrast, sabbath rests were memorial days outside of the Sabbath Day (Lev 23:39). Three examples are as follows:

1. The memorial of blowing of trumpets—first day of the seventh month. This was a holy convocation and sabbath rest. No customary work was to be done on this day (Lev 23:23-25).
2. The Day of Atonement – tenth day of the seventh month. This was a “sabbath of solemn rest” for the purpose of atoning sin. On this day, people were expected to remember their sins and offer sacrifices for atonement (Lev 23:27-32).
3. The Feast of the Tabernacles – seven days following the 15th day of the seventh month. This was a harvest festival for offering and giving thanks to the Lord. The first and 8th day of the feast were sabbath rests, in which no work could be done (Lev 23:33-36, 39).



Part 6 *How to Observe the Sabbath*

The Sabbath, or seventh day, is also called the “Sabbath of the LORD” (Lev 23:3). In contrast, sabbath rests were memorial days outside of the Sabbath Day (Lev 23:39). Three examples are as follows:

- a. Attend worship services at church
From the examples of the Lord Jesus and His disciples, we see the importance of observing the Sabbath in the house of God (Lk 4:16; Acts 17: 1-2). While we are there, we should read Scripture, which is a tradition that has extended from the Old Testament to the New Testament (Acts 15:21). Special prayers should be made in order to communicate with God. If there isn’t a church available, a person should still find a place to pray and worship the Lord (Acts 16:13). Lastly, those who have the gift of preaching should speak to edify the congregation (Eph 4:11-12).
- b. Remember God’s creation (Ex 20:11)
God created the universe, just as a builder builds a house (Heb 3:4). It is those who do not know God who fail to give thanks to the Creator (Rom 1:19-25). Since we know that God is the Creator, we should observe the Sabbath to remember His grace (Acts 17:24-28; Ps 139:13-14; Eccl 12:13).
- c. Remember God’s salvation (1 Cor 15:55-57)
God commanded the Israelites to observe the Sabbath in remembrance of how He saved them from slavery (Deut 5:15). Today, we keep the Sabbath to remember how God saved us from sin and gave us freedom (Rom 6:14; 1 Cor 15:55-57; 2 Cor 3:17).
- d. Pursue holiness (Ezek 20:12)
We should pursue holiness on the Sabbath because the day itself is sanctified by God (Gen 2:3). Moreover, God called us to holiness, not uncleanness or sexual immorality (1 Thess 4:3-5, 7). Since God is holy, we should also be holy on His special day (1 Pet 1:15-16; Heb 12:14).
- e. Seek spiritual rest (Mt 11:28-30)
Rest is a privilege we have as God’s chosen. Those who do not have a day of rest are like the Israelites, who could not enter God’s rest because of dis-

obedience (Heb 3:16-19). Thus, when we enter the Sabbath, we should seek to enter the Lord's rest and have peace in our hearts (Heb 4:4-6).

f. Hope for eternal rest (Heb 4:1, 9-11)

Every Sabbath day on earth prefigures the eternal rest in heaven. As Christians, our greatest hope and blessing is to enter the eternal rest (Heb 11:13-16; Rev 14:13). Since we have the hope of eternal rest, we should work at our salvation with fear and trembling (Phil 2:12). We should forget those things that are behind and reach forward to those things that are ahead (Phil 3:13-14). Otherwise, we will not be fit for the kingdom of God (Lk 9:62).

C H E C K F O R U N D E R S T A N D I N G



1

Why did God establish the Sabbath?

2

How should we observe the Sabbath? Do we absolutely have to be in a chapel?

3

What's the difference between Sabbath under law and Sabbath under grace? Which one do you prefer? Why?

4

Is there more than one kind of Sabbath? Give two examples.

5

In Colossians 2:16-17, Paul writes, "So let not one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ." What does he mean here? Is he saying that Sabbaths are not important since Christ should be the center of our faith?

L I F E A P P L I C A T I O N



Case Studies

Divide the students into teams of two or three. Ask each team to read the cases and come up with possible answers. Regroup to discuss each group's answers. Do the answers agree or disagree with the Bible's command of the Sabbath? How can each of the brothers and sisters depicted in the cases pursue their interests within the church?

Introduction

High school can sometimes be a very difficult and busy stage in life. The life of a typical high school student can often involve great academic stress, peer pressure, family conflicts, part-time work and loads of extra-curricular activities. Often times, students are forced to make decisions about attending church service due to conflicting schedules at school. The following are a few cameos of real life brothers and sisters and the decisions they had to make:

Case 1: Jenny the volleyball player

Jenny was a very talented volleyball player at her high school. She was tall and had a killer spike. By her freshman year, she had made it as a starter on the varsity team. However, many of the tournaments took place on Saturdays. When the first tournament rolled around, Jenny had to make the decision to participate or attend the Sabbath. She knew that missing the game would cause her coach and teammates to look down on her, but she also knew that God would not be happy if she skipped church.

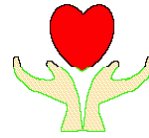
Questions to think about:

1. What would you do if you were Jenny?

2. Have you had any similar dilemmas? What did you do about it?

Case 2: Josh the Associated Student Body Officer

Josh loved being a leader. He enjoyed talking to people, organizing events and planning activities. He was also very popular at school and had many friends. Therefore, when it was time for Associated Student Body (ASB) elections, he decided to run for office. With the help of his friends, Josh ran an effective campaign



Without adequate physical rest, our bodies start breaking down. Acne breaks out, bags sag under our eyes and we start feeling light-headed. In the same way, we become weak and cranky when we do not have the proper spiritual rest. Those who skip Sabbath rest for worldly activities may find themselves weaker and weaker in faith. On the other hand, those who are fervent and work non-stop on the Sabbath for church may find themselves burned out and tired. Thus, we need to find our balance and ask the Lord to give us peace on His holy day. Only when we truly rest can we have Sabbath in the Lord.

and won an ASB position. However, after becoming an officer, Josh realized that he was expected to be present at all the Saturday football games to volunteer and sell concessions to raise money for the school. If he didn't participate, Josh knew that his reputation would suffer. His fellow ASB officers would likely call him a slacker and bad mouth him behind his back. At the same time, Josh had heard many Sabbath testimonies and feared God's punishment for missing church. Therefore, he thought to himself, "Maybe I could go in the morning and drive to church for the afternoon..."

Questions to think about:

1. How would you deal with school obligations if you were Josh?
2. Would you try to go to both school and church on the Sabbath?

Case 3: Carol the Brain

Carol was a top student. She had a reputation for being the brain of the class always getting straight A's. Since she did not think of herself as very athletic or physically attractive, she strove to excel in the only thing she was good at – grades. She only went for perfect marks, and every score below 90% made her depressed. By the beginning of sophomore year, all the overachievers in her class had enrolled in SAT prep classes. Not wanting to miss out, Carol also begged her parents to enroll her at the prep school for extra tutoring in English, Chemistry, Biology and Math. However, since she was already taking five Honors classes at school, she was forced to take some classes on Saturday mornings. The thought of missing the Sabbath made her a little uncomfortable. However, she consoled herself by thinking, "Well, at least I will glorify God if I get perfect scores on all my tests. Besides, these classes are only temporary."

Questions to think about:

1. Do you agree with Carol's thinking? Why or why not?
2. What would you suggest to Carol?