

Proper Sabbath-Keeping

Key Verses: “*He said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath.*”
—*Mark 2:27,28*

Selected Scripture:
Mark 2:23-28

Through the prophet Isaiah, God provided a deeper meaning of this commandment, explaining, “If you call the Sabbath a delight and the LORD’s holy day honorable; and if you honor it by not going your own ways and seeking your own pleasure or speaking merely idle words, then you will take delight in the LORD.”—*Isa. 58:13,14, International Standard Version*

The purpose of this one day of rest each week was not merely for physical repose, but more importantly it was meant, as explained through the prophet Isaiah, to be a day for thinking upon God and honoring him with delight. No commandment was given by Jesus or the Apostles to the church respecting the Sabbath day. As Paul wrote, “Ye are not under the law, but under grace.”—*Rom. 6:14,15*

The fourth commandment which God gave to Israel was: “Remember the sabbath, to keep it holy. ... In it thou shalt not do any work.” (*Exod. 20:8-11*) God explained the meaning of the commandment, stating: “It is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you.”
—*Exod. 31:13,14*

Through the prophet Isaiah,

However, at the time of Jesus' First Advent many Jewish religious leaders had become formalists, placing greater stress upon the literal commandments than upon their deeper meaning. In this lesson the Pharisees had accused Jesus' disciples of violating the Sabbath, because while passing through a grain field and because they were hungry, they had rubbed some grains in their hands to eat them.—Luke 6:1,2

Jesus did not violate the Sabbath commandment nor teach other Jews to do so. He was a Jew and bound to keep the Sabbath. However, he objected to nonsensical misinterpretations of God's commandments. Consequently, Jesus explained in this lesson that "the sabbath was made for man."

The word "Sabbath" signifies rest. Elsewhere, Paul wrote, "We which have believed do enter into rest." (Heb. 4:3) It is a rest of faith and trust in the Lord, and not the literal physical rest of the Jews. The Apostle continues, "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief."—vss. 9-11

At first, it sounds inconsistent to "labour" that we may "enter into rest." However, there is an important truth given in this exhortation. This rest is one in which we enter by making a daily effort to develop complete faith in God and dependence upon him. It is a rest of full trust in the promises of God, based upon knowledge, confidence, and obedience. Because of our relationship with God through his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, we will find spiritual strength in this rest.

Such a rest will be in proportion to our faith in God and in all his promises. For the Lord's followers, therefore, every day should be a Sabbath or rest day, in the additional sense of thinking upon and honoring with delight the Lord in all our thoughts, words, and actions. ■