

God's Appointed Times

Shabbat - Sabbath

Sabbath – *Leviticus 23:3, Exodus 20:8-10, Isaiah 58:13-14, Exodus 31:12-17*

Purpose

Sabbath means “to rest”. This tells us primary purpose of this observation – *restoration*. God knows that his creation needs proper rest, reflection and refreshment – spiritually, emotionally and physically - in order to survive. God Himself demonstrated this principle when he created the universe (*Genesis 2:1-3*). The Sabbath was to be a perpetual reminder of God our Creator and our need to find rest in Him.

Practice (Old and New Testament)

Sabbath observation begins at sundown on the 6th day (Friday) with a special meal (usually the finest of the week). There are blessings, Scripture recitations and breaking/sharing of the *challah* bread. The following day is dedicated to corporate worship, fellowship and rest. God commanded that the Sabbath be observed by sacred assembly or holy convocation. Following the example given in Nehemiah 8, the service consists of praise and worship, reading of the Scripture and a sermon/lesson on the passage of that day. The service closes with a hymn followed by the *Oneg Shabbat* (Delight of the Sabbath) – a time of refreshments and fellowship. The Sabbath day ends with a short special ceremony to close the day and the week.

In *Luke 4:16-21*, we see Christ observing the Sabbath by not only reading the Scripture (Isaiah 61) but also teaching about it as a rabbi/priest would have done.

Prophetic Fulfillment by Christ

Hebrews 4:9-10 tells us that there is *Sabbath* rest for God's people. In *Matthew 11:28*, Christ promises to give us rest. Spiritual rest, through Christ, is the prophetic fulfillment of the biblical observance of the Sabbath. Its fulfillment is in both the rest Christ gives us now and the Millennial rest to come.

Practical Applications

Many Christians call Sunday the “Christian Sabbath”, but this is technically incorrect. The name “Sunday” is never mentioned or called the new Sabbath in the Bible. It is referred to as the “first day of the week” (*Matthew 28:1, I Corinthians 16:2*) being labeled by its position to the Sabbath (seventh day). The names for the days of the week are of Roman origin. Christ rose from the grave on the first day of the week (probably during the night right after the Sabbath/7th day ended).

Discussion questions:

- Why do we worship on Sunday?
- What did Christ mean in Mark 2:27 when He said, “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath”?
- Is the day as important as the motive (Romans 14:5-6)?

Regardless of whether we celebrate a “sabbath” on Sunday or Saturday or another day of the week - the Scripture is clear that we are to set aside a day each week to consecrate to the Lord, worship, rest and reflect. But *how* should we observe a day unto the Lord each week? Have we rejected the Sabbath and its Jewish heritage so emphatically that we have failed to honor the Lord's Day appropriately? Has Sunday become “church day” and that's all – fulfilling our “obligation” by attending a service or SS class and then spending the rest of the day as we desire.

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Gal 5:1-6 It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all. Again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obligated to obey the whole law. You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. **The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.** (NIV)

Col 2:16-17 Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; **the reality, however, is found in Christ.** (NIV)

1 Cor 5:8 **Therefore let us keep the Festival,** not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth. (NIV)

Rom 14:1-23

1 Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters. One man's faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him. *4* Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

5 One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord. He who eats meat, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God.

7 For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living. You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat.

11 It is written: "'As surely as I live,' says the Lord, 'every knee will bow before me; every tongue will confess to God.'" So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.

13 Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way. *14* As one who is in the Lord Jesus, I am fully convinced that no food is unclean in itself. But if anyone regards something as unclean, then for him it is unclean. *15* If your brother is distressed because of what you eat, you are no longer acting in love. Do not by your eating destroy your brother for whom Christ died. *16* Do not allow what you consider good to be spoken of as evil. *17* For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, *18* because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved by men.

19 Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.

20 Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a man to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble. *21* It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall. *22* So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by what he approves.

23 But the man who has doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin.

(NIV)
