

Call to Obedience #265
PO Box 299 Kokomo, IN 46903 USA
www.schultze.org

Have a special love-feast with Jesus on every one of your Sabbath days.

REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY TO KEEP IT HOLY

By Reimar Schultze

In case you question whether we still need to keep the Sabbath holy, imagine the following scene in a Sunday morning worship service: On the left side of the sanctuary sits a mother with three children. The husband is not there because "he has to work." On the right side of the sanctuary, there also sits a mother with three children, but the husband is also there because "he has to worship" God on Sunday. Which picture is more pleasing to God: the woman taking on the priesthood of the home on the left or the man taking on the priesthood of the home sitting on the right?

The Necessity to Keep the Sabbath Holy.

The same God who commanded us to go and baptize also commanded us to not forsake the assembling of ourselves together (Heb. 10:25).

What a bicycle hub is to its wheel, the observance of the Sabbath is to the Christian. For us to know the extent of the life of Christ within a man, a very good indicator is to observe how he spends his Sabbath, for by this, we know his soul, his values, his character, his priorities, his love or lack of love for God, and his word. By it, we know the strength of his family, and most likely we can foresee the spiritual strength of his posterity. As the spokes of a wheel run out from its hub, holding up the rim, so the deeds, thoughts, actions and reactions run out from the way a Christian observes the Sabbath. "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy."

God says to remember the Sabbath. What does the word remember tell us? It tells us that Israel had a prior knowledge of the Sabbath, but through 430 years in Egypt, she had forgotten it. Remember also means that we are to never forget it. Keep remembering the Sabbath!

Now, the Sabbath day of rest was instituted in Genesis 2:2–3: "And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it..."

Was the first man, Adam, a Jew or a Gentile? He was a Gentile. Abraham who lived over 2000 years later was the first Jew. Hence, the institution of the Sabbath is not a Jewish institution but a divinely-ordained institution for all mankind. **This institution came out of the wisdom of God that man will not be able to adequately serve him unless, on one day out of every seven, he focuses that day entirely on the Lord.** The Sabbath rest is a spiritual, emotional, and physical necessity. A French king once abolished this day, and after just a few weeks, the horses and donkeys broke down, and men broke down. The king promptly reinstated the Sabbath. Remember the Sabbath, and rest on it!

We also learn from Genesis 2 that God blessed and sanctified that day. That day does not need to be blessed—it is already blessed! It does not have to be sanctified—it

is already sanctified! All we can do is to unbless it or unsanctify it by work, by unholy deeds, thoughts, activities, and observances. The Sabbath is already holy. God says: keep it holy! The emphasis is on keeping it holy.

Which Day Is the Sabbath?

Fortunately, in the Christian era, we need not ask which of the seven days is the day for the Sabbath. It is only a matter of deciding between Saturday worship and Sunday worship. It is only a question of the seventh day versus the first day of the week. And, it is incontestably correct that our Saturday, our seventh day, corresponds with the Jewish Sabbath on which our Lord worshipped (Mark 1:21; 6:2; Luke 4:16, 31; 6:5, 6) and with the seventh day on which God rested after the creation.

But it is possible to have the right day going back to creation, as corresponding to Genesis 2, but still have the wrong theology as it concerns the New Testament church. We must remember that when Jesus rose from the dead on Sunday, the first day of the week, "old things [had] passed away; behold, all things [had] become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). The emphasis on the Sabbath of creation was now replaced with an emphasis on the Sabbath of the risen Christ. In fact, the first day of the week now came to be known as the "Lord's Day." Hence, the apostle John says in his Revelation, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day..." (Rev. 1:10). The Lord's Day corresponds to the resurrection of the Lord because it is on that day that Jesus proved himself Lord over sin, death, and all principalities and powers that are in heaven and in earth (Col. 2:15). It was for this firstfruit of the resurrection that all creation had been groaning for deliverance since the fall of man. Hence, very soon after Pentecost, Sunday began to replace Saturday as the Christian day of celebration, as the Christian Sabbath, as we see in these passages: "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them..." (Acts 20:7), and "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him..." (1 Cor. 16:2).

The first observance Dr. Luke makes about the Christians on the birthday of her church is this, "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine..." (Acts 2:42). From the day of Pentecost, the first day of the church, all doctrines are to be looked upon through apostolic eye-glasses. The apostle Paul became the chief architect of Christian theology. After his conversion, he went into Arabia. There, the Holy Spirit revealed to Paul, progressively and abundantly, Christ and the main body of the doctrines of Christ as it was to be preached to the Gentiles. In his own words, "...it pleased God...to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen...Neither went I up to Jerusalem..." (Gal. 1:15-17).

Paul did not want pure Christian doctrine tainted by any Jewish traditions, rites and rituals that had lost their value since Christ's resurrection. And part of what came out of that, as noted above, was his meeting with Christians on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). His purpose to continue to visit with the Jews for a season on the Jewish Sabbath was his longing to bring them to a knowledge of Christ (Acts 13:14, 44).

It is also worth noting that on the seventh day, Saturday, Christ was in the grave. On the first day, Christ was risen. Christianity is a faith not of the dead but of the living Christ. We are not saved by Christ's death but by his life as Paul states in Romans 5:10, "...we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."

Now, for those who are troubled by Romans 14:5–6, where Paul states, "...another esteemeth every day alike," notice: 1) Paul, here, deals very tenderly with the Jewish Christians who still have attachments to the old Jewish traditions; 2) the word alike here is not found in the oldest Greek manuscripts; and 3) the phrase of verse 6, "and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it," is of very doubtful authority, being omitted by all the oldest and best manuscripts, by the Latin Vulgate, etc.

Summing this all up:

We have established that God—out of our physical, emotional, and spiritual need—has commanded that we rest one day each week and engage ourselves entirely in religious exercises on that day.

We have established that it is suitable that the day for the Christians to rest and to devote the entire day for religious activities and renewal is to be the same for all so that men would not interrupt each other in such activities, but rather complement each other by their coming together. Hence, the words of Paul of "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is" (Heb. 10:25).

And, finally, we have established that the first day of the week, by the direction of the Holy Spirit, has become that day of assembling together and that this tradition is to be observed until the end of time as Paul again admonishes us by saying, "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle" (2 Thess. 2:15).

How Do We Keep the Sabbath Holy?

First of all, we keep the Sabbath holy by not working. We neither work nor carry leftover work of the week into the Sabbath. The command is "thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter..." (Ex. 20:10). Does any mean any? "...nor thy son, nor thy daughter..." I worked one Sunday in my lifetime as a semi-truck driver. To this very day, I regret having done that. It is a dark cloud that the devil keeps throwing at me from time to time. When I went to college and graduate school, I never studied on Sunday. I never allowed my children to work or to catch up on homework on Sunday. That is not what the Sabbath is for. I raised my children without television on Sunday. Again, the Sabbath is to have a love feast with Jesus. It is not to take a rest from spiritual things, but rather to occupy ourselves with the things of God. The Sunday is not for self-indulgence. Yes, even Sunday afternoons must not be spent by our doing our own pleasures. It is really worth pondering whether what most Christians watch on their television sets on Sunday afternoons can be considered a godly exercise or satisfying the desires of the flesh, bringing leanness to their souls.

"If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it" (Is. 58:13–14).

Indeed, the Sabbath is to rest from our labors, to reflect on God's great work, it is to pray, to worship, to meditate, to cultivate Christian fellowship, to exhort one another in the faith, to study the Word of God, to deepen our roots in the everlasting springs of life, to prepare us to be witnesses and bright and shining lights for Jesus the next six days.

God Will Bless Those Who Keep the Commandments.

When I was hired for my first job out of college as an investigator for the United States Public Health Service, I met my new boss for the first time in an elevator. There was another young man with us. The boss said, "Now, you boys will need to work on Sunday once in a while when you get on a hot trail of somebody or you will lose that trail by Monday."

I was desperate for my first paycheck, and my wife was pregnant with our first child. In the moment of the twinkling of an eye, I envisioned my wife and two or three little ones sitting next to her in the pew of a church, and I was not there. I was at work because, "I had to work." I said to myself, "Surely, this is a picture from hell. This is no way to raise a Christian family, to have a Christian home, to build generation after generation of saints for God through my offspring." I would rather sleep with my wife under a bridge than to defile that which God has declared holy. So, I said to my boss, "I do not work Sundays, but I worship." The boss responded by saying, "Then you cannot work here." I said, "That's fine, I shall go home." Then, he reconsidered and said, "Well, let's wait and see." I kept the job, worshipped God on every Sunday, and after one year, he offered me his job to be in charge of the whole department. God had blessed me so much that my boss could find no better man. To God be the glory! You never win by selling out to the devil.

Are There Exceptions to Sabbath Work?

Matthew 12 is the Sabbath Day Exception Chapter in regards to work: the hungry disciples husking corn in their hands, Jesus healing a man with a withered hand, and the parable of a sheep being pulled out of a pit, all on a Sabbath day. All of these were considered Sabbath violations by the Pharisees. But Jesus said they were not because "...if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day" (vv. 7-8).

Jesus also remarked that David was guiltless when he went into the tabernacle to eat the shewbread which was forbidden for him to eat. As David knew the law was never intended to cross out mercy, so we also know that works of mercy and compassion are never wrong on the Sabbath. For Jesus said, "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath" (Mark 2:27).

My friend, keep the Sabbath day holy. It will help your heart, it will help your family, it will help your church, and it will help your nation.

Remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy.