

WHY THE SABBATH?

In our last three studies, several truths have been repeating themselves. As God is eternal (Psalm 90:2), so His ten commandment law which reveals His character is eternal (Psalm 119:142-144). The fourth commandment, the seventh-day Sabbath, was given by God in Eden to Adam and Eve (Genesis 2:1-3), and will be forever kept in the eternal new earth where God will be King (Isaiah 66:22,23; Revelation 21:3). The Bible is just as clear that the ten commandments show people where they are out of harmony with God (Romans 3:20), and it thus points to the one and only way to come into harmony with God – through acceptance of Jesus as Saviour and Lord (Acts 4:12; Philippians 4:13). Jesus forgives, and Jesus enables.

The Bible clearly says that the seventh day of the week is the Sabbath (Genesis 2:1-3; Matthew 28:1), and that Christ is the Lord of the Sabbath (Matthew 12:8). The purpose of this lesson is to discover why the Lord gave man the Sabbath, how God intends it to be used, and what results He designed it to bring to the people who keep it. What can we find about these questions in the Bible?

1. A significant beginning point is that the Sabbath was originally given to man before sin was known on this earth, and will be kept by the saved of all ages after sin is forever destroyed. Open the Bible and review Genesis 2:1-3. What do the following three points suggest in connection with the clarification of the real purpose of the Sabbath?

- (a) "rested" _____
- (b) "blessed" _____
- (c) "sanctified" _____

(For Adam and Eve, the Sabbath was a day set apart from the other six days, a weekly reminder of the Creator and the creation week, a special time with God, a time of gratefulness to Him, a time to learn more about Him. It seems clear that the eternal new earth Sabbath would be for these same purposes. Someone has said that no true Sabbathkeeper could be an atheist. How true!)

2. Now, let us come to sinners and the Sabbath. That is where we are. Do we need it? Can't we be Christians without it? What purpose can it serve for us? In a God-denying world, it can, first of all, aid us in accomplishing what Solomon admonished sinners in Ecclesiastes 12:1. (See also Revelation 14:7.) Summarize Solomon's statement.

 (One good way to use the Sabbath to accomplish this would be to spend some time out in God's nature. See Isaiah 40:26.)

3. Even as converted sinners, we are in constant need of learning more and more from God. How can we make each Sabbath a real day of spiritual learning?

- (a) John 17:17; Acts 17:11 _____
- (b) Luke 4:16-19 _____

4. The text we just read suggests the real mission of Christ, to spread the good news of salvation to everyone. Read Matthew 24:14. Here He commissions us to join Him in this

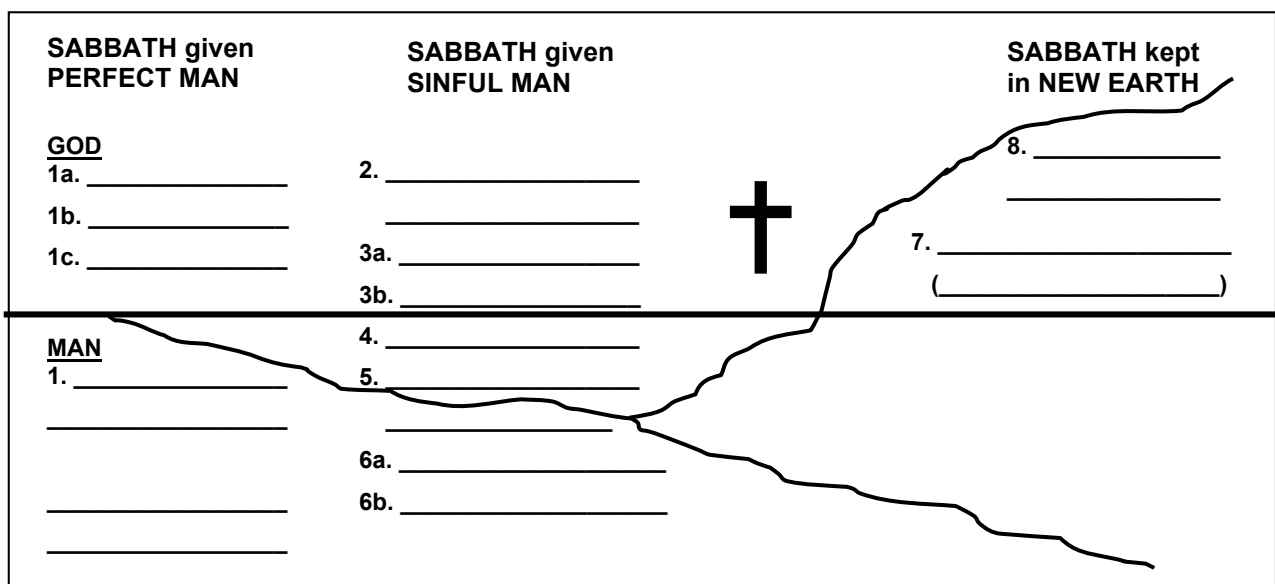
work. We learn as we help others to learn. Suggest a way in which we could use part of the Sabbath to do this. _____

5. According to Leviticus 23:32 and Mark 1:32, when does the Sabbath begin and end? _____
 This is the way in which God has always marked off days. (See Genesis 1:5; Luke 23:50-56.) It is interesting to note that God begins and ends the Sabbath when man is awake. How could we begin and end the Sabbath in such a way that our Creator is acknowledged and praised, and in a way that additional spiritual knowledge is gained?

6. What does the Bible teach us about other ways to rightly use His "set apart," holy day? Summarize these helpful passages:
 - (a) Matthew 12:10-13 _____
 - (b) Matthew 25:35,36 _____
 - (c) Acts 16:12,13; 17:1,2 _____

7. From every Sabbath day we can gain satisfying rest from our daily labors. By knowing Christ better, we can better experience the blessedness of God's approval, and further sanctification – spiritual growth and maturity into Christ's likeness. Read Ezekiel 20:12,20. Can we see more clearly what it means, in light of what we have been studying?

8. God makes wonderful promises to the true Sabbath keeper. Carefully read Isaiah 56:1-7 and Isaiah 58:13,14. The true emphasis of the Lord's Sabbath must always be God's emphasis – the use of a "set apart" day to spiritually mature "set apart" people. The Lord wants our decision in relation to the keeping of His weekly, seventh-day Sabbath. How vital it is for us as Christians to take this step with Him.



Introduction**Psalm 90:2**

² Before the mountains were brought forth,
Or ever You had formed the earth and the world,
Even from everlasting to everlasting, You *are* God.

Psalm 119:142-144

¹⁴² Your righteousness *is* an everlasting righteousness,
And Your law *is* truth.
¹⁴³ Trouble and anguish have overtaken me,
Yet Your commandments *are* my delights.
¹⁴⁴ The righteousness of Your testimonies *is* everlasting;
Give me understanding, and I shall live.

Genesis 2:1-3

¹Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. ²And 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. ³Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.

Isaiah 66:22, 23

²² “For as the new heavens and the new earth
Which I will make shall remain before Me,” says the Lord,
“So shall your descendants and your name remain.
²³ And it shall come to pass
That from one New Moon to another,
And from one Sabbath to another,
All flesh shall come to worship before Me,” says the Lord.

Revelation 21:3

³And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them *and be* their God.

Romans 3:20

²⁰Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.

Acts 4:12

¹²Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

Philippians 4:13

¹³I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Genesis 2:1-3 (see above)

¹Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. ²And 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. ³Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.

Matthew 28:1

¹Now after the Sabbath, as the first *day* of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb.

Matthew 12:8

⁸For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.”

1a. Genesis 2:1-3

¹Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. ²And 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. ³Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.

Answers:

(a) God ceased to do the work He has been doing during the previous 6 days of the creation week.

(b) God placed a special blessing in the 7th day that is not present in the other 6 days of the week.

(c) God made the 7th day a sacred time because He ceased to do His “work” and focused His attention and presence into the time of the 7th day of the week during which He spent the day with the ones He had created.

2. Ecclesiastes 12:1

¹ Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth,
Before the difficult days come,
And the years draw near when you say,
“I have no pleasure in them”:

Revelation 14:7

⁷saying 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.”

Answer: We are to both “remember” our Creator and respect and honor God through our worship of Him on His Sabbath.

Isaiah 40:26

²⁶ Lift up your eyes on high,
And see who has created these *things*,
Who brings out their host by number;
He calls them all by name,
By the greatness of His might
And the strength of *His* power;
Not one is missing.

3a. John 17:17

¹⁷Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.

Acts 17:11

¹¹These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily *to find out* whether these things were so.

Answer: Spending time searching the Scriptures makes it possible for us to know the truth about God.

3b. Luke 4:16-19

¹⁶So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. ¹⁷And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written:

¹⁸ *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,
Because He has anointed Me
To preach the gospel to the poor;
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to the captives
And recovery of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty those who are oppressed;
¹⁹ To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.”*

Answer: We should spend time in corporate worship and hearing the Bible truths being presented.

4. Matthew 24:14

¹⁴And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

Answer: Sabbath afternoon is a good time to spend in one's community telling others about Jesus and His Plan of Salvation.

5. Leviticus 23:32

³²It *shall be* to you a sabbath of *solemn* rest, and you shall afflict your souls; on the ninth *day* of the month at evening, from evening to evening, you shall celebrate your sabbath.”

Mark 1:32

³²At evening, when the sun had set, they brought to Him all who were sick and those who were demon-possessed.

Answer: The 7th day Sabbath starts at sundown and goes to sundown the next day.

Sundown worship each Friday evening to start the Sabbath and Sabbath evening worship to close the Sabbath and usher in the new week.

Genesis 1:5

⁵God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day.

Luke 23:50-56

⁵⁰Now behold, *there was* a man named Joseph, a council member, a good and just man. ⁵¹He had not consented to their decision and deed. *He was* from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who himself was also waiting for the kingdom of God. ⁵²This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. ⁵³Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a tomb *that was* hewn out of the rock, where no one had ever lain before. ⁵⁴That day was the Preparation, and the Sabbath drew near.

⁵⁵And the women who had come with Him from Galilee followed after, and they observed the tomb and how His body was laid. ⁵⁶Then they returned and prepared spices and fragrant oils. And they rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment.

Answer: Sundown worship each Friday evening to start the Sabbath and Sabbath evening worship to close the Sabbath and usher in the new week.

6a. Matthew 12:10-13

¹⁰And behold, there was a man who had a withered hand. And they asked Him, saying, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?”—that they might accuse Him.

¹¹Then He said to them, “**What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out?** ¹²**Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.**” ¹³Then He said to the man, “**Stretch out your hand.**” And he stretched it out, and it was restored as whole as the other.

Answer: The Sabbath is a special time to reach out and help those who have needs as those needs arise or one becomes aware of them.

6b. Matthew 25:35, 36

³⁵**for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in;** ³⁶**I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’**

Answer: Helping others who have a need is appropriate to do on the Sabbath.

6c. Acts 16:12, 13; 17:1, 2

¹²and from there to Philippi, which is the foremost city of that part of Macedonia, a colony. And we were staying in that city for some days. ¹³And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met *there*.

¹Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. ²Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures,

Answer: Studying the Scripture and preaching the truths found in the Bible is appropriate on the Sabbath.

7. Ezekiel 20:12, 20

¹²Moreover I also gave them My Sabbaths, to be a sign between them and Me, that they might know that I *am* the Lord who sanctifies them.

²⁰hallow My Sabbaths, and they will be a sign between Me and you, that you may know that I *am* the Lord your God.'

8. Isaiah 56:1-7

¹Thus says the Lord:

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

² 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.”

³ 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.”

⁴ For thus says the Lord:
“To the eunuchs who keep My Sabbaths,
And choose what pleases Me,
And hold fast My covenant,

⁵ 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.

⁶ “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—

⁷ 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.”

Isaiah 58:13, 14

¹³ “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,
And shall honor Him, not doing your own ways,
Nor finding your own pleasure,
Nor speaking *your own* words,

¹⁴ 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.”

WHY THE SABBATH?

Notes for the Instructor

Purpose of lesson 22: This is the "how to keep the Sabbath" lesson, emphasizing the positive aspects rather than the "don'ts." Attempt to clarify the Sabbath as a day of spiritual maturity, the high day of the week for becoming more like our Lord. It is taken for granted that the student has previously accepted the Lord of the Sabbath, and now we help him to see the purpose and value of the Sabbath of his Lord. Keep the Sabbath always as a means to an end, never an end in itself. Thus, the Christian will understand that we are not saved by keeping a day, but by using the day in such a way as to become more like Christ--the true end of all doctrine.

During the study itself: Explain carefully the significance of the three terms in question 1. The idea of God and man "resting" means that they ceased from something. God ceased from creating the world, man ceases from his daily labor to meet with his Creator. God made the Sabbath His day by blessing it--a day from then on of very special significance, when all created beings could enter into a very close relationship with Him. Finally, He sanctified it, setting it apart for holy use, just as He sets men apart--sanctifies them for holy purposes.

The points of question 3 include both personal and group learning. Explain the idea of "worship," which includes the elements of (1) God's revelation of Himself, through His Word, in prayer, singing, etc.; (2) man's response to God's being revealed, and (3) going out to serve and represent Him. In connection with question 5, supply ideas on how to have sundown worship. Show how it can serve to make us careful about the edges of the Sabbath, thus leading to our careful and profitable use of all of the Sabbath hours. Emphasize that our prayer at the close of the Sabbath should include praise for what God has accomplished in us that day, with a plea that we will use the next Sabbath even more effectively and creatively for the accomplishment of God's purposes in us.

Appeal: This lesson is the strong point of appeal to keep the Sabbath. The decision can not be long delayed, or the appeal of the Lord to keep this memorial day, this learning day, this sanctifying day, will wear away.

Illustration: Use to strengthen both the purpose of the Sabbath, and the appeal to keep it.

