

The Sabbath of the New Testament

The Sabbath was a very special day in the Law of Moses, and there were many restrictions assigned for this day, and keeping it was one of the 10 Commandments... and there were different punishments to those who break it....

But for us now, in the Church of the new covenant, what does the Sabbath mean? Is it really an ancient commandment which we have no relation with now?

The answer for this question is this, the Sabbath is a symbol of the Commandments of God and of His Holy days and keeping it is a symbol of obeying God and being pure and honest regarding His orders.

In Isaiah 58:13-14 we read about the rewards given to those who keep “the Sabbath” pure in their life from blame or negligence “if you turn back your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure, on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day of the Lord honourable; if you honour it, not going your own ways, or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly; then you shall take delight in the Lord and I will make you ride upon the heights of the earth; I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken” (Isaiah 58:13,14).

Isaiah 58:13-14

Great stress was always laid upon the due observance of the Sabbath day, and it was particularly required from the Jews when they were captives in Babylon, because by keeping that day, in honour of the Creator, they distinguished themselves from the worshippers of the gods that have not made the heavens and the earth. See (ch. 56:1, 2) where keeping the Sabbath is joined, as here, with *keeping judgment* and *doing justice*. It was a great sign between God and his professing people—His appointing it a sign of his favour to them and their observing it a sign of their obedience to Him.

I. How the Sabbath is to be sanctified?

This law of the Sabbath is still binding to us on our Lord’s day and on His holy commandments.

1. Nothing must be done that puts contempt upon the commandments of God, or looks like having mean thoughts of them, when God has so highly dignified them. We must turn away our foot from the Sabbath, from trampling upon God's holy commandments, as profane atheistical people do; we must turn away our foot from doing out pleasure against His holy commandments, that is, from living at large, and taking a liberty to do what we please, without the control and restraint of conscience, or from indulging ourselves in the pleasures of sense, though it is as great a profanation of the commandments as any thing. On Sabbath days (the preventions of God) we must not walk in our own ways (that is, not follow our callings), not find our own pleasure; also, we must not speak our own words, words that concern either our callings or our pleasures; we must not allow ourselves a liberty of speech, for we must then mind God's ways, make religion the business of our life; we must choose the things that please Him; and speak His words, speak of divine things as we sit in the house and walk by the way. In all we say and do we must put a difference between our divine way and the other perishing ways.

2. Every thing must be done that puts an honour on the commandment and is expressive of our high thoughts of it. We must call it *a delight*, not a *task and a burden*; we must delight ourselves in it, in the restraints it lays upon us and the services it obliges us to. We must be in our element when we are worshipping God, and in communion with him. "*How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!*" We must not only count it a delight, but call it so, must openly profess the complacency we take in the commandment and the duties of it. We must call it so to God, in thanksgiving for it and earnest desire of his grace to enable us to do the work that He likes, because we delight in it. We must call it so to others, to invite them to come and share in the pleasure of it; and we must call it so to ourselves, that we may not entertain the least thought of wishing the Sabbath gone that we may sell corn. We must call it *the Lord's holy order, and honourable*.

Also now, for the Lord's holy days and seasons, we must call them *holy*, separated from common use and devoted to God and to his service, must call them *the holy of the Lord*, the days which He has sanctified to Himself. Even in Old-Testament times the Sabbath was called *the Lord's day*, and therefore Sundays and fasting days are fitly called so still, and for a further reason, because it is the *Lord Christ's day*, (Rev. 1:10). It is holy because it is the Lord's Day, and upon both accounts (the ancient and the new) it is honourable. It is ancient, and its antiquity is its honour; when we put honour on the day, we give honour to Him who instituted it.

II. What is the reward of the Sabbath—sanctification?

If we thus *remember the Sabbath day (the commandment of God) to keep it holy,*

1. We shall have the comfort of it; *If we call the Sabbath a delight, then shall we delight ourselves in the Lord;* He will more and more manifest Himself to us as the delightful subject of our thoughts and meditations and the delightful object of our best affections. Note, The more pleasure we take in serving God the more pleasure we shall find in it. If we go about duty with cheerfulness, we shall go from it with satisfaction and shall have reason to say, "It is good to be here, good to draw near to God."

2. We shall have the honour of it: *I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth,* which denotes not only a great security (as that, ch. 32:16, *He shall dwell on high*), but great dignity and advancement. "Thou shalt ride in state, shalt appear conspicuous, and the eyes of all thy neighbours shall be upon thee." It was said of Israel, when God led them triumphantly out of Egypt, that *he made them to ride on the high places of the earth,* (Deu. 32:12, 13). Those that honour God and His Sabbath (commandment), He will thus honour. If God by His grace enables us to live above the world, and so to manage it as, not only not to be hindered by it, but to be furthered and carried on by it in our journey towards heaven, then He makes us *to ride on the high places of the earth.*

3. We shall have the profit of it: *I will feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father,* that is, with all the blessings of the covenant and all the precious products of Canaan (which was a type of heaven), for these were the heritage of Jacob. Observe, the heritage of believers is what they shall not only be portioned with hereafter, but fed with now, fed with the hopes of it, and not flattered, fed with the earnest and foretastes of it; and those that are so fed have reason to say that they are well fed. In order that we may depend upon it, it is added, *"The mouth of the Lord has spoken it;* you may take God's word for it, for He cannot lie nor deceive; what His mouth has spoken His hand will give, His hand will do, and not one iota or tittle of His good promises shall fall to the ground." *Blessed, therefore, thrice blessed, is he that does this, and lays hold on it, that keeps the Sabbath from polluting it.*