

Sunday the Sabbath

Written by Eric Shuster

Founder and Executive Director of the Foundation for Christian Studies



The majority of our society views Sunday as just another day off of work to watch football or go shopping—an unfortunate reality. For many Christians Sunday has become synonymous with going to church. There are Christian sects who refer to Sunday as the Lord’s Day and others who refer to Sunday as the Sabbath day. Whatever the case may be, Sunday is meant to be a special day for Christians to rest from their labors and place a particular emphasis on Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior.

The Original Sabbath Day

Exodus 20:8 boldly exclaims “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.” The Sabbath day is given as a remembrance of the day of rest from God’s labors after he completed the creation: “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” (Genesis 2:2–3).

Jesus Christ did not do away with the Sabbath day, and in fact told his disciples “The sabbath was made for man...” (Mark 2:27). The Sabbath is a day set aside from the other six where we particularly keep our mind on holy

things—not simply to rest from our labors, but to worship, serve, feel the spirit, and give reverence to God.

Historically the Sabbath began as the seventh day at the time of the creation. The Old Testament documents the Jews carrying forward the tradition of a sacred seventh day according to the commandments of God to keep it holy. The tradition was not only to follow the commandments of God, but to adhere to the covenant (Isaiah 56:1–8 and Jeremiah 17:19–27). The commandment of keeping the Sabbath day holy was repeated to man in the current dispensation when the Lord revealed “...the inhabitants of Zion shall also observe the Sabbath day to keep it holy” (D&C 68:29).

How Sunday Became the Sabbath Day

While the Sabbath day until the time of Jesus’ death was observed as the seventh day (Saturday), Sunday was later chosen as the Sabbath day in remembrance of the Resurrection of Christ, which came on the first day of the week. The New Testament records the Apostles observing the first day as the Lord’s day (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2), observing Sunday as the new Sabbath day—the day of rest and worship, a day that should be kept holy.

Keeping the Sabbath Day Holy

Keeping the Sabbath day holy involves that which is commanded by the Lord, and that which is given to individuals and families to decide. The Lord makes clear specific actions to take on the Sabbath in this revelation from 1831: “And that thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day; For verily this is a day appointed unto you to rest from your labors, and to pay thy devotions unto the Most High; Nevertheless thy vows shall be offered up in righteousness on all days and at all times; But remember that on this, the Lord’s day, thou shalt offer thine oblations and thy sacraments unto the Most High, confessing thy sins unto thy brethren, and before the Lord. And on this day thou shalt do none other thing, only let thy food be prepared with singleness of heart that thy fasting may be perfect, or, in other words, that thy joy may be full” (D&C 59:9–13).

Even as specific as this revelation is, there is still wide interpretation that can be made, especially the phrase “rest from your labors,” which can mean different things to different people. Modern day prophets have counseled that we should refrain from spending money at stores, being unconstructively lazy, participating in or going to sporting activities, or attending other events that can lead our minds away from Jesus Christ. There are times when work, travel, and certain activities cannot be avoided. During those times we can still keep the spirit of the Sabbath in our hearts. Each individual is called to do the best he can to keep the Sabbath day holy.

While there are specific things we should refrain from on the Sabbath, there are plenty of things we should do on the Sabbath. Such things should be a “delight” (Isaiah 58:13) to us and remain “simple” as D&C section 59 suggests. We are called to engage in activities that are uplifting and inspirational, keeping our minds on holy things and that which is considered righteous. Such activities will include “attending Church meetings, reading the scriptures and the words of our Church leaders, visiting the sick, the aged, and our loved ones, listening to uplifting music and singing hymns, praying to our Heavenly Father with praise and thanksgiving, performing Church service that we have been assigned to do, preparing family history records and personal histories, telling faith-promoting stories and bearing our testimony to family members and sharing spiritual experiences with them, writing letters to loved ones, fasting with a purpose, and sharing time with children and others in the home” (Gospel Principles, 162).

Misinterpretations of the Sabbath Day

Some Christians try to negate observance of the Sabbath by pointing to the scripture from Mark 2:27 in which Jesus is quoted as saying: “... The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.” Jesus Christ paid very strict attention to the Sabbath and never once mentioned it could be treated like any other day. Rather, he chided the Pharisees who put more emphasis into the letter of the law of the Sabbath as opposed to the spirit of the law (more with their heads than with their hearts). Observance of the Sabbath day is still very much a Christian doctrine that should be considered by all Christians.

Blessings of Keeping the Sabbath Day Holy

The Lord promises us blessings for keeping the Sabbath day holy, including joy and peace. D&C section 59, quoted earlier, promises that by keeping the Sabbath day holy with “thanksgiving” and “cheerful hearts” that “the fulness of the earth is yours” (D&C 59:15-16).

Conclusion

The commandment to keep the Sabbath day holy is as relevant today as it was during the public ministry of Jesus Christ. While the method of keeping the Sabbath day holy has evolved over time, the principle and resultant blessings of making every Sunday a special day in the Lord have stayed the same.

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