

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

What is the Sabbath for? In the Old Testament, working on the Sabbath day was a serious offense. This was because it is part of the third commandment. However, in the New Testament the Lord seems to disregard it or the rules around it. He regularly did things that got the Pharisees upset about Him “doing work on the Sabbath” So it might seem like the Lord was showing that commandment didn't matter. Jesus said “*The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.*” (Mark 2:27). Does that mean that it is just up to us about how to keep it or do whatever we like?

The Lord could have said that the Sabbath doesn't matter or that it is optional, instead he taught us that remembering the Sabbath is important for our sakes. Also in following His example we see that doing good to our neighbours is more important than not working. Nothing He did or said, suggests that the Sabbath is irrelevant or that we are free to ignore it. The lesson we can take from how Jesus treated the Sabbath is that there are deeper and more important elements to keeping the Sabbath than just resting from work.

If so, why was rest from work commanded in the first place? This goes back to the Creation story. The creation took only six days and then the seventh was a day of rest. The Ten Commandments build on this making a comparison that this pattern also relates to our work. The Doctrines of the New Church teach that this is a picture of our spiritual life and work. The Lord wants us to achieve a state of holy rest, but that state requires first working through spiritual struggles and shunning evils. A Week reflects and should remind us of our journey through the life on earth and then the peace of our future life in heaven. But the life we can look forward to is not a life of idle rest. It is a rest from spiritual struggle but not rest from being useful. Angels are servants and messengers of God. They are in a state of blessedness and peace from the good work that they are doing. It is good for our natural week to in a small way reflect this journey. Our work week needs a break, just like every day needs a break. The Sabbath is for our spirits, like sleep is for our bodies and minds.

It is vain for you to rise up early, To sit up late, To eat the bread of sorrows; For so He gives His beloved sleep. Psalm 127:2

So what are we meant to do with the Sabbath? If we go by the Lord's example while He

was on earth, we can see that it is still important to worship. He regularly went to Synagogues and the Temple. But what is worship? Worship is complex. Important elements are love and respect for the Lord expressed in Prayer, Singing, and Praise.

In the context of the Christian Religion, worship means communication with Jesus Christ through learning about Him and praying to Him. Crucially is also means receiving His Holy Spirit into our lives and living according to His teachings. In the passage from the work *Heaven and Hell*, it said that how we conduct our weekday life is more a reflection of our worship than our church attendance. It might seem then that working on a Sunday would actually be helpful, a chance to immediately apply the Word to life. That is not necessarily wrong: Jesus healed people on the Sabbath because healing was His mission and also part of the purpose of the Sabbath. It is serving to help reconnect people to God and heaven. It is not a break from being useful, but a way to increase our usefulness.

A key component of keeping the Sabbath is to Learn about the Lord and heaven. This is part of worshipping the Lord and also learning how to bring heaven into our lives. It is a truism that people can learn more by doing than by just being told about a subject. But there is also a lot we can learn by living and trying out different things, and then going back to the Master to learn more. Doctors and many other professionals have mandatory ongoing education. They take breaks from the active work of helping people to get better at helping.

Our spirits are not just being educated they are also getting shaped. When we take time to worship the Lord, we are re-structuring our priorities. The most basic natural reason for the ban on working was to take away self-centered activities. Our regular money earning jobs can become a selfish endeavor. Attending Church and setting aside time for worship don't make us money, and they are actively putting the Lord's will and agenda in the front of our minds.

[An aside is that the Christian Sabbath is typically celebrated every seven days on Sunday, the first day of the Week instead of the last. It also seems comes from the resurrection of Jesus on the First day of the Week and is called the Lord's day. This is not commanded in the Word, but it is letting the Lord have the first place in our week.]

If we are willing to take one day to conform our minds to the Lord, that actually helps shape our entire week according to the Lord's will. A big part of the Lord's will for us is in how we treat our neighbours. Loving the Lord and our neighbours are two sides of the same coin. A big value of worshipping in a community is that the Lord is present in the midst of our interactions. The Lord can be more present to us through how other people share with us, than

just inside us alone. The Lord can also be more present in our sharing with other people.

The Charity we can experience in a community is part of what the Lord wants for us. Sunday is meant to be a day of charity. That includes worshiping with other people, and sharing with them about spiritual subjects. It also includes having a good time recreating with other people. The Lord is present in all good work, He is also present in all good play. If we are cultivating a heavenly mindset, we are going to enjoy the happiness of other people, and want to be around them and serve them.

From this perspective we can see why the Lord sometimes “broke” the commandment about not working; He apparently broke the Sabbath when it served the higher good of healing and saving people. For us too, the priority of doing good to other people can take precedence over not working. It is perfectly ok for a Christian to work on a Sunday if that work is in service to other people. Even working to feed your family on a Sunday is reasonable, especially if you have some other time set aside to peacefully worship and reconnect with the Lord.

It is wonderful to remember that the Lord said the “*The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.*” He doesn’t make rules for the sake of His own ego, or arbitrary enjoyment. The Lord makes rules to help us reach our own greatest potential and happiness.

If the Lord has given us something for our benefit it would be wise to take advantage of those opportunities. We are clearly told that we should remember the Sabbath day. There are important spiritual benefits, even if we don’t always see the immediate external effects. Interestingly there scientific studies that suggest that regular prayer is good for our mental and physical health, at least of the one praying.

So to summarize; the Lord is not looking to add unnecessary burdens by asking to set aside a holy day and not work. There are important spiritual benefits that may also translate to benefits to our mind and body too. There is a benefit to keeping the Sabbath that the Lord doesn’t want us to miss out on.

Attending Church is an opportunity to learn more about heaven and the Lord. We can learn spiritual tools for making our lives better on all levels. Singing and praying, especially with others can help us remember to be grateful and help us experience a state of worship.

It also gives us an opportunity to exercise charity towards our neighbours, including contributing to their sphere of worship as well as instructing each other and recreating together.

So, there are many parts to what makes the Sabbath a special day. It is not just about rest, it is not just about worship. The Lord wants us to experience a little bit of what heaven will be

like. Heaven is not a place of idleness, or constant worship services. Heaven is a place where peace and worship are inside the work, the praying, the singing, and the play. We are told by the Lord to keep the Sabbath day so we can have a little bit of that heavenly experience every week, that will instruct, encourage, and feed our souls on the path to our eternal home in heaven.

One thing I have desired of the LORD, That will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD All the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the LORD, And to inquire in His temple.

Amen. And now to the Lord Jesus Christ, The One God of Heaven and Earth be all glory and Dominion forever. Amen.

Readings: **Genesis 1:1,2,31, 2:1-4; Exodus 20:8-11; Luke 6:6-11; TCR 301; Heaven and Hell 222.**

Genesis 1:1 In the beginning^o God created the heavens and the earth. 2 And the earth was a void and emptiness, and darkness was on the faces of the abyss. And the Spirit of God brooded upon the faces of the waters.

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31 And God saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning, the sixth day.

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2:1 And the heavens and the earth were completed, and all the army of them. 2 And on the seventh day God completed His work which He had made; and He ceased on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. 3 And God blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it, because in it He ceased from all His work which God created to make. 4 These are the births of the heavens and of the earth when He created them, in the day in which Jehovah God made the earth and the heavens.

Exodus 20:8 Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

9 Six days shalt thou serve, and do all thine occupation;

10 but the seventh day is the Sabbath of Jehovah thy God; thou shalt not do any occupation, thou, or thy son or thy daughter, thy manservant or thy maidservant, or thy beast, or thy sojourner who is in thy gates;

11 for in six days Jehovah made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested in the seventh day; therefore Jehovah blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.

Luke 6:6 Now it happened on another Sabbath, also, that Jesus entered the synagogue and taught. And a man was there whose right hand was withered. 7 So the scribes and Pharisees

watched Him closely, whether He would heal on the Sabbath, that they might find an accusation against Him. 8 But He knew their thoughts, and said to the man who had the withered hand, "Arise and stand here." And he arose and stood. 9 Then Jesus said to them, "I will ask you one thing: Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy?" 10 And when He had looked around at them all, He said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And he did so, and his hand was restored as whole as the other. 11 But they were filled with rage, and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus.

TCR 301. THE THIRD COMMANDMENT

Remember to keep the Sabbath day holy; for six days you are to labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath for Jehovah your God.

For this third commandment, see Exod. 20:8-10; Deut. 5:12, 13. In the natural or literal sense this means that six days are for man and his work, and the seventh is for the Lord, and for Him to give man rest. Sabbath in the language of the original means rest. Among the Children of Israel the Sabbath was the holiest of observances, because it represented the Lord. The six days represented the Lord's toils and battles against the hells, the seventh His victory over them, and so rest. Since that day represented the completion of the Lord's whole act of redemption, it was for that reason the height of holiness. When, however, the Lord came into the world, so that representations of Him ceased, that day became a day for instruction in Divine matters, and also a day of rest from work, for meditation about matters conducive to salvation and everlasting life, and a day for love towards the neighbour....

Heaven and Hell 222. Divine worship itself in the heavens does not, however, consist in going to church and in listening to sermons, but in a life of love, charity and faith in accordance with doctrines. Preachings in churches serve solely as means of instruction in matters of life. I have talked with angels about this, and have told them that it is believed in the world that Divine worship consists solely in attending church, listening to sermons, observing the sacrament of the Supper three or four times a year, and performing other acts of worship prescribed by the Church, also finding time for prayers, and then behaving devoutly. The angels said that these are outward acts that ought to be done, but are of no avail unless there is an internal from which they proceed, which is a life in accordance with the precepts that doctrine teaches.