

# The Sabbath: A Perpetual Covenant

by Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma

What a wonderful command God has given His church in the fourth commandment! It is one that believers cherish and enjoy keeping! “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.” This is the one commandment that Jehovah repeated just before Moses came down from Mt. Sinai. “Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel forever” Exodus 30:16, 17.

Ever since the pronouncement of that command Israel both in the old and new dispensations alike (Ephesians 2:11-19) have enjoyed the Sabbath. It may be true that today we call our Sabbath, “the Lord’s Day,” because Christ has fulfilled the Old Testament Sabbath, but our Lord’s Day today is still the Sabbath of the Lord. Of course it is! The Sabbath was established as a perpetual covenant. It is meant by God to be continued, to be carried on from one generation of believers to the next. It is a sign between God and His people forever. It did not cease when Christ fulfilled the Old Testament Sabbath in His resurrection. We still celebrate the Sabbath today, just like the saints of old did, without the Old Testament ceremonies, of course.

Sunday is a blessed day—a wonderful day for the believer, for us. Why? Well, because God has commanded us to set aside that day and consecrate it solely for worship of Him. Pretty wonderful, huh? God has given us one day every week that we can cease from doing everything we would do during the week, and then fill that day with things spiritual! Wow! That is quite a gift, considering that we seem to be so busy with earthly matters every other day of the week. We really need that day. We need it to recoup spiritually. Without it we would become so earthly, so carnally minded. It is a good thing that the Sabbath was made for man, as Jesus says.

You know, it seems to me that a person would be hard pressed to call himself a believer if he enjoyed using the Sabbath for his own purposes instead of for what God intended it. I mean our Lord’s Day is a sign, right? That is what God told Moses on Mt. Sinai: “it is a sign between me and the children of Israel.” That is what God spoke also through the mouth of the prophet Ezekiel too in Ezekiel 20:12, “Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them.” Each Sunday anew we are reminded of the covenant fellowship and friendship with God. When we use the day in the way God intends it, then we enter into intimate fellowship with our God. We push everything aside in order that we might listen to Him, learn of Him, and respond to Him. Is it not that which every true believer desires above all else? How can a person say he is a child of God if he does not want to spend the Lord’s Day in fellowship with his Father?

It is a puzzle to me why then there were those in the nation of Israel in the Old Testament, and are those of us in the church of the New Testament, that would rather use this day to fulfill their own pleasure! God speaks of pouring out His fury upon the nation of Israel in Ezekiel 20:13. He explains why in verse 16 of that chapter: “Because they despised my judgments, and walked not in my statutes, but polluted my sabbaths: for their heart went after their idols!”

Isaiah prophesies of what those “idols” were when he says in Isaiah 58:13, 14, “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, honorable; and shalt honor him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord...The idol in Israel and the idol today that replaces blessed fellowship with God is fun. Recreation, earthly pleasure, fun is the idol that has overtaken many in the church today. And that idol is threatening proper Sabbath observance among our young people.

May I be honest? I mean, I would be honest if I were sitting around that campfire with you at a young people’s retreat discussing this subject. I think there are those of our young people who have

forgotten why God has given us the Sabbath. It has become common knowledge that some of our young people make their way to the beach on Sunday night to hang out. On the way they stop at McDonalds to get a burger. Perhaps for a change of pace they search out the nearest campfire or spend the evening drinking coffee in a restaurant. The afternoon is spent sleeping the whole afternoon away or watching the football, basketball, or baseball game on TV. (Some young people enjoy doing this with their parents.)

I may sound like a prophet of doom (but then Isaiah and Ezekiel were considered this too by some), but it seems to me that there is a huge monster that is on one side of a locked door and is pressing against that door to get in. We have it locked but the door is bulging and it is about to break. When it does, that monster will get in and consume the church! Our churches still maintain that the Lord's Day must be kept holy. We still insist that there should be no labor on that day. We have the door locked yet. But the idol of pleasure is pushing on the door and it is threatening the proper observance of the Sabbath! The door is about to break and if it does, worldly-mindedness will swallow up the church!

Let's lay aside all the excuses we come up with. They are overworked anyway. And what is more, they don't hold water! We must call the Lord's Day "a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable." It is not to be used for earthly labors or for recreation. It is to be filled with things spiritual, things of the kingdom. And let's not try to synthesize these things with recreation. If we do, the spiritual matters of the Lord's day will eventually fade away. The Lord's Day is a day of worship; both public worship with God's saints but also family worship. In this way we will experience fellowship with God and God's people. We will live the covenant and not just profess it.

Are you a believer, young person? What is more important to you, then: fun or God? You cannot serve both. What takes priority in your life? If it is God then render to God on His day that which is due Him. If it is fun, well, God will not bless us. If the Sabbath Day is a delight because in it we seek our utmost to enter into fellowship with God then the rest of the words of Isaiah 58:14 will be true, "... and I will cause thee to ride upon the high place of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

Sunday: what a wonderful day for the believer! ♦

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