



The Sabbath Day

Chapter 24

The Meaning of the Sabbath Day

- What is the Sabbath day?

“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Exodus 20:8; see also D&C 68:29).

The word *Sabbath* comes from a Hebrew word meaning *rest*. Before the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Sabbath day commemorated God’s day of rest after He finished the Creation. It was a sign of the covenant between God and His people. We read in the book of Genesis that God created the heavens and the earth in six periods of time, which He called days: “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). Now the Sabbath also commemorates the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The Sabbath day is every seventh day. It is a holy day ordained by God for us to rest from our daily labors and worship Him.

The Purpose of the Sabbath Day

- How would you explain the purpose of the Sabbath day to someone who does not know about the Sabbath?

Jesus taught that the Sabbath day was made for our benefit (see Mark 2:27). The purpose of the Sabbath is to give us a certain day of the week on which to direct our thoughts and actions toward God. It is not a day merely to rest from work. It is a sacred day to be spent in worship and reverence. As we rest from our usual daily activities, our minds are freed to ponder spiritual matters. On this day we should renew our covenants with the Lord and feed our souls on the things of the Spirit.

- Think about what you can do to keep the purpose of the Sabbath in mind as you prepare for the day each week.

History of the Sabbath

The seventh day was consecrated by God as a Sabbath in the beginning of the earth (see Genesis 2:2–3). Since earliest times, the tradition of a sacred seventh day has been preserved among various peoples of the earth. God renewed a commandment concerning this day to the Israelites, saying, “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Exodus 20:8). Keeping the Sabbath day was also a sign that the Israelites were His covenant people (see Exodus 31:12–13, 16; Isaiah 56:1–8; Jeremiah 17:19–27).

However, some Jewish leaders made many unnecessary rules about the Sabbath. They decided how far people could walk, what kind of knots they could tie, and so forth. When certain Jewish leaders criticized Jesus Christ for healing sick people on the Sabbath, Jesus reminded them that the Sabbath was made for the benefit of man.

The Nephites also observed the Sabbath day according to the commandments of God (see Jarom 1:5).

In modern times the Lord has repeated His commandment that we should remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy (see D&C 68:29).

The Lord’s Day

- Why was the Sabbath changed from the seventh day to the first day?

Until His Resurrection, Jesus Christ and His disciples honored the seventh day as the Sabbath. After His Resurrection, Sunday was held sacred as the Lord’s day in remembrance of His Resurrection on that day (see Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2). From that time on, His followers observed the first day of the week as their Sabbath. In both cases there were six days of labor and one for rest and devotion.

The Lord has given us a direct commandment in these days that we too should honor Sunday, the Lord’s day, as our Sabbath (see D&C 59:12).

- How can the remembrance of the Resurrection influence our worship on the Sabbath?

Keeping the Sabbath Day Holy

- What does it mean to keep the Sabbath day holy?

The Lord asks us, first, to sanctify the Sabbath day. In a revelation given to Joseph Smith in 1831, the Lord commanded the Saints to go to the house of prayer and offer up their sacraments, rest from their labors, and pay their devotions to the Most High (see D&C 59:9–12).

Second, He asks us to rest from daily work. This means we should perform no labor that would keep us from giving our full attention to spiritual matters. The Lord told the Israelites, “Thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle” (Exodus 20:10). Our prophets have told us that we should not shop, hunt, fish, attend sports events, or participate in similar activities on that day.

President Spencer W. Kimball cautioned, however, that if we merely lounge about doing nothing on the Sabbath, we are not keeping the day holy. The Sabbath calls for constructive thoughts and acts. (See *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball* [2006], 170.)

What kinds of things *may* we do on the Sabbath? The prophet Isaiah suggested that we should turn away from doing our own pleasure and should “call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable” (Isaiah 58:13).

We should consider righteous things we can do on the Sabbath. For example, we can keep the Sabbath day holy by 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; preparing family history records and personal histories; telling faith-promoting stories and bearing our testimony to family members and sharing

For teachers: You can help class members or family members think more deeply about a question by giving them time to ponder. After they have had enough time, ask for their responses.

spiritual experiences with them; writing letters to missionaries and loved ones; fasting with a purpose; and sharing time with children and others in the home.

In deciding what other activities we could properly engage in on the Sabbath, we could ask ourselves: Will it uplift and inspire me? Does it show respect for the Lord? Does it direct my thoughts to Him?

There may be times when we are required to work on the Sabbath. We should avoid this whenever possible, but when it is absolutely necessary, we should still maintain the spirit of Sabbath worship in our hearts as much as possible.

- Think about something you can do to improve in your efforts to keep the Sabbath day holy. If you are a parent or grandparent, think about something you can do to help your children or grandchildren understand the meaning of the Sabbath.

Blessings for Observing the Sabbath

- What are some blessings we receive when we keep the Sabbath day holy?

If we honor the Sabbath day, we may receive great spiritual and temporal blessings. The Lord has said that if we keep the Sabbath day with thanksgiving and cheerful hearts, we will be full of joy. He has promised:

“The fulness of the earth is yours, . . . whether for food or for raiment, or for houses, or for barns, or for orchards, or for gardens, or for vineyards;

“Yea, all things which come of the earth, in the season thereof, are made for the benefit and the use of man, both to please the eye and to gladden the heart;

“Yea, for food and for raiment, for taste and for smell, to strengthen the body and to enliven the soul” (D&C 59:16–19).

Additional Scriptures

- Exodus 31:16–17 (the Sabbath is a perpetual covenant between the Lord and His people)
- Mosiah 13:16–19; 18:23; Exodus 35:1–3; Leviticus 26:2–4, 6, 12 (observe the Sabbath as a holy day)
- Luke 6:1–11 (lawful to do good on the Sabbath)
- Luke 13:11–17; John 5:1–18 (Jesus’s example of doing good on the Sabbath)