

KEEPING THE SABBATH DAY HOLY

The Sabbath is the Lord's day, set apart each week for rest and worship. In Old Testament times, God's covenant people observed the Sabbath on the seventh day of the week because God rested on the seventh day when He had created the earth. After the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, which occurred on the first day of the week, the Lord's disciples began observing the Sabbath on the first day of the week, Sunday (see Acts 20:7).

The Lord emphasized the importance of Sabbath observance in the Ten Commandments, stating "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it" (Exodus 20:8–11). The Lord told Moses that Sabbath observance was a sign between Him and His people of the covenant between them (see Exodus 31:13). However, some Jewish leaders made many unnecessary rules about the Sabbath, including 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. 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).

Because the Sabbath is a holy day, we believe it should be reserved for worthy and holy activities. Elder Bruce R. McConkie said "the matter of Sabbath observance remains . . . as one of the great tests which divides the righteous from the worldly and wicked." Abstaining from work and recreation is not enough. In fact, those who merely lounge about doing nothing on the Sabbath fail to keep the day holy. In a revelation given to Joseph Smith in 1831, the Lord commanded: "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" (D&C 59:9-10). In harmony with this revelation, Church members attend sacrament meeting each week. Other Sabbath-day activities may include praying, meditating, studying the scriptures and the teachings of latter-day prophets, writing letters to family members and friends, reading wholesome material, visiting the sick and distressed, and attending other Church meetings.

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 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. When a community or nation grows careless in its Sabbath activities, its religious life decays, all aspects of life are negatively affected, and the blessings associated with keeping the Sabbath day holy are lost.

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