

**Rejoice in  
God's Sabbath!**

*Many ask, "How should I keep the Sabbath?"  
This article gives you basic principles that will enable you  
to observe God's Sabbath as God intended.*

**J**esus Christ said, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27).

He didn't say it was made for the Jew, but for man — for all human beings everywhere on earth.

The Sabbath was made for man, and it was made when man was made — during creation week. Read the account in Genesis 2:2-3: "And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which he had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made."

In Exodus 20:8-11, we read God's instruction about the Sabbath — the fourth of God's Ten Commandments: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your manservant, nor your maidservant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it."

### **Sabbath a special sign**

The Sabbath is special to God. It is a memorial of creation — a special sign identifying God as Creator and those who keep it as His people. Notice Exodus 31:14-17: "You shall keep the Sabbath, therefore, for it is holy to you. . . . Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe

the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever; for in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed."

Throughout much of their history, God's people, ancient Israel, rebelled against God and failed to observe the Sabbath. They ignored and trampled all over it.

Notice: "Moreover I also gave them My Sabbaths . . . Yet the house of Israel rebelled against Me in the wilderness . . . and they greatly defiled My Sabbaths" (Ezekiel 20:12-13).

Because of this sin, the 10 tribes of the House of Israel went into captivity and lost their identity. They became known as gentiles, because they forgot God's Sabbath! (To learn where those "lost tribes" are today, write for our free booklet *The United States and Britain in Prophecy*.)

### **People punished for Sabbath breaking**

God warned the people of Jerusalem that if they did not keep His Sabbath holy, He would destroy the city: "But if you will not heed Me to hallow the Sabbath day, such as not carrying a burden when entering the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day, then I will kindle a fire in its gates, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched" (Jeremiah 17:27).

The people did not listen. They continued to break the Sabbath. The result was the sacking and destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, and the captivity of its citizens (Jeremiah 52:12-30).

After a number of years God brought some of the Jews back to Jerusalem. The people rebuilt the city and acknowledged the Sabbath. But even then, many began to break the Sabbath. God's ser-

vant Nehemiah "contended with the nobles of Judah, and said to them, 'What evil thing is this that you do, by which you profane the Sabbath day? Did not your fathers do thus, and did not our God bring all this disaster on us and on this city? Yet you bring added wrath on Israel by profaning the Sabbath'" (Nehemiah 13:17-18).

### **Men make Sabbath a burden**

Upon receiving Nehemiah's correction, most of the people repented and began observing God's Sabbath. However, human nature has a tendency to go to extremes. After the death of Nehemiah, religionists in their zeal to keep the Sabbath holy began to legislate in minute detail what a person could and could not do on the Sabbath. By contrast, God had given the people basic spiritual principles to apply in various situations.

"Not good enough," said the Pharisees, the leading religious party. "The people don't have the knowledge, understanding and wisdom to do that. We must tell the people what they may do and what they may not do."

The Pharisees did just that. They established 39 main categories of prohibited work alone. This was done to effect a norm for Sabbath observance that would be universal.

Speaking of the rabbis who enacted these rules, Rabbi Solomon Goldman in his book *A Guide to the Sabbath* says on page 28: "Uniformity, they believed, could be achieved, not by the enunciation of general principles, but by sharp and detailed demarcation of the areas of what is forbidden and what is permitted, by prescribing even for the remote contingency, by governing the apparently trivial circumstances of daily life and by strict definition of terms. Life

itself, they felt, 'consists of a multitude of minimal.' ”

However pure their motives and desirable their objectives, the rabbis by their strict legislation caused the Sabbath to become an institution of itself. They made the Sabbath a burden, not a blessing for man as God designed it.

### **Sabbath made to serve man**

Christ said the Sabbath was made for you (Mark 2:27). You were not made for the Sabbath. It was made for you, to help you, to enable you to live a happier and more abundant life. It was not made to be a burden.

God did not intend for a human being to so fret and worry about breaking the Sabbath that he would fear to do anything on that day. That is why this article is not an encyclopedic compilation of dos and don'ts for every possible situation that might arise on a Sabbath.

Our Creator knew that we would need a period of rest from our normal duties every seventh day.

Each of us tends to become overly absorbed in our daily cares during the week. God foresaw this. He set aside the Sabbath as a

time when we can completely forget our routine work. Then we can spend more time on those activities that help us better understand our relationship with God.

From the very beginning, God intended His Sabbath to be a day of joy and delight, a special day of blessing and happiness!

### **What does it mean to "rest"?**

God is concerned with two overall aspects of your life on the Sabbath. First, he wants your time to be free from responsibilities and activities. Secondly, he wants your mind free from thinking about those daily responsibilities and activities. This makes you free to properly worship God on this day.

Certainly we can physically rest more on the Sabbath. But the main emphasis is to rest from your normal toil and activities on this day. You should serve God with your mind on the Sabbath.

Those who can't or don't control their minds call the Sabbath "bondage." They eagerly wait for the end of the Sabbath so they can be about their ways and pleasures, which they have been

thinking about all day anyway. Once you are able, on the Sabbath, to get your mind and thoughts on God's purpose and God's ways, you will find out what a real delight and joy the Sabbath is. "Then you shall delight yourself in the Lord" (Isaiah 58:14).

How do you accomplish this? Devote the additional free Sabbath time you have to extra Bible study, extra prayer and extra meditation. This is the one day of the week when you don't have to worry about getting to the job, making payments, building fences, working out schedules, cleaning house.

Remember, we are to take care of all our responsibilities during the rest of the week. But the Sabbath is free time — free from all your daily cares and worries — free to be completely absorbed in God and His Word.

### **God's instruction**

Notice God's positive instruction about the Sabbath: "If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath [that is, don't trample on it], from doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of the

## **Before the Sun Sets**

On the Sabbath God wants our minds freed from our regular daily duties, so we can nurture our spiritual relationship with Him and spend time in worship and fellowship with other true Christians, learning about God and His way of life.

So, along with the weekly Sabbath, God provides us with a day in which to prepare for it. Friday, the day preceding the Sabbath, is this preparation day.

God demonstrated to ancient Israel the function of the preparation day when He sent manna from heaven for their food. The Israelites were instructed to gather each morning only sufficient manna for that day. Any left to the next day would spoil.

But each Friday God miraculously

supplied two days' worth of manna for each person to gather, and kept the portion for the Sabbath day from spoiling.

Today we can apply this principle regarding the preparation day by gathering our food before the Sabbath begins. We should take care of purchases during the week, buying last-minute perishables on Friday if needed.

On the preparation day, double-check to see that you have all ingredients needed for the next day.

### **Preparing food**

The Sabbath is a feast day, and one way we can rejoice is by enjoying delicious meals. But a day spent in food preparation is not a day devoted to extra time in prayer, Bible study

and fellowship. So what should you do? Early in the week, you could plan a menu for the Sabbath — maybe brunch, a snack and dinner. Then prepare as much of the food as you can on Friday or even earlier in the week.

Let's say you want to serve a roast, baked potatoes, a vegetable, salad, rolls and dessert for dinner. Cook the roast on Friday until almost, but not completely, done. Prepare the salad dressing and dessert and put them in the refrigerator. The rolls can be baked earlier in the week.

Then, on the Sabbath, pop the roast and potatoes into the oven to cook the potatoes and finish cooking the roast. While they are heating up, prepare the salad and vegetable and set the table. When you're done, warm the rolls in the oven for a few minutes.

Presto! You have created a feast for the Feast day. The preparation time involved on the Sabbath is kept

Lord honorable, and shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words, then you shall delight yourself in the Lord" (verses 13-14).

Let's understand the principle of Isaiah 58:13-14. What are "your own ways," "your own pleasure," "your own words"?

1) *Your ways*. This means course of life, mode of action — that is, your employment, enterprises, finances, the serious business of making a livelihood.

You should not involve yourself in working at what you normally do during the week — those things by which you feed, clothe and care for yourself physically. This includes working around the house, sewing, cleaning, washing the car — all the things that pertain to your physical maintenance during the normal course of the week.

2) *Your pleasure*. Forsaking one's pleasure does not mean that the Sabbath is to be a rigorous day of abstinence. The principle is that we should avoid having our mind, time and energy taken up in hobbies, sports and pleasure seeking.

The Sabbath was not designed

for activities such as hunting, fishing, golfing, movies, television, boating — those things that take up our leisure time. This would also include the many time-consuming hobbies such as ham radio, woodworking and stamp collecting.

3) *Your words*. This is the spiritual application of the first two principles. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Matthew 12:34). We talk about what we are thinking. Our words show what is going on in our minds and hearts.

This is obviously the most difficult of all! We may cease doing our ways and our pleasures, but it is much more difficult to cease thinking or talking about them.

Again, we shouldn't become pharisaical. This doesn't mean you can't mention physical things. There is no such regulation as "You may not spend more than 30 seconds talking about cars on the Sabbath." You simply apply the principle by putting your mind on the positive purposes for which the Sabbath was made.

### Sabbath begins at sunset

In order to keep the Sabbath

holy, we need to know when it occurs. Man begins his days at midnight. But God's days begin and end at sunset.

Notice Genesis 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31. In every case the evening precedes the morning. Furthermore, God Almighty commands us to celebrate His holy time from "evening to evening" (Leviticus 23:32). That is, from sunset to sunset.

Look at any basic calendar. You will see that Sunday is the first day of the week, and that Saturday is the seventh day of the week (that is, unless you have one of the newer calendars that deliberately attempt to do away with the Saturday Sabbath by making Monday the first day of the week and Sunday the seventh!).

The weekly cycle has not been broken since man was created. For further information on this important point, write for our free booklets *Has Time Been Lost?* and *Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?*

God's Sabbath is the seventh day, which is called "Saturday" in the regular calendar. And since God's days begin at sunset, you should keep God's Sabbath beginning Friday evening at sun-

to a minimum, and the food is hot and delicious.

Not everything can be done before the Sabbath. Your family wouldn't appreciate coffee made with water boiled the day before, for instance! But anything that can reasonably be done before the Sabbath should be, so we can spend our time the way God wants us to spend it.

### Household duties

The preparation day is also a time to make sure that weekly household duties are finished. Is your house in tip-top shape, clean and neat for the Sabbath? Is the furniture dusted and laundry done? Could you add fresh flowers or another special touch to make your house more beautiful for the Sabbath?

In your mind, walk

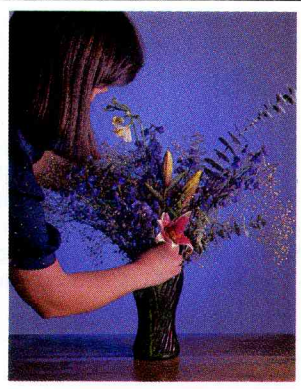
through the activities of the Sabbath ahead of time so you can prepare for what will need to be done. Sabbath clothes will need to be clean, pressed and ready to wear to church services. You may find it a good idea to set these out the day before so Sabbath time isn't wasted searching out clean, matching outfits. You might also want to assemble notepads, pens and children's toys and blankets Friday afternoon.

Before sundown, check that your car has sufficient gas for the trip, that train or bus tickets are purchased or that your ride to services is arranged. If you are unsure of the time and location of services, find this out on Friday and plan your departure time accordingly. See that everyone in the family knows what time you are leaving for

services so they can be sure to be ready.

Here is a word of caution: Friday is only one day. Don't try to do everything in the 24 hours before the Sabbath. Many household duties should be done during the week, leaving Friday free mainly for food preparation and last-minute errands, or you'll burn yourself out with preparation. Preparing a spotless house and elaborate meals is secondary to observing the Sabbath in good physical and mental condition.

And one final point: Avoid the tendency to frantically juggle duties until the sun dips below the horizon and then collapse into the Sabbath. Plan early in the week to accomplish duties before Friday sunset. You might find it helpful to finish preparations a half hour or so before sunset so that you can relax and make the most of the Sabbath from the moment it begins. — *By S. Hague* □



set and ending Saturday evening at sunset.

The approximate time of the sunset may be found in most newspapers, in the weather forecast section. If this information is not available, the sunset may be determined by observing the light as it diminishes before the twilight approaches. Or, if you can see the sun, you would begin to observe the Sabbath when the sun is ready to fade away over the horizon on Friday evening.

### Prepare for the Sabbath

In order that we may have our minds free from last-minute duties on the Sabbath, God has commanded that we prepare for it the day before.

Exodus 16:23-25 shows that we should do our heavy cooking, roasting or boiling on Friday, the preparation day prior to the Sabbath. God does not want us to clutter up His Sabbath with long hours of cooking.

Does that mean we cannot eat a

fine, sumptuous meal on the Sabbath? Not at all. The Sabbath is a feast day. But it does mean we should plan ahead.

Imagine that you want to prepare a nice roast for the Sabbath. But this may require cooking it for two or three hours. What should you do?

Here is one way to handle the situation: Cook it on Friday until it is nearly done — but not all the way. Then on the Sabbath you can simply warm it up. In this way as little time as possible will be required on the Sabbath, and the roast will not be dry.

The same holds true for any kind of baking. Baked goods can be prepared ahead of time, kept in the refrigerator and brought out on the Sabbath.

Elaborate salads and dressings and similar items should be prepared separately ahead of time and saved until the Sabbath.

Some things cannot or need not be done before the Sabbath. Obviously we would not normally

fry or scramble an egg on Friday, store it in the deep freeze and then thaw it out and eat it Sabbath morning.

Be careful, though, concerning the preparation day. Don't make the mistake of leaving daily duties such as housecleaning, baking, cooking, grocery shopping, house repairs or car washing until Friday, the preparation day before the Sabbath. If you do, you may find that the Sabbath will be a day of total collapse rather than a peaceful day of rest and relaxation with enough energy to communicate with God!

Friday is a day that prepares us for the Sabbath, not a day to catch up on what we should have been doing all week.

By using the preparation day properly we will be able to enter the Sabbath in a spirit of peace and rejoicing and worship toward God.

God's holy Sabbath is indeed a great joy, for those who understand and keep it! □

## '...All Your Work!'

Properly keeping the Sabbath is a catalyst to a satisfying, well-organized life.

God created the Sabbath to be a delight (Isaiah 58:13-14). He gave us the day off from work — from even thinking or worrying about our jobs. You don't have to feel guilty about not working on this day; it's your time off.

But God in His wisdom knew that to really enjoy a stress-free day of rest, we would have to learn to efficiently organize our work time on the other six days of the week.

### Prepare beforehand

Many of us, when we begin keeping the Sabbath, try to perform seven days of work in six days. This is not impossible, but the problem is we oftentimes try to cram two or three of those days into one day, Friday.

Friday is the preparation day, but those of us working five-day, 40-hour weeks don't have that whole day to use for Sabbath preparation. And try-

ing to hurriedly catch up on Friday afternoon with all the work we should have taken care of throughout the week is not the answer. Ending up a physical wreck every Sabbath from exhausting ourselves in a last-minute effort to prepare is not what God had in mind.

Avoiding the Friday-evening rush is mostly a matter of good planning. Begin by making a list of your major family and household responsibilities. Put everything on there — caring for the pets, vacuuming the carpets, washing the car, preparing the meals, mowing the lawn.

Now list under each family member's name his or her particular responsibilities. Make this a family activity. If you're single, it's just as important to be organized, so make out your list, too.

Next, number each responsibility in order of importance. If you end up with more responsibilities than time to do them, don't be too surprised. Go over your list again and see what

jobs can be eliminated or more efficiently done. Then schedule them throughout your six workdays.

Once you get your daily duties organized, the hours you have on Friday can truly be preparation time for the Sabbath and not just catch-up time for responsibilities you should have done earlier in the week.

It's wise to be flexible enough in your planning to allow for the unexpected. You can be sure that something will come up almost every week to disrupt your schedules.

### A weekly paid holiday

God says in Exodus 20:8-9: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work." Obeying this command will make you more efficient in your everyday responsibilities. You will get more done each week than you thought possible.

The Sabbath is a gift to you from God — a paid holiday for you to enjoy each week. But to really be able to rejoice in that special day, be sure that you are fulfilling the last part of His command as well — all your work is to be done during the first six days of the week. — *By Dexter H. Faulkner* □