

# OBSERVANCE OF THE LORD'S DAY

**BIBLE TEXT** : Exodus 20:8; 34:21; Leviticus 26:1,2; Isaiah 58:13, 14; Nehemiah 10:31; Matthew 12:1-8; Mark 2:27

LESSON 268 Junior Course

**MEMORY VERSE: "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day" (Revelation 1:10).**

## **BIBLE TEXT in King James Version**

### **Exodus 20:11**

<sup>11</sup> 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 34:21**

<sup>21</sup> Six days thou shalt work, but on the seventh day thou shalt rest: in eaving time and in harvest thou shalt rest.

### **Leviticus 26:2**

<sup>2</sup> Ye shall keep my sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I *am* the LORD.

### **Isaiah 58:13-14**

<sup>13</sup> 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, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking *thine own* words:

<sup>14</sup> Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken *it*.

### **Nehemiah 10:31**

<sup>31</sup> And *if* the people of the land bring ware or any victuals on the sabbath day to sell, *that* we would not buy it of them on the sabbath, or on the holy day: and *that* we would leave the seventh year, and the exaction of every debt.

## **BIBLE REFERENCES:**

### **NOTES:**

#### **The Lord's Day**

Before one can observe the Lord's Day, he must know which day that is. The term, **Lord's Day**, was used in Revelation 1:10, by John, no doubt referring to Sunday, the first day of the week. John was in exile, away from other Christians, but he was in the spirit of worship and reverence when the Lord met him there.

Christ arose on the first day of the week. Several times He met with the disciples on the first day of the week. The disciples met on Sunday to break bread together (**Acts 20:7 <sup>7</sup> And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight**) and to bring their offerings unto the Lord (**1 Corinthians 16:2 <sup>2</sup> Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come**). The Lord gave His approval of the first day by blessing His people who worshiped on Sunday and by sending His Spirit on the first day of the week upon those who were praying in an upper room on the Day of Pentecost, fifty days after Christ's resurrection. It was accepted as the day of worship immediately after the resurrection of Christ and has been observed by all true Christians from that time down to the present day.

The Jewish people kept the Sabbath Day, the seventh day of the week. Under the Law, it was a day of worship and rest, dedicated to honour God. The Sabbath was the day set aside in which to worship the Lord. Under the Law, the Jewish Sabbath was Saturday. God is to be served and honoured each day, but this one-day is dedicated particularly to the honour of God.

#### **For Man**

Jesus taught that, "the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27). Man was made before the Sabbath. Man was made by God and for God — to honour and serve God (**Colossians 1:16 <sup>16</sup> For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him**). The Lord hallowed and sanctified the Sabbath for the good and benefit of man. A day of rest and worship is profitable to both the body and the soul of man.

We work six days — many people for their own interest — and the other day of the week we owe to God. This day should be set apart, different from the others, in which we can forget the cares and responsibilities of our daily work and can give ourselves to think of the Lord and to speak of Him in a greater measure.

#### **The Fourth Commandment**

Moses, the leader of the Children of Israel, received the Law from God on Mount Sinai. Included in the Law were the Ten Commandments. One of those commandments, the fourth, concerns the Sabbath Day. It is: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8). The Lord explained to Moses and

## Matthew 12:1-8

<sup>1</sup> At that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn; and his disciples were an hungred, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat.

<sup>2</sup> But when the Pharisees saw *it*, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day.

<sup>3</sup> But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungred, and they that were with him;

<sup>4</sup> How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shewbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests?

<sup>5</sup> Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless?

<sup>6</sup> But I say unto you, That in this place is *one* greater than the temple.

<sup>7</sup> But if ye had known what *this* meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.

<sup>8</sup> For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day.

## Mark 2:27

<sup>27</sup> And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath:

the Children of Israel that there were six days in which to do their work but the seventh day of the week was a day of rest. "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 20:11).

In this day of rest, peace, and quiet, they were to remember that they had been servants in Egypt but the Lord had brought them out "through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm" (Deuteronomy 5:15).

### A Day of Rest

The Lord said concerning this day, "Thou shalt not do any work." This was to be a day of rest for all — even the children, the servants, the stranger, and the animals — that they might "be refreshed" (Exodus 23:12). When Sunday is spent in attending religious services, in reading the Bible, in praying, and in speaking of the Lord, one is refreshed both physically and spiritually. His soul is fed and blessed. His body is rested from the usual labour. When Sunday is spent doing work that should be done during the week, or when Sunday is spent in seeking worldly entertainment, one's soul is starved and one's body is tired and worn out to start the new week of work.

### Death Penalty

To keep the Sabbath holy was a commandment of the Lord, and He expects His people to obey. Under the Law, there was a severe penalty for disregarding the Sabbath. We read that "every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people" (Exodus 31:14). Today, those who persist in disregarding Sunday will find that they are not only spiritually starved but they are spiritually dead.

In years past, our whole nation kept the Lord's Day holy. Stores were closed, work ceased in the fields, and nearly everyone went to church to worship God. Laws, which would punish the one who desecrated the Lord's Day were passed in many states. According to the laws of the land, people were required to honour the Lord's Day. God honoured our nation for so doing as He honours those who honour Him. In the present day, Satan has hardened the hearts of many people and turned them from God. Many people are seeking their own pleasure and are demanding that the Sunday laws of the land be cancelled.

Today it is not unusual to see men working in the fields and in business houses, doing all manner of work; and God is not pleased. It has been proved that men do not prosper so much when they profane the Lord's Day by working. It is the general practice of Christians to refrain from Sunday work for material gain. They choose work in which they can be free on Sunday to worship and honour God. Some Christians have not accepted advancement in their work, and others have refused certain work because it required them to work on the Lord's Day. God honours and blesses them for so doing. Those who keep the Lord's Day show that they prefer a communion with God and their duty to Him, before their own business. There are some occupations that require Sunday work. But is there not other work for a Christian?

### Preparation

There is an account in the Bible where a man showed disrespect by gathering sticks on the Sabbath (Numbers 15:32). This man paid the penalty for his sin. He was put to death according to the word of the Lord. If this man had made the

proper preparation, he would not have been gathering sticks on the holy day.

While the Children of Israel were journeying in the wilderness, the Lord sent manna to feed them and the Lord instructed them about preparing for the Sabbath so there would be no need of working on that day. The Children of Israel gathered the manna each morning because "when the sun waxed hot, it melted." For six mornings of the week the manna was found; but those who did not hearken unto the Lord and tried to gather on the seventh day found there was none. The Lord told them to gather on the sixth morning enough to last for two days, since the next day was a holy day. The Lord said, "Bake that which ye will bake to day, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning" (Exodus 16:23).

To prepare for the holy day pleased the Lord. The manna kept very well and did not spoil when they gathered extra on the sixth morning; but any other time that they gathered more than enough for one day, the manna spoiled and worms grew in it.

When one makes preparation and plans for observing Sunday, there is usually no occasion to do that, which would show disrespect. Christians make provision for Sunday by having the home, food, clothes, yard, and car in order ahead of time. Sunday is not the day in which to do all the odd jobs around the home. Children should see that their chores are done ahead of time when it is possible. When it is impossible, this does not excuse them from doing their work, or from being helpful, or from keeping themselves tidy. Keeping the Lord's Day holy does not make one lazy, for he is busy in the Lord's work.

### **A Blessing**

There were many blessings — peace, plenty, safety, and the presence of the Lord — if the Children of Israel obeyed God's commandments, which included keeping the Sabbath and reverencing the Lord's sanctuary (Leviticus 26:2). Besides these blessings, the promise was given that God's people would be exalted and would receive an inheritance if they delighted themselves in the Sabbath. They would find pleasures in obedience if they honoured the Lord in His own way and spoke His words rather than their own (Isaiah 58:13, 14). When a person really loves and obeys God, his greatest pleasure is in the Lord's service. Sunday is a good time to start the study of the next Sunday School lesson and memory verse.

Some people seem to think that Sunday is the day, which is their own, a day in which they may do as they please. They make Sunday a day of recreation and boisterous play, with no thought of God.

### **Buying and Selling**

The Lord put great stress upon the due observance of the Sabbath. Everything done was for the glory of God. It has been said that next to idolatry there was no other sin for which the Jews were more frequently reprov'd than for profaning the Sabbath. During the days of Nehemiah there was an example of the Children of Israel's, being reprov'd for dishonouring the Sabbath.

Nehemiah returned to Jerusalem to help the Children of Israel rebuild the wall about the city, after their enemies had destroyed it. Nehemiah found that the Children of Israel were showing dishonour to the Sabbath Day. They permitted the harvesting of crops and the hauling of loads of produce into the city on the Sabbath. They probably thought that their crops had to be

harvested when they were ripe, but the people needed to be reminded of the word of the Lord: "Six days thou shalt work, but on the seventh day thou shalt rest: in eaving time and in harvest thou shalt rest" (Exodus 34:21).

Some of the Children of Israel were merchants. They made their living by buying and selling. Perhaps they did not have their stores open but the Israelites were buying on the Sabbath from the men of Tyre who brought their fish into the city. Maybe the Children of Israel were not doing their work on the Sabbath but they caused others to work, and they dishonoured the day by buying victuals and "all manner of wares" (Nehemiah 13:15, 16). Nehemiah reproved the Children of Israel and asked, "What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the Sabbath day?" Nehemiah did more than reprove, he closed the gates of the city and set guards "that there should no burden be brought in on the Sabbath day." When the merchants and sellers loitered around outside the city, he sent them away and threatened to "lay hands" on them.

As in the days of Nehemiah, Christians today make a practice of doing no business on Sunday. They plan ahead and do not buy, sell, or pay bills on Sunday, because it is unnecessary and dishonourable to God.

### **Jewish Teachers**

There is a curse pronounced upon those who add to as well as to those who take from the words of God (**Proverbs 30:6** <sup>6</sup> **Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.** **Revelation 22:18-19** <sup>18</sup> **For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book:** <sup>19</sup> **And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book).** Some of the Jewish teachers were too strict about keeping the fourth commandment. They enlarged and added to the word of the Lord. This happened when Jesus was here upon earth. One day as Jesus and His disciples walked through the cornfield, they were hungry; so they picked and ate corn. They were seen and criticised by the Pharisees, who complained because they had done so on the Sabbath. They did not object to the picking of the corn in another's field, because they were permitted to eat in a neighbour's field so long as they did not put a sickle to the grain or put grapes in a container to take home (**Deuteronomy 23:24-25** <sup>24</sup> **When thou comest into thy neighbour's vineyard, then thou mayest eat grapes thy fill at thine own pleasure; but thou shalt not put any in thy vessel.** <sup>25</sup> **When thou comest into the standing corn of thy neighbour, then thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand; but thou shalt not move a sickle unto thy neighbour's standing corn.**). The Pharisees thought that Jesus and His disciples had shown disrespect for the Sabbath. They did pluck and eat the corn, but it was out of necessity. Jesus taught that one was not guilty of profaning the Sabbath when he did acts of mercy and necessity on the Sabbath. Jesus gave examples to show that necessity rendered a person innocent of dishonouring God. Was not David guiltless when, out of necessity, he ate the shewbread which was intended for the priests only (**1 Samuel 21:6** <sup>6</sup> **So the priest gave him hallowed bread: for there was no bread there but the shewbread, that was taken from before the LORD, to put hot bread in the day when it was taken away.** **Mark 2:25-26** <sup>25</sup> **And he said unto them, Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungred, he, and they that were with him?** <sup>26</sup> **How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the**

**high priest, and did eat the shewbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him? )** Were not the priests who worked on the Sabbath blameless because they performed their duty of killing the sacrifices for the worship in the Temple (**Numbers 28:9-10** <sup>9</sup> **And on the sabbath day two lambs of the first year without spot, and two tenth deals of flour for a meat offering, mingled with oil, and the drink offering thereof:** <sup>10</sup> **This is the burnt offering of every sabbath, beside the continual burnt offering, and his drink offering.})?**

Jesus told the Pharisees that they did not know the Word of the Lord or they would not have condemned those who were not guilty. The Pharisees were careful to keep a part of the Lord's commandments but they overlooked other parts. The Pharisees remembered the feasts and sacrifices, but they showed little or no mercy. The Lord told the Children of Israel through the Prophet Hosea that He desired mercy, and not sacrifice, and He desired them to have knowledge of God more than burnt sacrifices (**Hosea 6:6** <sup>6</sup> **For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings**). God required His people to "do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly" with God (Micah 6:8). This meant doing these things not only on the Sabbath but every day of the week, and the Pharisees were failing to do them.

When the Pharisees asked Jesus if it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath. He answered, "It is lawful to do well on the Sabbath days" (Matthew 12:12). Jesus reminded them that they would work to get one of their sheep out of a pit on the Sabbath. Then how much better is a man than a sheep that one would show mercy on the Sabbath?

In these days when many people show no respect for God and the Lord's Day, the danger for most people is not in being too strict, as the Pharisees were, but in being too lax. Let us, as Christians, be examples to others by keeping the Lord's Day holy.

### **QUESTIONS**

1. What is the Lord's Day?
2. What is the Christian's day of rest and worship?
3. How do we keep the Lord's Day holy?
4. What does a Christian do on Sunday?
5. What does he not do on Sunday?
6. What day is dedicated to the honour and glory of God?
7. How can one prepare for Sunday?
8. What pleasure can one find on Sunday?
9. What can a child do on Sunday that will honour the Lord?
10. What did Jesus mean when He said, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath"?