



My Bible School Lessons

Exploring the Word of God

Lesson #17: "Sabbath Questions"

SCRIPTURE READING: LUKE 14:1-35

Memory Verse: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: . . . If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land:" Isaiah 1:18,19.

In the prophecies of Isaiah, we see the prophet answering questions for those who are puzzled. "Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?" is the anxious inquiry. To this Isaiah replies, "The morning cometh, and also the night: if ye will inquire, inquire ye: return, come" (*Isaiah 21:12*).

Isaiah did not discourage honest questions. "If ye will inquire, inquire ye," he said. Any "watchman" who has been set to guard the spiritual interests of the people should welcome sincere questions.

When the rich young ruler came to Jesus asking about the way of life, Christ answered him without hesitation. But insincere quibblers Jesus silenced with His penetrating questions and answers (*Matthew 22:23-33, 41-46*).

In this lesson, we want to answer questions that are often raised about the Sabbath-Sunday issue. These matters are of great importance to us; for the midnight of sin is coming upon the world, and the law here is our first question, a very important one:

1: HAS THE SABBATH BEEN LOST DOWN THROUGH THE AGES?

Some have asked, "Has time been lost?" "Has the Sabbath been lost?" We reply No. The Sabbath has never been lost, If the Sabbath had been lost between creation (that is, Adam's time) and Moses' day when God gave the written law with the Sabbath as the fourth commandment, this loss of time would have been rectified. Note the following:

Forty years, or 2,080 weeks. God worked a number of miracles every week, thereby pointing out the identical seventh day 2,080 times (*Exodus 16*). In the wilderness before the children of Israel reached Mount Sinai, the manna (food from heaven) fell on each of the first five days of the week. That was one miracle. Any portion kept over one day would spoil. Then on the sixth day a double portion fell. This was another miracle. The unused portion kept over to the seventh day did not spoil. This was a third miracle. To this we might add the fact that on the seventh, or Sabbath, day no manna fell. And this could be called a fourth miracle. God thus emphasized the sacredness of the Sabbath and clearly marked the seventh day.

If the Sabbath had been lost between Moses' time and Jesus' day, the Saviour would not have made it His custom to observe the Sabbath (*Luke 4: 16*). But we have the example of the Saviour, which is indeed sufficient. "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked" (1 John 2:6).

Has the Sabbath been lost since Jesus' day? And what about the calendar? The calendar has been

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changed, but there has been no loss of time or change in the rotation of the days of the week.

The Julian calendar was in use when Jesus was on the earth. Its originator, Julius Caesar, died about 40 years before Christ was born. The week in use in the East at that time was precisely the same as the week of our calendar today, which is the Gregorian. The days of the month are different, but the days of the week were never changed.

The change *from* the Julian to the Gregorian calendar occurred in this way: The Julian calendar used *for* sixteen centuries was not accurate in the length of its year, being about eleven minutes too long. By A.D. 1582, the vernal equinox of March 21 had receded to March 11 and was ten days off schedule.

Scientists in the time of Gregory XIII led *out* in the change, and the Gregorian calendar began to function at Rome on Friday, the 5th of (October, 1582. Friday the 5th was changed to Friday the 15th. The week remained untouched, and the days of the week were undisturbed.

Some nations began the use of the new calendar at once. Others began later. England waited 170 years, until 1752. Yet all that time these different states and nations with different calendars had the same week!

Just remember that the seventh day of the week today is the same as when Christ was here, and the calendar changes have not affected it. The Jews, scattered over the earth, have kept strict account of time; and wherever *you* find the orthodox Jew *you* find the seventh-day Sabbath. God has protected the Jewish people over the centuries, so they could testify as to which day of our week is the true Sabbath—the Bible Sabbath, the only Sabbath ever given to mankind by the God of heaven. So it is clear that the Sabbath has not been lost in our calendar.

2: DID THE RESURRECTED CHRIST ALWAYS APPEAR ON THE FIRST DAY?

The answer is No. The record of Scripture does not support such a view. As a matter of fact, there are only three such meetings where the time is indicated.

1. The resurrection day (which was, of course, Sunday, in John 20: 19), when Jesus met with His disciples who were "assembling *for* fear of the Jews."
2. A meeting "after eight days," when the doubting Thomas met Christ (*John* 20:26).
3. The day of the ascension, which occurred "forty days" after the resurrection (*Acts* 1:3, 9). A glance at the calendar will quickly reveal to *you* that if the resurrection was on Sunday, the ascension, which was *forty* days later, could not possibly have occurred on Sunday.

It is interesting to note that those who claim that, after the resurrection, Christ always met with His disciples on Sunday do not cite John 21:16 as an example. If this meeting was on a Sunday, then evidently the disciples considered fishing a proper occupation *for* that day. Nor did Jesus reprove them. Instead, He instructed them how to catch fish, and He cooked fish for them.

Christ appeared to His disciples at other times, but we are not told the day of the week. The time of Christ's appearance to His disciples has no bearing on the question of a weekly day of worship. The identity of God's holy day does not rest on such irregularities as meetings. A specific command points it out (*Exodus* 20:8-11). How much we need to study our Bibles in order to know what God would have us do!

3: IS NOT ONE DAY JUST AS HOLY AS ANOTHER?

Christ Himself made the Sabbath at creation and repeated the Sabbath command *from* Sinai. And He never made any other day holy (*John* 1:1-3, 14; *Mark* 2:27-28).

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We should remember that no one man or even all men together can make a single day holy. Only God can make a day holy. Only God can make men holy. It is God's special presence that makes any place or day or thing holy (*Exodus 3:1-5*).

The following Bible text is often quoted to support the claim that each man may choose his own day of worship:

Romans 14:5-6: "One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it."

Paul had no authority to create new holy days. In the text quoted, Paul was speaking of yearly ceremonial days. He was seeking to divorce the Jewish Christian *from* continuing to regard with holiness the feast days of the ceremonial system (*Leviticus 23:1-2, 4-37, 39-44*). Note that verse 3 and verse 38 indicate that the weekly Sabbath is distinct *from* the ceremonial, or yearly, sabbaths.) He also sought to lead them not to judge one another on the matter of observing these ceremonial laws.

The "every day" of Romans 14:5-6 sometimes means the "six working days" (*Exodus 16:4*). Let us remember also that Christ is the one who esteems the seventh day above the other weekly days. He places His special blessing on it. If you invite me to a dinner at your home on Saturday and I come on Sunday, I simply miss the occasion. If a man has seven sons, he cannot make the firstborn the lastborn and no one else can. Neither can any mere human transfer the sacredness that God placed on the seventh day to the first day.

Let us keep in mind five facts: (1) On the seventh day God rested. (2) The seventh day is the only weekly day to which God gave a sacred name. (3) It is the only one He blessed. (4) It is the only one He hallowed. (5) It is the only one He has commanded us to keep (*Genesis 2:1-3; Exodus 20:8-11*).

You need not fear that you will sin by not keeping Sunday for there is no Biblical law demanding Sunday observance. There is no instruction whatever about keeping it. According to *Exodus 20:9*, the first day is just another working day.

4: WAS THE SEVENTH-DAY SABBATH NAILED TO THE CROSS?

The apostle Paul would answer, "God forbid!" But Paul does make it clear that the Jewish ceremonial sabbaths were nailed to the cross. Here are his words:

Colossians 2:14-17: "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross; and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it. Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ."

It is plain that these sabbaths are "shadow" sabbaths. A reading of *Leviticus 23* will show that they came only once a year, and on different days of the week. They belonged to the system of "ordinances" given to the Jews. Read *Ephesians 2: 15*.

Dr. Adam Clarke says:

"The apostle speaks here in reference to some particulars of the handwriting of ordinances, which had been taken away, viz., the distinction of meats and drinks. . and the necessity of observing certain

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holydays or festivals, such as new moons and particular sabbaths. There is no intimation here that the Sabbath was done away with or that its moral use was superseded by the introduction of Christianity."

On Colossians 2: 16, Dr. Albert Barnes writes:

"But the use of the term in the plural number [sabbaths], and the connection, show that he [Paul] had his eye on the great number of days which were observed by the Hebrews as festivals, as a part of their ceremonial and typical law, and not on the moral law, or the Ten Commandments. No part of the moral law—no one of the Ten Commandments—could be spoken of as a shadow of good things to come."

All informed students agree with these correct statements. The yearly, shadow, or ceremonial sabbaths were nailed to the cross.

5: ARE NOT CHRISTIANS TOLD TO ASSEMBLE ON THE FIRST DAY?

No. But here is the text quoted to support this idea:

Hebrews 10:25: "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."

Many honest persons have thought that Hebrews 10:25 speaks of the first day of the week, but a reading of the passage will settle the question conclusively (2 Peter 3:10 on "the day approaching").

6: IS NOT SUNDAY THE LORD'S DAY?

No. John does not say that Sunday is the Lord's day when he says, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day" (*Revelation 1:10*). Sunday is just not in Revelation 1:10!

You may read the Bible from cover to cover, and nowhere is it remotely intimated that the first day of the week is the Lord's day. The Sabbath is the Lord's day, Christ said, "The Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath" (*Mark 2:28*). God Himself, speaking from Sinai, said, 'The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God.' Here the Lord claims the Sabbath as His day: therefore it is the Lord's day. And speaking through the prophet Isaiah, He calls the Sabbath "My holy day" (*Isaiah 58:13*). Words cannot be plainer. The Lord's day is the Sabbath, the seventh day of the week.

7: WHAT EXCUSES ARE SOMETIMES OFFERED FOR NOT OBSERVING THE SABBATH?

1. "I don't believe in that old Jewish Sabbath."

The Bible never calls the Sabbath Jewish. It is the "Sabbath of the Lord thy God" (*Exodus 20: 10*). It was "made for man," not for any special race (*Mark 2:27-28*). When you stop to think of it, it is actually blasphemous to say that the seventh-day Sabbath—the memorial of the Creation of our world (*Genesis 2:1-3*) is "just for the Jews," And here is a word for those who don't believe in "those old laws."

Jeremiah 6:16: "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls" (Isaiah 58; 12-14).

2. "I am afraid of new doctrines."

The Sabbath dates from creation. Read again Genesis 2: 1-3.

3. "My mother and father kept Sunday."

God will hold them accountable only for the light they had. "Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth" (*John 9:41*). Obedience is of more importance than earthly relatives. Read *Matthew 12:47-50*.

We are to walk in the light while we have the light.

John 12:35: "Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth."

4. "Many scholarly men keep Sunday."

Listen to these words of Hosea:

Hosea 10:13: "Ye have plowed wickedness, ye have reaped iniquity; ye have eaten the fruit of lies: because thou didst trust in thy way, in the multitude of thy mighty men."

1 Corinthians 1:26: "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called" (Proverbs 19:27).

5. "Almost everyone keeps Sunday."

Matthew 7:13-14: "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

6. "The Sabbath can't be kept on a round world."

The God of heaven, who made the world round, commanded us to keep the Bible Sabbath. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (*Genesis 1:1; Exodus 20:8-11*).

7. "It is inconvenient to keep the Sabbath."

Matthew 16:24: "Then said Jesus unto His disciples, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."

The privileges and blessings of following Jesus outweigh all trials and inconveniences.

8. "Sabbathkeeping interferes with my business and family support."

Matthew 6:33: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

Mark 8:36: "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

9. "The Sabbath brings trouble and division."

A man's foes, said Jesus, may be those of his own household. Read *Matthew 10:34-38*. It may also bring persecution, but the Saviour said:

Matthew 5:11: "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and

shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake" (John 12:42-43).

Acts 5:29 "We ought to obey God rather than men," said Peter (Acts 4:18-20; 5:28).

Thank God, all do not make excuses. They have learned that the Sabbath is a "delight," and that it brings great blessings! Yes, there is some scorn, but they are happy to bear reproach in order to follow in the footsteps of the Man of Calvary and be part of the great movement that belts the globe in these closing hours of the judgment. May God be very near to you, dear friend, as you search to know His way for yourself. The Sabbath truth is being proclaimed in more than 800 language and dialect areas. Hundreds of thousands are keeping the Sabbath the world over, and thousands more are taking their stand as the days go by.