

# “In It You Shall Do No Work ....”

## We Need to Review These Words Often

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Perhaps I am being trite by restating the obvious to everyone who has a conscience for obeying the Fourth Commandment. After all, this commandment we all cherish and follow to the best of our ability, for the law states,

“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 male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates” (Exodus 20:9-10).

Isaiah expounds upon the principles of keeping the Sabbath holy when Yahweh declares,

“If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of the 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; and I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father” (Isaiah 58:13-14).

Many books and articles have been written on the subject of how to observe the Sabbath day, and I do not intend to make this an extended dissertation on the subject. A brief sampling of Sabbath books from my library include *The Sabbath in the New Testament* by Samuel Bachiocchi (Biblical Perspectives, Barrien Springs, Michigan, 1990), *A Sign Between You and Me* by Frank Houtz (Dry Bones Restoration Company, Winchester, Kentucky, 2004), *The Forgotten Day* by Desmond Ford (Desmond Ford Publications, Newcastle, California, 1981), *From Sundown to Sundown* by May-Ellen Colon (Pacific Press Publishing Association, Oshawa, Ontario, 2008), and *The Sabbath: Symbol of Creation and Re-Creation* by Herbert Saunders (Seventh Day Baptist Center, Janesville, Wisconsin, 1970). There are many more older or recently published sources I could have cited as well.

It is never without merit to review what our Creator means by not working on the seventh day. Of course, our bodies will not just automatically shut down at sunset on Friday evening; the issue is what we must do with the energy we have on the seventh day to serve the Creator. We understand that we must not perform our usual “servile work” on this day that earns us money or other sustenance in order to provide for our families. That is the “work” God is referring to here, although the priesthood “worked” on the Sabbath. Let us clear up that supposed anomaly first of all.

Jesus straightened out the accusative Pharisees in Matthew 12:5 when He told them that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane [*bebeloo*] the Sabbath, but are blameless. Numbers 28:9-10 and many other Scriptures show that the priests were required to offer sacrifices on the seventh day; they were, in fact, assigned to a schedule of 24 courses during which they would work a particular week — twice a year — as well as during the annual Holy Days ( I Chronicles 24:3-19).

However, recall that the priestly Levites received no inheritance of land as did the other tribes of Israel. Read this fact in Numbers 18:20-21.

“Then the Lord said to Aaron: ‘You shall have no inheritance in their [Israel’s] land, nor shall you have any portion among them; I am your portion and your inheritance among the children of Israel.

Behold, I have given the children of Levi *all the tithes in Israel as an inheritance* in return for the work which they perform, the work of the tabernacle of meeting” (emphasis mine).

So, the tithes and sacrifices were Levi’s inheritance. The tithes were not wages; they were their inheritance, equivalent to the land given to the other eleven tribes of Israel. The servants of God were not hirelings!

We of the ecclesia today, as for the entire New Testament period, are the priesthood of the Messiah, as stated in I Peter 2:9, “But you are a chosen generation, *a royal priesthood*, a holy nation, His own special people ...” (emphasis mine). We in essence are performing the duties of the Levites, as it were, in offering sacrifices to God through our daily living, keeping His laws, commandments, statutes, and judgments in the footsteps of Jesus (I John 2:6; 5:2-3; Galatians 2:20; Genesis 26:5). On the Sabbath day we might be said to, in essence, work God’s work when we assemble, sing praises to His Name, preach His words, and listen to the teachings of others. We do not perform sacrifices of bulls and sheep and goats, but we might pull an ox or sheep out of a ditch (Matthew 11:12; Luke 14:5), feed our animals (Luke 13:15), or eat some food found along the way while taking a Sabbath stroll (Matthew 12:1-3). Jesus cut through the rigid rules the Pharisees and Jewish elders had built around what is to be a delightful seventh day (Isaiah 58:13), “teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Isaiah 29:13; Matthew 15:9; Mark 7:7). The Israelite leaders wanted to kill Him for breaking *their* laws surrounding the seventh day.

Thus, we are led to the question, as being sons of God and the present-day priesthood, what constitutes the work that we must avoid on the holy Sabbath? The day is to be a delight, but we are not to do our own pleasure. Making it a delight while not doing our own pleasure may sound incongruous, but is it really? Hardly!

As for the Levites of old — though we are not a part of that Levitical priesthood, which has become obsolete (Hebrews 8:13) — our inheritance is in God Almighty! We have a great God who provides us with work to sustain ourselves and our families six days a week, but the seventh day we desist from those labors and *rest* in the fellowship of one another. The day is indeed a holy convocation (Leviticus 23:3), and we should, whenever possible, assemble on that day with brethren.

That rest involves what Paul pointed out in I Corinthians 14:26-29: singing, teaching, prophesying, and sharing our spiritual gifts with one another (I Peter 4:10). It involves removing ourselves from the burdens of this present evil world and dwelling wholly upon the realm of our Creator, and the coming millennial age. Even as the Eternal made the heavens, earth, and sea in six days — and rested on the seventh day — so we ache in our hearts for the coming re-creation of the earth and Christ’s thousand year reign! As I John 2:15-17 states,

“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life — is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”

The entire issue of keeping the seventh day correctly rests solely upon our attitude toward our Creator ... knowing and serving Him and one another ... wanting to please Him. We must live during the weekly Sabbath day as if we were already living within the Kingdom of God, the seventh 1,000 years of mankind’s tenure on the earth! Please check back to the July-August 2018 *Sabbath Sentinel* for the article “That Mysterious Sabbath Verse — Exodus 20:11,” which delves further into this subject.

Our attitude, our attitude. When we keep the day as a day of holiness, of speaking His words, of honoring Him, of congregating with brethren, of making it a delight, of singing praises to His Name, of serving one another with our spiritual gifts of teaching, administrating, prophesying, and on and on the list goes ... then we will avoid the pitfalls of serving the self on this day “For to be carnally minded is death, but to be

spiritually minded is life and peace” (Romans 8:6).

We can do good on the Sabbath day, but we cannot receive pay for the good that we do. Look at a few of Christ’s examples.

Healing on the Sabbath (Matthew 12:10-13; Luke 14:1-4; John 9:1-7)

Casting out demons on the Sabbath (Luke 4:31-35)

Teaching on the Sabbath (Matthew 4:23; Luke 4:16; 13:10)

Whatever He did was to uplift and edify His fellow man, never to do His own pleasure. Here are some things that we might do on the Sabbath — not to replace fellowship but to complement it — in conformity with the spirit of the Fourth Commandment.

Enjoy a walk or drive through a beautiful natural area to praise God’s creativity ... or even have fellowship in such an environment

Help a brother or neighbor — or yourself — in a time of crisis, such as from a storm, fire, or accident ... an “ox in a ditch”

Visit those who are sick or infirm, or in jail

Provide food or clothing for the needy at a charity event

Attend an uplifting concert of music from Mozart or Beethoven

After all, we are told in Matthew 25:40, “ ... in as much as you did it [the good works] to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.” That statement must apply to the Sabbath day as much as any other day. Of course, we ought not refrain from fellowshiping when we can, but these acts of kindness can complement the day.

There are some situations that are difficult to address, since they involve necessary care of animals every day which brings income to the home. Some brethren operate dairy farms, and the cows have to be fed and milked twice a day; it is impossible to avoid working on the Sabbath and thus contribute to the family’s income through one’s work. I know this situation well, since I was raised on a dairy farm. Such a situation presents a quandary, and must be dealt with on an individual basis, but my recommendation is for dairy farmers to move into beef or other livestock to avoid the conflict with Sabbath dictates. My wife and I milked a cow for many years, but we would allow the calf to nurse the cow on the Sabbath, thus relieving us of that work.

We need to examine ourselves in our keeping of the holy Sabbath, and be sure we are not earning money on that day, serving our carnal nature by watching sports events, listening to unholy music, mingling with people that are working their everyday jobs, hunting or fishing, gardening, mowing the lawn, or any function that diverts us from the true spirit of the rest day.

Neither should we cause others to do work for us on the Sabbath. Hired gardeners, pool service men, and construction people need to take a break from serving your household on that day. I personally believe that applies to eating at restaurants as well, since having the waiter, cook, and other restaurant workers serve you is contrary to the Biblical command of having your servant do no work.

The Sabbath is a day in which we must do no servile work, but make it a day as if you were living in the next age. What a glorious time that will be (I Corinthians 2:9), a time that is made for our good and for the good and uplift of those around us.

“The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath!” (Mark 2:27).