

Keeping the Sabbath Holy

1- Objectives

- ❖ Why to keep the Sabbath (the day of the Lord)?
- ❖ Sunday is the actual day of the Lord (the day of rest)
- ❖ How to keep holy the day of the Lord

2- References

- ❖ The Ten Commandments (Volume 1) by HH Pope Shenouda III

3- Scriptural Verse

- ❖ “Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you” (Exodus 31:13)

4- Lesson Guidelines

It is a blessed day, a day of rest in the Lord:

- ❖ God blessed and consecrated the Sabbath Himself before giving the Law or the Commandments to the people. He did great things and said about it “good” or “very good” but blessed and consecrated only the day of rest to show us that useful and productive work cannot be blessed as one calm day with God. Remember the works of Mary and Martha.
- ❖ God blessed the seventh day because He rested in it. The creation of the world did not take from God any effort, but the real toil was in the redemption and the true rest God took was after the salvation of man, while the rest on the Sabbath had been just a symbol for the Resurrection; and so Sunday is the Sabbath in its spiritual meaning.
- ❖ Seriousness of the Commandment appears in that its punishment was putting to death the person who violates it and to be cut off his people “Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death” (Exodus 31: 15). See the incident in (Numbers 15:32-36). God even threatened all the city of Jerusalem of the same punishment for breaking the Sabbath. He said, “But if you do not listen to Me, to keep the Sabbath day holy...then I will kindle a fire in its gates; it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem and shall not be quenched” (Jeremiah 17:27).
- ❖ Since the Sabbath is a day of sanctification, there must be repentance from sin and reconciliation with our brothers. So prior to Communion we should have confessed and reconciled with each other.

When Was The Commandment Of The Sabbath Given?

- ❖ The commandment of The Sabbath is older than the Ten Commandments. Therefore when God wrote it on the first tablet, He started it with the word “Remember” to remind them of it. The Ten Commandments are written in Exodus 20, while the Commandment of the Sabbath comes in chapter 16 with the rules of gathering the manna. The blessing they had on Friday in the manna given them from heaven was a symbol of the blessing given to the whole world by the Lord Jesus Christ “the bread of life.”

Who rests on the Sabbath?

- ❖ It is a rest for all; masters, slaves, young and old, even the livestock. God knows our nature and that it needs one day's rest every week. So, He gave us the Sabbath as a gift for rest showing the spirit of mercy and equality in the Law. Even to the solid land He gave a year of rest and promised to bless the 6th year to cover up for the 7th year.

- ❖ Moses the prophet said, "See, the Lord has given you the Sabbath". Great! It is then a gift or a reward from God, not a burden or a heavy load. This is God's way in giving rest to someone or something. He gives more fruit. By this He teaches us that coveting for worldly matters destroys us spiritually, physically and financially. Take for example a person who works the whole week; his health gets worse, his nerves and spirituality break down. He cries to the Lord, but the Lord replies, 'I have given you the Sabbath, but you did not obey'!

Blessings of Keeping the Sabbath:

Today, who breaks the Lord's Day is not cast out of the camp, not killed, nor stoned. Would this be a cause for us to neglect God's commandments? God forbids.

- ❖ If you keep the Lord's Day, you will benefit physically and spiritually. Moreover, you will have a blessing according to the Lord's promise, "Who keeps the Sabbath, not profaning it...and hold fast My covenant - these I will bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on My altar...I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off" (Isaiah 56:2-7)
- ❖ The Sabbath is given as a sign: "You shall keep My Sabbaths; for this is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, given in order that you may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you" (Exodus 31:13).
- ❖ What is the Sabbath but the Lord's Day that we should keep holy? In its essence it is not abolished; for we still honor the Lord's Day, but in a more powerful way. When we keep the Lord's Day holy, we remember that He sanctified us with His death and resurrection.
- ❖ This small Sabbath then has changed into Sunday in Christianity. It was on Sunday that the Lord Jesus Christ resurrected from the dead and appeared to the disciples and the women. On that day the disciples used to meet and break bread (Acts 2:46). It is also the day on which the Holy Spirit descended on the disciples and the early Church was founded. The main point is that we keep the Lord's Day holy and make of it a blessing to our lives and rejoice and be joyful on it in the Lord.
- ❖ The Pharisees missed the meaning of the Sabbath because they didn't realize that it was not about just taking a break and resting but it is about participating in God's sanctifying process. When the Liturgy is over, we take the Lord Jesus with us. The ending really marks a beginning. The Liturgy becomes the launch-pad for the rest of the week. Just like when God finished creating the world, it was the beginning of life for His creation.

How do we keep the Lord's Day in Christianity?

- ❖ The Law commanded that no work be done on the Lord's Day. And as they were used to celebrate the Sabbath from evening to evening (Leviticus 23:32), they prepared themselves from Friday and they called Friday "the day of preparation" (Luke 23:54).
- ❖ The Jews used to carry out the Commandment "you shall not do any work" in a literal way lacking spirit. Even doing good deeds on the Sabbath was considered by them a sin! So they opposed the Lord Christ regarding this matter.
- ❖ But the commandment not to work on that day did not mean turning the Lord's Day into a day of laziness, sleep and rest in bed! Good things ought to be done on it. So a question that caused argument between the Jews and the Lord Christ was, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" (Matthew 12:10, Luke 14:3). The Lord used intentionally to heal many people on the Sabbath: For example, He created eyes to the blind, out of the mud, in a miraculous way that demonstrated His divinity, but the Jews were literal and did not see the greatness and significance of the miracle but only said that He was a sinner because He did not observe the Sabbath (John 9:16,24).

- ❖ He used to say "The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27), and said to them, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice" (Matthew 12:7).
- ❖ The Lord Jesus wanted to prove to them that a spiritual work is lawful on the Sabbath; as He said, "On the Sabbath, the priests in the temple break the Sabbath and yet are guiltless" (Matthew 12:5, 6). By this, He meant circumcision and offering of sacrifices on the Sabbath. We ought not to understand the commandment of the Sabbath in a literal way, "for the letter kills" (2 Corinthians 3:6).

Religious Teaching and Worship on the Lord's Day

- ❖ God has commanded that the Sabbath be allocated to worship "a Sabbath of complete rest, a holy convocation" (Leviticus 23:3). It means that spiritual meetings should be held on it. He said also, "from Sabbath to Sabbath, all flesh shall come to worship before Me" (Isaiah 66:23). He ordered also that burnt offerings and grain offerings be offered to Him on the Sabbath (Ezekiel 46:4).
- ❖ The Holy Scriptures were also read on that day "For in every city, for generations past, Moses has had those who proclaim him, for he has been read aloud every Sabbath in the Synagogues" (Acts 15:21). Not only was the Sabbath a day for worship, but also for teaching. The Lord Christ taught on the Sabbath (Mark 6:2). His apostles did so as well. St. Paul the Apostle used to teach in the synagogues every Sabbath (Acts 18:4) & (Acts 17:1, 2).
- ❖ God requires you to make this day holy for Him. Therefore the Holy Scriptures are read in the Church in the Mass every Sunday, and sermons are delivered to the people, and children are taught in the Sunday schools.

5- Conclusion

- ❖ The Lord's Day is not a day for laziness and sluggishness, but a day for worship, contemplation, spiritual meetings and readings and not just stopping worldly works; otherwise we would be negative on it.
- ❖ Keeping the day holy means designating it for the Lord. You do not own this day to act on it as you like. It is the Lord's, you should give it to Him; do the works that make you grow spiritually; for as your body is in need of rest, your spirit also needs to rest in the Lord.

6- Activitiesw / Discussion Points

- ❖ A Story: One day a rich man was returning home in his car after shopping, and he was stopped on a sudden by a godly man crying to him 'Take care, you man, see what you are treading on'. He stopped quickly thinking he ran over a child, but he found nothing. He asked that godly man who answered him, 'You are treading on the Lord's day. You tread on the Fourth Commandment'.
- ❖ Question: why should we specify only one day for the Lord although we are asked as Christians to pray the whole time and do the spiritual and good deeds all the time; we even pray masses sometimes every day.
- ❖ Answer: We start by keeping the day holy and after that we can consecrate whatever we like to God according to the degree of our love. It is exactly like giving the tithe; You cannot say all my money to the Lord while you are not giving the tithe, but after giving what you owe to God you can grow spiritually in giving till you give all your life to God as do the monks and whoever love God from a pure heart.