

Yahweh, the Almighty God of Israel, is with us
"Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet,
and shew my people their transgression,
and the house of Jacob their sins." Isaiah 58:1

Vital Biblical Topics

Study Prayerfully & Study Carefully

Keeping the Sabbath

The Sabbath is Yahweh's holy day. In (Exodus 20: 8-11) we are commanded to refrain from doing our own work on the **seventh day of every week**, which is Saturday. **The Sabbath, however, is not to be a day of idleness.** Yahweh set it aside for doing His work. Devoting the day to Yahweh's work is translated by Christ as doing good on the Sabbath day. (Matthew 12: 12, Mark 3: 4)

Is it Lawful to do Good on the Sabbath Day?

Doing Yahweh's work (preaching His Word, visiting the sick, helping the aged, the wounded, the lonely, studying Yahweh's handiwork in nature etc.) is permitted on the Sabbath day. All these activities can be described as **'doing good.'** **The Pharisees didn't understand this fine distinction between doing one's own work and doing Yahweh's work; but Christ did.** His healing work on the **seventh day** of the week is proof that doing good on the Sabbath is perfectly in order. That is why it is perfectly in order for doctors and nurses etc. to work on the Sabbath. They are doing good, they are saving lives, who might otherwise die.

Seeking one's own economic advancement (normal secular work, business deals, debt collecting etc.) is not recommended on the Sabbath day. These things, though perfectly acceptable on other days of the week, should not be done on the Sabbath day. In short, we should rest from our own work on Yahweh's Sabbath and concentrate on His. **The Master set us a perfect example in this matter of Sabbath keeping; he went out of his way to heal on the Sabbath day - of doing good - even though the Pharisees didn't agree.** Further definition of these broad principles is not an area on which we wish to pontificate.

A lot of **hot air** has been spoken about **'how to keep the Sabbath.'** **A Voice In The Wilderness - Canada** has no wish to add to the confusion. Each believer will need to decide for him/herself how to keep the Sabbath day. **Why, even the Saviour's performance was not up to the standards of the religious leaders of his day. Who are we to expect a better assessment of ours?**

Let each believer examine the issue carefully and decide for him/herself. Going beyond the plain statements of Scripture is a dangerous occupation I can assure you. **More people have rejected the vital issue of 'faith in Jesus' because of incorrect opinions about how the Sabbath should be kept than any other issue.** No doubt you know what I mean. Isaiah chapter 58, especially verses 13 - 14, offers some very good advice about how to keep the Sabbath day. Read and study that whole chapter.

Isaiah 58:
13: "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:

14: *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.*"

Matthew 12: 1-9

The Pharisees thought that the disciples were breaking the law when they plucked a few ears of corn on the Sabbath and ate the grains. **But the Pharisees were wrong.** That act was not a violation of the Sabbath law. **The disciples were 'guiltless' as Christ pointed out in verse 7.**

Matthew 12: 1: *"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.*
2: *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.*
3: *But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungred, and they that were with him;*
4: *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?*
5: *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?*
6: *But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple.*
7: ***But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.***
8: *For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day.*
9: *And when he was departed thence, he went into their synagogue:"*

Mark 2: 27-28

The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath. **This passage is given to show that to save life, certain actions - which under normal circumstances would not be acceptable - are permissible.** For example: rescuing an ox from a pit, helping to put out a fire that is endangering life, feeding someone with sacred bread who might otherwise die of hunger. These actions are excusable in certain circumstances. In the same way labouring to save life on the Sabbath is doing good. **It is not a sin.**

Mark 2: 27: *"And he said unto them, **The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath:***
28: *Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath."*

Luke 6: 6-11

The same principle was demonstrated in the healing of the man with a withered arm. **To restore him on the Sabbath day was perfectly in order; so the Saviour healed him.** The Pharisees were furious; **but somehow they couldn't see that the Sabbath was given for mankind's good:** rest from toil, for healing, for companionship, for instruction in Yahweh's Word and all the other blessings **this world so desperately needs.** The Pharisees had misunderstood this beautiful command; and burdened it with restrictions which made it more of a curse than a blessing. **Messiah went out of his way to tear away their man-made restrictions.**

Luke 6:
6: *"And it came to pass also on another sabbath, that he entered into the synagogue and taught: and there was a man whose right hand was withered.*
7: *And the scribes and Pharisees watched him, whether he would heal on the sabbath day; that they might find an accusation against him.*
8: *But he knew their thoughts, and said to the man which had the withered hand, Rise up, and stand forth in the midst. And he arose and stood forth.*
9: *Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing; Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it?"*

10: And looking round about upon them all, he said unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he did so: and his hand was restored whole as the other.

11: **And they were filled with madness; and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus.**”

When does the Sabbath Begin?

The weekly Sabbath begins at sunset on Friday evening and ends at sunset on Saturday evening.

Leviticus 23: 32: **“From evening unto evening shall you celebrate your Sabbaths.”**

Because the sun can set at different times during the year and also at different times in different countries, the Sabbath could start any time between 3 and 11pm. It depends on when the sun sets in your area. **Just watch the sun set on Friday evenings and you will know when the Sabbath starts.** In Canada's mid winter the Sabbath start as early as 4 pm. But in high summer when the sun sets much later it could start at 9:30 pm. However in some countries the sun sets more or less at a regular time - about 6pm. As I said above, you'll need to look out for sunset in your own district to know the exact time. Some believe that the word ‘**evening**’ does not mean ‘**sunset**’ but some hours before. Others think that evening means several hours after sunset when it is dark. The Scriptures quite clearly state that evening is when the sun sets. Here are several texts that prove this:

Mark 1: 32: **“And at evening when the sun did set...”**

Joshua 8: 29: **“And the king of Ai he hanged on a tree until **eventide**: and as soon as the sun was down, Joshua commanded that they should take his carcass down...”**

Joshua 10: 26: **“And afterward Joshua smote them, and slew them, and hanged them on five trees: and they were hanging upon the trees **until the evening**.**

27: And it came to pass at the time of the **going down of the sun, that Joshua commanded, and they took them down off the trees, and cast them into the cave wherein they had been hid, and laid great stones in the cave's mouth, which remain until this very day.”**

See also (1 Kings 22: 35-36 & 2 Chron.18: 34) where the evening clearly means at sunset. In (2 Samuel 3: 25) we see how king David reckoned that the day ended when the sun went down. **In short the Sabbath starts at sundown on Friday evening and ends at sundown on Saturday evening.**

Kindling Fires on the Sabbath

Now to the matter of lighting fires. (Exodus 35. 3) In ancient days and perhaps even for some in these modern times - the lighting of a wood fire was quite a laborious task. It involves collecting, cutting and carrying wood; and this time-consuming work frustrated the main object of Sabbath keeping; it came in the way of increasing holiness. It was a laborious task and was therefore forbidden - and still is. If, however, the lighting of a fire, (e.g. an electric fire, an electric bulb or torch or an electric or gas cooker) can be accomplished without such laborious effort, and most modern fires are lit with virtually no effort at all, then in our judgment it is not Sabbath-breaking to light such a fire or lamp on the Sabbath or even to heat a meal prepared the day before. Indeed in our part of the world (Canada) it is dark for most of the day during winter; the sun is up for only 7-8 hours and it is very cold too. So we use our electric, oil and gas heaters and fires.

Also remember that in the extreme north others have an even worse time - the winter nights are very long and there is sometimes no daylight for 3 months in the year. For these people, as for us, the lighting of a fire or lamp on the Sabbath is an absolute necessity - **if the day is to be a joy**. So you can see that there is some difference between the ancient Israelite in the desert who would spend a lot of time gathering and cutting wood to light a fire and the modern believer living in a world where a simple flick of a switch can put on a fire or light. It is for this reason that we emphasise that the commandment is firstly - **Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy** when advising believers to obey Yahweh. The other activities are secondary - and we leave it to the individual congregations and believers to decide for themselves by weighing up local conditions whether or not the lighting of a fire is wrong or right.

At all costs I would hate to put off a potential Sabbath-keeper by insisting that he/she mustn't light a fire or lamp by using a switch on the Sabbath day. Some believers, I am told, do not even use their electric or gas fires on the Sabbath, but I have not met any of them - and I doubt if they live in the distant north or south of this world. Nevertheless, if such individuals do exist, and perhaps they do, then I would be the last to judge them; for their stand - which would appear to be more correct than my own - is praise worthy to say the least. **A Voice In The Wilderness - Canada** presents the truth as best we understand it: and speaking for ourselves in Canada, all we can say is that we use electricity, gas and oil fires to heat and light our homes on the Sabbath day and even to warm up meals prepared mostly on the day before. Concerning the preparation of meals on the **Feast Days** (which are all High Sabbath days) the Bible says that meals may be prepared on them. I quote the text.

Exodus 12: 16: *“And in the first day there shall be an holy convocation, and in the seventh day there shall be an holy convocation to you; no manner of work shall be done in them, **save that which every man must eat, that only may be done of you.**”*

This text clearly allows the cooking of meals on Yahweh's Feasts. And the weekly Sabbath is included with the other feast days in (Leviticus chapter 23). All are Sabbath days. Indeed all are rest and feast days to a greater or lesser degree. One could hardly have a feast day without cooking a meal. The preparation of meals is allowed on the Feast Day Sabbaths. And we are inclined to think it is allowed on the weekly Sabbath too. But again let us say: wherever possible all laborious work (collecting and cutting wood etc.) should be done on the day before.

Transportation on the Sabbath

Those who live some distance from church and who would find a walk exhausting should drive to church, either in their own cars or by public transport. (bus or train) A four kilometer walk to a young person is easy; but to an elderly person it can be a great distance. It's not only the distance that counts, but also the fitness and health of the person walking. **Travelling long distances, however, is not advised.** But believers must decide for themselves. If they can drive or walk without becoming tired, fair enough, but if not, then better to stay at home. But always remember, **'The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath.'** (Mark 2: 27)

Does Sabbath-Keeping save a Person?

The answer is **NO! Salvation** is a free gift. It comes to a believer through faith in Jesus (Yahshua) the only begotten Son of the Most High. No man or woman can earn salvation. It is a free gift. Keeping a particular commandment will, in itself, not earn salvation any more than being honest will obliterate past lies, or being thrifty cancel existing debts. Persistent sin can, however, jeopardise salvation - even though faith is verbally expressed. Faith, to be acceptable must be followed by obedience, else it is dead. The book of James makes this point abundantly clear. In short, a person who **deliberately** breaks the Sabbath commandment, after being convicted about it, is on extremely dangerous ground. This of course applies to every one of the **Ten Commandments**. Persistent refusal to acknowledge and obey Yahweh's law is the sure path to destruction. But faith and obedience - even though they both may be feeble - is the best policy. In other words: **Trust and Obey.**

Sport on the Sabbath

Sport should not be engaged in on the Sabbath. Ball games, hockey, curling, swimming, long hikes and cycle rides etc. may be engaged in on weekdays. The Sabbath is a rest day, a day set apart for Yahweh's work - not man's sport.

Buying & Selling

We recommend that, **except in absolute emergencies**, that there be no buying and selling on the Sabbath. (Nehemiah 9: 15-22)

Funeral / Burials on the Sabbath

Funeral / Burials, as you can imagine, call for a lot of physical labour: preparing and carrying the corpse and digging graves. This particular matter is not dealt with in the Scriptures; but Israel as a nation did not bury their

dead on the Sabbath; nor do they do it to this day. Speaking for myself, I do not not attend a funeral / burial on the Sabbath. If at all possible you should try to persuade people to bury their dead on the other six days of the week: as this would not threaten life or cause undue hardship.

What does A Voice In The Wilderness do on the Sabbath?

Our program in **A Voice In The Wilderness - Canada** follows a pattern like this:

- **Friday Evening:** Prayer and Bible Study 8pm - 10pm approximately.
- **Sabbath Morning:** Prayer and Bible Study 9am - 11am approximately.
- **Sabbath Afternoon:** Divine Sabbath Service 2.30pm - 4.30pm.
- **Sabbath Afternoon:** Following services we take it in turn to meet for dinner either in our - or in another's home.
- **After dinner** - weather permitting - we go for a walk in a quiet park, visit friends, visit the sick, study, sing etc.
- **No energetic sports: swimming, golf, baseball, football etc.**
- **Sabbath Evening:** After a light tea we all return to our respective homes.

As you can see, for **A Voice In The Wilderness - Canada**, the Sabbath is a worship & family day. I trust that puts you in the picture.

AMEN!

In the Son's Name - For the Father's glory.

Elder: *Max W. Mader*

A Voice In The Wilderness - Canada
Home

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