LESSON 25

The Lord's Day or the Christian Sabbath

Read: Genesis 2:1-3; Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12-15; Psalm 92; Revelation 1:10

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy."

I. The Lord's Day is a Divine Institution

The Bible is the most important book in the world. This is because the Bible is the Word of God. God our Creator has revealed much of His greatness in nature. The sun, moon and stars, and all created beings bring a clear message to all mankind. They teach us that there is a great and glorious Creator. The Word of God tells us more fully who this great God is.

The sacred Book reveals that God our Maker is eternal, infinite and unchangeable in His being, in His wisdom and power, in His holiness and justice, and in His goodness, mercy and truth. This God is a Spirit who requires that we should worship Him in Spirit and in truth. See John 4:24.

The worship of God is a prescribed worship. God Himself teaches in His Word how He desires to be worshipped. In His holy Law, He even stipulates the time of worship. God, Who requires that we should also honour Him on the other six days of the week, commands us to worship Him in a special manner on the Sabbath Day.

Our first concern in this lesson is, what is the origin of the observance of the Lord's Day? When we answer this question, we do not point you to state governments nor to church councils or officials. The Christian Sabbath is not a human invention. This institution has a far more exalted origin. The Sabbath or the Lord's Day is a divine institution. The Fourth Commandment is of heavenly origin. At the completion of the magnificent creation, when God discontinued His marvelous creative activities, God provided a special blessing for Adam and Eve. God instituted for His own glory and the good of mankind the seventh day as a sabbatical festival.

1. Q. Where do we read in the Word of God about the origin of the Sabbath Day?

   A. In Genesis 2, the verses t _ _ and t _ _ _ _ .

2. Q. How is this recorded in verse _ _ _ _ _ ?

   A. "And _ , and _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ it."

3. Q. What does it mean that the seventh day was sanctified?

   A. It means that the seventh day was devoted to _ _ _ .

II. The Significance of the Lord's Day

This blessed and beneficial commandment is of the utmost importance. If its significance is rightly understood, then the sacred day will not be thoughtlessly neglected or abused but will be genuinely loved and gratefully observed.

As God did rest on the seventh day, so He ordered Adam and Eve to rest on the seventh day. We should not view God's resting as a mere repose after wearisome activities. God is an infinitely glorious being. He did not need the Sabbath Day because He was weary. Yet God did rest; He ceased from making new things.

How then must we view the truth that God rested? Perhaps we may compare the rest of God to what an artist does after he has successfully completed a great work of art. He surveys his achievements with satisfaction and enjoyment, or, if you wish, he delights in his accomplishments.

In the Genesis creation account, we read seven times that God looked at His accomplishments with satisfaction.

1. Q. How is this stated in Genesis 1: 4, 10, 12, 18, 21 and 25?

   A. "And God saw that _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ ."

2. Q. How is this described in Genesis 1:31?

   A. "And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold it was _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ ."

Man, as the crown of God's creation, was privileged by the sanctification of the Sabbath to enter into this rest and enjoyment of God. Man was to view the works of God as God saw them.

He was to delight himself in God and to admire His works. "Marvellous are Thy works…How precious also are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them!" (Psalm 139:14&17)

The Sabbath Day is a day on which man may and must remember God's indescribable glory as Creator of the universe; it is a memorial of God's marvellous creation.

God who created all things is without limitations. We are dependent on this great God. God can do whatsoever He pleases. God can give help to the helpless, hope to the hopeless, and strength to the weak. For Christ's sake, God can give salvation to the lost.

3. Q. When the Ten Commandments were given on Mount Sinai, how was the commandment regarding the Sabbath Day expressed in Exodus 20:8?

   A. "R _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ , _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ ."

4. What does the word remember at the beginning of the commandment tell us?

   (a) It teaches us that the Israelites already knew about this commandment.

   (b) It tells us that the Israelites did not know anything about the Sabbath Day.

   Underline the correct answer.

When the Lord redeemed the people of Israel from the cruel bondage of the Egyptians, the Sabbath became also a memorial of this redemption.

We read this in the Deuteronomy record of the Ten Commandments. See Deuteronomy 5:12-15. Of special significance is verse fifteen where the deliverance out of Egypt is given, as the reason for keeping the Sabbath Day.

5. Q. How is the relation between the Sabbath day and the redemption out of Egypt expressed in verse 15?

   A. "And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the LORD thy God _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ thence through _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ and by a _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ : therefore the LORD thy God commanded thee to keep the _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _."

Israel's exodus or redemption from the Egyptian bondage was in a certain sense the most important event in the entire history of the Old Testament. It marked the birth of Israel as a nation.

The significance for us today is that Israel's redemption was an anticipation of a far more glorious redemption, which is the matchless redemption accomplished by Jesus Christ. In His infinite love the Lamb of God took away the sin of the world by bearing it upon Himself.

This most amazing redemption began when Christ was born and laid in the manger of Bethlehem and was completed with Christ's atoning death at the Cross of Calvary. God the Father set His seal of approval upon the finished work of Christ by raising Him from the grave on the first day of the week.

6. Since the days of the Apostles, the Sabbath is kept on the first day of the week. What is the reason for this change?

   (a) The resurrection of Christ was on the first day of the week.

   (b) The Apostles just liked to make a new beginning.

   Underline the correct answer.

A Pastoral Message

How amazing was the miracle of Christ's resurrection. He could say, "Behold I am alive forevermore." The day of Christ's resurrection was the first New Testament Sabbath Day. On this day Christ appeared five times to His followers. His first appearance was to the sorrowful, weeping Mary Magdalene who could not live without Him. She was longing, desperately longing, for His gracious love and nearness. She was needy and Christ alone could meet her need and give her peace.

Only the living Redeemer can satisfy the heart of God's children. Christ is so precious, not only as the suffering Servant of the Lord, but also in His resurrection glory. How deep is His love and compassion; He understands a needy soul. If you and I need help, there is one address and one only. It is Christ who has a love for the needy, for the weary, and for the undone. He applies salvation by revealing Himself to the heart of the lost.

So the Lord's Day is a memorial of redemption. The great work of redemption that only Christ could do was completed at Calvary. The Lamb of God wrought salvation by His substitutionary atonement. This salvation satisfies the neediest of sinners. Everything is complete in the crucified and risen Redeemer.

Each Lord's Day we may remember Him. Is there not a need for this? Are we not needy sinners? Are we not helpless without the Saviour? Do we not need His presence and nearness? Do we not need His love and pardon? Do we not need His renewing grace? Are we not altogether dependent on Him? Where is any hope for a sinner, if it is not in Christ?

Christ came to seek and to save that which is lost. He did not come for any other purpose. O sinners, flee to Him. Make known to Him all your troubles. Do not hide the worst; do not hide the greatness of your sins. Some do not go to Christ because they think that there is no help for them. But Christ can save the worst of sinners.

How blessed is it to have the Lord's Day as a memorial of a redemption that is complete in Christ. Pray, "O Lord, open my eyes for this precious redemption that is in Christ; let me see it by faith. I am so blind and often neglect the things I should be busy with. O let me be active at the throne of grace with my need of Christ's redeeming love." How blessed is the Lord's Day!

The Observance and Sanctity of the Lord's Day

How can and must we observe and sanctify the Lord's Day? It seems best that we follow the divine instruction given unto us in God's own Word. The Bible teaches us first of all what we ought not to do, and secondly what we ought to do. In the fourth commandment God forbids us to work and to do business on the day of rest. Only works of necessity and mercy are permitted. Unnecessary travel and worldly pleasures are not allowed on the Lord's Day. Everything is forbidden that is not in harmony with the design of the day, which is to worship God in private and in public and to promote our own and our family's spiritual interests.

Public worship is a divine ordinance of the utmost importance. Sincere worshippers have always come together on the Sabbath day to pray to God, to praise His holy name and to be instructed in the truths relating to God and His service. In the book of the Psalms, we find many references to the public worship of God. The Psalms abound with expressions declaring a warm and wholehearted interest in visiting the house of God. In Psalm 122:1 we read, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD." The poet of Psalm 84 esteemed one day in the house of the Lord better than a thousand elsewhere. See Psalm 84:10.

With this instruction on the Lord's Day, we have come to the close of this series of Bible lessons. It is our prayer that the Lord may graciously use this study of His Word and bless it to the hearts of each participant for their spiritual and eternal well-being.

"This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." (Psalm 118:24)

Evaluator: _____

This is the last lesson in the Introductory Bible Course. We hope you have enjoyed doing it and that it has been a blessing to you. The CLDA has two additional courses available – the one is called the 'Acts to Revelation Course', which covers the books of the Bible from Acts to Revelation. The other is called the 'Advanced Course', which goes through the 52 Lord's Days of the Heidelberg Catechism. If you are interested in continuing lessons in one of these courses, please check off your selection below before sending in this last lesson.

- o Acts to Revelation Course
- o Advanced Course