Dear Student:

Sunday today is considered by some people as a holiday, a day for recreation and relaxation, a day with the family. Others view it as a great day for a round of golf or a time to mow the lawn. Could this attitude stem from the fact that many misunderstand the purpose for a special weekly worship day, as well as misidentifying which day God has set aside for His Sabbath day and when it begins?

Bible scholars who support the creation account in Genesis agree that God originally set aside the seventh day of the week—the day we call Saturday—as His special Sabbath day way back at the creation of this world. They also support the fact that the traditional, Biblical Sabbath day is still the seventh day of the week—the day we call Saturday.

God set aside the seventh day of the week as a perpetual reminder of His Creatorship, a reminder that this world was created by Him in six literal days. The Sabbath points man back to this great act to remind him continually that God created man in His own image. Thus the Sabbath is more than just one of the ten commandments. It is an experience in communion with God on the same day of the week that He gave to Adam and Eve. God blessed the seventh day. He sanctified it for man’s benefit. All this is clear in the creation account. For someone to come along and substitute another day—any other day, in place of God’s Sabbath, presupposes that such a person is equal to God Himself. And for someone else to pick up that day, recognizing it as a substitute, and expect to receive the blessing God promised for those who worship on His seventh-day Sabbath, borders on presumption.

What an honor God has given man, to arrange a special weekly appointment for fellowship together. The King of the universe wants me in that circle of His fellowship! He wants you to keep this appointment that He has so graciously provided. But He leaves it with us to decide. No force. No compulsion—except the drawing power of Calvary, where He showed how much He cares for us. Is He asking too much—one special appointment a week? And at the time He has arranged?

Very sincerely,
Your Bible Instructor

LESSON 16 -- SABBATH OBSERVANCE

SCRIPTURE READING: JOHN 9

God said, "Remember!" But evidently man has forgotten the divine appointment God made with him many centuries ago. Church attendance is dropping rapidly the world over. Only 5 percent of the people in France, and only 2 percent of those in England, ever attend church. Although some churches in America have shown an increase in attendance, many of the larger churches are having difficulty in luring members to any but special holiday services. Recently one church offered a prize to the family who came to church on a certain Sunday by the most unusual method of transportation!

Most people have become so preoccupied with living and having fun that they have forgotten their Maker. Too busy to really live is the schedule that many Americans have charted for themselves. Could it be that because God knew and understood that the pressures and problems man would face would make it very easy to forget His gracious
provision of love, He began the Sabbath command with the word "Remember"?

Part 1 -- THE VALUE OF THE SABBATH

1. For whose benefit was the Sabbath made?
Mark 2:27
When God commands, He does it with love. His request for us to keep the Sabbath holy is a request for joy—our joy. The world around us runs at its frantic, dizzy pace. The Sabbath is a buffer against it—a time to turn off the world; a time for physical, mental, and spiritual rest. He called it the Sabbath, which means rest.

2. Of what two things is the Sabbath designed to remind us?
Genesis 2:1
Ezekiel 20:12
Here we are reminded of two great facts: (1) God is our Maker, the Father of us all; and (2) God's objective is to sanctify us; i.e., to restore His image in us. Sabbath observance is our acknowledgement that only the Creator has the power to re-create us. Since it is Christ who sanctifies us (1 Corinthians 1:30) keeping the Sabbath shows our faith in His ability to do this for us.

3. Of what future event does the Sabbath remind us?
Isaiah 66:22, 23
By keeping the Sabbath holy we demonstrate our faith in the second coming of Christ and the recreation of all things. Each recurring Sabbath becomes a foretaste of the Sabbaths to be spent with our Saviour throughout eternity.

True Sabbathkeeping answers the three great questions mankind has faced throughout the ages: Where did we come from? Why are we here? Where are we going? . . .
• We came from God, who created us.
• We are here to become again like Him—to have His image restored in us.
• And we shall someday live with Him and rest with Him "from one Sabbath to another."

Part 2 -- HOW TO KEEP THE SABBATH HOLY

1. How should we keep the Sabbath?
Exodus 20:8

2. What is not to be done on the Sabbath?
Exodus 20: 9,10)
Frequently well-meaning Christians say, "We ought to keep every day holy, not just one." Of course, what they really mean is that we should live holy lives every day of the week. And who will quarrel with that? However, to live Christlike lives every day is not the same thing as keeping a day holy. God does not leave it up to man to define what it means to keep His day holy. He spells it out carefully for us. God expects us to earn a living, and has given us six days each week for that purpose, but the work involved in making a living is not to infringe upon God's time.

3. What about hiring others to work for us on God's holy day?
Exodus 20:10
Even if our employees or household help do not believe in God, they are not to be denied a
day of physical rest. Even domestic animals are not overlooked!

4. What else besides labor is prohibited on the Sabbath?
Isaiah 58:13 "If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from ______________, from
__________________________, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing
__________________________, nor finding thine own _____________,nor______________:

To place your foot on something is a Hebrew idiom meaning to claim ownership of it. God
says, "Stop taking over my day as if it belonged to you." God wants the Sabbath to be a
delight— the best day of the entire week! Why then, are we not to do our own pleasures on
that day? As legitimate as our hobbies and pasttimes may be, they are usually
all-absorbing. Many involve strenuous exercise. The Sabbath is a day set apart for God.
On it man is to concentrate on doing that which will please and honor God, not himself.

To illustrate: I notice on the calendar that Mother’s Day is approaching. I want to do
something special for my dear mother, now up in years, so I plan carefully. I am very fond of
pizza. Here’s a great opportunity to go to the pizza parlor and indulge. True, Mother doesn’t
particularly care for pizza, and going out saps her frail strength, but I want to do something
special for her! What’s wrong with that kind of thinking? Why, if I really want to do something
special for my mother, I will plan to do the things that she most enjoys, not what I would like
to do. She would cherish an unhurried visit. She still delights in a good game of dominoes,
and she’s very fond of mints. So I slip over with a box of mints and give her a couple hours
of my time. The game we play together and our fellowship will be relived over and over in
the coming weeks as she recalls Mother’s Day.

Just as one must know and appreciate the love of a mother in order for Mother’s Day to
mean anything to him, so the Sabbath can be of no value apart from a happy and holy
relationship with the One it honors. How appropriate it would be if our first thoughts upon
awakening each Sabbath were, "This is your day, Lord. I will rejoice and be glad in it. I want
to spend it with You. What may I do today that would bring You honor? What would please
You most?" Soon the Sabbath would become a delight to us. We would look forward to
stopping secular work and anticipate with pleasure the quiet hours of the Sabbath, and
worshiping with fellow believers in church. All through the week the Sabbath would attract
our hearts, pulling us closer to God. As we look forward to its sacred hours, we should plan
ahead to make everything ready. The house will be clean, the clothes ready, the food
prepared. The radio will be silenced and the television turned off. Newspapers, secular
books and magazines will be put away. The Sabbath has arrived, a special time for man
and his God, a time when our spiritual longings can find fulfillment in communion with our
Maker.

5. When does the Sabbath begin?
Mark 1: 21, 32; Leviticus 23:32

Only those who have experienced the peace and quiet joy of ushering in God’s holy day as
the sun sinks in the west, can fully appreciate this thoughtfulness on the part of God. Man
begins each day in the middle of the night. How much nicer it is, with all the work done, with
clean bodies and homes, for the whole family to meet together for songs of praise, for words
of Scripture, and for prayer as the Sabbath hours begin. Then again, as the sun goes to its
rest at the close of the Sabbath, we may lift our hearts and voices to Him in thanksgiving,
and ask His blessing and presence to be with us as we begin another week. What a lovely
way to begin and end God’s weekly Sabbath!
Part 3 -- HOW JESUS KEPT THE SABBATH

For a perfect example of how to keep the Sabbath holy, we may turn to the Word and see how Jesus observed it when He walked on earth. Jesus knew why the Sabbath was made and for what purpose. He knew of man's need for rest, refreshment and delight. But by the time He arrived on the scene of action, the true nature of the Sabbath had become perverted by human interference. Covered with the rubbish of human inventions, the Sabbath was no longer a blessing but a burden, no longer a delight but a drudgery. Jesus came to cast away these purely human enactments and restore the Sabbath to its rightful position. Much of His ministry was devoted to proper Sabbath observance.

1. Where was it Christ's custom to go on the Sabbath?
   Luke 4:16
   What the Jews called a synagogue, we call a church. Our Saviour attended and took part in Sabbath services—not just to get an audience, for vast crowds followed Him wherever He went. Evidently it was His way to show regard for God's holy day and to leave us an example of proper Sabbath keeping.

2. When his enemies accused him of Sabbath breaking by healing on that day, what great principle of proper Sabbath observance did Jesus give?
   Matthew 12:12
   Works of mercy, relieving pain and suffering, honor a God whose heart is touched by any kind of suffering.

3. What else did Jesus often do on the Sabbath?
   Luke 4:31
   To share with others who are hungering and thirsting for a knowledge of God, the Word of Life, is certainly an appropriate activity for the Sabbath day.

4. Why did the Pharisees accuse Jesus' disciples of breaking the Sabbath?
   Matthew 12:1, 2
   The religious leaders of His day had added to the Sabbath commandment countless restrictions of their own—restrictions that were both ridiculous and impossible to keep. Prodding in the direction of greater strictness was the last thing needed in Christ's day. Rather, Jesus sought to free the Sabbath of all these man-made encumbrances and to let it stand in its original beauty. Today the pendulum has swung to the other extreme and most people pay little attention to what they do or do not do on the Sabbath.

5. Why did Jesus visit a Pharisee one Sabbath?
   Luke 14:1
   Christian fellowship is proper on the Sabbath day. Notice, however, that Christ gave us an example of "not speaking thine own words." The table conversation was not on the latest fashions, the political news or the Roman games. It centered on spiritual themes.

Part 4 -- LOYALTY

George E. Vandeman, in A Day to Remember, tells the following story: "Seated in a dining car on a train during World War II, I noticed on the back of the menu an engraving of the Stars and Stripes in full color. As a loyal American, I honor the Stars and Stripes. So you can..."
imagine my surprise and my perplexity as beneath the flag I read these words: 'Just a piece of cloth. That's all it is; just a piece of cloth. You can count the threads in it, and it's no different from any other piece of cloth.'

"My patriotism would have rebelled if I had not read on: 'But then a little breeze comes along, and it stirs and comes to life and flutters and snaps in the wind—all red and white and blue, and then you realize that no other piece of cloth could be just like it. Yes, that flag is just a piece of cloth until we breathe life into it. Until we make it stand for everything we believe in and refuse to live without.'

"I might take an ordinary piece of red cloth. You could count the threads in it, and find it no different from any other piece of red cloth. But if I take that piece of red cloth and a piece of white cloth and a piece of blue cloth and sew them together into the Tricolor of France, Frenchmen would die for it. If I sew them together into the Union Jack, Britishers would die for it. Or if I sew those same pieces together into the Stars and Stripes, Americans would die for it—would not live without it!

"Just so, God took an ordinary day. You could count the hours in it. In that respect it was no different from any other day. But then He made a Sabbath out of it. He breathed life into it. He made it stand for everything precious and vital, an emblem [sign] of all He wants Christians to live for and refuse to live without" (pp. 43, 44).

1. What did God call His Sabbath?
   
   Ezekiel 20:12, 20 "I gave them my sabbaths, to be a __________, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctify them. And they shall be a __________, that ye may know that I am the Lord your God."

   Today we would probably use the word "trademark." When you see a Kiwanis pin on a man's lapel, you know he belongs to the Kiwanis Club. When we keep the seventh-day Sabbath, it is a badge, or sign of membership in God's family. It shows that He is my Father and I am His child. It becomes a special bond between God and me. It tells Him He is supreme in my life. It tells Him that I look back upon Calvary with a recognition of my own sinfulness. It tells Him that I see and realize how much Jesus paid for my redemption there on that cross. It is a sign to everyone who sees me worship on His day, that I would rather die than be disloyal to Him.

2. How is our loyalty determined?
   
   Romans 6:16
   
   As history winds its way to its final crises, the question of allegiance will become even more important. Every person will be on one side of the other—the Creator's or the man of sin's "who exalteth himself above . . . God" (2 Thessalonians 2:3,4)

3. How did Jesus feel about following tradition?
   
   Mark 7:7-9

   Could He have said it any plainer? Rather serious, isn't it—that we might as well not worship at all if we are going to do it in our own way and not as He has commanded? And since we plan to keep the Sabbath with Him in heaven—and in His way—isn't it a good idea to start keeping it here? "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome" (1 John 5:3, RSV).

If you have never known the joy of Sabbathkeeping, why not accept the rest that God gives in Christ? Why not find the joy and delight He has placed in this memorial of the work He
finished at creation and on the cross? Do you love Him enough to do this?

_____________________________ End of Lesson _______________________________