

"HEAR YE HIM"

A Devotional Series For Radio

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The Sermon: OBSERVE THE SABBATH DAY

Scripture: Doctrine and Covenants 59:2,3.

And that thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day; for verily this is a day appointed unto you to rest from your labors, and to pray thy devotions unto the Most High; nevertheless thy vows shall be offered up in righteousness on all days, and at all times; but remember that on this, the Lord's day, thou shalt offer thine oblations and thy sacraments unto the Most High, confessing thy sins unto thy brethren, and before the Lord. And on this day thou shalt do none other thing, only let thy food be prepared with singleness of heart, that thy fasting may be perfect; or in other words, that thy joy may be full. Verily this is fasting and prayer, or in other words, rejoicing and prayer.

The inhabitants of Zion shall also observe the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

How do you keep the Sabbath? The people of America are rapidly becoming a nation of Sabbath breakers. Commercialized sports, recreations, and entertainments are more and more replacing the worship of God on the Sabbath day, and in spite of organized labor's attempts to establish a five day week, more and more retail businesses are ignoring the Sabbath and doing business seven days a week. Modern inventions have increased our opportunities and temptations to Sabbath breaking. The automobile tempts us to forget church and drive great distances in search of recreation or amusement. Radio and television bring the theater directly into the homes of people who would not think of attending a theater on Sunday. How should we keep the Sabbath in these modern times?

First, we should briefly settle one point. Within the scope of this brief sermon there is no opportunity to discuss the relative merits of the first day or the seventh day Sabbath. As a church we have been commanded in modern revelation to observe the Lord's day, the first day of the week. We believe that such practice has complete scriptural justification. When we speak of the Sabbath, therefore, we are speaking of the first day of the week, Sunday.

There are two philosophies of Sabbath keeping. One is harsh, restrictive, unsympathetic. It holds that man was made for the Sabbath, and that the institution of the Sabbath must be kept even

though man suffers inconvenience, hardship, or loss. The second philosophy is that the Sabbath was made for man -- for his use, benefit, and welfare; that in case of a conflict, man's needs always take precedence over the letter of the law, or over the institution itself. The Scribes and Pharisees held to the first philosophy; Jesus formulated the second and denounced the first. The value of the Sabbath lies outside the institution itself -- in what it does for man. Yet we should always remember that the Sabbath was made for man, but not BY man. The day was made BY God. It belongs to God. It is the Lord's day, not man's day to do with as he pleases.

Keeping the Sabbath is more a matter of attitude than of legalism. It is impossible to classify and catalogue every possible human act, and decide whether it is properly done on Sunday. Every man's duty to the Sabbath is determined by his own peculiar needs, temperament, occupation, and physical environment. No two men are exactly alike.

This was one of the mistakes made by the Scribes and Pharisees, who listed thirty-nine categories of work which were prohibited on the Sabbath, and subdivided each category almost endlessly; and yet someone was always challenging the rules and inventing a loophole. For example, if one wanted to travel more than the lawful "Sabbath day's journey" from his home on the Sabbath, he could deposit some food just within the legal limits of

2000 cubits on the day before, and designate that spot as a temporary home or dwelling place. Then he could travel as far as the food and the temporary "home" on the Sabbath day, and then go another "Sabbath day's journey" beyond that -- or even repeat the process indefinitely, and still be within the letter of the law. But what about the spirit or attitude of those who would resort to such tricks?

What are your rules for choosing activities on the Sabbath. I should like to propose eight simple tests for activities on the Lord's day, which may help in making your decisions.

1. Does your Lord's day activity serve your purposes, or God's? It is the Lord's day, not yours. It is given as a day of rest, of worship, of fellowship with other worshippers, of religious instruction, of paying religious vows, tithes, and oblations. Each activity on the Lord's day should be chosen from the standpoint of what God's wants, not what I want.

2. Does your Lord's day activity contribute to your physical, mental, spiritual, and social welfare in a balanced way? The Lord's day is a day of rest. The best rest is sometimes a change of pace, a change of activity. But any activity which stresses one aspect of life and completely neglects another, is not in balance. If you rest or sleep so much that your work, or your social and intellectual life are neglected, your Sabbath-keeping is out of balance.

3. Will your Lord's day activity strengthen or weaken family ties? This day gives opportunity for families which are separated by the activities of the week to be together, united in the worship of a God who can claim the allegiance of all.

4. Does your Lord's day activity contribute to your worship of God, and to your appreciation and understanding of him? Does it increase your love for and thankfulness to him? Does it contribute something to the establishment of his righteous kingdom on earth? Does it help you to remember, or help you to forget God, whose day it is?

5. Does your Lord's day activity force or obligate others to sacrifice their day of worship and of rest in order that you may be served, amused, or entertained? To say that the persons involved would be working anyway is a poor excuse. Followers of Jesus should lead the world, not follow after the world. The reason why many places of business and entertainment operate on Sunday is that so many half-hearted followers of Jesus are willing and even eager to patronize them. Are you?

6. Is your Lord's day activity necessary? We are told in modern revelation that necessary work should not be neglected, and that nothing should be allowed to go to waste for lack of attention. Certain humanitarian activities, such as caring for the sick, the injured, and the aged, may certainly be classed as necessary. In our modern civilization certain utilitarian activities are necessary -- supplying electricity, gas, and water; giving hotel and restaurant service for people necessarily away from home, police and fire protection, and some manufacturing processes such as steel mills, where a shut-down of equipment would involve damage and unnecessary loss. A farmer might find it necessary to get in his crop before a threatening storm.

7. Does your Lord's day activity set a good example for others? Even though it may appear perfectly harmless to you, will some weaker brother follow your example and be harmed thereby?

8. What motive is back of your choice of Lord's day activities? If you abstain from certain activities only in order that you can look upon others with a "holier than thou" attitude, then maybe it would be a lesser sin for you to indulge. Certainly you need to check your motive. We are told again in modern revelation not to be harsh in judgment, or to make a man an offender for a word.

Use these tests and any others you like, but remember to observe the Sabbath as the Lord's day, sacred and holy to his purposes for you and all the rest of mankind.