

The New Horizons Newsletter

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Matthew 28:19-20

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Sabbath-Rest

For Bible-believers a highlight of the week is sundown on Friday—in Bible terms the dawning of the weekly seventh-day Sabbath. A time to lay aside worldly pursuits, to focus on the spiritual essence of our being, to worship and learn from our great Creator and our Saviour.

It is a day first set aside by God immediately following the creation of our first forefather and observed throughout time as a sign of our relationship with the creator of the material universe: *'...the seventh day is a sabbath to Jehovah your God...For in six days Jehovah made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all which is in them, and He rested on the seventh day; on account of this Jehovah blessed the sabbath day and sanctified it'* (Exodus 20:10-11). Sabbath is the God-appointed memorial of His almighty creative power.

For several centuries after the Flood (c.2300BC) mankind in general adhered to the true path, but with a gradual bend to idolatrous and often despotic practices. The descendants (Israel) of Abraham (who observed all God's guiding principles: Genesis 26:5) were chosen to be the flag-bearer for the primeval way of truth.

To protect the remembrance of the day God set the Sabbath at the heart of Israel's Constitution, protected by legal boundaries (Numbers 15:32-35, Leviticus 20:9ff). Indeed their failure to guard it resulted in invasion by a foreign aggressor, and their exile

from their land.

The Law—and especially the law on Sabbath observance—served to bind Israel's allegiance to the one true God, though they all too often embraced idolatrous practices—with adverse consequences. By the first century of our era the religious establishment in Judaism had added burdensome strictures to the Sabbath law far beyond the written Law.

Christian Observance

Jesus—who is *'...lord of the Sabbath'* (Mark 2:28)—restored its true significance and dismantled the harmful Pharisaic additions. While authenticating the written Mosaic law for mankind in general as a guide for life and governance, Jesus placed the Sabbath law in the context of those who through repentance and baptism would have God's Spirit 'bearing witness' in their minds (Romans 8:16).

Christians are not 'legally bound' to the Sabbath law (though they joyfully embrace it) but will be held to account as to how — guided by the Word of God—they freely apply its principles in their daily lives. 'Infants' in the church must grow to maturity.

The vast majority of Christians, as dictated by the Roman church—and as is universally known—abandoned the seventh *cont'd over*

In exile in Egypt Israel observed the Sabbath, drawing the ire of Pharaoh: *'... Behold, the people of the land are many now, and you [Moses] make hem cease [sabbatize] from their burdens'* (Exodus 5:5).

Why Do We Sin?

Some folk harbour the notion that if you are a ‘Christian’ you will never sin—a position countered by the apostle John: ‘...*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us*’ (I John 1:8). The misconception may stem from the fact that when we do sin—and confess it to God, with repentance (v.9)—that sin is covered, obliterated, ‘...*as far as the east is from the west*’—and only by the shed blood of Jesus Christ. But how does sin arise?

‘The devil made me do it’ cry some. But what do the Scriptures tell us?: ‘...*out of the heart come forth reasonings, evil things, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, lies, blasphemies. These things are the things defiling the man*’ (Matthew 15:20). (Note: Jesus lists these sins in the order of the ten commandments! cf I John 3:4)) As wrote Jeremiah (ch 17:9): ‘...*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*’.

On the other hand the righteous person has laid up in his memory store the wholesome teachings of the Creator: ‘...*The good man out of the good treasure of the heart puts forth good things. And the evil man out of the evil treasure puts forth evil things. The things which come out of the mouth come forth from the heart, and these defile the man*’ (ch 12:34-35). We must choose wisely what we ‘feed’ on: ‘*garbage in, garbage out*’.

Polluted Inheritance

Every human being has inherited from Adam a moral downward tendency: ‘...*the carnal [normal] mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be*’ (Romans 8:7). It is the universal ‘law of entropy: ‘...*lack of order or predictability; a gradual decline into disorder.*

Our first parents were created as perfect beings, mature and with freedom of choice—for the consequences of which they were responsible. By our inherited nature we choose our own path—with consequences: ‘...*there is a way which seems right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death*’ (Proverbs 12). As wrote the apostle Paul: ‘...*the wages of sin is death*’ (Romans 6:23). We have a choice: if we truly love [*ie serve*] God we will hate evil [all unrighteousness] (Psalm 97:10).

Deadly Influences

As Ezekiel (ch 18) points out we each have per-

sonal responsibility for our own behaviour no matter what our background. We throughout our life face differing challenges, summed up by the apostle John as ‘the world’: ‘...*the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.*’ (I John 2:15-56). We don’t face judgment for our back story but for what we do with what we have and are.

Evil is defined as going contrary to the will, the life principles, of God: ‘...be not conformed to this world: but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God’ (Romans 12:2)

That ‘world’ (*ie* all its inhabitants) is one that has been deceived by the Devil (Revelation 12:9). Throughout history he has manipulated mankind through ‘influencers’ who in every field of human thought have dreamed up philosophies contrary to the will of God—in education, entertainment, business, economics, psychology, human health and in religion. Such people are sure to be far removed from righteousness, from the perfect will of our Creator as He reveals Himself.

The devil and his cohort of sinful spirits have over the millennia honed their skill to manipulate, to deceive, to bamboozle the human race. Not content with their God-appointed role of serving mankind they continue to covet the forbidden role of Sonship with the Father (Hebrews 1:5). But by actively applying God’s guidance in the Scriptures we can avert these ‘*fiery darts of the wicked one*’ fired through the world and its godless influencers and institutions.

Our sin stems from ‘the world, the flesh, and the devil’. How we respond is our choice. **Ω**

Sabbath... cont’d

day to observe the pagan Sunday.

But God’s guiding Spirit in us is for now in an ‘embryo’ stage, and must be carefully nourished by immersing ourselves in His Word, the written expression of His way, His thinking.

The seventh-day Sabbath forms the background culture in all Scripture, both in the Old Testament and in the New, and was observed by both Jews and Christians.

Sabbath is our weekly ‘treat’, our rest from the daily grind, the refreshment of the weary human spirit, our dedicated time with our Father.

Delight in it!

Ω

Insight from Paul

The apostle Paul's letters shed a bright light on our walk with God

Our world is fast becoming the mirror image of the world of the apostle. Like that world we attend to our daily lives as best we can despite the stranglehold of red tape, of petty authoritarian interference and the pressures of a self-centred society.

As Christians, Paul says, we must be prepared to '...suffer tribulation [*Gk.thlipsis*] and persecution [*Gk diogmos*]' . That is, *pressure, trouble, affliction, burdens, and persecution*. He spoke from personal experience! (II Corinthians 11:23-29).

We are, however, in the loving care of our great God, our heavenly Father, who monitors our every woe: '...[God] will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it' (I Corinthians 10:13). And '...If God be for us, who can be against us?'

All too often we need that escape route from trouble—though our problems are often caused by our neglect of God's principles for living, the remedy for which can be found in His Word through our diligent study.

The added imminent external pressures—energy, high living costs *etc*—can test our trust in His provision of our daily needs. But we are assured of His care, as Elijah told the widow; '...thus says the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the LORD sends rain upon the earth' (I Kings 17:14).. Recall how He fed Israel with the *manna* for forty years, protected them from the sun, provided water, and fed Elijah by ravens.

We are comforted by the words of the apostle: '...Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love him. But God has revealed them unto us by his Spirit.'

Festivals 2022

Trumpets	September 26
Atonement	October 5
Tabernacles	October 10-16
Eighth day	October 17

Lord's Supper 2023 is on the evening of April 4 (Tues)

The Family of God

Over the past six millennia God has selected men and women to become part of His eternal spirit Family. Many, indeed, have been invited (there's no coercion) but few have responded—or they have not finished the course.

Some are well-known: Enoch, Noah, Abraham, David, Paul—a '*great cloud of witnesses*' (Hebrews 12:1), all faithful. Some lived long productive lives, some were cut short—many martyred. All were in some degree flawed, but lived in faith, trusting in God whatever life threw at them.

A plan, a grand design, was conceived in the heavenly realm to create a being in God's own image, a rational being endowed with the power of choice: to learn compliance with the *laws of life*—or a rebel who would choose the path of self-determination and its terrible consequence, death. The Creator crafted a clay image of Himself [from earth's elements] and breathed into it '*...the breath of life*', purposed to qualify to become part of His spirit Family.

We know their initial choice—self-determination and death'. Instructed the Creator: '*...of the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden, God has said, You shall not eat of it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die*' (Genesis 3:3). *Wrong choice!* They thus shattered their intimate relationship with the Almighty God and were cast into the wilderness. Access to God would be only through an intermediary. Life became onerous.

God prescribed animal sacrifice as an atonement for sin, pending the ultimate sacrifice—the death of the Son of God, Jesus—through whom alone can man be part of the earthly *and* heavenly family: '*...Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*' (Acts 4:12).

The faithful from all eras, those living and those now dead, bond in a family relationship, later to become the '*church*', the '*Israel of God*'. It is a body distinct from the visible church which includes seekers and wreckers—to be separated at the return of Jesus when the '*saints*' are transformed or resurrected. They 'follow the lamb: '*...These are the ones who were not defiled with women [false churches and destructive teachings], for they are virgins [undefiled by false teachings]. These are the ones following the Lamb wherever He may go. These were redeemed from among men as a firstfruit to God and to the Lamb*' (Revelation 14:4).

The invitation remains open—for now. Ω

'Give us this day...'

Our world and all its institutions is fast sinking into a cesspit of anarchy. The restrictions imposed by governments worldwide under the pretext of climate change, protection from disease, diversity *etc* are stirring widespread opposition from farmers, from transport workers—and not least from the increasingly restless populace as they battle with the resulting consequences of inflation and the soaring cost of living.

A cohort of relatively young trendy leaders (*eg* in Canada, France, New Zealand, The Netherlands) have bought into the grand plan, hatched behind closed doors, for 'saving the world'. They vigorously pursue the goals of so-called *Agenda 2030* and *zero carbon*, and are aided by subservient, compliant governments and councils worldwide.

Nor does religion escape. Driven by the papacy (powered by Jesuits) the global agenda is to blend the faiths under the banner of the 'common good'—as exemplified by 'Chrislam', the merging of Christianity and Islam—while claiming, contrary to Scripture (Acts 4:12), that all paths lead to the same 'god'. In this it is increasingly supported by leading Protestant evangelicals.

All true followers of Jesus Christ need to be aware of this global movement, which undermines our freedom of thought, our freedom to worship—and *prepare*. Guns won't stop it, and stored food will eventually become exhausted (or stolen). Martyrdom may be the price we pay for loyalty to our Saviour—but the outcome is a role in God's eternal spirit Family.

Trust Him

It is vital in dark times that we each daily enhance and deepen our trust in Him for every need. The '*Lord's prayer*' is not just a prayer formula—'*...give us this day our daily bread*'—but a guidepost for our everyday life.

The record of God's supportive dealings with His people is writ large in Scripture. Jacob's family were delivered from severe famine (Genesis 41); through Moses God fed and watered Israel for forty years. In a time of prolonged drought; He nourished Elijah through ravens (I Kings 17:4-6); He miraculously fed a widow in her need (vv.13-17). *Trust Him!* Ω

The *Church of Rome* is (though hypocritically) 'on the side of the angels' in advocating observance of the last six of God's commandments. It does, however, reject the first four - which identify the one creator God (Exodus 20) .

The Madness of Crowds

Street brawls and mass demonstrations aruasually provoked by the actions of a small coterie of antagonists. Bill and Harry disagree and fisticuffs follow—swiftly joined by onlookers. Or, Tom has an issue with his energy company and soon gathers a huge Facebook following of disgruntled and angry customers—exacerbated on other social media, Others are vilified for expressing a contrary thought.

A wave of mass hysteria ('mass psychogenic illness') can sweep through a nation, often prompted by mental or emotional tension. It was evident in the Salem witch trials. We saw it with the AIDS challenge. We saw it after the untimely death of Princess Diana. We are seeing it with the spurious 'self-identifying' and 'woke' craze, with often dangerous mask-wearing, with social distancing and vaccination induced by fear tactics. Perhaps even with the Gadarene pay-rush to destruction by various Unions in this time of recession.

It isn't new. As Jesus was being falsely accused before Pilate, stirred up by a handful of religious leaders ('doing God service') the crowds hysterically clamoured for him to be crucified. That prefigures the baying crowds in the Colosseum in Rome: '*get the Christians*'.

What of the future? We have already seen—in India, Africa—militant mobs massacring those professing the name of Christ. The Devil is on the war-path: '*...the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ*'. Ω

Note: Not to compare it to the above, but isn't it odd that many thousands of supposedly upright people in our cities degrade themselves by supporting so-called 'pride' marchers [*cf* Ezekiel 16:49]. As to the latter, : '*...The expression of their faces witnesses against them; they have declared their sin like Sodom; they do not hide it. Woe to their soul! For they have dealt evil to themselves*' (Isaiah 3:9). Divine law is brazenly flaunted on our streets—and in the corridors of power.

As urges King Solomon of those who associate with or support the unrighteous: '*...walk not in the way with them; refrain your foot from their path*' (Proverbs 1;15). And King David: '*...The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts*' (Psalm 10:4).

So awesome was Sodom's sin that God sentenced them to total destruction (Genesis 19:13), with the promise of a future resurrection to individually face a period of testing (Mtthew 10:15). Ω