

Are You Passing God's Test?

SABBATH

While in school we had to take tests periodically. But do you realize that every one of us is still being tested regularly? God is testing us every week.

What kind of grade is God giving you?

God's way of life is based on His spiritual law of love. It is love toward God and love toward fellowman. God's love is further magnified by the Ten Commandments. And one of these 10 is a test commandment.

There are many today who will admit that the Ten Commandments should be obeyed, except for one — the fourth. Most do not want to keep the Sabbath commandment!

Let's understand the truth about God's Sabbath day, and why it is so important that we pass this test commandment every week.

1. On which day of creation week did God rest? Genesis 2:1-3, Exodus 20:11. Did God rest because He was tired? Isaiah 40:28.

God is composed of spirit and never tires. God created or "made" (Mark 2:27) the Sabbath by resting, whereas all else was made by working. By resting on the seventh day (Saturday), God set an example for man to follow.

2. Which member of the God Family made that first Sabbath? Colossians 1:13-16, Mark 2:28.

Jesus Christ is Lord of the Sabbath because He made it. As other scriptures prove, Christ was the Lord God who revealed Himself to ancient Israel throughout the Old Testament. And God the Father created all things through Him. By ceasing to do any labor on the seventh day of creation week, Christ set apart that 24-hour period for a special and holy use.

3. For whom did Jesus say the Sabbath was made? Mark 2:27. Who would that include? Exodus 20:8-10, especially verse 10.

"The Sabbath was made for man," declared Jesus. Every seventh day from creation was singled out by God to be specially observed by mankind. The Sabbath was to benefit all who would live — if they would keep it.

4. How did Christ intend the Sabbath to benefit mankind? Deuteronomy 5:14, Exodus 23:12. (Notice the words *rest* and *refreshed*.)

The word *Sabbath* means "rest" in Hebrew.

Physical rest and mental relaxation after a busy week are obvious reasons for keeping the Sabbath. God knew humans would need periodic rest and change from work.

But the purpose for keeping God's Sabbath goes far beyond simply resting on this day. Man desperately needs this time each week to have close spiritual contact with God.

The Sabbath allows us time to think more about God, to pray to and worship Him (both in private and in fellowship with others) and to study the Bible to understand more about God's purpose for us.

5. Should we pursue our own interests and pleasures on the Sabbath? Isaiah 58:13. Will God bless the faithful Sabbath keeper? Verse 14, Isaiah 56:2-7.

God made the Sabbath holy time! Employment, shopping, mowing the lawn, home maintenance, hobbies, sports and other special interests are for the first six days of the week. Such activities take our minds away from God and the entire purpose for His Sabbath.

God promises to bestow blessings on us now and eternal life in the resurrection as His free gift if we repent of our sins and faithfully keep His Sabbath and other commandments.

6. Was observance of the Sabbath day to be a special sign of identification between God and His people? Exodus 31:13, 16-17. Did God also make Sabbath observance a separate covenant with His people? Verse 16.

God wanted ancient Israel to remember that He is Creator, Sustainer and Supreme Ruler over all His creation. So He singled out Sabbath observance as the one great sign by which they would always be reminded of who He is and who they were — His chosen people.

And so God doubly commanded Sabbath observance by making it a separate covenant with His people Israel *after* the covenant concerning His overall relationship with the nation (commonly called the "Old Covenant," which included the Ten Commandments) had been made. This special covenant was to be an everlasting agreement — the sign that would identify God's people of all generations.

7. Is a real Christian one who has become a

spiritual Israelite — one of Abraham's "seed" through Christ? Galatians 3:28-29, Romans 4:16, Ephesians 2:11-13, 19.

God made the special Sabbath covenant with Abraham's physical seed — the nation of Israel. It was to be obeyed throughout their generations. Today, regardless of race or national origin, all Spirit-begotten children of God — true Christians (Romans 8:9) — have become Abraham's spiritual descendants and therefore keep God's Sabbath. They have been set apart ("sanctified" — Exodus 31:13) by God.

However, most religious groups today who profess to keep God's seventh-day Sabbath do not keep *all* of God's commandments. Therefore they are not part of the Church of God. For more information, send for our free booklet *Where Is the True Church?*

Today, the Sabbath is a reminder of our Creator, who not only created the universe and man, but who is also creating His holy character in His people — character that will endure forever when they are born into His divine Family. Thus the Sabbath also reminds true Christians of God's purpose for man.

8. Was Sabbath keeping also a test to see if the Israelites would obey God? Exodus 16:4-5, 22-23.

How many do you know who keep God's Sabbath? It is obvious to the rest of the world when one keeps the Sabbath. But most people do not want to be identified as different from the world. Most professing Christians are willing at least to acknowledge that the other nine commandments should be kept, but the one commandment they reject and refuse to obey is the fourth! Therefore the Sabbath command is the crucial test of obedience, for it identifies those who have surrendered to God — who obey *all* of His commandments regardless of persecution or cost!

9. Did Jesus Christ keep the Sabbath? Luke 4:16, 31.

Jesus regularly attended religious services on the Sabbath day "as His custom was." He obeyed His own command to meet every Sabbath (Leviticus 23:3). This is the day He would naturally have observed, because He made the Sabbath and ordained that it be kept holy.

10. Was it the apostle Paul's custom to keep the Sabbath? Acts 17:1-2. Is there other proof that the early New Testament Church of God observed the Sabbath? Acts 13:13-15, 42, 44, 18:1, 4, 11.

There is no question that the early Church observed the seventh-day Sabbath. Those who are striving to obey God today will also be keeping the same day Jesus, Paul and the entire Church kept.

11. What is God's warning to Christians in

Hebrews 3:8-13, 16-19, 4:1-2? (Notice the use of the word *rest*.) Was rebellion, especially Sabbath breaking, the reason God did not allow an entire generation of Israelites to enter His "rest"? Ezekiel 20:12-13, 15-16.

The land of Canaan — the promised "rest" into which Israel finally entered (Joshua 1:13) — is spoken of in the Bible as a symbol of the Christian's spiritual "rest" (Hebrews 4:1) — of being born into the universe-ruling Family of God and living forever.

12. If Christians believe and obey God, will they enter their "rest" — eternal life in God's Kingdom? Hebrews 4:3, first nine words, and verse 11.

The equation is clear: Real belief in God equals active obedience (James 2:20-22). Those who really believe God will be keeping His Sabbath! God's Sabbath is not to be treated lightly or forgotten. We are commanded to "Remember the Sabbath day" (Exodus 20:8). It is a memorial of God's restoration of the earth and the creation of man, reminding us who the Creator is. And the Sabbath pictures the coming eternal rest that true Christians will enter when born into the Family of God.

13. Did God command the Israelites to meet together for worship on the weekly Sabbath? Leviticus 23:3. What are New Testament Christians admonished regarding the assembling of themselves? Hebrews 10:24-25.

Today's people of God attend weekly Sabbath services of the Worldwide Church of God in more than 50 nations around the world. Every Sabbath, they meet together to receive spiritual instruction from the Bible as taught by the ministry of God's Church (Ephesians 4:11-13).

God's people truly rejoice in His Sabbath and enjoy fellowshiping with each other on His Holy Days. They are learning what a pleasure and great blessing it is to keep God's Sabbath holy — the day that reminds us of the Creator God and His stupendous purpose for mankind!

(For information about God's Sabbath and Christian fellowship, request our free booklet *Which Day Is the Christian Sabbath?*) □



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