**Lesson – 6 Resting in Christ**

**Read for your study: -** [Matt. 11:28-30](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt.%2011.28-30); [12:1](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt%2012.1), [2](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt%2012.2); [12:9-14](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matt.%2012.9-14) [Luke 14:1-6](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke%2014.1-6); [John 5:9-16](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/John%205.9-16); [Isa. 58:7-13](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Isa.%2058.7-13).

**Memory Text: -** “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” **(**[**Matthew 11:28, NIV**](http://biblia.com/bible/niv/Matthew%2011.28)**)**.

**Introduction: -** All throughout His life, Jesus revealed God’s way of working. His actions, as well as His parables, tell us much about our God. In His Word He provides the treasure hidden in a field. He allows sinners to stay in the same church as the saints. He healed the sick, the blind, the deaf, and the dumb! He declared to the weary and burdened, to come to Him for rest. He lived His life reflecting the true meaning of God’s Law, the Ten Commandments, and especially the fourth, the seventh – day Sabbath. What a way to conquer opposition! It bewildered all who watched, temporarily confusing even John the Baptist. It sometimes discouraged the twelve disciples. It made the religious leaders angry. Even now, God's way of working is often misunderstood or escapes our notice.

This week we will learn about some Sabbath controversies in Jesus’ life and how He overcame them to show what it means to keep the Sabbath. Let us dive into our study and learn!

**The Light Yoke of Christ: -** When John's disciples came asking, "Are You the Messiah?" Jesus did not give them a direct reply. Instead, He seemed to ignore their question while He healed and comforted the sick, cast out demons, and taught the outcasts. Finally, toward the end of the day, He turned toward the disciples and said, "Go and tell John what you have heard and seen." When the disciples delivered their witness to John, it satisfied him. Weighing what was reported to him against the messages of the Old Testament, John recognized that the works of Christ "declared Him to be the Messiah" and "showed in what manner His kingdom was to be established"—**The Desire of Ages, p. 217.**

**How do Jesus' words in Matthew 11:28-30 fit into the context of this chapter?** Jesus did not want anyone to feel shut out from His love and care. He began with a powerful rebuke to some of the cities in Galilee who rejected His ministry. He denounced unbelief and reaffirmed His closeness with the Father and then offered all who are burdened with the load of sin and feel the need of spiritual rest may come to Him and exchange their heavy load for His light yoke. Matthew is the only Gospel giving us this amazing statement of what Jesus wished to convey to the human race, in His whole mission on this earth.

**One may ask what kind of burden Jesus would ask us to carry.** And what makes it light, in comparison to the burdens we carry on our own. The answer to this question seems to be found in **1 John 5:3** **“For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.”** What we do for Jesus is not ‘burdensome’ but meant for us to be good.

**Unrest Over a Rest Day: -** Rejecting and dishonouring the Sabbath was one of the main reason the Israelites had spent many years in Babylonian captivity centuries ago. Therefore in order to honour God on the Sabbath day, the Jews added numerous restrictions in an attempt to safeguard the fourth commandment but through this ‘safeguarding’, Sabbath keeping became burdensome. Here are some of those ridiculous rabbinical Sabbath keeping requirements:

* If a hen were a laying hen, **it was not permitted to eat its egg on the Sabbath.** But if it were not a laying hen, it was alright to eat it, because laying the egg would not be that animal’s primary labor.
* The reason for **not looking in a mirror on the Sabbath** day was because one might be tempted to pluck out a gray hair, which would be **“reaping”** on the Sabbath.
* **If your house catches fire on the Sabbath, you could only salvage one set of clothing** besides what you are wearing. But it was permissible to put more than one layer of clothes on before you escaped the flames. (In addition, you couldn’t ask a Gentile to put out the fire on the Sabbath, but if he did that on his own, it would be OK.)
* **You could spit on a rock on the Sabbath, but not on the ground,** because that would potentially be making **“mud or mortar”**, which would be a form of work.
* A devout Jew could not walk more than 2,000 cubits (approximately 3,000 feet) on the Sabbath day unless on Friday he prepared some food and placed it at that limit. He could then go an additional 2,000 cubits on the Sabbath because the place he left food could be termed his residence.

**Jesus’ Response: - Ellen G. White** writes, “In the days of Christ the Sabbath had become so perverted that its observance reflected the character of selfish and arbitrary men rather than the character of the loving heavenly Father.”—**Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 284.**

Jesus used two events recorded in **Matthew 12:1-8** and **12: 9-14** to illustrate His way of turning people’s attention to true Sabbath keeping.

About His disciples plucking and eating grains of wheat while passing through the field, He narrates the story of David and his men when they entered the tabernacle and ate the sacred bread because it was for a noble purpose – to keep David and his men alive. Thus, He ended His response by saying that **“the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.”**

Jesus came to offer rest from such man-made rules. He assured them that true Sabbath rest, and rest from all our legalistic thinking, could be achieved when we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior.

We do not gain the blessing God puts into the Sabbath if our Sabbath keeping does not lead to full enjoyment of mental, spiritual, and physical wholeness.

"The Saviour Himself has the right to determine what is appropriate to that day; consequently, the Pharisees were exceeding their prerogatives. . . . The church has no right to load the Sabbath with oppressive restrictions—as did the Jews—or to attempt the transfer of its sacredness from one day to another. Both are devices of the evil one designed to lure men away from the true spirit of Sabbath observance."—**SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 5, p. 589.**

**Healing on the Sabbath: -** As we read through the four Gospels, we see that there has been a mention of the constant struggle of Jesus with the leaders over Sabbath keeping. But never did He mention anytime of its abolishment. He always upheld it and went to Synagogues for worship ‘as His custom was.’

Jesus knew what keeping the Sabbath was about. He went around healing the sick and relieving them from their sufferings and burdens.

Mentioning of His miracles and healings, Ellen G. White writes, “Upon another Sabbath, as Jesus entered a synagogue, He saw there a man who had a withered hand. The Pharisees watched Him, eager to see what He would do. The Saviour well knew that in healing on the Sabbath He would be regarded as a transgressor, but He did not hesitate to break down the wall of traditional requirements that barricaded the Sabbath … It was a maxim among the Jews that a failure to do good, when one had opportunity, was to do evil; to neglect to save life was to kill. Thus Jesus met the rabbis on their own ground.”—**Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages, p. 286.**

**Keeping the Sabbath: -** Jesus sought to point people to the higher purpose of the law, to the higher purpose of what the life of faith is all about. He restored the Sabbath, freeing it from the cumbersome burdens people had placed on it. Hundreds of years later Christians were still resting and worshiping on Sabbath.

The fifth-century historian Socrates Scholasticus wrote: “Almost all churches throughout The World celebrated the sacred mysteries (the Lord’s Supper) on the Sabbath of every week, yet the Christians of Alexandria and at Rome, on account of some ancient tradition, refuse to do this.”—**Ecclesiastical History, book 5, p. 289.**

Thus, we have powerful evidence that the seventh-day Sabbath was not abolished nor changed to any other day.

**How should our Sabbath keeping be like?** Our worship on that day should have at least some of these:

* **Gathering with like believers** is certainly an activity God encourages–Matthew 18:20 (…where two or three are gathered together…) **be a regular church attendant!**
* **Doing good deeds** for others–Matthew 12:12 (…lawful to do good on the Sabbath…)
* Drawing close to God through **Bible study and prayer, or enjoying scenes of nature** (God’s handiwork)–Luke 4:16-17  and Revelation 14:7
* **Visiting the Sick** is another activity one can do.
* **Family time: Gathering over a meal at home and not in a restaurant.** Just as married couples, desiring to preserve our close bond we spend quality time with each other, we can look at the Sabbath as our “quality time” with God, given to mankind from the Creation of this world.

Satan has done everything he can to take us away from the Sabbath. He has attacked it by making it too difficult to keep it. Thus, giving this world a substitute, by changing the day from the seventh to the first, to make it look like very easy to follow and observe. But this is a false day of worship, a counterfeit of the true Sabbath day. He wants us to forget the seventh day of worship.

But God knew that this would happen. Thus, he gave us the ‘fourth’ commandment by saying ‘Remember...’ God wants us to ‘remember the Sabbath day to keep it Holy’!

Today, we have very conflicting trends of Sabbath keeping that are creeping into our church. We are becoming very ‘liberal’ in our observance of Sabbath. Let us be very careful and vigilant on those trends. If we have to speak up and condemn those trends, let us do it with firmness and keep reminding each other, especially the young people about the true Sabbath keeping! May the Lord give us wisdom and strength to face these challenges!

**God Bless You!!!**