

SHOULD CHRISTIANS FREQUENT RESTAURANTS ON THE SABBATH?

Most professing Christians do not keep God's Sabbath. As a former Roman Catholic and Pentecostal, I, by the grace of God, have come out of religious Babylon and into His marvellous light (**Revelation 18:4; I Peter 2:9**). I can tell you that according to God's Word, the Bible, Sunday is NOT the day that God has made Holy. There are, of course, differences in how these days are observed.

For those professing Christians who keep Sunday, most will get up and get the family together and plod off to church services about ten or eleven in the morning, and then after an hour or two at the most, they will go for breakfast or brunch with many of their friends to a local restaurant. It is a tradition for many, perhaps tens of thousands, do this every Sunday. If you don't believe me, try to go out to eat at that time, it's usually standing room only in most restaurants.

After this, families will often go home and lounge around the house, in a laid-back sort of way, watching TV, tinkering with a hobby, mow the lawn, do other yard work or attend to chores that may have piled up during the week. Some may spend the afternoon visiting friends or relatives, but this time is usually and generally viewed as their own free time.

Hundreds of thousands observe Sunday this way and they are not sinning by doing these things or their own things, because it is *not* God's appointed time. The Sabbath, however, is different. All Bible students realize that the Sabbath has restrictions. Sabbath-keepers would never think of coming home from church services and mowing the lawn or doing chores. They wouldn't think of spending a significant portion of the day watching TV, or being occupied with some sort of hobby. They know that these things are not pleasing to God on His Holy day, because these activities do not make His Sabbath separate, special, and holy, the way God intended.

In these later years, however, some Sabbath-keepers have begun, in some ways, to "Sunday-ize" God's Holy Sabbath, that is, they have begun to let the spirit (attitude) of the way in which Sunday is kept, creep into their observance of God's Holy day. They have begun to water down God's Sabbath by not treating it as special as God wants us to keep it. While most would not watch their favorite TV show or sitcom, many Sabbath-keepers think little of going out to eat at restaurants before or after services just like Sunday-keepers do.

Should we be doing this? Is it wrong to eat in a restaurant on the Sabbath day or frequent restaurants as a regular part of our Sabbath worship? Is it sin? Have we, perhaps, allowed ourselves to go a little too far in permitting ourselves to do what we want to do, what we enjoy, instead of letting God's Word be our sole guide? Again, I ask, is it wrong to go to a restaurant on the Sabbath, when you are feeling hungry? Is it all right to go once in a while, occasionally, as long as you don't make it a habit? Are there exceptions to the rule, say, for example, when you are travelling or at the time of God's annual Holy days, especially the Feast of Tabernacles?

One brother recalls that during the Feast of Trumpets in 1969 in Craftsman Hall, San Diego, as people were filing in that morning, carrying covered dishes, the serving tables were filling up

with food that had been prepared the day before. After the morning service, the congregation enjoyed a potluck meal together before assembling for the afternoon service.

I'm told that such was the norm during the 50s, 60s, and early 70s. Obedient Church members never went out to a restaurant for a meal on a Holy Day or on the Sabbath.

So what has changed things? Are the Scriptures that were once used to demonstrate that purchasing food on the Sabbath is sin, no longer valid? Are people following people, the example of men, and not Christ? Why have we slackened in this regard? Is it our Christian liberty to do so? Has Christ loosened the Sabbath for us in this regard as many believe today? Did the liberalization which crept into the Church during the mid-70s have anything to do with the change in people's hearts? I understand that Mr. Herbert Armstrong even began to eat out on the Sabbath, he said due to his continual travelling. An old saying comes to mind, "As goes the leadership, so goes the church!"

Were the early Church brethren taught that it was a sin to buy food on the Sabbath, either at a store or at a restaurant? Did the disciples frequent establishments to buy and eat food on the Sabbath? Did Christ, Himself, set an example for us in this regard? Did He eat in restaurants or the local "Inn" on the Sabbath at least "once" during His three-year ministry?

Brethren, God dealt with me on this very issue of buying food, or visiting restaurants on His Holy Sabbath day in 1995, and I am beginning to see that there are many others who are being awakened in these end times, having their minds impressed upon by God's Holy Spirit, to know and to understand that God wants us to keep His Sabbath day HOLY.

Our Savior, Jesus Christ (Yeshua Meshiach) is coming back for a Church, His Bride, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing and NOW is the time to get our spiritual houses in order. "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" (**I Peter 4:17**).

The convicting power of God's Holy Spirit caused me to revisit this matter. It was not an issue of deciding to become more "strict" in my Sabbath observance, but simply started out from a sincere desire to please Him in everything and respond in loving obedience to His gentle correction.

As we approach this subject, we must fully realize, first of all, that God wants us to know and understand that He is our provider (Yahveh-Yireh). When He was showing (reminding) the Israelites which day was His Sabbath, after they had lost track of it during their many years of slavery in Egypt, He commanded them: "Tomorrow is a Sabbath rest, a Holy Sabbath to Yahveh. Bake what you will bake today, and boil what you will boil, and lay it up for the morning." Then Moses said, "Eat that today, for today is a Sabbath to Yahveh, you will not find it in the field. Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day which is the Sabbath, THERE WILL BE NONE." (**Exodus 16:23, 25-26**).

Now, I realize that this verse does not mention anything about buying, but what is the principle here?

The fact is, that they were commanded to prepare TWICE as much on the day before the Sabbath, in order to carry them through the Sabbath, to the first day, work day of the week. This is a wonderful example of the DAY OF PREPARATION, which many Sabbath-keepers have forgotten or completely ignore today in the various churches of God. I will comment more on this later.

THE SABBATH IS HOLY

The Sabbath is God's Holy time, "And on the seventh day God ended his work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. And GOD BLESSED THE SEVENTH DAY, AND SANCTIFIED IT: because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made," (**Genesis 2:2**). God sanctified the Sabbath day, which means that He set it apart for a special purpose. This day is not like other days. God set it apart in order to make it holy, "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord BLESSED THE SABBATH DAY, AND HALLOWED IT." (**Exodus 20:11**).

God made this day HOLY. When something is HOLY it is the opposite of common or profane. God elevated this day to a special status and it is SACRED and PURE, belonging to God, and it is a part of time that is wholly devoted to God. Therefore, since the Sabbath day is Holy time and God made it this way, it is up to His children to KEEP IT THAT WAY! "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy." (**Exodus 20:8**).

Notice that it says that we are to "Remember the Sabbath," which implies that we would tend to "forget" this day. Now, it does not say that we would forget WHICH day it was, but that we are to remember to keep the day a certain way — HOLY! We must remember the WAY we ought to keep the day. IT IS HOLY TIME!

When we go out to eat at restaurants on the Sabbath, are we keeping this day sacred and holy? Are we keeping it holy by spending this holy time in the company of those who are profaning the Sabbath? Is it sanctified (set apart) by going to restaurants? Is it somehow elevated by doing this? Is it making this day more devoted to God? Or are we simply using this time to enjoy our own pleasure? I believe that the Apostle Paul's words apply to our Christian conduct every day of our lives and especially the Sabbath, "Follow peace with all men, and HOLINESS, without which no man shall see the Lord," and "Be ye HOLY; for I am HOLY." (**Hebrews 12:14; I Peter 1:16**).

This does not mean that we go around trying to establish our own righteousness, like the Pharisees did. No, instead we seek to follow GOD'S WAYS, and allow Christ to live out His righteous life through us. As I have said before, time and time again, it's not enough to HAVE the spirit of God, we must be LED by the Spirit of God! (**Romans 8:14**).

THOU SHALT NOT DO ANY WORK

In order to protect and safeguard the Sabbath, God put some restrictions on the observance of this day. The chiefest of these restrictions is that we should do no work. "But the seventh day is

the Sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates." (**Exodus 20:10**).

God was very specific in this. He legislated that everyone have this day off. The servants were not to work, the children were not to do any work, a stranger, a person who was not of Israel, could not work. Even animals were given the day off.

It is absolutely clear that no one is to do any work on the Sabbath. This is important to understand because when Christ returns to set up His Kingdom and rule planet Earth, I can guarantee you that there will be no restaurants operating on the Sabbath. Absolutely no one will work on the Sabbath!

Think about it! The Sabbath pictures the Millennial rest of our Lord Jesus Christ. Isn't it ironic that we would celebrate the Sabbath by doing something that Christ Himself will not allow to be done when He institutes His Kingdom?!!

All of this strongly implies that it was never God's intention that we go to restaurants on His Sabbath. Whether people choose to or not, the fact is that people working in restaurants ARE violating God's day of commanded rest. Ignorance of the law is no excuse, especially now that Christ has come with the full knowledge of God. (**Acts 17:30**). If we go to the restaurant to purchase their food, are we not in some way contributing to them breaking the Sabbath? Are we not condoning it? Are we not a party to their lawlessness?

Think about it! In our own judicial system, a person who aids or contributes to the commission of a crime or offense, (but not necessarily as the chief instigator) is considered an **ACCESSORY TO THE CRIME!** Are human judges more righteous and just than God? Will God judge His people differently?

Additionally, most of us would not consider forcing an employee (servant) to work on God's Sabbath. There are those who believe that when you visit restaurant establishments that the waiters, waitresses and cooks are not working "for you"; they are working for their employer. The idea is that they are going to work whether we are there or not. We are not making them work on the Sabbath. This is a weak, shallow, argument put forth by those who do not see the sanctity and holiness of the Sabbath.

When we frequent a restaurant, we ARE hiring servants on a temporary basis while we are there. It may be true that WE are not making them be there on the job, but we certainly do not **DECREASE** their workload when we go. We actually increase the amount of work that they have to do! In the case of waiters or waitresses, these people are indirectly in our employ and we will "TIP" them depending on how well they "worked" for us.

Restaurant owners pay very little and expect them to get the majority of their pay in tips. There is no escaping this — when we are there, **THEY ARE OUR SERVANTS!** They serve us and the **WORK** they do **FOR US** is definitely **IN OUR CONTROL**. The work they do for others is **NOT**

in our control. The work they do for us is directly in our control. That makes the work they do for us OUR RESPONSIBILITY!

We don't make people work in bowling alleys, amusement parks, or movie theatres, any more when we go there, than we do the restaurant employees. In fact, they work probably LESS in comparison. We don't force people in any business to work on the Sabbath, but, would it be right (in God's eyes) to do business with any of them on the Sabbath? So then, what's the difference? The main difference is that the restaurant employees have to work even harder for us than the clerks in a store!

The spirit of the law, as taught by our Master, says that only in such an emergency situation that life, limb, or property is in danger, should we be permitted to buy anything, or do any work, or cause anyone else to work on the Sabbath.

Some may insist that these people do not work for you because you do not pay their salary. However, in terms of their wages, any restaurant manager will tell you that the price of the menu item covers three things -- food costs, operating expenses, and WAGES. You DO pay their wages! In fact, one brother recently told me that when he worked for a well-known Winnipeg restaurant, his paycheck had these words written on it, "REMEMBER, CUSTOMERS MAKE YOUR PAYCHECK POSSIBLE."

God says that our servants are not to work. Even if they are strangers (not Christians) within our gates (our control), they are not to work, when it is within our control. The maitre de, chefs, waiters and waitresses are strangers, they are not Christians.

When God says that those who are "within our gates" must not work, this means inside our homes, on our property, or within the whole of the city gates, but the underlying meaning is THOSE WHO ARE WITHIN OUR IMMEDIATE CONTROL. That would apply to waitresses, waiters, and chefs.

Brethren, we need to see sin through God's eyes. We need to realize how severe this is from God's point of view: "Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD: whosoever doeth any work in the Sabbath day, he shall surely be PUT TO DEATH," (**Exodus 31:15**). God repeats this four chapters later, "Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day there shall be to you an holy day, a Sabbath of rest to the LORD: whosoever doeth work therein shall be PUT TO DEATH," (**Exodus 35:2**).

This decree was not just an idle threat. In **Numbers 15**, the man caught gathering sticks (wood, timber) on the Sabbath was STONED TO DEATH: "And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man that gathered sticks upon the Sabbath day. And they that found him gathering sticks brought him unto Moses and Aaron, and unto all the congregation. And they put him in ward, because it was not declared what should be done to him. And the LORD said unto Moses, The man shall be surely put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp," (**Numbers 15:32-36**). So, in God's eyes this IS serious business.

We need to realize that what may appear to be a "small thing" to us, is NO SMALL THING to God! There are many examples in the Scriptures of things that appeared little or insignificant to the Israelites, yet in God's eyes they were ABOMINATIONS!

The idolatrous ritual of holding the tamarisk branch to the nose may have appeared innocent and quite harmless to the Israelites, but the prophet Ezekiel writes:

"Then said he unto me, Hast thou seen this, O son of man? turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations than these...Then he said unto me, Hast thou seen this, O son of man? Is it a LIGHT THING to the house of Judah that they commit the abominations which they commit here? for they have filled the land with violence, and have returned to provoke me to anger: and, lo, they put the branch to their nose." (**Ezekiel 8:15, 17**).

CHRISTIANS SHOULD NOT CONDUCT BUSINESS ON THE SABBATH

God told Israel that they were not to make a fire on the Sabbath day, "Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations upon the Sabbath day," (**Exodus 35:3**). This fire was one for industrial purposes and required a lot of work to maintain, it was not a fire to keep the family warm in winter. This fire was for the purpose of doing commercial work. God did not want Israel to make a fire in order to engage in some sort of commercial enterprise. They were not to conduct business in ANY WAY on the Sabbath.

Going to a restaurant IS conducting business. A restaurant is a business, a commercial venture. It exists for the sole purpose of making money and when we go there we are conducting business. We pay money to someone for their product and they give us what they produce in return.

Think about it! What kind of all-day fire (stove, grill, charcoal pit, etc.) is burning in a restaurant? It is fire to cook food for commercial purposes and it is the very fire that God condemns in Exodus 35. Most Sabbath-keepers would not think of going to Safeway or SuperValue to buy food, go home and prepare it on the Sabbath, except in an emergency situation. So why would that same Christian consider going to buy food at a restaurant and have someone else prepare it and slave over a hot stove for them? Why conduct business and contribute to others doing business?

God sent His people into bitter captivity for breaking the Sabbath. Israel was the first to go. They were taken captive by the Assyrians. They lost the Sabbath completely and hence their identity, which, up until this century, has remained a mystery. Judah was next. They also broke God's Sabbath after repeated warnings and went into captivity. Judah was taken captive by Babylon. The Jews, however, did not lose their identity. They returned to the land after 70 years. Those who returned wanted to "revive" God's true worship in Judah. These people were mainly sincere, but they were also unconverted carnal people and as a result they made mistakes. One of their mistakes was in not keeping the Sabbath holy. They were conducting business on the Sabbath.

This was the very sin for which Nehemiah had to correct the Jews after their return from Babylon. Before quoting and explaining some key passages, here are some Bible dictionary and commentary notes describing everyday life during his time.

"A chief location for food purveyors in Old Testament times was outside the city walls near the Temple area. This is attested by the last chapter of Nehemiah. The prophet resented the desecration of the Sabbath by peddlers who had carried fish from Tyre, and those who SOLD FOOD and all manner of wares . . . fly-flecked meats, fresh produce from the Bethlehem terraces, and fruits from Hebron crammed the dark, windowless masonry stalls," (*Miller's Encyclopedia of the Bible*, pp.121, 123, emphasis mine). Obviously, in the absence of modern refrigeration, such goods would have to be consumed the same day.

"The village baker kindled his beehive oven with quick brush fuel and baked the dough together with meat and vegetables," (*Ibid.*, p. 334). Here is a scene of the village restaurateur serving a meal!

I have heard people say, "Nehemiah was a legalist, he went to extremes! He was really only talking about grocery shopping and doing 'work' (physical labor)" — as if he was doing his own thing and as if there were no eating establishments in his day. But there WERE street vendors, those who sold prepared food, and Nehemiah makes NO DISTINCTION! Let's take a closer look at this inspired, written account.

In **Nehemiah 9**, he is explaining to the Israelites that they need to get back to God's Law. Is this not the message for the Church today, for physical and spiritual Israel? "And testifiedst against them, that thou mightest bring them again unto Thy law: yet they dealt proudly, and hearkened not unto thy commandments, but sinned against Thy judgements, (which if a man do, he shall live in them); and withdrew the shoulder, and hardened their neck, and would not hear, (**verse 29**).

In **chapter 10** the people voluntarily enter into an agreement (covenant) to return to the law of God. If a whole nation was willing to repent and make an oath to God, should we not be willing to do this as individuals today? When God calls a nation to repentance, is He not calling each individual in that nation to repentance? Of course He is! The nobles of Judah signed and sealed a covenant as recorded in **verses 1-27**.

In **verse 28** all the rest of the people join with the nobles, entering an oath to walk in God's Law, given to Moses, and to observe all that Moses commanded, beginning with abstaining from inter-faith marriages in **verse 30**, and then in **verse 31** we read: "And if the people of the land bring ware or any VICTUALS (food) on the Sabbath day to sell, that we would NOT BUY IT of them on the SABBATH, or on the HOLY DAY: and that we would leave the seventh year, and the exaction of every debt."

There is no distinction here between food that might be eaten the same day, saved for the next day, or the coming week! But only three chapters later it seems that they had already forgotten their oath! Once again food is being bought and sold on the Sabbath and Nehemiah rebukes the Jews for selling food on the Sabbath day:

"In those days saw I in Judah some treading wine presses on the Sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all manner of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath day: and I testified against them in the day wherein they

SOLD VICTUALS. There dwelt men of Tyre also therein, which brought fish, and all manner of ware, and sold on the Sabbath unto the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem. Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What EVIL THING is this that ye do, and profane the Sabbath day?" (**Nehemiah 13:15-18**).

Well, what EVIL thing had they done? Was Nehemiah only referring to WORK (treading wine presses, lading asses, etc.)? Did Nehemiah make any distinction between buying food and buying other items like clothing and other goods, or between buying and working? Clearly, the evil thing was BUYING, SELLING AND PHYSICAL WORK, or conducting business in general.

Here is what Charles Fensham has to say in his commentary: "The Tyrians, famous Phoenician merchants, were selling fish and other kinds of merchandise to the Jews on the Sabbath day. The Sabbath law was totally forgotten. The real meaning of the Sabbath, a day to acknowledge the Lord as Creator and to give all the honor to Him for a successful week, had been abandoned. The Sabbath was celebrated to show that man's existence as a creation was more important than his fight for survival. Because of their need (for food) the Jews were conducting their business on that day like the neighboring heathen. The Lord provides food for the Sabbath; it is wrong and a sin to buy or sell food on that day." (pp. 263-264).

Let's see what Matthew Henry has to say about **Nehemiah 13:15**: "The keeping holy the Lord's day forms an important object for their attention who would promote true godliness. Religion never prospers while Sabbaths are trodden under foot. No wonder there was a general decay of religion, and corruption of manners among the Jews, when they forsook the sanctuary and profaned the Sabbath. Those little consider what an evil they do, who profane the Sabbath."

"We must answer for the sins others are led to commit by our example. Nehemiah charges it on them as an evil thing, for so it is, proceeding from contempt of God and our own souls. He shows that Sabbath-breaking was one of the sins for which God had brought judgements upon them; and if they did not take warning, but returned to the same sins again, they had to expect further judgements. The courage, zeal, and prudence of Nehemiah in this matter, are RECORDED FOR US TO DO LIKEWISE . . ." (emphasis mine).

Nehemiah took drastic steps to ensure the proper observance of the Sabbath. Why is this inspired biblical account so difficult for Christians to accept? Is this not written for our example? From the beginning of the Sabbath to its end, the gates of the city were closed! Now, obviously, we cannot make restaurants close their doors (yet) to honor the Sabbath, but we should not patronize them on the Sabbath and join them in polluting the Sabbath by paying them to prepare a meal for us.

It is CARNAL, HUMAN REASONING to say, "They will be there working on the Sabbath anyway, whether we go or not!" because so will the salesmen of nearly every other kind of merchandise, but we don't engage in financial transactions with any of them on the Sabbath, do we?

It has been stated that we have to eat on the Sabbath. Yes, and we have to drive our car to services and wear clothes to services. Do we buy our gas and clothes on the Sabbath? Should we

buy our food on the Sabbath? NO! God gave us six other days each week to buy what we need and prepare for the Sabbath — SIX OTHER DAYS! Think about it! Is there no way to prepare for this one day or are we simply unwilling to prepare for the Sabbath?

Most people would agree that it would be a sin to go to the store and buy all of the individual ingredients for a picnic lunch on the Sabbath. Then what is the difference in going to the restaurant and paying someone else to do it for you?

It is also very interesting to note that the Hebrew word Nehemiah used which is translated "victual" (**13:15**), is #6718 in Strong's concordance, "tsayid" and it can also be rendered "LUNCH"! So Nehemiah DID INDEED condemn them for buying or selling lunch on the Sabbath day!

The *World Biblical Commentary* by Williamson has this to say about **Nehemiah 10:31**: "This general statement (content of **verse 31**) is followed by a number of particular stipulations. They are NOT to be regarded as additional to the law just mentioned, as though the law did not legislate for these areas, for ALL OF THEM can be related to it more closely than this view would apply. Rather they spell out a few matters where the community is particularly conscious of having LASED, either through NEGLECT or through having FAILED TO APPRECIATE THE FULL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE LAW'S REQUIREMENTS," (p. 333, emphasis mine).

On page 334 of the same reference it says: "It is generally thought that it is possible to trace a developing severity in the Sabbath laws of the Old Testament whereby the original prohibition of occupational work spreads to cover other spheres of activity also. The law was already understood to forbid trading (**Amos 8:5**). But the latter period with its closer relations between Jew and foreigner, gave rise to a new problem, whether it was forbidden to buy from a non-Jew on the Sabbath or any other Holy Day to which the conditions of Sabbath observance applied. Nehemiah contended that this, too, was forbidden (buying from a Gentile) by the law."

Do you see what foolish reasoning it is to say, "They are going to be there selling food anyway"!

Another interesting point this commentator makes is that in the time of Moses, when the Israelites were more isolated, there was not as much temptation to buy on the Sabbath as there was in Nehemiah's day. In his day the Jews were living more closely with Gentiles, who had absolutely no regard for the Sabbath and did not close their shops that day. This became a great temptation to the Jews of his day.

Is it any different today in God's Church in the 1990s? Do we dwell in "Sabbath-safe communities"? Sure, it would be great if we could do as Nehemiah did and MAKE the markets, mega shopping malls, and restaurants close their doors and HONOR God's Sabbath day, but we can't! So what do we do?

"If we can't beat 'em, join 'em?" Is that the idea? No! But, I can assure you that one day soon they will: "And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk

in His paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem." (**Micah 4:2**).

Is there a true Christian drawing breath, who would argue that those who are working on the Sabbath day, preparing and selling food, are not sinning? I don't think so. Then how can the same person rationalize away God's direct command not to buy, sell, and trade on the Sabbath day, and show approval of the Gentiles' profaning the Sabbath by purchasing their food from them on that day?

Here's another quote from Williamson on the content of **Nehemiah 13**:

"In taking the Jewish nobles to task, Nehemiah shows that he held THEM (the leadership) responsible for what happened in Jerusalem. It is possible that they had not regarded BUYING as a profanation of the Sabbath, since only the vendor could properly be regarded as engaging in work." (This is exactly the EXCUSE we hear today!!) Continuing the quote, "For Nehemiah, however, it was nothing less than an extension of those practices that had led to the destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of the Babylonians," (pp. 395-396). DID YOU GET THAT?!?

Isn't that interesting? The whole content of Williamson's remarks is that it is UNLAWFUL TO BUY on the Sabbath day. Do you see? The Jews knew that it was unlawful to sell for gain, and they felt convicted of that. They acknowledged that it was wrong, and not unlike many today, they reasoned that perhaps it was all right to buy on the Sabbath, since the vendor was the one doing all the work!! "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." (**Proverbs 14:12**).

Let's look at one final fascinating commentary on Nehemiah by Matthew Henry: "They would not only not sell goods themselves for gain, but they would not encourage the heathen to sell on that day, by buying of them, NO, NOT VICTUALS, UNDER PRETENSE OF NECESSITY, BUT WOULD BUY THEIR PROVISIONS THE DAY BEFORE. Note: Those that covenant to keep all God's commandments (and, at baptism we all did), must particularly covenant to keep Sabbaths well! For the profanation of them is an inlet to other instances of profaneness. The Sabbath is a market for our souls but not for our bodies," (p. 638).

Now, in all honesty, I ask you. As a true, faithful, God-fearing, God-loving, and God-pleasing Christian, can you deny that buying food from a restaurant on the Sabbath is a blatant abuse and profanation of the Sabbath?

THE FORGOTTEN DAY OF PREPARATION

In order to prevent work from being done on the Sabbath, God provided legislation for this very purpose. He made Friday, the sixth day, (from Thursday at sunset to Friday at sunset) a PREPARATION DAY.

"Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in

my law, or no. And it shall come to pass, that on the sixth day THEY SHALL PREPARE that which they bring in; and it shall be TWICE AS MUCH as they gather daily," (**Exodus 16:4**).

They simply gathered twice as much food on the sixth day, put it away for the next day and then ate that extra portion on the Sabbath day.

"And it came to pass, that on the sixth day they GATHERED TWICE AS MUCH BREAD, two omers for one man: and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. And he said unto them, This is that which the LORD hath said, Tomorrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the LORD: bake that which ye will bake to day, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning. And they LAID IT UP TILL THE MORNING, as Moses bade: and it did not stink, neither was there any worm therein. And Moses said, Eat that today; for today is a Sabbath unto the LORD: to day ye shall not find it in the field. Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the Sabbath, in it there shall be none. And it came to pass, that there went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none," (**Exodus 16:22-27**).

What was the provision for those who did not prepare? God was teaching them a lesson on how to keep the Sabbath holy. The fact is that He did not give them an alternative food source when they did not prepare on the sixth day — "THEY FOUND NONE"!

Can we see that God was teaching them a fundamental lesson in obedience? There was no manna in the field when they went out to get it on the Sabbath. God is not teaching us a lesson today because WE SHOULD HAVE ALREADY UNDERSTOOD THE LESSON! He is still TESTING His children however.

We can go out into the field (world) today and find food everywhere. You can go to any restaurant and get any kind of food you want on the Sabbath, but the question is, should we? God is still testing his children to see if we have learned the lesson. If we don't PREPARE will we go into the field to find food or will we make preparation so that we don't have to?

What was God's response to those who did not prepare? "And the LORD said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep My commandments and My laws? (**Exodus 16:28**).

"See, for that the LORD hath given you the Sabbath, therefore He giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day." (**Exodus 16:29**).

God did not mean that they could not leave the tent. They left the tent when Moses assembled them to hear him speak on the Sabbath. The point is, don't leave your place to find food that was to have been already prepared on the preparation day. This point about abiding in your place is important; it referred to the place of the camp. This was a relatively large area which later came to mean the city and eventually a Sabbath day's journey. What is the principle here?

I believe that God did not want people to travel so far that they could not eat what was left over (prepared earlier) at home. How far do we travel on the Sabbath? Some may travel a

considerable distance to attend services. Today we have cars and can travel farther with much less work. If we are travelling so far that we must eat at a restaurant, could it be that we are going *too* far?

Technology has also provided us with insulated, food cooler chests, so we can safely carry food on trips. This means that we can prepare the Sabbath food on the preparation day, before the Sabbath, as God commanded. We can then take that food with us, and eat it along the way. This would enable us to keep the Sabbath as God commanded us, eating what was left over from the preparation day. We should not try to get out of preparing as God said. If it is too much trouble to prepare the day before, then chances are we are probably travelling too far. Perhaps we should have a living room service with a group of brethren who live near us.

As a minister of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, I believe that the MINISTRY SHOULD SET THE EXAMPLE TO OTHERS IN THE CHURCH AND IN THE WORLD!! To "prepare" requires some effort and planning — perhaps a lifestyle change. Are you willing?

My family and I live in the country and we travel about 35 minutes to attend services in Winnipeg. We spend most of the Sabbath day with the brethren. We start at 10:30 AM with our Bible Study, which usually lasts for about 90 minutes. Then we take a short break and resume our worship service (singing hymns, choruses, special music), followed by some sharing or testimonies, a sermonette or two, and then a final sermon.

After service, which is usually around 2:30 to 3:00, we will have a beautiful, delicious, potluck dinner prepared in advance by all of the ladies, with wonderful fellowship and godly conversation. In the summer and fall, we will often go as a group to a beautiful scenic park for a leisurely stroll, admiring God's wonderful handiwork. Sometimes we have outdoor services in a park, singing choruses and preaching the gospel for whoever wants to hear. We believe that it's important to spend our time the way God wants us to.

Did the early Christians go out to eat at Gentile "inns" after services?

What does Luke tell us? "And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart," (**Acts 2:46**).

They were eating in one another's homes! They didn't go out into the business world to purchase food on the Sabbath. Isn't this a good example to follow? We should not compromise with God's Sabbath. We should strive to keep it holy, separate and pure!

Some say that they are following Christ's example by eating in a restaurant. I ask you, where do you see this in the Scriptures? The truth is, there is not one single example of Christ or one of the disciples even ENTERING a restaurant on the Sabbath. In **Luke 14:1**, Jesus enters the home of a Pharisee to eat a meal on the Sabbath. "And it came to pass, as He went into the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the Sabbath day, that they watched Him."

Are we not willing to open up our homes to the brethren? Even the Pharisees did that! Are we willing to show hospitality as Paul instructs and according to the example of the early church?

(Acts 2:46-47). Just think what we would gain -- wonderful blessings and good wholesome fellowship that God approves!

Some of you may remember reading articles in the Good News magazine which stressed: "Proper Sabbath observance begins before sunset Friday evening. Friday is the day to put the final touches on your Sabbath plans, TO PREPARE YOUR SABBATH MEALS!!" (Oct./82). "The Sabbath is a day we can rejoice in, by enjoying delicious meals. Early in the week PLAN a menu for the Sabbath. Then prepare as much food as you can on Friday or even earlier in the week. Anything that can be reasonably done before the Sabbath should be, so we can spend our time the way God wants us to." (Oct./85).

WHAT ABOUT THE ANNUAL SABBATHS?

Do we have to prepare ahead for these days? Can we buy and sell on High Sabbaths? A High Sabbath is still a Holy day. Did Nehemiah make a distinction? "that we would not buy it of them on the Sabbath or on the HOLY DAY . . ." (Nehemiah 10:31).

God's Word clearly shows if and when there is an exception to the rule. During the High Sabbaths of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, we are permitted to prepare food on these days, but there should be no servile work (labour) performed, other than we might bake and boil or roast our meat in our own homes, and not in a restaurant.

"And in the first day there shall be an holy convocation, and in the seventh day there shall be an holy convocation to you; no manner of work shall be done in them, save that which every man must eat, that only may be done of you," (Exodus 12:16).

Since we gather together as a congregation, for services on these days, we usually have a potluck dinner which the ladies have prepared in advance as much as possible.

When we are travelling it is more difficult to prepare before the Sabbath, but we shouldn't use this as an excuse for not keeping the Sabbath holy by conducting business and going to a restaurant. There are still ways to prepare. Are we not capable of planning ahead and arriving at our motel or hotel before the Sabbath begins?

In our own travels when the preparation day is upon us, we have made a point of stopping to purchase food (pizza, fruits or sandwiches, etc.) for our meals to eat in our comfortable motel room.

DOING OUR OWN PLEASURE

Don't just take my word for it brethren! Prove this matter for yourselves as I have done for myself. Does what I am saying agree with the Scriptures? As a watchman for your souls, I am accountable to Almighty God for what I preach and teach.

"Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at My mouth, and give them warning from Me," (Ezekiel 3:17).

Please understand that my motivation is LOVE and that I do not want to see anyone come short because of the deceitfulness of sin. Sin can be very, very subtle. Hearken unto me ye that follow righteousness!

Isaiah gave a stinging rebuke to Israel before God sent them into captivity : "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins!" (**Isaiah 58:1**).

For years we thought nothing of going to restaurants on the Sabbath. We even planned our Holy Day festive celebrations in restaurants, totally and completely ignorant and oblivious to the fact that we were doing our own pleasure! When you are deceived, you don't know you are deceived, otherwise you wouldn't be deceived! And when you don't know something, you don't know that you don't know!

Thank God for the convicting power of His Holy Spirit! "For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?" (**Hebrews 12:6-8**).

Israel thought that they were God's people. They were religious. They sinned because they did not do what God said to do. One problem was the way they fasted. Another was the way they profaned the Sabbath day. They thought that they were keeping the Sabbath, but they were doing their own thing, not what God commanded!

"If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it," (**Isaiah 58:13, 14**).

"Turn away your foot from the Sabbath," literally means, "Take your dirty feet off the Sabbath!" We are not to do our own pleasure. The word "pleasure," according to Strong's concordance means, "desire, a valuable thing to you, something on your mind, that in which one takes delight, your own matter or purpose."

Some have said that God intended for us to make the Sabbath a delight. So, if going out to eat causes us to do less work, and makes the Sabbath more enjoyable for us, then it is good for us to go to a restaurant. This approach however, is NOT justified in the Scriptures. The Scriptures nowhere tell us to do what we humanly think is a delight on the Sabbath. Please read the above passage again.

Notice that we are not to MAKE the Sabbath a delight. We are to CALL the Sabbath a delight. The point is that God made the Sabbath. We are not to think that the Sabbath is a burden because

we are not able to do our own thing. The word for "delight" is #6027 in Strong's, the Hebrew word "oneg," which means "luxury," or "delicate life." We are to call the Sabbath a "LUXURY" BECAUSE WE DON'T HAVE TO WORK!!

The Scripture says that we are not to find our own pleasure, nor do our own ways on His holy day. We are to call the Sabbath a delight because we can stop doing the normal, routine, everyday things that we do. We have the time, holy time, a special time, when God's presence is near and very real and we can seek His face!

Our focus is on Him, which is why we call His Sabbath honorable. We can be with Him more and draw nearer to Him, basking in His glory! It is for this reason that we should call His Sabbath a delight, not because we are having more fun.

WHATSOEVER IS NOT OF FAITH IS SIN

Now, if we are 100% confident that it is all right to frequent restaurants on the Sabbath, then perhaps we can do so and be confident we are not sinning. It means that we are assured that we are not causing others to work and contributing to their profanation of the Sabbath. It means that we are confident that we are not conducting business. It means that we are certain that we are not doing our own pleasure.

If we are positively convinced that we are not doing any of these things to some degree, then it would not be a sin to us. If we believe that we might be doing some wrong to some degree, then it becomes sin. "Hast thou faith? Have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin," (**Romans 14:22, 23**).

The reason I raise this issue is because in every article that I have read on this subject, the statement is made that it would be all right to eat at a restaurant on the Sabbath "occasionally," just don't make it a regular habit.

Why do they use this word "occasionally"? If it is all right anytime to eat at a restaurant on the Sabbath, wouldn't it be all right to eat there every time? So we should say that it is always all right to eat at a restaurant. If it is not always right to eat at a restaurant on the Sabbath, then it must NEVER be the right thing, when we have a choice. If it is all right occasionally, then there are times when it is right and times when it is wrong. How would we know which occasion is the right occasion. Is every man (and woman) to do that which is right in their own eyes? (**Proverbs 16:2**).

If we have a choice and we are not absolutely, positively sure, then the best choice is not to do it! If we don't have complete faith that it is always right, then it is sin for us. If there is any question in our minds brethren, then we shouldn't do it! If we are not sure then we should "ERR" ON THE SIDE OF OBEDIENCE TO GOD!!

We should stay as much within God's law as we can. We shouldn't try to push out the boundaries even occasionally. I believe that the points and the questions I have expressed in this

article are legitimate. Now, let's take a look at some common objections and let's be men and woman of understanding. Together, let us UNDERSTAND THE TRUTH!

SOME COMMON OBJECTIONS

There are some who have tried to convince me that Jesus broke His own law in order to liberate us and give us the "freedom" to eat at restaurants on the Sabbath if we want to. They have used the story about the disciples harvesting and eating corn recorded in **Mark 2:23-27**:

"One Sabbath he was going through the grainfields; and as they made their way His disciples began to pluck heads of grain. And the Pharisees said to Him, 'Look, why are they doing what is not lawful on the Sabbath?' And He said to them, 'Have you never read what David did, when he was in need and was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God, when Abiathar was high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those who were with him?' And he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath; so the son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath'."

The idea here is that Christ and His disciples harvested and ate grain on the Sabbath, that they broke the Sabbath law to do this and it was all right to do so. A reference is made to the time when David took the shewbread, which was unlawful for him to eat. Some say that this sets a precedent for us to do what we want because we are hungry on the Sabbath.

Now, let's examine this carefully. Christ did NOT break the Sabbath law, at least, not the one He created, instituted and legislated. He did not go to unbelievers and hire them to cook food. He ate what was already provided there by God. He did not cook the food. He did not "harvest" in the truest sense of the word. He did not conduct business, nor did He do His own pleasure.

Now, had the disciples walked into one of the Gentile restaurants, in Jerusalem at that time, on the Sabbath, then we would have seen a standard set. But they never did that. They knew the commandment and Nehemiah's admonition. The Pharisees complained that it was unlawful because they equated it to "harvesting" on the Sabbath.

In **Exodus 34:21**, we read, "Six days thou shalt work, but on the seventh day thou shalt rest: in eaning time and in harvest thou shalt rest."

The Pharisees were being LUDICROUS! Whose "law" did Jesus break? The Pharisees were looking for "loopholes" in the law in order to "trap" Jesus. Plucking an ear of grain can HARDLY be compared to harvesting. The Pharisees used this exaggerated extrapolation of their own traditions and blew it completely out of proportion! They went overboard in their defense of their Jewish customs and oral laws (Halakha). They built up so many rules and regulations to govern the Sabbath, that they SERVED the Sabbath and made it a day of bondage!

Jesus (Yeshuah), set the record straight! After all, it was His law! He made it. He made the day! He knew the original intent and purpose! The traditions of the elders wrongly defined harvesting

as plucking an ear of grain. Jesus reinstated the original intent of the Sabbath! This is the "freedom" He restored!

So what precedent did the Master set? Can we glean from this that it is all right to go to restaurants on the Sabbath? That would really be s-t-r-e-t-c-h-i-n-g it, don't you think? I believe that the precedent Jesus set is this:

If you are taking a walk through the country, a park, or an orchard on the Sabbath and come across a fruit tree, it is O.K. to pick a piece of fruit for myself and my family and eat it on the Sabbath as we walk along, and not be guilty of harvesting on the Sabbath. This is the "freedom" He restored!

He doesn't expect US to go "overboard" either, with our freedom! I am not permitted to buy food, or go to those who are polluting the Sabbath, by working, and hire them to fix a meal for us because I have failed to follow God's instructions to PREPARE our own meal on the preparation day. This applies to the roadside fruit and vegetable vendors who are also profaning the Sabbath.

Notice, too, Christ's comments about David and the shewbread. Do we really understand what Jesus is saying? Can we honestly compare David's situation to a leisurely stroll into our favorite restaurant for a Sabbath morning breakfast or lunch?

"And He said to them, 'Have you never read what David did, when he was in need and was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God, when Abiathar was high priest, and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those who were with him'?"

David was fleeing for his very life! He was no doubt under tremendous strain, fatigue and famine, probably on the brink of starvation! This was obviously a life-saving emergency, an exception to the rule, an ox in the ditch, if you will. And not only that, but David asked Christ for permission and Christ Himself, the Law-Giver, gave it to him!!

David asked the priest to inquire of God about the bread. The priest enquired, possibly using the Urim and Thummin, and Christ indicated that the answer was YES, eat it, so the priest gave it to David who was on the run from Saul.

"And David said unto Ahimelech the priest, The king hath commanded me a business, and hath said unto me, Let no man know any thing of the business whereabout I send thee, and what I have commanded thee: and I have appointed my servants to such and such a place. Now therefore what is under thine hand? Give me five loaves of bread in mine hand, or what there is present.

"And the priest answered David, and said, There is no common bread under mine hand, but there is hallowed bread; if the young men have kept themselves at least from women. And David answered the priest, and said unto him, Of a truth women have been kept from us about these three days, since I came out, and the vessels of the young men are holy, and the bread is in a manner common, yea, though it were sanctified this day in the vessel. So the priest gave him

hallowed bread: for there was no bread there but the shewbread, that was taken from before the LORD, to put hot bread in the day when it was taken away." (**I Samuel 21:2-6**).

This first account doesn't tell the whole story. The rest of the story is given in the next chapter. Saul received word that David received bread from the priests, so Saul went to ask the priests if they helped David.

"Then answered Doeg the Edomite, which was set over the servants of Saul, and said, I saw the son of Jesse coming to Nob, to Ahimelech the son of Ahitub. And HE INQUIRED OF THE LORD FOR HIM, and gave him victuals, and gave him the sword of Goliath the Philistine," (**I Samuel 22:9, 10**).

David had the high priest inquire of the Lord! It was God who said that it was all right to give the shewbread to David to eat. Christ gave David permission! Yes, David did that which was unlawful, eating the bread which only the priests were allowed to eat, but Christ gave him permission, so it was not unlawful!

David didn't just go in there and steal the bread. In **Mark 2:26** Christ was not telling these people that it's O.K. now for anyone to go in and eat the shewbread. He did not say that anyone can do that which is unlawful if they are hungry on the Sabbath. He was saying (to those who have ears to hear), that David asked the "Lord of the Sabbath" for permission to do what he did. Christ gave David permission back then, and Christ (who is greater than the temple!) gave His disciples permission to pluck an ear of grain to eat.

Christ knew the Scriptures and He probably remembered the event. He knew that David asked God for permission. He was now saying that He, as the Creator of the Sabbath, was giving permission to His disciples to pluck the grain. This was in keeping with the true spiritual intent of the Sabbath. The Sabbath was made FOR man, for his benefit, for physical and spiritual rejuvenation. It was never intended to be a day of bondage.

We should not read into the Scriptures that which it does not say. This passage can in no way be used to say that we can conduct business and contribute to others profanation of the Sabbath by causing them to work for us on God's weekly or annual Holy days.

The same principle applies to the many examples where Christ HEALED on the Sabbath. He was restoring the original intent of the Sabbath. He taught that it was all right to do GOOD on the Sabbath.

"Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the Sabbath. The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured, It is the Sabbath day: it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed," (**John 5:8**).

"And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the Sabbath day. But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill Him, because He not only had broken (loosened) the

Sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making Himself equal with God," (**John 5:16-18**).

This is another example of the Jews traditions and "halakha" rules which they added to the Sabbath day commandment, making it a burden and a yoke of bondage.

They were no doubt referring to the words of Jeremiah, "Neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath day, neither do ye any work, but hallow ye the Sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers," (**Jeremiah 17:22**).

Can you imagine? Instead of rejoicing with this man because he was miraculously healed after a 38 year infirmity, the stiff-necked, hard-hearted, self-righteous, Pharisees became ANGRY. Now he could simply carry his bed mat home and no longer have to lie down in the streets, but they told him that it was "unlawful" to do such a thing on the Sabbath. According to who? God? Or their own rules?

Again, their false accusation and imposed restriction was based on overstepping the bounds of truth. The forbiddance spoken of by the Lord through the prophet Jeremiah had nothing to do with carrying a bed mat or even a box of food for the needy. This "burden" referred to lading asses, carts, etc., carrying it in by the gates of Jerusalem; to be unloaded and sold there, as wine, grapes, figs, and fish, were, in the times of Nehemiah. (Compare **Jeremiah 17:21** with **Nehemiah 13:15, 16, 19**).

What about the priests? They work on the Sabbath and are blameless. This verse has been used to prove that ministers can go out to eat at restaurants and be blameless. Is this what Christ is saying in **Matthew 12:5**, "Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the Sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless?"

Notice that this verse states that they are IN THE TEMPLE. They are not profaning the Sabbath by going out and conducting business with a Gentile, and then considered blameless. Christ is only talking about the priest's duties in the temple! On the Sabbath the priests were commanded to do certain works. They had to circumcise babies on the 8th day, even if it was the Sabbath. They had to light the evening and morning fires and sacrifice and carry animals. All of this was a lot of work, but God commanded them to do this work and it was done in the temple. Being a priest or a minister does NOT mean that we are exempt from God's Law.

JUST HOW SERIOUS IS THIS?

Just how serious is this issue of buying and selling on God's Sabbath day? Believe me brethren, this issue goes much deeper than we realize.

The Laodicean attitude is widespread and dominant, but as individual Christians we can have a Philadelphian attitude and enter the same covenant that the children of Judah did, when Nehemiah showed them their transgression.

The Sabbath has always been God's TEST commandment, His mark, the identifying sign of His people. "Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my Sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a SIGN between Me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you." (**Exodus 31:13**).

Today, the Most High has a "seal," a mark that is implanted in the forehead (seat of the mind, the intellect, the will) of His servants, figuratively speaking. (**Revelation 7:4**). The sealed are those who have been purchased and follow the Lamb wheresoever he goeth.

They are sealed (anointed) with His Holy Spirit and are led by his Spirit. They have the testimony of Jesus Christ and the seal of the Law in their lives, (**Isaiah 8:16; Revelation 12:17**). They also have His Name upon them, which is another sign of ownership. "And they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads." (**Revelation 22:4**). The Law is spiritual (**Romans 7:14**) therefore, God's mark or seal is spiritual.

The Spirit of God is the Spirit of Truth, (**John 16:13**). It is the TRUTH that seals us and sets us apart from pagans, heathens, idol worshippers, and apostates. Whatever is put "in place of" God's mark or identifying signs (His Laws and commandments), would be the mark of the beast. The beast power is a corrupt political/religious system opposed to the ways of God. Her mark is counterfeit Christianity. Her sign is the cross, Sunday worship, and all her pagan religious holidays. In fact, the whole world (professing Christians or not) wonders (follows) after the beast.

What does the apostle John tell us about this mark in **Revelation 13:16-17**: "And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might BUY or SELL, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name."

The "forehead" signifies submitting one's mind, will power, and intellect. The "right hand" signifies willingness, action, and more importantly, co-operation.

Which is the biggest BU\$INE\$\$ day for buying and selling in all of the world? Is it not Saturday, God's Sabbath day?

The fact is, if you have the mark of God, you are limited in your buying and selling because you will not be buying and selling on His Holy Sabbath day. If you have the mark of the beast, you have no restrictions, you will buy and sell on God's Sabbath day. The mark of the beast is spiritual! The mark of the beast has always been here!

"And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." (**Revelation 20:4**).

In this passage, John is seeing a vision of the glorified, RESURRECTED SAINTS. This is the FIRST resurrection of ALL of those who lived and died "IN CHRIST" and ALL of those who are alive when Christ returns. They will live and rule with Christ during His thousand-year reign.

John says that this group of individuals HAD NOT worshipped the beast, NEITHER His image, NEITHER had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands! ALL of these resurrected saints REJECTED the mark of the beast! They had to make a "conscious choice" and they REFUSED the mark of the beast, which means that they KNOW WHAT IT IS!

Don't you see? The mark of the beast has always been here! God is marking His own. Are you numbered among them?

"And the LORD said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof. And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary (Church). Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house." (**Ezekiel 9:4-6**).

"He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still," (**Revelation 22:11**).

"Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city," (**Revelation 22:14**).

"Earnestly study to present yourself approved to God, a workman unashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth," **II Timothy 2:15**.

"However, the foundation of God stands firm, having this seal, "The Lord knew those being His;" **Numbers 16:5**, also, Let everyone naming the name of Christ depart from unrighteousness."

"Then if anyone purifies himself from these (heresies), he will be a vessel to honor, having been sanctified (set apart) and made useful to the Master, having been prepared unto every good work." (**II Timothy 2:15, 19, 21**).

May Almighty God help you to truly see the light on this most important matter. Yield to Him right now and allow Him to teach you, convict you, and inspire you to REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY, TO KEEP IT HOLY!

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