

GD16 - "Thou Shalt...Offer Up Thy Sacraments upon My Holy Day"
Goose Creek Ward, Ashburn, VA Stake
S. Kurt Neumiller
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Ancient Historical and Doctrinal Context

Historical - for the ancient Israelites there were three major events which formed the symbolism of the Sabbath.

First, the Sabbath was a sign that Israel is the Lord's chosen people. Just as the Lord rested, so too must His people rest.

Exod. 31:13 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.** 14 Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it [is] holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth [any] work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. 15 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. 16 Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, [for] a perpetual covenant. 17 **It [is] a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for [in] six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.**

Thus, the Sabbath is a means of differentiating between Israel and the Gentiles. The Lord is saying, "Be like Me, not like the Gentiles."

Second, the Sabbath was to be much more than simply a day off. It was there to remind them of something in specific.

Deut. 5:12 Keep the sabbath day to sanctify it, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee. 13 Six days thou shalt labour, and do all thy work: 14 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, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that [is] within thy gates; that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou. 15 **And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and [that] the LORD thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the LORD thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day.**

They are to remember the Lord delivered them from their servitude wherein they were not allowed to rest and were not allowed to worship Him. Now, they may rest and worship Him, and the Sabbath is the time set aside to do that.

Third, in addition to the weekly Saturday Sabbath, all of the Feasts of Ingathering are Sabbaths as well.

Passover/Pesach Lev. 23:1 AND the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 2 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, [Concerning] the feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim [to be] holy convocations, [even] these [are] my feasts. 3 Six days shall work be done: **but the seventh day [is] the sabbath of rest, an holy convocation; ye shall do no work [therein]: it [is] the sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings.** 4 These [are] the feasts of the LORD, [even] holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their seasons. 5 In the fourteenth [day] of the first month at even [is] the LORD'S passover....

Weeks/Pentecost/Shavuot Lev. 23:15 And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete: 16 Even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer ... the firstfruits unto the LORD.... 21 And ye shall proclaim on the selfsame day, [that] it may be an **holy convocation unto you: ye shall do no servile work [therein: it shall be] a statute for ever in all your dwellings throughout your generations.**

Yom Kippur and Booths/Tabernacles/Sukkot - Lev. 23:26 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 27 Also on the tenth [day] of this seventh month [there shall be] **a day of atonement: it shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD.** 28 **And ye shall do no work in that same day: for it [is] a day of atonement,** to make an atonement for you before the LORD your God.... 34 Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, The fifteenth day of this seventh month [shall be] **the feast of tabernacles [for] seven days unto the LORD.** 35 **On the first day [shall be] an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work [therein].** 36 Seven days ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD: on the eighth day shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD: it [is] a solemn assembly; [and] ye shall do no servile work [therein].

All three Festal Holidays are Sabbaths where the Lord commands Israel to sacrifice, requiring Temple attendance. Thus, Sabbaths are equated with Temple worship. Hence the emphasis observing the Sabbath receives.

Thus, for the ancient Israelites the Sabbath was very important because it was a sign that they were the Lord's chosen people unlike the Gentiles, that they were freed from servitude in Egypt, and that the Sabbath was a time to meet the Lord in His Temple.

Doctrinal The rules and regulations concerning what you can and cannot do have been a source of contention and debate through the ages. However, the Lord's intention is these myriad rules is to educate us regarding His will concerning the Sabbath and not to confine us to didactic stricture.

Lets take some regulations concerning fire on the Sabbath as an example:

Exod. 35:2 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. 3 Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations upon the sabbath day.

We are informed that no "work" is to be performed on the Sabbath and the specific case of starting a fire is prohibited. Actually try to start a fire by hand and you'll quickly see how much work that is.

Num. 15:32 And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man that gathered sticks upon the sabbath day. 33 And they that found him gathering sticks brought him unto Moses and Aaron, and unto all the congregation. 34 And they put him in ward, because it was not declared what should be done to him. 35 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. 36 And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died; as the LORD commanded Moses.

Here we are informed that gathering sticks on the Sabbath is prohibited. Naturally, the sticks were intended for a fire.

Num. 28:9 And on the sabbath day two lambs of the first year without spot, and two tenth deals of flour [for] a meat offering, mingled with oil, and the drink offering thereof: 10 [This is] the burnt offering of every sabbath, beside the continual burnt offering, and his drink offering.

But, here the Levites are instructed they are to offer burnt offerings on the Sabbath. Are Levites exempted from the prohibition on kindling fires and gathering sticks? There is nothing to suggest that at all. Instead, what must the Lord be implying is such a thing?

Obviously, if one needs a fire on the Sabbath but cannot kindle it or gather sticks for it on the Sabbath, when does one kindle it and gather the sticks? When its not the Sabbath, and then the fire is simply kept going.

Thus, the Lord's intent is to have people plan ahead and be prepared for the Sabbath. Get all of the labors, the "work", out of the way, then when the Sabbath comes you can relax from physical labors and focus as much as possible on spiritual things. The Lord wants us to deliberately plan for the Sabbath to be as spiritual as possible.

Ideally, the Sabbath is to be a time where we deliberately set aside our own desires and pursuits. If we do, then we will love to observe the Sabbath because it will be a enjoyable and precious day where we cast aside all of the hassles and aggravation of the week for a day of respite.

Isa. 58:13 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: 14 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].

If we do this, we will be in line to inherit the lineage of Jacob. What is the lineage of Jacob? Posterity, land for inheritance, and eternal life.

Modern Historical and Doctrinal Context

Surprisingly enough, the Sabbath is only commented on twice in the D&C, aside from a tangentially related comment in D&C 77:12. D&C 59 is the definitive statement and the other is a simple statement among many others telling the Church to observe the Sabbath.

D&C 68:29 And the inhabitants of Zion shall also observe the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

As such, we will spend the rest of the time on D&C 59. D&C 59 was prompted by the death of Polly Knight, wife of Joseph Knight, Sr. Knight was an early benefactor of Smith and did much to support the translation of the BofM. The Colesville Branch of the Church, the Knights among them, had gathered to Independence, MO and about two weeks after their arrival, after a prolonged illness, Polly passed away. Polly was the first member of the Church to die in the newly declared Zion. Verses 1-2 are generally considered to be commenting directly upon Polly's passing, and the rest of the revelation is considered exhortation to the recently arrived founding branch of Zion at Independence.

Note the emphasis given to the subject of observing the Sabbath as more text is dedicated to this one subject (v. 9-14) than 9 of the other 10 commandments (v. 5-8).

D&C 59:9 And that thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day; 10 For verily this is a day appointed unto you to rest from your labors, and to pay thy devotions unto the Most High; 11 Nevertheless thy vows shall be offered up in righteousness on all days and at all times; 12 But

remember that on this, the Lord's day, thou shalt offer thine oblations and thy sacraments unto the Most High, confessing thy sins unto thy brethren, and before the Lord. 13 And on this day thou shalt do none other thing, only let thy food be prepared with singleness of heart that thy fasting may be perfect, or, in other words, that thy joy may be full. 14 Verily, this is fasting and prayer, or in other words, rejoicing and prayer.

"unspotted from the world" Particularly note the manner in which v. 9 presents Sabbath day observance as a means of discerning between the Church and the world. If the Church fails to observe the Sabbath, then they are just as the world is. This clearly invokes the same theme as that of Exod. 31:13 where the Sabbath is a sign that those who keep it revere the Lord.

"go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments" The end of verse 9 tells the Church to gather together on the Sabbath and pray and take the sacrament. When discussing the meaning and importance of the sacrament, it is only intuitive to review the text of Moroni 4-5 which documents the blessings which were made over the bread and water given to the church as the sacrament. It is instructive to note the similarities and differences between the two prayers when they are held in parallel, as follows:

O God, the Eternal Father,
we ask thee
in the name of thy Son,
Jesus Christ,
to bless and sanctify this
bread
to the souls of all those
who partake of it;
that they may eat
in **remembrance** of
the body of thy Son, and
witness unto thee,
O God, the Eternal Father,
that they are willing
to take upon them the
name of thy Son, and
always **remember** him, and
keep his commandments
which he hath given them, that
they may always have his Spirit
to be with them.
Amen.

O God, the Eternal Father,
we ask thee,
in the name of thy Son,
Jesus Christ,
to bless and sanctify this
wine
to the souls of all those
who drink of it,
that they may do it
in **remembrance** of
the blood of thy Son,
which was shed for them; that
they may witness unto thee,
O God, the Eternal Father,
that they do
always **remember** him,
that
they may have his Spirit
to be with them.
Amen.

The similarities are that both prayers address the Father in the name of the Son and do so in a Father-Son-Son-Father pattern and end in an appeal to have the Spirit with the partaker. Remembrance is emphasized by it being repeated twice in both prayers.

The differences are that the bread is intended to represent the body, or mortal ministry, of the Son with the partaker taking his name upon themselves and keeping his commandments. The wine is to represent the blood which the Son shed for the forgiveness of our sins, and therefore has a more eternal focus.

The differences also suggest an if...then pattern. If the partaker takes the name of Christ upon themselves and keeps Christ's teachings, then the Son will cover the partaker's sins with the blood He shed.

"rest from your labors" The Lord then instructs the saints to cease from their labors. The question is always "What is and what is not appropriate for the Sabbath?"

Practical Applications

When it comes to the Sabbath day activities, there are two factors given in the Scriptures which dictate what is and what is not appropriate. First, we are told not to work, and it is made plain that whatever occupation we pursue the rest of the week we are not to pursue on the Sabbath (cf. Deut. 5:12-15). Second, we are told not to pursue our own will, but rather the Lord's will (cf. Isa. 58:13). Given these two criteria we can make a simple matrix.

Work?	No		Shaded
	Yes		
		Mine	Lord's

Who's will?

The shaded square in the upper-right hand corner is where we ideally should be. However, we know the Sabbath is not greater than the man (cf. Mark 2:27), so those whose professions are involved in public health and safety (e.g., police, nurses, doctors, etc.) where the health and well-being of people would be jeopardized if they failed to do their job may occupy the lower-right corner.

In a matrix such as this one it is simple to categorize activities. The world pursues their own will and works on the Sabbath. The Church is to do the Lord's will and to cease from their occupations on the Sabbath. If the Church does not do this, then they are no different from the world.

Conclusion

We are told in Isa. 58:14 those who observe the Sabbaths of the Lord honor Him, and obtain the heritage of Jacob, which is land, posterity, and ultimately eternal life. This is the heritage we want, we must observe the Sabbath to obtain.

One of the purposes of the Sabbath is to remember what Jesus Christ did for us, we do this through the Sacrament:

O God, the Eternal Father,
 we ask thee
 in the name of thy Son,
 Jesus Christ,
 to bless and sanctify this
 bread
 to the souls of all those
 who partake of it;
 that they may eat
 in **remembrance** of
 the body of thy Son, and

 witness unto thee,
 O God, the Eternal Father,
 that they are willing
 to take upon them the
 name of thy Son, and
 always **remember** him, and
 keep his commandments
 which he hath given them, that
 they may always have his Spirit
 to be with them.
 Amen.

O God, the Eternal Father,
 we ask thee,
 in the name of thy Son,
 Jesus Christ,
 to bless and sanctify this
 wine
 to the souls of all those
 who drink of it,
 that they may do it
 in **remembrance** of
 the blood of thy Son,
 which was shed for them; that
 they may witness unto thee,
 O God, the Eternal Father,
 that they do

 always **remember** him,

 that
 they may have his Spirit
 to be with them.
 Amen.

When it comes to the Sabbath day activities, there are two factors given in the Scriptures which dictate what is and what is not appropriate. First, we are told not to work (cf. Deut. 5:12-15). Second, we are told not to pursue our own will, but rather the Lord's will (cf. Isa. 58:13). Hence the simple matrix:

Work?	No	
	Yes	
		Who's will? Mine Lord's