

Sing before the service: Psalm 27:4

Our help is in the Name of the Lord who made heaven and earth.

Beloved, grace and peace be to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ through the mighty working of God the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Psalm of praise: 92:1

Prayer

Scripture hymn 9-1:6 (26:6)

Scripture reading: Exodus 35

Scripture text: Exodus 35:2; Catechism Lord's Day 38

For six days, work is to be done, but the seventh day shall be your holy day, a Sabbath of rest to the LORD. Whoever does any work on it must be put to death. (Exodus 35:2 NIV-UK)

The fourth commandment deals with the way in which the Sabbath should be spent.

1. Which principle is under discussion?

2. What do we do on such a day?

1. What principle is under discussion?

The Lord puts forward a principle:

- Of the seven days, He set aside one day so that He can be honoured on that day.
- The New Testament nowhere indicates that the atonement and fulfilment by Jesus Christ cancelled this principle.

We do read, however, that the particular day was moved from the seventh day to the first day, but the essence of the day stayed the same.

- The reason why it was moved from the seventh to the first day is because the old covenant passed on to the new covenant.
- The covenant of works passed away, and the covenant of grace through the Lord Jesus Christ came into being.

In practice it means that in terms of the covenant of works, man had to work for six days before he could take a rest, and on the day of rest he had to glorify God.

- The symbolism built into this is that man first had to work during his life on earth before he could enter the eternal Sabbath with God.

Then the covenant of grace came into being.

- Through this the Lord tells us that we have already been buried with Jesus Christ and that, just as Christ was raised from the dead, we may also live a new life. (Romans 6:4)
- Hence we no longer have to keep the law in order to go to heaven. We already have eternal life through Jesus Christ.

But we are still on this earth!

- Therefore we now worship the Lord on the first day of the week. This symbolises that we already live, like in the hereafter, through the grace of the Lord's reconciliation.

Take note, however, that the essence of the day is still the same.

- We still praise and glorify the Lord on this day.

- It is still the day He set apart because He wants our undivided attention in worshipping Him on this particular day.

This is why the Lord Jesus said the following in Mark 2:27:

Then 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. (Mark 2:27-28 NIV-UK)

Here the Lord Jesus Himself maintained the commandment to keep the Sabbath holy.

- This completely rules out the argument that we no longer have to keep the Sunday – like the Sabbath in the Old Testament – as a day on which we do not work and on which we worship God and learn more about Him.
- The Lord says that the purpose of the day is still the same, and also that the God of the day is still the same.

2. What do we do on such a day?

Just consider for a moment the institution of the Sabbath:

The LORD blessed the sabbath day and *hallowed it*.

The King James Version reads:

Remember the sabbath day, to *keep it holy*.

What does the word *holy* mean?

- It means to set something apart.
- And it means *dedicated to God*.

Hence the day is set apart for the Lord.

- On this day we do what pleases the Lord.
- The Lord also rested on the seventh day. However, He did not rest in a passive way, in other words doing nothing.
 - He was very active on that day, because He admired and enjoyed his work.
 - The glory of all his works in the entire creation shone upon Him.

The Lord told the Israelites to remember that he was their Saviour because He had led them out of Egypt.

The same applies to us. The Lord is our Saviour because He saved us from eternal damnation.

You must also keep the Sabbath like this.

- First, we may not work.
- The Lord is so serious about this that the people who worked on the Sabbath, had to be killed.
- In this respect many of us sin, because on Sunday we wash the car, work in the garden, and do all the work we did not get done during the week. The Lord will not accept this.

On the other hand, you must be active. Certain works must be done on the Sunday.

- First, attend the church services on this particular day.
 - Just consider Psalm 84. Psalm 84 was written by a person who knew exactly what he was talking about, because he was forbidden to go into the temple again after he had sinned.
 - Then he wrote this psalm to put into words what he missed so dearly.
 - Don't be too late to discover what you have lost if you are locked out of God's house through his judgment!

The Sunday should also be used to study the Bible actively.

- The Christians of the New Testament regularly met on Sundays to study the Word of God.
- On the Sabbath the Lord Jesus took the scroll of the prophet Isaiah and explained the meaning of a certain passage to the people.
- This is also the day on which we, in particular, must teach our children the Word of God – catechism class at home but also at the church.

Now, decide for yourself, where do you fit in?

- Are you one of those who use this day for fun, for work, doing things for yourself, while you forget about the holiness of God?
- Just remember, you cannot argue that you have done enough for the Lord after having been at the church for one hour.
- The Lord will ask you what you have done during the other 23 hours because He lays claim to the entire day!

In his anger the Lord swore that he would let all those die who desecrate his sabbath day.

- Consider Hebrews 4:1:

Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. (Hebrews 4:1 NIV-UK)

Join me in reading Catechism Lord's Day 38.

103. Q. What does God require in the fourth commandment?

A. First, that the ministry of the gospel and the schools be maintained[1] and that, especially on the day of rest, I diligently attend the church of God[2] to hear God's Word,[3] to use the sacraments,[4] to call publicly upon the Lord,[5] and to give Christian offerings for the poor.[6] Second, that all the days of my life I rest from my evil works, let the Lord work in me through His Holy Spirit, and so begin in this life the eternal sabbath.[7]

[1] Deut. 6:4-9; 20-25; I Cor. 9:13, 14; II Tim. 2:2; 3:13-17; Tit. 1:5. [2] Deut. 12:5-12; Ps. 40:9, 10; 68:26; Acts 2:42-47; Heb. 10:23-25. [3] Rom. 10:14-17; I Cor. 14:26-33; I Tim. 4:13. [4] I Cor. 11:23, 24. [5] Col. 3:16; I Tim. 2:1. [6] Ps. 50:14; I Cor. 16:2; II Cor. 8 and 9. [7] Is. 66:23; Heb. 4:9-11.

Amen.

Closing prayer

Closing hymn: Psalm 84:1, 2

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.

Amen.

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Summary

The Sabbath is set apart for the Lord. On this day everything is done that pleases the Lord. This is the way we should spend Sunday.