

606 What Is the Lord's Day?

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God's Answers to Life's Questions

When I was a boy growing up, my father and mother and people in the church used to call Sunday, the first day of the week, the "Lord's day." Religious phrases (Lord's day) puts some people off, but understanding what is meant by the Lord's day is far more than mere "spiritual talk." It is really something very important and meaningful in Christianity. In the coming minutes we're going to talk about the origin and significance of the words "Lord's day." We're going to see that the early Christians looked forward each week to the Lord's day and wanted to worship God in spirit and in truth. Yes, the Lord's day is not just another day.

We often use the terms "Saturday" and "Sunday" to refer to days of the week. Both words (as all the days of our seven day week) are Latin terms referring to various days named after their gods: Saturday was named after Saturn, the god of agriculture; and Sunday named, for the day of the Sun god. This is very different from the week found in Genesis one, where the days of the week were numbered. Genesis 2:2 says, "By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made."

It was not until the time of Moses, however, that God called the seventh day, "the Sabbath," and required his people to rest on that day. In Exodus 16, when God gave the people manna, He required them to pick up more manna on the sixth day to prepare for the Sabbath, which He made a holy day. There would be no manna on the seventh day, so they were to prepare their food early. From that time forward the Israelites rested on the Sabbath and did not do any work. When Moses gave the Ten Commandments, the fourth commandment dealt with the Sabbath day. Exodus 20:8 says, "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy."

Now the Sabbath day was for Israel. At the close of his life, Moses said in Deuteronomy 5:15, "You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day." You can see from this that the Sabbath day was linked to Israel's coming out of Egypt. Though God instructed Israel to keep the Sabbath, God never instructed Christians to do so. You see, Christianity is not a part of that old covenant made at Mt. Sinai. Rather, Christianity comes from the teaching of Jesus in the New Covenant.

Hebrews 8:8-12 quotes from the prophecy of Jeremiah 31:31-34 and shows that God would make a new covenant. "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. For they did not continue in my covenant, and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall not teach, each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more." Hebrews 8:13 concludes this, "In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away." So the old covenant was to become obsolete and a new covenant was to take its place. This new covenant ratified by the blood of Christ no longer had a Sabbath day. It had something else.

It had a day that remembered the Lord every week but not identical to the Sabbath. It was an important day when the church would gather to remember the Lord and worship. This was not the seventh day of the week but the first day of the week. Now this is significant, because in Christianity the Lord is to be first in everything. Paul said in Colossians 1:17-18, "He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything." I have never liked calendars that put Sunday as the last day of the week. It is and should always be the first day of the week.

Now the first day of the week is important to all Christians, because that is the day that Jesus arose from the dead. Luke 24 records for us that Jesus fulfilled his prophecy by rising on the first day of the week. Luke 24:1-7 says, "But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men suddenly stood near them in dazzling clothing; and as *the women* were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, *the men* said to them, "Why do you seek the living One among the dead? He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee, saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again." You see the resurrection on the first day of the week was the fulfillment of that promise. From that day forward the first day of the week (what we call Sunday) became a day that Christians remember the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. In fact, we find that the church began their gatherings on the first day of the week. God raised Jesus up on that very day, and because of it Christians remember the Lord's day.

When the day came for the church to begin, God chose the day of Pentecost, which is always on the first day of the week. This was the day the apostles received the baptism of the Holy Spirit and were endowed with power to speak in tongues. This is the day that Peter and the eleven spoke in fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah 2 to Jews from all nations. This was the day that the gospel (the good news) was first preached—that Jesus died, was buried, and rose again from the dead. Acts 2 tells how Peter proclaimed to all that the crucified Jesus was indeed Lord and Christ (2:36). To say He is Christ is to say that He is the Messiah, the fulfillment of all the Jewish prophecies.

To say that Jesus is Lord is to say that He is not only Divine but that He is our Master, who has control of our lives. It is on Pentecost, the first day of the week, that 3,000 souls are saved by being baptized "in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness" of their sins (Acts 2:38, 41). This is the first time baptism is "in the name of Jesus Christ." Luke then tells us that those who are saved (baptized in His name) are added to the church (Acts 2:47). This is first time that the word "church" is spoken about as a reality. It began on the day of Pentecost, the first day of the week. Now God was behind all of this and chose the first day of the week to be special to the church.

In Acts 20:6-7, Luke records, "We sailed from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and came to them at Troas within five days; and there we stayed seven days. On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul *began* talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight." Here we find that Paul waited seven days at Troas to

meet with the church. It was on the first day of the week, “when we were gathered to break bread.” This is not just any meal, since Paul and others ate every day. This is a reference to the Lord’s Supper, which the early church observed regularly on the first day of the week.

They waited seven days until that day came to “break bread,” a reference to the Lord’s supper. The history of the early church is clear. The church met on the first day of every week to partake of their communion, a memorial meal of unleavened bread and fruit of the vine. They remembered his body as they ate of the bread and remembered his blood as they drank of the fruit of the vine (the product of the grape). This was the Divine tradition among all the churches in the early days. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, ‘For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, “This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.” In the same way *He took* the cup also after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink *it*, in remembrance of Me.” For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.’ This practice is called the Lord’s Supper in 1 Corinthians 11:20. Now it is significant Paul uses that word “Lord’s.” In the original Greek this word is rare and used only two times in the New Testament. It is not the common word for “Lord.” It refers to “what belongs to the Lord.” The Lord’s Supper belongs to the Lord.

Now this unusual word is only used one other time. In Revelation 1:10, John said, “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day.” The Lord’s day—that day that belongs uniquely to the Lord. What day is that? This is the only time that phrase (Lord’s day) is used in Scripture. But the phrase is used many times by writers in the second century, and without exception they were referring to the day that Christians observed the “Lord’s Supper” or the first day of the week. They observed the Lord’s (or Lordian) Supper on every Lord’s (or Lordian) day, each first day of the week. This was the universal practice of the church for centuries. They gathered each Lord’s day to observe the Lord’s supper.

The word for ‘Lord’s’ in Greek is the word *kuriakon*. As years went by *kuriakon* became in English “kirk,” which is the old English word for our word “church.” Lord’s day, Lord’s Supper, and church are all so closely related they cannot be separated. To forsake attending church on the Lord’s day to break bread in the Lord’s Supper was to abandon the Lord Himself. The Hebrew writer said in Hebrews 10:24-25, “let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging *one another*; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.” God wants His people to attend church regularly.

Hebrews 10:26 speaks of those who quit going to church altogether, “For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.”

If a Christian forsakes assembling, decides he’s not going to assemble with the church ever again, he is actually going against God and endangering his soul. Many people think assembling with the church is optional, but the Scriptures tell us not only to attend but to encourage others to assemble. I, for one am thankful to go to church, where my dearest friends are. Assembling with the saints is the time I can sing, pray, commune, hear God’s word and make a gift to God.

I want the Lord to know I belong to Him and that I am going to honor His day each week by partaking of His Supper. When I became a Christian, I made a commitment that was to last for a lifetime. God’s grace and love for me has been so abundant, I cannot imagine overlooking any opportunity to honor Him and praise Him with my brothers and sisters in Christ. I want to be at church every time the doors are open. I grow from being with my brethren. They encourage me to love and good works, to pray more, to be a better man, a better husband and father, a better servant, and a better friend. Being a church keeps people strong in their faith. We need that—all of us.

I don’t know whether you are assembling with your brothers and sisters in Christ each Lord’s day or not. I hope you will. There is value to worship and fellowship. You need the church, and the church needs you. I hope that you have become a Christian and are faithfully attending worship every week. If you are not a Christian, you are missing out on all the wonderful, spiritual blessings of life. Why not become one today by believing in the Lord Jesus, repenting of your sins, confessing His name before others, and by being baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins, and the Lord will add you to His church.

Several weeks ago I was shocked when I heard some churches were going to close their doors because Christmas fell on Sunday. They put their family time ahead of the Lord. Many churches even dismiss or change their services over the Super Bowl. Has our desire for ourselves become so large and has Jesus become so small in our lives that we feel free to set aside His day for our own enjoyment? Some said, “people won’t come to church, if Christmas falls on Sunday.” Why should we let what others do keep us from doing what the Lord asks? Let us keep the Lord in first place in everything, especially in assembling with His people. Let’s not let the world keep us from serving God.

Paul said in Romans 12:2, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.” We must not let the world keep us from our faith. Let’s put the Lord’s day back where it belongs—in first place in our lives. Jesus asks us to seek first the kingdom of heaven and His righteousness. When we do that we will not only please Him, we will also say to the world that Jesus is first in our lives. If Christians treat Him as optional, how can they ask the world to give their lives to Him? Let’s live what we believe and live with the Lord as first in our lives.

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