



## The Lord's Day and the New Covenant

We know from the New Testament that God has a rest day, a special day of the week that He calls His own. John writes, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet." Revelation 1:10. Long after the cross, it is evident from this verse that God does have a special day, a day that belongs to Him, a day that is called "the Lord's Day."

To find out the origin of this day we must go back to the beginning of the Bible. Before there had ever been any transgression of God's law, when there was no need for a plan of salvation because no one had ever sinned.

Genesis 2:1–3 says, "Thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. And on the seventh day God ended 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."

Genesis 1 and 2 says that God created this world in six days. The evening and the morning were the first day, the second day and so on. During each one of these days, in creation week, God created some aspect of the world or solar system. But at the end of Creation week, God created a special holy day to commemorate what He had made. This day He called a rest day or a Sabbath day and in that day God set an example for us by resting. The Bible says that He blessed the day and made it holy.

The book of Revelation teaches that only God is holy. (Revelation 15:4.) No man or group of men can make a holy day, because only a holy being can make a day holy. Thus only God could sanctify the Sabbath and make it a holy day.

## The Sabbath in Many Languages

It is from the first week of history, the Creation Week, that we get the Sabbath and the week itself. Many of the languages of the world still exemplify this in the way that their days of the week are named. Take for instance what the Italians call the seventh day of the week. It is called "Sabato." Similarly in Spain, it is called "Sabado." In Russia, it is called "Subedah." And in Poland it is called "Sobadah."

All these names mean Sabbath or Rest Day. Except for those languages that have adopted the pagan names for the days of the week, the seventh day is still called "The Sabbath," even today, just the way God named it in the beginning.

The moral duty of all mankind to keep the Sabbath was reviewed by God, for all of His people, when He came down on Mount Sinai and spoke His moral law (the Ten Commandments). He then wrote His Law down on tables of stone and He commanded His people to keep it through all generations.

At that time, the Sabbath was not introduced as a new day that the Israelites were to begin keeping. We can be sure of that fact when we read the Fourth Commandment in Exodus 20:8. It says, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." The Lord says, "Remember," because His special day goes all the way back to the creation of the world.

It is interesting that the only commandment that people want to lose sight of is the only one that God said, "Remember." In the heart of God's law, it says, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it." Exodus 20:8–11.

## The Origin of Our Week

The weekly cycle of seven days comes directly from Creation week. The heavenly bodies control all the other measurements of time. The year is dependent on the revolution of the earth around the sun. The month has to do with lunar cycles. The seasons have to do with the revolution and rotation of the earth. Only the weekly cycle has no natural origin, and so only can point back to the Creation week when the Sabbath was instituted.

This weekly cycle has never been changed since Creation. The seventh day of the week today, is the same day that God instituted as the Sabbath in Eden. It is impossible to mistake which day it is because it is the day that has been kept by the Jews as the Sabbath from Christ's day until the present time. Obviously, it is impossible that millions of people scattered all over the world could all of a sudden in one week forget which day of the week it was and all start keeping another day.

In addition to that, the crucifixion of Christ establishes, beyond any reasonable doubt, which day the Sabbath is according to the commandment.

The account in Luke tells us this: "Now, behold, there was a man name Joseph, a council member, a good and just man. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a tomb that was hewn out of rock, where no one had ever lain before. That day was the Preparation, and the Sabbath drew near. And the women who had come with Him from Galilee followed after, and they observed the tomb and how His body was laid. Then they returned and prepared spices and fragrant oils. And they rested on the Sabbath according to the commandment." Luke 23: 50–56.

So it was that as Friday, the preparation day ended and the Sabbath was drawing near that they prepared the body of Jesus and put it in the tomb. After they did that, they rested the next day, the Sabbath, according to the commandment. Then it says, "Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared." Luke 24:1. That was resurrection Sunday.

The record Biblical shows Good Friday, resurrection Sunday, and the Sabbath "according to the commandment," which they kept, was the day in between. Since the whole world acknowledges Good Friday and resurrection Sunday, it is impossible for any candid reader of the Bible to make a mistake as to which day is the Sabbath.

## The Sabbath Changed?

However, some people ask, "In the New Covenant was not the Lord's day changed from the seventh day of the week to the first day of the week?" The Bible clearly answers. Jesus did not change it. The apostles did not change it. Nowhere does the Bible authorize a change. Jesus and the apostles kept the seventh day holy not only before, but also after the cross, and there is no record of its change in the Bible before or after Jesus' death. Jesus said, "And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle [a small part of a letter] of the law to fail." Luke 16:17.

Father O'Brien, a Catholic author, in his book, *The Faith of Millions*, copyright 1974, says, "Let me address myself to my dear non-Catholic reader. You believe that the Bible alone is a safe guide in religious matters. You also believe that one of the fundamental duties enjoined upon you by your Christian faith is that of Sunday observance. But where does the Bible speak of such an obligation? I have read the Bible from the first verse of Genesis to the last verse of Revelation and have found no reference to the duty of sanctifying the Sunday. The day mentioned in the Bible is not the Sunday, the first day of the week, but the Saturday, the last day of the week." The first day of the week is mentioned in the Bible nine times, but nowhere is it mentioned as a Christian Sabbath or as a holy day or day of worship.

## Nailed to the Cross?

Many have confused God's holy Sabbath day with the yearly Sabbaths that were kept by the Israelites in Old Covenant, and think that, somehow, they were also annulled when Jesus died. These were added because of transgression and pointed forward to the life and ministry of Christ. One of those yearly Sabbaths was the Passover Sabbath. These ceremonies pointed forward to Christ's ministry and death were called "a shadow of things to come." Colossians 2:17. The Passover Sabbath came on the fourteenth day of the first month of the Jewish year, the day that Jesus was crucified. The Bible says that "Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us." 1 Corinthians 5:7. But when Jesus died, these ceremonial Sabbaths had no more significance because they had been fulfilled.

The seventh day Sabbath has nothing to do with Jewish ceremonies. It was established before there were any Jews or any Jewish ceremonies or before the plan of salvation had even been introduced, because it was made before sin even came into the world. The Bible never calls it the Jewish Sabbath. Rather it calls the seventh day Sabbath, the Lord's day. Jesus acknowledged that the Sabbath that was kept by the Jews was the Lord's day, His holy day and it was made for all mankind—and not just for the Jews. "And He said to them, 'The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath.'" Mark 2:27, 28.

The Jews kept the Sabbath because they were God's people, in those days, and as God's people they kept God's day. The Sabbath can be kept legalistically like the Pharisees did but when it is kept the way Jesus kept it; it is a great blessing to mankind. Calling Sunday the Lord's day cannot make it holy or make it God's rest day any more than calling a piece of cut glass a diamond can make it so, even if it looks just the same. Calling it such may confuse people, but it will never change the truth.

Adolph Hitler said that if you repeatedly tell a lie, especially a big one, eventually people will believe it. In this case he told the truth. God and man kept the Sabbath in Eden. It was kept by Abraham according to Genesis 26:5. It was kept by Christ according to Luke 4:16. All the apostles kept it. There is not one instance recorded in the New Testament of an apostle keeping Sunday nor is there one instance of an apostle not keeping the Sabbath. The Bible records over eighty Sabbaths that the apostle Paul kept.

Revelation tells us that there will be a day that will be kept by God's people in the last days, and this is a distinguishing mark of those people who will not receive the mark of the beast. "Here is the patience of the saints; here are those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." Revelation 14:12.

The "saints" keep God's commandments. No one can be described as a person who keeps God's commandments if they break one, and the Sabbath is one of God's commandments. James 2:10 says that if you keep the whole law and offend in one point, you are guilty of all. Therefore, God's people in the last days, who will not receive the mark of the beast, will be Sabbathkeepers.

The Bible says that the redeemed, when they are taken to heaven, will keep the Sabbath. (See Isaiah 66.)

All of this evidence is sure to make some question, "How then did the Christian world begin to keep Sunday instead of Sabbath?" The change began after the apostles' death when the Christian church went into great apostasy and changed their religious practices contrary to Bible teachings. Students of religious history that have studied this subject know that it was in the city of Rome where Sunday appears to first have been kept, possibly just decades after the death of the apostles. (It was kept at an early date in Alexandria, Egypt also.) At that time, it was decided that it would be a good idea to celebrate the festival of Ishtar with the pagans in Rome. This pagan holiday was held about the same time as the Passover (the time of the year when Christ died and was resurrected.) We now call this day Easter. You might recognize the resemblance in the names Ishtar and Easter.

The yearly Sunday observance was gradually followed by a weekly Sunday observance, also in honor of the resurrection. The pagan world already kept this day in honor of the Sun, so soon it was decided that this would be a holy day for Christians too, and thus the Christians could more readily convert the pagans. Now the Christian world had two holy days—Sabbath and Sunday. However, as time went on, fewer and fewer continued to keep the Sabbath. More and more began to worship only on Sunday.

Finally, in A.D. 321, the Emperor Constantine passed a Sunday law, before he became a Christian. In this Sunday law, the "holy day" was not called a Sabbath but the "venerable day of the Sun." The Sun was the god of the pagan religion and Sunday was the day on which the Sun was worshipped.

## Protestants and Sunday-keeping

This history is not unknown to the Protestant leadership. Doctor Binney of the Methodist Church wrote, "It is true there is no positive command in the Bible for keeping holy the first day of the week." Dr. Edward T. Hiscox, author of the Baptist Manual, said, "There was and is a commandment to keep holy the Sabbath day, but that Sabbath was not Sunday. It will, however, be readily said and with some show of triumph that the Sabbath was transferred from the seventh to the first day of the week with all its duties, privileges, and sanctions.

"Earnestly desiring information on this subject, which I have studied for many years, I asked, Where can the record of such a transaction be found? Not in the New Testament, absolutely not. There is no Scriptural evidence of the change of the Sabbath institution from the seventh to the first day of the week. Of course, I quite well know that Sunday did come into use in early Christian history as a religious day as we learned from the Christian fathers and other sources. What a pity, that it comes branded with the mark of paganism and christened with the name of the Sun god."

There is no evidence in the Bible for the change of the fourth commandment. That is purely a human invention that has no Biblical support whatsoever. The Lord has a day that He says is His. He is the Lord of the Sabbath day, the seventh day of the week.

Many people today think that somehow it is unimportant to obey God exactly. They think that His requirements can be adjusted or changed to suit their own thinking or the practices of society. But the Bible is very clear about our obligation to keep the whole law, and it predicts that in the last days a great controversy will occur over the Sabbath commandment.

Everyone must decide whether they will obey God exactly or whether they will seek to make human adjustments to divine commands. The final test in this world will involve Satan's claim, "That the law which was spoken by God's own voice is faulty, that some specification has been set aside . . . It is the last great deception that he will bring upon the world. He needs not to assail the whole law; if he can lead men to disregard one precept, his purpose is gained. For 'whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.' James 2: 10. By consenting to break one precept, men are brought under Satan's power. By substituting human law for God's law, Satan will seek to control the world. This work is foretold in prophecy. Of the great apostate power which is the representative of Satan, it is declared, 'He shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand.' Daniel 7: 25.

"Men will surely set up their laws to counterwork the laws of God. They will seek to compel the consciences of others, and in their zeal to enforce these laws they will oppress their fellow men.

"The warfare against God's law, which was begun in heaven, will be continued until the end of time. Every man will be tested. Obedience or disobedience is the question to be decided by the whole world. All will be called to choose between the law of God and the laws of men. Here the dividing line will be drawn. There will be but two classes. Every character will be fully developed; and all will show whether they have chosen the side of loyalty or that of rebellion.

"Then the end will come. God will vindicate His law and deliver His people. Satan and all who have joined him in rebellion will be cut off. Sin and sinners will perish, root and branch, (Malachi 4: 1)—Satan the root, and his followers the branches. The word will be fulfilled to the prince of evil, 'Because thou hast set thine heart as the heart of God; . . . I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire . . . Thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt thou be any more.' 'Then 'the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be;' 'they shall be as though they had not been.' Ezekiel 28: 6–19; Psalms 37: 10; Obadiah 16." The Desire of Ages, 763.