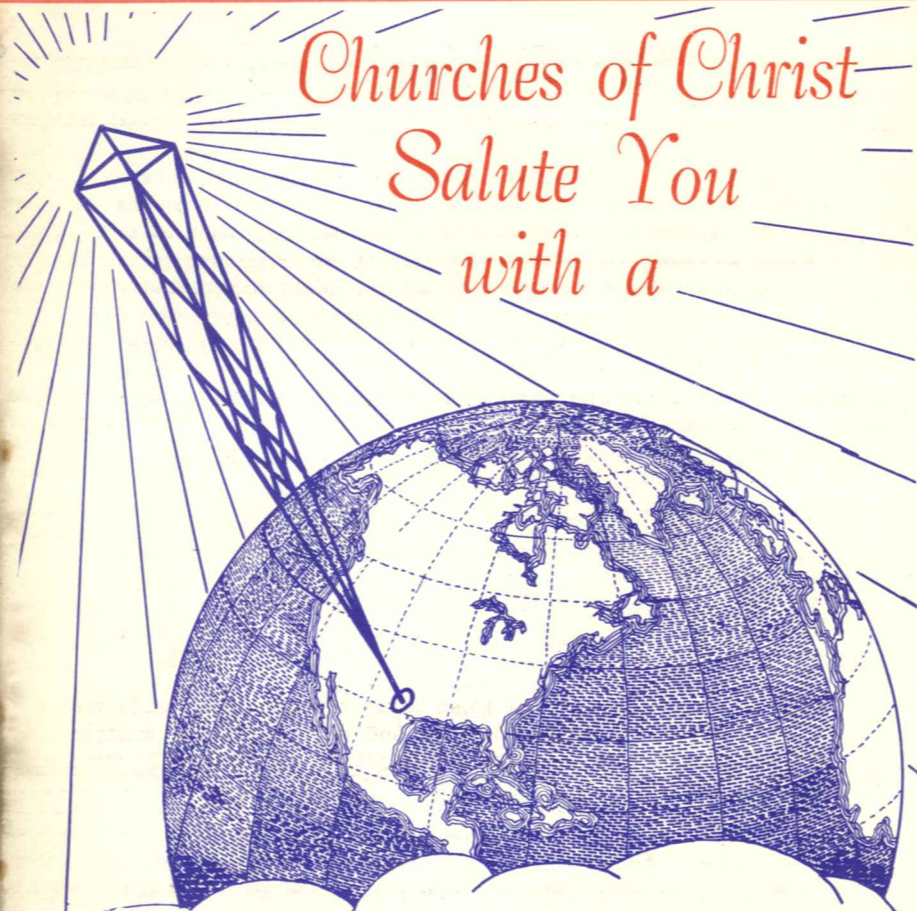


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Churches of Christ
Salute You
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The Sabbath Day
James W. Nichols January 18, 1953

Herald of Truth

The Sabbath Day

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In the first chapter and tenth verse of the book of Revelation, John the apostle declares to us, "I was in the spirit on the Lord's day." There has been a great deal of speculation as to what the Lord's day was, but in general the conflicting ideas can be narrowed down to three concepts—first, that this day was Saturday, commonly known as the sabbath day; second, that it was Sunday, and that the Sabbath day had been changed from Saturday to Sunday to become the Lord's day; and third, that this was the first day of the week, and that the sabbath day had been abolished.

It is our purpose to examine these three ideas in the light of the word of God to see what should be our day of worship, and to see what title can be applied to it.

The first idea that we mentioned is that the day of worship is Saturday, or more explicitly, from sundown Friday night to sundown Saturday night. Those who hold to this idea refuse to recognize the first day of the week as the Lord's day, or as the day upon which we should worship. They gain their point of view from the fact that the children of Israel worshipped upon the sabbath day, which was Saturday. They contend that this law has never been changed, that God from the beginning gave a moral law commanding to keep the seventh day, and that any moral law is applicable throughout all time.

Now, with all due respect for those holding this idea, we believe that the people who make this contention are in error in keeping the sabbath day, and that they do not keep it in the way that the children of Israel did. We notice that no commandment was ever given to remember the sabbath day until the giving of the law of Moses. In Exodus 20:8 we read, "Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy." This is the first time that anyone was ever told to remember the sabbath day.

But to whom was this law given? It was given only to the children of Israel. In fact, the entire law of Moses was given to the children of Israel only, and never to a Gentile. For us to say that we must remember the seventh day because Moses commanded it is very much like saying that we in the United States should adhere to a decree of the king of England. We do not do so because we are not under his jurisdiction. The law of Moses, which included the command, "Remember the

sabbath day to keep it holy" was given to the Hebrews and not to Christians.

In fact, as we turn to the New Testament we soon find that this law in its entirety has been done away. In Hebrews 10:1 we read, "For the law having a shadow of good things to come and not the very image of the things, they can never with the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect them that draw nigh. In verse 9 we read: "He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second."

But perhaps you wonder if it were all or a part of the law of Moses that was removed. Those who contend that we should keep the seventh day say that only the ceremonial part of the law has been done away, but that the moral part has been retained. To answer this we turn to the seventh chapter of Romans. In verse 4, Paul says, "Wherefore, my brethren, ye were made dead to the law through the body of Christ." In verse 6 he says, "But now we have been discharged from the law." What law is he speaking about? In the next verse he concludes, "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Howbeit, I had not known sin, except through the law; for I had not known coveting except the law had said, thou shalt not covet." Now, let's notice his reasoning. He says we are discharged from the law. What law? The law that said, "Thou shalt not covet". And where do we find the expression "Thou shalt not covet"? In the ten commandments in the very same place where we find the command, "Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy." So when Paul says we are discharged from the law, he is including the statement, Remember the sabbath day.

But in order that we may make it a little more conclusive that we are not to keep the seventh day, I would have you notice the 2nd chapter of Colossians. In verse 14 Paul is speaking of the death of Christ on the cross, and he says, "Having blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us: and he hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross." What did Christ do? He nailed the law of Moses to the cross. Then he concludes in verse 16, "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a feast day or a moon or a sabbath day: which are a shadow of the things to come; but the body is Christ's." These things which were a part of the law of Moses, including the sabbath day, are no longer to be observed, because the old law of Moses had been nailed to the cross. And to clinch the argument, Paul

says that these things, including the sabbath day, were only a shadow of the things to come.

But we would also have you notice that those who remember the sabbath day today, do not do it in the way the Israelites did. Under the law of Moses no work was to be done, and when a man went out to pick up sticks on the sabbath day, we are told in Numbers 15 that he was stoned. We don't hear of people being stoned today when they fail to keep this portion of the law. Yet this was the law of Moses. In Exodus 35:3 we are told that they were to kindle no fires. They were to abide in their places, going no farther than a sabbath day's journey, which was less than a mile, and yet the very people who contend so strongly that they must remember the sabbath day, break the sabbath day by going more than a mile, sometimes many miles, on the seventh day.

We think all these reasons combined should be sufficient to show us that Christians are not commanded to remember the seventh day of the week today. But there are some who say that the sabbath has been changed from Saturday to Sunday. As we search the scriptures we find not one single statement that it has ever been changed. If the sabbath has been changed, it has been changed by man, and not by God. To refer to the first day of the week as the sabbath day, is therefore, incorrect. If we did keep the first day of the week in this respect, we would be under bondage to observe it as the Israelites did. This would forbid all cooking, all traveling, even the kindling of fires, and it is quite obvious that those who observed the first day of the week as the Sabbath do not often comply with all these requirements.

Then, you ask, "Why do we observe the first day of the week?" Surely there must be a reason, but what is it? We noticed in the beginning that it is called the Lord's day. Now it is the Lord's day because it was on this day, the first day of the week, that Christ arose from the grave. We turn to the accounts of the four gospels and we find that early on the first day of the week certain women came to the grave of Christ, intending to anoint His body with spices. But when they arrived, they found that He had arisen. Several times on that day, the first day of the week, He appeared to His disciples. And on what day did He arise? The first day of the week. Therefore, it is His day, or the Lord's day.

But again, it was on this day that the church was established. We have the account of the establishment of the church recorded in the 2nd chapter of Acts. It was the occasion of the

assembling of the children of Israel to observe the day of Pentecost. The word pentecost means fiftieth day. It was exactly fifty days after the passover on which Christ was crucified, and this placed it on the first day of the week. On Pentecost, Christ's church was established. It was the first day of the week. Therefore, His church was established on His day.

In the 20th chapter of Acts, verse 7, we have a record of the Christians assembling to worship. "And upon the first day of the week when they were gathered together to break bread, Paul discoursed with them, intending to depart on the morrow." This refers to the Lord's supper. They observed the Lord's supper, which was a memorial of the death of Christ, on His day, the first day of the week. No amount of figuring can place this observance on any other day. Some contend that Paul preached on the sabbath day. And that is correct; he preached on the sabbath day to non-Christians, because that was the day when they were accustomed to assemble. If you were to go to a Mohammedan country today it would perhaps be best to preach on Friday because that is their day of worship. It is right to preach the gospel on any day, and if you can reach more people on Saturday than on Wednesday, then Saturday is the day to do the preaching. But we do not have one single example where Christians themselves ever met together to remember the Lord's supper on the seventh day. We have another statement that would be good to notice. In I Corinthians 16:2, Paul says, "Upon the first day of the week let each one of you lay by him in store, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come." Why do you suppose that Paul wanted them to do their giving upon this day if it were not for the fact that this was the day upon which they were accustomed to assemble? The truth is, that every indication that we have in the New Testament points to the fact that the first day of the week is the Lord's day. He arose on this day, His church was established on this day, His disciples remembered His death on this day, they were commanded to give on this day. So it must be the Lord's day. History confirms this teaching. Barnabas in his epistle wrote, "The eighth day is the beginning of another week, and therefore with joy we celebrate the eighth day on which Jesus arose." John Martyr, writing about 150 A.D., says, "On the Lord's day all Christians in the city or country meet together, because that is the day of the Lord's resurrection; and then we read the Apostles and Prophets. This being done, the president makes an oration to the assembly to exhort them to imitate and practice the things which they have heard, and

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then we all join in prayer, and what is collected is laid up in the hands of the president, who distributes it to orphans, and widows and other needy Christians as their wants require." Eusebius, a great historian, tells us, "From the beginning the Christians assembled on the first day of the week, called by them the Lord's day, to read the scriptures, to preach, and to celebrate the Lord's supper." End of quotation. Surely all of these statements, added to the testimony of the scriptures, should convince us that the first day of the week, and not the seventh, is the Lord's day. And may God help us to observe the Lord's day.

In Hebrews 5:9 the writer tells us, "and having been made perfect, he became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation." And then again the apostle Paul warns in II Thessalonians 1:7-8, "and to you that are afflicted rest with us, as the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus." I would to God that all of us could realize that there is no place for disobedience in our lives if we seek that everlasting home, it matters not whether it is disobedience in observing the Lord's day, believing the gospel, repenting of our sins, confessing our faith, being buried with our Lord in baptism, or worshipping God as His children in spirit and in truth. Our salvation is dependent upon our obedience to his command. James said in James 2:10, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is become guilty of all." I beseech you, my friends, today, come to the Lord in obedience. Delay no longer, but "seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto Jehovah, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."

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*Pentecost occurred
on a Sunday*