

ORTHODOX Christians refer to the Christian rest day in three ways. Some refer to it simply as "Sunday"; others speak of it as "the Lord's Day"; a few call it "the Sabbath". They all mean the same thing unless they are of the Seventh Day Adventist persuasion. The latter, through the influence of Sabbatarian literature and preaching, cling to the Sabbath of the Mosaic dispensation—which was observed on Saturday.

Seventh Dayists often warn Christians that in keeping the first day of the week, they are bringing condemnation upon themselves because they are recognizing the day of sun-worshippers—"Sunnan-daeg". As a matter of fact Saturday is from "Saturn-daeg"—Saturn being the Latin god of agriculture. Each of the seven days of the week has been designated as Sabbath by various nationalities and religions. Monday was the Greek Sabbath; Tuesday the Persian, Wednesday the Assyrian, Thursday the Egyptian, Friday the Turkish, etc.

Adventists likewise make much of the oft-refuted argument that the orthodox rest day came as the result of a change made by the Roman church in the time of Constantine. Sunday, we are told, was the day of the pagan festival of sun worship. However, the pagan festival of sun worship was not a weekly affair, but an annual festival season. Furthermore, the Roman week was eight days, not seven, and they therefore could not have had a Sunday rest day every seven days. Their rest day was "Nundinae", once in eight days.

Christians of that day, following without break the Jewish reckoning, held to their first day of the week which they had been keeping since the

resurrection of our Lord. Constantine, having become a professing Christian, legalized this day, forcing it upon the whole Roman Empire as the legal rest day. Later this resulted in the abolishing of the pagan Nundinae. Thus, instead of changing the Christian rest day from Saturday to Sunday, as Adventists claim, this Roman did the very opposite: he put over on the Roman Empire the day Christians were keeping.

It should be understood that, in New Testament usage, the Mosaic Sabbath and the Lord's Day run side by side following the resurrection. Saturday was a day when Christ's body lay dead in the tomb. To the disciples, it was a day of restless doubt and gloom, a day they would wish to forget. For the rejectors of the Saviour, it was a day of terrible unbelief. They were carrying on their sacrifices as though redemption had not been "finished". Satan and his hosts rejoiced that day, believing that Christ was held under the power of death. It was a day when creation was under doom—the last day of an old period. The resurrection day—the first day—marked the beginning of a new period.

The practice of the apostles and the inspired record of their conduct, together with the writings of the early church period, show clearly that the old day fittingly gave way to the new order. There is no doubt whatever that from the resurrection forward, the first day of the week was recognized by believers as the day sealed of God in honor of the Risen Christ.

The church stands not at the foot of Mount Sinai, except as it recognizes the unchangeable moral principles of the commandments, all of which are brought over into the Gospel. We stand

at the mouth of the open tomb. The resurrection is the fundamental truth on which Christianity stands. Without it, there would have been no church and no Gospel. It was an event far greater than the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage, the occasion of the Mosaic Sabbath law. (Deut. 5:13-15; Exo. 20:1-2; 31:16-17; Ezek. 20:12.)

But there are those who point out that we cannot find recorded a single command of Christ to change the day. The Lord's Supper, in the New Testament, became the equivalent of the Passover, that solemn feast celebrated by divine command for many centuries. We find no command of Jesus Christ to make the change. Water baptism took the place of circumcision, that rite commanded of God through the centuries. We find no command of Christ to make the change. Our Adventist friends accept these changes without objection. The Lord's Day naturally took the place of the Mosaic Sabbath in honor of the resurrection of our blessed Redeemer. No command of Christ ordered the change.

Controversy about circumcision, attendance at the Jewish Passover, and other points continued for some years in the early church, as might be expected. Our New Testament tells us much about these controversies. Some converted Jews held that the old was to be observed in addition to the new, but it nowhere appears that any question was raised as to the fitness of the first day of the week as the Christian day of worship. (Gal. 4:10; Rom. 14:5; Col. 2:16.)

There are those who raise the objection that we have no warrant for calling the first day of the week, "the Lord's Day". The one use of this

expression (Rev. 1:10) they change to read, "day of the Lord". Such a change, however, is without authority. The original text of Rev. 1:10 is not the same as in texts referring to the future day of the Lord. It is a well-known fact that the first day WAS called "Lord's Day" in the early church, as evidenced by many ancient manuscripts brought to light. The expression came about most naturally. The first day of the month was called "the Emperor's Day". Following our Lord's resurrection, the first day of the week was called His day. The natural sense of the language of Rev. 1:10 is that the visions recorded in Revelation passed before John's mind on the day he specially kept in memory of the Risen Lord.

A unique Sabbath, under the law, was appointed to follow the regular Sabbath of the Passover week. (Lev. 23:10, 14.) It occurred at the beginning of the barley harvest, the earliest grain to ripen. The sheaf of the first fruits was to be brought to the priest and on this eighth day Sabbath, was to be waved before the Lord. Another eighth day Sabbath was prescribed in the law of Lev. 23:15-17, 21. They were to count seven Sabbaths from the day of the wave offering, "even unto the morrow after the seventh Sabbath shall ye number fifty days." This was to be a holy convocation.

The Jewish followers of Christ could not help seeing the fulfillments of these typical Sabbaths in Jesus and the Lord's Day, or morrow after the Sabbath. By His resurrection on that day, Jesus was revealed as "the first fruits of them that slept." And when, on the morrow after the seventh Sabbath—Pentecost—the promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit came, Jesus was revealed as

the two-fold bread of life, as seen in the two "wave loaves" presented on that day. (Bread for soul and body.)

Those who would fix the time of the Christian's rest day by the fourth commandment, fail to observe that it allows of flexibility. It declares that there shall be six days of labor, followed by a seventh of hallowed rest. Had the particular set of hours been the essential thing, it would have been necessary for God to lay down specific directions as to where the one-seventh of consecrated time should begin and end. If Saturday does not happen to fall the same time for all in the world, then it must be admitted that it was not a certain portion of *time* which God made more holy than others. The *essential* thing was the dedication of a certain PROPORTION of man's time, even as God requires a certain proportion of income as offerings. So far as duty to God's moral law is concerned, the demand of the fourth commandment was not lost sight of when the early church recognized the first day in honor of the resurrection, as the proper day for the church to keep.

The consecration of one-seventh of our time to the worship of God and the recognition of our Risen Saviour, stands as a moral obligation of the law of God. We cannot violate these moral obligations and expect the full measure of the blessing of God. The great Sabbath principle must abide. It is a scientifically proven fact that man is a six-day clock and he cannot be at his best without one day of worship to six days of labor. The Lord's Day is not a day for revelry, neither for gloom, but a day of religious delight and joyous service.

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The SABBATH QUESTION

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