

# WHO CHANGED THE SABBATH?



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A series of five messages by Richard W. De Haan, delivered over a special network of leading radio stations throughout the world.

### 1

#### SABBATH BEFORE MOSES?

We are constantly being bombarded by certain religious teachers with the charge that Christian people are worshipping on Sunday because they are blindly following the mandate of self-seeking, semi-pagan Church leaders who in 321 A.D. published the famous law of Constantine, legally establishing Sunday as the sabbath in the place of Saturday. They contend that we should recognize this source of Sunday worship as basically pagan in origin, and that sincere believers in Jesus Christ should observe the seventh-day sabbath just as Israel did.

On the other hand, many of the old-line denominational churches insist that Sunday is now the true sabbath. They declare that we must keep it as the "Christian sabbath" because Jesus rose from the dead on Sunday, publicly appeared to His assembled disciples on Sunday, poured out the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, the fiftieth day after His resurrection, a Sunday, and that the early Church met on the first day of the week for worship instead of on Saturday. They are convinced that the decree of 321 A.D., and that of the council of Laodicea in 364 A.D., only made official that which had long been the practice of the majority in the early Church. They declare without question their conviction that Sunday is now the Christian sabbath.

My father briefly and lucidly stated a third position, however, and one which I believe is both historical and Scriptural; namely, that we do not live under the sabbath law, and that



neither Saturday nor Sunday is to be observed as a Christian sabbath. He said: We "... hold that the sabbath was given to Israel sixteen hundred years before Calvary, that it was only a shadow of things to come, and was completely fulfilled by Christ, and ceased as a sabbath day at His resurrection . . . . The Church has no sabbath, but instead, by common precedent and example, rather than by specific commandment, we observe the first day of the week as a day of commemoration and worship, assembling together for the preaching of the Word, and ceaseless activity in spiritual things. This day . . . is not a matter of legal duty, but a glorious privilege under grace, a voluntary service in gratitude to God. It is not observed because it is commanded but because [we] delight in gathering together to remember the Lord's death and to celebrate His resurrection."

Those who teach that we today must keep the sabbath, both those who insist that Saturday is the sabbath and those who look upon Sunday as the Christian sabbath, turn back to Exodus 20:8-11 as the Scriptural basis for their sabbath observance.

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

*Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work;*

*But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates;*

*For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore, the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it (Exodus 20:8-11).*

The above Scripture is certainly clear in that it forbids all kinds of labor on the sabbath day. Nor is there any question that the sabbath Israel observed was on the seventh day of the week. It was a day of complete rest. No special worship duties were enjoined upon the people, but they were absolutely to refrain from all physical labor. In fact, the Hebrew word *shabbath*, and the Greek word *sabbaton* from which the English word "sabbath" is transliterated, carry the thought of rest, a cessation from labor. It will be well for you to bear in mind as we go along in these messages that the Old Testament sabbath was not a day of intensified spiritual activity, but a day of total rest.

Since this sabbath commandment of Exodus 20 is found in the Ten Commandments, and because the other nine commandments are all repeated in the New Testament, the "sabbath-keepers" tell us that that the keeping of the sabbath is part of God's basic moral law. They declare that men were obliged to observe the seventh day as a day of complete rest from the dawn of human history. It is their conviction that even as it always has been and always will be sinful to worship idols, blaspheme the name of God, dishonor parents, and commit murder, so it always has been and always will be sin to break the sabbath. If this be true, then we should all certainly be very meticulous about observing it.

A careful study of the Scriptures, however, reveals that in the period from Adam to Moses God never once gave any regulations concerning the sabbath, and that apparently even the patriarchs did not observe it. On the basis of this, Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer declares: "It is incredible that this great institution of the sabbath could have existed during all these centuries and there be no mention of it in the Scriptures dealing with that time. The words of Job, who lived 500 years and more before Moses, offer an illustration. His experience discloses the spiritual life of the pre-Mosaic saint, having no written Scriptures, and striving to know his whole duty to God. Job and his friends refer to creation, the flood, and many details of human obligation to God; but not once do they mention the sabbath. Again, it is impossible that this great institution, with all that it contemplated of relationship between God and man, could have existed at that time and not have been mentioned in any portion of the argument of the book of Job."\*

The first mention of a sabbath is found in Exodus 16. The children of Israel had been delivered from Egypt and in the wilderness were in need of a supernatural food supply. God told Moses that He would rain manna upon them, and that on the sixth day they must be prepared to bring in twice as much as on the other days (verse 5). On these other days they were to gather only as much as could be eaten in one day. When on the sixth day a double amount of manna was found, the rulers of the people came to Moses for an explanation, and, according to Exodus 16:23-26,

\*Chafer, *Grace*, (Findlay, Ohio; Dunham, 1922) pp. 248, 249. Used by permission.



... he said unto them, *This is that which the Lord hath said, Tomorrow is the rest of the holy sabbath unto the Lord: bake that which ye will bake today, and boil that ye will boil; and that which remaineth over lay up for you to be kept until the morning.*

*And they laid it up till the morning, as Moses bade; and it did not become odious neither was there any worm in it.*

*And Moses said, Eat that today; for today is a sabbath unto the Lord: today ye shall not find it in the field.*

*Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the sabbath, in it there shall be none* (Exodus 16:23-26).

The language of the original text here is a crystal-clear refutation of the idea that the Israelites had a previous understanding of the sabbath. In verse 23 the Hebrew has no article, and thus literally could read, "Tomorrow is a rest of a holy sabbath unto the Lord." This rendering definitely supports our position that the thing announced here was something new to the Israelites. They had never observed a rest day in Egypt. But here in Exodus 16 we hear for the first time about the establishment of the sabbath as a rest day, one on which they were neither to gather manna nor cook food. Although no further regulations were given at this time, a short while later God did give the Israelites the Law, and among the Ten Commandments was the injunction, "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8). The word "remember" points back to this incident recorded in Exodus 16, something that would be very fresh in their memories.

As a proof for the early observance of the sabbath, even before the announcement of it in Exodus, some will claim that "sabbath-keeping" was known among pagan peoples in the ancient world. Sabbatarians felt quite encouraged when several years ago some scholars believed they had found indication of a seven-day week cycle with a seventh-day sabbath among the Babylonians and other eastern peoples. However, subsequent examination of the documents indicates that although the Babylonians and other pagan civilizations had certain sacred days, they were not rest days. Those who were superstitious considered certain days lucky or unlucky, and among them were the seventh, fourteenth, nineteenth, and twenty-first days of certain months, but there is no indication

that any of these people celebrated a weekly rest day. In sources outside the Biblical revelation we can find no solid evidence for sabbath observance. The words of John Richard Sampey are still true, "The wealth of learning and ingenuity expended in the search for the origin of the sabbath has up to the present yielded small returns." Therefore, those who look upon sabbath observance as a basic moral obligation are without one shred of evidence that it was recognized as such before the days of Moses.

Another argument used by sabbath-keepers is that sabbath observance is rooted in creation. They point out that in Exodus 20:11 Israel was given a reason for God's choice of the seventh day as the rest day. Here's the verse:

*' For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore, the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it* (Exodus 20:11).

Here is an obvious reference to that which Moses declared in Genesis 2,

*And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it, because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made* (Genesis 2:3).

These words contain no hint, however, that God said anything to mankind before Moses' time about a seventh day for rest. In Exodus 20 God simply points Israel to the fact that in creation He had prefigured the weekly sabbath. He had rested on the seventh day to show that His creative work was finished. From this point on, He would no longer bring something out of nothing, but would providentially control that which He had brought into existence. Thus God had laid the foundation for His later revelation of the sabbath rest day. For men and women living under the curse of Adam's sin, work had been reduced to wearisome toil. However, at Mt. Sinai, God indicated that for *redeemed* men and women their labor was neither aimless nor incessant. Each sabbath rest day would be a prophecy of the time when such toil shall cease, and the goal will be achieved. This will find its fulfillment when the nation of Israel under Jesus Christ exercises its predicted role in the millennial earth. The fact that God rested on the seventh day in no way indicates that the sabbath rest was observed any earlier than that indicated in Exodus 16.

Deuteronomy 5:15 assigns another reason for sabbath ob-

servance in Israel. After repeating the command God says:

*And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out from there through a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day (Deuteronomy 5:15).*

Israel's sabbaths commemorated the glorious deliverance God gave them from their slavery and burdensome toil in Egypt. God gave them rest from this labor, a type of the rest that awaits the people of God.

Thus we find that the sabbath command was something special between God and Israel. God expressly declared this in Exodus 31,

*Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant.*

*It is a sign between me and the children of Israel forever; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed (Exodus 31:16, 17).*

This statement should settle forever any question concerning the purpose of the sabbath as legislated under the law. It was a sign between God and Israel. When we bear in mind that Israel is God's earthly people for whom God has a unique place in the coming golden age we can understand this special significance.

Turning to the New Testament we do not find one indication that the Church is to observe the sabbath. In fact, Colossians 2:13-17 asserts the contrary.

*And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he made alive together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses,*

*Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;*

*And, having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.*

*Let no man, therefore, judge you in food, or in drink, or in respect of a feast day, or of the new moon, or of a sabbath day,*

*Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ (Colossians 2:13-17).*

Paul here declares that we through the death of Jesus Christ have been released from the condemnation of the law, and from the domination of satanic powers. We have in union with Jesus Christ received new life, the forgiveness of all our sins, and freedom from the law and all that it involves. We must not, therefore, permit anyone to test our piety by whether or not we eat pork or other foods termed ceremonially unclean, or on the basis of our observance of the annual and monthly festivals, or the weekly Jewish sabbath.

Those who insist upon keeping the sabbath are guilty of scorning the grace of God. They place themselves under the law, and are trying to produce a way of salvation in which grace and law are mixed together. Listen to the words of Paul in Galatians 3,

*For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.*

*But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident; for, The just shall live by faith.*

*And the law is not of faith, but, The man that doeth them shall live in them (Galatians 3:10-12).*

I close this message with the words uttered by my father some years ago when he preached on this subject.

"Why not turn to the grace of God which is your only hope. Turn from Sinai to blessed Calvary and the empty tomb. The law can only condemn and certainly cannot save us, and to add anything to the finished work of the Lord Jesus is to spoil everything. I want to address myself to you who are still unsaved, and are trying to do your best to earn salvation but find it to be absolutely hopeless. You cannot, by yourself, keep God's holy law; and yet unless you find some way to obtain a perfect righteousness, you must be forever lost. And this brings us to the great finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ who paid the penalty of the law for us, and now sets us free and places us under the grace of God, seeking to do His will, and loving Him for His service. If you have tried and tried in vain and found it absolutely hopeless, we plead with you to flee to Him for mercy and salvation."

*... Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved... (Acts 16:31).*



## ISRAEL AND ITS SABBATHS

In this message we will discuss the various sabbaths God commanded the Israelites to observe. The weekly sabbath was only one of a number of sabbaths the people were obliged to keep, and some of them did not necessarily fall on the seventh day of the week.

The weekly sabbath stands first and foremost among the sabbaths and was very specifically defined in Exodus 20:8-11.

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

*Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work;*

*But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates;*

*For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore, the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it (Exodus 20:8-11).*

The sabbath referred to in these verses was the seventh day of the week, and it was to be kept as a day of absolute rest. We find no mention of worship or special sacrifice. Furthermore, after careful examination of every Old Testament reference to the weekly sabbath, we cannot help but be impressed with the fact that there were no general meetings to be attended. It was a day of holy convocation to the people "in all their dwellings" (Leviticus 23:3). Later, just before the people were to enter Canaan, God provided for a double offering on the sabbath, but nothing of added responsibility for public gatherings. It was set apart as a day on which God expected family groups to enjoy a time of leisure and to contemplate His goodness. The rest from toil, prefigured by God's cessation from creative activity (Genesis 2:1-3), and reminding the Israelites of their bitter slavery in Egypt from which they had been delivered (Deuteronomy 5:12-15), should have been a great delight.

In an age when slaves usually worked from sunup to sundown, seven days a week, the sabbath was a gracious provision from God. Even the beast of burden was benefited by this day of rest, a beautiful token of the time when God will

lift the curse from nature, and this world will experience a glorious rest for one thousand years.

This sabbath was to be kept very strictly. Those who violated it became the objects of God's displeasure. As a striking example of this we have a dramatic record in Numbers 15:32-36.

*And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man who gathered sticks upon the sabbath day.*

*And they who found him gathering sticks brought him unto Moses and Aaron, and unto all the congregation.*

*And they put him in prison, because it was not declared what should be done to him.*

*And the Lord said unto Moses, The man shall be surely put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp.*

*And all the congregation brought him outside the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died; as the Lord commanded Moses (Numbers 15:32-36).*

Another observance in Israel that is sometimes looked upon as a sabbath, referred to by Paul in Colossians 2:16, is the feast of the "new moon." At the beginning of every month, there was a special day on which sacrifices were presented, and a trumpet-blowing ceremony was observed (Numbers 28:11-15). This was not a strict rest day, however, and it is never actually called a sabbath in the Bible.

There were also the annual sabbath days observed in connection with the five feasts — passover, pentecost, trumpets, the day of atonement, and tabernacles. All these sabbaths did not necessarily fall on Saturday, and were not days of *absolute* rest. Specifically forbidden was "servile labor," such as was performed by slaves in the field. Except for the day of atonement, these sabbaths permitted the gathering of sticks, the building of fires, preparation of food, and the performance of other tasks that would enhance the festive nature of the day. Every Israelite must have looked forward to these days much as we do to our national holidays.

Concerning the feast days of Israel my father said: "But these sabbath days were more than national holidays, for they also had a deep religious and spiritual significance. In addition, they were typical and prophetic. They all pointed forward to future days of which the nation was totally ignorant at the



time. The significance was only revealed in the New Testament. In these seven feasts we have a prophetic picture of the orderly chronology of events from Calvary to the Kingdom. The Passover, the first of the feasts, was a picture of Calvary where the Lamb of God was slain. The Feast of Tabernacles, the last feast, typified the final victory and consummation of God's plan of redemption for the earth. In it we find the people resting for seven full days in peace and quiet." (The entire chapter of Leviticus 23 is given over to a discussion of these feasts and their sabbaths.)

Because of the nature of these celebrations, the sabbaths were joyous and festive in nature. They were far more like the Sundays observed by Christians today than like the Old Testament family rest day. On the seventh-day sabbath, however, the people did not meet in large special convocations for praise and worship. Instead, they simply gathered in small family groups. In contrast to the seventh-day sabbath we find that on the annual sabbaths they rested from servile labor, but did not refrain from building fires, cooking food, or performing tasks that would help make this a more joyous day of worship and praise.

In addition to sabbath days, there was also a sabbatic year. Leviticus 25:1-7 gives us the details of this law. Every seventh year the land was to be left untilled. All would have freedom from hard manual labor, and every family had the privilege of going into the fields to help themselves to the food needed day by day. Every slave and every animal had a year of rest. This was a law God gave to Israel, and no other nation ever received anything like it.

Every fiftieth year, the seventh time the sabbatic year came around, God decreed that Israel should celebrate the year of Jubilee, which is described in Leviticus 25:8-34. It was a year of rest, like the regular sabbatic year, but in addition all Israelitish slaves were freed, and property was returned to the families of the original owners. This was a great provision for those who through a series of unfortunate circumstances had lost their wealth, and it also prevented the accumulation of great riches and the acquisition of all the land by a few. It typified the glorious future that Israel has in the millennial age when there shall be no slavery, and every man shall sit under his own vine and fig tree.

We have taken the time to discuss these many sabbaths to

demonstrate emphatically that the weekly rest day was only part of a whole system of sabbaths. The weekly sabbath prescribed only rest, and the festal days, some of which did not fall on the seventh day, provided opportunity for public worship and joyous praise.

The nation of Israel was obligated to keep all of its sabbaths, both the weekly and festal sabbath days, and the sabbatic years. You simply cannot separate the weekly sabbath from these other sabbaths by looking upon it as a basic moral law and considering the others temporary in nature. They are all part of that entire system known as the Law, from which Christ delivered us.

Commenting upon the death by stoning of the man who picked up sticks on the sabbath, my father said: "Surely nowhere in Scripture can we find a clearer example of what the ministry of the law really is. It is the ministry of death to the sinner. Undoubtedly there were thousands of other Israelites who also broke the sabbath and did not die [but] this does not change the picture, or remove the guilt. If every Israelite who ever broke the law, including the sabbath, had died, there would soon not have been a single Israelite left. In the same way, if all who hold to the law of the sabbath for today were to die for the least infraction or violation of it, there soon wouldn't be any of us left either.

"Why then did not all those who broke the sabbath day die, as this young man did? The answer is simply because, during the age of the law, God was still dealing in grace. . . . If the grace of God had not continued under the dispensation of law, every Israelite would have died. God gave the law to show how weak they were, and how wholly incapable of keeping it they were in their own strength, in order that they might flee for mercy (not justice) to the grace of God. When Moses therefore brought down the law from Sinai, he also brought down something else. Without this something else, that law would have immediately condemned and killed every Israelite, like this man who gathered sticks on the sabbath; for when Moses came down from the mountain he saw that the people had already broken the law, in their frenzied, naked dancing about the golden calf. Had Moses therefore carried nothing with him from the mount, except that law of prohibitions and judgments, it would have been the end of every single Israelite. But Moses did receive something else from God in the



mountain. It was the pattern of the tabernacle with its sacrifices, its blood, and its atonement, the perfect picture of the Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ. God knew that Israel would break, yea, they had already broken, this law, and were guilty of death, and so He provided immediately also the tabernacle with its blood on the altar and the mercy-seat as the only salvation from the curse of that broken law — death."

The same law that condemned the sinner also pointed the way to his deliverance through the tabernacle and its sacrifices. The law is therefore an indivisible unity. To distinguish between a moral and ceremonial law within the Mosaic system, and declare that Christ freed us from only the ceremonial aspect of it is completely without warrant in Scripture. Galatians 3:10 tells us,

*For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, Cursed is everyone that continueth not in ALL things which are written in the book of the law, to do them (Galatians 3:10).*

James 2:10 expresses the same thought,

*For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all (James 2:10).*

A careful reading of 2 Corinthians 3:7-18 should further convince any earnest seeker after the truth that even the Ten Commandments as a system have been done away. In the seventh verse Paul speaks of that which God had engraved on stones as the "ministration of death." He pictures the shining of Moses as a brightness which was rapidly fading away. This evanescent glory Paul sets forth as a type of the passing glory of the law dispensation. Referring to the law which had been engraved on stones he says in verse 11,

*For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious (2 Corinthians 3:11).*

No, my friend, you must either keep all the law, or recognize the fact that you are not living under it at all.

One might ask if we are not in danger of becoming lawless in our conduct because of our teaching that even the Ten Commandments as a system have been done away. Do not the Ten Commandments contain certain basic laws of God? Yes, they do, and nine of the ten are repeated in the New Testament in various forms. The principles abide. All the laws

God gave Israel, even the ceremonial and civil ordinances, were based upon *eternal* principles. Certainly we believe that the basic standards of right and wrong have never changed. An example of this is the law which demanded that the corners of fields had to be cut round, and gleanings left in the field so that the poor could help themselves and have enough food for their needs. (See Leviticus 19:9, 10.) Some years ago a Christian businessman read this passage of Scripture and became convicted that he had been selfishly cutting every corner square in his business with no concern for the laborer. Upon his knees, he confessed this to God, and then set up a system whereby his employees shared in the profits of the company. One underlying principle of this law in Leviticus is that every man who owns the means of production must have consideration for those less fortunate than he. Another principle is that it is far better to let the needy work for their food than to demoralize them by doling it out. While we can discover these basic truths, we must realize, however, that only in Israel were men commanded to cut their corners round or leave gleanings, and no man today is under obligation to carry out the letter of this law. Yes, there are abiding principles to be found in the Ten Commandments, even though we do not live under the Mosaic system. We find our standard of faith and conduct in the New Testament, primarily in the epistles, and are led to a life on a far higher plane than that of those who lived under the law.

The legalist who tells us that we must observe the Saturday sabbath does not properly keep it himself. Again I would quote something very pertinent which my father wrote some years ago. He said: "The death penalty was commanded for any and all who did any work or lit a fire or in any other way broke this sabbath day. Now I want to ask you just one question. Do you, my friend, actually keep the sabbath as God commanded it in the Old Testament? If you do, then remember that one stroke of work after sundown Friday night until sundown Saturday night, according to the law, calls for the death penalty. If you travel on the sabbath, whether you think it is the seventh day or the first, you are guilty of sabbath-breaking, and the law demands your death. If you turn on the gas for a cup of coffee, light the stove for breakfast, you have kindled a fire. If you use electric lights on the sabbath, or turn on the tap for water to wash your face, you have broken



the sabbath, for God commanded that neither you, nor your servants, nor the stranger within your gates, should do any work on the sabbath day. To use light, you make it necessary for someone to work at the power plant. To use water requires someone to work at the pumping station, and they are therefore your servants. No, beloved friends, if you are under the law, you are under the curse, for says the Scripture:

*... as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them (Galatians 3:10).*

"But if you are under grace, you have no sabbath. Instead, you gather in joy and eagerness and with great anticipation among God's people, to break bread, sing hymns, pray, testify, and receive instruction; and then as a joyful, loving voluntary service, you spend the day, not in loafing and resting, but in witnessing, giving out the Word, visiting the sick, and winning souls for Jesus Christ."

*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God —*

*Not of works, lest any man should boast.*

*For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2:8-10).*

### 3

## JESUS CHRIST AND THE SABBATH

Jesus Christ observed the sabbath, the seventh day of the week, our Saturday, the day God had established as the day of rest. He would have sinned if He had not kept the sabbath. He was under obligation to live in obedience to the law God had given Israel through Moses. He kept the Jewish ceremonies and festivals, and regulated His life in conformity to the law. He lived His life under the law because it took His death to redeem others from it. The law was in effect as the constitution under which God's people were to live until the day He died for our sins. The fact that the law system came to an end when Jesus died on the cross was strikingly indicated by a miraculous occurrence in the temple. The earth quaked, rocks were rent, graves were opened, and Matthew says:

*And, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom . . . (Matthew 27:51).*

The veil that separated the holy of holies from the holy place in the temple was made of extremely heavy material. Rabbinical sources tell us that it was 60 x 30 feet and about 4 inches thick. Suddenly, the veil tore from top to bottom, exposing to the view of any priests who might have been on duty that sacred chamber where once the ark of the covenant and the two tables of the law were kept, and where the shekinah glory of God had manifested itself. This miracle symbolized the end of the law. No longer was there need for an earthly high priest, the sacrifice of animals and sprinkling of blood, and the observance of Old Testament days and seasons. The true High Priest as the Lamb of God had died for sinners. To observe the ceremonial laws, keep the sabbaths, and go back to altars, sacrifices and a priesthood, is to go back to the weak and beggarly elements from which we have been delivered.

Therefore, all those who point out that Jesus Christ kept the sabbath, and that we should for this reason also honor it, forget that a dramatic and fundamental change took place through His death. The relationship of men to the law ended, not when Jesus was born, but when He died. Galatians 4 makes a tremendous assertion which establishes the fact that Jesus lived under the law in the status of a child, but that, by virtue of His death, freedom from it is enjoyed by those who have the standing of mature sons. Paul writes in verses 4 and 5 of that chapter,

*But, when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,*

*To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons (Galatians 4:4, 5).*

A child is subject to many minute regulations. He may not cross certain corners unless someone is there to guide him. When he reaches high school, however, he is no longer subject to many of those rules which controlled him in his childhood. Thus, those under the law were commanded to obey a multitude of ordinances designed for them in the immature childhood period, represented by the law, while now those who trust in Jesus Christ are mature sons of God and not subject to these childhood rules. To say that because Jesus kept the sabbath we should do likewise is to deny the power of His



death and resurrection to deliver from the curse of the law. Paul was most vehement in his repudiation of the teaching that Christians must go back to at least a partial submission to the law. He said in Galatians 4:

*But now, after ye have known God, or rather are known by God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, unto which ye desire again to be in bondage?*

*Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years.*

*I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain (Galatians 4:9-11).*

One statement that Jesus made is often quoted to prove that sabbath-keeping is mandatory for all mankind, and not a special sign between God and Israel. It is found in Mark 2:27, 28.

*And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath.*

*Therefore, the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath (Mark 2:27, 28).*

Those who promote sabbath-keeping as a basic moral obligation contend that Jesus did not say, "The sabbath was made for Israel . . .," but rather, "The sabbath was made for man. . . ." Does this prove that God gave the sabbath to the entire human race? Should we all give ourselves to absolute rest every Saturday? Should there be no electricity used today by anyone, no telephone service, no radios or television sets turned on, and no use of anything that would require labor, except that which is necessary to care for emergencies? The context of Jesus' words in Mark 2 makes it clear that when Jesus said, "The sabbath was made for man," He was simply denouncing the legalistic Pharisees who were exalting a strict observance of a sacred day above the welfare of the people, whereas all of God's rules and regulations were designed for their benefit. "The sabbath was made FOR man" should be the emphasis, *not* that it was made for *all* men.

Though Jesus Christ honored the sabbath while He lived here as a "child of the law," He demonstrated on many occasions that the Pharisees and other religious leaders of His day had distorted it. The religious leaders of Jesus' time had become extreme ritualists and legalists in their manmade regulations, going far beyond those of the Old Testament Scriptures. On the other hand, they were hypocritical, dishonest,

greedy, and extremely superficial in their piety, placing regard for the exact letter of the law above their love for their fellow man.

Whenever one must make a choice between the observance of a ceremonial law like the sabbath and the discharge of a moral responsibility like giving help to someone in time of need, he must choose the moral responsibility. The ceremonial law must then give way to the law of love. That is why Jesus insisted upon His right to heal men of their afflictions on the sabbath. To illustrate His contention that the ceremonial must always be in subservience to the moral, Jesus pointed to an incident in David's life when the high priest gave to him and his men bread that had been dedicated in the tabernacle, even though this should have been reserved only for the priests. The moral obligation to preserve the life of David and his men took priority over the ceremonial rule. In thus correcting the legalists, the Lord Jesus strikingly exhibited the fact that sabbath-keeping was a ceremonial regulation, and not to be exalted to the place of an underlying moral law.

Let us also remind ourselves again of the fact that the weekly sabbath was given to Israel as part of the Mosaic Law along with the other sabbaths, and that when Christ died for sinners the entire system of shadows and types came to an end.

Even as the death of Jesus Christ brought about the end of the sabbath, so His resurrection marked the beginning of a new and very special day — the Lord's Day.

The Lord's Day is the first day of the week because it was on this day that Jesus rose from the dead. Mark, Luke and John all assert that very early on the first day of the week the women found the tomb empty. Down through the ages of Church history believers have been almost unanimous in looking upon Sunday as the time of our Lord's resurrection, and therefore also the Lord's Day.

A very small minority have sought to indicate, however, that Jesus rose from the dead on Saturday on the basis of Matthew 28:1, 2 which tells us that,

*In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulcher.*

*And, behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and*



rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it (Matthew 28:1, 2).

It is their contention that the words "in the end of the sabbath" should be read, "late in the sabbath." Since the sabbath ended at sundown on Saturday evening, they assert that this must have taken place before Sunday. The key to understanding this verse is found in the Greek word *opse*. This word sometimes is translated "late," and if we interpret it thus in this passage of Scripture it could point to the resurrection as occurring before the sabbath ended. This, however, makes it almost impossible to harmonize this report with that of the other gospels. We are grateful for the fact that recent light on the Greek language has settled the problem. It has been plainly demonstrated that this Greek word *opse* is often used as a preposition meaning "after." The newest and finest Greek lexicons give ample evidence that Matthew 28:1 could very well read, "Now *after* the sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week. . . ." This not only makes Matthew's account correspond with that of the other gospels, but it also fits in beautifully with Old Testament typology. The wave-offering of the feast of firstfruits, which typified the resurrection both of Christ and His followers, was presented before the Lord "on the next day after the sabbath" (Leviticus 23:10-14). The resurrection of Jesus Christ on any other day than Sunday would have destroyed the type.

Sunday, the first day of the week, was the day of our Lord's resurrection. It was also on Sunday that the Lord Jesus fulfilled His promise, ". . . ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now" (Acts 1:5). The day of Pentecost, which was to become the birthday of the Church, fell on the fiftieth day after the Sunday that the wave-sheaf was presented to the Lord. Therefore it also fell on Sunday. Thus the first day of the week became known as the "Lord's Day." The day of the week on which God first said, "Let there be light," the day on which our Savior by resurrection destroyed the power of death, and on which He poured out His Holy Spirit upon the waiting disciples, is now very fittingly called the Lord's Day.

The Lord's Day is not the Christian sabbath. The entire law system, with its types and shadows, has ended.

*For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth* (Romans 10:4).

The Lord's Day is not primarily a day of rest, but of joyous worship and praise in commemoration of the resurrection triumph of our Savior.

This all leads us back again to the question, "Who changed the sabbath?" The answer is that the sabbath never has been changed. God established the seventh day as the sabbath with Israel, and Israel alone. No other nation had anything resembling Israel's sabbaths. The sabbaths, whether annual or weekly, were part of the Law that God gave to Israel, and therefore Jesus Christ carefully observed them. On the other side of Calvary He lived under the Law, but when He died the Law dispensation ended, and the system was abolished. The Jews still continued to go to their synagogues on Saturday where the apostles preached to them to reach them with the Gospel. The early believers, however, began immediately to worship on Sunday, the Lord's Day.

Instead of asking, "Who changed the sabbath?" we would like to ask, "Who said the sabbath has been changed?" God certainly never made a declaration changing the sabbath from one day to another. The Church never changed the day either. The decrees in the fourth century did not really change anything at all. They simply confirmed that which was being practiced when they declared Sunday the official Lord's Day for Christian worship. The fact that some Christians call it the "Christian sabbath" does not of necessity make it so. There is no sabbath day for us in this dispensation. Therefore, we do not observe the sabbath when we set aside Sunday for special worship services in our churches. Those who look upon Sunday as the sabbath are in error. Nobody ever changed the day.

The Bible indicates that when Israel is restored to the land of Palestine and lives under the righteous rule of Jesus Christ during the millennial age, the sabbath will again be kept. Isaiah declared,

*And it shall come to pass that, from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord* (Isaiah 66:23).

This does not mean that the law of Moses with all its restrictions will be re-established. That system ended at Calvary. However, the earth will experience peace and justice, the rest to which the sabbath in Israel pointed. In commemoration of



this fact, delegations of people from all the nations will worship at Jerusalem in the monthly festivals and on the regular day of rest. This undoubtedly will be the seventh day of the week, not Sunday. When God instituted the sabbath, He specified that it would be on the seventh day of the week, and this He has never changed.

The person who does not recognize that there is a clear distinction between the sabbath and the Lord's Day is confused regarding law and grace. Moreover, he cannot in today's highly technological society keep the sabbath as it was legislated under Moses. To turn off all electricity, telephone service, and to refrain from all labor except that which is absolutely necessary for the preservation of life would disrupt the entire economy of the nation and of the world. No one can keep the sabbath today, and God does not expect anyone to do so. We repeat, no one ever changed the sabbath.

#### 4

### THE APOSTLES AND THE SABBATH

A small and very vocal minority in Christendom insists that we should keep Saturday as a weekly sabbath. We are told that the apostles observed the sabbath, and that the early Church generally kept the seventh day until Sunday was declared to be the sabbath in 321 A.D. A careful study of the New Testament, however, clearly reveals that the apostles and the Apostolic Church did not keep the sabbath, and Church History gives ample evidence that Sunday was observed as the Lord's Day from the beginning.

Jesus never once paid the slightest attention to the seventh-day sabbath AFTER HIS RESURRECTION. Now, this may come as quite a shock and surprise to many of you, and on the spur of the moment some may feel inclined to challenge me immediately, and to call in question the statement that Jesus never recognized the sabbath AFTER His resurrection; and so we make bold to repeat it, and challenge you in turn to find one single instance in the entire Bible where Jesus after the Cross is said to have observed the sabbath day in any way. On the other hand, in every instance where the Lord meets with His disciples and the day is specified, it is ALWAYS the first day of the week. We read in John 20:19,

*Then the same day at evening, being the first day of*

*the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you (John 20:19).*

Then, just exactly one week later, again on the first day of the week, He meets with His disciples. Remembering that from Sunday to Sunday was reckoned by the Jews to be eight days, listen to John's words in verse 26 of chapter 20,

*And, after eight days, again his disciples were inside, and Thomas with them; then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you (John 20:26).*

Whereas we have evidence that Jesus appeared to His disciples on the first day of the week on these occasions, nowhere do we find a single word, or even a hint, that He ever met with them on the sabbath, nor is the sabbath even mentioned by Him.

The Christians, in the early Church in the book of Acts, evidently followed this example of the Lord Jesus and they ALWAYS gathered as a Christian assembly on the first day of the week, by common consent, and in commemoration of the Lord Jesus' resurrection. Their weekly day of worship was always the first day. In Acts 20, verse 7, we read a conclusive statement, which alone, and standing by itself, without any other support, should establish the fact that the first day was the customary day of assembly for believers.

*And upon the FIRST day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the next day, and continued his speech until midnight (Acts 20:7).*

Will you notice very carefully these lessons which can be gleaned from these verses.

1. The disciples had gathered together on the first day of the week.
2. They had assembled to "break bread."
3. Paul preached to them on that occasion.

In complete harmony with this picture in Acts is Paul's admonition to the believers at Corinth. He said,

*Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye.*

UPON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK let every



one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come (1 Corinthians 16:1, 2).

Please notice that this directive was not an isolated, local order for the Corinthian Christians, for Paul says he also instructed the churches of Galatia in the very same thing. The first day of the week was to be the occasion for the gathering of collections. This clearly suggests that, during the lifetime of the apostles, believers assembled on the first day of the week, not on the seventh.

Now, I can immediately hear a very violent objection from those who would remind me that the book of Acts does record incident after incident when Paul did go into the synagogue on the sabbath day and preach. We admit gladly that this is true, but hasten to remind you that this preaching in the synagogues on the sabbath day was not directed to assemblies of Christians, but rather to groups of unbelieving Jews. Paul did not break bread with them, or fellowship with them around Christ. He merely went into the synagogues on the sabbath day that he might PREACH to them and to get them saved, and then after they were saved, they, of course, would be encouraged to go and worship with the believers on the first day of the week. Paul went into the synagogue on the sabbath day simply because this was the best means of reaching the Jews with the Gospel. It was not because he preferred the sabbath over the Lord's Day. In the same way, we preach and teach by radio, not because we prefer this to the local church, but because of its opportunity to reach those not in the church. When we are able to lead folks to Christ, then we encourage them to find a good church home for worship, instruction, and fellowship.

Paul explains his entire conduct in 1 Corinthians 9, beginning with verse 19,

*For though I am free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.*

*And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, not being myself under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law (1 Corinthians 9:19, 20).*

How crystal-clear this statement of Paul. He says, "To win my fellow kinsmen, the Jews, I place myself under their law in order to reach them for Christ." And so, although he went

to their synagogues on the sabbath day, he certainly did not go there to break bread, or to fellowship around the person of Christ. He met with *believers* on the first day of the week for that purpose. We find Paul, then, preaching in the synagogues to unbelieving Jews on the sabbath day, but meeting with God's people on the first day of the week.

It is also significant to notice that just as soon as Paul turned from the Jews to the Gentiles, there is no more reference to his activities on the sabbath at all. The last time Paul preached to Jews on the sabbath day is recorded in Acts 18 beginning with verse 4:

*And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks.*

*And when Silas and Timothy were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ.*

*And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he [Paul] shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean. FROM NOW ON I WILL GO UNTO THE GENTILES.*

*And he departed from there . . . (Acts 18:4-7).*

In these verses we have the last mention of the sabbath in the book of Acts. We repeat, this is the final statement that Paul went to his own people on the sabbath. The first part of the commission, "to the Jew first," has now been fulfilled, and so he goes to the Gentiles, and the Jewish sabbath disappears entirely from the record.

Not only did believers meet on the first day of the week for worship and the breaking of bread, but the apostles actually *rebuked* the Jewish Christians and false teachers who sought to place believers under the law, and to bring into the Church the observance of Jewish sabbaths.

We must remember that it wasn't easy for Jewish believers to break away completely from the rituals and regulations of their former life. Circumcision, the temple rites, the rigid distinction between clean and unclean meats, the observance of the weekly sabbath and the religious holidays had been a vital part of their lives up to now. Therefore, they had a strong tendency to carry into their new life some of these features, and even to demand that Gentile believers place themselves under some aspects of the law. This became such a serious problem that on one occasion Paul had to rebuke Peter for



going along with the legalists (Galatians 2:11), and Acts 15 tells us of a Church council that was called to determine which aspects of the law should be made binding upon Gentile believers. On this occasion the Apostle Peter made it very clear that the Gentile believers were not in any way to be subjected to the law. He declared,

*Now, therefore, why put God to the test, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? (Acts 15:10).*

At the conclusion of this Church council, however, Christians were enjoined to abstain from certain things, but not one word was said about keeping the sabbath. This certainly would have been an issue if sabbath-keeping were mandatory.

The Apostle Paul really clinches the matter in Colossians 2:16. Deceivers had crept into the Church, teaching a false asceticism and a rigid legalism. For that reason he found it necessary to write,

*Let no man, therefore, judge you in food, or in drink, or in respect of a feast day [an annual sabbath], or of the new moon, or of a sabbath day [the weekly Saturday sabbath] (Colossians 2:16).*

With all of this in mind, it is well to remember that the observance of the sabbath will be re-instituted after the Church has been raptured, and God has once again made Israel the center of His program upon the earth. Isaiah 66:23 tells us,

*And it shall come to pass [in that Kingdom age when Israel is restored] that, from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord (Isaiah 66:23).*

This prophecy will find fulfillment only after the Church has been removed from the picture and is caught up to reign with Christ, and Israel is permanently re-established in the land.

Having considered the evidence from the Scriptures concerning the observance of the Lord's Day instead of the seventh-day sabbath by those in the early Church, listen to a testimony from Church history.

Justin Martyr, a disciple of Polycarp, one who was personally acquainted with the Apostle John, wrote: "Sunday is the day upon which we all hold our communion assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Savior on that day rose from the dead. And on the day called

Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together in one place and the memoirs of the apostles, or the writings of the prophets, are read as long as time permits."

We could multiply quotations from early church fathers which clearly establish the universal worship of the early Christians on Sunday. Sometimes you will hear the charge that Sunday was dedicated to the sun-god, and that a mixture of paganism with early Christianity led to the adoption of Sunday. This contention is sometimes supported by lifting parts of sentences from the writings of early historians out of their context — a very unethical and unchristian practice. The pagan idea had nothing whatsoever to do with the fact that Sunday became the Lord's Day, and those who try to prove this must stoop to a deceitful use of historical quotations to do so. A statement in the Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, 1891 Ed., Vol. 4, article on "Sunday," plainly states how Sunday came to be the Christian day of worship, and I quote: "Sunday . . . was adopted by the early Christians as a day of worship . . . SUNDAY WAS EMPHATICALLY THE WEEKLY FEAST OF THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST, AS THE JEWISH SABBATH WAS THE FEAST OF THE CREATION. IT WAS CALLED THE 'LORD'S DAY,' AND UPON IT THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH ASSEMBLED TO BREAK BREAD (Acts 20:7, 1 Corinthians 16:2). No regulations for its observance are laid down in the New Testament nor, indeed, is its observance even enjoined; YET CHRISTIAN FEELING LED TO THE UNIVERSAL ADOPTION OF THE DAY, IN IMITATION OF APOSTOLIC PRECEDENCE. IN THE SECOND CENTURY ITS OBSERVANCE WAS UNIVERSAL" (capitals ours).

Dear listening friend, you have no sabbath day to observe. God offers you a sabbath life, a life of rest from all self-effort to earn salvation, from all the pangs of remorse, and from all fear of condemnation. The sabbath rest of which God speaks in Hebrews 4:1-11 is not a sabbath day, but a rest which begins here and will continue forever. The nation of Israel did not obtain the rest God had for it due to its wickedness, but there remains a sabbath rest for those who by simple faith turn to Jesus Christ. He tells us, "For we who have believed do enter into rest" (Hebrews 4:3), and that true rest comes to him "that worketh not, but believeth on Him that



justifieth the ungodly" (Romans 4:5). Have you turned from all self-effort to Jesus Christ? The rest of salvation, the sabbath life for time and eternity, is yours to enjoy if you will come by faith. Hebrews 4, verse 10, speaks of this rest, this salvation rest that you can enjoy here and now,

*For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his* (Hebrews 4:10).

Turn from your own works to find rest in the finished work of Christ on Calvary's Cross.

"Not the labors of my hands  
Can fulfill thy law's demands;  
Could my zeal no respite know,  
Could my tears forever flow,  
All for sin could not atone;  
Thou must save, and Thou alone!"

—Toplady

## 5

### THE LORD'S DAY FOR THE CHURCH

The Lord Jesus rose from the grave and made His first post-resurrection appearance on the first day of the week. This is the unanimous testimony of the four gospels. He waited until the next Sunday to meet His assembled disciples again. It was on another Sunday, the fiftieth day after His resurrection, that He bestowed the Holy Spirit upon His disciples in fulfillment of His promise. Sunday, therefore, immediately became the day on which early Christians met to break bread and fellowship in the things of Christ. On the sabbath the apostles preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the Jews in their synagogues, but believers worshiped on the Lord's Day.

It appears that in the early years of the Church, Saturday continued to be observed by Jewish believers as the day of rest, but we find no evidence that any person or group refused to acknowledge Sunday as the Lord's Day. Finally, in the fourth century, Sunday was officially declared to be the day for rest and worship. However, this does not mean that the decree of Constantine in 321 A.D. changed the sabbath from Saturday to Sunday. No one has ever done that. If you wish to observe the sabbath, then it should be on Saturday. But, we, as be-

lievers, keep no sabbath. The Lord's Day has replaced it.

Two very serious errors are continually being made today concerning the sabbath. Some call Sunday the "Christian sabbath," and others insist that Saturday is both the sabbath and the Lord's Day. We unequivocally state that which we have already proven in these messages: Sunday is not the sabbath, and Saturday is not the Lord's Day.

Furthermore, all serious-thinking people should certainly abolish from their minds the idea that the sabbath was changed in fulfillment of a prophecy found in Daniel 7. In Daniel 7:25 we read,

*And he shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High, and think to change the times and the laws; and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time* (Daniel 7:25).

There are those who teach that these words of Daniel predicted the edict of Constantine in 321 A.D., and the decision of the Council of Laodicea in 364 A.D., both of which officially declared Sunday to be the Christian day of rest and worship. We have already established the fact that these declarations did not change the sabbath. They simply made official the recognition of Sunday because some mistaken legalists were concerned about keeping a seventh-day sabbath in addition to the Lord's Day. Moreover, the words of Daniel's prophecy cannot by any stretch of the imagination be applied to either Constantine or the Church authorities of the fourth century. These men were wrong in many of their ideas, and may not always have manifested a proper Christian spirit, but they never openly denied God or ridiculed His power. Read again the opening words of Daniel 7:25,

*And he shall speak great words against the Most High...*

Neither Constantine nor the Roman bishop of the fourth century fulfilled this prediction. They were not militant blasphemers.

Daniel 7:25 obviously refers to the coming Antichrist who is described in Revelation 13:1-10. We have the same picture in both of these passages; namely, that of a great political dictator who blasphemes God, persecutes the saints, and continues in power for three and one-half years. Revelation 13:5 tells us that the beast's absolute power will continue "forty

and two months." This is the exact equivalent to the time, times, and the dividing of a time of Daniel 7:25. Almost all reputable scholars agree that this is three and one-half years, exactly forty-two months.

Therefore, we are emphatic in stating that when men seek to make Daniel 7:25 a prophecy of something that occurred in the fourth century in connection with the sabbath they do so in violence to both the Scriptures and Church history.

Now let us consider some practical implications concerning the Lord's Day, and how we should observe it. As you search the New Testament you will find no regulations governing conduct on the Lord's Day. This is an important and significant observation. It certainly reveals that we are not to have a "legislated" Sunday. We should not attempt to establish it as a national sacred day. We have absolutely no warrant to make or enforce laws that will govern the conduct of those who are not Christians in this matter of Sunday observance. In fact, we should be careful about setting up rules and regulations even for our fellow believers, telling them what they may or may not do.

The Bible, however, does place an obligation upon believers in regard to the Lord's Day, in Hebrews 10:25. The writer of this book, aware of the failure of some early Christians to faithfully attend the meetings of God's people on the Lord's Day, said:

*Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching (Hebrews 10:25).*

The person who neglects regular attendance in the house of God may be revealing that he has never really been saved. It is also possible that this failure is a symptom of a low spiritual condition, and surely continued absence from services will deepen his backslidden state. We know that some people live in areas where there are no Bible-preaching churches, and that others cannot attend due to circumstances beyond their control. God will give special grace, and the Holy Spirit will minister to their hearts. The chastening hand of God, however, may manifest itself to those who willfully neglect worship with God's people. It is certain that they will reap a harvest of spiritual loss.

Moreover, meeting with other Christians in worship is not

only beneficial to oneself, but also to others. You will notice that Hebrews 10:25 says, "... but exhorting (encouraging) one another." Your presence will be an encouragement to others. Your absence may disappoint some weak Christian, and help put him on the road to a spiritually cold condition. Then, too, a half-empty church does not make for a good service. It does not present much appeal to the stranger who comes in. As a Christian, you have a solemn responsibility to the Lord in this matter of church attendance.

The writer of Hebrews adds: "and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." As the coming of the Lord draws nearer, it becomes increasingly important that we faithfully attend the house of God for the spiritual benefit of ourselves and others, and that we may not be ashamed before Him at His coming.

When we meet for worship on the Lord's Day we may also exercise the privilege of Christian stewardship. Writing to the Corinthian believers Paul said:

*Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye.*

*UPON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come (1 Corinthians 16:1, 2).*

The poor Christians in Jerusalem needed financial help. Paul exhorted these believers to lay by in store on the first day of the week as the Lord had prospered them so that he would not be obliged to take special offerings when he arrived. Giving of our means is part of worship, part of our grateful response to the goodness and mercy of God. You will note the complete absence of legalism. Nothing is said of a tithe. To insist as some do that every believer is to give ten percent of his income in the church service every Sunday is to read more into this text than is really there. New Testament giving is not based upon the legal principle of the tithe, but "as the Lord hath prospered." Each one of us whenever possible is to meet with God's people in worship and praise on Sunday, and part of this worship is rendered in a giving that is wholly voluntary, and in proportion as the Lord hath prospered.

Beyond these responsibilities — which are really privileges, not conditions for salvation — the believer under grace must recognize that the way he keeps the Lord's Day is strictly a



matter between himself and the Lord. No other person has a right to impose rules and regulations upon him, or judge his godliness by the way he conducts himself on that day.

However, as yielded Christians under grace we will govern our lives in accordance with the principles of Christian liberty which Paul lays down in Romans 14. There are some things lawful for a Christian that are not expedient, and therefore we must regulate our conduct not only on the basis of whether or not something is lawful, but also with the welfare of others in mind. Paul, for example, looked upon all food as proper, from a ceremonial point of view. If he were in a private home eating a meal he was quite unconcerned about whether or not some of the food came from a market where they sold things that had been dedicated to idols. As a robust Christian he recognized that this in no way contaminated the food. He also was very much aware that the ceremonial dietary restrictions of the law were not in effect. He said:

*I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself . . . (Romans 14:14).*

However, if Paul saw that his eating of certain food would harm a Christian brother who did not have as strong a faith as his own, he would refrain from eating that food.

Thus it was in regard to "days." Some Jewish believers who had lived under the law all their lives were unable to disassociate themselves from their former sabbath concepts. It may be that they found it difficult to break from resting on Saturday, though they gladly worshiped on Sunday. Others may have somehow invested Sunday with some of their sabbath restrictions. The strong believers, however, looked upon every day as an opportunity to be filled with the Holy Spirit, bear witness, and pray. For the Gentile believers who had never recognized a sabbath, it would not be very difficult to look upon every day as equally belonging to the Lord. These believers rejoiced in the added privilege that on Sunday they could meet with God's people for worship and breaking of bread, and were not hindered by a previous legalistic approach. Paul called upon those believers who were not burdened with a sabbatarian background to be considerate of the weaker brother. They should be sympathetic to the fact that he was still unable to shake himself loose from some of his old concepts. Here the believers who had no such problems were called upon to regulate their lives by the law of love, a regard

for the spiritual welfare of the ones who were of weaker faith than they.

We still have a regular two-day weekend in the United States in which a large percentage of our people do not work. With the strong secularization of society, and the increasing efforts to divorce our nation from all traces of our Christian background, the time may come when we will not have such weekends. It is quite possible that with shorter work-weeks the schedules will be staggered so that not such a large percentage of the population will have their free time simultaneously. However, if such should become the situation, believers in the Lord Jesus Christ will still earnestly desire to meet with God's people on the Lord's Day. From John 20:19 and Acts 20:7 we can gather that it was not unusual for Christians to gather on Sunday evening. The believer will seek some time on every Lord's Day when he can associate with other Christians for worship and fellowship. Every believer who is not required to work on Sunday should be grateful for the special privilege he is afforded on the Lord's Day. It is a day he can set aside from the routine of his daily pursuits, to meet in fellowship with other believers and worship the risen Christ. A spiritual believer will rejoice in these privileges, and will not attend church or perform spiritual services grudgingly, or out of a sense of legal obligation.

Children in Christian homes should be led to Jesus Christ as early as possible, and should find Sunday a day of delight. The Sunday school classes, the worship services, and the youth meetings will not be a burden but a delight, if older Christians who lead in these functions do so with hearts full of love and devotion to Jesus Christ. Needless restrictions should not be placed upon the children so that they dislike the day. It may be that sometimes parents will find it necessary to insist that their children attend Sunday school and church services, because children are not yet mature enough to know always what is best for them. However, the parents should show such an interest in the things of God, such loyalty to the Church of Jesus Christ, and such genuine spiritual concern for those who are wayward or still unsaved, that the children will find themselves caught up in the spiritual enthusiasm of their parents.

God has given us the Lord's Day. It is a day to be observed, but it is never a matter of being a better person on that

day than on any of the other days of the week. Whenever it is possible to observe it as a day of cessation from temporal cares, it makes for a day of greater freedom than any other day of the week for the Christian. In a special way it celebrates the resurrection of Jesus Christ and our new life in Him. If you bear this in mind, and look upon Christian worship and services as a privilege, rejoicing in the blessedness of salvation, you will find it to be the "day of all the week the best." If you observe it as a rest day because of a feeling of legal obligation, you are completely misunderstanding God's intention for you in this age of grace. Let it be for you a day of overflowing praise and voluntary joyful service.

"O day of rest and gladness, O day of joy and light,  
O balm of care and sadness, most beautiful, most bright;  
On thee, the high and lowly, bending before the throne,  
Sing "Holy, Holy, Holy," to the great Three in One.

On thee, at the creation, the light first had its birth;  
On thee, for our salvation, Christ rose from  
depths of earth;  
On thee, our Lord, victorious, the Spirit sent  
from heaven;  
And thus on thee, most glorious, a triple light was given."  
— Wordsworth

This word in closing to you who are not saved. The Lord's Day and its observance will never have any real significance and blessing for you until you know the Lord Jesus as your Savior. If you have never been saved, why not bow your head in prayer and settle this matter right now? Here is a suggested word of prayer which you might offer: "Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner and could never save myself. I believe that Thou didst die for me and shed Thy blood for my sin, and that Thou didst rise again from the dead. And now I am receiving Thee as my Savior, my Lord, my only hope of salvation. Lord, be merciful to me a sinner, and save me according to the promise of Thy Word. Amen."

If you prayed this and really meant it, you are saved. The Bible says,

*For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved (Romans 10:13).*



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