

# The Sabbath and the Lord's Day

## Summary:

- God rested on the seventh day and sanctified it, making it holy (Gen. 2:2-3). There are no commands to Adam and Eve to observe it, though Jesus may allude to it (Mk. 2:27).
- The Sabbath was a covenant and sign between Israel and the Lord that was not given as a covenant to any of their forefathers. Breaking the Sabbath warrants the death penalty as a covenant (Ex. 16:23; Ex. 31:12-17; 35:2-3).

## 1. The Proclamation of Jesus as Lord of the Sabbath (Matt. 12:1-8)

- Jesus, as Lord of the Sabbath and the incarnate YHWH who instituted it, not only clarifies it but alludes to a future unveiling of it as Lord. There will be new characteristics that will be appropriate under the inaugurated New Covenant.
- He alludes to Himself as the greater temple (v.6). Jesus groups the bread, the temple, and the Sabbath, demonstrating His Lordship.
- Jesus never violated the Sabbath nor desecrated the temple in any way, for He came under the law (Gal. 4:4-5), and, as a result, demanded that the temple be hallowed (Mk. 11:15-18) commenting on sacrificial worship (Matt. 5:23-24). Simultaneously, He predicts that the temple is doomed and on the verge of collapsing. Jesus obeyed the Law of God in its complete sense but also brought the full expression of it. He brought the Sabbath (and temple) to its fulfillment.
- Jesus abrogated and destroyed the temple (Jn. 2:19; 1 Cor. 6:19) and the priests (Eph. 2:19-22; 1 Pet. 2:4-5) in one sense, even though they remained. The temple yields to Christ, and so does the Sabbath.
- Through His sufferings and glory, the temple yields to Christ to fit the redemptive-historical circumstances. In the same way, the Sabbath similarly yields to Christ. With the New Covenant, there is a new temple and a new Sabbath. It has elements of both, but it fits the redemptive and historical revelatory purposes.
- As a positive law, not natural (as image-bearers), the seventh day Sabbath is the only commandment in the Decalogue that allows for exception (2 Kgs. 11:5-9; Ezek. 46:1-3; Matt. 12:5; Lk. 6:1-5; 14:1-6; Jn. 7:21-23). The moral law is based on the nature of God and is eternal and transcending both time and covenant. The Sabbath is temporal and creational based on the seven days of creation (Ex. 20:8-11). The Sabbath, as the seventh day, is a positive law that has been abrogated, changed, and altered.

## 2. The Precedence and Priority of Sunday Gathering

Why do we, as "the church," gather on Sunday?

- A. Jesus rose on the first day of the week (Matt. 28:1; Mk. 16:1; Lk. 24:1; Jn. 20:1,19):
  - Christians gather on the first day (Sunday) to commemorate the historical-redemptive-eschatological epoch (era) procured through the incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- B. Pentecost (outpouring of the Holy Spirit) occurred on Sunday (Acts 2:14-21)

Both the Resurrection and Pentecost occurred on Sunday. The resurrection represents the newness of life, a new epoch (era) that fits within the redemptive-historical paradigm. Pentecost (fifty days after the Resurrection) was when the Holy Spirit was poured out in fulfillment of the prophet Joel. Post-resurrection and pre-ascension appearances assume something peculiar (Acts 2:1; 20:7). The resurrection is a pivotal epoch-changing, redemptive-historical, and theological basis for gathering on the first day of the week. It is the beginning of the new creation.

## C. The early church gathered on Sunday (and initially on the Sabbath as well):

- While there is no prescriptive command to meet on the first day, the New Testament writings describe the meetings of the early church (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2; Rev. 1:10). They already gathered Sunday mornings.
- The command may have occurred when Jesus taught his disciples over 40 days about the kingdom of God (Acts 1:1-4). Paul may have received a similar direct revelation from the Lord Jesus Christ concerning this (Gal. 1:11-23).

Did the early church (Jewish Christians and Proselyte Gentiles) gather in the synagogue and observe the Sabbath?

- Yes (initially). The synagogue was the cultural epicenter of Jewish Rabbinical teaching (Acts 9:2,20; 13:5,14,15,43, 14:1; 15:21; 17:1,10,17; 18:4,7, 8,17,19,26; 19:8).
- Jewish Christians did not initially leave the synagogue, nor were they forced. In the "mixed bag" of Jews and Gentiles in the early church, many attended the synagogue on the Sabbath, observed the Sabbath, and gathered Saturday or Sunday evenings (after 6 PM). The Jewish tradition continued in addition to Christian gatherings and fellowship as an eschatological newness emerged.
- The apostles entered the synagogue to evangelize by unveiling the details of the New Covenant. Over time, the Jewish cultic life (circumcision and the Sabbath) faded as the church embraced its new redemptive-eschatological standing in Christ. These changes reflect the historical-redemptive-eschatological that emerge through His entrance into glory. The Sabbath is perpetuated as a rest, not as a seventh-day observance.
- By the end of that first century, the apostle John used "The Lord's Day" as he wrote to the seven churches of Asia Minor (Rev. 1:10). They would have understood this as a unique and memorable day (Sunday) attributed to the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

## 3. The Procedure for Sunday Gathering

- A. There is no explicit meeting time (morning, afternoon, or evening): They gathered Saturday and Sunday night due to the agrarian cultural context in which they lived.
- B. There is no explicit set amount of time for the gathering: They may have gathered up to six hours at a time (Acts 20:7).
- C. There is no explicit order of service: The Old Testament Scriptures were read and expounded through a Christological lens, the apostolic tradition was taught, and New Testament copies were read as they became more widespread and available. There was also singing and encouragement (Col. 3:16; 2 Tim. 4:1-5).

\*Order was required (1 Cor. 14:26-40) without man-made manipulation (Eph. 4:15).

Christians today fall into several categories regarding the Lord's Day (Christian Sabbath):

- A. They adopt some principles of the Jewish Sabbath but not all, demonstrating a misunderstanding between the Jewish Sabbath and the Christian Sabbath.
- B. They are loose, passive, apathetic, and indifferent to the special commemorative redemptive, epoch-changing day, refusing to commit, participate, financially give, and invest in a local body of believers for their good and the glory of God.
- C. They do what they have always done: go to "church" on Sunday.
- D. They look forward to Sunday gatherings to celebrate, participate, and worship with God's people, which includes reading God's Word, singing God's Word, and receiving the declaration of God's Word.

Sunday is a unique and memorable day that should require special attention to the epoch-changing, redemptive-historical accomplishments of the resurrection commensurate with the gathering of Christ's church together.