

We come this week to our eighth sermon in a short topical series entitled, Back to Basics—having considered, How to worship last week, it seems logical to consider the subject, How to keep the Lord’s Day—if the Lord has a right to tell us how we worship Him [as we saw last week], then it only makes sense He has an equal right to dictate when we worship Him...

I don’t think I need to mention that we live in a day when the Lord’s Day has been forgotten, rejected, and desecrated—but this ought not to surprise us, for—“the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be...”

But the unique tragedy of our day is that the church has virtually if not actually done these very same things—worship services are now offered on Saturday night that Sunday might be left to fun and games, second or evening services have ceased to exist that we might spend the bulk of the day doing whatsoever, and public meetings are attended only if they don’t interfere with our busy schedules...

All of this I trust you know my brethren, is in contradiction to church history, for regardless what branch or denomination—reformed, Presbyterian, Baptist, Wesleyan, or Methodist—all Christians have agreed upon the religious nature and importance of the Lord’s Day...

Our text is the words of John while exiled on the island of Patmos—he says he was “in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day...”—to be “in the Spirit” has reference to worship and probably prayer—John was in the Spirit “on the Lord’s Day”—that is on a specific day—a day he understood belonged to the Lord—and it was upon this day that the Lord revealed Himself to John, for it is upon this day that He has promised to specially dwell in the midst of His golden lampstands—that is, His new covenant churches...

- I. Its Old Testament origin
- II. Its New Testament change
- III. Its practical observance [considered this afternoon]

I. Its Old Testament origin

1. Essential to the concept of the Lord’s Day, is an understanding of its Old Testament Sabbatical roots—simply put the Lord’s Day is the New Covenant Sabbath...
2. The proof for this assertion is twofold—[a] because a Sabbath day is eternal moral law, and [2] because the Lord’s Day continues Sabbatarian language...
3. Notice [1] the Sabbath is eternal law—by this I mean the principle that one day of the week is holy to the Lord has it’s beginning at creation...
4. Thus the concept of a weekly Sabbath day is not a part of the ceremonial law given exclusively to the nation of Israel but a part of God’s moral law given to man...
5. Gen.2:1-3—“thus the heavens and the earth, and all the host of them, were finished. And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made...”
6. While the noun “Sabbath” is not found in this passage we do have the verb used twice, v2—“he rested” and v3—“in it He rested...”
7. These are verbs taken from the word “sabbath” meaning—“to cease or rest”—it has absolutely nothing to do with the number seven...
8. Notice [a] what the Lord does to the Sabbath, v3—“then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it...”—that is, He set it apart as holy from the rest of the week...
9. Notice [b] why He did this, v3—“because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made...”
10. God set apart the Sabbath as a pattern for Adam to keep, one day in seven, when he could cease or rest from his labors...

11. Thus it must be kept in mind, that even in a perfect paradise, God sanctified one day out of the week, to serve as a Sabbath for man...
12. Ex.20:8-11—"remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10 but the seventh day *is* the Sabbath of the LORD your God. *In it* you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who *is* within your gates. 11 For *in* six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that *is* in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it..."
13. Notice this commandment begins with the exhortation—"remember the Sabbath day..."—which implies a previous knowledge...
14. The reason being Adam, the very first man, was given a Sabbath day to keep, even while in a perfect paradise...
15. This is evident from the latter part of v11b—"therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it..."
16. Why does God here command that we work six days and rest the seventh, but because He Himself established the pattern in creation...
17. Thus the Sabbath [the principle that one day in seven was holy to the Lord] has historically been referred to as "a creation ordinance..."
18. This refers to the fact that the weekly Sabbath had its origination at creation and is thus binding to the whole of mankind...
19. John Murray—"The Sabbath was instituted at creation. It belongs, therefore, to the order of things which God established for man at the beginning. It is relevant quite apart from sin and the need of redemption. In this respect it is like the institutions of labour, of marriage, and of fruitfulness..."
20. Mk.2:27-28—"and He said to them, The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is also Lord of the Sabbath..."
21. Here we find our Savior's inspired commentary upon that first Sabbath [or holy day] made by God and given to Adam...
22. The Sabbath was not given to Israel but to man—it is an obligation placed upon mankind and not merely the nation of Israel...
23. It is what we refer to as "moral law"—and thus it is equally as binding upon all men as much as the other nine commandments...
24. Are all children to honor their parents or only Jewish ones, are all men forbidden to commit murder, adultery, and lie, or only Jewish people...
25. Thus because the principle of a holy day has its beginning at creation and is reiterated in the Ten Commandments...
26. The concept of a weekly day that is holy to the Lord, a day set apart for religious purposes, is imbedded into the moral fabric of man as man...
27. Thus it should not surprise us that the NT speaks about a holy day that belongs to the Lord, for this has been true since the beginning of time...
28. This brings us to a [2] proof behind the assertion that the Lord's Day is the New Covenant Sabbath—namely—the terminology [Lord's Day] is Sabbatarian language...
29. For example, Isa.58:13—"if you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day...the holy day of the LORD..."
30. Here the Lord refers to the weekly Sabbath as—"My holy day...the holy day of the Lord..."—in other words it was the Lord's Day...
31. A day that belonged to God specially and uniquely—it was His day in a way the other days were not—it was a unique and special day...
32. Thus John says He was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day—that is, a day that uniquely belongs to Him—a day, separate from the other six...
33. We find the same thing in Ex.31:13—"Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep..."—notice the weekly Sabbath is "His Sabbaths..."—that is, it unequally belongs to Him—it is the Lord's Day...
34. Thus if the NT expressly refers to a day as being the Lord's—then doesn't it seem logical that every person remotely familiar with the OT would equate this with the Sabbath...

35. It is the Lord's Day—that is, it is a holy day which specially belongs to the Lord in a way that the others do not...
36. For example, because the tithe was the Lord's, it was holy, Lev.27:30—“and all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's. It is holy to the LORD...”
37. Notice because the tithe of the land was the Lord's, it was holy—thus the Lord's Day because it is the Lord's, must of necessity be a holy day...
38. Furthermore, our Savior Himself said in Mk.2:28—“the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath...” which reminds us of the phrase—“the Lord's Day [Lord of the Sabbath]...”
39. Sam Waldron—“Is it possible to think that when John used the terminology the Lord's Day that he was not remembering that the Sabbath had been the Lord's holy day and that Jesus had called himself the Lord of the Sabbath..?”
40. Now if we were to carefully examine the OT, we would find two things mentioned again and again as belonging to the Lord—the Sabbath and the Passover, Ex.12:11—“it is the LORD's Passover...”
41. Thus it should not surprise us that when we come to the NT there are only two things described as the Lord's in this manner—“the Lord's Supper” and “the Lord's Day...”
42. The Greek construction is a strong possession—these two things belong to the Lord in a special way—they are His Supper and His Day...
43. These two events are to serve as memorials to His death and life—that is, the Lord's Supper reminds us of His crucifixion and the Lord's Day reminds us of His resurrection...

II. Its New Testament change

Here I want to address the fact that within the new covenant the Sabbath day has been changed from the last day of the week to the first, 1689 [of religious worship and the sabbath day]—“[the Lord] has specifically appointed one day in seven for a sabbath to be kept holy unto him, which from the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ was the last day of the week and from the resurrection of Christ was changed into the first day of the week, which is called the Lord's Day...”—now admittedly we do not find this change anywhere expressly stated within the NT, but we do find a repeated and peculiar significance placed upon the first day of the week—let me suggest five of these...

A. It was the day Christ rose from the dead

1. That the Sabbath is changed to the first day of the week from the seventh commemorates the fact that in His resurrection Christ completed His redemptive work now rested from His labor...
2. Just as God rested after finishing his work of creation, blessing the day and sanctifying it, so too, Christ after completing the new creation blessed and sanctified the first day as holy...
3. Mk.16:9—“now when Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene...”
4. Now it is important to notice that nowhere in the entire NT is any day of the week numbered but the first day...
5. Nowhere do we ever read of the “second day of the week” or the “third” or “fourth” or “fifth” day of the week...
6. But eight times we do read of the “first day of the week”—again and again and again, the NT Scriptures use this phrase “the first day of the week...”
7. Sam Waldron—“The first day of the week is the day upon which Christ's labours to atone for the sins of this people came to an end and he entered his rest in resurrection glory. The Lord's day is the eighth day, the day of new beginnings. As the seventh day was associated with and commemorated the old work of creation, so the first day is associated with and commemorates a new creation...”
8. Thus my brethren, every single Sunday is an Easter Sunday, and should be considered as a Holy-day to be observed...
9. For it was upon this day that our beloved Savior rose from the dead, conquering all His and thus our enemies...

10. It was on this day that our Savior was raised for our justification—it was on this day that redemption was purchased and eternal life secured...
11. Thus I suggest to you that the first day of the week, the day our Savior rose from the dead, is referred to by John as the Lord's Day...
12. Joe Morecraft—"The seventh day or Saturday Sabbath of the Old Testament is no longer the Sabbath, being left in the grave when Christ arose on the first day of the week, or Sunday..."

B. It was the day Christ was declared Lord

1. Throughout our Bibles we have the repeated affirmation that at His resurrection Christ assumed a formal role as Lord...
2. This doesn't imply that as eternal God He always was Lord, but the Scriptures made clear, it was at His resurrection that Christ sat on the throne of His Father...
3. Thus it is for this reason that the first day of the week is designated "the Lord's Day" as it was on this day that Christ was declared Lord...
4. Rom. 1:1-4—"Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called *to be* an apostle, separated to the gospel of God 2 which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, 3 concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, 4 *and* declared *to be* the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead..."
5. Notice the phrase in v4—"and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead..."
6. Christ was "declared to be the Son of God with power"—that is, He was declared to be the powerful and authoritative Lord—"by the resurrection from the dead..."
7. Rom. 14:9—"for to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living..."
8. Here we find that our Savior died and rose again, that—"that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living..."
9. This is to say, that it was because of His death and resurrection that He earned the right to be Lord over all men...
10. Acts 2:36—"therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ..."
11. Thus Christ was made Lord at His resurrection in the sense that He assumed a position as the glorified God-man that did not previous have...
12. And so it is for this reason that John refers to the first day of the week, as the Lord's Day—the day upon which Christ was made or declared Lord...

C. It was the day Christ gave His Holy Spirit

1. I don't want to spend a long time here, other to point out that the day Christ chose to pour out His Spirit was the first day of the week...
2. This is found in Lev. 23:16 as we learn that the Day of Pentecost was to be—"the day after the seventh Sabbath..."—that is the first day of the week...
3. Acts 2:1—"when the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting..."
4. Thus it was on the first day of the week that our Savior chose to pour out His blessed Spirit upon His beloved people...
5. It may be for this reason that John combines the Lord's Day with the Spirit—"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day..."
6. In other words, as Christ gave His Spirit on the first day [the Lord's Day], it seems logical that John would see a connection between the two...
7. What better day to be "in the Spirit" than the very day the Spirit was given—what a double blessing—to be in the Spirit on the Lord's Day...

8. Thus there is a sense in which the Sabbath day brings a specialized focus, upon each person of the Trinity...
9. The Father [in that it reminds us of creation], the Son [in that it reminds of the resurrection], and the Spirit [in that it recalls the Day of Pentecost and the giving of the Spirit]...
10. Thus I suggest that the first day of the week is the Lord's Day, because it was this day that the Lord chose to give send His Spirit to His church...

D. It was the day Christ met with His disciples

1. We find within the gospel narrative, that having risen from the dead on the first day, our Savior favored meeting with His disciples on this day...
2. Jn.20:19—"then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors where shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, Peace be with you..."
3. This of course refers to the evening of the same day Christ rose from the dead—He enters into their midst and pronounces a blessing upon them—"peace be with you..."
4. Jn.20:26—"and after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, thee doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said Peace to you..."
5. Notice John expressly states that the second time Christ meets with His disciples it was "after eight days..."
6. This is another way of saying it was again on the first day of the week, as in counting days the Jews included each day...
7. Thus beginning with the first day [Sunday] and counting a week later to next Sunday it would be eight days, thus the NIV—"a week later his disciples were in the house again..."
8. Why did Christ wait for a full week before He again revealed Himself to His disciples—well certainty the main reason was to make good His promise—"where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there in the midst of them..."
9. I suggest to you that our Savior was teaching His disciples what they are to expect as they gather on His day and await His presence...
10. Thus in both appearances He pronounces upon them a similar blessing—"peace be with you..."—that is, it is on this day as we have gathered in His name that we should except a similar blessing...
11. Now let simply remind you that it was on the OT Sabbath that the High Priest stood in the midst of the people and pronounced a blessing of peace upon them...
12. Numb.6:24—"The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace..."
13. Thus I suggest to you that the first day of the week is the Lord's day, because it was the day Christ favored to meet with His assembled people...

E. It was the day Christ' disciples met together

1. As we read through the book of Acts and the epistles, we find that the disciples of our Savior, made it their habit to meet together on the first day of the week...
2. Acts 20:7—"now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight..."
3. While Paul was ready to depart Troas he purposefully waited till the next day to leave, wanting to gather with the brethren on the Lord's Day...
4. Notice it was the custom of the early church to gather on the first day of the week—"on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread..."
5. The phrase "came together" refer to that formal gathering of the church as she comes together to offer up corporate or public worship...
6. Notice they came together "to break bread"—that is, they came together to participate in the Lord's Supper...

7. It was on this day that the early church gathered to worship, and thus the apostle Paul—“spoke to them and continued his message until midnight...”
8. 1Cor.16:1-2—“now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: on the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come...”
9. Here we find apostolic commandment to bring tithes and offerings into the church as we gather on the first day of the week...
10. Notice that this commandment given to the church at Corinth, was also given to the multiple churches of Galatia...
11. Paul was about to collect a donation made by these churches for the benefit of the impoverished church at Jerusalem...
12. The Christians in these churches were to bring their donations with them as they gathered that—“there be no collections when I come...”
13. That is—when he comes he will have all things present that he might easily gather them and be on his way...
14. But the point I am here making is that they were to bring these donations with them as they gathered together to worship on the first day...

Let me conclude,

1. I want to finish this sermon with two objections—[1] there are those who might object—To me every day is the Lord and not merely one in seven...
2. Such an objection has a measure of truth in it and may even give the appearance of a heightened spirituality...
3. But John speaks of a day that is the Lord’s special possession, and to deny this day a unique place is the very height of impiety...
4. Thus to treat every day alike, is in fact to deny the Lord’s day, and treat what God has made His peculiar possession of little or no value...
5. Sam Waldron—“All days are the Lord’s, but this one is especially His, else the words mean nothing...If you, therefore, keep all days alike, you are clearly failing in your duty...”
6. Notice [2]—there are those who object that a New Testament Sabbath takes the focus off Christ and puts it on the day...
7. But in answering this objection, I would ask—how can putting focus upon the Lord’s Day detract from putting focus on the Lord...
8. The very purpose behind the Lord’s Day is to draw attention to the Lord, and any presentation of the Sabbath that loses sight of this is unbalanced...
9. As I have sought to show you the very purpose the first day of the week is called the Lord’s Day is because it turns our eyes to Him, His Spirit, and His people...
10. Robert Murray McCheyne—“This is the reason why we love it, and would keep it entire. We love everything that is Christ’s...We love His word, His house, His table, His people. And we love the Lord’s Day, because it is His. Every hour of it is dear to us—sweeter than honey, more precious than gold. It is the day He rose for our justification. It reminds us of His love, and His finished work, and His rest. And we may boldly say that that man does not love the Lord Jesus Christ who does not love the entire Lord’s Day...”