

# From Sabbath To Lord's Day

Doctrinal Conviction of Pastor-Teacher Paul B. Phair  
and Elder Team Policy

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## *Seek Rest With God*

Commandment #4 from God's Top Ten List  
Exodus 20:8 (& Deut. 5)  
July 14, 2002

With each year that passes it feels to us as if life becomes more and more stressful. Our careers become more demanding and pressure filled, our kids schedules and activities add to our strain: Drive one child to ball practice and then a half hour later another to dance, then pick them up and then assist them with math that we ourselves don't understand, there are personal finance responsibilities and projects that are piling up on our desks, and we don't get to communicate with our spouses until we are in bed, drifting off to sleep.

In the midst of all of this we may wonder, is there any purpose in all this pressure? "*What's it all about Alphonse?*" If life has purpose there must be a God, but I'm so busy, I can't take the time to find Him, if He really is to be found.

### **Timeless, three-fold application**

God's 4th Commandment from within the 10 Commandments, addresses this concern of God for us.

The **principle application** that I believe God has for us in our day is that God would have us seek **rest with God**.

1. God is compassionately concerned about our need for rest from the responsibilities and pressures of life. **Physical & emotional rest.**
2. but moving deeper than that, the longing of God's heart is that we ultimately find that rest in a personal ongoing relationship with Him. **Spiritual renewal of relationship with God**
3. Pattern of **weekly corporate worship**

### **Cessation of the Sabbath**

#### **Exodus 20:8-11**

"Remember to observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. [9] Six days a week are set apart for your daily duties and regular work, [10] but the seventh day is a day of rest dedicated to the Lord your God. On that day no one in your household may do any kind of work. This includes you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, your livestock, and any foreigners

living among you. [11] For in six days the Lord made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and everything in them; then he rested on the seventh day. That is why the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and set it apart as holy.

There is a principle from this commandment that remains, but the literal commandment concerning the Sabbath as originally given to the nation of Israel has ceased to exist for the Christian. There is now for the Christian what the NT calls the Lord's Day. The Sabbath Day, and the Lord's Day are different days and commemorate different events.

- The Sabbath is the last day of the week and in part, commemorates God's rest after His "toil" during His week of creation;
- The Lord's Day is the first day of the week and commemorates the Resurrection of our Lord.

Here I want to be very plain and very definite. For the Christian the Sabbath has **ceased to exist**. The Sabbath is simply a day which the Christian does not observe - nor is Sunday merely a different day of the week for the observance of the Sabbath. To speak of Sunday as the Sabbath is quite wrong, because for the Christian there is no such thing.

### **Sunday is not the Sabbath.**

Again to put it very plainly and very definitely, this 4th Commandment, as understood literally, is not binding on the Christian at all. There is **no evidence** in Scripture that the rules and regulations concerning **work**, which govern the Sabbath, were ever **transferred** by divine authority to the Lord's Day.

The Sabbath is not a Christian institution, the Lord's Day is. To this day the Jews observe the Sabbath on Saturday, and from the point of view of Jewish religion, correctly so. But the Christian has his own day, commemorating the greatest event of his faith, that is, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

This means **we are not to be asking:** *How ought I to keep the Sabbath?* Instead we are to ask: *How ought I to keep the Lord's Day?* The Lord's Day is not primarily and essentially a day when this, or that, or the next kind of work and action is prohibited, which is what the Jewish Sabbath is.

The Lord's Day is primarily and essentially a day when we remember that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead and is alive and therefore with us here and now and we together worship Him.

Every time we become involved in arguments about what may or may not be done on the Lord's Day we are, in fact, being Jewish instead of Christian, and we are, in fact, turning the Lord's Day into the Sabbath. [In preparation for this message I read **D.L. Moody's** sermon on the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment, and he had quite a bit to say about the sin of reading a newspaper on the so-called Christian Sabbath. Likewise, just two weeks ago, while on vacation, I heard a **pastor** declare that the 4<sup>th</sup> commandment was binding upon Christians and suggested that lawn mowing on Sunday was in violation of it. Also Eric Liddell, *Chariots of Fire*. I admire his devotion & commitment to follow his conviction, but...]

Biblically how did I arrive at such a conclusion? By necessity, I am going to have to be quite brief. I am making available to you more extensive notes on the back table.

## **Biblical Support for the Cessation of the Sabbath**

### **1B The meaning of the Mosaic Sabbath**

**Exodus 31:17a** -- It is a sign of a covenant between God and the nation of Israel, but not between God and the nations of the world. This sign of Sabbath keeping, like the tabernacle, the temple, the priesthood, the sacrificial system was superseded by Christ. (Old Covenant & New Covenant)

### **2B Jesus' relationship to the Sabbath**

#### **Matthew 12:1-8**

At about that time Jesus was walking through some grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, so they began breaking off heads of wheat and eating the grain. [2] Some Pharisees saw them do it and protested, "Your disciples shouldn't be doing that! It's against the law to work by harvesting grain on the Sabbath."

[6] I tell you, there is one here who is even greater than the Temple! ...[8] For I, the Son of Man, am master even of the Sabbath."

Jesus is the Lord God who created the Sabbath – it all points to Him! Jesus has superceded all the OT ceremonies and regulations. When we are related to Christ, then we are free from such religious regulations.

### **3B No Sabbath observance in the NT church**

#### 1B

#### **Colossians 2:16-17**

So don't let anyone condemn you for what you eat or drink, or for not celebrating certain holy days or new-moon ceremonies or Sabbaths. For these rules were only shadows of the real thing, Christ himself.

- 2B There is **not a single** verse in the NT which commands Christians to observe the Sabbath or a Sunday day of rest. Nor is Sabbath breaking ever included in any list of sins in any of the epistles. Violations of **all other of the nine** commandments are spelled out as sins, but Sabbath breaking is omitted.

### The Timeless Principle Concerning Our Need For Physical & Emotional rest

1. In addition to Sabbath observance being a sign of the special relationship that existed between God and the nation of Israel, there is a second reason why God commanded the Sabbath rest to the Israelites:
2. Can you discover it as you read it with me in Deut 5:14

#### Deuteronomy 5:14

but the seventh day is a day of rest dedicated to the Lord your God. On that day no one in your household may do any kind of work. This includes you, your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, your oxen and donkeys and other livestock, and any foreigners living among you. All your male and female servants **must rest as you do.**

God had a social concern for God's people and even for the animals, servants, and foreigners in their land.

God knows that **we need** physical, mental, and emotional rest from the stresses of everyday life. There is more to life than work alone, and we must not become consumed by it. One full day out of every seven is an **excellent pattern** for us. God knows our human frailty and our need to unplug regularly.

For many of us in our culture, **Sunday is an excellent day** for us to do just that. Spend the day wisely in refreshment: Worship God, take a nap, enjoy family recreation. Step out of the fray and re-energize and re-focus on the priorities of life.

### Our need for ultimate rest is found in a relationship with Christ

In a rather complex passage, **Hebrews 4**, the inspired author informs us that God offers to believers a special kind of rest that is similar to God's Sabbath rest after creation. This rest is more than a mere cessation of activity, but a true fulfillment and satisfaction. This fulfillment involves forgiveness of sin and the joy of personally being related to God – and in greatest fulfillment, the joy of heaven. [Shadow to come, pointing to Christ.]

Just prior to a Sabbath controversy, in Matthew 11:28-29 Jesus says

### **Matthew 11:28-29**

... "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle, and you will find rest for your souls."

Even if you do regularly unplug from the stress of life there remains within a **restless soul**; a kind of **void**, and a **longing for purpose** and meaning and true joy. That can only be found through a personal relationship with Christ. Words encouraging people to come to Christ.

I encourage you as God does, to regularly rest from the stresses of life, and to then come to find forgiveness, and inner joy through a personal relationship with Christ.

Then as believers in Jesus Christ, weekly experience spiritual renewal through corporate worship.

### **The New Testament *Lord's Day***

Phrase used in Rev 1:10 -- Jesus' special day, in honor of the first day of the week in which Jesus rose from the dead.

Gospels are emphatic in telling us that **Jesus rose** from the dead on the first day of the week

(pattern) And then in Acts we find that it was on the 1st day of the week that the new believers in Jesus assembled together for corporate worship, fellowship, for instruction in God's word, and the collection of offerings.

The first day of the week, the Lord's Day, became an appropriate day of the week for believers to worship.

There is no commandment that Sunday must be the day when we do this, though the established pattern of Sunday is a good and honorable one. I prefer it for two reasons:

1. Because of the Biblical precedent and what the first day of the week can commemorate
2. Our American culture generally gives most of us Sunday's off from work and we are therefore free to worship on this day.

But I do not think we are bound by it. I am comfortable if we one day decide to make good use of our facility and accommodate our culture to worship on another day of the week, say Saturday night.

While we are free to worship on any day we wish as a congregation, we are to make regular, consistent worship a very high priority for our lives.

[My admiration of many ND farmers in former church who made this a priority during harvest, except during beet harvest (thus not legalistic, but a priority.)

Heb 10:23-25

We must not follow the pattern of our culture about us which puts work or even family recreations ahead of worship. Worship, Bible teaching (SS) and fellowship is God's plan and purpose for this congregation and us as individuals: you see this in our purpose statement.

## ***From OT Sabbath to NT Lord's Day***

Notes by Dr. Paul B. Phair

I especially benefited from the scholarly series of essays in *From Sabbath To Lord's Day: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Investigation*. Edited by D.A. Carson

As Christians, on what day of the week are we to worship? Most Christians worship on Sunday, a few worship on Saturday.

Beyond the question of which day of the week is to be spiritually significant, is how are we to observe that day? William Barclay suggests that a Christian can worship the Lord on Sunday by himself out in nature. On the other hand I read D. L. Moody's sermon on the 4th commandment and he had much to say about the sin of reading a Sunday paper. Some remember stricter days - some people are glad those days are gone, others are concerned. How does the 4th Commandment relate to us today?

I want to first explain to you the relation between the Sabbath in the OT and (Lord's Day) Sunday in the NT. First let me give you my conclusion and then the biblical reasoning for why I got there.

The Sabbath day and the Lord's Day are different days and commemorate different events. The Sabbath is the last day of the week and in part commemorates God's rest after the toil of the week of creation; the Lord's Day is the first day of the week and commemorates the Resurrection of our Lord. Here I want to be very plain and very definite. For the Christian the Sabbath has ceased to exist. The Sabbath is simply a day which the Christian does not observe - nor is Sunday merely a different day of the week for the observance of the Sabbath. To speak of Sunday as the Sabbath is quite wrong, because for the Christian there is no such thing. Sunday is not the Sabbath.

Again to put it very plainly and very definitely, this 4th Commandment is not binding on the Christian at all, for there is no evidence in Scripture that the rules and regulations such as rest, which govern the Sabbath, were ever transferred by divine authority to the Lord's Day.

The Sabbath is not a Christian institution, the Lord's Day is. To this day the Jews observe the Sabbath on Saturday, and from the point of view of Jewish religion, correctly so. But the Christian has his own day, commemorating the greatest event of his faith, that is, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. This means we are not asking: *How ought I to keep the Sabbath?* We are asking, *"How ought I to keep the Lord's Day?"* The Lord's Day is not primarily and essentially a day when this, or that, or the next kind of work and action is prohibited, which is what the Jewish Sabbath is.

The Lord's Day is primarily and essentially a day when we celebrate that Jesus Christ has risen from the dead -- He is therefore alive and with us here and now, thus we gather to worship Him together.

Every time we become involved in arguments about what may or may not be done on the Lord's Day we are, in fact, being Jewish instead of Christian, and we are, in fact, turning the Lord's Day into the Sabbath. Biblically how did I arrive at such a conclusion? The following is a reasonably brief summary.

## 1A The 7th Day And Creation

There are those who teach that in Genesis 2:2-3 God sets forth creation ordinance; therefore the Sabbath was not just for Israel, but all mankind because its origin is at creation - and thus forever binding upon all people. I do not agree for the following reasons:

- 1B Not called Sabbath here - but only 7th day.
- 2B God blessed the 7th day (Saturday) and not the first. If we believe this is a creation ordinance how dare we switch His holy day to Sunday without explicit biblical teaching to that effect. We're guilty of violating the 7th day. The principle would not be one in 7 days, but the 7th day. Those who say Sunday is the NT observance of the Sabbath are not consistent. This view is not found in Scripture -- or the writings of the church for the first 3 centuries.
- 3B In Genesis 1 & 2 Adam & Eve have explicit commands from God - but no command was given to them regarding the 7th day.
- 4B The command for man to abstain from work on 7th was not given to Jewish people until at Mt. Sinai. Then and only then was the Sabbath to reflect God's order in creation.
- 5B Exodus 31:17 - as one ancient writing says, "The Sabbath is a perpetual covenant between me and the children of Israel, but not between me and the nations of the world". (From *Sabbath to Lord's Day*, p. 350).
- 6B Interesting that Jewish people never understood this commandment as being for all people either. If you were a Gentile God-fearer they didn't expect you to keep *this* commandment.
- 7B As we'll see later, in the early apostolic church in Jerusalem, when the gospel first spread to Gentiles, they did not require the Gentile Christians to observe the Sabbath nor some alternative Sabbath day (such as a Sabbath on Sunday).
- 8B The NT makes a reference or two to the 7th day of creation, but never in an appeal to a universally binding principle for all people to follow - in fact there is much to the contrary.

Secondly, what was the Mosaic Sabbath's meaning?

## **2A The meaning of the Mosaic Sabbath**

- 1B The most characteristic feature of the observance of the Mosaic Sabbath was the absence of regular work on the 7th day; there was not an original intent that its focus be worship -- as the NT Lord's Day is.
- 2B The Sabbath was a sign of Covenant that God established with Israel (Ex. 31:12-17). But as part of the Mosaic covenant, like the tabernacle, the priesthood, offerings, and the sacrificial system, the Sabbath was superseded by Christ.
- 3B Memorial of creation - Sunday certainly isn't that (Ex. 31:17; 20:11).
- 4B Memorial of deliverance from Egypt (Deut 5:15). Says nothing about its being worship - though this was a part, it was not the focus. It was a rest day. Social concern for God's people and even for animals, servants, and foreigners in their land.

I liken the Sabbath to the memorial of the Passover. We don't observe the Passover today - it has been superseded with the coming of Christ. Lord's supper has similarity (just as Sunday does to Sabbath) but its meaning has transcended the OT form - completely new meaning.

## **3A Jesus' relationship to the Sabbath**

- 1B Though called a Sabbath breaker - never violated the OT Sabbath - but he did violate the legalistic additions to the OT that the scribes had given concerning the Sabbath rest.
- 2B The Sabbath controversies became opportunities for Jesus to make claims about his deity and being the fulfillment of the prophecy of the Messiah. The claims He made about Himself at those times were sometimes suggestive and sometimes explicit to His hearers that they were to interpret the Sabbath in relation to His own person and character.
- 3B Mt. 12:1-8 - Jesus' disciples were guiltless of violating the Sabbath because they were in relation with the Lord of the Sabbath (vs. 8) who is greater than the temple (6) and its ceremonies which passed away with Christ.
- 4B Mk. 2:22ff (Lk 5:37ff) Mark & Luke place this same incident in direct relation to what Jesus said earlier about the old order changing in light of the new order.

- 5B There are several other references. The point is that Jesus' person transcends the Sabbath law and points to the direction of a new order - the Sabbath would be transcended in Christ. Heb. 4:4-10 - God's rest at creation was the kind of rest God intended for His people - it points forward to salvation and new rest in Christ (Mt. 11:28-30 before Sabbath controversy). Sabbath rest in OT fulfilled in Christ's redemption. Salvation is now the Christian believer's rest.

#### **4A Sabbath observance in the NT church**

- 1B There is not a single verse in the NT which commands Christians to observe the Sabbath or a Sunday day of rest. Nor is Sabbath breaking ever included in any list of sins in any of the epistles. Violations of all other of the nine commandments are spelled out as sins, but Sabbath breaking is omitted.
- 2B In the NT Church there were three attitudes toward the observance of the Sabbath: 1) Jewish and Gentile Christian who followed the apostle Paul's teaching that they were free from the Sabbath commandment; 2) Jewish Christians who improperly taught that the observance of the whole law was necessary to salvation and forced Sabbath observance upon Gentile believers; 3) Jewish Christians like the Jerusalem apostles who continued to observe the Sabbath as part of the way they fulfilled their role as true Israel, but did not insist that Gentile believers observe the Sabbath - in fact on the first day they met with believers for worship.
- 3B When Gentiles came into the church what was the reaction of some Jewish Christians? Some were legalistic and attempted to impose the ceremonial laws on the Gentile believers such as observing the Sabbath. Gal 4:8-11 - days certainly refers to Sabbaths. Paul likens this as the error of returning to the weak, worthless, elementary things. The Gentile Christian has no need to observe the Sabbath as a day of rest, abstaining from work.
- 4B This wasn't just the apostle Paul's idea, but that of the other apostles as well. In Acts 15, the apostles in Jerusalem asked early Gentile converts to observe certain ceremonial laws (like diet) for the sake of the weaker Jewish believers - but never is the Sabbath required.
- 5B Rm 14:5,6 - one day above another likely refers to the Sabbath. The weak Jewish Christian thought he still had to observe it, the strong believer didn't - though this wasn't to divide them - it is clear that Paul felt the weaker brother who felt compelled to follow the Sabbath had not yet fully understood the implications of the transition from the old economy to the new.

- 6B Col. 2:16-17 - this transition from the old economy to the new, which has taken place in Christ, is the basis for what he says here in this verse. The Sabbath is of the past and it foreshadowed Jesus Christ.
- 7B It is unlikely that the Gentile churches would have introduced the notion that the first day (Sunday) was to be treated as the Sabbath. Since keeping the Sabbath was a controversy, if Paul felt that Sunday was now the exact replacement of the OT Sabbath then why didn't he state that and settle the issue? No, the churches understood his teaching about Sabbaths and thus they would not have replaced the concept of the Sabbath to the first day of the week.

### **5A How does this issue relate to church history?**

Neither the early church, nor the Reformers ever at the time identified the Lord's Day with the Sabbath. That identification did not begin to emerge until after the 3rd Century and was not developed until the 8th Century. It was soundly denied at the 1500's Reformation by such men as Luther and Calvin, but emerged again in the 16th and 17th Centuries.

In the early church and at the reformation, the Lord's Day was not seen as being the Sabbath, but it was an all together different day.

### **Conclusion**

My conclusion again is that the Sabbath and the Lord's Day are two different days. For the Christian, the Sabbath has ceased to exist. Do not try to base your Sunday observance on the OT Sabbath. They are not the same

There are of course similarities between the Sabbath and the Lord's Day, but also some important distinctive.

### **6A The Timeless Principle Concerning Need For Rest**

In addition to Sabbath observance being a sign of the special relationship that existed between God and the nation of Israel, there is a second reason why God commanded the Sabbath rest to the Israelites: Can you discover it as you read it in Deut 5:14c?

**Deuteronomy 5:14 (NASB)** but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; *in it* you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter or your male servant or your female servant or your ox or your donkey or any of your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you, so that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you.

God had a social concern for God's people and even for the animals, servants, and foreigners in their land (*so that ...may rest*).

God knows that we need physical, mental, and emotional rest from the stresses of everyday life. There is more to life than work alone, and we must not become consumed by it. One full day out of every seven is an excellent pattern for us. God knows our human frailty and our need to unplug regularly.

For many of us in our culture, Sunday is an excellent day for us to do just that. Spend the day wisely in refreshment: Worship God, take a nap, enjoy family recreation. Step out of the fray and re-energize and re-focus on the priorities of life.

### **Ultimate rest found in Christ**

In a rather complex passage, Hebrews 4:1-13, the inspired author informs us that God offers to believers a special kind of rest that is similar to God's Sabbath rest after creation. This rest is more than a mere cessation of activity, but a true fulfillment and satisfaction. This fulfillment involves forgiveness of sin and the joy of personally being related to God.

Mt. 11:28-30 (followed by Sabbath).

Even if you do regularly unplug from the stress of life there remains within a restless soul; a kind of void, and a longing for purpose and meaning and true joy. That can only be found through a personal relationship with Christ.

I encourage you as God does, to regularly rest from the stresses of life, and to then re-focus your life upon the ultimate meaning of life through the corporate worship and fellowship of God's people, and to pull away for quiet times just between you and Jesus Christ. He wants to be a part of everyday of your life, all through each day, but to help us do that we need to regularly spend time with Him.

### **7A What are the similarities?**

- 1B Resurrection commemorated - weekly, 1 in every 7
- 2B Sabbath - memorial of redemption from Egypt - Lord's Day resurrection of Christ and redemption.
- 3B Sabbath commemorates creation; Lord's Day commemorates new creation
- 4B Both were days of worship

### **8A What are the differences?**

- 1B Sabbath was rest and no work; Lord's Day abstaining from work never mentioned but emphasis is on worship.
- 2B Sabbath is the 7th day; Lord's Day on the 1st day.

- 3B Sabbath commemorates God's rest from creation work; Lord's Day commemorates resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- 4B Sabbath - entire day was a holy day  
Lord's Day is not regarded as a holy day; but at least part of the day was regarded as an appropriate day for worship.

## 9A Why do we worship on Sunday?

The first day of the week (Sunday) receives unusual emphasis in the NT. All four Gospels record the resurrection on the first day. Look at MK 16:1 & 2 as an example. Quite emphatically MK says the day of the resurrection was when the Sabbath was over (1) and again emphasizes that it was on the first day of the week (2).

Luke wants to make it clear that Jesus' resurrection appearance to the two on the road to Emmaus, and the eleven, were on that same day - 1st day of the week.

Jn 20:1 - then vs. 19 John underlines that Jesus' appearance to the gathered disciples was the 1st day of the week and then John makes it clear that another appearance to the disciples, with Thomas present, took place on the first day of the following week 20:26 eight days later (inclusive counting).

It seems clear that the four gospel writers put emphasis upon the first day of the week events in relation to Christ's resurrection because of the later significance this had in the church as to its worship day.

Now lets look at 3 references in the NT to the prominence of the 1st day in connection with Christian worship.

Acts 20:7 - explicit it was on the 1st day that the Christian community gathered together to break bread (fellowship meal w/communion). Manner which this is spoken of indicates that such 1st day gatherings were a regular occurrence for the church at Troas. 6 & 7 mention Paul's staying for 7 days and then planning to leave the next morning, reads as though Paul deliberately planned to address all the believers when they assembled for their weekly meeting.

I Cor. 16:2 - Paul instructed the Corinthians about their offering for the poor at Jerusalem in this way. What distinguished this day from others as the most appropriate for setting aside an offering was that this day was their regular assembly for worship.

Rev. 1:10 - The first day of the week - The day on which Jesus rose from the dead is called the Lord's Day by the Apostle John. The Lord's Day - means it was Jesus' Day - that special day when he arose. John's term here indicates that by the time of his writing Sunday was universally recognized as the day of the week for

Christian worship. The emergence of Sunday observance in place of the Jewish Sabbath was a gradual historical process, and here we see the recognition that the transition had now taken place. Worship on Sunday was never directly commanded. But it became the established pattern. It was an appropriate day of worship because of its association with the resurrection.

### **Outside of the Scriptures**

There is ample documentary evidence beginning in the early AD 100's that the Christian Church observed the first day of the week as the day of Worship. Later, when the Roman Emperor Constantine in the 4th century declared Sunday the day to be observed, he was only putting official approval on a day which had already been set aside for some 300 years.

Now you know from the NT and early church history how Sunday gradually came to be universally recognized in the Christian church as the day for worship.

Now that we have observed that Sunday became a special day for Christians, an interesting question arises. Rm 14:5 & 6a - from the context, we know that Paul approves the position that no day is to be regarded as more or less sacred than another - that all days are to be under the Lordship of Jesus and lived for him - how does that fit with Sunday's being a special day in the NT church?

I would put it this way. For the Christian in the new dispensation, no day has special sanctity for all days are sacred and devoted to the Lord, and yet one day is distinctive for Christian worship - What I am saying is, Sunday is not a sacred day, but it is an appropriate day for worship because of its association with Christ's resurrection and NT church practice. I do not see Sunday as being the required necessary day for worship as the Sabbath was in the OT.

Here's the application of what I'm saying. I used to be bothered by some progressive churches today who grew very large and yet refused to build a bigger building - instead within the small facility there were a number of different congregations which the pastors served. One congregation would meet on Sunday morning, another in the afternoon, another in evening, another on Saturday, etc. - Saturday, Monday, etc. used to trouble me - but now - Sunday is not the sacred day of worship. It is the most appropriate but if circumstances should dictate, other days of the week could be used for worship just as well. I found it interesting that the reformers like Luther and Calvin were also that flexible in their theology.

### **10A How are we to observe Sunday?**

**Rest.** As I stated earlier, the Lord's Day is not to be confused with the OT Sabbath and the 4th Commandment to abstain from all ordinary work. In many

of the early NT churches Christians were in a position where they had to work on the Lord's Day (many as slaves) but they met for worship in the evening.

There is no evidence in the NT or the early church, that the 1st day, the Lord's Day, was regarded as a Sabbath day of rest. There did develop over the years a preference to have rest from work on Sunday in order that they might worship as much as possible. The focus of Sunday was worship and the desire for rest was not from obligation but convenience. Later came the improper association of the Lord's Day with the Sabbath.

I'm not suggesting that since the Lord's Day is not a day requiring Sabbath rest that we do away with that custom which has been in existence for centuries. I just want you to understand your Christian liberty - you are not sinning against the Lord's Day if you work, or if you enjoy Sunday afternoon recreation.

God knows that we need rest, though the Sabbath rest is no longer binding upon us, it is instructive that God is concerned for people's physical rest - we need it. Mk. 6:31 - Jesus recognized the disciples need for rest. Our rest could be taken any day of the week but since our society recognizes Sunday as a break from our work, then lets use it that way when possible.

So, how are we to use Sunday? From a **practical** standpoint we should use it as a diversion from our regular work and enjoy rest, recreation and our families. But there is a far more important way that we are to observe the Lord's Day and that is *Worship*.

### **Worship**

The emphasis upon the Lord's Day in the NT and early church practice was not rest, it was worship. The focus of Sunday was worship and the desire to rest from work on Sunday was so that they might worship as much as possible.

Whatever other activities you schedule for Sunday - worship should be the priority for the Lord's Day. Worship involves gathering together with other believers to pray, sing, meditate upon God, and be instructed from God's Word.

Though you are not sinning if you work on the Lord's Day - if you are failing to assemble together with fellow believers for worship then you are missing a priority God has for your life. Avoid work which conflicts with worship. Also if you are an employer, you'd better think twice about hindering a person's opportunity to worship on the Lord's Day. Rest on Sunday isn't the issue but worship is.

Heb. 10:23-25 - Day the Church assembles together is Sunday.

Worship, fellowship, and instruction are the emphasis of Sunday. If you consistently put work, or family activities and recreation ahead of worship, you are failing to fulfill a God given priority for your life.

Those Christians who only come for one hour to a morning service are really missing God's will for your life. You need to be fed, to really fellowship and care for one another and to be involved in Christian ministry to the body and through the body to the community.

Worship is the churches heartbeat, Sunday is the appropriate day - so concentrate on making as sure as possible that Sunday worship has the emphasis it should have in your life and your families.

Concerning the Lord's Day, I have talked about liberties - but make sure you don't miss out on God's priority for your life. Furthermore read Rm 14 and be careful that your liberties don't cause another Christian to stumble and sin.

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