

J. KYLE PAILSEY MEMORIAL FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Lord's Day Morning Sermon Notes

6th November 2005

Read: Exodus 20: 1-17

Text: v.v. 8-11

The Lord's Day -- The Day of Worship

In recent weeks I have been preaching on the subject of *Worship*, dealing with a number of important features of that subject. However, before concluding this short series on the topic of worship it is utterly essential that some consideration be given to the matter of *The Day of Worship*.

As noted in these messages, the worship of God emanates from the hearts of His people, that people whom He seeks out by His grace from the ranks of fallen humanity so that He will have throughout eternity a people who will offer Him spiritual and sincere worship. Therefore, since the act of true worship itself arises from the regenerate heart, the true believer who is going on with God will find himself engaging in worship constantly. Worshipping the Lord personally will be the desire and the experience of every genuine child of God.

Moreover, the believer will also wish to meet with others of like precious faith so that together they may engage in worship that will glorify the Lord. Consequently, this is a point that opens up a particular line of study on the issue of worship, namely that the gatherings of God's people for public worship necessitate the establishment of a certain time for that purpose. However, on this matter the Scriptures are exceedingly clear: while the N.T. Church met frequently and on various days of the week to worship God, there is clear evidence to show that it was especially on the first day of the week that God's people came together – Acts 20: 7; 1 Cor 16: 1. In both these verses the language is such as to indicate that it was the practice and pattern for the Church to meet on the first day of the week. And it is generally recognised that this is the day that John had in mind in Rev 1: 10 where he speaks of *The Lord's Day*.

Thus, the New Testament is clear in its revelation that, while the Lord's people obviously engaged in public worship at various times of the week, yet they recognised that one day of the week especially was to be set aside to meet with the Lord. Moreover, throughout time the Church has universally followed this N.T. pattern, meeting on the Lord's Day for worship and observing that day as a day on which all other pursuits should be set aside in order to meet together in undisturbed worship.

However, the question then arises as to whether the N.T. Church set aside one day of the seven for worship merely out of tradition or custom or did she believe that she had a divine command and mandate for doing so? I would suggest to you that the Church gave one day in seven to public worship out of the conviction that this was the will of God as revealed in the fourth commandment.

It is vital to notice that the fourth commandment belongs to that section of the law that is especially Godward in its direction and deals in particular with the matter of the worship of Almighty God. First – the only object of worship, the triune Godhead; second – the manner of worship, namely without human innovation & invention; third – reverencing God in worship; fourth – the day of worship, for the commandment specifies that one day of the week is to be sanctified unto the Lord. Thus, the command presupposes that God's people should gather together for worship on that day since they are commanded to cease from all other earthly engagements. Indeed this is the sense of the words "*keep it holy*." The Lord is saying that this one day in seven is to be used for holy purposes, which has always been understood by the Reformed & Protestant Churches to be a reference to gatherings for worship.

Now, in approaching the subject of the day of worship we approach a large subject indeed; and one that is controversial also for various reasons, one of the most pertinent being that many even within the professing church deny that the keeping of the one day in seven is binding on the believer and the Christian church. Consequently, in dealing with this issue of *The Lord's Day – the Day of Worship* it is necessary to begin at this point and establish the fact that the keeping of a day of worship is binding on the Lord's people. Moreover, we establish this fact by considering the teaching of the fourth commandment itself along with other related Scriptures.

I. THE KEEPING HOLY OF ONE DAY IN SEVEN IS A UNIVERSAL INSTITUTION

Many teach that the words "the sabbath day" are a reference to a Jewish or ceremonial institution; thus the 4th commandment has no authority in the NT church or among mankind in general. At once it must be said that this teaching is utterly false, due to quite a degree to a misunderstanding of the term *the sabbath day*. Among many it is assumed that the word "sabbath" means *seventh*, whereas it means "cessation" or "rest" so that the opening words of the commandment read – "*Remember the day of rest to keep it holy*." Moreover, the language is such as to indicate that the commandment is based on a pattern already established – denoted by the word *remember*. The inference is that the keeping holy of one day in seven had already been instituted – it was not a new decree. For proof see Exodus 16: 22-26 – the language is such as to show that Israel was already aware of the day of rest – a foundation had already been laid. When? See v.11 of the commandment – here is the original institution of the observance of one day in seven, and it was the Lord Himself who instituted it at creation.

However, the fact to note is that the Sabbath in its original institution was universal in nature - it was made not for some mere segment of mankind but for the entire human family, verified by Christ in Mark 2: 27, "*The Sabbath was made for man*." Here is the authoritative teaching of Christ as He contends with the intolerable burdens that the Pharisees placed on the keeping of the Sabbath. He declares that the Sabbath was made for man, i.e., for his welfare, physically, mentally and spiritually. But the point is that "the day of rest" was made for the

human race as a whole; it is not some 'Jewish' institution. Christ takes us back to the beginning - before there ever was a Jewish nation - back to the original creation when the Sabbath was instituted. See Gen 2: 2, 3 - when God's work was done He put His imprimatur on the day immediately following the 6 days of creation. He established the week of seven days and blessed and sanctified one of the seven to be a day of rest. For whom did He sanctify it or set it apart? For man, according to Christ, thus it was a universal institution.

Some teach that Gen 2: 1-3 is "anticipatory history" -- that is, these verses are simply anticipating what was done at Sinai several thousand years later. Hence, they teach that Gen 2: 1-3 are not to be regarded as the literal institution of one day in seven. But again see Ex 20: 11 where it is stated that God "rested the seventh day." Note the past tense -- distinct reference is to the historical fact of God's having ceased work on the 6th day, with no creative work done on the 7th day. The commandment proceeds -- "wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it," again the past tense is employed.

From this universal institution of the Sabbath note: (i) *Its necessity to man* -- remember that Adam was unfallen yet God deemed it necessary to call him from the task of tending the garden to attend to his religious duties. How much more essential for fallen man! (ii) *This was the first duty laid on Adam* -- as soon as creation was finished the Sabbath was instituted, thus Adam's first full day on this earth was the observance of the day of rest. As soon as a creature was made on this earth, capable of knowing and serving God, a special time was assigned to that end. (iii) *This obligation to observe the sabbath was graphically illustrated by God Himself.* God could have made all things in a split second. But He chose to create over a 6 day period, followed by the day of rest. Hence, He was personally teaching man that he must do the same. God's own actions indicated that man was created for labour with intervals of rest during which he might especially attend to spiritual things. All of these points flow from the fact of the universal institution of the Sabbath - let us heed them.

II. THE KEEPING OF ONE DAY IN SEVEN WAS A PERPETUAL INSTITUTION

There are yet others who claim that the observance of the fourth commandment sabbath was part of Israel's ceremonial law, thus was not perpetual since the ceremonial law has been annulled. This is confusion, proved in various ways. Note the following --

1. **The ceremonial law only became necessary when man sinned.** The ceremonial law was a foreshadowing of the Gospel. It pointed fallen man to the one Mediator and the one way of salvation, thus the ceremonial law was a setting forth of the Gospel under all of its types, shadows, rituals etc. Thus, the ceremonial law only became necessary when man became a sinner. Hence, since the Sabbath was set up before the Fall, it was instituted before the ceremonial system. Thomas Boston -- "It was appointed and given to Adam in his state of innocence, before there was any ceremony to be taken away by the coming of Christ."

2. **The non-Israelite could have no part in the ceremonial system.** Not only was the Gentile, the foreigner, not required to observe Jewish ceremonies, he was not permitted to have any part in them. The Gentile was forbidden entrance within the Holy place, signifying that he could not participate in ceremonial observances, except if he became a proselyte. But see Exodus 20: 10, "nor thy stranger that is within thy gate." The point is that the non-Israelite was required to observe the day of rest, Neh 13: 16, 20, 21.

3. **The Sabbath was not abolished with the annulling of the ceremonial system.** Christ abolished the ceremonial system at Calvary, signified by the rending of the veil, Heb 9: 3, 7, 8. So long as that veil remained it was the token that the ceremonial system was intact. But in Christ's sacrifice there was a rending of the veil, Matt 27: 50, 51 -- rent from the *top to the bottom* to signify that direct access to heaven had been made. So Christ's sacrifice signified the end of the ceremonial age, Heb 9: 26. The "end of the world" literally means "*the consummation of the age...*" i.e., the OT ceremonial age. So that system was annulled, yet *the Sabbath remained*. See Matt 24: 20 -- here Christ speaks of the "sabbath" still existing in this prophecy of the end time. Hence the sabbath was not abolished at the cross, which it should have been had it been part of the ceremonial system; also Heb 4: 9.

III. THE KEEPING OF ONE DAY IN SEVEN WAS A MORAL INSTITUTION

The moral thrust of the 4th commandment is -- **one day in seven belongs to God so man is morally obliged to keep it.** Its moral nature is seen in that *it is an inseparable part of the moral law.* The Ten Commandments form a unit, James 2: 10; called the "whole law" and violation of one part constitutes violation of it all. Hence, whatever authority the other 9 have, so has the 4th, being part of a unit. Just as a man is morally obliged not to be an idolater, an image worshipper, a murderer, an adulterer etc, so he is under moral obligation not to desecrate God's day, 1 Cor 9: 21. Also the N.T. quotes or refers to all 10 showing their morally binding character for the believer.

To counter the moral nature of the 4th commandment some will argue that its statements have to do with the O.T. pattern of meeting on the 7th day and thus have no bearing on the church which meets on the 1st day of the week. But read the commandment carefully and you will discover that it does not specify the 7th day O.T. Sabbath. It tells us to keep the sabbath; i.e., the "day of rest" not the 7th day. It tells us to labour 6 days, but does not say the first 6 days of the week but simply that six days in every week are given for work. It says that the 7th day is the Sabbath or day of rest; i.e., the day after the 6 days of work whatever they may have been. Therefore, the 4th commandment specifies our moral duty to keep holy one day in seven, which means that the Church has a mandate for setting aside one day in seven as a special day of worship.