

J. KYLE PAISLEY MEMORIAL FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Lord's Day Morning Sermon Notes

13th November 2005

Read: Deuteronomy 5: 6-21

Text: v.v. 12-15

Christ Changed the Day for the Sabbath

When God made all things at the beginning of this world's existence & history, He placed and set in motion certain natural laws by which He governs and controls His creation. One of those natural laws has to do with the method by which time is computed and marked. Genesis 1 reveals that the heavenly bodies were specifically created "to divide the day from the night..." and to be "for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years." It is very obvious that the Lord ordered the time framework within which we all live and move and have our being, a framework that is universal and that no one can alter.

The basic element of the framework for time is the week of seven, twenty-four hour days, a fact that is at the foundation of the fourth commandment. In that commandment where the Lord requires of a man a particular proportion of time for sacred purposes, the basis of His requirement is His appeal to the order established at creation: "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." This verse proves that the days of creation were actual twenty-four hour periods of time; otherwise the commandment would be meaningless in its requirement upon men to keep holy one day in seven.

As I pointed out in the message last week, the real emphasis of the fourth commandment is *on the proportion of time that is to be set aside for the sabbath*, namely that in a concentrated fashion one day in seven is to be given to the things of God – "Remember **the day of rest** to keep it holy." In other words, when an Israelite would have heard or read the fourth commandment he could never have determined on which day of the week the day of rest was to be observed. But what was being brought to his attention was the moral law that he was to keep holy one day in seven.

To re-emphasise this fact that the emphasis of the fourth commandment is on the proportion of time that is to be set aside for the sabbath let me remind you of the points that I set before you at the close of the message last Lord's Day. Notice that the fourth commandment commences by bidding us keep "the sabbath day" or *the day of rest* for the word "sabbath" means *rest* or *cessation* not "seventh" as is the thought of many. The next part of the commandment reminds us of God's gracious provision of time for all our earthly duties & activities – "Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work." Do not miss this perspective – God has mercifully given us six days in the week to attend to our earthly needs and essentially commands us to attend to such matters on those six days. Moreover, the commandment does **not** stipulate what those six days are. It does not say, for example, "the **first** six days **of the week**..." which is what many read into the commandment. It merely says, "Six days shalt thou labour," i.e., six days in every week are allotted to man for his earthly occupation. Then the commandment proceeds to teach that the day following the six days of labour – whatever those days might be – is to be the day of rest. In other words the fourth commandment does not state that the seventh day **of the week** is the sabbath or day of rest. Rather, it is plainly teaching that the day that follows the six days of labour is to be the sabbath on which there is cessation from all that occupies us on those other six days.

The vital point made by the fourth commandment is that man has a moral duty to keep holy for God one day in seven in the sense that on that day especially we give ourselves to worship. Moreover, the fourth commandment being moral in nature, thus binding on our consciences, gives Christ's Church a mandate for convening services of worship on one day in seven. Christ's Church would have no mandate or right for requiring its members to set aside the things of this earth on one day out of seven and give that day to worship were this commandment not a moral law and were it not perpetually & universally binding on God's people. But, as has been stated, the fourth commandment is still in force requiring that man give one day in seven to the Lord.

In other words, the fourth commandment finds its proper observance in our sanctifying the first day of week as the Lord's Day and the day of worship – this is the premise and theme that I wish to take and deal with today. Let us make some observations in connection with this theme.

I. FIRST, LET US NOTE THAT THE LORD CHANGED THE DAY OF REST FROM THE SEVENTH TO THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK.

In the O.T. era the sabbath was observed on the 7th day of the week in order to celebrate the Lord's creation rest. But the fact that the O.T. sabbath fell on the 7th day of the week did not invest the observance of Saturday as the sabbath with permanence – a fact proved in that the Lord Himself changed the day of rest for the Christian Church from the 7th to the 1st day of the week.

Seventh Day Adventists & others dispute the fact that the Lord changed the sabbath to the first day of the week, alleging that it was the Roman Emperor Constantine who did so. This allegation is false. After he professed Christianity, Constantine merely made the observance of the 1st day of the week mandatory throughout society. But he did not institute it in the Church – Christ did that some hundreds of years before Constantine's day.

1. Christ began to introduce the change by His rising again on the first day

That day is repeatedly and emphatically noted by the gospel writers as the precise day of His conquest over the grave. Four times on that day He showed Himself alive: to Mary Magdalene in the garden, John 20: 11-16; to the other women as they went to tell the disciples, Matt 28: 9; to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, Luke 24:

13, 21; to the eleven gathered in the upper room, Luke 24: 33, 34; John 20: 19. Note this latter reference – “assembled.” It would seem that though the eleven were fearful they were met together for fellowship and discussion of the things of God; as if they were expecting the Lord to come among them. See John 20: 26. Eight days - a Jewish method of counting; they included the portion of the days from which and to which they reckoned. So this was the next Lord’s Day - seems there were no more appearances during the intervening week. This would have marked out and separated the two Lord’s days. Also this second meeting has all the marks of being an appointment; there was a definite plan to meet on that day.

2. Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, which was the Lord’s Day

See Lev 23: 10-16 – seven sabbaths from the sabbath at the end of the Passover week plus one day places the Day of Pentecost on a Sunday.

3. The New Testament Churches met on the first day of the week

See Acts 20: 6 & 7 – this was about 30 years after the resurrection. The language indicates a well-known practice – preaching & Lord’s supper. The terms also indicate that they waited for the Lord’s Day before assembling. See 1 Cor 16: 1, 2, also 30 years later. Established practice to bring offerings - churches of Galatia also. Before the NT was written - yet the practice of meeting recognized and observed by the church. Thus, by this practice within the early church a precedent was set for all believers for all time. Remember – *Apostolic precedent has the same value as a command*. What the Apostles **did** was just as normative & binding as what they **said**.

4. The New Testament claims the first day of the week as “the Lord’s Day” Rev 1: 10

In the original Greek text the term *the Lord’s Day* is parallel to the term *the Lord’s Supper*, 1 Cor 11: 20. Here is the significance: just as the Lord’s Supper replaced the Passover, so the Lord’s Day, the first day of the week, replaced the seventh day for the observation of the day of rest or the sabbath.

5. Most important is the fact that the O.T. prepared the way for this change of day for the sabbath.

(a) It was predicted in the feast of firstfruits, Lev 23: 10 -- this sheaf of the firstfruits of the harvest, speaks of Christ, 1 Cor 15: 22, 23. Then note Lev 23: 11 - sheaf was offered “*on the morrow after the sabbath*,” which would be the first day of the week, pointing to Christ rising on that day and hinting at least at the change of day.

(b) It was predicted by the psalmist, Psalm 118: 22 - this verse is applied six times to Christ in the NT. Note Acts 4: 10-11 where it is made clear that Christ became the head stone of the corner by rising from the dead. Now note carefully: as soon as David refers to Christ’s resurrection he says, “*This the day which the Lord hath made*.” The verb “made” means *formed, fashioned, or appointed*. The fact that David follows his prediction of Christ’s resurrection with the declaration of the divine appointment of a day in which we are to rejoice & be glad is surely most significant and important.

II. SECOND, NOTE SOME REASONS WHY WE ARE TO KEEP THE LORD’S DAY

1. The keeping of the Lord’s Day is a sign that we are His people.

Exodus 31: 13 -- the Lord says that the keeping of the sabbath was a sign between Him and His people, which is still true though the day has changed. In this era therefore, keeping the Christian sabbath is a testimony of our allegiance to Christ Who arose on that day, having accomplished redemption. The sabbath then, is to be regarded as a means of professing that God alone is our God; that Christ alone is our Saviour; that we are the covenant people of God. The Christian Sabbath points to the covenant of grace and all that it includes, since Christ arose on that day to signify that He had sealed the covenant with His blood. **Hence the observing of the Christian Sabbath is for a very spiritual purpose.** It is a witness to the world of the God we worship and serve; what system of salvation it is that we follow; what Saviour we trust in for eternity.

2. Keeping the Lord’s Day is a means of grace to our souls.

See Heb 10: 25. What great spiritual loss is suffered when believers fail to avail themselves of the opportunity of gathering on the Lord’s Day, John 20: 24. We wonder where Thomas had been. Note that it was the evening of the Lord’s day. Result was that Thomas was full of doubts about the Lord. One of the chief causes of spiritual ills among believers is failure to appropriate the blessing of having the means of grace. When God has appointed the sabbath for our blessing, what else should we expect but spiritual problems if we are negligent of the day or even part of the day.

Christ Himself was accustomed to the observance of the sabbath for the purpose of obtaining spiritual blessing, Luke 4: 16. See also Acts 15: 21, the law of which Moses was the penman, was read in the synagogues “*every sabbath day*.” It was the established practice; it was no new custom; it was “of old.” Hence it was the ancient Jewish way of spending the sabbath -- under the hearing and exposition of the word, Acts 13: 14, 15. Neglect of such a privilege took men to hell, Luke 16: 29-31. The point being made is that the word of God alone - the OT Scriptures are what are meant - is sufficient to save sinners from hell. But if they neglect such they will perish.

Thus Scripture shows that the sabbath is given as a means of sanctification. A day for the expounding of the covenant of grace that sinners might be saved, believers edified, and God’s work promoted.