

Keeping Holy the First Day of the Week

Rev. David Lipsy

Psalter: 367

Scripture: Deuteronomy 5:1–22

Psalter: 419:1–3

At this time we will address a matter of some controversy amid certain segments of the Christian community, namely, the transition from seventh-day Sabbath observance to first-day Lord's Day observance. We want to consider whether this change is indeed scriptural and right. Is first-day observance truly of the Lord, or is it, as some contend, an invention of man that runs contrary to Scripture? Let us consider this matter carefully and prayerfully, looking to the Lord for guidance as we do.

Though we will consider a number of Scripture passages, let me at this time read with you Deuteronomy 5:12–15: “Keep the sabbath day to sanctify it, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee. Six days thou shalt labor, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou, and remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the LORD thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the LORD thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day.”

Keeping Holy the First Day of the Week

1. *The perpetuity of the day of rest*
2. *The progressive nature of the day of rest*
3. *The ultimate object of the day of rest*

I. The perpetuity of the day of rest

It is a sad day in church history when we find ourselves needing to defend the fact that our Lord would have us continue to observe the fourth commandment. I'm sure that several of us have heard or read that there are Christians who teach that this commandment is no longer obligatory in the New Testament church. Those who teach this typically do so for one of two reasons. Either they teach that *none* of the Ten Commandments really pertain to the New Testament church any more, or they teach that *all* of the Ten Commandments are *restated* in the New Testament except the fourth. The absence of positive didactic statements about it, they say, ought to be interpreted to mean it is not a part of the New Testament church's doctrine or practice and is to be abandoned even as other Old Testament ceremonial observances.

I will not now take the time to address directly the scriptural basis such people attempt to put forth in defense of their beliefs. Instead, let us consider instead the reality that God's Word clearly teaches that the fourth commandment is every bit as operative in the New Testament church as it ever was in the Old.

First, we cannot help but observe that it was our Lord's constant practice to observe the Sabbath by attending local synagogues. There are so many examples of this in the Gospels that multiplying citations to prove it seems needless. Those who opposed the use of the fourth commandment in the New Testament church might suggest that Jesus did so solely because He was Mediator and substitute for His people. In other words, He observed the Jewish Sabbath as part of that perfect obedience He lived and would give to believers as their own.

So they teach that Jesus, also in *this* matter, “is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth” (Rom. 10:4), which, to them, means His fulfillment of the commandments *for us* means the end of our need to do so.

Of course, such persons fail to take into account passages like Matthew 5:17 where Jesus says, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy but to fulfil.” He came to fulfill the law for all believers—also the fourth commandment. But in fulfilling the law, Christ clearly states that He did not *abolish* it.

Paul makes plain that this is the understanding of the New Testament church. He writes in Romans 3:31, “Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.” The Greek word translated “establish” cannot in any way be twisted to mean *abolish* or *do away with* but quite the opposite. In Romans 7:7, the apostle affirms that the law of God *is* useful in the life of the elect both to acquaint them with their sins and (as in Gal. 3:24) to lead us to Christ for salvation. Finally, does not the apostle echo the Old Testament saints in their love for God’s law when he writes in Romans 7:22, “For I delight in the law of God after the inward man”? Simply put, the New Testament church has no less esteem from the law of the Lord than did their Old Testament counterpart.

As for the fourth commandment in particular, if one does not believe the practice of the Savior is normative for the New Testament because He was the Mediator, the practice of the early church will furnish sufficient proof that this commandment was still being observed, though in a Christian manner.

It is obvious, for example, that the church of Corinth met together for regular worship services, evidenced by passages such as 1 Corinthians 11:18, where we read of their “coming together in the church,” and 1 Corinthians 14, where a number of elements constituting their worship services are mentioned. Most conclusive of all,

however, are our Lord's words in Matthew 24:20 where, speaking of the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 72, He warns, "Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day," which would be a perplexing command if it had been His will that the New Testament church cease observing the Sabbath.

Finally, just to mention one more proof of the perpetuity of Sabbath observance, let us not forget John's reference to "the Lord's Day," an expression found in Revelation 1:10, written somewhat near the end of the first century. Though we will discuss this expression in some detail in a few moments, suffice it to say that we will find through its use evidence enough that the perpetuity of the observance of a Christian Sabbath continued though the entire New Testament period.

Let us now turn to the second matter we want to carefully consider together.

II. The progressive nature of the day of rest

As we have seen on multiple occasions, it pleased the Lord to unfold the revelation of Himself and His will gradually over time. This is also true with respect to God's teaching regarding the Sabbath. Though progressive in nature, there is a common element that spans all the Sabbath observances mentioned in Scripture, namely, *rest*.

In Genesis 2, we are told that the Lord "sanctified"—i.e., set apart—the day after He finished His work of creation. "And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made" (v. 7). One can't help but wonder if Lamech, the Father of Noah, was thinking of the promise made to Adam and Eve, one of rest from sin and its curse, when he named his son Noah. "And he called his name Noah, saying, This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the LORD hath cursed" (Gen. 5:29). Noah was a kind of savior of sorts, but the true rest was not to

be found in him or brought about by him. Sin returned on the other side of the Flood and the weight of the Fall continued to rest on all mankind and the creation.

It's interesting to note that prior to the actual giving of the law on Sinai (Ex. 20), the Lord had already given instruction about Sabbath observance to His people. In Exodus 16, the Lord taught Israel to rest from their gathering of manna, promising sufficient provision the day before for both days. "See, for that the LORD hath given you the sabbath, therefore he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day. So the people rested on the seventh day" (vv. 29–30).

There was the fourth commandment itself. In Exodus 20:8–11, we read, "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: 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." If you read these verses carefully, you might be surprised to find that there is no mention of the day of the week upon which the Sabbath should be kept. What it does give us is a pattern: work for six days and, on the seventh, rest from your labors. Unlike the New Testament, which speaks of a specific day of the week, the Lord says nothing about that here or anywhere else in the Old Testament. More about this in a moment.

In six days, the Lord made heaven and earth and rested on the seventh day. He blessed that day of rest and set it apart from the rest. God rested from the works of creation, but not from all that He does. He continues to uphold, govern, and direct all things. In like manner are we to rest, not from all of our works, but rather from our

daily calling, unless that calling involves works of mercy and/or necessity. Rather than mere rest, we are to engage ourselves more specifically in spiritual works on that day. In this first declaration of the ten commandments, note that the reason appended for keeping the seventh day holy is the example given by God in creation. This will be significant as the Lord's revelation about Sabbath unfolds.

In Exodus 31, we come across a threat of death to those who defy God's command and work. Appended to this are two important statements. In verse 15, God says, "Six days may work be done but in the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD." In addition to the six-and-one pattern, the Lord says we are to keep that day "holy to the LORD." We are to focus more on Him that day. The next verse continues, "Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations." We might well ask what the day of rest has to do with a perpetual covenant. Is this an additional covenant God establishes with His people? No, this is not a new covenant. However, the Lord ties together in His people's thinking the idea of rest and covenant. Covenant is a bond of fellowship with Him forged in blood. So He brings together for us Sabbath rest and communion with Him, founded on sacrifice. May not we say it this way: rest and fellowship with God through the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ?

In Exodus 35 again, no mention is made of a certain day, but the ancient pattern of six days work and the seventh day rest is repeated. It will be a Sabbath of rest to the LORD, a day set apart unto Him. In verse 3, however, the Lord adds what, at first glance, might seem an unrelated stipulation. "Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations upon the sabbath day." If we listen closely with the ear of faith, however, can we not hear, "The Lamb is the light thereof," a reference in Revelation connecting eternal rest and the lack of need for any light apart from the Lamb Himself?

We are told that on the eighth day, certain animals would be given to the Lord (Ex. 22:30, Lev. 22:27, etc.). Our Savior was set apart by His heavenly Father to be the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. It was on the eighth day that circumcision was to take place, and we are told in Romans 4:11 that circumcision was a seal of the righteousness that believing Israel had by faith. Is not our Jesus the object of justifying faith? On the eighth day, Aaron and his sons were to be consecrated for their service. Jesus Christ is our high priest.

As the Lord continued to unfold His will for His people, we find in the book of Leviticus a multiplication of Sabbath days. He begins with the day we refer to as the Day of Atonement. As with the other passages already considered, no mention is made of a particular day of the week. We do read that on the tenth day of the seventh month, there would be a "sabbath of rest." On that day, God's people were to afflict their souls and the priest was to make atonement for their sins by going one time within the veil of the holiest of holies, carrying with him the shed blood of the lamb. The New Testament equivalent? We too are to afflict our souls (repent) and look to our great high priest, Jesus Christ, whose atonement satisfied once for all for sin. "[B]y his own blood Christ entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us" (Heb. 9:12).

In Leviticus 23, the Lord reveals the details of the feast called Passover. This time the Lord says to His people, "In the first day ye shall have an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein. But ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD seven days." In addition to the first day, the Lord also set apart the seventh day of this feast for rest. Cannot the eye of faith see in this Christ our passover sacrificed for us (1 Cor. 5:7)?

In this same chapter, the Lord went on to specify that "on the morrow after the sabbath" (the first day of the week), God's people were to wave the firstfruits of har-

vest before the Lord. Could this be a foretaste, perhaps, of when “Christ [has] risen from the dead and become the firstfruits of them that slept” (1 Cor. 15:20)?

Immediately after the Passover specifications are given, the Lord proceeds to speak about the feast of the full harvest. “On the first day shall be a sabbath and on the eighth day shall be a sabbath...and ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete: Even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days.” That first day of the week—the “morrow after the seventh sabbath”—would be Pentecost. Does the Lord have His people celebrate the completion of the full harvest then? Think of the day of Pentecost described in Acts 2: “And when the day of Pentecost was fully come...they were all filled with the Holy Ghost (v. 4)... The same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls” (v. 41). A full harvest indeed.

At the time of full harvest, we are told that on the first day of the feast the people of God were to make booths of branches and were to dwell in them seven days. Why? “That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.” As a result of the atonement of Jesus on the cross, all the believing people of God are brought out of bondage, not of *Egypt*, but of *sin*. But there’s more. He also says to them, “I go to prepare a place for you. and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself,” not into temporary booths but into everlasting habitations.

Later still in Leviticus 23, again with no mention of a particular day of the week, the Lord proclaimed yet another sabbath. “In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation. Ye shall do no servile work therein.” What might the ears of faith hear

now? “For the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible”; Scripture is referring there to the final resurrection on the great day of days.

All these days of rest, yet the people of God were still in the wilderness. Still, each of them was given to point in so many different ways to a rest that was yet to come, a rest that only Messiah could bring. So forceful was this dynamic—the unfolding and multidimensional understanding of the Sabbath—that Moses, the man of God, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, changed the foundational reason for the fourth commandment itself in the rendition of the Ten Commandments given in Deuteronomy. In Exodus, God's people were pointed to the Lord's resting from His work of creation. “The seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work.... For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day.” In Deuteronomy 5, we find no mention of creation with respect to the fourth commandment. Instead, in verse 15, we read, “And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the LORD thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the LORD thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day.” This wording was the only substantive alteration made to the Ten Commandments. Plainly, the church of God was taught early on that the true rest, the true foundation of rest, was yet to be revealed. God has not changed the commandment as such—there would still be rest one day of seven. But clearly the foundation for its observance was changed and would change again as the Lord continued to unfold His will for His people.

When you think about it, beloved, we who are Gentile believers cannot rightly celebrate our deliverance from Egypt. Neither we nor our fathers came from thence. There *is* a deliverance, however, that we can and do commemorate. One that eclipses all other deliverances. One

that provides a deeper rest than any other. One that was *sealed* to us on the first day of the week. One whose foundation is laid in the Messiah Himself, Jesus Christ, a Mediator and Deliverer far greater than Moses (Heb. 3).

We know that the generation of adult Israelites who passed through the Red Sea, because of their sinful unbelief, wandered in the wilderness for forty long years. God raised up Joshua to lead the surviving younger generation into the land of rest, Canaan. God had previously assured Moses that His presence would go with His people, saying in Exodus 33:14, “My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.” And they did have rest—but only for awhile because of their sin. It was not God’s will that His people sin. But He would use their colossal and repeated failures to point them to a rest beyond what Canaan could possibly give them, a rest that eluded them as long as any merit of theirs was involved. Even years later, after their restoration from captivity in Babylon, we find Nehemiah admonishing them for buying and selling with foreign merchants who pitched their wares outside the gates of Jerusalem.

Moving from the historical to the prophetic books of the Old Testament, we find Isaiah first addressing the manner in which God’s people should view and keep the day of rest (Isa. 58:13–14). But only a few chapters later, the prophet points us beyond this rest to that of the new heavens and the new earth and the sabbath rest to be enjoyed then.

Next, Jeremiah calls out to the people of God to remember their sabbaths. But Ezekiel, particularly as he writes those mysterious chapters about a temple, dissimilar in several respects from the temple of Solomon or that rebuilt in the days of Ezra, Nehemiah, Zechariah, and Haggai, seems to be referring to the only structure it could possibly represent—the New Testament church, consisting of believers, referred to as the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19, 2 Cor. 6:16, 1 Peter 2:5). In this

light, consider these fascinating words in Ezekiel 43:27, "And when these days are expired, it shall be, that upon the eighth day and so forward the priests shall make your burnt offerings upon the altar and your peace offerings and I will accept you, saith the Lord GOD." Christ is indeed our great High Priest, but we believers are also priests unto God (1 Peter 2:5, 9) offering spiritual sacrifices to God (Rom. 12:1, Phil. 4:18, Heb. 13:15).

From the perspective of the New Testament Scriptures looking back on the experience of the Old Testament people of God, we find Hebrews 3 and 4 particularly helpful in addressing the theme of rest. Chapter 3 describes God's condemnation of those who would not believe Him and subsequently perished in the wilderness. In chapter 4, the reader himself is warned to fear: "lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." Those who believe *do* enter into rest. What rest is this? Hebrews 4:4 speaks of a rest based on the creation ordinance. Verse 5 alludes to a rest that is yet to appear. Verse 6 assures us there is a rest beyond that to which Joshua led Israel. And verses 9–10 point us to the rest we believers have in Christ's finished work of salvation, gained by faith and not merited by our works. "For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his." Still, as believers, we labor to enter into that rest (v. 11). The struggle against unbelief can sometimes be fierce. "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief" (Mark 9:24).

With all this in mind, do we not find ourselves sometimes wondering whether the rest we now have in Christ is the ultimate rest God has reserved for us? Are we really perpetually at rest? Is there not a rest that still evades us, even though we rest in Christ by faith now? If you think about it, our present day of rest is still only one day in seven, a rest amidst spiritual warfare, a rest that does not negate the strife we endure at the hands of spiritual

enemies without and within. “There remaineth therefore a rest [α σαββατισμὸς] to the people of God” (Heb. 4:9).

So there was the Sabbath rest of creation and then the Sabbath rests in Canaan; but Hebrews 4 tells us Joshua did not give them the ultimate rest. God spoke of yet another day to come. Ah beloved, where do all of these Old Testament pictures and prophecies point us? They point us to the ultimate rest that Christ has purchased for us and will one day give to us. But more than anything else, all these Old Testament types, shadows, and symbols point us where all the rests of Scripture do. Just like Jesus taught us in Luke 24:27, “And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, Jesus expounded unto them in *all* the scriptures the things concerning himself” and a little later, “These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses and in the prophets and in the Psalms concerning me.”

Beloved, Jesus Christ the Lord is our refuge, our rest, our peace. He is the center and object of all of Scripture, including the Sabbath!

III. The ultimate object of the day of rest

Did it ever strike you that in all of the New Testament Scriptures, there are only two days mentioned prominently and frequently: The Sabbath and the first day of the week? Why the Sabbath? Why did Jesus attend synagogue worship? Why did His disciples do so, including Paul and his contemporaries?

Frequent mention is made of the Sabbath in the early New Testament simply because the scene in which the gospel came into being was set among the people of Israel. The Son of David, the Messiah, would come from among that people. He was sent first to His own that they might first hear the gospel. Why did Jesus observe the Old Testament Sabbath? He did so for two reasons. The first was to fulfill all righteousness, i.e., to fulfill perfectly

what God required of man morally and to fulfill everything that typified Him as Messiah. But the second reason was that which Jesus told the woman of Canaan and His own disciples, namely, that the gospel was to be first brought to the lost sheep of Israel—first to Jerusalem, then to Judea, and afterward to the ends of the earth. This is why Peter, speaking to the assembled Jews in Acts 3:26, said, “Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.”

Why did the disciples, including Paul, frequent the synagogues on the Old Testament Sabbath? First to show that they were not walking disorderly, disdaining God's law. We see this illustrated in Acts 21 when James said to Paul, speaking of the believing Jews of Jerusalem, “And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs.” After giving instructions to Paul regarding how he might prove otherwise, James added, “...that...all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law.” Secondly, the disciples were very solicitous, even as their Master was, to bring the gospel to the Jews in the very setting and on the very days in which they would be gathered together for public worship. The disciples took advantage of every opportunity to bring the gospel to their brethren after the flesh. Paul, in 1 Corinthians 9:20, put it this way: “unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews.” These two are the primary reasons we see frequent mention of the Old Testament Sabbath in the early Scripture narratives of the New Testament church.

But we must not allow this practice to deflect our attention from those events to which our Lord most frequently and repeatedly pointed His disciples and, by ex-

tension, us. Luke 9:22, "The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes and be slain and be raised the third day." Luke 9:44 says, "Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men." Luke 13:32 says, "I do cures to day and to morrow and the third day I shall be perfected." Luke 18:31-33 says, "Then he took unto him the twelve and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on: And they shall scourge him, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again." Luke 24:4 and following says, "Behold, two men stood by them in shining garments: and they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. And they remembered his words." And after Jesus' resurrection, He said to the travelers to Emmaus, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself." Of what significance are these repeated references to the third day?

A moment ago we noted the frequent mention of the Old Testament Sabbath in the New Testament and why we find it there to the degree we do. But there is no day of the week mentioned in the New Testament except one, and that one frequently—the first day of the week. The several Old Testament sabbaths pointed in symbolic fashion to various aspects of Christ's work and the salvation He worked. But the fulfillment of almost all of these took place on one day of the week, the only day of the week

mentioned repeatedly in the New Testament. Why would God so inspire the New Testament writers to mention this day and no other if there was not great significance attached to that detail? When Matthew sits down to write his account of Jesus' resurrection—a gospel purportedly written with the Jewish reader particularly in mind—he writes that the Sabbath had ended but then adds these words “as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week.” The reason I point this out is that no other event in all the gospels, not even the death of the Lord Jesus on the cross, is associated by any of the Gospel writers with a particular day of the week. But when it comes to the resurrection of Jesus, we find the rare occurrence that, not only is a day of the week mentioned, but it is specified by all four writers. And if one would look at the contexts in which these are found, there appears no real reason for mentioning it since it doesn't tell us anything we couldn't have already deduced from the histories themselves. Someone may object that perhaps it is mentioned to prove Jesus indeed rose on the third day as He said He would, and that might have been helpful if we knew what day of the week the Passover had been celebrated that year. But as it turns out, we are not given that information.

As John wrote, not only about resurrection morning, but also about the evening of the same day, he noted that Jesus appeared to the disciples the same day at evening. That's certainly clear enough. Yet John continues the narrative, adding, “being the first day of the week.” Now we know that John wrote his gospel many years after the other three and typically wrote only that which the others did not—unless it was a matter of great importance. Each of the other three mentioned the day of the week. So does John. Why would he do so if it wasn't a detail of great significance? Could it be that what prompted him to mention the first day of the week twice in his narrative was the fact that the New Testament church, which had already considerably grown by the time he wrote his

Gospel, met for worship on the first day rather than on the seventh day?

A week later, according to the Jew's way of reckoning time, the disciples gathered together again. It's understandable why they would gather the day after the first Sabbath following Jesus' crucifixion, but what would prompt them to meet together exactly a week later? Why not meet sooner or on another day? And why would Jesus appear on that particular day and not one earlier in that week? Jonathan Edwards observed that the Sabbath was meant to be a day of rejoicing. Why would not the Lord appear to His disciples on that day instead of the first day of the week? Clearly the Lord was ascribing a unique significance to that day of the week, the first day of the week. That day would be the day in which the New Testament church rejoices.

Another great event in the New Testament church, the outpouring of the Spirit on Pentecost, took place on the first day of the week. Jesus had told His disciples that He would not leave them comfortless but would send the Holy Spirit to be with them and in them. He then added, "I will come to you," an obvious reference to His coming to them by means of the blessed Holy Spirit, elsewhere explicitly referred to as the "Spirit of Christ" (Rom. 8:9, 1 Peter 1:11). So on Pentecost, instead of standing among them like He did in the upper room, Jesus poured out His Spirit into them to abide with them forever. He would, by means of His Spirit, never leave them nor forsake them. And this outpouring, this day of the Lord called Pentecost, took place on the first day of the week.

As we look further, chronologically, into the New Testament, we are given a relatively few number of details concerning actual Christian worship services. That being the case, Luke does not neglect to mention, in one of those rare instances given in Acts 20:7, that it was the first day of the week when the disciples came together to break bread, a reference in this context to the Lord's

Supper, and that the Apostle Paul also preached for them on that occasion.

In 1 Corinthians 16:2, Paul addresses another element of New Testament worship, namely, the giving of alms for the poor. The Corinthian Christians were told to gather their alms on the first day of the week. When you think carefully about this command, the mention of a specific day of the week to gather alms would appear to be altogether superfluous if all the apostle meant to say was that the Corinthian Christians should be ready sometime before the Jewish Sabbath. And why prepare nearly a full week before the Sabbath? Clearly the command instead points to the Lord wanting His people to gather their alms on the first day of the week, alms they had already prepared beforehand, so that they might distribute it during the first-day worship service, even as had been done formerly during the seventh-day Jewish synagogue services.

Finally, there is the familiar reference John wrote in Revelation 1:10, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day." Before considering the expression itself, think about what takes place immediately after he wrote this. John had been banished to the island of Patmos. But just as Jesus had suddenly appeared to His sequestered disciples after His resurrection on the first day of the week, so too now He appears to the isolated apostle John on this lonely isle on the first day of the week, a day which John refers to as "the Lord's Day." The glorified Jesus appeared to John in His full glory on that day.

As to the expression itself, some have suggested that the wording is really no different than the ancient formula "the day of the Lord," uttered previously by prophets and apostles alike and referring to God's coming day of judgment about which John would also now write. But if you compare each instance of that expression in the New Testament (there are five of them), each of them is the same but all of them are distinct from the one John

uses in Revelation 1:10. John's expression there literally speaks of ownership, as in, that day is the Lord's, reminiscent of something Jesus Himself said: that "The Son of Man is Lord also of the sabbath" (Luke 6:5).

As a final consideration, let us take up an Old Testament quotation that many have used in reference to the Sabbath day: Psalm 118:24. "This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." But consider that this verse is actually part of a prophecy concerning the change of the Jewish Sabbath to the New Testament Lord's Day. The context immediately before this verse reads, "I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me and art become my salvation." To what salvation is the psalmist referring? "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the LORD's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes." Jesus connects this very prophecy to Himself in Luke 20:17–19 and elsewhere. But the Apostle Peter, by the Spirit's inspiration, applied it specifically to the resurrection of Jesus: "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner" (Acts 4:10–11). So next time we say with joy, "This is the day which the Lord hath made, let us rejoice and be glad in it," think (as the psalmist and the apostles did) of resurrection day, the first day of the week, and especially of our resurrected Savior!

So it is no longer the first creation that we celebrate when we come together on the Lord's Day, but rather the new creation that we have in our risen Savior (2 Cor. 5:17). It is no longer the Passover deliverance of Israel from Egypt that we commemorate on our day of corporate worship, but Jesus Christ, our Passover, who was sacrificed for our deliverance from sin and eternal death (1 Cor. 5:7). We do not circumcise our seed but we baptize

them, no longer shedding the child's blood but rejoicing in the salvation brought to us by the shed blood of the Lamb of God, Christ Jesus (1 Peter 1:18–19). We do not celebrate the old covenant made with Israel on Sinai but the new covenant made in His blood (Luke 22:20). We worship in the church, not in the synagogue (1 Cor. 11:18a). We worship not in a temple made with hands, but instead we are the temple of the Holy Ghost because of what our Savior has done for us (1 Cor. 6:19). Is it any wonder, therefore, that we keep the Lord's Day as our day of rest rather than the Jewish Sabbath?

All this being said, let us remind one another that the Lord's Day is not our ultimate Sabbath rest. We look forward to the eternal rest that awaits the people of God. That is a rest where sin will no longer trouble us, where our Savior is with us bodily as well as in spirit, and where we all, with glorious resurrected bodies, will worship the Lord as never before! "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out" (Rev. 3:12). "Therefore are they before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them" (Rev. 7:15). "And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it" (Rev. 21:22). Indeed beloved, "There remaineth therefore a rest [αβαβατισμὸς] to the people of God" (Heb. 4:9). Let us look with ardent desire to when time will exist no longer and when our Sabbath rest will be complete. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Amen.