



“Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight” (Acts 20:7).

The Lord’s Day

Truth: The first day of the week should be a time of public and private devotion.

Cobb’s “Confession of Faith”: Article XIV

Text: Acts 20:6, 7; Revelation 1:9-11

“We believe that the first day of the week is the Lord's Day. It is to be kept sacred as a memorial of the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Christians, refraining from all secular labor and worldly recreations, should devoutly use all the means of grace, both private and public, by which they may be drawn closer to God and provoked to holier living, in preparation for their eternal abode in the presence of God” (Cobb's Baptist Church Manual, page 82).

God should be given recognition each day of the week. But one day should be set apart for God alone. Based on an Old Testament command and example, the practice should be followed by New Testament Christians. It is designed for our spiritual and physical benefit.

There is no need to argue whether Christians should observe the first day or the seventh day. The principle is to observe one day in seven. The seventh day was observed by command in the Old Testament. The first day is observed by tradition and example in the New Testament. We look upon the first day of the week as “The Lord's Day” and devote it to Him in worship, study, rest, and ministry.

I. A DAY OF HERITAGE

The observance of one day in seven in worship of God has its roots in antiquity. The custom has come to us with a glorious heritage.

A. God himself instituted the day of rest and worship. Genesis 2:1-3 shows how God completed the work of creation, ceased His work at the seventh day, then blessed and sanctified that seventh day. He set the example.

God wanted men to observe that special day, so He gave the command, “*On the seventh day ye shall have an holy convocation; ye shall do no servile work*” (Numbers 28:25). To enforce the importance of that day, God gave no manna on that seventh day in the wilderness (Exodus 16:16-27). Giving one day in seven is very important to God.

B. God commanded observance of the day of rest and worship. One of the Ten Commandments reads, “*Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. . . . The seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work*” (Exodus 20:8, 10). That injunction is repeated many times in Old Testament scriptures (Exodus 34:21; 35:3; Nehemiah 10:31). To fail to give the day to God is to disobey His clear command.

C. God promised blessings to those who observed the day of rest and worship. “*Blessed is the man that . . . keepeth the sabbath from polluting it*” (Isaiah 56:2). God promised, “*If thou. . . call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it*” (Isaiah 58:13, 14).

D. God executed judgment for violation of the day of rest and worship. The death penalty was set for violation of the holy day (Exodus 31:14; Numbers 15:32-36). Judgment came upon the nation of Israel because of her violation of God's day (Jeremiah 17:27; Ezekiel 22:8). God was not defending a ritual; He was protecting His honor and promoting the spiritual good of the people. Judgment always follows sin.

E. God gave reasons for observing the day of rest and worship. (1) There was a humanitarian reason. God made the creatures of earth so that they need rest. He rested from His work on the seventh day to set an example of how we should rest and let the domesticated animals rest on that day (Deuteronomy 5:12-15). (2) There was a religious reason. God commanded ancient Israel to observe the Sabbath as a memorial to her redemption from Egyptian bondage and birth as a nation (Exodus 20:8-11).

We can observe the day for both reasons. Our spiritual reason relates to Jesus Christ, however, not to Israel's deliverance.

II. A DAY OF RESURRECTION (Luke 24:1-7)

Christians observe the first day of the week as the Lord's Day because Jesus did such a wonderful thing on that day.

A. Jesus arose from the dead on the first day of the week. It was “*as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week*” that the resurrection of Jesus became known (Matthew 28:1; see also Mark 16:2; Luke 24:1; John 20:1). The prophets had declared He would not be held by the chains of death (Psalm 16:10). He had said He would lay down His life and take it up again (Matthew 16:21; Luke 24:6, 7; John 10:17, 18). It happened! On the first day of the week He arose.

B. Jesus appeared to His disciples on the first day of the week. He appeared first to Mary and sent her to announce His resurrection to the others (Mark 16:9, 10). He appeared to two disciples as they walked to a village near Jerusalem and was recognized by them when He broke bread as He did in the upper room (Luke 24:13-15). He appeared to His apostles on that same day (John 20:19). There were more post-resurrection appearances of Jesus on the first day of the week than any other day. No wonder it became “*the Lord's day*” to them (Revelation, 1:10).

Jesus made our deliverance from sin sure on the first day of the week. His resurrection is our “exodus” because “*we shall be saved by his life*” (Romans 5:10).

III. A DAY OF ASSEMBLY (Acts 20:6, 7)

Israel had a solemn convocation on their Sabbath. Christians have a glad assembly on their Lord's Day. There was no formal decree which established the first day of the week for Christian worship. The Spirit of God confirmed in their hearts that this was the appropriate time.

Christians met on the first day of the week to observe the Lord's Supper. Paul and his missionary party had to wait several days for that meeting (Acts 20:6, 7). They broke bread and listened to Paul's preaching in their meeting.

Preaching was common in the meetings of early Christians on the first day of the week. The meeting of the church was to be edified (strengthened by teaching) according to 1 Corinthians 14:3, 5, 6, 12, 26, 40. God gave pastors and teachers in the church for that very purpose (Ephesians 4:11,

12).

Those meetings are so important the Holy Spirit caused this word to be brought to us in the Bible: *“Let us consider one another. . . not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching”* (Hebrews 10:24, 25).

IV. A DAY OF WORSHIP (Revelation 1:9-13)

The Lord's appearance to John on *“the Lord's day”* gives some principles concerning Christian worship on that day. These principles are valid for us today.

A. Call the day by the name of the Lord. It is *“the Lord's day”* (verse 10), the day *“belonging to the Lord.”* It is better to call it by that name than to say “Sunday” or “first day of the week.” God himself named the day; it is a sacred day with a holy name.

B. Hear the voice of God on that day. John heard *“a great voice, as of a trumpet”* (verse 10). God speaks in worship today through hymns, prayers, Bible reading, meditation, and particularly through the teachers and preachers of the Word who *“speak as the oracles of God”* (I Peter 4:11). It is our privilege to hear God speak through human agents when we meet to worship.

C. Recognize the churches of God on that day. John saw the glorified Christ *“in the midst of the seven candlesticks”* (verses 12, 13). Those candlesticks represented churches of our Lord. We recognize His ministry in the churches when we assemble in a church of our Lord on the Lord's Day.

D. Worship the Son of God on that day. That is the purpose of our assembly. Fall before Him as John did (verse 17) and receive His ministry of love (verses 17-20). Keep your emphasis on the Lord and not on the day as you think of the Lord's Day. It is He who makes the day holy. There is widespread desecration of the Lord's Day. We need a time for physical and spiritual refreshing. God gave us such a day. If we neglect it, it will be to our harm and loss. *“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy”* (Exodus 20:8).

1. What is the “sabbath day”?
2. What is the “Lord's Day”?
3. What two reasons are there for Sabbath observance?
4. What blessing is promised in Isaiah 56:2 and 58:13, 14?
5. Why was such a severe penalty put on breaking the Sabbath?

6. What great event happened on the first day of the week?
7. What does Hebrews 10:24, 25 teach about public worship today?
8. Why are public meetings for worship so important?
9. What does church attendance mean in your spiritual life?