

Which Day

is



### Which Day Is "the Lord's Day"?

The purpose of this tract is to set forth thoughts on the once-recorded Biblical phrase: "the Lord's day," in an effort to determine which day Christ considers His day.

John, the Revelator, introduces this phrase in the last book of the New Testament. He does so in connection with a series of visions and revelations of future events given to him through the Holy Spirit while he was on the "isle that is called Patmos." He said:

*I was in the Spirit on THE LORD'S DAY, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet (Rev. 1:10).*

By this usage of the term ("Lord's day") it is evident that John understood that there

Scripture quoted in this tract has been set in italic type to give it emphasis and to make it readily recognizable. Also some words in Scriptural quotations have been purposely set with capital letters to achieve additional emphasis and do not so appear in the Bible.

It is to be understood that by the term "New Testament" we are referring to the second of the two major divisions of the Bible which begins with the book of Matthew and ends with the book of Revelation. These divisions, as designated by the compilers, are not to be confused with the Old and New Testaments as defined by the inspired writers of the Bible. Additional information is available on this subject by writing to the publishers.

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was a day that especially belonged to the Lord. However, by the wording, it could not be certain as to whether this day was one particular day of the week, month, or year, or whether it happened to be one special day in the course of time that the Lord had selected as His personal day without intending that it should be perpetuated.

It is generally believed by the religious world that the term, "Lord's day," is synonymous with *Sabbath day*—the day that God has set aside each week for rest from labor and for assembling for Christian fellowship and spiritual worship. However, this is not the end of the subject. This only brings us to an all-important question—the answer to which has *not* been universally agreed upon. This is the question:

"To which day of the week was John referring when he said: '*the Lord's day*'?"

The search for the answer has resulted in much theological controversy. Many people have been (and still are) deeply concerned about this question, and every lover of God and seeker for Bible truth wants to know the true answer.

The vast majority of Christendom believes that John meant *Sunday* when he used the term: "*the Lord's day*"—inasmuch as it is thought that the Bible establishes that Sunday is the Lord's day, or the Christian Sabbath. However, there are many thousands of other sincere, Bible-loving and Bible-studying Christians who think differently and understand that

this day is Saturday—the seventh day of the week. Then there are many more who are in a state of indecision.

We feel that this is a most important subject, because the holy Sabbath of God is involved, and it is vital to know which day it is. Therefore, it is hoped that the thoughts presented herein will be helpful in determining what is the correct answer to our question, so that if the "*Lord's day*" is the Sabbath we will know *which* day of the week to observe as such.

It is well-understood that God has set aside one certain day of the week as a special day—as a sabbath day, and that upon this day certain things are not to be done that are done on others, and also that, basically, it is to be used for different purposes than the rest of the week. We would observe, however, that if "*the Lord's day*" (mentioned in Revelation 1:10) is another designation for a particular day of the week—whether it be Saturday or Sunday, or some other day—that John most definitely does not so state. Therefore, it will be necessary to consult other Scriptures if we are to learn which day he meant and which day is the "*Lord's day*," or the Sabbath.

As we proceed with this study, it should be helpful to keep in mind that the words *Sunday* and *Saturday* are not to be found in the Bible. In Scripture (with one exception) the days of the week are numbered instead of named: as, the first day, second day, third

day, etc. The exception was the last day of the week. It was called "the Sabbath." We would cite two Scriptural passages in evidence of this:

"...the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God" (a part of the fourth commandment of the Decalogue) (Exod 20:10). and "In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week..." (Matt. 28:1).

It is of interest to note that according to this Scripture—Matthew 28:1—the first day of the week, or Sunday, came after, or followed, the seventh day, or the Sabbath.

Now even though we have found that the days of the week were numbered instead of named, we must also observe that nowhere in the Bible is the first day of the week said to be the Sabbath, and neither did John say that "the Lord's day" was the first day of the week.

It is true that the term: "the first day of the week," is to be found in the New Testament—just eight times. However, not in even one instance is this day—the first day of the week—so much as remotely connected or associated with the Sabbath of the Lord, nor is there any intimation that it was to take the place of the seventh-day-of-the-week Sabbath that had been given at creation and was a part of the Ten Commandments written on stone at Mt. Sinai.

### First-Day-of-the-Week References

So that it may be seen that this is true, we will quote the eight places in the New Testament where the phrase: "the first day of the week," is recorded. In the various passages of Scripture where it is used it will be noted that the first day of the week is merely (and not otherwise than):

1. The first day after "the end of the Sabbath":  
*In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre* (Matt. 28:1).

NOTE: There is no sanctity or special significance given to the first day here. However, Matthew does say that it was the day after the Sabbath, and he is reputed to have written this about 40 A.D., or about eight and one half years after the crucifixion of our Lord.

2. The day when Mary Magdalene and Mary, the mother of James, and Salome went to the sepulchre to anoint the body of Jesus:

*And very early in the morning THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK, they came into the sepulchre at the rising of the sun* (Mark 16:2).

NOTE: Again, this is just another account of the time when women went to the sepulchre, and they went there then not because it was the designated and proper time to anoint the dead. But they went

there then because it was the first opportunity they had had to anoint Jesus, only to find that He was not there; He had already risen and left the tomb.

3. The day when Jesus "was risen" and appeared to Mary Magdalene:

*Now when Jesus was risen early THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils (Mark 16:9).*

NOTE: Even if this verse *did* state that Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week, or Sunday, which it *does not*, it would not prove that this day was the Lord's day. Had the words, "the Lord's day," been added following the phrase, "the first day of the week," in this verse, there would be something positive by which to prove that Sunday is the Lord's day; however, it is *not* so stated here.

Nowhere in Scripture is there the slightest indication that the time Christ was resurrected was to in any way change or affirm the Sabbath. The seventh-day Sabbath is not observed because Christ arose on that day. No place in Scripture are we told to honor, celebrate, or keep holy the day on which Christ was resurrected. This verse simply states: After Jesus was risen, he appeared to Mary early the first day of the week. Change the comma in this sentence by taking

it away from after the word "week" and place it following the word "risen," and that which is meant to be understood is easily discerned. It is to be remembered that men added the punctuation to the Scriptures.

4. A day upon which women visited the sepulchre (where Jesus had been buried) after "having rested the sabbath day":

*Now upon THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them (Luke 24:1).*

NOTE: There is no allusion here that the first day was considered to be the Sabbath, or Lord's day, or in any way a special day. It is to be noted, however, that the women felt free to do on the first day of the week that which they had refrained from doing the day before—the Sabbath. Luke states: "And they . . . rested the sabbath day according to the commandment" (Luke 23:56).

5. A day on which Mary Magdalene visited the sepulchre:

*THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre (John 20:1).*

NOTE: The term is used here the same

as in Luke 24:1 and is only used to designate the time that something was done, and there is no indication of any religious significance being attached to it because of that which took place at that time. Most definitely it does *not* say that the first day is the *Lord's day*.

6. A time (after His resurrection) when Jesus appeared to His disciples:

*Then the same day at evening, being THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you (John 20:19)*

NOTE: Neither does this passage state, or even indicate, that the first day is synonymous with "Lord's day" or Sabbath. The fact that the disciples were assembled together on the first day of the week does not prove that it was a regular day for worship. They were once assembled together on Monday (as will be shown later), and on this occasion it was to attend a preaching service. Whereas, in the verse just quoted, the disciples were assembled "for fear of the Jews"—not because it was the Lord's day or Sabbath day for weekly religious worship. The Jews had had a prominent part in having Christ crucified, and no doubt the disciples feared for their lives, for they were known to be His followers.

There is no indication that they were gathered in celebration of Christ's resurrection, for at this time they had no concrete evidence that He had been resurrected, for they had not yet seen Him.

Thus, there is just no way they could have known about a change having been made in the day for worship: There is no record that Christ had told them before His death that there would be a change.

So there is absolutely no basis for saying that the disciples were assembled here because they knew it had now become the Lord's day. Neither is there any Scriptural ground for concluding that their having met on Sunday was so significant as to show that it should now be observed as a special religious day.

The occasion was simply the first recorded time that Christ had an opportunity to be reunited with His disciples to encourage them and give them assurance of His well-being. He "stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you."

7. The day on which Paul began a preaching service that extended until the daylight part of the next day:

*And 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 con-*

tinued his speech until midnight (Acts 20:7).

Note: If this meeting began before sundown, part was on the first day of the week, but the continuation into the night was on the second day of the week, or Monday. If the meeting began after sundown, it was all on the first day of the week and when daylight came, Paul departed and walked about 20 miles to meet the ship. In either case nothing is said of a sacred day.

It is to be noted here, as well as in all other places where the *First day* is mentioned, that it is only used to tell us when something happened and not for the purpose of pointing out what the day was intended for or designed to be.

The disciples did not limit their breaking bread (eating common meals) to the first day of the week. It is recorded in Acts 2:46 that "...they, continued daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart." The term, "break bread" (or "breaking bread"), cannot be shown to be synonymous with partaking of the Lord's Supper. It was a term used to indicate the eating of a daily meal. The "cup," or "fruit of the vine," is always mentioned in connection with the bread when the emblems of Christ's body are referred to. It will help to understand the usage of these terms by not-

ing the wording of Acts 27:34-36.

8. One of the six days on which work was to be done:

*Upon THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come (1 Cor. 16:2).*

NOTE: With the absence of any other indication that the first day of the week was then, and now is, the Lord's day, or Sabbath, that which is stated in this verse would not seem to be sufficient reason to conclude that the first day had become a new sabbath day. At least there is no intimation of it in this passage. There is no suggestion of a day of worship or religious service here. Neither is it a record of a meeting held, but rather, it is an instance of instructions being given to "lay by," or gather together, material things for an offering.

We find, according to Romans 15:25. that there were brethren at Jerusalem who were poor and in need of material help and that Paul was soliciting assistance for them from the brethren in other places. We note this in 1 Corinthians 16:1: "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye."

We would observe that offerings taken at church services today (on the first day of the week) are not ordinarily for the

poor, and that the "7" in this reference refers to Paul and not to Christ. In this case Paul wanted to make sure that the Corinthian brethren would have their collecting work taken care of early—doing it the first working-day of the week, so that when he came by he could pick up their contributions without delay.

This is a text that could well indicate that the early Christians still kept the seventh-day Sabbath. Inasmuch as Paul's letter was directed to the church of God at Corinth, evidently it was to be read to the assembled church. This would mean that it would be read on the Sabbath, and the people would be instructed to gather their gifts the next day—the first day of the week. Actually, there is no stipulation in this text about which day is the Sabbath, yet it does present strong evidence that the early church did not rest or meet for worship on the first day of the week.

We have now examined every place in the New Testament where the term, "first day of the week," is recorded, but have failed to find where this day was made the Sabbath or a new day for rest and worship to replace the original seventh-day Sabbath. Furthermore, the record of that which was done, or that which happened, on any first day of the week mentioned in the New Testament is not of such a nature as to even indicate that sanctity was being attached to the day, or that it was to be considered any differently than any

other day. Still further, there is not a hint or allusion in any of the eight places where the first day of the week is mentioned in the New Testament that it was a day for rest, or a holy, sacred, or sanctified day, such as is said of the seventh day.

Would it not seem reasonable that if a day as important as the Sabbath was to be changed that there would be at least one positive statement to that effect and that we'd not be left to draw conclusions as to which day the Lord expects us to observe as His day?

It is neither reasonable nor logical that God would have cancelled or abolished the day He had commanded men to keep holy for thousands of years without naming another day to take its place or to have done so and then leave men no instructions as to how they should go about selecting a substitute day. Or, more unthinkable still, that He would have annulled the Sabbath and then be satisfied to have men be no longer concerned about a special day for rest and worship.

Many things happened on the Sabbath (during the apostolic times), but that is not the reason it is observed. This day is honored because God said: "*the seventh day is the Sabbath*" (Lev. 23:3).

Things happened, and Christ and the apostles did important things on other days also. Thus, drawing on the time when events occurred, or things were done, is not a method



to use in trying to determine which day of the week is the Lord's day.

If the Sabbath was made void by the death of Christ, and it was then no longer expected that any certain day was to be observed as a sabbath, day for rest, or for public or private worship, we believe that God would have caused a statement to that effect to have been recorded in His Word, and that He would not have left us to also draw conclusions about this. But, again, there is no passage of Scripture that even so much as hints that during the dispensation following Christ's death people would be free from observing any particular day.

Neither can we find Scripture to support the idea that there would come a time when it would be necessary to search for reasons for establishing a new day for worship and rest, due to the alleged fact that the Ten-Commandment law (which specifies that the seventh day should be kept holy), would be abrogated, changed, nullified, or abolished.

Nor is there any Scripture that indicates that some other day, other than the seventh, would become just as acceptable to God for a time for rest and worship.

**Further Search-Futile**

We would like to continue the search for a text that does state that the first day of the week is now the Lord's day and should be observed as the day for rest and worship. However, we have quoted and discussed every

verse in the New Testament which mentions the first day of the week. There just are no more! And we have not found any evidence or justification for calling Sunday the Lord's day. In fact, in summarizing, we find that there are only three different first days of the week, or Sundays, mentioned in the writings of the apostles: one in connection with Jesus' resurrection and His desire to prove that He had risen from the dead; another when Paul desired to have a farewell meeting with his disciples when he knew he would see them no more; and the other instance was when the brethren were instructed to gather and store their contributions for the poor at Jerusalem.

Inasmuch as there is no Scripture that even so much as hints that the first day of the week was made the Lord's day, we must conclude that John, the revelator, was referring to some other day than Sunday when he said: "I was in the spirit on the Lord's day." What day, then, are we to conclude is the Lord's day?

First, we would have to say that there is no verse in the Bible which plainly states that such and such a day is the Lord's day. However, there is one statement which leaves no doubt as to which day the Lord considers His, and there are others which give many-times-over stronger indication of the truth of this than is to be found to support the idea that Sunday is His day. Here is the one Scripture we have in mind:

*And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man [not just for the Jew].*

*and not man for the sabbath: therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath* (Mark 2:27, 28).

If Christ is Lord of the Sabbath it would certainly be reasonable and logical to conclude that He would consider it *His* day. No place is it recorded that Christ said that He was Lord of the first day of the week—or of any other day than the Sabbath.

**The Seventh Day Is the Sabbath**

That the seventh day (Saturday) is the Sabbath can be clearly seen by these and other Scriptures:

*And Moses said, Eat that to day: for to day is a sabbath unto the Lord: to day ye shall not find in the field.*

*Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the sabbath, in it there shall be none* (Exod. 16:25, 26).

(It is to be noticed that this was spoken before the Ten-Commandment law was given at Mt. Sinai.)

*Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day is the sabbath of rest, an holy convocation; ye shall do no work therein: it is the sabbath of the Lord in all your dwellings* (Lev. 23:3).

Whereas the first day of the week is mentioned only eight times in the New Testament, the Sabbath is recorded 57 times by those who wrote through inspiration of the Holy Spirit after the resurrection of Christ. We find

that Paul observed 78 Sabbaths in one place—the Gentile city of Corinth (Acts 18:4, 11).

It was Paul's custom to observe the Sabbath. Another time while he was at Thessalonica, it is recorded that "*Paul as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures*" (Acts 17:2). Once, when there was no synagogue in which to preach to the Jews, Paul worshipped by a riverside on the day the Holy Spirit called "*the sabbath*" (Acts 16:13).

**Saturday Is the Seventh Day**

Although there have been changes in calendars, we know that the weekly cycle has not been changed from the time of Christ until now. The sun has never failed to rise and set every 24 hours during this time, and there has been an unbroken chain of people who have kept the Sabbath since the time of Christ.

Rome ruled Palestine at the time Christ was on earth, and the Julian calendar was then used throughout the Roman world. We now have the Gregorian calendar. However, the Julian calendar had the same weekly cycle as the one we now use. The seventh day of the week is now called Saturday, and any dictionary, calendar, or encyclopedia will verify the fact that Saturday is the seventh day of the week.

Another very positive proof that the seventh day is Saturday and the Sabbath is that it is the day the Jews, as a nation, observe. They have not accepted Christ, and they still

keep the same day they kept before Christ came. Jews are now returning to Palestine (Israel) from all parts of the world, but they have no trouble identifying which day of the week constitutes the Old-Testament Sabbath. They all say it is the day we call Saturday.

#### Summary

We make these points in summarizing our study:

A. The term, "*Lord's day*," is recorded once in the Bible, but the writer who used it did not identify which day he had in mind. As far as the information furnished in this verse is concerned, *any day* might be the *Lord's day*.

B. Even though the term is only used once in Scripture, without any particular day being indicated, it is generally believed that Sunday—the first day of the week—is the *Lord's day*. However, since the word *Sunday* is not used in the Bible, and seeing that the writers of the New Testament fail to associate the first day of the week (mentioned only eight times) with the *Lord's day*, and inasmuch as the inspired writers do not in any way indicate that they knew it was to be considered any differently or held to be any more special than any of the other work days, there is only one conclusion to draw: There is no Biblical grounds for such belief, for there is no proof to be found, or even implied, that Sunday is the *Lord's day*, and neither is there evidence that it had become, or was to become, a new day for rest and

worship to take the place of the seventh-day Sabbath.

C. On the other hand, inasmuch as there is no passage of Scripture that tells us that the seventh-day Sabbath of the Ten Commandments, which was designated by God as "*my holy day*" (Isa. 58:13), and designed for rest from physical labor, for spiritual meditation, and for public worship, was, or ever would be, changed or set aside in favor of some other day for these purposes, and

Inasmuch as the writers of the Gospels and Acts mention the Sabbath 57 times, and it was Paul's custom to observe it as a day for worship, and

Since there is conclusive evidence that the weekly cycle has not been changed, and there has been an unbroken line of people observing the seventh-day Sabbath from the time of Christ, and

Because Christ, Himself, said: "*the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath*," the final conclusion must be: There is overwhelming and irrefutable evidence that Saturday—the seventh day of the week (and not Sunday)—is today the *Lord's day*, the holy Sabbath, and God's approved time for rest and for public and private spiritual devotion and fellowship.

*There is a way which seemeth right into a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death* (Prov. 14:12).