

## #188 “Why Christians Worship on Sunday”

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The early church met for corporate worship on the first day of the week, which is Sunday, the same day Christ rose from the dead (Matthew 28:1). Acts 20:7 says, “On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight.” Also, 1 Corinthians 16:2 says, “On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come.” These verses provide clear evidence that the early church did in fact assemble together on Sunday, not Saturday.

The Biblical reason for the change from the Sabbath day, Saturday, to Sunday, is first and foremost the fact that it is in commemoration of the resurrection of Christ, which sealed the deal in establishing the new covenant. The old covenant, part of which was the keeping of the Sabbath, has been replaced by a new and better covenant (Hebrews 8:6). Further evidence that the Sabbath day no longer needs to be kept is the fact that we are no longer under law but under grace (Romans 6:14). We don’t keep the Sabbath to fulfill the Law because Christ has already fulfilled it (Romans 8:4). Rather, we assemble together with others on Sunday for worship, for growth, and for being moved to good works (Hebrews 10:24-25).

Colossians 2:15-17 says, “When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him. Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day-- things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.” The application is that we need to make Christ the center of our focus. The Sabbath was part of the Law, which was not given to save us but to show us our need for a Savior, namely Christ (Galatians 3:24). Thus, rather than go back and try to keep the Law, we are to rather honor Christ by living out the law of Christ, which is that we love God with our whole heart and mind and love others with a selfless love (Galatians 6:2). If we do this, we, through Christ, show evidence that we have been redeemed. Living according to keeping the Sabbath misses the point for the believer under the new covenant. The Sabbath rest that we have been given is rest from enslavement to sin (Hebrews 4:9-10). It is not simply about being inactive for a period of 24 hours. That is why Christ purposefully healed people and did ministry on Saturday as a means of demonstrating that He was Lord over the Sabbath (Luke 6:5). It is about Christ and not about legalistically ceasing from all activity. There is merit to setting aside time for rest (Exodus 20:10-11), but there is nothing wrong with doing ministry or other activities on Saturday.

Some Christians translate the Sabbath principles of ceasing from doing work to meaning that we must not do any work on Sundays. They might have all kinds of religious activities planned for the day, and they might set up rules for what people can and cannot do. This is a Pharisaical approach to living the Christian life, and it is not right according

to the new life and freedom in Christ. Sunday is not about doing nothing or doing only religious things. It is about gathering with God's people for worship, and it is about honoring God in whatever we do (Colossians 3:17), regardless of whether some might classify it as "work" or not.

Returning to living under the Law as if Christ never came to establish a new covenant is just insensible. If we were to go back and live under the Law, then we would need to get a priesthood and a system of animal sacrifices as well if we want to be consistent. The Sabbath was a Jewish thing, a sign of their being the people of God. Ezekiel 20:12 says, "Also I gave them My sabbaths to be a sign between Me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD who sanctifies them." We are under a new and different covenant wherein we see the full meaning of what was merely a shadow before. The Sabbath for us is a resting from our sin and disobedience and being reconciled to God through faith in Christ. Knowing Jesus and having eternal life is the fullness of our "Sabbath," our rest (Hebrews 4:1-11).

There are many who are vehement about worshiping on Saturday rather than Sunday, and I have been told many times myself that it is an issue of salvation that is at stake in refusing to rest on Saturday. This unfortunately is false teaching that makes salvation a result of law-keeping rather than faith in Christ. A proper understanding of Jesus and of the new covenant frees us from legalism and enables us to worship God freely on all days and at all times. In such freedom, life, and hope, we join with all who have embraced faith in the Messiah Who has come to save us from our sins, and we worship on Sunday as the church of Jesus Christ did from the outset.

Sunday worship is not a modern thing, but it has been this way since the church was born. Christ was raised to new life on the first day of the week, and it is on that day each week that we celebrate His victory over sin and our new life in Him. Sunday worship must draw its value from its true beginning, honoring the Savior and the greatest victory ever won.