

# The Lord's Day: Sabbath or Sunday?

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One of the most important aspects of living the Christian life and growing to maturity is learning to walk in not only in humility, but also in *balance*. We are instructed in 2 Timothy 2:15 to "rightly divide" the scriptures, which means *balancing* the whole counsel of God (even the parts that don't jive with our preferred doctrine), to arrive at correct positions. Doctrinal stubbornness and failing to rightly divide the scriptures not only leads to false doctrine and resultant *idolatry* (see 1 Sam. 15:23) but also to the "wrongly dividing" of Christians themselves, who can always find an area of doctrine to disagree about, be it eschatology, sovereign election vs. free will, eternal security vs. temporary salvation, spiritual gifts, etc, etc. Some Christians err on the side of "liberty" and redefine grace to justify licentiousness and unrepentant carnality, while others on the opposite extreme gravitate toward legalistic doctrine that is a mark of spiritual immaturity, and that results in bondage to man-made rules and Phariseism, a destructive leaven most despised, resisted and rebuked by the Lord Jesus during His earthly ministry.

The false teachers most harshly opposed by the Apostle Paul in his ministry and writings were those *Judaizers* who refused to grasp the significance of Christ's finished work in His cross and empty tomb, which as the climax point of all human history ushered in a new age and a new covenant *far superior* to the former. Much of the New Testament, including the entire books of Galatians and Hebrews, was written to dispel the fatal error of attempting to force continued compliance with Mosaic law. The heresy of the Judaizers that incited the writing of these great epistles has made a troublesome resurgence in our day, under various movements including Seventh Day Adventism and the Messianic "Hebrew Roots" movement, each of which persistently demand the keeping of the seventh day sabbath as a current Christian duty. The purpose for this treatise is to rebut some writings that have been presented to the author by well meaning but very misguided sabbatarians, and to offer for consideration the conclusion that the sabbatarian position is a serious doctrinal error, as an extension of the heresy of the Judaizers and a continued denial of the significance of Christ's atonement and of Christ's deliberate and purposed setting aside of the Mosaic seventh day sabbath command to institute its fulfillment under the Christian New Covenant in "The Lord's Day" on the first day of the week. To prove this conclusion the following arguments will be further supported herein:

**1. The New Testament observance of the Lord's Day on the 1st day of the week, rather than the 7th, was prefigured in the Mosaic Law, in the observance of Firstfruits and Pentecost on the "morrow after the sabbath," and in other "eighth day" observances.**

**2. The seventh day sabbath command was given to Israel alone as a sign of their covenant with God as His covenant people. Therefore it neither preceded nor succeeded the dispensation of the Mosaic Law.** There is no record of any of the patriarchs from Adam to Jacob, or of any other ancient culture, observing the sabbath. If there was, the sabbath could not have been a "sign" between God and Israel (Exodus 31:12-17).

**3. Christians are NOT ONE TIME in the New Testament commanded or admonished to keep the Old Testament seventh day sabbath.** Out of *hundreds* of commands given in the NT, **never** are we in any way commanded, admonished or even *encouraged* to keep the sabbath. Sabbatarians dismiss the glaring significance of this fact to their embarrassing shame. *Not only* are we never commanded to keep it, but further:

**4. Christian believers are clearly instructed in the New Testament scriptures to resist those who try to place them in bondage to the Hebrew sabbath as a Christian duty.**

**5. The Lord Jesus himself established the "Lord's Day" for the weekly assembly of His Church, by His resurrection and appearance to His disciples on the first day of the week, then again confirming it by His second appearance to them on the "eighth day."** Contrary to the sabbatarians' biblically and historically ignorant arguments, Christ did **not** rise from the dead on the sabbath, and the catholic pope had **nothing** to do with converting a sabbath assembly to Sunday.

**6. The early church clearly met together on the first day of the week, not the seventh.** This is a historical fact that is clearly stated in the New Testament scriptures and supported by many recorded statements of 1st and 2nd century church leaders.

Just as the Old Covenant's Levitical sacrifices were fulfilled in Christ's blood atonement once and for all time, so the seventh day sabbath is also fulfilled under the New Covenant in Christ's institution of the Lord's Day on the first day of the week.

The Lord Jesus said in **Matthew 5:17-19**:

17 Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

18 For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

19 Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

What did the Lord Jesus mean by this statement? Obviously heaven and earth are still here, so why do we not still honor every jot and tittle of the Mosaic law? Why is circumcision no longer required as a sign of the covenant? Why are we no longer required to celebrate the feast days or slaughter goats and bullocks for blood sacrifices? The obvious reason, understood even by most of today's neo-Judaizers, is that the ceremonial law was completely fulfilled once and for all time in Christ's final sacrifice on the cross (Heb. 9:1-15). God's justice demands that blood be shed in atonement for sin, and without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin (Heb. 9:22, Lev. 17:11). The penalty for sin was (and **still is**) death; but the Lord Jesus willingly died in our place and shed His own blood in atonement for all who trust completely in His eternal sacrifice once and **for all time**, as *"neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained **eternal redemption** for us"* (Heb. 9:12). Continued reliance on the former covenant is therefore not only "abolished" in Christ (2 Cor. 3:6-13, Eph. 2:15), but is **condemned** as the ultimate willful rejection of Christ:

#### **Hebrews 10:28-29**

28 He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: 29 Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

But to what extent is the Mosaic law fulfilled (or "abolished") in Christ? Which parts of the law are binding on us today as Christians who desire to honor God's word and keep His commandments (Rev. 14:12)? After much prayerful deliberation on the subject and on the following grounds it is the author's conclusion that just as the Levitical sacrifices were fulfilled in Christ's sacrifice on the cross, so is the seventh day sabbath fulfilled under the New Covenant by the observance of a **new day** for the people of God on the *eighth* day, now known to Christ's church as **The Lord's Day**.

1. The New Testament observance of the Lord's Day on the 1st day of the week was prefigured in the Mosaic Law, in the observance of Firstfruits and Pentecost on the "morrow after the sabbath," and in other "8th day" observances.

Most sabbatarians agree that the feasts of Israel were prophetic in nature, as "shadows" looking forward to their fulfillment in the New Testament, and that the observance of the *Firstfruits* offering prefigured Christ's resurrection, as confirmed by the Apostle Paul:

But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the **firstfruits** of them that slept. 21 For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. 23 But every man in his own order: **Christ the firstfruits**; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. - **1 Cor. 15:20-23**

With that understanding then, why do sabbatarians refuse to grasp the significance of the fact that the Offering of Firstfruits was observed on the **first day of the week** rather than the seventh?

9 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, 10 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the **firstfruits** of your harvest unto the priest: 11 And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted for you: **on the morrow after the sabbath** the priest shall wave it. - **Leviticus 23:9-11**

Sabbatarians further ignore the great significance of the fact that from the observance of Firstfruits the Israelites were to count forward seven weeks to the Feast of **Pentecost** (prefiguring the empowerment of Christ's church), which was **also** celebrated on the **first day of the week** rather than the seventh:

15 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: 16 **Even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath** shall ye number **fifty days**; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the LORD... 20 And the priest shall wave them with the bread of the firstfruits for a wave offering before the LORD... 21 And ye shall proclaim on the selfsame day, that it may be an holy convocation unto you: ye shall do no servile work therein: it shall be a statute for ever in all your dwellings throughout your generations. - **Leviticus 23:15-21**

These two statutes for Israel's observance clearly prefigured both the Lord's resurrection and the empowerment of the Church on the day of Pentecost, precisely seven weeks after the Lord Jesus rose from the dead, on the **first day of the week**:

#### Acts 2:1-4

And **when the day of Pentecost was fully come**, [(i.e., on the first day of the week)] they were all with one accord in one place. 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. 3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

The empowerment of the church on the day of Pentecost fulfills the OT figure; the Holy Ghost thereby confirming the first day of the week as the "Lord's Day." Further, in addition to Pentecost and Firstfruits, several other OT ordinances were also observed on the "*eighth day*," including the giving of all firstborn to the Lord (Ex. 22:29-30), ordination of Aaron and his sons as priests (Lev. 9:1), rite of circumcision (Lev. 12:1-3), ceremonial cleansing (Lev. 14:10,23; 15:13,29, & Nu. 6:10), acceptance of offerings (Lev. 22:27), and the convocation of the feast of tabernacles (Lev. 23:36). Why all the emphasis on the *eighth day*? Because the New Testament observance of the Lord's Day on the eighth day was prefigured in the Mosaic Law. As Barnabas observed in 74 A.D: "*We keep the eighth day with joyfulness, the day also on which Jesus rose again from the dead*" (see Part 6 below).

2. The seventh day sabbath command was given to national Israel *alone* as a sign of their covenant with God as His covenant people. It neither *preceded* nor *succeeded* the dispensation of the Mosaic Law.

#### Exodus 31:12-17

12 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,  
13 Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for **it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations**; that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth **sanctify you**. 14 **Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you**: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. 15 Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD: whosoever doeth any work in the sabbath day, he shall surely

be put to death. 16 Wherefore **the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath**, to observe the sabbath **throughout their generations**, for a perpetual covenant. 17 **It is a sign between me and the children of Israel** for ever: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.

**The Sabbath was a sign of the covenant between God and the children of Israel.** It was never a universal command given to all mankind or to all of God's people. There is no Biblical evidence of any of the patriarchs from Adam to Noah, or from Noah to Abraham to Jacob keeping a sabbath day, though some try to find evidence for this at Gen. 4:3, saying "process of time" means "end of days," indicating a set time for worship. If in fact the sabbath *was* sanctified from the beginning as a universal ordinance it was completely lost to former generations, as there is no record of any ancient culture having a seventh-day sabbath custom. The seven day week *itself* was not even universal; ancient Egyptians, Etruscans (Romans) Chinese and other cultures had a 10-day week; yet other cultures had 8, 9, and 13-day weeks.

The more likely explanation, in lieu of the sabbath being lost to succeeding generations after Adam, is that **the sabbath command was never given to Adam**. Since Moses compiled and penned the Pentateuch, when he wrote at Genesis 2:3, "*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*" he did so to explain why God was **at the time of Moses' writing** instituting the sabbath **for the first time**. This explains why there is no Biblical evidence of any of the patriarchs from Adam to Noah and their generations afterward, including Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, nor even Job keeping a sabbath, nor any of their contemporary cultures. There is no evidence of anyone *other* than God's people Israel keeping the sabbath from Moses to Christ, and further as shown below there is no New Testament command to keep the OT sabbath law. **The seventh-day Sabbath was a sign of the covenant between God and the children of Israel.** It was never given as a universal command to all mankind or to all of God's people.

3. Christians are NOT ONE TIME in the New Testament commanded or admonished to keep the Old Testament seventh day sabbath. Sabbatarians shamefully dismiss the glaring significance of this fact.

The obvious significance of the terms "Old Testament" and "New Testament" must not be ignored! It is well

settled and indisputable that the Old Covenant has been **set aside** to make for a new and much better covenant; this is the theme of the entire books of Hebrews and Galatians. Christian theology is clearly to be established by the writings of the New Testament, not the Old:

**In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old.** Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away. - Hebrews 8:13

Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. **He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.** - Hebrews 10:9

Who also hath made us able ministers of the **new testament**; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. 7 But if the **ministration of death, written and engraven in stones**, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be **done away**... 11 For if that **which is done away** was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious. 12 Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech: 13 And not as Moses, which put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which **is abolished**: 14 But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same **vail** untaken away in the reading of the **old testament**; which vail is **done away** in Christ - 2 Cor. 3:6-15

**Having abolished** in his flesh **the enmity**, even the **law of commandments contained in ordinances**; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace - Ephesians 2:15

**Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us**, which was contrary to us, and **took it out of the way**, nailing it to his cross - Colossians 2:14

In light of these scriptures (and many others) conclusively showing that the OT law has to at least some extent been "**made old**," "**done away**," "**blotted out**" and "**abolished**," it is clear that whatever parts of the Ten Commandments or OT law that carried forward into the New, that continue to stand as definition of sin and as a schoolmaster to lead us to Christ, have by necessity been clearly repeated in the NT scriptures. God is not the author of confusion, nor of contradiction.

Therefore we are clearly admonished via literally **hundreds** of commands in the NT scriptures as to the holy behavior and lifestyle expected of us, and are repeatedly warned against the specific sins that are not to be even named among us (1 Corinth. 6:9-10, Gal. 5:19-21, Eph. 5:3-6, etc.). If today's sabbath-keepers were correct in their persistent emphasis on sabbath observance, **surely** there would be **at least one verse** in

the New Testament mentioning a sabbath duty! In fact *all they would need* would be **one verse** whereby NT believers would be admonished to keep the sabbath day or rebuked for failing to do so, but **IT IS NOT THERE!** Paul spent much of his pen and ink correcting problems in the churches **without one word** even *encouraging* sabbath day keeping. The only verse that comes remotely close is the admonishment in Hebrews 10:24-25 not to forsake the assembly:

And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: 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.

If ever there was an opportune or appropriate time in the NT for the Holy Spirit to admonish us to keep the OT sabbath **this would have been it!** But alas, **no mention of the sabbath**, just an admonishment to wayward backsliders to get back into church where they belonged. Perhaps some had forsaken the assembly because of bad advice of the Judaizers of their day to keep the sabbath instead! If in fact the OT sabbath law required an assembly on the weekly sabbath which was continued under the new covenant, then those who had forsaken the assembly were in serious **sin** that would have warranted a much more severe warning than that given in this passage. The glaring absence of any reference here to the sabbath command is rather embarrassing to the sabbatarians' position. So is the **complete absence of any admonishment anywhere else in the NT to keep the OT sabbath day law**. NOT ONLY is there (1) **no command** given in the New Testament for Christian believers to keep the sabbath, but further there is: (2) **no penalty** imposed for failure to keep the sabbath; (3) **no blessing** pronounced for those who keep the sabbath; and (4) **no indication** that the disciples in their worship as Christians **EVER** met together on the seventh day sabbath. Sabbatarians' dismissal of this glaring, hugely significant fact reveals a most unbalanced and unbiblical agenda on their part.

One outspoken sabbatarian known to this author wrote a 30-page treatise on this subject, but her only response to this problem was to dismiss it by writing: "*The New Testament never states that God repealed his law, and it did not have to command Christians to observe it because the first Christians were Jews who were already observing it.*" These arguments are not only most unresponsive to the immense problem but are also in obvious error. The first argument that "*the New Testament never states that God repealed his law*" is grossly and **shamefully** ignorant of the theme of much of the Apostle Paul's writings and of the many scriptures already cited above showing that the OT law

has been "made old," "taken away," "done away," "blotted out" and "abolished." The reader is here encouraged to go back read those scriptures above one more time. It is noteworthy that in **2 Corinthians 3:6** the part of the law that Paul says was "done away" and "abolished" included the part that was *written and engraven in stones* - the **TEN COMMANDMENTS**. Again, whatever parts of the OT law that carried forward into the New, that continue to stand as definition of sin and as a schoolmaster to lead us to Christ, have by necessity been clearly repeated in the NT scriptures. **That does not include the sabbath.**

The latter argument, "it [the NT] *did not have to command Christians to observe it* [sabbath] *because the first Christians were Jews who were already observing it*" is a *ridiculous* argument that is blatantly ignorant of the facts that (1) The gospel quickly went beyond the Jews to Gentiles who did **not** keep the sabbath, and (2) the apostles had to convene a special council to settle the great controversy that arose as the gospel went out to the Gentiles as to what extent Christians were to be obligated under the law. That controversy was settled by the apostles' letter to the Gentile churches, which glaringly included **no mention of any sabbath duty.**

...Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment... ..For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well. - Acts 15:23-29

Gentile believers were by this letter released from any requirement to "keep the law" (v. 24). The text goes on to say, when the letter was read to the church at Antioch, "they rejoiced for the consolation." If the sabbath was to be kept by Gentiles as Christian duty it **surely** would have required mention in this letter since it was not previously kept by the Gentiles. The Christian is **NOT** under the Mosaic Law, **period**; he is under the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2) to fulfill the *spirit* of the former law but not the letter (Matt. 5:20,22, 26 &f, 2 Cor. 3:6, Rom. 7:4-6). The Lord Jesus said we are to keep **His** commandments (Matthew 28:20), and in contrast to the Mosaic law his commandments are not burdensome or grievous (1 John 5:3). As explained below, the *spirit* of the OT sabbath law is now fulfilled in the Lord's day on the first day of the week. The reason there is **NOT ONE MENTION** of a sabbath duty in the NT is that **THERE IS NO DUTY TO KEEP THE SABBATH UNDER THE NEW COVENANT!**

4. Christian believers are clearly instructed in the scriptures to *resist* those who try to place them in bondage to the Hebrew sabbath as a Christian duty.

Though the text is wrangled and mangled by those who refuse to accept its clear teaching, Paul says this:

**Colossians 2:13-17**

14 Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross...

16 **Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:** 17 **Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.**

Some Christians are, to their own detriment, just too stubborn to simply take God's word for what it says! It is precisely this kind of stubbornness that leads to "iniquity and idolatry" (1 Sam. 15:23). If sabbatarians would rightly interpret and accept the above passage as authoritative, the sabbath dispute would be settled. The point of this passage is clear: "*Let no man **therefore**...*" By the word "therefore" Paul is clearly saying **the dietary laws, the feast days, and the sabbath laws in verse 16 were part of the ordinances that were taken out of the way and nailed to the cross in v. 14**, having been mere shadows that were fulfilled in Christ! Because the "handwriting of ordinances that was against us" was nailed to Christ's cross and has been taken out of the way (v. 14), we are not to allow the Judaizers to judge us or place us back in bondage to the OT laws, neither the dietary laws, the feast days, nor the sabbath! This agrees with Paul's example of resisting the Judaizers in Galatians 2:4-5: "*And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: To whom we gave place by subjection, **no, not for an hour**; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.*"

When confronted with scriptures that disprove their position, heretics typically either twist those scriptures to say what they do not mean, or worse, deny the reliability of the scriptures themselves. The sabbatarian author cited above does both in her 30-page treatise, completely **flipping** the meaning of this passage in Colossians 2:16-17 to say we are not to allow others to judge us for **keeping** the sabbath! As Peter said of Paul's writings, "*they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction*" (2 Pet 3:16). That same sabbatarian claims the phrase "*he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it.*" in Rom. 14:5

should not be in the Bible, siding with those that accept the modern (NIV, etc.) paraphrases of the infamously perverted Wescott-Hort Greek text and attack the reliability of the NT scriptures as preserved in the TR (KJV) text; so we have a primary problem in differing authorities for what constitutes scripture itself.

The meaning of this passage at Colossians 2:16-17 is clear. **Paul makes a distinction between holy days** (festivals or feast days), **new moons** (monthly sacrifice, Num. 10:10, 28:11), **and the sabbath days**. The word "*days*" after "sabbath" is in italics in the KJV as it is not in the Greek TR text. Therefore the "sabbath days" are **not** the "high holy sabbaths" as claimed by sabbatarians (which Paul addressed earlier in the verse) but is "the sabbath" - the weekly sabbath observance. If "sabbath" is to be taken as plural it then must also include the seventh year sabbath of the land as well, which no neo-Judaizer known to this author today advocates keeping, and the breaking of which brought God's judgment on Israel and their captivity in Babylon (2 Chr. 36:21). While many of today's Judaizers advocate celebration of Hebrew feasts **and** the weekly sabbath, They were **all** nailed to the cross and taken out of the way. They were a *shadow* of things to come. **They were fulfilled in Christ**. We are by this passage clearly and in plain language told to **resist** those who try to place us in bondage to the sabbath; *"To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you."*

5. The Lord Jesus established the "Lord's Day" for weekly assembly of His Church by His resurrection and appearance to the disciples on the first day of the week, then confirmed it by His 2nd appearance to them in their assembly on the "eighth day."

Sabbatarians perform great exegetical contortions and wrangling of scripture in their attempts to prove that the Lord Jesus rose from the dead on the seventh day Sabbath rather than the first day of the week, in order to argue for the sabbath's continued observance, all the while shamefully arguing directly against the plain statements of scripture. The **Bible is clear** that the Lord Jesus rose from the dead on the **same day** he appeared to His disciples, on the **first day of the week**. As stated above, Christ's resurrection on the first day of the week was prefigured in the observance of Firstfruits on the "morrow after the sabbath" (point 1 above). Further, **every gospel writer** specifically uses the phrase "first day of the week" in connection with Christ's resurrection and the women's visit to the tomb:

**Matt 28:1** - 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.

**Mark 16:2** - And very early in the morning the **first day of the week**, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun.

**Luke 24:1** - 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.

**John 20:1** - 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.

While these scriptures would allow for Christ to have risen on the Sabbath, to be visited by the women the next day, Mark 16:9 goes on to clearly state:

*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...*

Furthermore, the account of the Lord's appearance to the 2 disciples on the road to Emmaus further proves this truth. To begin with, the Lord Jesus proclaimed multiple times that he would be raised the **third day** after his crucifixion (Matt. 16:1, 17:23 & 20:19; Mark 9:31 & 10:34; Luke 9:22, 18:33 & 24:6-7, all saying "third day"). Even Jesus *enemies* knew about this claim:

...Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, **After three days** I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day... - Matt. 27:63-64

Then, the Lord Jesus was raised the third day:

Him God raised up **the third day**, and shewed him openly; Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.

- Acts 10:40-41

And that he was buried, and that he rose again **the third day** according to the scriptures - 1 Cor. 15:4

Finally, Christ's appearance to the disciples on the road to Emmaus on the third day after His crucifixion **proves** He was raised **on the same day he appeared to them**, that day being the first day of the week:

Luke 24:1 - 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...

...21 But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, **to day is the third day since these things were done.**

- Luke 24:21

Between the clear statement of Mark 16:9 and the exclamation of the two disciples in Luke 24:21, there can be only one conclusion: Christ's resurrection was on the **third day** after His crucifixion, on the **same day** he appeared to his disciples, and on the **first day of the week**. This is confirmed by the undeniable fact that the early church most certainly did meet together on the first day of the week, which is itself confirmed by the writings of early church fathers as reproduced below (Part 6). NOTE: The willingness of the early (predominantly Jewish) church to set aside the sabbath and meet together on the first day of the week in its place is one of the most oft-cited, undeniable historical **proofs** of the resurrection itself!

It is not to be taken as mere coincidence that the Lord appeared after His resurrection to the disciples as they were gathered together in assembly on the first day of the week. His re-appearance exactly a week later, as the disciples were again assembled together, plainly confirms the first day of the week as the Lord's Day:

1 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... ..19 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. 20 And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord. ...26 And **after eight days again** his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. 27 Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. - John 20:1, 19-20, 26-27

By Jewish reckoning of days, the phrase "after eight days again" (v. 26) is synonymous with the phrase "eighth day" (see Matt. 27:63). Further, in this context it means that these two appearances of Christ to His disciples both occurred on the **first day of the week** - as the disciples were assembled together. The significance of this fact must not be dismissed!

Though we have no record of Christ instructing His disciples to continue meeting on the first Day, it is this writer's opinion that He did plainly do so, if by nothing other than by the example He set. What *can* be stated dogmatically from the text is that **in appearing to His disciples in assembly on the first day of the week, Christ clearly approved, confirmed and blessed their gathering together on that day.**

6. The early church clearly met together on the first day of the week, not the seventh. This is a historical fact that is clearly stated in the New Testament scriptures and proven by many recorded statements of 1st and 2nd century church leaders. First, the New Testament plainly states the early church met on the first day of the week:

**Acts 20:7** - 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 continued his speech until midnight.

This verse plainly says it was the common practice of the early church to meet on the first day of the week. But here again, sabbatarians argue directly against the plain sense of the scripture, at this verse claiming that this meeting was just one occurrence and was not the norm, insisting that the early church met on the sabbath. Again, there is **not ONE record** in the New Testament of **ANY** church meeting on the sabbath. While the disciples did go into synagogues on sabbath days it was NOT for church meetings, but for the explicit purpose of preaching the gospel to the Jews. Paul further states it was the **normal practice** of early Christians to meet together on the first day of the week, by instructing them to take up a collection on that day when they assembled, for the purpose of storing up an offering for Paul to take to the impoverished saints in Jerusalem:

**1 Cor 16:2** - **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.

Further, the historical fact that the early church met together on the first day of the week is further proven by many recorded statements of 1st and 2nd century church leaders. Below are some such quotes:

**Barnabas** (of Alexandria)

*"We keep the eighth day [Sunday] with joyfulness, the day also on which Jesus rose again from the dead"*

(Epistle of Barnabas 15:6-8, A.D. 74)

**Ignatius of Antioch**

*"If, therefore, those who were brought up in the ancient order of things have come to the possession of a new hope, no longer observing the Sabbath, but living in the observance of the Lord's Day, on which also our life has sprung up again by Him and by His death — whom some deny, by which mystery we have obtained faith, and therefore endure, that we may be found the disciples of Jesus Christ, our only Master"*

(ca. A.D. 110, Epistle to the Magnesians)

## Justin Martyr

"... On the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying Amen; and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons. But Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Savior on the same day rose from the dead."

(Justin, ca. A.D. 150 from the "First Apology")

"The command of circumcision, again, bidding [them] always circumcise the children on the eighth day, was a type of the true circumcision, by which we are circumcised from deceit and iniquity through Him who rose from the dead on the first day after the Sabbath, [namely through] our Lord Jesus Christ. For the first day after the Sabbath, remaining the first of all the days, is called, however, the eighth, according to the number of all the days of the cycle, and [yet] remains the first.." (Justin, Dialogue 41:4)

"Moreover, all those righteous men already mentioned [(Adam, Abel, Enoch, Lot, Noah, Melchizedek, and Abraham)], though they kept no Sabbaths, were pleasing to God; and after them Abraham with all his descendants until Moses... And you [(fleshly Jews)] were commanded to keep Sabbaths, that you might retain the memorial of God. For His word makes this announcement, saying, "That you may know that I am God who redeemed you.""

(Justin, Dialogue With Trypho the Jew, 150-165 AD, Ante-Nicene Fathers , vol. 1, page 204)

"But if we do not admit this, we shall be liable to fall into foolish opinion, as if it were not the same God who existed in the times of Enoch and all the rest, who neither were circumcised after the flesh, nor observed Sabbaths, nor any other rites, seeing that Moses enjoined such observances... For if there was no need of circumcision before Abraham, or of the observance of Sabbaths, of feasts and sacrifices, before Moses; no more need is there of them now, after that, according to the will of God, Jesus Christ the Son of God has been born without sin, of a virgin sprung from the stock of Abraham."

(Justin, Dialogue With Trypho the Jew, 150-165 AD, Ante-Nicene Fathers , vol. 1, page 206)

## Conclusion - Rest for the People of God

As the Old Covenant's Levitical sacrifices were fulfilled in Christ's blood atonement once and for all time, even so the seventh day sabbath is also fulfilled under the New Covenant in the establishment of the Lord's Day on the eighth day in its place. God's purpose in setting aside the sabbath to allow its fulfillment on the Lord's Day was to (1) to make a loud and clear statement that the old covenant has been set aside to make way for a new and much better covenant; and (2) to proclaim to the world that Christ "is risen indeed." Just as Paul says that in assembling as the body of Christ to celebrate the Lord's Supper together we "do shew the Lord's death til He come" (1 Cor. 11:26), in doing so on the 1st day of the week (the same day **firstfruits** was offered under the old covenant), we also thereby proclaim not only the Lord's death, but also his **resurrection** until He comes.

In light of the foregoing truths, continued insistence on observation of the Old Testament seventh day sabbath as a current Christian duty constitutes serious doctrinal error that must be repented of. It is, in a sense, an extension of the heresy of the 1st century Judaizers, as a continued denial of the setting aside of the old covenant so it could be fulfilled in a new covenant **far superior** to the law of Moses, and a refusal to enter in to the New Testament "rest for the people of God." As said the writer to the Hebrews:

1 Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it... 4 For he spake in a certain place of the **seventh day** on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works...

7 Again, he limiteth a **certain day**, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, **To day** if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts... 8 **For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day.** 9 There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. 10 For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. 11 **Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.** - Hebrews 4:1-11

The point of this passage is that if Joshua (v. 8) had given the children of Israel true spiritual rest, and if the 7th day rest (v. 4) was sufficient, then David (v. 7) would not have looked forward to a new era under a new and better covenant signified by "**another day**," - the Lord's Day. "Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest." Amen.