

The Lords Church And The Lords Day

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THE LORD'S CHURCH AND THE LORD'S DAY

Moslem will keep Friday as his weekly holy day and an orthodox Jew will observe Saturday. The true Christian will gather with his fellow saints on Sunday to publicly worship the God of heaven. The Islamic faith receives its instructions to worship on Fridays from its Koran while Judaism finds its Sabbath in the law of Moses or in The Old Testament. The Christian worships on Sunday, the first day of the week, because the Lord Jesus, through The New Testament, instructs him to gather together with fellow followers to offer to God specific acts of worship on that day.

The Lord's church had its birthday on the first day of the week in Acts 2. In that chapter you will find the first gathering of the church and the fact that its members "...continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." (v. 42). That this practice continued on what we call Sundays today is noted in Acts 20:7 where it is recorded, "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ..." This is a verse that records the custom of apostles and The New Testament disciples as well. A note of explanation may be needed for some about the terms "breaking of bread" and "to break bread" used in the preceding passages. These are phrases used to describe the Lord's Supper because each communicant is required 'k break bread." See I Corinthians 10:16-17. John, who seemed to have lived longer than the other apostles, was so accustomed to gathering on the first day of the week to worship that, though he was a prisoner and separated from other disciples, wrote, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day ..." Revelations 1:10. In writing this he gave to Christians a new term to describe their day of worship, the first day of the week, as the Lord's day.

THE LORD'S DAY

This is a name that tells the worshipper of God there is a day that belongs to the Lord. Just as the terms LORD'S SUPPER or LORD'S TABLE, I Corinthians 11:20, 10:21, tells you that the royal feast belongs to the Christian's king, so this name of a day teaches that day belongs to the Lord Jesus. It is His because He made it a special day suitable to be set apart from all other days of the week. Psalms 118:22-24. Not much mention of the first day of the week is recorded in scripture until, in fulfillment of this prophecy, this day began to assume its prominent and important role in God's scheme of things. For example, in Mark 16:9 and Matthew 28:9-10 Jesus arose from the dead on the first day of the week and for the first time was worshipped as the risen savior. Other events occurred on that same day including His assembling together with His disciples. See Luke 24:13-15, 33-36, and John 20:19. The next first day of the week found the disciples assembled together and Jesus appeared with them again. John 20:26. While these events in themselves may not require the disciples to gather to worship each first day of the week they do show a greater interest in this day by the Holy Ghost and the ever growing role it was assuming in the mind of God. Add to this the fact that the disciples were gathered together on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:1. Pentecost was to be observed on the first day of the week. Leviticus 23:11, 15. So, again, the disciples had gathered on

the first day of the week and on that day the risen and ascended Lord chose to send the Holy Spirit and begin the church He promised to build in Matthew 16:18. It was on the first day of the week that God's plan for regeneration was completed, I Peter 1:3, and on this same day of the week 3000 souls experienced this new birth for the first time, Acts 2:47. It is, therefore, no wonder the disciples gathered together to break bread on the first day of the week, Acts 20:7, to remember their risen Lord, I Corinthians 11:23-26, and to proclaim His death. Other events that occurred on this day could be cited, but these should be enough to show "This is the day the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." The first day of the week is THE LORD'S DAY.

THE COMMAND TO ASSEMBLE TO EAT ON THIS DAY

In Hebrews 10:25 the Christians are commanded to assemble together, but are not told the day to assemble. In I Corinthians 11:33 they are enjoined that "...When ye come together to eat, tarry one for another." The only thing Christians are commanded to literally eat together is the Lord's supper. In Acts 20:7 the disciples came together to obey these two commands. They assembled and they ate. They did this on the first day of the week or on Sunday. And the writer of Acts wrote that this is "when" the disciples gathered to do this. It was their custom to do this on this day. In these verses the Christian is commanded to gather on the first day of the week to partake of the Lord's supper. Since the day of the week is revealed as opposed to a yearly or a monthly date the Church of Christ, meets each Lord's day to obey this and other commands. Church history reveals- this to have been the practice of the church for the first three centuries of its existence. Alexander Campbell wrote in "The Christian System," page 287, "All antiquity concurs in evincing that, for the three first centuries all the churches broke bread once a week. Pliny, in his Epistles, book x.; Justin Martyr, in his Second Apology for the Christians; and Tertullian, De Ora., page 135, testify that it was the universal practice in all the weekly assemblies of the brethren, "after they had prayed and sung praises." This article could be swelled with quotations to this effect but there is not room nor should it be necessary since Acts 20:7 establishes the weekly day of observance as the first day of the week or Sunday.

I CORINTHIANS 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." LAYING BY IN STORE or giving is a religious service that was enjoined on the Corinthians and others of The New Testament era and on us today. Furthermore, it was commanded to be done on a certain day. The first day of the week. In obedience to this injunction, the Church of Christ gathers each Lord's day to contribute as each worshipper has prospered. She does not ask for a collection on any other day of the week.

INFLUENCE OF THIS OBSERVANCE ON THE ROMAN EMPIRE

On March 7, A.D. 321 the Emperor Constantine issued a decree to the citizens of the Roman Empire to rest on "the venerable day of the sun ..." (Or Sunday). He enjoined this on his subjects, not because this was an unknown practice before this date, but because it was the day Corinthians had been worshipping since the beginning of the church in A.D. 33. He wanted his fellow citizens to begin worshipping and serving God as Christians had and were doing.

If worshipping on this day could sway an Emperor to make it a special day in his kingdom, should not you also consider giving the Lord's day a special place in your life?

Each Christian should delight in gathering with other Christians each first day of

the week to offer these gifts and sacrifices along with those recorded in Acts 2:42 and rejoice in the fact that Jesus has made this such a wonderful and important day.-

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