

THE CHURCH AND THE LORD'S DAY

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Some time ago I was privileged to hear a prayer led by one of the young men in the church. It was in this particular prayer that I was very impressed to hear him pray, saying, "Oh Lord, we're so thankful for the privilege of being a member of the church of Christ." This is a very simple and plain statement but carries with it great worth, meaning, and great weight. This young man, even though he was young spiritually, recognized the great and wonderful privilege of being a member of the church.

We all ought to recognize the importance, power, and benefits of the church. We all ought to be thankful for the privilege of being a member of it. This young man, it seems to me, saw to the fullness of being a member of the body of Jesus Christ. Perhaps he is able to see some things that older members sometimes overlook.

The church was blood-purchased. It is a heaven-sanctioned organization. It has an eternal destiny. It is the greatest institution on earth. It is named ninety-nine times in the New Testament, perhaps more. Its importance is magnified by the number of times the pen of inspiration saw fit to record the word, "church", and its worth.

But today, may I speak for a little while concerning the matter of the church and the Lord's Day. The Lord's Day is the first day of the week. We find the term "Lord's Day", occurring in Revelation 1:10, from the pen of the apostle John whenever the Bible says, "I was in the spirit on the Lord's Day." In Psalms 118:24, we remember the words of the prophet David when he projected into the future saying, "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." This day is inseparably connected with the church, and certainly there is no greater manifestation of a still existing church, than when the church assembles on the Lord's Day for the purpose of magnifying Jesus Christ, and seeing to our worship to God.

If you could imagine for a little while, let your mind drift, as it were out into the vast space of the universe, and think for a little time about the Lord's Day morning services. Think of every congregation that meets upon the face of the earth, of the beautiful praises that are wafted toward heaven and all of the wonderful words spoken in exhortation to one another and in praise to God. If you can think about the praises as they drift on the air waves, as it were, to make their way to the portals of heaven from the congregations that assemble, we can get somewhat of a picture, no doubt, of what it means to God, whenever the church comes together in the assembled capacity on the Lord's Day. May we understand clearly that all church assemblies should mean, honor to God, but especially on the Lord's Day. This day becomes a distinct day in that two things are to be performed that must not be performed upon any other day of the week. Thus we come to recognize how that the church assemblies magnify the greatness of the institution.

I would like to notice with you, in a few points, how the first day of the week, the Lord's Day and the church are connected. In order for us to get the connection or relationship between the Lord's Day and the church it will be necessary to get the connection between:

The Lord's Day and Salvation.

Without salvation there is no church. The church is a result of people being called out of the world, the Lord adding them to the church. The church is a result of folks being delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of Jesus Christ. And so then as the Lord's Day relates to salvation, the Lord's Day and the church will be related to one another. Salvation and the

church are inseparable. It is no accident that the church had its beginning upon the first day of the week.

The Bible says, in Isaiah 2:2 and 1st. Tim. 3:15, "the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established." This Lord's house is called the church according to Paul's writing to Timothy. The church had its beginning on the first day of the week. It was a first day of the week, on the day of Pentecost. It was on this day that the gospel of Jesus Christ was preached. Now David said, (Pa. 118:24), "This is the day that the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it."

Although the word "new" does not necessarily occur in that passage, I think it indicates the idea of a new day that's going to come about, insomuch as the Sabbath was going to cease, and this day was going to be replaced with the day that is called the Lord's day in Rev. 1:10. Concerning this new day that David prophesies about, we also want to notice with you that there is going to be also a reference to a new house which had its beginning on this new day. We want to notice also that this was the time that a new law was brought into existence under the preaching of that new law; there was a new house which resulted.

Pentecost Came On The First Day

Please notice Lev. 23:15, "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." We could engage, I'm sure, in great controversy over when, or upon what particular Sabbath they started counting these seven Sabbaths, but this is not the point at all. The point is this: The Bible says, "Even unto the morrow after the seventh Sabbath shall ye number fifty days; (Pentecost means fiftieth day). That fiftieth day is a result of having counted seven Sabbaths. Anytime you start with a given Sabbath regardless of how many Sabbaths you count, the day following will be a first day of the week. Since the Sabbath was the seventh day of the week, the morrow after the Sabbath, or the day following that Sabbath would have to be a first day.

The Church Began On Pentecost

In Acts 2:14, we read how the apostles were gathered together on the day of Pentecost. The Holy Ghost came and they were baptized therewith, according to the promise made them by Christ. Peter delivered a great discourse on this day. Folks were pricked in their heart and asked, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Upon this question, Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, —" the scriptures tell us in verse 41, "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about 3,000, souls." Going on to verse 47, we read, "...And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." The obedience of these people, on that day resulted in their salvation and the Lord adding them to the church. Therefore, we can correctly state that a new institution had its beginning on the first day of the week. A new institution on a new day, the day which David said the Lord hath made, the day John called the Lord's Day. Paul called this new institution the church, the pillar and ground of the truth according to 1st. Tim. 3:15.

The Gospel Was First Preached On Pentecost

We can see that a new house, a spiritual house, see (1st. Peter 2:5-9), had been established. Its establishment came as a result of the preaching of the gospel, which first began to be preached on the first day of the week. Therefore let us now discuss the matter of the "new law" as compared to the old.

However, before we move directly into that point, allow me to point out that what occurred on Pentecost with reference to the receiving of the word, seems to be another fulfillment of

David's prophecy. Note in Acts two, the Bible says "they that "gladly" received his word were baptized. David says of the day that the Lord would make, that we will rejoice and be "glad" in it. The Bible says they were pricked in their heart, full of remorse over the sins that they had committed, but then the gospel was preached and they gladly received that which was preached.

Now, in reference to the new law, The Bible tells us plainly of the old and the new, of the first and the second. Notice, Heb. 8:13, "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." Again, Heb. 8:7, "For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second." Again, Heb. 10:9, "—He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second."

Notice Eph. 2:15, "—Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; —" Also in Colossians 2:14, "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; —"

Going on to verse 16, we find the writer saying, "Let no man, therefore, (i.e. for this reason) judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days: "—What reason are you speaking of Paul? — Due to the fact that Christ, he says, has blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that were against us! By this we can see that the new law took the place of the eating of meats, of drinks, of the feasts of the new moon as well as the Sabbaths.

A New Spiritual System

So far we have discussed a new law, a new building or a new spiritual house. Allow me to make another reference on this in your Bible from Heb. 9:11. "But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building." Under the Law of Moses was a tabernacle. Under the new arrangement is the church. It is Gods house today. God could have had you and me to have been born under the Law of Moses. If so we would have had to offer animal sacrifices on an altar. You and I can be thankful that we were not born bound under a system of bloody and inconvenient sacrifices, but have been blessed with the privilege of being a spiritual people that can offer up spiritual sacrifices as members of a spiritual house. How can one dare to stand in the face of all the great benefits of the church and say that the church does not really matter, that it's unimportant?

A New Sin-Offering

Under the new system there is a new sin offering. This has some connection with the first day as we will see later. On this point let me read 1st. Cor. 15:14, "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures."

Notice in particular, "he died for OUR SINS, "-Here is our new sin-offering. Each first day of the week the church assembles for the purpose of simply showing forth the Lord's death till He comes again.

May we recognize that in communion we do show forth the Lord's death, 1st. Cor. 10:16,

'the cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?' We do not worship the Lord who is dead and will never live again, but we worship a resurrected Lord. The communion primarily shows forth His death, however, it also entails our confidence in his resurrection as we believe he was raised from the dead, placing the blossom of immortality on every grave. It is significant that Jesus came forth from the grave on the first day of the week, and thereby once again distinguished this new day as David said that he would. When we come together on the first day of the week for the purpose of communion, Acts 20:7, 1st. Cor. 10:16, it is to show forth our recognition of the new sin-offering made for us. Not an animal sacrifice, for with such sacrifices God is not well pleased, but as he said, "A body thou hast prepared me," Heb. 10:5-6.

Proof Jesus Was Raised On the First Day

Since there is mix-up by some in religion regarding the day which Jesus was raised from the grave, please allow me to deal with the question just briefly. The most unmistakable proof of the first day resurrection is in the twenty-fourth chapter of Luke. Notice this sequence of events:

Luke 24:1, "Now UPON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulcher—"

Luke 24:13, "And, behold, two of them went that SAME DAY to a village called Emmaus—"

Please continue reading from verse thirteen and you will find that it was on this trip that two disciples were discussing the things which had come to pass. Jesus appeared walking with them, but their eyes were holden that they should not know him. Jesus questioned them concerning their conversation. They told him how Jesus had been delivered up, condemned and crucified. Then notice in verse 21, "But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, TODAY IS THE THIRD day since these things were done." Referring back to verse seven of the same chapter and also to verse forty-six, the scriptures teach, "The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the THIRD DAY rise again."

The conclusion is that Christ was to rise the third day. On the first day of the week the women went to the tomb. On that same day, (i.e. the first day), the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, said today is the third day, since all these things came to pass. Therefore if Christ was to rise the third day, he rose on the first day of the week for the first of the week was the third day since he had been delivered condemned and crucified. Little wonder Mark 16:9, says, "when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, —". This is the Lord's Day. This is the day the Lord hath made.

In conclusion the church and the Lord's Day are inseparable. The gospel was first preached on the first day of the week. Therefore, the new law had its beginning on the first day of the week. By this preaching of the new law, folks were saved, the Lord added them to the church and a new house had its beginning on the first day of the week. This begun a new spiritual system, paid for by a new sin offering, Christ Jesus. Christ, though he died, yet he lives evermore, because he came forth from the grave on the first day of the week. The church is to assemble according to example, (Acts 20:7), on the first day of the week, to break bread in memory of our Lord.

The First day of the week, the Lord's Day and all that it incorporates magnifies the church and its importance. Every time that God's people comes together to worship Him on the first day of the week in spirit and in truth, simply tells the world, "The Church, Still It Stands."