

The Lord's Day



REASONS FOR THE OBSERVANCE

... By ...

THE LATTER-DAY SAINTS
OF THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK AS THE
CHRISTIAN SABBATH OR THE
"LORD'S DAY"



By

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MISSION ADDRESSES

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THE LORD'S DAY

The acceptance by the Latter-day Saints of what is usually called the "Christian Sabbath," or "Lord's Day," as the proper day of special service and worship of the Lord is sometimes challenged. Such acceptance is challenged as being in violation of one of the Ten Commandments—the fourth—which directed ancient Israel to keep holy the Sabbath day—the Seventh day of the week; and which, it is held, was designed to be a perpetual law unto all who accept God as Creator and Law-giver.

This question is raised not only against the Church of the Latter-day Saints but against all Christendom, Catholic and Protestant alike, who accept the first day of the week or Sunday as the Christian Sabbath instead of the Jewish Sabbath, the seventh day of the week. The question is raised by one of the minor sects of Christendom, "The Seventh Day Adventists." The distinguishing characteristics of this sect are that they believe in the personal and glorious coming of the Lord Jesus Christ; and that the holy day of worship appointed of God is the seventh day of the week instead of the first. Hence their name—"Seventh Day Adventists."

Owing to the fact that modern Christians quite generally deny the continuation of revelation after the days of the apostles, and as they cannot point to any direct revelation, or positive apostolic institution in the New Testament by which the first day of the week was substituted for the old Jewish Sabbath, the seventh day, which Jesus during His lifetime honored by observing, the Adventists have other Christians at somewhat of a disadvantage in this controversy. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, however, need not be embarrassed by the arguments of Adventists, since the Church of Christ in this last dispensation has the warrant of God's word, by direct revelation, for keeping holy the "Lord's Day," that is, the first day of the week, as a day of public worship and thanksgiving, a holy Sabbath unto the Lord. It is not our intention, however, to avoid a discussion of the question by thus placing it on entirely new ground,

and making the success of the issue depend upon one's ability to make it clear that God has given such a revelation, although, that is a position that can be consistently taken by our Church. But we desire to point out the evidence we have (1) from the New Testament, and (2) from the practice of the early Christian Church, for observing the first day of the week as a day of public worship, sanctified and set apart as the "Lord's Day." By doing so we shall be able to show at least that there is a very strong probability that the change from the seventh to the first day of the week was made by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, after His resurrection; that it was perpetuated by His apostles and the early Christian Church; and then, in conclusion, shall cite the revelation referred to which, to the Latter-day Saints, changes this "probability" into fact and confirms with divine sanction our custom of worshiping on the first day of the week. By pursuing this course we shall draw the strong probability to be derived from the scriptures and the practice of the early Church to the support of the revelation referred to, while the revelation, as already indicated, will transform the "probability" of the New Testament scriptures into positive fact.

We begin with the arguments to be derived from the New Testament:

It is related in John's gospel that on "the first day of the week," Mary Magdalene, early in the morning, met the Lord Jesus, after His resurrection, and conversed with Him. This she told the disciples. "Then the same 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 their midst and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. * * * As my Father hath sent me even so send I you. And when he had said this, He breathed on them and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." (John 20:19-23.)

Thomas, one of the Twelve, was not present at this meeting nor does he believe the account delivered to him of it by his fellow apostles, but declared he must see the print of the nails in the Master's hands, and thrust his hand into His side before he could believe. "**And after eight days**," which of course brings us again to the first day of the week, "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." He then dispelled the doubts of Thomas, and did many other things which are not written. (John 20:24-30.)

Let this much be held in mind from the above: Jesus arose from the dead on the first day of the week and appeared to His disciples when they were assembled together. Then, "After eight days," which brings us again to the first day of the week, His disciples were again assembled, and He appeared unto them. We have no account of His appearing to any one in the interval, a significant fact; and one which makes it easy to believe that the second meeting on the first day of the week was appointed by the Lord Himself, and since all that He did on this and other occasions was not written (John 20:30 and ch. 21:25), it is not impossible, nor even improbable, that He then sanctified this day, and appointed it as a holy day, to be observed as sacred by His followers. This view is sustained by the continued practice of the apostles in meeting on the first day of the week.

It is a significant fact that the day of Pentecost, upon which day the apostles received their spiritual endowment by the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, "that year fell on the first day of the week." (See Smith's Dictionary of the Bible, Hackett & Abbott's edition, vol. 2: Art. Lord's Day, p. 1677. Also Bramhall's work, Vol. 5: p. 51, Oxford Ed., Discourse on the Sabbath and Lord's Day). "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place" (Acts 2:1). They received the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, and publicly preached the gospel and administered baptism. This assembling together on the first day of the week was doubtless in continuation of that new order of things with respect to the Sabbath which Jesus had ordained.

Many years after Pentecost, in giving the account of Paul's journey from Philippi to Troas, the writer of the Acts of the Apostles says that the journey was accomplished in five days; and at Troas the apostolic party abode seven days; "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." (Acts 20:4-7.)

Again: Paul sends the following instructions to the

Saints at Corinth—and it is to be seen from the passage itself that he had given the same instructions to the churches of Galatia: “Now, concerning the collection for the Saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God has prospered him, that there be no gatherings (i.e., collections) when I come.” (1 Cor. 16:1, 2.)

These passages prove very clearly that the custom of meeting together for acts of public worship and the preaching of the gospel was firmly established in apostolic times, and since that is the case it doubtless was ordered by Messiah's own appointment. Surely the apostles would not presume to establish such an order of things without divine sanction. Within the lifetime of the last of the apostles, too, this Christian Sabbath had received its name—“the Lord's Day.” John's statement—“I was in the spirit on the Lord's Day, and heard behind me a great voice,” etc., can have reference to no other thing than the fact that on the first day of the week which had come to be known by the Christians as “the Lord's Day,” John was in the spirit, etc. “The general consent, both of Christian antiquity and modern divines, has referred it to be the weekly festival of our Lord's resurrection, and identified it with ‘the first day of the week,’ on which He rose with the patristical ‘eighth day,’ or day which is both the first and the eighth; in fact with the ‘Solis Dies’ or Sunday, of every age of the church.” (Smith's Dictionary of the Bible, Vol. 2; p. 1676.)

Following is the argument of a very respectable authority upon these New Testament passages, and it seems to us decidedly strong:

“As the death of Christ made atonement for sin and symbolized the death of His church to the world, so did His resurrection mark the beginning of a new spiritual life, or, in the words of Paul, ‘a new creation in Christ Jesus.’ This new creation was the higher renewal of that first one which sin had marred; and therefore we find the disciples, from that very day, celebrating the first day of the week as the Christian Sabbath, the Lord's day, on which He met for worship and fellowship. These assemblies began on that very evening when the risen Lord entered the chamber where the eleven apostles had met with doors shut for fear of the

Jews, saluted them with the blessing of peace, showed them His wounded body, and ate bread with them; and then breathing His Spirit upon them He repeated their commission, to preach the gospel to every creature, and to baptize all believers; conferred on them the power to work miracles, and gave them the authority of remitting and retaining sins. Such was the first meeting of the apostolic church on the first Lord's day. After eight days again His disciples were within, the doors being shut as before, when Jesus stood again in their midst, with the salutation of 'peace,' and satisfied the doubts of Thomas, with the tangible proof of His resurrection." (Student's Eccl. Hist. [Philip Smith, B. A.] Vol. 1, pp. 21, 22.)

The same authority continues the argument in a footnote thus:

"The meetings of the disciples on each eighth day have the more force as an argument from the very fact of their being only incidentally recorded. The correspondence of the interval with the week, and the distinction of the day from the old Sabbath, are facts which admit of no other explanation; and all doubt is removed by Paul's plain allusion to the meetings of the disciples on the first day of the week, and by the testimony of the heathen as well as Christian writers to the practice from the earliest age of the church. John, in mentioning the day as a season of spiritual ecstasy in which Christ appeared to him and showed him the worship of the heavenly temple, expressly calls it by the name which it has always borne in the church, 'the Lord's Day.'" (The Student's Eccl. Hist., Vol. 1, p. 22, Note.)

These arguments may be further strengthened by the following considerations: When the Jews were stickling for a very strict observance of the old Sabbath, Jesus, with some spirit, replied that "the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath." And furthermore gave them to understand that "the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27, 28.) It follows then that since Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath, it would clearly be within the province of His authority to change the old Mosaic institution of the Sabbath if He so elected. Paul in his day said: "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold all things have become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). Again in his letter to the Ephesians, the apostle represents Christ

as "having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances." And again in his letter to the Colossians: "And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath He quickened together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses; blotting out the handwritings of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to the cross. * * * 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: which are a shadow of things to come." (Col. 2:13-17.)

From this it is clear that many things in the law of Moses being fulfilled in Christ were done away, or changed to conform to the law of the gospel and to say the very least of the argument set forth up to this point, it is very probable that the Sabbath was among those things so changed.

Turn we now to the argument to be derived from the custom of the primitive church:

Next to the New Testament writers, Clement of Rome, a companion of the apostles, is most relied upon as stating correctly early Christian practices, and in his epistle to the Corinthians, speaking of things commanded of Christ, he says:

"Now the offerings and ministrations He commanded to be performed with care, and not to be done rashly or in disorder, but at fixed times and seasons. And when and by whom He would have them performed He Himself fixed by His supreme will: that all things being done with piety according to His pleasure might be acceptable to His will. They therefore that make their offerings at the appointed seasons are acceptable and blessed; for while they follow the instructions of the Master they cannot go wrong." (Clement's Epistle to the Ephesians, chapter 40. We use Rev. Geo. A. Jackson's translation of the passage.)

From this it appears that Jesus Himself did fix set "times and seasons" for "offerings and ministrations," as well also by "whom" as "when" they should be performed, and that, too, according to "His supreme will." This represents the Lord as having arranged matters in the church—including "times and seasons" for "offerings and ministrations"—more definitely than any of the New Testament writers credit Him with doing. Is it unreasonable to think

that among these was the transition from the Jewish Sabbath to the Lord's Day?

In the Epistle of Barnabas, written in the early part of the second century, it is said by that writer, speaking of the Christian custom as pertaining to the Sabbath: "We keep the eighth day unto gladness, in the which Jesus also rose from the dead, and after that He had been manifested, ascended into heaven." (Epist. Barnabas, Ch. 15.)

The younger Pliny, the Roman governor of Bithynia, in describing the custom of the Christians to his friend, Trajan, the Roman emperor, says:

"They were accustomed on a stated day to meet before daylight, and repeat among themselves a hymn to Christ as to a God, and to bind themselves by an oath with an obligation of not committing any wickedness; * * * after which it was their custom to separate and to meet again at a promiscuous, harmless, meal (the Sacrament?) from which last practice they desisted, after the publication of my edict." (Pliny's letter to Trajan and the emperor's reply will be found in full in Roberts' "New Witness for God," Vol. 1, pp. 54-57.)

It is only claimed for this passage that it proves that the Christians had a stated day on which they met for the worship of God, and the renewal of religious covenants; and doubtless that stated day was the eighth day of the week mentioned by Barnabas, and which corresponds with the "first day of the week" mentioned by the New Testament writers.

Justin Martyr, one of the most learned and highly esteemed of the apostolic fathers, is very clear upon this subject. He says, writing in the first half of the second century, almost within shouting distance of the inspired apostles:

"In all our obligations we bless the Maker of all things, through His Son Jesus Christ, and through the Holy Ghost, and on the day which is called Sunday, there is an assembly in the same place of all who live in cities or in country districts and the records of the apostles, or the writings of the prophets, are read as long as we have time. Then the reader concludes, and the president verbally instructs and exhorts us to the imitation of those excellent things. Then we all arise together and offer up our prayers. And, as I

said before, when we have concluded our prayer, bread is brought and wine and water, and the president in like manner offers up prayers and thanksgiving with all his strength, and the people give their assent by saying, amen. * * * But Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God when He changed the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Savior on the same day rose from the dead: for the day before that of Saturn He was crucified, and on the day after it, which is Sunday, He appeared to His apostles and disciples and taught them these things which we have given to you also for your consideration." (I Apology, Ch. 67.)

We have not the space to further examine the testimony of the fathers, nor is it necessary. Sufficient has been quoted to show that in that age immediately succeeding the apostles, the practice, which seems to have begun even under the immediate supervision of the Lord Himself, was firmly established in the early church. The learned writer in Smith's Dictionary of the Bible, Rev. James Augustus Hessey, who there treats this subject, says :

"The result of our examination of the principal writers of the two centuries after the death of St. John are as follows: The Lord's day (a name which has now come out more prominently, and is connected more explicitly with our Lord's resurrection than before) existed during these two centuries as part and parcel of apostolical, and so of scriptural Christianity. * * * Our design does not necessarily lead us to do more than to state facts; but if the facts be allowed to speak for themselves, they indicate that the Lord's day is a purely Christian institution, sanctioned by apostolic practice, mentioned in apostolic writings, and so possessed of whatever divine authority all apostolic ordinances and doctrines (which are not obviously temporary, or were not abrogated by the apostles themselves) can be supposed to possess." (Vol. 2, pp. 1678-9.)

Yet after all this is admitted, and the strength of the argument is very great in my judgment, it must still be confessed that it falls somewhat short of being absolutely conclusive. It cannot be made out clearly and positively that Jesus or the apostles by direct, official action authorized the observance of the first day of the week as a day of public worship, dedicated to the service of God, and designed to take

the place of the Jewish Sabbath. The most that can be claimed for the evidence here adduced—and it is the strongest if not all that can be marshalled in support of the proposition—is that it is **probable** that such a change was instituted. Rev. Baden Powell, professor of geometry at Oxford University, states the case as it stands most truly. He says:

“To those Christians who look to the written word as the sole authority for anything claiming apostolic or divine sanction, it becomes peculiarly important to observe that the New Testament evidence of the observance of the Lord’s day amounts merely to the recorded fact that the disciples did assemble on the first day of the week, and the **probable** application of the designation of the Lord’s day to that day.” (Kitto’s Cyclopaedia of Biblical Literature, Art. Lord’s Day.)

That Catholics regard what is written in the New Testament as insufficient to justify them in the observance of the first day of the week instead of the seventh is evident from the fact that they appeal to the tradition of the church or “the unwritten word of God” in justification of their practice, and upbraid Protestants for their rejection of the authority of tradition, which alone, in their view, justifies the change from the seventh to the first. The author of the Catholic work, “End of Religious Controversy,” after citing the scripture commanding the observance of the seventh day as the Sabbath, then says:

“Yet with all this weight of scripture authority for keeping the Sabbath or seventh day holy, Protestants of all denominations make this a profane day, and transfer the obligation of it to the first day of the week, or Sunday. Now what authority have they for doing this? None whatever, except the unwritten word, or tradition of the Catholic church; which declares that the Apostles made the change in honor of Christ’s resurrection and the descent of the Holy Ghost on that day of the week” (End of Religious Controversy, letter 11).

It is this element of uncertainty in the evidence, and the consequent inconclusiveness in the argument that those who contend for the seventh day as the Sabbath of the Lord take advantage of; but, as stated in the beginning, the Latter-day Saints need not share the embarrassment that other Christians generally feel over the question, for the Lord has set

the matter at rest by a revelation in the last days to His church. In a revelation to His servant Joseph Smith, given in August, 1831, He said:

“Thou shalt offer a sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in righteousness, even that of a broken heart and a contrite spirit. And that thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day; for verily this is a day appointed unto you to rest from your labors, and to pay thy devotions unto the Most High. Nevertheless thy vows shall be offered up in righteousness on all days and at all times; but remember that on this, the Lord’s day, thou shall offer thine oblations and thy sacraments unto the Most High, confessing thy sins unto thy brethren and before the Lord. And on this day thou shalt do none other thing, only let thy food be prepared with singleness of heart that thy fasting may be perfect, or in other words that thy joy may be full.” (Doc. & Cov. Sec. 59:8-13.)

This is in clear allusion to the first day of the week and thus the matter is set at rest. The observance of the “Lord’s day” as the day sacred to the worship of Almighty God, so far as the Latter-day Saints are concerned, does not rest upon the “probability” that it was of divine or apostolic institution, as is the case with Protestant Christendom; nor does it rest upon the “tradition” of the church that it was of apostolic institution, as is the case with the Catholic church; but the observance of that day comes to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints by direct appointment of the Lord by revelation to the head of the Church in the present new dispensation of the gospel; and that revelation transforms the “probability,” that the first day of the week was substituted for the old Jewish Sabbath, into a certainty.

At the Seventy-seventh Annual Conference of the Church, held in the Tabernacle, Salt Lake City, Utah, April 5, 6, 7, 1907, Anthon H. Lund, of the First Presidency of the Church, speaking on this subject of the Sabbath Day, and justifying the practice of the Church in observing the first day of the week as our Christian Sabbath, employed among other arguments the following:

“It is impossible for all to keep the Sabbath day at the very same time all over the globe. If all the people lived on

one longitude or meridian they could keep it at the same time, but as they are now scattered around the globe, there is a great difference in time. For instance, children went to Sunday School in New Zealand yesterday at half past two o'clock. It was Saturday to us; (President Lund made these remarks on Sunday forenoon) it was ten o'clock Sunday morning to them. The children on the Hawaiian Islands will go to Sunday School about one o'clock today, and it will be ten o'clock then for them. Thus, at a given time it may be Sunday for one set of people and Saturday for people in another place. The teachers in the Hawaiian Sunday School might say today to the children, 'Your brethren in New Zealand met yesterday, when it was twelve o'clock here, in their Sunday School,' and the children would likely say, 'Why, they have Sunday School on a Saturday!' The line which divides the time, or which indicates where day begins, is an arbitrary one made by men for the sake of convenience. It is located the very best place that it could be, because there are very few inhabitants that the line will strike. It passes over the Pacific Ocean, and in order that no island shall have Saturday on one side and Sunday on the other, they have turned the line around the group of islands in the Pacific Ocean, so that pertaining to the same country, under the same government, may have the same day; but this is all an arbitrary arrangement. If, then, the Lord accepted the devotions of those who worshipped Him yesterday, calling the day Sunday, and accepts the worship of those living a short distance eastward who call today Sunday, the important question seems to be, **not so much the exact time as the fact that one day in every seven is set apart to be a day of rest.**"

In conclusion, let us ask the Latter-day Saints to observe with what solemnity God hath dedicated this day, and set it apart for the worship of the Lord; and how strictly He hath prohibited other occupation than this on that day; and so much as our "certainty" outstrips the "probability" of the Christian sects that the "Lord's day" is the proper day for public worship, so let our strict observance of it outstrip theirs.

THE ARTICLES OF FAITH

Of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

1. We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.

2. We believe that men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam's transgression.

3. We believe that through the atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.

4. We believe that the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: (1) Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; (2) Repentance; (3) Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; (4) Laying on of Hands for the Gift of the Holy Ghost.

5. We believe that a man must be called of God, by prophecy, and by the laying on of hands, by those who are in authority, to preach the Gospel and administer in the ordinances thereof.

6. We believe in the same organization that existed in the Primitive Church, viz.: Apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers, evangelists, etc.

7. We believe in the gift of tongues, prophecy, revelation, visions, hearing, interpretation of tongues, etc.

8. We believe the Bible to be the word of God, as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.

9. We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.

10. We believe in the literal gathering of Israel and in the restoration of the Ten Tribes; that Zion will be built upon this (the American) continent; that Christ will reign personally upon the earth; and, that the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory.

11. We claim the privilege of worshipping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may.

12. We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law.

13. We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men; indeed, we may say that we follow the admonition of Paul—We believe all things, we hope all things, we have endured many things, and hope to be able to endure all things: If there is anything virtuous, lovely, or of good report or praiseworthy, we seek after these things.—JOSEPH SMITH.

THE BOOK OF MORMON

An account of the religious, political and social life of the ancient inhabitants of North and South America, covering the period of time from 2200 B. C. to 420 A. D. It is a most interesting and instructive book, but most of all the word of the Lord to the people of this continent as the Bible is the word of the Lord to the people of the old world.

Wherefore it is an abridgment of the record of the people of Nephi, and also of the Lamanites; written to the Lamanites who are a remnant of the house of Israel; and also to Jew and Gentile: written by way of commandment, and also by the Spirit of prophecy and of revelation. Written and sealed up, and hid unto the Lord, that they might not be destroyed; to come forth by the gift and power of God unto the interpretation thereof; sealed by the hand of Moroni, and hid up unto the Lord, to come forth in due time by way of the Gentile; the interpretation thereof by the gift of God.

An abridgment taken from the Book of Ether also; which is a record of the people of Jared; who were scattered at the time the Lord confounded the language of the people when they were building a tower to get to heaven; which is to show unto the remnant of the House of Israel what great things the Lord hath done for their fathers; and that they may know the covenants of the Lord, that they are not cast off forever; and also to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that JESUS is the CHRIST, the ETERNAL GOD, manifesting himself unto all nations. And now if there are faults, they are the mistakes of men; wherefore condemn not the things of God, that ye may be found spotless at the judgment seat of Christ.

Copies of the Book of Mormon and other Latter-day Saint literature may be had by addressing any of the Missions listed on second page.