

THE LORD'S DAY

Sadly, observance of the Lord's Day is in grave deterioration. It seems to be like an old ruin of a house ready to collapse. I don't think we have ever had such contempt for the Lord's Day in our nation as we have in present times.

W.R. Mohon wrote a book on the *Lord's Day*, published by Banner of Truth, and in it he said, "When a nation remembers Sunday as the Lord's Day and keeps it holy unto Him this is both pleasing to God and beneficial to the country". ... But when a nation abandons the Lord's day, when churches close and bars open, and the mind of the people are not set upon the worship of God ... what really is the difference between today and the times of Sodom?!

How we need voices in Parliament such as William Wilberforce (1759-1833), "Oh what a blessing is Sunday ... There is nothing in which I would advise you to be more strictly conscientious than in keeping the Sabbath day holy".

Our *Confession* teaches, (ch.22.7), "As it is a law of nature, applicable to all, that a proportion of time, determined by God, should be allocated for the worship of God, so, by His Word, He has particularly appointed one day in seven to be kept as a holy Sabbath to Himself. The commandment to this effect is positive, moral, and of perpetual application."

In the days of Nehemiah the children of Jerusalem had become content with **compromising companionships** (13:4-9) with others who did not share their passion for God. When they didn't put God first they fell into a **financial fiasco** because they forgot the priority of putting God and His house first (vv.10-14). And then the Bible tells us about their **domestic disobedience** as they married spouses from a Gentile (i.e. non-Jewish) background (vv.23-28). Such was the decline in their society that they began also to fail in another very important aspect In the wilderness of Sinai God had commanded their forefathers, **Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.**

This same command had been repeated in **Neh. 10:31** **And if the people of the land bring ware or any victuals on the sabbath day to sell, that we would not buy it of them on the sabbath, or on the holy day, but as Nehemiah walked round the city ... 15:15** **In those days saw I in Judah (!) some treading wine presses on the sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all manner of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the sabbath day: and I testified against them in the day wherein they sold victuals.**

Let's consider this subject of the Lord's Day ...

IT IS THE LORD'S DAY

- * It was the day when God rested from His work, and it is the one day in seven that He has set aside for us to rest, ... now, what does 'rest' mean?
- * Does it mean the one day when you can lie in bed until dinner time, and get up and lie around the house the rest of the day? No, that is not what it means.
- * Here are these people of God in Jerusalem, and as Nehemiah walked through the city ...
- * He saw them treading the wine presses *on the Sabbath*,
- * He saw them coming in out of the fields with the sheaves of corn they had reaped *on the Sabbath*,
- * He saw them carrying all their wine and grapes and figs and he saw them selling them *on the Sabbath*.
- * And he saw the gates of the city open for business and the children of Israel standing alongside the men of Tyre, - the Gentiles, - *on the Sabbath*.
- * Now, there was nothing wrong with bringing the sheaves of corn into Jerusalem, and there was nothing wrong with carrying into the city their wine and grapes and figs, and there was nothing wrong with standing at the gates and doing business, but what was wrong was this – they had neglected what God had commanded! [Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.](#)
- * What does 'holy' mean? 'Holy' means it is to be kept separate and different from all the other days.
- * And for these Israelites in Judah it ought to have been a 'holy' day set apart unto the worship of the Almighty God Who had settled them again in their own land.
- * God took Sabbath observance seriously; He said, [Ex. 35:2 Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day there shall be to you an holy day, a sabbath of rest to the LORD: whosoever doeth work therein shall be put to death.](#)
- * Throughout Scripture He commanded His people to observe His Day.
- * On one occasion, in Num. 15:32-36 the Israelites found a man who had been gathering sticks on the Lord's Day and they brought him to Moses and Aaron; that man was stoned until he was dead, - such was the seriousness of upholding the Sabbath.
- * The Psalmist gives us the purpose for the Sabbath, [Ps. 92:1 A Psalm or Song for the sabbath day. It is a good thing to give thanks unto the LORD, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High.](#)
- * Isaiah spoke of the blessings God would bring upon His people for observing the Sabbath, [56:2 Blessed is the man ... that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil.](#)
- * Isaiah said again, [58:13 If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor](#)

speaking thine own words. 14 Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

* Jeremiah also preached the importance of Sabbath observance, 17:21 Thus saith the LORD; Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the sabbath day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem; 22 Neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on the sabbath day, neither do ye any work, but hallow ye the sabbath day, as I commanded your fathers.

* And through Jeremiah God gave the Israelites a warning, 17:27 if ye will not hearken unto me to hallow the sabbath day, and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the sabbath day; then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched.

* Yes, the Sabbath was undoubtedly the Lord's Day, and yet Nehemiah saw how his people were failing to observe it the way they were commanded.

* ... But how important is it today to continue with an old Biblical principle such as Sabbath observance?

* Is it still necessary and relevant to keep one day different to all the rest?

* Common sense tells us we can't keep going without a break, - we need a rest;

* The Christian Church is not out on its own when it wants to retain one-day-in-seven. Both Judaism and Islam set one day aside, - the Jews continue to recognise their Sabbath (from 6 pm Friday to 6 pm Saturday), and the Muslims have theirs on a Friday. ... But, there is more to it than that ...

* Some, - even professing Christians, - would pride themselves in having an 'open, liberated' view regarding Sunday observance. They would tell you that your old-fashioned ideas of the Lord's Day are outmoded and no longer necessary; they would put you and I alongside the Pharisees with their legalism and strict rules.

* ... *Is it important to have one day in the week totally given over to God, and for consideration of the things of God? Well ... The Bible teaches us, - as far as God is concerned, - it is! ...*

IT IS THE LORD'S DAY FOR THE LORD'S PEOPLE

* The Bible says we are no longer under law but under grace, - but it doesn't take away from the fact that if God considered this matter so important in the Old Testament, then it must also have an application in the New Testament,

* In other words, the Old Testament principle is carried into the New ... for two very important reasons, - and the second reason is more important than the first, - but the first reason is this ... **It is the Lord's day for the Lord's People.**

* In the New Testament we find the disciples of Jesus walking through the fields and picking the ears of corn on the Sabbath,

- * The Pharisees jumped at the opportunity to accuse Jesus of breaking the law of the Sabbath by ‘working’.
- * Now, Jesus did not share the Pharisees’ point of view, [Mk. 2:27 And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath:](#)
- * On the other hand, you will find Jesus and His disciples, - and later on His apostles, - observed the Sabbath when they went in to the synagogues on the Sabbath, the Saturday (often as an opportunity for the sake of the Gospel!)
- * After Christ’s resurrection and ascension the Sabbath for the Christians took on a slightly different meaning.
- * In line with Apostolic teaching (and inspired by the Holy Spirit), the Sunday, - the day after the Sabbath, - began to be celebrated by the Christians as “the Lord’s day”, for example ...
 - * In Troas, [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.](#)
 - * In Corinth, [I Cor. 16:1 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. 2 Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him.](#)
 - * On the island of Patmos John remembered, [I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,](#)
- * It came to be **the Lord’s Day for the Lord’s People**.
- * Formerly, as Jews, they treated as holy the Saturday (the Sabbath), but when they became Christians they substituted the Saturday for the Sunday, ... and so has the majority of the Church ever since (except for such groups as e.g. Seventh-Day Adventists).
- * And so the Lord’s people, - the new believers in Christ, - carried on the commitment God inaugurated on Mount Sinai when He commanded, [Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.](#)
- * ... And what does it mean to keep something ‘holy’? It means to keep it separate and set apart; the one-day-in-seven is *different* from the other six.
- * That’s the way God commanded it in His Word, and the people to whom He commanded were His own people He had chosen out of the nations.
- * You see, Nehemiah saw the children of Israel doing things on the Sabbath they ought not to have been doing ... just like their Gentile, idol-worshipping, God-rejecting neighbours.
- * But Nehemiah did not contend with the outsiders because as far as God and His Word are concerned the keeping of the Lord’s Day is the responsibility of *the Lord’s people*.
- * Voltaire was a violent opposer of Christianity. He spoke about the Sabbath, “If you want to kill Christianity you must abolish Sunday”. *Voltaire got it right!*

* When God's people are slack regarding God's command relating to His own special day the Bible teaches [the Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness \(II Pet. 3:9\)](#) and history proves He is not slack when it comes to defiling His day.

* We say we are His, ... then we ought to obey His Word, [Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.](#)

* [When I was a wee boy I was never allowed to watch television on a Sunday, I wasn't allowed to cut my nails or polish my shoes, I wasn't allowed to kick football or climb trees.](#) ... How is the child of God to carry out his/her responsibilities on the Lord's Day?

* I read of a footballer who belongs to one of the top clubs in Scotland, - a born-again believer. He plays his football on the Sunday afternoon and rushes back to 'preach' in his church that evening; is he justified by simply saying he has to earn a living? ... Or should he go and get another living?

* **The Lord's Day is for the Lord's people**, - what are they allowed to do ... without profaning it? I believe if you ask that question you are starting at the wrong place. Instead, the Lord's Day has a definite, particular and specific purpose that is spelled out for God's people in the Bible ...

IT IS TO THE LORD'S GLORY

* It is the one day in seven the Bible says the Christian ought to give over totally to God, - that was the principle behind the commandment that God gave to Moses at Sinai. It is His day and we ought to live it for Him.

* Richard Baxter said, "Use your Sabbaths as steps to Glory". Yes, all the days are to be lived to His glory, but it was His express desire that one-day-in-seven be given to Him *completely*, ... when we come together as a church fellowship and step aside from all the things we have been busy with during the week and just concentrate upon Him.

* It is the teaching of the Bible that this day is specifically God's day, and you are not being a special type of Christian or doing God any special favours by observing it, - for *He expects it* from each of His children.

* When we come into His presence it is as a consequence of the desire He has laid upon our hearts because we are children of God ... and the children want to meet with their Father. ... On the Lord's Day we meet to honour His Name.

* How do I conduct myself on the Lord's Day? Dare I cut my nails or polish my shoes?

* Surely, much more importantly, is the emphasis I lay upon this day as being in the right attitude of worship before God.

* ... You see, **the Lord's Day is for the Lord's people**, ... and when the Lord's people honour the Lord's Day they enjoy the favour of God and, in turn, society is blessed through the Lord's people. It is **to the Lord's Glory**.

CONCLUSION.

* I hope you understand it is an important subject, - the Lord's Day; one that has been relegated in modern society, but God's Word has always put great store on how His people, - in particular, - must observe it.

* It's His day. It belongs to Him. ... What if I have to genuinely go into a place of work? ... Many people do have to go into their work on the Lord's Day out of necessity.

* We dare not be like the Pharisees with all their legalism; ... Frances Turretin (1623-87) was the Italian Reformer who followed Calvin and Beza in Geneva, he wrote, "He who does works of necessary charity and mercy on the Sabbath does not profane it. He would be guilty of the basest superstition and hypocrisy who, under this pretext, would desert a neighbour in trouble. He ought to help whom he can and to serve God according to his ordination. For the Sabbath is said to have been "made for man" that he may in a special manner consult his own salvation by performing the duties of piety to God and of love to his neighbour; "not man for the Sabbath," as if he ought to neglect necessary charity or mercy towards himself or neighbour through a superstitious regard for the Sabbath."

* Yes, we keep the Lord's Day, not out of superstition but because *it is* the Lord's Day. I believe it is a mark of the true Christian to *enjoy* the Lord's Day, ... for when you enjoy meeting with God and with God's people it is a 'practice run' for Glory ... for *Heaven is going to be one long Lord's Day!*

* The Bible describes it ... [There remaineth therefore a Sabbath-rest to the people of God \(Heb. 4:9\).](#)

* On the Sabbath day Nehemiah made sure to shut the gate, he made every effort to guard the entrances, and he was *zealous* for the Lord's Day; he recorded, [From that time forth came they no more on the sabbath.](#)

* I know it is old-fashioned; ... it doesn't matter though, it's God's Word, - it has much to say about the Lord's Day. ... I'll let Nehemiah finish the matter in his own words,

* [Neh. 13:22 And I commanded the Levites that they should cleanse themselves, and that they should come and keep the gates, to sanctify the sabbath day. Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy.](#)