

The following is a rough transcript, not in its final form and may be updated.

Celebrating the Lord's Day John 5:10-16

Intro: We have been looking at Jesus' healing of the lame man beside the pool of Bethesda. Of course, the healing is just part of it; we have yet to get to what Paul Harvey would call, "the rest of the story" which is actually the whole point of the story. Jesus heals this man on the Sabbath day not just to heal him, not just to reveal Himself as the long awaited and much prophesied Messiah but, He did all of this for the express purpose of confronting the religious leaders of Israel with a serious conundrum: how can a man apparently possess and exercise the power of God in direct conflict with their long held interpretation of God's Law? Jesus was giving the Jews something to think about.

Last week we took some time out of our verse by verse study of [ch5](#) to look at the significance of the Sabbath issue. We saw that for the most part, the Jewish people considered the Sabbath as a joyous day of rest but that over time, the religious crowd had perverted it into a burdensome system by which they could earn grace by doing good works. We also established from the OT that there were no Sabbath observances by the Hebrews or anyone else before the time of Moses and, more importantly; observing the Sabbath as a religious ordinance is only for the Jewish people.

We concluded the message by stating that, although the Sabbath was instituted by God and was important for Israel in the OT, as NT believer we are released from the responsibility and regulation of Sabbath observance by the cross of Jesus Christ. Just as we are no longer required to observe temple worship, the feast days or the sacrificial system, so we are freed from observing the Sabbath as a day of worship ([Col 2:14](#)).

We also noted that the implications of [Col 2:8](#) are that NT believers are also freed from both the traditions of men and the basic principles of the world. What are the basic principles of the world? This is nothing more than the basic idea of cause and effect that rules nature and the minds of men. It manifests itself in the idea that we get what we deserve: if we're good, we deserve to receive good; if we're bad, we deserve to receive bad. The problem with this kind of thinking is that it eliminates both the grace and the

power of God. “What goes around comes around.” If that were always true – we’d all be in a world of hurt because in God’s eyes, we all deserve hell. “You can’t get blood from a turnip.” This is true on a human level but we serve a God who can produce water from a rock!

What about the traditions of men? What are they? Every religion has them; every Christian denomination has them, in fact; every individual church has them. One of the biggest, most well known traditions of Christianity is the celebration of Christmas. Although the birth of Christ is mentioned in the Gospels, He never commanded it to be celebrated, the Apostles didn’t teach it and the early church never observed it. It’s a tradition of men. Having said that, I must also add that there is nothing inherently wrong with traditions. Most begin as a way to honor the Lord. But, good traditions become evil whenever they are elevated to the level of or considered to supercede the revealed Word of God. Of course, even a good tradition can have a negative effect if people merely observe it to gain brownie points with God. Traditions are meant to be a launching pad for our faith but to many, they are just a parking lot.

Why rehash all of this? Because last week’s study only dealt with one half of the issue. We understand we’re not commanded to worship on the Sabbath but why do we worship on Sunday? If one day of the week is as good as any other, why not worship on Tuesday? Does the NT anywhere say: Thou shalt worship on Sunday? No, but we do so because that’s the day Jesus rose from the dead. Ok then, does the NT ever say, “Thou shalt worship on Sunday because that’s when Jesus was resurrected”? No. Then how do we know that it’s not just the traditions of men?

Let me first say that on the individual level, Christians can and should worship the Lord every day of the week. We do that by reading and meditating on His Word, by spending time in prayer, by attempting to look at ourselves and the rest of the world from His eternal perspective and by honoring Him and His gift of salvation with our lifestyle. What we’re focusing on today is the corporate worship of the body of Christ and why it occurs every Sunday. Our study will show that Sunday worship is not a tradition of man but is the intention of God as revealed in Scripture.

Let me start by saying that beginning with the resurrection, every event recorded in the New Testament that had important religious significance fell

on the first day of the week, the Lord's Day. There are eleven of these events.

1) Of course, the most important event to occur on the first day of the week was Christ's resurrection. This great event is mentioned in all the Gospels and is referred to constantly throughout the rest of the NT. The fact that the earliest Christians (Jews) worshipped on Sunday and not on Saturday is one of the great proofs that the resurrection did occur. Most early believers were Jews that had long been in the habit of worshiping on Saturday, but yet, another day was chosen for Christian gatherings. This couldn't have happened by whim or chance. Only the actual, historical resurrection of Jesus Christ can account for it. Also, a Sunday resurrection is proof of the new character of the age we now live in. So, we pattern our lives on the resurrection life of Christ and not on the principles of the Mosaic Law.

When Jesus arose, Christianity was born and the new creation was brought into existence. There's nothing in the old order for the believer. We stand on resurrection ground. We belong to the new creation only. God is faithful to all that He's accomplished in Christ and according to His Word, He won't allow the children of the new creation to go back and celebrate the beginning of the *old and fallen creation* from which we have been saved through the riches of grace. If the children of grace persist in relating themselves to the old creation by the observance of the Sabbath (the Law), it is evidence of their limited knowledge of both the Word and the will of God; it is to fall from grace."

2) Jesus ascended into heaven the 1st time after His earthly life. In **John 20:17**, Jesus says to Mary Magdalene, "Go . . . to My brethren and say to them 'I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.'"

We should understand that Jesus spent the 40 days between the resurrection and His final ascension passing freely between earth and heaven, the 1st time being early on that 1st resurrection morning. Initially He told Mary, "Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father," but then soon after, He allowed the other women to touch Him and even invited the disciples to do the same later that evening (**Mt 28:9; Lk 24:39**) The reason? Between the two occurrences, Jesus ascended to the Father to present to Him the value of His atoning death. So, the announcement of a

completed atonement is also a part of the resurrection day's significance.

3) Jesus appeared to the disciples the 1st time in the upper room and bestowed peace upon them. Peace is one of the three results of justification listed by Paul in **Rom 5:1-2**. He speaks of peace, access to God, and rejoicing. Jesus gave all these to the disciples. They hadn't been at peace. They weren't aware of God's presence and they certainly weren't rejoicing: they'd gathered in secret for fear of the Jews. Jesus changed all of this by His presence.

4) Jesus first broke bread with the disciples. This happened twice, once in the presence of the 2 disciples, whom He traveled with on the road to Emmaus, and once in the upper room with all the disciples at the end of the first Lord's Day. These were the first post-resurrection observances of the communion service.

5) Jesus opened the disciples' understanding so they could comprehend all that the Scriptures taught about Him.

When Jesus met the 2 disciples on their way home to Emmaus, He began to expound...the scriptures. Then, as they were eating together, Jesus broke bread and they recognized who He was. Later in the upper room, Jesus opened their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures. We follow the Lord's example when we read and interpret the Scripture on Sunday.

6) Jesus commissioned the disciples to the task of world evangelism. He said in **John 20:21**, "As the Father has sent Me, I also send you." In **Luke 24:48** He said to the disciples, "You are witnesses of these things." Just like them, we are commissioned to go into all the world with the gospel, even as Jesus was commissioned by the Father.

7) Jesus breathed on the disciples, imparting the Holy Spirit to them (**John 20:22**).

8) 7 weeks after the resurrection, on the 1st day of the week, the Holy Spirit descended from heaven at Pentecost and began His ministry for the entire church age. Today we look to the Spirit to impart spiritual gifts and skills and to bring about correction, reproof, and conversion as He works through the

preaching and teaching of the Bible.

9) The Holy Spirit directed Paul to gather believers together and preach to them on Sunday (**Acts 20:7**). This passage records the time Paul was pursuing missionary work at Troas. **Vs6** says Paul spent 7 days in the city; meaning, he was there for a Saturday and a Sunday. There was obviously an opportunity to choose between either of the two days, but we're told that the disciples came together and Paul spoke to them on the first day of the week! This is another indication of the normal pattern of the early Christian observance.

10) The first day of the week was established by Paul as the day on which the Corinthians were to lay something aside . . . as he may prosper" (**1 Cor 16:2**). It's the day offerings were to be brought and dedicated to the Lord's work.

11) Finally, on the first day of the week the Lord Jesus Christ appeared to the apostle John on the island of Patmos and gave him that great revelation of Himself in all His present heavenly glory. This same revelation also outlined His plans for the future, both for the church age and for that age which will follow Second His coming.

11 important events, all occurring on the Lord's Day not on the Jewish Sabbath, reveal the importance of the day of the resurrection to the church in the NT era. More than that, they also give us a pattern for our present Christian celebration. Everything we do in church on this day is based on these eleven great events. Such as: the gathering of ourselves together, the reading and interpretation of the Scriptures, the preaching and teaching of the Word of God, the collecting of offerings, the observance of communion, and above all the remembrance and worship of the One who died for us and rose again. We don't do these things by accident or by whim (or by tradition). This is God's pattern. We follow it out of thanksgiving for what God has done for us through the Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior.

Now, having established the importance of worshipping on the Lord's Day, the next obvious question is how should a Christian celebrate Sunday? The short answer is that since it is the Lord's Day, it should be celebrated in whatever manner will most honor and glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. One theologian said, "The conscious effort to promote God's honor is more

important than the forms by which we try to do so.” That’s not to say that all forms of worship or all attitudes toward the Lord’s Day are equally valid or equally useful in promoting God’s honor. So, to prevent any bondage to the traditions of men, according to the Bible, how do Christians properly celebrate the Lord’s Day?

1) With Joy (Mt 28:9) - the first word Jesus spoke after His resurrection was Rejoice! Jesus told the women to be glad. They were to be happy. This was the day that the Lord had made and they were to rejoice and be glad in it.

The Sunday celebration is not the time for long faces, solemn demeanors or grumpy and impatient participants. We don’t see that anywhere in the early church. On the contrary, we see the exact opposite (**Acts 2:46-47**). These were happy Christians that other people liked to be with, probably because they were happy. Friendships were developed and on the basis of these friendships, the Lord moved and added to the church daily such as should be saved.

Have you ever considered that your attendance at church on Sunday and your conduct while there are important in the conversion of non-Christians? If a lost person in need of spiritual assistance goes to a church service and finds the congregation distracted, discouraged and impatient, they will be convinced that there is nothing for them there. If, on the other hand, he finds the people engaged in worship, encouraged by the message and excited to fellowship with each other, he may not understand what’s going on but at least he’ll see that there’s something to it. I think it is safe to say that if you don’t enjoy the Sunday service then you’re not really celebrating the Lord’s Day.

2) With activity – Some people believe Sunday is a day of rest but growing up in a minister’s home, that has never been my experience. Consider the 1st Lord’s Day: the women going to and from the tomb, the appearances of Jesus, the return to Jerusalem of the Emmaus disciples, the sharing of experiences, communion, the Lord’s commission. It was a day of much activity. The Lord’s Day is not for selfish entertainment or amusement nor for idleness and rest. It’s the one day of the week Christians have to corporately offer the fullest service of prayer, worship, and testimony which belongs to their Lord. The Christian no longer labors to be accepted by God but, having been accepted in grace, he now labors to glorify his Lord who

saved him. He has ceased from his own works, and yet is still ceaselessly active, working in the power and energy of the Holy Spirit.

3) With Spiritual Expectation – I never know what's going to happen on Sunday: who I will meet, who will be here, who will respond to the message. I never know what's going to happen but I always expect something to happen! My goodness, we're singing praises to God from our hearts and we're expounding on the Word of God – something is bound to happen! It may not be here during the service, it may be after – it may be in someone's heart listening over the internet. We have regular hits on our website from China, Brazil, Canada – all over the world and all over the US. I don't know if they are listening for themselves or using the sermon notes to share with other but either one is great!

Do you show up to church with the same expectation? If you do, it will increase your joy and cause you to work even harder. You will thrill to God's grace and the power of the Spirit working in your life and the lives of others.

We observe the Lord's Day as God's great weekly reminder that we are not under law in our relationship to the Lord. We are under grace. When a Christian falls from grace, what happens to the Christian? He does not lose his salvation. That is not what the phrase means. To fall from grace is to fall into law. To fall from grace is to fall into bondage to man-made regulations. You don't lose your salvation; you just lose the joy of your salvation

Let's live in the full sunshine of God's grace, which is our right as members of God's new creation. We've been called by grace. We've been redeemed by grace. We are justified by grace. We are being sanctified by grace. Our God operates constantly by grace. He is our gracious God. We cannot help but live out lives accordingly! 😊