

The LORD'S Day

Should Sunday be a special day or should all days be treated the same? Should we keep the Sabbath or has that requirement passed away with the coming of Jesus? What services and fellowship times should we attend at church on a Sunday? These are just three of the questions which may be raised in respect of our attitude to Sunday. Let us see whether we can gain some guidance on these issues from scripture.

It is established according to God's purposes in creation that there should be a day of rest. In giving the ten commandments God says **six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work** (Ex 20:9-10a). However, in establishing this command he goes back to the first week of history and says **for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.** A day of rest each week is necessary for the well-being of mankind. So the LORD Himself says that **The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.**

In the Old Testament the day of rest was on the Saturday. However, after the resurrection of Jesus and the birth of the church the people of God started to use the Sunday, called the Lord's Day by John in Revelation 1:10, as their special day. This day was, after all, the day of our Lord's resurrection. Christianity is a religion of the "new start" and thus it is appropriate that we celebrate the basis of this "new start"; the resurrection of our LORD. It is worthy of note, as well, that every appearance of our Saviour after He arose, was on the first day of the week. Moreover, when we see the emerging practice of the church we see them treating the first day of the week as their special day (see Acts 20:7 and 1 Cor 16:2).

The principle then is established of having one day of rest every week. However, the question is then raised about how we should use this day.

Put quite simply the Lord's Day is to be a day for the LORD. It may be countered that all days should be for Him. No doubt that is true, but the first day of the week is to be specially for Him. In that context the exhortation from Isaiah 58:13-14a. should be heeded **If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on My holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of the LORD honorable, and shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking your own words, then you shall delight yourself in the LORD.** The day then should be a day for rest, refreshment and worship. And in all these things we are led to remember all of God's goodness

to us.

At this point the response may come “surely we have to do some things on a Sunday!”. To consider this we may helpfully look at the activities which the LORD saw as being good for the Sabbath. Let us look at three passages in Luke:

- In 6:1-5 the LORD gave approval to works of *necessity* when he did not reprove the disciples for obtaining food on the Sabbath.
- In 6:6-16 he gave approval to works of *kindness* when he healed the man who had a withered right hand.
- In 14:1-6 he gave approval to works of *emergency* when he healed the man who had dropsy.

The day then is to be a day for the LORD, when we refresh ourselves by focusing on His goodness and grace. And as we are recharged in the LORD we can happily glorify His Name with works of necessity, kindness and emergency.

But what does all this mean in “*the nitty-gritty*” of life? The danger comes at this point that we start to make rules and regulations about what activities we should or should not be doing. However, we should make sure that we make the Lord's Day special and for the LORD. So to that end we must seek to be in church to worship God. Why not make a point of coming to both morning services and use the occasions as times of refreshment as we worship our great and glorious God.

Presently, at Feltham Evangelical Church, we have Sundays when there are activities throughout the day. Also there are Sundays when there is nothing formally arranged in the evening. So how should we think of profitably using the Lord's Day? Why not spend time with others from the church by inviting them over for a meal? Make it a time as well when you can be together as a family. Have a time of prayer and bible study at home as a family and/or with others who can be helped spiritually. Life is busy and sometimes we neglect to spend time together as families; let us use the Lord's day to that end.

Also in facilitating a better enjoyment of the Lord's Day, as a suggestion, why not have one day a week with no newspapers, TV or Internet? Try it and see if it does you good!

In all these things it is of course to be remembered that the LORD knows all our circumstances. Some have to work on a Lord's Day. The LORD knows this. But that should not lead to us being casual in our attitude. We should do as much as we can to get the benefit of Sunday for our whole beings, physically and spiritually.

So let us seize every opportunity to follow the call of Isaiah to make the Lord's Day a delight (see Is. 58:13b). And in keeping the LORD's (fourth) commandment to have a day specially for Him let us remember that **His commandments are not burdensome** (1 John 5:3b). Rather in keeping them we have the means whereby we please our Father because His commandments reveal what pleases Him.