

CHURCH.

LESSON 11

1	PRAYER
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Group leader. *Pray* for God's guidance through his Spirit, for awareness of his presence and for listening to his voice. Commit your group and this lesson about church building to the Lord.

2	SHARING (20 minutes) <i>[QUIET TIMES]</i> 2 CORINTHIANS 4 - 6
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Take turns and **share** (or **read** from your notes) in short what you have learned from one of your quiet times out of the assigned Bible passages (2 Corinthians 4 – 6).

Listen to the person sharing, take him serious and accept him. Do not discuss what he shares. Take notes.

3	MEMORISATION (5 minutes) <i>[KEY VERSES IN JOHN]</i> (5) JOHN 4:24
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Review two by two.

(5) John 4:24. God is Spirit, and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth.

4	TEACHING (85 minutes) <i>[CHURCH FESTIVAL]</i> THE LORD'S DAY: THE DAY OF REST, FELLOWSHIP AND SERVICE
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Introduce. "The Lord's Day" is the day on which Christians rest and meet to fellowship, worship and serve. We will learn what the Bible teaches about "the Sabbath", which was kept on *the seventh day of the week*. And we will learn about "the Lord's Day", which in the Bible was always on *the first day of the week*. Why do Christians all over the world meet on the Lord's Day to worship? What should Christians do on the Lord's Day?

The days of the week are divided differently in different cultures. In the days of the Old Testament, the day of rest or Sabbath was kept on the last day of their week, namely, *the seventh day or Saturday*. The Christians in the days of the New Testament celebrated the Lord's Day on *the first day of their week, namely, on Sunday*. Many Christians in the world follow their example and celebrate the Lord's Day on the first day of their week, namely, on Sunday.

But Christians living in difficult countries celebrate the Lord's Day on their national day of rest, which may be a Thursday, a Friday or a Saturday, dependent on the culture of their country. What is important is "the purpose of the Lord's Day" and not "on which day of the week it is celebrated".

A. THE LAW IN THE OLD TESTAMENT AND THE NEW TESTAMENT

1. The Law in the Old Testament.

The Old Testament Law may be distinguished in:

(1) The moral law.

The moral law (Exodus 20:1-17; Deuteronomy 5:6-21) is the way in which God wants his saved people to *live*.

(2) The ceremonial law.

The ceremonial or ritual law (see below) was the way in which God during the Old Testament period wanted his people (the believers) to *approach, worship and serve* him.

(3) The civil law.

The civil law for the nation-state of Israel was the way in which God during the Old Testament period wanted Old Testament people, Israel, to *function as a (theocratic) state*. It consisted of laws about property, lending and borrowing, marriage, lawsuits, slavery, war, murder, etc. (Exodus 21:1 to 23:9; Deuteronomy 16:18 to 26:19).

2. The Old Testament Ceremonial Law.

The Old Testament Ceremonial Law stipulated rules and regulations with respect to four areas of worship: holy persons, holy places, holy times and holy actions.

(1) Holy persons.

These laws were for the priests and the Levites (Exodus chapters 28-29,39; Leviticus chapters 8-10,21-22; Numbers chapter 8).

(2) Holy places.

These laws were for the Tent of Meeting and later the Temple at Jerusalem (Exodus 20:24-26; Exodus chapters 25-27,30,35-38; Leviticus 24:1-9; Deuteronomy 12).

(3) Holy times.

These laws were the appointed day of fasting (Leviticus chapter 16, 23:27; Numbers chapters 28-29; Isaiah 58:1-12; contrast this with Zechariah 8:19 and Luke 18:12) and the other appointed feasts (Exodus 23:14-19; Leviticus 23:1-44; Deuteronomy 16:1-17), especially the Sabbath, the Sabbath year and the Year of Jubilee (Exodus 23:10-13; 31:12-17; Leviticus 25:1-28).

(4) Holy actions.

These laws were for the circumcision (Genesis chapter 17), the purification rites (Leviticus chapters 12-15; Numbers chapter 19), eating clean foods (Leviticus chapters 11,15; Deuteronomy 14:3-21), offering sacrifices (Leviticus chapters 1-7,22; Numbers 28:1-15), setting aside the firstborn of man and animals and the first fruits of the harvest (Exodus 13:1-16; Numbers 18:14-20; Deuteronomy 15:19-23; cf. Judges 13:7; 1 Samuel 1:28) and bringing three different kinds of tithes (Leviticus 27:30-33; Numbers 18:20-32; Deuteronomy 12:17-19; 14:22-29; cf. 16:16-17).

3. The Law in the New Testament.

(1) The moral law is *maintained* in the New Testament period.

The moral law is expounded properly in Matthew chapter 5; reiterated in Matthew 22:36-40, Mark 12:30-31 and Romans 13:8-10; and is the standard for the Christian life in John 13:34-35. The Moral Law remains the way in which God wants his saved people to live.

(2) The ceremonial law was *fulfilled, cancelled and abrogated*.

The ceremonial law was fulfilled (Matthew 5:17) at the first coming of Christ and therefore cancelled (Colossians 2:14) and abrogated (abolished) (Ephesians 2:14-15).

(3) The civil law of the nation-state of Israel was *replaced* by the principles of the kingdom of God.

It has been replaced by the teachings of Jesus Christ on the Kingdom (Matthew chapters 5,6,7, 13 and 18 and in all the other parables about the Kingdom). God desires that his people in all the nations of the world function as citizens of the kingdom of God.

4. What the New Testament teaches about the various parts of the Old Testament Ceremonial Law.

(1) The Old Testament ceremonial Law was a *shadow* of the New Testament *realities*.

Read Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 8:5,13; 10:1. The regulations of the Ceremonial Law were only a *shadow of the real things that were coming*. The New Testament books of Romans, Galatians and Hebrews clearly teach how Jesus Christ *fulfilled* the Old Testament Ceremonial Law and introduced *the realities* themselves.

(2) The Old Testament priests were shadows of the New Testament Christ and Christians.

Read Hebrews 7:23-28. For Christians, their only *priest* is Jesus Christ, because he is perfectly sinless and lives forever. Only Jesus Christ is the Apostle and High Priest of our confession (Hebrews 3:1), the Shepherd (Pastor) and Overseer (literally: Bishop) of our souls (1 Peter 2:25), *the Chief-Shepherd of the flock of God* (1 Peter 5:4). And the New Testament teaches the priesthood of believers (1 Peter 2:9-10).

(3) The Old Testament temple was a shadow of the New Testament Church.

Read Ephesians 2:21-22 and 1 Peter 2:4-11. For Christians, their only *temple* is the worldwide body of believers called the Church.

(4) The Old Testament Sabbath was a shadow of the New Testament day of the Lord.

Read Hebrews 4:1-11.

- The seventh day of the week celebrated the completion of God's work of creation and the beginning of life on earth.
- But the first day of the week celebrates the completion of God's work of salvation in Christ and the beginning of the new (eternal) life.
- For Christians the ultimate Sabbath rest comes when they die and forever live in the visible presence of God (Christ), initially in heaven and later on the new earth.

The functions of the Old Testament Sabbath were the following:

- one day a week was set apart from daily labour in order to get refreshed (Exodus 23:12)
- to meet together in a sacred assembly (Leviticus 23:3)
- and to do good and save lives (Mark 3:4).

These functions were carried over to the Sunday, the day on which God's work of salvation through Christ was completed and on which the new life on earth began.

(5) The Old Testament fasting was a shadow of the New Testament joy.

Read Mark 2: 18-22; John 16:19-22. For Christians the *fasting with mourning* has been exchanged for celebration and never-ending joy (Zachariah 8:19), because Jesus Christ had fulfilled everything needed for salvation and is continually present (Matthew 28:20).

(6) The Old Testament Passover was a shadow of the New Testament Good Friday and the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

Read 1 Corinthians 5:6-13; 1 Corinthians 11:18-32. For Christians, the Passover lamb is the substitution sacrifice of atonement of Jesus Christ and they celebrate the festival, not with the old yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth (1 Corinthians 5:7-8). They celebrate the Lord's Supper regularly in remembrance of the body and blood of Christ on the cross (1 Corinthians 11:24-26).

(7) The Old Testament circumcision was a shadow of the New Testament rebirth.

Read Romans 2:28-29 and Colossians 2:11. For Christians, their only *circumcision* is the circumcision of their sinful hearts through rebirth by the Holy Spirit.

(8) The Old Testament purification rites were a shadow of the New Testament baptism with water.

Read Mark 1:8; John 3:22-25; Acts 10:47-48; Acts 22:16. For Christians the only *purification rite* is the baptism with water, which symbolises the baptism with the Spirit (and thus the participation with Christ's completed work of salvation, like for example the washing away of sins or the complete forgiveness of sins).

(9) The Old Testament eating of only (ceremonial) clean foods was a shadow of the New Testament holy life.

Read Mark 7:19; 1 Timothy 4:3-5. For Christians all kinds of *food are clean* and thus suitable for consumption. In contrast to Jews and Muslims, the issue for Christians is not "clean or unclean" food, not "what enters the mouth", but "the things that come out of the mouth and out of the heart"! "The things that come out of the mouth come from the heart and these make a man unclean. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what make a man unclean; but eating with unwashed hands does not make him unclean" (Matthew 15:18-20)!

(10) The Old Testament sacrifices were a shadow of the New Testament sacrifice of atonement of Christ.

Read Romans 3:25, Hebrews 2:17; 9:28; 1 John 4:10. For Christians, their only *substitution sacrifice* is the death of Jesus Christ on the cross.

(11) The Old Testament firstborn was a shadow of the complete commitment to Christ in the New Testament.

Read Matthew 6:33; Luke 9:23. For Christians, not only *the firstborn* (the first-born of animals and the first fruits of the harvest), but all and everything sanctified by God and dedicated (committed) to him.

(12) The Old Testament tithes were a shadow of the New Testament giving.

Read Luke 6:38; 2 Corinthians 9:6-15. The three different tithes of the Old Testament revelation were given to support the temple worship with priests and ceremonies in Jerusalem on the one hand and the social tax for the poor on the other hand. For Christians the tithes have been replaced by willing and cheerful giving in order to advance the kingdom of God (and the worldwide Church).

Conclusion. The Bible clearly teaches that Jesus Christ did not set aside the Law, but fulfilled it (Matthew 5:17) and changed it (Hebrews 7:12).

- Jesus Christ restored and upheld the Moral Law (the ten Commandments)(Matthew 22:36-40)
- but cancelled the Ceremonial Law with its requirements (Colossians 2:14) and abrogated it (Ephesians 2:14-15).

The ceremonial laws may never again be re-introduced into the Christian Church and thus again cause divisions between people who keep the ceremonial law and people who do not keep the ceremonial law (Ephesians 2:14-15)! Note the serious warning: "You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace" (Galatians 5:4)!

B. THE SABBATH IN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT

1. Keeping the Sabbath was a part of the Old Testament Ceremonial Law.

Discover and discuss. What was God's purpose with respect to the Sabbath day?

(1) The Old Testament Sabbath – a day separated.

Read Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:12-14. The Lord gave his people whom he saved from slavery in Egypt Ten Commandments to keep, not as rules by which they could be saved, but *as rules by which they could live as God's saved people!* The fourth commandment of these Ten Commandments is with respect to "keeping the Sabbath day (the last day of the week) holy". The word "holy" means *to keep this day separate from the other days of the week and to dedicate it* to the purpose that God has given to that day.

(2) The Old Testament Sabbath – a day of rest.

Read Genesis 2:2-3; Exodus 23:12. God’s first purpose with respect to the Sabbath day was to set apart one day from the other six working days of a week for man *to rest and to be refreshed (gain new energy)*.

(3) The Old Testament Sabbath – a day of assembly.

Read Leviticus 23:3. God’s second purpose with respect to the Sabbath day was to set apart one day from the other six working days of a week for man *to meet God and one another in a sacred assembly*.

Thus, the fourth commandment teaches the wisdom of setting aside one day out of every seven days in the week for rest and refreshment and for worship and service.

2. The Jewish religious leaders and teachers changed the spirit of the Old Testament Law.

Discover **and discuss**. How did the Jewish religious leaders and teachers change the Old Testament Law?

(1) The Jewish religious leaders changed the fourth commandment.

Read Isaiah 29:13; Mark 2:23 - 3:6. Already during the time of the prophet Isaiah (740-680 B.C.) the religious leaders of Israel began to produce all kinds of rules for the religious worship. Especially during the 400 year period between the last book in the Old Testament and the first book of the New Testament, the Jewish religious leaders *produced many new laws*, which they said were their interpretation of the laws in the Old Testament.

The Sabbath began with sundown on Friday and ended with sundown of Saturday. The Jewish religious leaders produced a list of 39 forbidden works on the Sabbath. For example, it was forbidden to do any kind of work on the Sabbath; that it was forbidden to make a journey on the Sabbath; that it was forbidden to cook food on the Sabbath; that it was forbidden to carry anything on the Sabbath, etc. They accused the disciples of Jesus, who were also Jews, of breaking the fourth commandment, because they picked some heads of grain on the Sabbath to eat. “Reaping” was forbidden on the Sabbath. They taught that man was made to keep the Sabbath. By adding such laws to God’s law the Jewish religious leaders had changed the law into a heavy load which people could not carry. That is why Jesus said, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).

(2) The Jewish religious leaders changed the whole meaning of the Old Testament Law.

Read Galatians 3:25-27; Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 10:1; Acts 15:1,5; Romans 9:30-33; Matthew 23:3-4. Instead of viewing the Old Testament Law as a shadow pointing to the reality, the coming Saviour, Jesus Christ, the Jewish religious leaders and teachers changed the Law into a means of justification (salvation)! They taught that only by observing the Law could a man be saved (justified in God’s eyes). They meant not only the Old Testament Law, but also especially the hundreds of law they produced and had added to the law! They especially made circumcision and keeping the Sabbath indispensable for salvation (Acts 15:1)!

But the Jewish religious leaders were hypocrites, because they themselves did not keep these laws, but expected their followers to keep them. “They do not practice what they preach. They tie up heavy loads and put them on men’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them” (Matthew 23:3-4). They had changed the Old Testament law into an unbearable burden!

But the Bible warns: “You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace” (Galatians 5:4).

(3) The Jewish religious leaders exchanged the commands of God for their own traditions.

Read Mark 7:1-13. Jesus said that the Jewish religious leaders and teachers set aside the commands of God in order to observe their own foolish man-made traditions! They buried the Old Testament law under 365 man-made prohibitions and 248 man-made commandments (in total 613 traditional laws). Their interpretations of the Old Testament Law was opposed to what God had intended the Old Testament Law to be.

God had intended the Old Testament Law to be *a preparation* for the coming Saviour and *an illustration* pointing to his coming work of salvation! For example, the sacrificial lamb pointed to the sacrifice of atonement of sin by the Lamb of God (2 Corinthians 5:7). But the Jewish religious leaders and teachers had changed the Old Testament Law into *a means of salvation*. They taught that their obedience of the Law could and would justify them before God! Therefore, there would not be any need of a Saviour from sins! They taught that the coming Messiah would not be a Saviour from sins, but a Saviour from the political oppression of Jews by the Gentile nations and that the Messiah would turn the whole world into a Jewish kingdom. Later other religions in the world followed their example in making the law a means of salvation. They were all mistaken!

3. The Sabbath as interpreted by Jesus in the New Testament.

Discover **and discuss**. How does Jesus view the Sabbath?

(1) The Old Testament Sabbath was made to serve man.

Read Mark 2:18-27; Matthew 5:4; Romans 12:15; 2 Corinthians 1:3-7. The ceremonial law was only *a shadow* of the future reality that is found in Jesus Christ (Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 10:1). The ceremonial law is represented by *the*

old wine (the old contents) kept in old wine skins (old forms). The completed work of salvation of Christ is represented by the new wine (the new contents) that will be (and must be) poured into new wineskins (new forms).

For example: Jesus emphasises that those who are living in his very presence should be feasting with joy instead of fasting with mourning. They should rejoice instead of mourn. This celebration is a spiritual celebration and inward joy due to Christ's fulfilled work of salvation and due to his continual presence. This is not in conflict with mourning together with other Christians when they suffer!

By his first coming, Jesus Christ ushered in a new order (Hebrews 9:8-11). He brought new contents, namely, the realities instead of the shadows and these new realities require new forms!

The *outward forms* of fasting days and Sabbath days belong to the old order. Jesus says, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27). The Sabbath was instituted *after* the creation of man not to be a burden, but to be a blessing for man. It was not instituted to observe at least 39 man-made laws, but instituted so that man may rest from his work in the past week and get refreshed and have opportunity to meet other believers in a sacred assembly that worship God. These were the first two objectives of the Sabbath.

(2) The Old Testament Sabbath was made to serve God.

Read Mark 2:28 - 3:6. Jesus says, "The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath." The religious leaders of the Jews have no authority to lay down the principles that govern the Sabbath day! Only Jesus Christ has that authority! For example: Whenever there was a genuine need to save lives like in the case of David (1 Samuel 21:1-6; 1 Samuel 22:14-20), or to heal people like in Mark 3:4, then the divinely ordained ceremonial provision of the fourth commandment (resting *on the seventh day*) must be ignored. Jesus says, "Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" (Mark 3:4)?

Therefore, the third objective of the Sabbath was to serve God especially by doing good and by saving lives, for example by feeding and clothing them and by proclaiming the good news to them (Matthew 11:5). The teaching of Jesus shows that Jesus replaced the ceremonial aspect of the fourth commandment (namely: the seventh day) with wise, spiritual and constructive principles (to do good and save lives).

The first Christians applied these principles especially to the first day of the week. They called it "the Lord's Day", because the Lord Jesus Christ had fulfilled the law (Matthew 5:17) and had completed his work of salvation (the resurrection and the outpouring of his Spirit) on the first day of the week!

C. THE LORD'S DAY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

- The Old Testament "Sabbath Day" (the seventh day of the week) celebrated the completion of God's work of creation and the beginning of life on earth (Genesis 2:1-3).
- The New Testament "Lord's Day" (the first day of the week) celebrated the completion of God's work of recreation (salvation in Jesus Christ) and the beginning of the new and eternal life for Christians on earth (Luke 24:1-8; Romans 6:4-7)!

The Lord's Day is very important for Christians, because all the great history of salvation events took place on the first day of the week! During the New Testament period of time, the first day of the week was "a Sunday".

Discover and discuss. Why is the Lord's Day so important in the New Testament?

1. Jesus Christ was resurrected on the first day of the week.

(1) The New Testament "Lord's Day" is the day that Christ was resurrected.

Read Matthew 28:1. The Gospels state very clearly that "after the Sabbath" (the seventh day, Saturday), "very early in the morning of the first day of the week (Sunday)", the Lord Jesus Christ was resurrected from the dead.

(2) The New Testament "Lord's Day" is the day that certified Christ's completed work of salvation.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:54-57; Hebrews 2:14; Philippians 2:8-11. The bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ proved that sin and death and the devil had been conquered! The bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ is God's certification to the world that he has accepted the atoning sacrifice of Jesus for sinners and has given Christ the highest place in the universe.

(3) The New Testament Lord's Day is the day that ushered in the New Testament period of realities.

Read Hebrews 8:6,13; 10:1.

- The death of Jesus Christ terminated the Old Testament revelation.
- The resurrection of Jesus Christ ushered in New Testament revelation.

In the New Testament period the Old Testament shadows (illustrations or types) and prophecies have been fulfilled in Jesus Christ and the Old Testament salvation history has been brought to an end! Also the Old Testament seventh day (as part of the Old Testament ceremonial law) has been *fulfilled and thus cancelled and abrogated (abolished)*. In the New Testament period the New Testament realities are being revealed.

For example:

- The death of Jesus Christ fulfilled and replaced the Old Testament animal sacrifices (Hebrews 10:8-10).

- The Lord's Supper replaced the Old Testament Passover that commemorated that God graciously passed over sins when he saw the blood of the sacrifice of atonement (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).
- The baptism with water replaced circumcision as the visible sign of the invisible baptism with the Spirit and entering God's covenant of grace (Romans 2:28-29; Colossians 2:11-12; Galatians 3:26-29; cf. Genesis 17:7,10-11).
- The heavenly high priesthood of Jesus Christ in the order of Melchizedek fulfilled and replaced the earthly priesthood in the order of Aaron (Hebrews 7:11-28).
- The crucifixion of Jesus Christ fulfilled and replaced the function of the curtain of the temple (Matthew 27:51) and thereby abolished the temple and temple service completely (John 2:19-22; Colossians 2:14; Ephesians 2:14-15) and replaced it with the Church and its service in spirit and truth (John 4:23-24).
- And the principles of the kingdom of God replaced the civil laws of the theocratic nation-state of Israel (Matthew 5-7; 8:10-12; 13:40-43; 21:42-44).
- But note: God's Old Testament people, Israel, was not terminated or replaced by the New Testament Church, but was continued on a higher level (in which the Law and the Prophets were no longer shadows, but were fulfilled and have become the realities) and was extended (enlarged) to include the believers in Jesus Christ in all the nations on earth (Romans 1:16; 10:12-13; Ephesians 2:11-22; 3:2-6; 1 Peter 2:4-10).
- Likewise, the Lord's Day (the first day of the week) replaced the Sabbath (the seventh day of the week) as the day to keep separate (holy) from the other days!

In the Old Testament, the last day of the week (the seventh day of the week) took on special importance as the day commemorating God's completion of his work of creation (cf. Genesis 2:2-3). Believers rested from their weekly work and met together in a sacred assembly.

In the New Testament, the first day of the week took on special importance as the day commemorating God's completion of his work of recreation (salvation) (cf. John 19:30; 20:1)! The believers met together to worship God, to celebrate the Lord's Supper, to preach the Word, to pray, to fellowship with one another and do good works outside the Church and save lives.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ was God's convincing proof that God had accepted Christ's completed (finished) work of salvation. It is the resurrection of Jesus Christ that has made the first day of the week (Sunday) so important.

The fourth commandment concerning keeping the Sabbath holy was partly ceremonial and therefore there had to be a change in the Old Testament symbol of the Sabbath day (cf. "necessary change of the law" in Hebrews 7:12). The Old Testament symbol (the seventh day) was replaced by the New Testament symbol (the first day of the week).

- The seventh day celebrated the completion of bringing about God's creation and the beginning of life on earth.
- The first day of the week celebrated the completion of bringing about Christ's recreation (salvation) and the beginning of eternal life.

Therefore the first day of the week received greater significance than the seventh day. It symbolised the triumph of Jesus Christ through his resurrection from the dead! The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ fulfilled the shadows, illustrations (types), prophecies and history of the Old Testament revelation, and thus triumphed over the whole Old Testament Law and Prophets, including the ceremonial aspects of the Sabbath commandment.

2. The resurrected Lord Jesus Christ appeared to people on the first day of the week.

Read Mark 16:9-14; John 20:26. Other facts show that the first day of the week (Sunday) is very important in the New Testament. On the first day of the week (Sunday) that he was resurrected,

- Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene "early on the first day of the week" (Mark 16:9; John 20:11-18)
- and to the other women (Matthew 28:9)
- He appeared to Peter during the afternoon (Luke 24:35; 1 Corinthians 15:5)
- He appeared to two other disciples of Christ on their way to Emmaus when it was "nearly evening" (Luke 24:29).
- He appeared to ten of his disciples and their friends "on the evening of the first day of the week" (Luke 24:33,36; John 20:19). Because the Gospel of John was written much later than the Synoptic Gospels, John did not reckon with the Jewish calendar in which the new day began at sundown. This was the first appearance of Jesus Christ to a Christian church.
- He appeared to eleven of his disciples (this time with Thomas) one week later also on the first day of the week (John 20:26).

3. The Holy Spirit was poured out on the first day of the week.

Read Acts 2:1; Leviticus 23:15-16. *The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost was also on the first day of the week (Sunday).*

4. The New Testament Church was founded on the first day of the week.

Read Acts 2:42. The first Christian church was founded on Pentecost in Jerusalem. God made the first day of the week (Sunday) a very special day, because Jesus Christ was resurrected on Sunday, he appeared to his followers on Sunday, he poured out his Spirit on Sunday and founded the first church on Sunday!

5. Christians continued to meet together on the first day of the week.

(1) The Jewish Christians met together on the first day of the week (Sunday).

Read Acts 2:42; 21:20-21; 1 Corinthians 9:19-23. *Before* Pentecost the Christian community from among the Jews celebrated the Sabbath Day (Saturday) together with other Jews, because they felt themselves to be Jews. They gathered together to read the Old Testament, to listen to preaching and to pray. However there is no reference in the New Testament that the Jewish Christians celebrated the Lord's Supper on the seventh day.

But *after* Pentecost the Christian community from among the Jews also began to celebrate "the Lord's Day" (Sunday) apart from the other Jews. They gathered together to read the Scriptures that consisted of the Law, the Prophets and the Writings and the Gospels and the Letters of the apostles (2 Peter 3:1-2,15-16), to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer (Acts 2:42).

(2) The Gentile Christians met together on the first day of the week (Sunday).

Read Acts 20:5-12; 1 Corinthians 16:2. They met together for worship, for the Lord's Supper, for preaching and teaching the Word, for conversation about the things of God and for bringing their gifts of money!

(3) Christians throughout history continued to meet on the first day of the week (Sunday).

Read Revelation 1:10. The phrase *the Lord's Day* in Revelation 1:10, always refers to the first day of the week in the writings of the early church fathers and even in Modern Greek. Thus, the Christian community continued to meet together on the first day of the week (Sundays) and they called this day "the Lord's Day".

Summarise. Thus, from the time of the New Testament, the first day of the week (Sunday) is recognised by Christians as the day to meet for worship, for celebrating the Lord's Supper, for preaching and for conversations about the things of God.

Only a few hundred years later, Constantine, the Caesar of the Roman Empire, made the first day of the week (Sunday) the official day of rest for the whole Roman Empire. But his decision has no biblical authority. Because Jesus Christ had fulfilled the Law (Matthew 5:17) Christians in other cultures may celebrate the Lord's Day on their national day of rest or worship, which may be any day of the week. What is important is the purpose of the Lord's Day and not on which day of the week it is celebrated!

D. THE PURPOSE OF THE LORD'S DAY

Introduce. In the Bible, the seventh day of the week (Saturday) was called "the Sabbath Day" and the first day of the week (Sunday) was called "the Lord's Day". There is no explicit command in the New Testament to keep the first day of the week (the Lord's Day) like the Old Testament seventh day of the week (the Sabbath). There is also no explicit prohibition in the New Testament to keep the first day of the week (the Lord's Day) like the Old Testament seventh day (the Sabbath). Christians throughout the ages and in all countries have kept the spirit of the Sabbath (Exodus 20:8-11).

- Christians have retained the wise principles in the contents of the fourth commandment (to rest, to get refreshed, to meet together, to do good and to save lives)
- but have abolished the form of the fourth commandment (the seventh day of the week) and replaced it with the first day of the week!

Because there is no explicit command to keep the first day of the week (the Lord's Day) like the Old Testament seventh day of the week (the Sabbath), the following are just guidelines for Christians what they should do or leave on the day of the Lord. However, these activities may not become "new laws" or "a burden" for Christians.

1. The purpose of the Lord's Day is to celebrate with joy the completion of the salvation work of Christ (his resurrection, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and his continual presence).

2. The purpose of the Lord's Day is to rest from work, to grow spiritually, fellowship with other Christians and to worship and serve God.

(1) Christians may use "the day of the Lord" *for themselves* to meet God and grow spiritually in righteousness and holiness.

Read Isaiah 56:6-7; Isaiah 58:13-14. The purpose of the Lord's Day is not that you go your own way and do what you please, but to do the will of the Lord and please him. Christians should find their joy, not in themselves, but in the Lord. The purpose of the Lord's Day is to love God, to worship and to serve him with righteousness and holiness!

(2) Christians may meet God *together* with other Christians on "the Lord's Day".

Read Leviticus 23:3; Acts 2:42; 20:5-12; Hebrews 10:24-25. The purpose of the Lord's Day is to have a sacred assembly, to celebrate the Lord's Supper, to preach and teach God's Word, to have conversations with one another about the Bible, to pray and to have fellowship with one another, to pray and to fellowship together.

(3) Christians may be *actively* involved "on the Lord's day" in doing good and saving lives.

Read Mark 3:4; Isaiah 58:6-12; Luke 4:16-21. The purpose of the Lord's Day is not to be idle (to not work), but to do good and to save lives. For example, help people by feeding and clothing them, preaching the Gospel to them or to deliver them (from occult powers and false teachings).

(4) Christians may *rest* on the Lord's Day from their work.

Read Exodus 23:12; Mark 2:18-27. The purpose of the Lord's Day is that Christians rest from their normal six days of work and be refreshed. It is a good time for Christians to reflect on their own lives, to relax, and to meet with family and friends. The purpose of the Lord's Day is to *help man* instead of being a burden to man.

3. The purpose of "the day of the Lord" is to live every day with a view to eternity.

Read Hebrews 4:9-11; Revelation 14:13. "There remains then a Sabbath-rest for the people of God". It does not say: "a Sabbath day", but "a Sabbath-rest"! This passage does not teach the observance of the seventh day of the week (Saturday) as a day of rest an Old Testament Sabbath). It teaches that the eternal rest, still lies ahead of Christians on earth. "The Sabbath-rest" is a term for heaven or the new heaven and the new earth. When Christians have finished their life and work on earth, they will enter God's rest and rest from their work on earth (Revelation 14:13), just like God rested from his creation work on earth. Because Christians know that this eternal rest lies ahead of them in the future, they make every effort to trust and obey God here on earth!

They must not fail to enter God's Sabbath-rest by unbelief and disobedience as the Israelites did. Not just on "the Lord's Day", but on every day of their lives Christians look forward with joyful anticipation to the eternal rest that remains for the people of God! This explains why the above-mentioned purposes of the Lord's Day are not to be restricted to this one day in the week. The goals are:

- to love, worship and serve God
- to meet together as Christians to spur one another on to love and good works (Hebrews 10:24-25)
- to study, discuss, preach and teach God's Word
- to do good works (Galatians 6:9-10)
- to save lives (Mark 3:4)
- to make disciples (Matthew 28:19)

These activities are also for every day of the week!

5	PRAYER (8 minutes)	<i>[REACTIONS]</i> PRAYER IN RESPONSE TO GOD'S WORD
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Take turns in the group to pray short to God in response to what you have learned today.
Or divide the group into two's or three's and pray to God in response to what you have learned today.

6	PREPARATION (2 minutes)	<i>[ASSIGNMENT]</i> FOR NEXT LESSON
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(Group leader. Give the group members this preparation for at home in writing or let them copy it down).

1. **Commitment.** Be committed to make disciples and build Christ's Church.
2. **Preach, teach or study the teaching** of "The Lord's Day - the day of rest, fellowship and service" together with another person or group of people.
3. **Personal time with God.** Have a quiet time from half a chapter of 2 Corinthians 7 - 10 each day. Make use of the favourite truth method. Make notes.
4. **Memorisation.** Review key verses in John. (1) John 1:14; (2) John 1:15; (3) John 2:25; (4) John 3:16; (5) John 4:24. Daily review the last 5 memorised Bible verses.
5. **Bible study.** Prepare the next Bible study at home. John 4. Make use of the five steps method of Bible study.
6. **Prayer.** Pray for someone or something specific this week and see what God is doing (Psalm 5:3).
7. **Update your notebook** on building Christ's Church. Include your notes on quiet time with God, your memorisation notes, your teaching notes and this preparation.