

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this teaching series, you will have an opportunity to learn about the practical life of the Christian community. Two teachers will teach from the Bible about the Christian festivals. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. Today's teaching is: THE LORD'S DAY, the day Christians meet to worship.

We will learn what the Bible teaches about the meetings on the "Sabbath", which were on the seventh day of the week in the Old Testament and about the meetings in the New Testament, which were on the first day of the week. Why do many Christians all over the world meet on the first day of the week to worship? What should Christians do on that day?

(S) **POINT 1. THE SEVENTH DAY OF THE WEEK IS CALLED THE SABBATH.**

First. Keeping the Sabbath was a part of the Old Testament Law. In Exodus 20, the Lord gave his people Ten Commandments to keep. The fourth commandment of these Ten Commandments says, "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall *not do any work*, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord *blessed* the Sabbath day and *made it holy*." In the Old Testament, God instituted the seventh day of the week as a special day to keep separate from the other 6 days of the week.

In Exodus 23:12 God commands, "Six days do your work, but on the seventh day do not work, so that your ox and your donkey may rest and the slave born in your household, and the alien as well, may be refreshed." Here the purpose of not working one day out of every seven working days was *to rest and get refreshed*. In Leviticus 23:3 God commands, "There are six days when you may work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of rest, a day of sacred assembly." Here the purpose of not working one day out of every seven working days was *to have the opportunity to meet together with other believers in a sacred assembly*. Thus, the fourth commandment teaches the wisdom of using one day out of every seven days in the week for refreshment and for meeting together with other believers.

(T) Second. The Jewish religious leaders and teachers changed the spirit of the Old Testament Law.

The Jews changed the fourth commandment. They buried the fourth commandment under a catalogue of 39 forbidden works on the Sabbath! For example, they taught that it was forbidden to make a journey, or to cook food, or to carry anything on the Sabbath. They accused the disciples of Jesus of breaking this commandment, because they picked some heads of grain on the Sabbath to nibble. The Jews called this "reaping" and according to them that was forbidden on the Sabbath. In this way, it seemed as if man was made for the Sabbath. By adding 39 things which were forbidden to do on the Sabbath, they *changed the Sabbath into a heavy burden for people to carry*.

The Jews exchanged God's Old Testament Law for their human traditions. The Jewish religious teachers and leaders buried the law of God under 365 man-made prohibitions and 248 man-made commandments! In Mark 7:9, Jesus says, "You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions!" Their interpretations of the Old Testament Law was opposed to what God had intended the Law to be. God had intended the Old Testament ceremonial laws as "types" pointing to the coming Saviour and his kingdom, but the Jews had changed them into *a means of salvation*. They taught that only by observing the Law could a person be saved. They especially made circumcision and keeping the Sabbath indispensable for salvation (cf. Act 15:1). Thus they changed the Old Testament Law into a burden that no human being could lift (Mt 23:4; cf. 11:28-30)!

(S) Third. The Old Testament ceremonial law as "a type, illustration or shadow" has been fulfilled and abolished. The Old Testament Law consisted of three parts: the ceremonial (ritual) law, the civil law and the moral law. The New Testament teaches that the ceremonial law has been fulfilled in Jesus Christ (Mt 5:17; Eph 2:15; Col 2:14), the civil law of Israel has been superseded by the principles of God's Kingdom, but the moral law is maintained.

The moral law stipulated rules and regulations with regard to how God's people should live as God's people. The moral is written in the Ten Commandments (Ex 20, Dt 5) and summarised in the law: to love God and to love your neighbour (Mt 22:37-40).

It is very important to notice that the moral law has been given in the context of grace. In Exodus 20:2 we read, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery." Only after God saved the people from their sin and slavery, he gave them the Ten Commandments as a way to live. God *never* intended the Old Testament

laws as “a test of Israel’s obedience” or as “a means by which they could be saved”. In the New Testament, God did not change the original intention he had for his moral laws in the Old Testament. God’s intention with the moral laws was and is that his people would know how they should live in order to please and glorify him. For example, the fourth commandment says, “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.” The fourth commandment teaches the wisdom of using one day a week for refreshment, for meeting other believers and for constructive service.

(T) Fourth. The Sabbath as interpreted by Jesus in the New Testament.

Jesus taught that the Sabbath was made for man. The Sabbath was made to help man. In Mark 2:18-22, Jesus teaches that “new wine should be poured into new wineskins”. The fulfilment of the shadows of the Old Testament and *the contents* of the realities of the New Testament that he brought should be given new *forms*. He emphasises that those who are living in his very presence should be feasting instead of fasting, rejoicing rather than mourning. By his coming, Jesus Christ ushered in a new order. “The forms” of fasting days and Sabbath days belong to the old order. In Mark 2:23-27 he says, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.” The Sabbath was created *after* the creation of man and was instituted not to be a burden for man, but to be a blessing for man.

The first purpose of the Sabbath was *to be helpful to man, to give him an opportunity to rest and get refreshed (Ex 23:12), to occupy himself with God and God’s things by serving, loving and worshipping God (Isa 58:13-14; 56:6), and to meet with other believers to worship God (Lev 23:3).*

Jesus showed that the Sabbath was made to serve God. In Mark 2:28 Jesus says, “The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.” He has the authority to lay down principles that govern the Sabbath day. When there was a genuine need, to save lives like in the case of David, or to heal people like in the present case, then the divinely ordained ceremonial provision of the Sabbath may be ignored. And in Mark 3:1-5 he says, “Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?”

The second purpose of the Sabbath was *to serve God especially by doing good and by saving lives, for example by delivering people from bondage and feeding and clothing them (Isa 58:6-12).* This shows that “the ceremonial aspect” and “form” of the fourth commandment has been replaced by wise, spiritual and constructive principles. The Christians applied these principles of the seventh day to the first day of the week, and called it “the Lord’s Day”.

(S) POINT 2. THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK IS CALLED THE LORD’S DAY.

Why is the first day of the week so important for Christians?

First. Jesus Christ was resurrected on the first day of the week. The Gospels state very clearly that “after the Sabbath, very early in the morning of the first day of the week (Sunday in the Bible)” the Lord Jesus Christ was resurrected from the dead. The bodily resurrection of Jesus was God’s certification to the world that he had accepted the atoning sacrifice of Jesus for sinners and that he had conquered sin and death. The resurrection ushered in the new era of the New Testament. *The New Testament is the age in which the shadows, types, prophecies and history of the Old Testament have been fulfilled in Jesus Christ and have thereafter been abolished (Heb 8:6,13; 10:1-4).* The Old Testament animal sacrifices were replaced by the death of Jesus Christ (Heb 10:8-10). The Old Testament Passover was replaced by the Lord’s Supper commemorating God’s gracious passing over sin that has been atoned for (1 Cor 11:23-26). The Old Testament circumcision was replaced by baptism as the sign of entering God’s covenant of grace (Col 2:11-12). The Old Testament high priesthood after the order of Aaron was replaced by the high priesthood of Jesus after the order of Melchizedek (Heb 7:11-28). The Old Testament temple of Israel was replaced by the Church as the Body of Christ consisting of believers from every nation in the world (Jn 2:19-21). The Old Testament worship of God through the ceremonies of the ceremonial law were replaced by the worship of God in spirit and truth (Jn 4:23-24). The Old Testament civil law of the theocratic state of Israel were replaced by the principles that Jesus taught about the kingdom of God (Mt 22:43).

Likewise, the seventh day of the week in the Old Testament was replaced by the first day of the week in the New Testament as the day to keep “holy”, that is, as the day to set apart from the other days in the week. The fourth commandment concerning keeping the Sabbath holy was partly ceremonial. Therefore there was an appropriate change in the symbol of that day. In the New Testament, not “the last day of the week”, but “the first day of the week” took on special importance as the weekly day of celebrating the triumph of the resurrection! The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ fulfilled the shadows, types, prophecies and history of the Old Testament, and thus triumphed over the whole Old Testament Law, including the ceremonial aspects of the fourth commandment.

(T) Second. Jesus Christ made most of his appearances on the first day of the week. The Gospels state very clearly, that after Jesus was resurrected, he appeared to people especially on the first day of the week. On the first day of the week, early in the morning, he appeared to Mary Magdalene and the other women. In the afternoon he appeared to Peter and two other disciples on their way to Emmaus. In the evening he appeared to ten of his disciples and their friends.

This was his first appearance to a gathered assembly of Christian believers. One week later, again on the first day of the week, he appeared to eleven of his disciples, including Thomas. This was his second appearance to a gathered assembly of Christian believers.

(S) Third. The Holy Spirit was poured out and the Church was founded on the first day of the week. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost was also on the first day of the week. On that same day, the first local church in Jerusalem was founded. Therefore, the Lord Jesus Christ chose to honour the first day of the week by bringing about both the Easter victory on the cross and the birth of the New Testament Church on the first day of the week!

(T) Fourth. The Christian community continued to meet on the first day of the week and called it “the Lord’s Day”.

The Jewish Christians celebrated the Lord’s Day. After Pentecost, it seems that the Christian community from among the Jews continued to celebrate the seventh day of the week as a Sabbath, because most people of their culture were doing that. But according to Acts 2:42, they also met on the first day of the week to celebrate the Lord’s Day! The Jewish Christians gathered as they did before on Saturday together with other Jews to read the Old Testament, to listen to preaching, and to pray, because they felt themselves to be Jews. However there is no reference in the New Testament that the Jewish Christians celebrated the Lord’s Supper on Saturday.

The Gentile Christians celebrated the Lord’s Day. Acts 20:5-12 and 1 Corinthians 16:2 records clearly that the Gentile Christians met on the first day of the week for worship, for the Lord’s Supper, for preaching, for conversation about the things of God and for bringing their gifts of money!

Christians throughout history celebrated the Lord’s Day. The word “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, from the time of the New Testament, the first day of the week was 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 the official day of rest for the whole Roman Empire.

(S) **POINT 3. WHAT CHRISTIANS SHOULD DO ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK.**

Remember, in the Bible the days of the week is numbered differently than in some modern cultures. In the Bible, “the seventh day of the week” was Saturday and was called “the Sabbath” and “the first day of the week” was Sunday and was called “the Lord’s Day”. Although there is no explicit command in the New Testament to keep the first day of the week like the Old Testament seventh day of the week, there also is no explicit instruction to the contrary. Therefore, Christians throughout the ages and in all countries have *regarded the spirit of the fourth commandment to continue on the first day of the week.* They have *abolished “the ceremonial aspect” of the fourth commandment,* but have *maintained the wise principles of the fourth commandment* on the first day of the week and called it “the Lord’s Day”!

(T) How should Christians keep the Lord’s Day holy?

First. Christians should meet God alone and grow in sanctification on the Lord’s Day. According to Isaiah 58:13-14, the purpose of the Lord’s Day is not that Christians do as they please or go their own way, but instead that they do as God pleases and go God’s way. Christians should find their joy not in themselves, but in the Lord. According to Isaiah 56:6, the purpose of the Lord’s Day is to serve, love and worship God.

(S) Second. Christians should meet God together with other Christians on the Lord’s Day. According to Leviticus 23:3, the purpose of the Lord’s Day is to have a sacred assembly. According to Acts 2:42 and 20:5-12, Christians should meet together in order to worship God, to celebrate the Lord’s Supper, to preach God’s Word, to have conversations with one another about the Bible, to pray and to have fellowship.

(T) Third. Christians should do good and save lives on the Lord’s Day. According to Mark 3:4, the purpose of the Lord’s Day is not to be idle, but to do good and to save lives. Christians should not only do good with respect to God by loving, worshipping and serving him. They should do good with respect to people by delivering them from any kind of bondage, by feeding them, by clothing them (Isa 58:6-12) and by preaching the gospel to them.

(S) Fourth. Christians should rest and get refreshed on the Lord’s Day. According to Exodus 23:12, the purpose of the Lord’s Day is that Christians rest from their normal six days of work and get refreshed. According to Mark 2:18-27, the purpose of the Lord’s Day is to help man instead of being a burden to man.

(T) Fifth, Christians should look forward to the eternal rest in the future. In Hebrews 4:9-11 we read that there remains not “a Sabbath day”, but “a Sabbath-rest” for Christians. When Christians have finished their work on earth, they will enter God’s rest in heaven and rest from their work on earth, just like God rested from his creation work on earth. Because Christians know that this eternal rest together with God exists for them in the future, they should make every effort to trust and obey God here on earth. They must not fail to enter God’s rest by unbelief and disobedience as the Israelites did. Thus, every day of their lives, and not only on the Lord’s Day, Christians should look forward with joyful anticipation to the eternal rest that remains for the people of God!

(S) **ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**

First. Teach new believers the meaning of the Lord’s Day - the day Christians meet to worship, serve and rest.

Second. See the workbooks “Go and build Christ’s Church” and Internet on www.dota.net

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to “Discipleship training on the air”.