

The Lord's Day In A Roman Prison

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Why is the Sabbath called the Lord's Day in Revelation and nowhere else in Scripture?

REVELATION 1: 10 Says, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day."

The expression, the Lord's day, is found only once in the Scriptures. The phrase is arresting. Which day is it? Why is it used in this closing section of the Book of books?

It comes to us from momentous times, when the death decree hung over that expression. The Book of Revelation was written in prison. The writer was there because of the lord, and John's loyalty to Him.

By the time Revelation was written, Caesar worship was the one religion which covered the whole Roman Empire; and it was because of their refusal to conform to its demands that Christians were persecuted and killed. The essence of Caesar worship was that the reigning Roman Emperor as embodying the spirit of Rome, was divine. Once a year everyone in the Empire had to appear before the magistrates in order to burn a pinch of incense to the godhead Caesar, and to say: 'Caesar is Lord.'

Thus to refuse to burn the pinch of incense, and to refuse to say "Caesar is Lord," was treason, in addition to being evidence of open opposition to the established religion. The worship of the Emperor began with the worship of the Caesar after his death. However, the Roman Emperor Domitian, who died in AD 96, was most probably the emperor who sent John into exile on the Isle of Patmos. In AD 96 Domitian put to death Flavius Clemens (his own cousin) who was consul, and exiled his wife Flavia Domitilla, niece of Domitian, and both were charged with "atheism." They were probably Christians, for many Christians were thrown to the lions, charged with atheism, for refusing to sacrifice to the Emperor, who claimed to be God.

Domitian's Claims

"Domitian was the first Emperor who arrogated divine honors in his lifetime and caused himself to be styled, 'Our Lord and God,' in public documents. He informed all governors that government announcements and proclamations must begin 'Our Lord God Domitian commands.'

They must call Domitian god or die. Thus the issue was clear. It was a matter of gods. Either the Lord Jesus Christ or the emperor of Rome was lord-god. It was Jesus or Caesar. Who was Lord? That was the issue. The Scriptures clearly show why the writer was banished.

Revelation 1:9: "I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos for the Word of God."

Domitian, claimed to be lord. His day, the Emperor's day, was thus claimed to be the Lord's day. John was banished "for the Word of God." which claimed only one "Lord's day." He rejoiced in that day, the true Lord's day. That holy day belonged to his Lord, and in defiance of a pagan day, he wrote "the Lord's day" in Revelation 1:10. For the Emperor's day was in contrast to the true Lord's day as Dr Cambden M. Cobern states, "Lord's Day finding its exact parallel in Emperor's Day: 'place of prayer' being used for heathen assemblies."

What is "The Lord's Day"?

The Revelation reveals the Lordship of Christ. It exalts the Lord Jesus, who is the Lord of the Sabbath. John, the beloved disciple, rejoiced in Christ's special day "the Lord's day."

It was the Lord's day, for there was and is no other. Any other day is a counterfeit. For the one and only true Lord's day, John would gladly stiffer banishment, persecution or death.

The Sabbath is the Lord's day, for Christ the Lord rested on that day. He blessed and sanctified it. He called it "My holy day" (Isaiah 58:13). It is "the Sabbath of the Lord thy God." Exodus 20:10. It is "the Lord's day."

Revelation exalts Jesus as Lord. He is "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS" (Revelation 19:16). Jesus means "Jehovah." He is "the First and the Last" (Revelation 1:17). He was the Creator and he will be the Finisher. He is from eternity to eternity. He is the One who was dead, but is now "alive for evermore." (Revelation 1:18.) He has the keys of death and the grave and He is the only One who has them. The keys are a sign of authority. He has conquered death. What a Savior! What a Lord! No wonder John rejoiced in exalting Him as Lord. What was a mere mortal man in comparison, even if he be Rome's Emperor? The Sabbath was his Lord's day and in that clay he rejoiced. He was in the Spirit on that holy and sanctified day.

The First and the Last

Revelation reveals Jesus to be the Jehovah of the Old Testament. For instance, three times in Isaiah Jehovah, the Creator, is called "the First and the Last."

Isaiah 41:4, "I the [Jehovah] Lord, the First, and with the Last; I am He." Isaiah 44: 6, "I am the First, and I am the Last." It should be noted that the Lord, Jehovah, says, "I have redeemed thee," verse 22. "Thus said the Lord [Jehovah], thy Redeemer," verse 24. This is Jesus speaking. He is our Redeemer. He is our Lord.

Isaiah 48:12, "I am He; I am the First, I also am the Last."

Three times in Revelation Jesus is referred to as "The First and the Last."

Revelation 1:11, "I am Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last."

Revelation 1:17, 18, "I am the First and the Last. I am He that lives, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore."

Revelation 22:13, "I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the last."

Three times Jehovah, the lord, is mentioned in the fourth commandment.

- (a) "The seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD thy God." Exodus 20:10.
- (b) "For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and rested the seventh day." Exodus 20:11.
- (c) "Wherefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it." Exodus 20:11.

Jesus is the LORD of the Sabbath.

He is the LORD of the Old Testament.

He is the LORD of Revelation.

The Revelation is made up largely with quotations from the Old Testament

Jesus was the Author of the Old Testament (1 Peter 1:10, 11). He was the One who led Israel (1 Corinthians 10:4). He is LORD. HE is LORD of all. Thus when Revelation confirms Jesus as Lord, it automatically reveals the Sabbath of our Lord as the Lord's day. The climax book of Scripture reemphasizes the grand truth that Jesus is Lord.

Someday, and may it be soon, "Every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord." Philippians 2:11. "At the name of Jesus every knee should bow," for it is a name "which is above every name." Philippians 2:9-11. "The divinity of Christ is the believer's assurance of eternal life."

Jesus, our divine Lord claimed, The Son of man is lord also of the Sabbath." Mark 2:28.

Not a Jewish Institution

This day is not merely a Jewish institution: our Lord made it holy thousands of years before there were any Jews in existence. His words give it a permanent place under the Lordship of Christ. He claimed to be Lord of the holy Sabbath. It is the only day He claimed as His. It is the only day on which He rested. It is the only day He blessed and sanctified. It is His day. It is the Lord's day. Christ has placed His permanent seal upon it. Jesus spoke eleven times on the subject of the Sabbath, but always to correct the superstitious additions of the Pharisees, never to destroy it.

It is also of interest to note that there is no indication in history of Jewish prisoners under the, Romans having trouble over the Sabbath. It is very evident that they were granted the Sabbath as a day of rest. Rome had many thousands of Jewish slaves. Christianity was regarded by the Romans as being a Jewish sect, and as such John was at first granted the Sabbath. As the church in

later years drifted into apostasy in the great "falling away" from truth, they took the sacred title "Lord's day" and applied it to a counterfeit day.

Christ's Attitude

Calling Sunday the Lord's day, does not make it the lord's day. The facts are that our blessed Lord never claimed it as His day, but He did claim the Sabbath as His own. It is a recognized rule that when approaching a historical problem, it can only be approached from the past. This is the only legitimate approach that can be followed.

Sunday is never mentioned anywhere in Scripture as the Lord's day, and the fact that in later years it was so named, does not make it the Lord's day. It merely proves how far professed Christians had fallen away from truth when they would take a sacred title and apply it to a counterfeit day. A few facts clearly revealed in our Lord's Word show this.

1. Our Lord worked on Sunday. (Genesis 1: 1-5.)
2. The Lord calls Sunday a working day. (Ezekiel 46:1.)
3. He commanded work on Sunday. (Exodus 20: 10, 11.)
4. Our Lord never kept Sunday.
5. His Father never kept it.
6. The Lord never blessed it.
7. He nowhere forbids work on it.
8. The New Testament nowhere forbids sport on Sunday.
9. Our Lord never pronounced any penalty for its violation.
10. He never promised any blessing for its observance.
11. It is never called in Scripture the Lord's day.
12. There is no record that our Lord ever mentioned it.
13. Our Lord never asked us to break bread on Sunday.
14. He never asked us to keep it as a memorial of His resurrection.

Sunday is not the Lord's day, it never was and never will be.

A certain king once sent to a weaver, and said to him, "Make me a curtain for my palace, and let it be according to this design that I send."

The weaver was happy in receiving such-a commission, and set about his task at once. But when he looked over the pattern and saw that the groundwork was purple, he was troubled. "The established custom," he said, "is to use red for groundwork, but this calls for purple. Now, of a truth, I don't think the king will ever notice the difference at all, and if he does, will acknowledge the red looks just as well; it's cheaper and more convenient for me. So the red goes in for the groundwork; the rest will all go in just as the pattern indicates."

Imagine the poor fellow's consternation when the king utterly refused the tapestry at any price. "The stamp of royalty is lacking," was the explanation. "There is not a hint of the royal purple in it; your red doesn't mean a thing, except, perhaps, that you have obeyed your own conscience instead of me. I hope your conscience will reward you well for your lack of loyalty, fellow!"

Likewise, imagine the consternation and surprise of those who have woven a substitute Sabbath into the great law of Jehovah, saying, "it looks as well as the one He ordered, and it is according to custom." The two cases are parallel. The Sabbath commandment is the seal of God's law. It marks Him as Creator, and consequently King of all created things. It is the royal color He has chosen, and given as a sign between Him and His people. The king who ordered the purple in his curtain had reasons for so doing. The King who ordered the Sabbath in His commandment also had reasons for His order, and its change will be like changing the purple of the curtain. The stamp of royalty again is lacking, and disobedience is conspicuous.

References

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