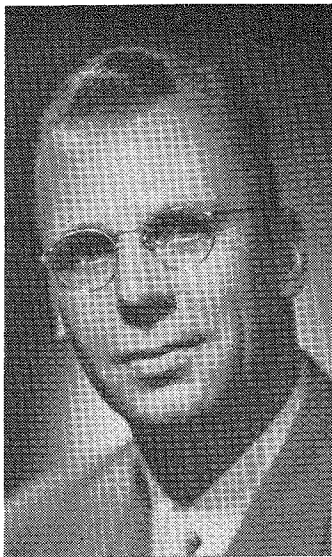


# SUNDAY

# The Lord's Day



*by Evan A. Fry*

THE REORGANIZED CHURCH OF JESUS  
CHRIST OF LATTER DAY SAINTS

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# Sunday

## The Lord's Day

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**O**NE OF THE MARKS of our present day is a neglect of Sabbath observance. Sunday is a day for commercialized recreation, for ball games, races, movies, week-end trips in the car to recreation centers which may be many miles away. Most business is stopped on Sunday, but there is an ever-increasing list of stores and shops which seemingly find it necessary to do business on Sunday. Of course, under modern scientific and technical development, there is a large number of essential services which must be maintained seven days a week—such as transportation, communication, water supply, other utilities, hospitals, fire and police departments, etc. And now that we are at war, and our very existence as a nation imperiled, we deem it necessary to work our defense plants seven days a week, supplying the materials and tools of war to the fighting forces.

### Our Modern Sunday

In many ways, our modern Sunday is perhaps better than the old-fashioned Sun-

day of the Puritans, or even of our grandfather's day. Those old-fashioned Sundays were often too stiff and formal, too rigorous, too repressive. Sometimes they tended to drive people away from God, rather than invite them to him. But basically, the old-fashioned Sabbath was a good idea. It was a day different and set apart from all other days. It was a day which originally was intended for rest, for spiritual re-creation, for religious devotion and instruction. Emphasis was added to the day by a cessation of commercial activities and accustomed daily labor, by "Sunday" clothes, by special family dinner, by church attendance, by quiet reading and study. It is well that we should have liberalized our observance of the Sabbath in these modern days, but we should not lose sight of the basic, fundamental reason for the observance of one day in seven in our zeal to enjoy our new-found freedom.

### Its History

The principle of one day's rest in seven is as old as creation itself, for God made the earth and heaven in six days, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed. Historically, it is impossible to determine whether the patriarchs from Adam to Jacob kept a Sabbath day or not. There is not a single passage of scripture that mentions a Sabbath until the first manna fell during the exodus from Egypt,

and the Lord commanded the children of Israel to gather a double portion on the sixth day. The fact that the principle of one day's rest in seven was established at creation would seem to indicate that there may have been some such observance. The sixteenth chapter of Exodus, which contains the first mention of the word *Sabbath* in the Bible, speaks of it as if it might have been an already familiar custom. But if it had ever been observed, we may rely upon it that there had been no observance of a weekly day of rest during the Egyptian bondage, when as slaves the Israelites were made to labor even beyond the limits of human endurance.

The law which enjoined Sabbath keeping was given to Moses as a part of the Ten Commandments. The covenant contained in this law was a covenant with Israel only. The 31st chapter of Exodus, verse 13, says ". . . Verily, my sabbaths ye shall keep; for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations . . ." and in verse 17, ". . . it is a sign between me and the children of Israel forever . . ." Deuteronomy 5: 2, 3, is even more plain: "The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us alive here this day." The Ten Commandments, and the covenant which they implied between God and Israel, were a

lesser law—a shadow of the higher law of Christ. Paul characterizes this law in Galatians 3:23, 24, as a schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. That law was necessary for the Israelites who had just come from the bondage of Egypt, and who while there had lost much of their religious heritage and spiritual and intellectual strength.

But the fact that there is no mention of this Sabbath law until the time of Moses, plus the fact that all the New Testament writers from the time of Christ's death to the close of Revelation are silent upon the subject, would seem to indicate that the strict Sabbath law was for the nation of Israel alone. Not a single New Testament epistle gives any rules for the observance of a Sabbath. Not once in any of the epistles is Sabbathbreaking denounced. Not once in any of the New Testament epistles are Sabbathbreakers included in any lists of sinners, or evil-doers, or offenders against the gospel of Christ. Inasmuch as all the moral precepts of the old law are reiterated in the New Testament *except* this principle of the Sabbath, and inasmuch as every one of the Ten Commandments is explicitly restated in the New Testament *except* the fourth commandment on Sabbath-observance, there seems ample basis for assuming that the law and covenant on Sabbath-observance, which had been made

only with Israel, was abrogated and done away with the resurrection of Christ.

Jesus came not to destroy the old law, but to fulfill it. When he had fulfilled that old law, which had been a school-master to the Israelites from the time of Moses, that lesser law had no more effect. It was done away—superseded by a new and higher law of love. (See 2 Corinthians 3:7-11.) Paul says again in Romans 7:1-4, that the followers of Christ are dead to the law of Moses, and no more bound by it than a woman is bound by her vows to a dead husband. In Colossians 2:16, 17, Paul is even more explicit, and advises his hearers to let no man judge them in meat, in drink, in respect of holy days, or new moons, or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.

### The New Sabbath

As the old Sabbath commemorated God's work of creation, and the deliverance of Israel from bondage in Egypt, so the new Sabbath commemorated God's work of redemption through Christ, and the deliverance of ALL MEN thereby from the bondage of death and sin. That new Sabbath was celebrated on the first day of the week, the Lord's day, instead of on the seventh day as under the old law of Moses, and under the old covenant, which were dead. Jesus meticulously kept the Jewish Sabbath, not ac

according to the laws of the Pharisees, but according to his own law. But after the resurrection, the apostles observed the Lord's Day, the first day of the week, the day on which Jesus emerged from the tomb, completed his work of redemption, and delivered mankind from the bondage of sin and death.

### Jesus Observed Sunday

Jesus first appeared to Mary after his resurrection, on the *first*, or Lord's Day (John 20: 1-16). On the *first* day, Jesus first appeared to the eleven as they were gathered together with the doors barred for fear of the Jews (John 20: 19). Thomas was not with them on this occasion, but after Jesus had appeared to two disciples on the road to Emmaus (also on the first day) he appeared again to the eleven (Luke 24: 33, 34), the inference being that Thomas was then present. Eight days later, also on the first day, the eleven were gathered together again (John 20: 26-29), and Thomas, the doubter, was instructed to thrust his finger into the wounds of his Lord. The first day of the week, Sunday, was the day of Pentecost, when the church was organized, and three thousand souls baptized. Paul's first letter to the Corinthians (16: 2), indicates that it was the custom for the Christians to make a collection for the poor on the occasion of their meeting together on the first day of the week. Revelation 1: 10



mentions the Lord's Day as being the day on which John saw his vision on Patmos.

The charge has often been made by advocates of a seventh-day Sabbath, that the Catholic Church is responsible for the change in the Sabbath Day. It is not particularly remarkable, when we consider the claims of our Catholic friends to an unbroken succession clear back to the time of Peter, that they readily admit the charge. Historically, however, the papacy was not recognized as supreme until the year A. D. 538. The first legal enactment requiring observance of the first day, was made by Constantine, in A. D. 321, which was followed by a Council of Laodicea in A. D. 364. There is ample historical evidence that these legal and ecclesiastical pronouncements were merely official sanctions of something already accepted—a calling of people to a more strict Sabbath observance. Had we time to bring you lengthy quotations, we could quote from a dozen or more of the early church fathers, who are unanimous in counseling the observance of the first day—all of whom lived from 100 to 200 years *before* Constantine. Our list would include such men as Ignatius (about A. D. 100), Barnabas is contemporary with the apostles), Justin Martyr (A. D. 140), Clement of Alexandria (A. D. 194), Tertullian of Carthage (A. D. 200), Bor-dasenes of Edessa (A. D. 180), and Dyonysius of Corinth (A. D. 170).

The Pharisees had prostituted the old seventh-day Sabbath by making hundreds of confusing rules about it. A man was not allowed to carry a pocket handkerchief, lest he violate the rule against bearing burdens. A man was allowed to apply a bandage to a wound to keep it from spreading, but to apply one for the purpose of healing was unlawful. He must be careful not to wear any ornament which might be taken off and carried in his hand, for this would be a burden. Washing with soap on the Sabbath was counted unnecessary labor. Certain kinds of knots might be tied; others could not. He must know what was a lawful "Sabbath day's journey" from his home, or he might be flogged if he overstepped. Much of the later Sabbath observance of our Puritan ancestors partook of this same legal intolerance. There are even some today who would like to bring back this strict, legalistic, oppressive observance of our Christian Sabbath.

Such is not the purpose in the keeping of the Lord's Day. The spirit of the Christian Sabbath is one of joy, of refreshment, of mercy, of gladness, of cheerfulness. It is a day on which we should do God's works. The Psalmist says, "This is the day the Lord hath made; we will be glad and rejoice in it." Nehemiah commanded "Mourn not nor weep; [on the Sabbath] eat the fat, drink the sweet, and send portions to them for whom

nothing is prepared" (8:9, 10). It is a day of instruction, as the Sabbath is observed in "all the dwellings" (Leviticus 23:3).

### Latter Day Instruction

On August 7, 1831, the Prophet Joseph Smith gave to the church a revelation concerning Sabbath observance. It is now printed as section 59 of our book of *Doctrine and Covenants*. This modern instruction commands that Saints shall go to the house of prayer, to offer up their prayers, sacraments, and oblations on the Lord's Day; that on this day they shall rest from their labors, only preparing their food with singleness of heart, that their joy might be full. Promise is given that if the Sabbath is thus kept, with cheerful hearts and countenances, but without the "much laughter" which is sin, that all the good things of earth shall be theirs to enjoy.

Later, in April, 1887, the son of Joseph the Martyr again gave the word of the Lord concerning Sabbath observance. In spite of the previous instruction concerning the observance of the Lord's Day there were some who advocated a seventh-day observance by the church. This later revelation, section 119, paragraph 7 of our *Doctrine and Covenants*, admonishes the observance of the first, or Lord's Day as a day of worship and of rest. And to temper the zeal of those who would again have imposed a Hebraic or Puritanical Sab-

bath, these further words were given, "And on this day they should refrain from unnecessary work; nevertheless, nothing should be permitted to go to waste on that day, nor should necessary work be neglected. Be not harsh in judgment, but merciful in this, as in all other things. Be not hypocrites, nor of those who make a man an offender for a word."

Latter Day Saints, then, observe the FIRST day of the week, the Lord's Day, advocating for that day, rest, religious observance and instruction, and prayer as the central theme or purpose of the day, but not denying the necessity in these modern times of sometimes performing necessary work, or perhaps of obtaining that physical and mental recreation which are *not* obtainable at other times. We deplore, however, the increasing tendency to commercialize the amusements of Sunday, forcing others to lose their day of rest in order that we might be entertained. We deplore the modern tendency to make Sunday altogether a day of rest and relaxation and amusement, omitting the religious duties which are necessary to its proper observance. For man will always need one day in seven not only to rest and re-create his body, but to renew his fellowship, his communion, and his vows with his God, until we all shall come to that endless Sabbath when we shall serve God continually in the light of his glorious presence.