

Resurrection Sunday
Selected Scripture
ABC 4/16/17

He is risen! Here we are, together again & it's Easter, or better, Resurrection Sunday. Why is it that the pattern of Christians all over the world is to worship on Sunday? It is just tradition? Who started it & why? As we saw last week in Rom 14 & the rest of Scripture, the Sabbath law in the Mosaic Covenant is no longer binding. We're not under that covenant. There are no more dietary laws & there are no more Sabbath laws. That all ended. A death blow was struck on the Sabbath at the cross of Jesus. The New Covenant has its own day, the 1st day of the week. We've been going through Romans & in chapter 14 Paul talks about debatable things. In vs 5 he says, **One person regards one day above another, another regards every day alike.** This led us last week to look at the Sabbath & today we look at Sunday. We're going to go through Scripture backward to trace it back to why we worship on Sunday. Turn to...

1. Revelation 1 The Apostle John is on the Isle of Patmos where he's been exiled as a prisoner for the testimony of Christ & the Word of God. John says, **I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day...** (10). When is John writing? He's writing 30-40 years after Paul, about 96 A.D., & by that time this was no longer called Sunday or whatever other names the 1st day of the week was called. For believers it was now **the Lord's Day**. It doesn't even need explanation. What is **the Lord's Day**? We often call Sunday **the Lord's Day** & it comes from here. Some argue this refers to the time of judgment called **the Day of the Lord**, but the Greek phrases are different. Besides that, the vision John received here has nothing to do with **the Day of the Lord**. It's a vision of Jesus' present ministry in the church. How do we know this refers to Sunday? This is the only place this phrase occurs in the NT. We assume John means the 1st day of the week because that's the sense in which the early Christians made of it.¹ From John's day forward **the Lord's Day** was when Christians worshiped together because of Jesus' victory over death on that day. **The Lord's Day** became the customary way of referring to Sunday. From the 2nd century onward, the evidence shows that Sunday was the regular day of Christian worship everywhere & there is no

¹ D. A. Carson, *From Sabbath to Lord's Day*, p 221

controversy recorded about whether worship should take place on Sunday.² So **the Lord's Day** is Sunday. But what does **the Lord's Day** mean? It's a possessive. The day belongs to Him. It's His possession. It's **the Lord's Day** & we don't worship the sun, we worship the Lord. This title is all through early Christian writings & has continued through all the world.³ Jesus didn't have to give John this vision on **the Lord's Day**. He could have given it on a Tuesday. But He gave it on the Lord's Day & it's a vision of the church. **17-20**

None of John's other visions, & the Book of Revelations is full of them, are associated with any day of the week, just this one. This vision of the church was given on **the Lord's Day**, Sunday.

2. 1 Corinthians 16 Paul says he's going to come to Corinth & he wants them to take up a collection to help the Christians in Jerusalem. **2**

He's telling them that when they meet, on the 1st day of the week, to take up a collection for the Christians in Jerusalem. The implication is the church met on the 1st day of the week. That's when they came together for worship & when they gave as an act of worship. It seems that Sunday worship was already a Christian custom & that it spread throughout the growing church.⁴

3. Acts 20 In Acts 20 Paul goes to Troas. The Gentile church has been established & we read in **vs 7a...**

John called it **the Lord's Day**. The Corinthian church gathered on the 1st day of the week. & here in Troas they were gathered on **the 1st day of the week & Paul began talking to them** & he kept preaching until midnight. There **were many lamps in the upper room where they were gathered** (8) & it got warm & stuffy & a young man named Eutychus was sitting on the window sill, fighting to stay awake. (It's comforting to know that even Paul had people fall asleep while he was preaching!) As Paul kept on preaching, Eutychus fell asleep & fell out of that 3rd story window & died (8-9). Ironically, his name means good fortune or good luck. But maybe not. **10**

Paul raised him from the dead by the power of the resurrected & living Jesus. May I suggest that's because Paul wasn't done with his sermon? **11-12**

² R.J. Bauckham, "The Lord's Day," in *From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical, Historical & Theological Investigation*, p 237

³ Ibid p 224

⁴ Thomas C. Hanson Sr., www.gci.org/law/sabbath/hanson

What a story Eutychus had to tell when he got home.

4. Acts 2 Jesus had promised to send the Holy Spirit numerous times & when that happened the church was born. The New Covenant has already been ratified by Jesus' death & resurrection. 40 days after Jesus' resurrection, He ascends to heaven. After 40 days of teaching His disciples things concerning the kingdom & appearing to more than 500 different followers, we come to the day of Pentecost. 120 Christians (1:15) had gathered together. **2-4**

The Holy Spirit had come. God gave them a visible sign of an invisible reality. It was indicated by the flames that were on the heads of everybody in the room. It was also indicated by their ability to speak languages they didn't know. This was a miraculous moment as the Holy Spirit comes & the church was born & it happened on the day of Pentecost. That same day, **Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice & preached.** At the end of his sermon, **3,000 souls were added to the church** (2:41). The day the church was born, the church grew by 3,000. Now why am I talking about the Day of Pentecost? Have you ever wondered what day of the week Pentecost was? Probably not. Me either. Back in Lev 3:16 there's information about the Day of Pentecost. **You shall count 50 days to the day after the seventh Sabbath.** You start on a Sabbath, you count 7 Sabbaths & then the 50th day. 7 Sabbaths is 49 days, right? So if you had 7 Sabbaths, the 50th day would fall on what day? Sunday. Pentecost, also known as the Feast of Weeks (Dt 16:10), Feast of the Harvest (Ex 23:16), or 1st Fruits (Num 28:26) & was designed to dedicate the 1st of the harvest to the Lord, usually around May or June. Simple calculations indicate that Pentecost was always on a Sunday.⁵ Are you seeing a pattern? The Holy Spirit didn't establish the church on a Monday or a Wednesday or a Friday. The Holy Spirit established the church on a Sunday.

5. John 20:26

This is the week following Jesus' resurrection. You remember Thomas wasn't there the day Jesus' resurrected. **After eight days...** So what day of the week is this? The Jews would count starting with the day they were in, so the 8th day would be the next Sunday. Here they are, 1 week after

⁵ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pentecost>

the resurrection, gathering together on Sunday. Does this indicate that based on what happened on resurrection Sunday, it had now become their day? Maybe, but whatever they were thinking isn't really the issue. What is the issue is on this Sunday they were together & Thomas was there & Jesus showed up. They haven't seen Him since the prior Sunday. Jesus didn't return to them on a Wednesday or Thursday. He waited until the following Sunday before He reappeared. He came through the shut doors or thru the walls, stood in their midst & said, **Peace be with you. 27-29**

I don't know whether they'd decided they were going to meet on Sundays or not, but Jesus decided He'd have His meeting with them on Sunday. It was a His choice to appear on Sunday & that must have made it clear to them that this was the New Covenant day. It wouldn't take long for them to understand the Sabbath was no longer an issue. Why does John tell us what day it was if it's not important? Why even say when it happened if it's not significant? God has set aside the Sabbath & instituted a new day, a New Covenant day. We can still look at every Saturday that goes by & praise God as Creator because in 6 days He created the universe. But our day is the 1st day, Resurrection Day, **the Lord's Day**. It wasn't the disciples' plan. In fact, they were shocked when Jesus showed up, but it was His plan. Now let's look at that 1st Easter, resurrection morning.

6. Matthew 28:1

After the Sabbath, the 1st day of the week, on Sunday these ladies come to Jesus' grave. He was nailed to the cross & died on Friday. He's been in the grave since late Friday afternoon, before sundown, & was there through Saturday, the Sabbath. He had told them He'd be 3 days in the grave, & as I said earlier, Jews counted days by including any portion of the day. Jesus was in the grave on Friday before sunset, day 1. He remained in the grave throughout the Sabbath, Saturday, day 2. He left the grave Sunday morning, day 3. Early Sunday morning these ladies came to look at the grave. **2-7**

It was dawn on Sunday morning, the morning Jesus arose & they see Jesus alive & living. **8-9**

Here we have the 1st worship service of the New Covenant age, it was small, but a time of worship & it was held on Sunday morning. This Sunday had absolutely no importance on the

Jewish calendar. Sunday was usually like any other day. It had no particular significance until this event, until the Resurrection of Jesus & God decided that Jesus should rise on Sunday.

7. Mark 16 Mark weighs in on this whole scene. **1-2**

Notice that every time there's a narrative about the Resurrection, it always clearly indicates this happened on the 1st day of the week. Mark's account goes from there but the 1st day of the week has significance. It just keeps being repeated & repeated & repeated.

8. Luke 23-24 At the end of the chapter, the last vs, it refers to these women who came. They were preparing some spices & perfumes to anoint the body of Jesus. But they didn't come on Saturday, on the Sabbath day they rested (56). They were still following Sabbath law. **24:1-9**

It was dawn on Sunday & Jesus had come out of the grave. He had risen. He was alive. He'd been raised for our justification. He'd conquered sin & death & hell. He had borne our sins in His body. He had been made sin for us & triumphantly came out of the grave & rose on Sunday morning. Because of this, we worship on Sunday, forever grateful & remembering His resurrection. Saturday, the Sabbath, Jesus' body was dead in the grave. That was really the death of Sabbath. When Jesus died, Sabbath died. When Jesus rose, a new day dawned. But that's not all. Let's continue to follow the day. The 1st worship service took place in the morning as the women worshiped Jesus (Mt 28:9). Now let's see what happens. It's a little later in the day. Vs 13 tells us 2 disciples, one of them is named Cleopas (18), are traveling & talking. They were going to the village of Emmaus, 6-7 miles from Jerusalem. As they walk they're talking about all the things that have taken place (14). **15-17**

They'd been talking about the fact that their Messiah was dead. **18b-20**

Where have you been? All of Jerusalem has been in an uproar over Jesus. There were trials & a mob demanded Jesus' death. Pilate gave in & they marched Him up the hill & they executed Him. Where have you been when all these things were happening? Haven't you heard any of this?

They're incredulous that He appears to know nothing about the happenings in Jerusalem. **21**

They knew Jesus had said He'd rise on the 3rd day but they haven't heard for sure that He's done so. **22-24**

They're still not sure what's going on. But Jesus does & here we find the 1st sermon ever preached on a Sunday. Jesus said to them, 25-27

Haven't you read the prophets? Haven't you read Isaiah? Don't you realize what it says in the Psalms that the Messiah is going to die but His body won't see corruption? He will come out of the grave. Don't you know He'll be wounded for your transgressions & bruised for your iniquities & your chastisement will be upon Him & by His stripes, you'll be healed? Haven't you read all that? Don't you remember that the Messiah had to suffer before He could enter into the glory of His kingdom?

This is the 1st sermon ever preached on a Sunday. Jesus opens up the Scripture & explains the OT Scriptures to them & how they point to the Messiah. That morning was the 1st worship service, as the women worshiped the risen Christ. Later in the day, in the afternoon, is another service & this one features a sermon by Jesus Himself. At dawn on Sunday, Jesus arises. On Sunday afternoon He's alive & He preaches the 1st Sunday sermon to these 2 men. 28-32

There was a morning time of worship & an afternoon sermon but that's not all. Look at vs 33a.

They weren't about to stay in Emmaus, not after having seen the risen Christ & having the OT made clear to them. They return to Jerusalem & I'm sure they made really good time! They found gathered together the other disciples of Jesus. 34-35a

By now it's evening. The disciples are gathered excitedly talking about the events of the day & trying to make sense of it all. 36-44

Here you have an evening service on that resurrection Sunday & another exposition of Scripture by Jesus. 46-49

That 1st Easter began with a worship service around the risen Christ. It continued on the road to Emmaus with the 1st expository sermon as Jesus preached to the 2 disciples. It continued in the upper room that night when Jesus showed up where the eleven (minus Thomas) & others were gathered & He again opened the Scriptures & taught them the OT pointed to Him. Not only that, but He also gave them the great commission that they were to go & preach to all nations the message that repentance for forgiveness of sins is available only through Him. You start in Jerusalem. You go to the world, but before you go, wait for the Holy Spirit who's going to empower you to do that. This is some Sunday, isn't it? Jesus came to the disciples. He taught them. He commissioned them. He promised them the Holy Spirit.

9. John 20. John, the 4th gospel writer, starts chapter 20 by saying, **1-2**

John writes about the resurrection & again includes it's the 1st day of the week. He tells of Peter & himself running to the tomb & finding it empty. John also discusses Jesus' appearance to Mary. She's standing outside the tomb, stoops down to look at the tomb, & sees the 2 angels (11-12).

13

That indicates what her 1st thought was: *Somebody had stolen His body.* **14-18**

& then again, starting in vs 19, John tells the story of that Sunday night. **19**

There must have been instant panic. He showed them His hands & His side. Vs 24 tells us Thomas wasn't with them. He missed it. Now there's another event in **vss 21-23.**

Here's the Savior's promise & pledge that they'd receive the Holy Spirit in the near future. He'd made this promise often (Jn 14, 15, 16). The Spirit's going to come. He's going to take up residence in you. He's going to give you spiritual gifts & power for evangelism. & they'd be able to boldly declare the certainty of the sinner's forgiveness by whether or not they believe the gospel. They could tell the whole world, all the nations, that forgiveness of sins is available if you repent & come to Jesus & embrace Him as Savior & Lord.

The fact that each gospel writer mentions that Jesus' resurrection was on the 1st day of the week shows the importance of that day. Literally it reads, *the number one of the Sabbath.*⁶ In other words, the day which is number one in the sequence of days determined by the Sabbath.⁷ The Christian church made the change from the 7th day to the 1st day for worship because it was the day the Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead, the day He completed His Father's redeeming work. What a Sunday that was! Jesus rises from the dead early on Sunday & He appears on that Sunday morning, afternoon, & night. It's a full day. By the time that Sunday is over, they all know Jesus is alive from the dead. Peter knows it, John knows it, Mary Magdalene knows it, the other Marys & the other women & the disciples know it. & by Sunday evening, all the disciples know it with the exception of Thomas. He has to wait a week. The 1st worship service is held early in the morning. Jesus shows Himself alive to the women on that Sunday & they had that 1st Sunday

⁶ John Piper, desiringgod.org/messages/is-there-a-lord-s-day

⁷ Paul Jewett, *The Lord's Day*, p. 75

worship. & then He met 2 disciples that afternoon & He ate with them & revealed Himself to them & miraculously vanished but not until He'd preached the 1st expository sermon ever preached on a Sunday. That evening He met the eleven, minus Thomas, & twice pronounced peace on them & ate with them & taught them, opening the Scriptures & giving their minds understanding. It was on that same Sunday He told His disciples they were going to be sent to take the message of forgiveness to the whole world & they'd be able to announce to all who would repent that there was forgiveness of sins from God provided through the death & resurrection of Jesus & it was available to the whole world. On that 1st Easter Sunday Jesus launched a worldwide mission of evangelism, commissioning the disciples & telling them they possessed divine authority, able to tell others their sins were forgiven if they believed the gospel & received the living Savior. It was on that Sunday He pledged to His disciples they'd be empowered to do this by receiving the Holy Spirit who would come upon them. The New Covenant was ratified on Sunday. When Jesus died & was buried, so was the Sabbath. When Jesus came out of the grave on Sunday, a new day was established. What a glorious day, all the way from dawn till probably late into the night. & with that, Sundays would never be the same again. Sunday became the New Covenant Resurrection day in the disciples minds & it wasn't a tradition & it wasn't that they chose it. Who established **the Lord's Day**? The Lord did. & by the way, it's not the Lord's hour. It's not even the Lord's morning. It's His day. It's not the world's day. It's not the families' day. It's not the kids' day. It's **the Lord's Day**. But it's not law. You could have a service every day or every hour of every day & it would be right but it appears God established a day when Jesus would be exalted worldwide, a day set apart for Him. The events of the resurrection, the birth of the church, the empowerment of the church, the completion of salvation, & the coming of the Holy Spirit; these glorious foundational realities that are at the very heart of our redemption, these are the realities that replaced the shadows & the forms of the Sabbath. They happen on a Sunday & the Lord, then, has picked out His own day. He didn't fill it with law. He just filled it with grace. & in essence He said,

The measure of this day isn't going to be what you don't do. The measure of this day is where your heart is. The measure of your observance of this day is the honor you give to the Savior. This is His day.

The Sunday of the resurrection was a special Sunday. The following Sunday was a special Sunday. Pentecost was a special Sunday. Clearly Sunday was well established in the minds of the people of God. But did they worship only on Sunday. Nope. How often did they worship? Every day (Acts 2:46). But Christians worship on Sundays in celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It's important to remember, though, Sunday worship isn't commanded in the Bible, & Sunday hasn't replaced Saturday & become the Christian Sabbath. While the NT describes Christians gathering & worshipping on Sundays, it nowhere states that Sunday has replaced Saturday as the Sabbath. The key point in all of this is that we aren't to limit our worship to any particular day of the week. We are to rest in the Lord every day. We are to worship the Lord every day. It's not a day when we're more holy than others. It's not a day when there are some restraints on how we're to behave. It's a day when we celebrate our salvation. It's a day when we glorify God & focus on what Christ has done for us. That's why we come together & pray. That's why we come together & sing hymns. That's why we come together & read Scripture. The reasons we come to church on Sunday is because we've been rescued from our sins, united with a risen, living Christ & with each other through faith in Jesus. Because of that union with Jesus & with each other, the Bible, God's Word, calls us to regular, expressions of our corporate joy & thankfulness before God in worship, not just isolated people scattered around, but corporate gatherings praying & singing & hearing God's word & celebrating the ordinances of Jesus.

What does God expect of us? He hasn't given any rules or commands for Sunday. But grace doesn't require less than law. It requires your whole heart & life. How much do you love Jesus? How much do you desire to worship & honor Him? How grateful are you for your salvation? There aren't any external rules to give you for Sunday & anybody who takes the Sabbath law & drags it over & imposes it on Sunday, doesn't understand grace & doesn't understand the line drawn between old, dead covenants & the New Covenant that came through our living Lord. Everything about the New Covenant is better than the old covenant, including our day. Wouldn't you rather

be living in the joy & celebration of the Lord's Day than under the burden of the Mosaic law of Sabbath? I don't need a day full of regulations. I don't want to be under a system of condemnation. I don't want to live in a shadow that points to a reality. I've entered into true rest. I have the reality. I have the Savior. Paradise is found. I'm no longer under law. I'm not under bondage. I've been set free but that doesn't call for less from me. That calls for more & out of my heart should flow love & adoration & praise that fills up the Lord's Day. So ask yourself, *What does my love for Jesus ask of me on my Lord's Day?* It's not a question of what's forbidden. It's about giving your heart to the Lord on His day, centered on worship & thanksgiving & learning more from His Word. Search your heart. Is it really His day in your life? What a privilege to celebrate Him as Savior. When Jesus rose from the dead on the 1st day of the week, things changed. Christ, the second Adam, **finished** (Jn 19:30) the work that the 1st Adam failed to do (Rom 5:12-19). Because of that pivotal event, the church determined that for Christians under the new covenant, the day of worship & celebration of the Lord's grace in Jesus Christ was to be the 1st day of the week, resurrection Sunday. On this day, we're reminded of & participate in the glorious reality that we've already entered God's rest (Mt 11:28; Heb 4:10) & we eagerly await the fullness of this rest in eternity in the new heavens & new earth (Rev. 21-22).⁸

Christians are people who recognize that, even though like all humans we have been created in the image of God, we fall short of what God expects of us & therefore we've sinned against Him & have mocked His glory by treating the things He made as more valuable than He is Himself. We recognize that we deserve to be punished for this. & even more, we recognize that God is not only just in His punishments, but patient & loving. He has sent a Rescuer, His Son, a Redeemer, Jesus Christ into the world to bear the punishment we deserve. & so the Bible says, **If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord & believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved** (Rom 10:9). & that means saved from God's wrath, saved from God's punishment, saved from hell & given purposeful, abundant, & eternal life. That's why we gather on Sundays as we rejoice in our salvation provided by our risen & living Lord. We are grateful people who

⁸ Daniel Hyde, www.ligonier.org/blog/why-christians-worship-sunday/

have believed in Jesus as the Son of God who died for our sins, who rose again from the dead, who reigns in heaven today, & who will come again. We are trusting Jesus day-by-day as our Savior from sin & judgment & as our supreme Authority & as our greatest Treasure. Do you know Jesus in this way? If not, why not? He died in your place to pay the punishment of your sins. He rose victoriously to offer to you His resurrection life. Would you like to receive Him today? Easter Sunday, resurrection Sunday, every Sunday we're to be celebrating & honoring our Savior. We begin doing that by acknowledging Him & His work & putting our faith in Him. If you haven't done that, please talk with me or someone here & make this Sunday the start of your new life in Him & we celebrate His resurrection with you.