

**WHY CHRISTIANS WORSHIP ON SUNDAY (THE LORD'S DAY)
AND NOT ON SATURDAY (THE SABBATH)
Timothy Lin, Ph.D.**

Exodus 20:11; Deuteronomy 5:15; Psalm 118:22-24; John 20:19; Revelation 1:10

The origin of many isms and of much misunderstanding of Scripture may well be attributed to the failure to comprehend the concept of the organic and progressive nature of revelation. For instance, Seventh Day Adventists, as well as Seventh Day Baptists, have failed to realize the truth concerning the progressive revelation of the Sabbath in the Scriptures. The purpose of the commemoration of the Sabbath was changed even in the Old Testament from recognition of the creation (Ex. 20:11) to that of the Exodus (Deut. 5:15). Psalm 118:22-24 refers to the day of the resurrection of Christ and may well be taken as the prophetic note for the changing of the Sabbath to that day in which “the stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner” - the resurrection day of our Lord.

God's revelation is not limited to words only. In His natural revelation He uses “the heavens to declare His glory, and the firmament to show His handiwork” (Ps. 19:1), and in His supernatural revelation He revealed the importance of faith through Abraham's life and of redemption to the Gentile through Paul. In other words, God's revelations are found in words as well as in nature and actions. An explicit commandment to change the Sabbath to the Lord's Day is not recorded in the New Testament, yet the change is very clear as viewed progressively in the New Testament. It started with Christ's statement that He was the Lord of the Sabbath day (Matt. 12:8). He had the right and authority to interpret it and to do what He liked for the good of men. In the New Testament this is the first embryonic revelation of the Lord's Day, anticipating its later development. The importance of the day is not that it is either the last or the first day of the week, but that it is the day that the Lord chose for “the day” predicted in the Old Testament. Since the Lord was resurrected and appeared to His disciples on the first day of the week (John 20:1,19), and appeared again to the apostles on the following first day of the week (John 20:26), undoubtedly the first day of the week is sealed as “the day.” In all history what greater event has ever occurred than the Lord's resurrection, which was repeatedly confirmed by His many appearances. Thus this day on which the greatest of all events occurred is surely an important one!

Further, when Paul and his companions stayed at Troas for seven days, a Sabbath passed by, yet there was not a single hint that they observed it. On the contrary, when the first day of the week came, the disciples gathered together to break bread, and Paul preached. Why did they have to wait until the first day of the week? Obviously this period of time had already become the formal day for Christians' gathering. Here, besides the importance of the day, the Lord further disclosed the program of commemoration or worship that should include gathering together, breaking bread, and preaching. A few years earlier the Lord had already disclosed another program concerning the believers' offering which should be collected on that same day (1 Cor. 16:1,2). Thus, the authority, the importance, and the program of worship of the day had

all been progressively disclosed; but not the name of the day, which was not revealed until the last book of Scripture.

When John was in Patmos waiting for the revelation of the Lord, on the first day of the week the Lord suddenly appeared to him, and in his inspiration John named the first day as the Lord's Day, which means belonging to the Lord (Rev. 1:10). Christ has done so much for the world, does He not deserve a day for Himself? After all, He should "have the preeminence in all things" (Col. 1:18)!

Note: Christians who mentioned the Lord's Day in their writings in the early Church History:

- Epistle of Barnabas 15:9 (AD 100)
- Epistle of Ignatius to the Magnesians 9:1 (AD 107)
- First Apology of Justin, Chap. LXVII (AD 145)

© 1997 Biblical Studies Ministries International, Inc. All rights reserved. For permission to copy, see our Reprint Policy at www.bsmi.org. Direct all questions and comments to us at bsmi.org.