

# Two Sermons on the Christian Sabbath

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## ON THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH

### Sermon I

Revelation 1:10

#### **“I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day.”**

The apostle John was one of those, who by their doctrine and works bare testimony to the resurrection and divinity of Jesus Christ. For this testimony, he was banished by the Roman Empire to an island called Patmos, a dreary, uninhabited island in the Archipelago, which is part of the Mediterranean Sea.

As his crime was preaching the gospel of Christ, his persecutor chose to send him into a solitary and desolate place, where he would have no opportunity to propagate his religion. But no solitude could exclude him from communion with God - no artifice of man could defeat the purpose of heaven. Here was communicated to him, in vision, that wonderful revelation, which contains a prophetic series of events, from that time to the end of the world, and which, in every age, is a standing demonstration of the truth of the glorious gospel of Christ. "The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophesy."

John makes particular mention of the day, on which he received the divine communication. "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day."

The churches, to whom he wrote, knew and observed this day. He named it to them to shew that their Lord had put a distinguished honor upon it, and that they were bound to keep it holy in honor and obedience to him. On this day John was in the spirit. Being engaged in the exercises of piety and devotion, he enjoyed that high communion with God, which, at other times, he had seldom known. By a pious observance of God's consecrated day he could have communion with him in the wilderness.

We will consider the day, which is distinguished by the name of the Lord's Day - the manner in which the holy apostle was employed on this day - and the advantage, which he found in his employment. We will then attend to the instructions, which may be collected from our subject.

I. We observe, first, that the apostle speaks of a certain day, distinguished from all others by the name of the Lord's Day.

As he was writing to Christian churches, and expressly to the churches in Asia, he undoubtedly called the day by a name, which was common and familiar among

Christians. We may therefore conclude, that there was a certain day, which, in the apostles' times, was known and observed in all the churches, as eminently and peculiarly the Lord's day. And this must be the first day of the week, on the day on which the Lord arose from the dead; for no other day is mentioned in the New Testament, as in any respect distinguished among Christians from other days, or as entitled to the peculiar honor of being called by this name.

As the sacrament of the Supper, which was instituted in remembrance of Christ's death, is called the Lord's Supper, so the day on which he arose from the dead is called the Lord's Day. As the Supper is distinguished from all other festivals by the express institution of Christ, and by his express command to observe it in remembrance of his death, so the day of his resurrection is distinguished from all other days by this great and important event, and sequestered by his authority as a day of religious worship among Christians, that this interesting event might better be kept in remembrance. There is the same reason, why Christians should, have a standing memorial of his resurrection as of his death. The Supper is the memorial of the one; the Christian Sabbath is the memorial of the other. And this day is called the Lord's Day, for the same reason, as that is called the Lord's Supper.

The name seems to be taken from the 24th verse of the 118th Psalm, where David, speaking prophetically of Christ's resurrection says, "I will praise thee, for thou art become my salvation. The Stone which the builders rejected, is become the head of the corner. This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day, which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice in it and be glad." Here is a plain imitation, that the day, on which the marvelous work of Christ's resurrection would be accomplished - the day, when the stone rejected by the builders should be made the head of the corner, would be consecrated for, and observed by the church, as eminently the Lord's day - the day which he had made in a peculiar sense - had distinguished by his resurrection, and appointed by his authority for religious worship.

And we find in fact, this day, immediately and constantly, after our Lord's resurrection, was observed among his disciples as a day sacred to piety and devotion. And the observance of it was doubtless in compliance with the previous instructions of him, who is the Lord of the Sabbath, otherwise we can hardly suppose, it would have begun so soon, and prevailed so generally, as it appears to have done.

The apostle John, in his gospel, tells us that Jesus rose from the dead early on the first day of the week. And the same day, at evening, being the first day of the week, when the disciples assembled together, came Jesus, as before and stood in the midst of them.

There is certainly some reason, why these circumstances are so particularly remarked, once and again. And what could it be, but because this day was, in future, to be distinguished by religious assemblies of Christians and the gracious presence of Christ in them?

We are told, in the history of acts, that, "When Paul and his company came to Troas," where was a Christian church, "they tarried there seven days; and on the first day of the

week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow." And because this was the day, on which Christians stately assembled for religious worship, Paul gives instructions to the churches of Corinth and Galatia, that, in order to prepare a collection for the suffering saints in Jerusalem, "every one, on the first day of the week, should lay by him in store, as God has prospered him."

This day was honored by the first remarkable effusion of the divine Spirit on the apostles of Christ, and the preachers of his gospel; and by the first signal instance of the success of their preaching. "When the day of Pentecost was fully come, the disciples were all together with one accord." This is the same festival, which, in the Law of Moses, is called the festival of weeks; i.e. of seven weeks, or one week multiplied into another, which make forty-nine days. It was forty-nine days after the second day of the Passover. Pentecost signifies the fiftieth. It is so called, because it was celebrated on the fiftieth day from the first day of the Passover. The first day of the Passover was the Jewish Sabbath; the fiftieth day from thence would be the first day of the week. On this day the disciples were all together. On this day Christ fulfilled his promise, which, before his ascension, he made to his disciples, that "they should be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." On this day Peter preached to the assembled Jews; and the word came with power and with the Holy Ghost. Multitudes were awakened and converted, and the same day were added to the church three thousand souls.

In this chapter, which contains our text, we have another example to our purpose. John, in his vision, beheld the churches in Asia assembled, on the Lord's Day, for religious worship, and the Lord Jesus walking among them, to observe their order, to assist their pastors, and to impart his grace. He says, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day. And I heard behind me a great voice, saying, 'I am the First and the Last. And what thou seest write in a book, and send to the seven churches which are in Asia.' And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks, and in the midst of them one like the Son of Man - his eyes were as flame of fire - and he had in his right hand seven stars. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven candlesticks are the seven churches." This vision plainly instructs us, that the Lord's day was the time, when the churches assembled for the hearing of the word - that on this day, their respective angels or pastors, attended to preach the word to them - and that the Lord Jesus, in a peculiar manner, honored this day by his gracious presence with his worshipping assemblies and ministering servants.

These examples sufficiently demonstrate that the churches from the time of Christ's resurrection, and during the life of the apostles, met for social devotion on the first day of the week, and that they did this with the approbation of him, who is the Lord of the Sabbath, and in consequence of his institution.

We find indeed, that Paul often went into synagogues to preach on the Jewish Sabbath, or the seventh day of the week; for as this was the day, on which the Jews assembled to worship, it was the most favorable opportunity to preach the gospel to them. But wherever Christian churches were assembled, the first day of the week was observed as sacred time. This was the day on which they met together to hear the word, break bread, and unite in prayer and praise.

That a seventh part of time should be sequestered for the purposes of piety and devotion was a law as early as the creation of man. "On the seventh day God ended his work, which he had made, and he blessed the seventh day and sanctified it." This law is not only recorded by Moses for the Jews, but seems to have been conveyed to other nations by tradition. How else should it be, that nations, which had no knowledge of, or paid no respect to the Mosaic Law, should think of dividing their time into periods of seven days? Periods of years are naturally marked by the declinations of the sun; periods of months are marked by the changes of the moon; periods of days are marked by the vicissitudes of light and darkness. We easily see, how mankind came to agree in these divisions of time, but how came they to think of these septenary periods of days? Doubtless they were taught, from the beginning, to reverence one day in seven as consecrated to God.

The sons of Adam had their stated seasons of worship. These were probably at the end of the days appointed for labor. "Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain was a tiller of the ground." They both were employed in peculiar occupations. "And in process of time," or as the margin reads, agreeable to the original, "At the end of the days, they brought the one of the fruit of his ground, and the other of the firstlings of his flock, an offering unto the Lord."

Noah, after the ark had rested, constantly observed periods of seven days in sending forth his doves, to discover whether the waters of the flood were abated.

The Jews, in the wilderness, before the law was given from Sinai, observed one day in seven, as a holy Sabbath; and God, by withholding the manna on a certain day, pointed out this, as the day of rest. Moses, by God's direction, says to the people on the sixth day. "Tomorrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath. Six days ye shall gather the manna, but on the seventh, which is the Sabbath, there shall be none."

When the law was given, there was placed among the moral precepts, a command to observe a seventh part of time as holy to God. This with the others, was spoken by the voice of God to the people, and written with the finger of God on a table of stone, and deposited by the order of God in the Ark of the Covenant. These circumstances plainly indicate its moral and perpetual obligation.

The contempt of the Sabbath is in scripture ranked with idolatry, and other gross corruptions and immoralities; for it always was followed with a general depravation of sentiments and manners. One reason why the Jews were to observe the Sabbath, was that they might not be seduced to idolatry; And one reason why Christians are not to forsake the assembling of themselves together on the Lord's Day is, that they may hold fast to profession of their faith.

The prophets, in their reproofs and exhortations to the Jews, lay particular weight on the religious observance of the Sabbath, and distinguish this from all ceremonial observances. This they urge in degenerate times, as the first step to a reformation, and a principle mean of national virtue, security and happiness. And the judgments which befell that nation are often ascribed to the profanation of God's holy day, than to any other particular crime; for this was the source of all crimes.

If we believe, that there is one supreme God, who exercises a moral government in the world, we must believe that we are bound to worship him. And if we believe we are made to subsist in a social connection, and to serve one another in the exercise of mutual benevolence, and that God extends his government to societies as well as to individuals, then we must believe that social worship is a moral duty. If we are to worship God in a social manner, there must be some fixed and known season for this purpose. And as mankind would not be likely to agree on the time, it is reasonable to expect that God in a revelation given to men, would appoint the time for them. Thus far the observance of a Sabbath is matter of moral obligation, as really as prayer, or praise or any exercise of piety, justice or benevolence.

A seventh part of time seems to be a reasonable proportion for sacred use. Too frequent a return of holy time would exclude the necessary occupations of the world. Too long intervals would leave the pious sentiments awakened in our devote exercises to languish and expire. Tho' we cannot say, that this is the only proportion which would answer the purposes of piety, without intruding on the duties of common life, yet experience teaches us that it is justly and wisely chosen. Which of the seven days should be consecrated to religion, in preference to the others, reason could form no judgment. This depends on positive institution, and belongs not at all to the morality of the command. And therefore, tho' the Sabbath can not be abolished, yet the day may be changed. From the time of the creation, there was a natural propriety in reflecting from the labors of life, on the day, on which the work of creation ceased, because this would aptly bring to mind that vast and stupendous work.

The deliverance of the Jews from bondage of Egypt was an event in which that nation was deeply interested, and which in all generations they ought to thankfully commemorate. Therefore, the renovation of the ancient institution, so far as it peculiarly respected them, had a special reference to this deliverance; and their observance to the Sabbath is urged by this, in addition to other arguments. "Keep the Sabbath day and sanctify it, as the Lord hath commanded thee - Remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord brought thee out hence with a mighty hand; therefore he commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day."

The Jewish Sabbath was appointed to be on the day of this deliverance. Thus it would be a mere pertinent commemoration of it. The resurrection of Christ, by which he finished the work of our redemption, was an event far more grand, interesting and glorious. Hence there was a manifest propriety in setting apart that day of the week, on which he arose, to be observed in perpetual remembrance of this event. This was eminently the Lord's Day, and as such it was revered and observed in all churches of the saints.

We proposed to shew,

II. How John was employed on this sacred day. It appears from the text that the words connected with it, that he spent this and doubtless other Lord's Days, in the exercises of religious worship.

As he was confined to a place uninhabited, he has no opportunity to join the social devotions, which were a useful part of the business of the Lord's Day among the early Christians. But he did not forget the day, when it returned. He remembered it in distinction from all other days, and spent it as far as he was able, in conformity to the sacred design of its institution. He did not give himself to indolence and slumber, as if there were nothing to be done, but applied himself to the duties of private devotion. This is implied in the expression "I was in the Spirit." He had a vision of the assembled churches, and of Jesus walking in the midst of them. He attended to the instructions given him by Christ relative to the work which he had to perform, particularly to the admonitions, which he was to send to the churches in Asia. Not able to go and preach to them in person, he employed the day in writing letters of reproof, instruction and consolation that they might know what the Spirit said to them.

It was by humble prayer that the prophets of old were prepared to receive the visions of God. Daniel, before he was made acquainted with the great designs of providence concerning the church, set himself to search the word of God, and to seek light and direction from him by earnest supplication. The visions which he has recorded were made to him in consequence of fasting and prayer and reading the books of former prophets. In like manner, John was prepared for the discoveries made to him. He remembered the Lord's Day. He gave himself to meditation and prayer, and doubtless also to reading the prophets, for from them he has taken many of the expressions and most of the figurative descriptions, which we find in this book. While he was seeking divine grace, light and comfort in these devout exercises of the Lord's Day, the heavenly communications were made to him.

This leads us to confer,

III. The benefit to which the apostle found, in attending on the duties of the Lord's Day.

He says, "I was in the Spirit." This phrase especially intends the communication of the Spirit of prophesy, as appears from the following description of the vision presented to him. The phrase is again used in the same manner in the fourth chapter. The expression in this high sense is applicable only to the prophets of God. But there is a sense on which it may be applied to every pious and humble Christian. As there was an extraordinary operation of the Spirit, peculiar to the prophetic and apostolic ages, so there is an ordinary influence common to all ages of the church.

The Spirit of God is presented as dwelling in the hearts of true believers, to sanctify them more and more from sin, to afflict them in prayer, to strengthen them in duty, to comfort them in trouble, to succor them in temptations, and to seal them unto the day of redemption. And in regard to these gracious influences, they are said to "be in the Spirit." The apostle says to the Romans, "ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

The Lord's Day is the time when Christians most eminently experience the communication of the Spirit; for the word and ordinances administered on this day, are

the means by which God imparts his grace to humble souls, and it is in a diligent attendance on these means that they are to hope for his grace.

God promised of old, "In every place where I record my name, I will come unto you and help you." Similar to this is the promise of our Savior, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them." It is by an attendance on the instituted duties of the sanctuary, that Christians increase in knowledge and holiness, have their doubts removed and their darkness dispelled, and feel their virtuous resolutions animated and confirmed. Christ gave pastors and teachers for the edifying of his body, that all might come to perfect men in him.

We may add farther: The conviction and conversion of sinners are, in Scripture, ascribed to the Spirit of God. The preaching of the word is the ordinary means of conversion, but it is by concurrent divine influence that the word becomes effectual to this end. The sinner, therefore, awakened to a sense of sin, convicted of his danger and "framing his ways to turn unto God" may be said to be "in the Spirit" - to be subject to divine operation. As God is pleased ordinarily to grant his Spirit in the use of those means, which are to be stately enjoyed on the Lord's Day, for this is the season when sinners have most reason to hope for the effectual working of God's power in their souls. Lydia's heart was opened while she was hearing the word. It was on the day of Pentecost while Peter was preaching that the multitudes were pricked in their hearts. It was when this apostle was speaking the word to Cornelius and his friends that the Holy Ghost fell on them. The Galatians received the Spirit in the hearing of faith. As the word of God is the appointed means of obtaining the Spirit, and as the Lord's Day is the appointed season of hearing the word, so this is the time when we are most likely to receive the heavenly gift. Therefore seek the Lord while he may be found. Call upon Him when he is near. Ask and ye shall receive, for he gives his Spirit to them who ask him.

## Sermon II

Revelation 1:10

### **“I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day.”**

The Christian Sabbath, or the first day of the week, is here called, the Lord's Day; it being the day, on which he arose from the dead, and which he appointed to be observed among Christians, as a season of religious worship.

On that day John was employed in such exercises of piety and devotion, as were suited to his solitary condition, and to the general state of the church, whose prosperity lay with weight on his mind.

Being thus employed, he received some special communications of the divine Spirit. He had a view of the blessed Jesus in his exalted glory\_a view resembling, but far surpassing that which he formerly had, when he was with him on the mount. And he had also a discovery of the great designs of providence with regard: to the church, from that time to the end of the world. The Spirit of revelation and prophecy, which John enjoyed on the Lord's Day, was peculiar to the times of inspiration. But there is an influence of the Spirit common to all ages. And this we may hope to obtain by our attendance on the institutions of the gospel on the appointed day. Christians on this day may receive the sanctifying and comforting presence of the Spirit; and sinners may hope to become the subjects of his convincing and converting power. On these thoughts we enlarged in our preceding discourse.

I shall now call your attention to the reflections and inferences, which naturally result from our subject.

I. As a day set apart by divine authority for the commemoration of Christ's death and resurrection; we may hence conclude, that there were events vastly important to mankind, and worthy to be remembered in all ages of the world. If Jesus had been only a common man, and his death and resurrection uninteresting occurrences, a day would not have been sequestered to perpetuate the remembrance of them.

Moses, the great lawgiver of the Jewish nation, was deservedly held in high estimation among them for his institutions and miracles, virtues and self denials. But lest a superstitious veneration should be paid to him, his burial was so ordered in providence, that the place of it was utterly unknown.

Next to Moses, Elijah was a man of most distinguished eminence among the Jews. He restored to its primitive purity the divine law, which had been corrupted by the intermixture of pagan rites. He performed many surprising miracles. He acted in the cause of religion, with a warm and animated zeal. He encountered opposition; and endured affliction, with singular fortitude and patience. To reward his great piety and patriotism and to prevent a superstitious remembrance of him, he was translated to heaven, and exempted from death.

No day was sequestered, nor form of worship instituted in memory of these high and distinguished characters; but, on the contrary, particular care was taken, that nothing like religious veneration should be paid to their names. A grateful remembrance is due to public benefactors; but no festivals have ever been divinely instituted in honor of their persons, or in memory of their services. Certainly then we must conclude, that Jesus Christ is a character Superior to all human characters; and that his death and resurrection are events in which mankind are more interested, than in any other event, which has taken place in the world.

A day was set apart in commemoration of the creation. An additional reason for the religious observance of a Sabbath among the Jews was their glorious deliverance from the bondage of Egypt. The former was a work worthy to be commemorated by all mankind. The latter was an event peculiarly deserving of a grateful remembrance among the Jews. But when the Redeemer died on the cross and rose again from the dead, another day was appointed, instead of the former, to celebrate the wonders of his redemption. We may then conclude that redemption is a work more worthy of our remembrance, than creation itself. Creation has given us a rational existence: Redemption has procured for us a happy immortality. If positive happiness is of more value, than bare existence, we are more indebted to divine goodness for the work of redemption, than for that of creation. The superstition of heathens has deified certain heroes and conquerors; and the superstition of some nominal Christians has canonized particular saints, and appointed days for the celebration of their virtues and works; but divine institution has honored with this distinction none but our glorious Redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ. To him, in the religious observance of his day, let us devoutly pay the honor due to his merits.

II. Our subject teaches us, that it is the indispensable duty of all Christians, living within a convenient vicinity, to associate for the maintenance of, and an attendance upon the instituted worship of God. The appointment of a particular day for this object bespeaks its solemn importance.

The Jews, on their Sabbath, were to have a holy convocation. The early Christians, on the Lord's Day, came together to break bread, hear the word, and unite in prayers and praise. The believers in Corinth are said to have met together in one place. The Hebrew Christians are cautioned, not to forsake their religious assemblies. In the several provinces of Asia, there were distinct churches, and each church had its fixed pastor. To the pastors John directs his epistles, to be by them communicated to the people of their respective charges. Wherever the apostles found a number of believers, so situated that they could assemble together, they collected them into a church; and in every church they ordained an elder. They never allowed Christians to live in a disconnected state, nor churches to continue without a pastor.

Their example teaches Christians their duty in all ages. They are bound to associate for the maintenance of divine worship, and to procure them pious and able ministers, who may stately preside in their religious solemnities. And every Christian, as he has opportunity, is bound to join himself to some such society, for his own and the common edification. No man has a right to live unconnected with the church; and no church has a right to continue destitute of a pastor. These are not matters of human option, but divine

injunction. As Christ has purchased the church with his blood, instituted social worship in it, given pastors and teachers for its edification, and appointed a day, in which it shall stately assemble, they who voluntarily, or negligently continue without a minister, without stated worship, and without the observance of the Lord's Day, live in plain disobedience to his authority, and in open contempt of his grace and love.

We see, then that they who change the place of their worldly habitation, should keep in view the worship of God. Men have a right to alter their situation, when they think they can mend it; to sell one inheritance and purchase another, when they reasonably expect to meliorate their condition. But in all their removes they should preserve a regard to divine worship, should either go to places where it is enjoyed, or speedily seek the enjoyment of it where they go. This was the temper of the Psalmist; "God shall choose our inheritance for us, even the excellency of Jacob, which he loved." This excellency or glory of Jacob was the sanctuary, which God had ordained, and the worship, which he had instituted. The Psalmist refers to Providence to choose for him his earthly inheritance, but with this humble and pious reserve, that it might be in a place, where God was known and worshipped. "This one thing he desired of the Lord, and this he sought after, that he might dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire at his temple." This privilege, has so near a connection with the existence of religion, and with the hope of Salvation, that a pious man, sooner than part with it, will forego every worldly interest.

III. Our Subject teaches us the importance of attending on divine institutions. It is thus that we are to obtain the Spirit.

We are dependent on God in the concerns of religion, as well as in those of common life. Of ourselves, without the grace of God, we are no more sufficient to effect our preparation for heaven, than, without the blessing of his providence, we are sufficient to procure our daily bread. But his grace no more supersedes our labors in the former case, than his providence excludes our diligence in the latter. To obtain the blessing of his providence on our husbandry, we must apply the means which nature and experience point out. To obtain the influence of his Spirit in the work of our Salvation, we must apply the means, which his word prescribes. The Sabbath, the preaching of the gospel, joint prayer, and social worship are institutions of God; and, while we enjoy them, we are to expect his blessing only in the use of them.

God doubtless could grant his Spirit independently of these means; nor will we presume to say, how far his grace may interpose in behalf of some, to whom these means are denied. But we, who enjoy them, cannot expect his blessing in the neglect of them. God could reveal to every mortal the gospel scheme, as easily as he revealed it to the apostles; and he could form men's hearts to embrace it by his immediate energy, as well as by the intervention of external means. But this is not the way in which he has chosen to deal with us. He has given us a written revelation he has appointed teachers to open the doctrines, and inculcate the precepts contained in this revelation. And he grants his Spirit in the hearing of faith. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

God will not do that for men immediately, which they, are capable of obtaining in the use of the means which he has given them.

When there was no written revelation, God often communicated his will to men in an immediate way. As the written revelation began to appear, these immediate communications became less frequent. And when revelation was complete, they wholly ceased.

When Saul of Tarsus, who made havoc of the church, was on his way to Damascus, with a commission to destroy the Christians there, Jesus, that he might bring the persecutor to a conviction of his madness, spake to him by a voice from heaven, and made himself known to him as the Savior whom he was persecuting. Saul now enquired, "Lord, What will thou have me to do?" Jesus could as easily have instructed him in his future duty, as have spoken what he had already. But that was not necessary. There were other means of information within Saul's reach. Jesus therefore says to him, "Go into the city, and it will be told thee what thou must do!" He obeyed; and Ananias was sent to instruct him.

When the devout Gentile Cornelius prayed in his house, his prayer rose up before God, and an angel was sent to tell him, where he might find an apostle, who could instruct him in the way of salvation. God could as easily have taught Cornelius by inspiration, as have taught the apostles. And the angel, if such had been his orders, might as well have given him instruction on this subject, as have directed him to send for Peter. But God will have his institutions honored. He would not by inspiration, or by a message from heaven, teach this Gentile the things, which he could learn by applying to a minister of Christ. Cornelius could not, by his own reason, investigate the way of salvation. But he could send for Peter; hear the apostle when he came; and understand what he said. Had he refused to apply to Peter, or to hear him preach, his inability to find out the way of salvation, would have been no excuse for his ignorance.

Farther: The gospel teaches us, that we are saved, not of ourselves, but by the grace of God. A doctrine worthy of all acceptance; but no way tending to encourage indolence.

Salvation is the purchase of Christ. In this view it is wholly his own work, we have nothing to do in it. It is the gift of God: We can do no more to deserve it for ourselves, than we have done to purchase it for the world. The gospel teaches us the way of salvation: Had we not been taught the way, we never could have found it. Repentance is the condition of pardon; and to this divine grace is necessary. Thus all things are of God.

But then we are rational beings these are means put into our hands and with the means God often gives some attendant influence of his Spirit; for the gospel is called a ministration of the Spirit. The means afforded us we must apply to the purpose for which they were appointed. Thus we are to hope for God's blessing. "To him who hath, shall more be given." If we neglect the plain institutions of God, despise his word and worship, and profane his day, there is no ground to expect, that his Spirit will be given us; for there is no encouragement in scripture that it will be given in this way.

IV. Our subject farther teaches us, that the Lord's Day is a season peculiarly favorable to the purposes of religion.

On this day John was in the Spirit. He certainly had some good reason for informing the churches of this circumstance. And what could it be, but to recommend to them the religious observance of the day, as a means of obtaining the Spirit.

The churches, to whom he wrote, were generally fallen from their first purity. The purport of his letters was to reprove them for their declensions, and exhort them to repentance. He tells them that what he wrote was dictated by the spirit of Christ, and that he received the spirit on the Lord's Day that on this day Christ walks in the midst of his churches, and that if they would receive his Spirit, they must meet him in his sanctuary, where he walks.

Here is a plain intimation, that the declension of religion among them had been owing to a neglect of the Christian Sabbath; and that the revival of religion would depend on a more strict observance of that day.

It appears from John's letters to some of these churches, that their declension had been caused, in a great measure, by the influence of certain irregular teachers, who, under false pretensions, had gained admission among them, disturbed their order, and corrupted their sentiments. It is common, that such teachers divert men from the stated worship of the Lord's Day, by substituting other times of worship in its place. John would have Christians strictly attend to the instituted worship of the holy Sabbath. He suggests to them, that the day of the Lord was the season, and his ordinances were the means of obtaining his grace. Christians must be builded together for a habitation of God thro' the Spirit, and by peace and union in sacred duties grow into a holy temple in the Lord.

Other days, besides the Sabbath, are sometimes pointed out in providence, and may be usefully employed for the purpose of social worship. But occasional seasons must never supplant the Lord's Day. When this is the case, they rather obstruct, than promote religion. An attendance on occasional worship is a matter of Christian prudence; an attendance on the stated worship of the Sabbath is matter of divine requirement and moral obligation. Paul, when necessity required, taught out of season, as well as in season; and from house to house, as well as publicly. Thus he did in Ephesus, when the gospel was first introduced there. But reasonable and public teaching he preferred. At Troas he waited seven days for the return of the Lord's Day, when the disciples would of course come together. Other seasons, prudently chosen, may be useful; but on this day we have most reason to expect God's blessing. If we with the power of religion in our own hearts, and the promotion of it among others, we must honor this day.

V. We are taught, that, under ordinary circumstances we cannot be excused from the duties of the Sabbath. John, even in a state of banishment and solitude, found something to do.

As social worship is an institution of God, every one, as there is opportunity, is bound to attend upon it. This however, is not the only duty of the Lord's Day. There are other more

private exercises, which belong to it. It is to be "a Sabbath to the Lord in our dwellings." We are to "call the holy of the Lord honorable, and to honor him not doing our own ways, nor finding our own pleasure, nor speaking our own words." We are to withdraw ourselves from the cares and occupations of the world, and employ our private hours in meditation, self examination and prayer, and in profitable conversation and reading in exercises adapted to promote personal piety, and in instructions suited to advance family religion.

VI. We are here farther instructed that we ought to improve the Lord's Day with an aim and desire to obtain the Spirit in those gracious influences, which are suited to our condition and character. We should come to God's house hoping that we may receive a word in season, and that the word may be attended with the Holy Ghost and with power.

Sinners should desire the convincing and converting influences of the Spirit. The work of conviction is produced by the Spirit operating with the word. The Spirit was given by Christ to convince the world of sin. The word is the sword of the Spirit. In hearing the word, the Jews, at the feast of Pentecost, were pricked in the heart. The Lord's Day is the time in which, and the preached word is the mean by which the Spirit usually convinces sinners, and begins a good work in them. The stated exercises of the Sabbath are indeed sometimes the means of conviction to those, who had no such aim in attending on them. The Jews, on the day of Pentecost, received lasting benefit from a gospel sermon, which they had no previous intention or desire to hear. But where any serious disposition already exists, there is still greater hope of spiritual benefit. If then you view yourselves as being in a state of unpardoned guilt, and feel any solicitude to be delivered from this state, attend on the public solemnities of the sanctuary, give earnest heed to the things which you hear, apply to yourselves what is pertinent to your case, and pray for the Spirit to impress it deeply on your hearts. And let the serious sentiments, awakened in hearing the word, accompany you in the ordinary business of life. Take heed, that the affairs of the world extinguish not your Sabbath feelings; but let your better frames govern you in your worldly labors, and restrain your worldly affections.

If you are in affliction go to God's house with a desire to hear some instructive and consoling truths adapted to your case, and with these to receive the guiding and supporting influences of that Spirit, who is called the comforter. David, in the house of his pilgrimage, made God's statutes his song. He confessed that, unless God's law had been his delight, he should have perished in his affliction. Asaph in his perplexities went to God's sanctuary, and there found relief. Hannah, in the bitterness of her spirit, repaired to the temple of God, and there poured out her soul before him. "And she went her way, and her countenance was no more sad."

If you view yourselves as saints, so improve the Lord's Day, that it may be a means of rendering you more holy and heavenly. Seek a greater measure of the Spirit's sanctifying influence.

To be in the Spirit, is to possess and exercise that temper which is the fruit of the Spirit. "This is in all goodness righteousness and truth." We are in the Spirit, when the Spirit

awakens into exercise those pious and benevolent dispositions, in which the religion of the gospel consists.

We are especially required to exercise these graces in the public solemnities of the Lord's Day, prayer, praise, and hearing the word. All these things are to be done with charity, meekness and humility. When we stand praying, we are to forgive, if we have ought against any man.

We are to sing praises with grace in our hearts, with thankfulness to God, and peaceableness and benevolence to men. In hearing the word we are to lay aside all malice, envy, guile and hypocrisy, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, that it may save our souls. When we thus worship God on the Lord's Day, we may be said, to be in the Spirit, for we have those tempers, which are the fruits of the Spirit.

But let us not imagine, that these goodly frames are required only on the Lord's Day that if we are serious, grave and devout then, we may indulge our passions, and live to the world every day besides. The religious exercises of the Lord's Day are instituted to make us constantly and habitually pious and holy.

We are to be in the Spirit on this day, that we may walk in the Spirit every day. We are to forgive, when we stand praying to have the peace of God in our hearts, when we are singing to put on humility and meekness; when we are hearing, that we may be always of a meek, humble, peaceable and forgiving temper. If such a temper is right in the duties of devotion, it is right also in the duties of common life. In vain we pretend that we are in the Spirit of Christ on his day, if we are in the spirit of the world on all other days. Let us, therefore, at all times, put on humbleness of mind, meekness, goodness and love, which are the fruits of the Spirit. Thus it will appear that we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit, which is of God, and that we know the things, which are freely given us of God.

## CONCLUSION

Our subject may with great propriety, be applied to the people dispersed in the wilderness, and in the new settlements, for whose benefit the publication of it is principally intended.

To you, our friends and brethren, we address our affectionate advice.

In regard to your own, and your children's worldly interest, you have removed to a distance from us. But we hope, you have carried with you those sentiments of regard for the gospel and the day of our Lord, which you entertained while you were among us. And we entreat you not to forget them, nor suffer them to languish in your hearts.

Pay an early attention to the enjoyment of the gospel ministry in the places where you are. Let not the paucity of your numbers, or the poverty of your condition plead for too long a delay, lest your children, growing up accustomed to this divine institution should contract an indifference to it; and even some, who are older, should, by long disuse, sink

into habitual carelessness; and thus your difficulties, instead of being diminished by an increase of wealth and numbers, should be increased by the diminution of virtue and piety. For your encouragement, think of the example of the fathers of our country. In all their new plantations, one of the first objects was the enjoyment of gospel ordinances, and the settlement of an able minister. In their zeal they found ability; and God prospered them. For our present national happiness we are much indebted to their social spirit, love of order, attention to family education and reverence for divine institutions.

Look to the example of the holy patriarchs. They were pilgrims in the world. But in all their peregrinations they showed a governing regard to God and his worship. And wherever they made a stand, their first work was to erect an altar to God, at which they, and all, who accompanied them, might attend for social devotion. Thus they preferred religion in their own hearts, maintained it in their households; and recommended it to the people among whom they sojourned; and thus they obtained the promise of God's blessing on their posterity.

As you have come from different parts to settle on the same ground, it is natural to expect, that there should be some diversity in your sentiments and usages. But let not this diversity obstruct your treasures for obtaining religious order and a stated ministry. Avoid vain jangling and perverse disputing, and exercise yourselves to godliness. Distinguish between things essential, and things circumstantial in religion. A proper zeal for the former will always be accompanied with condescension in the latter. Exercise the same charity, humility and forbearance, which Saint Paul inculcated, in his day, on the Jewish, and the Gentile believers; and you may, as they did, unite in the same church, and under the same ministry; for we trust, your differences are, in few instances, greater than were theirs. The rule which this apostle gives you is, that "you reject not those, whom God receives." This rule, well observed, will have a happy tendency to unite you.

While you are destitute of a stated ministry improve the means, which you have.

Attend on the missionaries whom we send among you. We shall send only such as can be well recommended men duly authorized, and competently furnished for their mission men of ability, learning and piety men of pacific and conciliating dispositions men who will study to edify you in love, not to sow discord, and cause divisions among you.

If you have not a minister, yet forsake not the assembling of yourselves together. Statedly meet on the Lord's Day, join together in prayer, and let there be a portion of scripture, or some pious book read in your assemblies. Thus you will promote brotherly peace and love; thus you will cherish youthful minds sentiments of reverence for religion, for the gospel, and for the Lord's Day.

On this day, forbear all unnecessary secular labor and worldly discourse, and restrain your children from diversion and amusement, and every thing inconsistent with its sacred design. Remember, how John kept the day in a wilderness. Let it be a Sabbath to God in your hearts, and in your dwellings.

Maintain daily religion in your families. Let your houses be houses of prayer. Let the Holy Scriptures be read in them. Train up your youth in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Walk before them in a perfect way. Thus let there be a little church in every house; and soon there will be a house for God in every plantation, and his house will be filled.

Cultivate the Spirit of religion in your hearts, and exhibit the virtues of it in your life. Consider one another to provoke unto love and good works, and be fellow workers to the kingdom of God.

We wish you health and prosperity; and above all that your souls may be in health and prosper. Great will be our joy, if we hear that you and your children walk in the truth, the order and purity of the gospel.

How transporting to John, in the wilderness, must have been that vision, in which he saw, on the Lord's Day, the churches of the Redeemer assembled in their respective temples, to mingle hearts and voices, to offer joint prayers and praises, and to hear the glorious doctrine of salvation; and, at the same time, beheld the Lord Jesus, dressed in his robes of majesty and grace, walking among them to observe their order, diffuse his influence, bless his ordinances, and offer incense with the prayers of his saints? This nearly resembled his subsequent vision, in which he saw a door opened in heaven, a throne there placed, and saints and angels surrounding it with harps and songs, and giving glory and honor and thanks to him who sat upon it, and who lives for ever and ever.

A sight like this was enough to turn his wilderness into paradise his Isle of Patmos into the Garden of Eden.

Could we see you, our brethren, who are scattered in the wilderness, every where gathering into churches, erecting sanctuaries for God, assembling in them on the Lord's Day, calling ministers of Christ to preside in your solemnities, walking together in purity, peace and love, and thus exhibiting a proof that the Lord is among you of a truth, we should feel a joy approaching toward that, which Saint John must have felt; and our joy would be the joy of you all. May God pour down his spirit and blessing upon you from on high, and comfort all your desolate places; may he soon make your wilderness as Eden, and your desert as the garden of the Lord: may joy and gladness be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody.

FINIS.

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