

Christ In The Commandments — Week 8

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT PT. 1

THE TIME OF WORSHIP

Exodus 20:8-11

This week and God-willing next we will be dealing with the 4th commandment. The fourth commandment I believe is the most controversial out of the ten at least within the church itself. This morning, I will not be focusing on the exposition of the 4th command. There are two primary things I will be addressing this morning:

Outline

- I. The Continuance of the Sabbath
- II. The Change of the Sabbath

Next week we will be looking at the charge of the Sabbath and the Christ of the Sabbath. So we are not going to get to how Christ is the fulfillment of the Sabbath—that He is our Sabbath until next week.

Preliminary remarks

The essence of the Sabbath command finds a unity with the other commandments because it is part of the moral law. However there is positive law mixed in it.

Moral law — (ethical) law dealing with what ought to be done or avoided

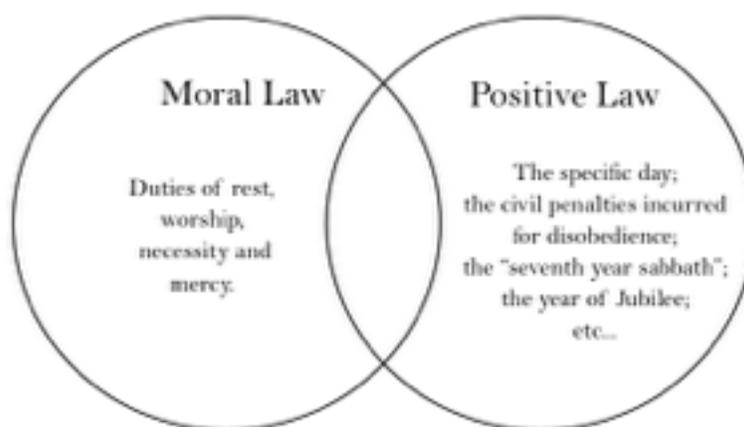
Positive law — (volitional) law dealing with what one chooses¹

The fourth commandment is moral in the sense that it is an undeniable fact that all of our time belongs to the LORD. There is not some time that is ours and

¹ 1. God's will being primary and 2. Man's will being secondary

some time that is God's. All of our time is God's time. The 4th commandment speaks to all seven days, not just one. The 4th commandment is essentially moral law. But there is positive law mixed in it. Under the old covenant the 7th day was the Sabbath, and under the new covenant the 1st day is the Sabbath. Additionally there were ceremonial and judicial laws that were attached to the 4th commandment that were binding on Israel that are not binding on us today.

The Mixed Nature of the 4th Commandment



I. The Continuance of the Sabbath

THE BIG IDEA...the *essence* of the Sabbath command rests on a moral and perpetual law that binds all men for all ages.²

3 Epochs

The Sabbath at Creation

The Sabbath at Sinai

The Sabbath at the Cross

² WCF 21.7 As it is the law of nature, that, in general, a due proportion of time be set apart for the worship of God; so, in his Word, by a positive, moral, and perpetual commandment binding all men in all ages, he hath particularly appointed one day in seven, for a Sabbath, to be kept holy unto him: which, from the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, was the last day of the week; and, from the resurrection of Christ, was changed into the first day of the week, which, in Scripture, is called the Lord's day, and is to be continued to the end of the world, as the Christian Sabbath.

The first epoch: the Sabbath at creation

Where does the week come from? We can see in nature why we have days —they correspond to the rotation of the earth; months correspond to the waxing and waning of the moon; years correspond to the time it takes for the earth to travel around the sun. But where do weeks come from? There is nothing in nature itself that governs the 7 day week. The non-christian 1911 version of the Encyclopedia Britannica surprisingly says this: *“Those who reject the Mosaic recital will be at a loss, as . . . to assign it [the week] to an origin having much semblance of probability.”*³ In other words, it is against all odds that the week originates from anywhere else other than what God said in **Genesis 2:1-3** “Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.”⁴

Let’s make a few important observations from this text. 1) It took God 6 days to create the universe. It didn’t have to. He could have created in 6 seconds or 600 years. He did it in six days for a purpose, to fulfill a plan. 2) God wasn’t tired when He created all things. Omnipotence cannot be exhausted. So He wasn’t meeting a need that He had. God doesn’t need. 3) When God blessed the seventh day, He wasn’t doing so meaninglessly. As if the blessing only meant something to Him. This blessing had an effect on the calendar of the world that cannot be undone. The 7 day week was instituted at that moment as an unbreakable decree until the consummation of all things. 4) God made the day holy. He set apart that day for it to participate in a special way in His holiness. 5) Consider that the Jewish nation was not yet born. This

³http://books.google.com/books?id=r3syvcP9UmIC&pg=PA988&lpg=PA988&dq=Encyclopedia+Britannica+Those+who+reject+the+Mosaic+recital+will+be+at+a+loss,+as+.+.+.+to+assign+it+to+an+origin+having+much+semblance+of+probability.&source=bl&ots=-PMS21wKi8&sig=IY_wb_lUXDw8-shQMhmsG1BEMA&hl=en&sa=X&ei=TgkvVMXQAszcoATAHoLACw&ved=0CBYQ6AEwAA#

⁴ Those who who deny that Genesis 2 speaks of a Sabbath here, need only to look at the 4th commandment for the proof of the point. “Remember the Sabbath...for in six days God made...and rested on the seventh day.” The ground for Sabbath keeping God blessing the seventh day back at creation. The Sabbath command has a creation origin and therefore is binding for all men for all ages.

sanctifying the Sabbath came at least 2,000 years before Abraham was born. God made this day holy in respect to all of creation, not just a particular nation.

These observations have implications for all of humanity. As Jesus said in **Mark 2:27** “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.”⁵

Natural law reveals the sabbath

Jonathan Edwards,⁶ John Owens, the Puritans, and the Westminster Divines were in virtual universal consent as to the substance of the Sabbath being a thing that could be understood through the light of nature. The WCF says this in 21.7

“As it is the law of nature, that, in general, a due proportion of time be set apart for the worship of God; so, in his Word, by a positive, moral, and perpetual commandment binding all men in all ages, he hath particularly appointed one day in seven, for a Sabbath, to be kept holy unto him...”

⁵ Meaning, the Sabbath was made for all men. Not just Jewish men. Not just O.T. men. But all of men for all ages, founded in the creation ordinance itself. **2)** v. 10 of the 4th command itself says “...*the sojourner who is within your gates...shall not do any work.*” This is speaking of the Gentile foreigner who was not under the ceremonial law of Israel. Yet they were commanded to be under this moral law. It was binding on them under the Theocracy, even though the ceremonial law was not.

⁶ “From the consideration of the nature and state of mankind in this world, it is most consonant to human reason, that certain fixed parts of time should be set apart, to be spent by the church wholly in religious exercises, and in the duties of divine worship. It is a duty incumbent on all mankind, in all ages alike, to worship and serve God. His service should be our great business. It becomes us to worship him with the greatest devotion and engagedness of mind; and therefore to put ourselves, at proper times, in such circumstances, as will most contribute to render our minds entirely devoted to this work, without being diverted or interrupted by other things.” Jonathan Edwards *The Perpetuity and Change of the Sabbath* from *The Works of Jonathan Edwards Vol.2* (Carlisle: The Banner of Truth Trust, Reprinted 2009), p.94

Notice they said “law of nature.”⁷ Think of it this way: when a man marries a woman, that relationship—marriage—governs (as a law of nature) how they should spend their time. Husbands and wives have an obligation to spend undivided time together. This “law” is understood naturally. Of course the husband should devote time to his wife and only her on a regular basis setting aside all other relationships in those moments so that he can be devoted to her. It is a self-evident truth. It is the nature of marriage.

That is what the Sabbath points to. A time that God created for man to spend with Him—undividedly—whole-heartedly—setting aside all else so as to focus on him alone.

Nations are wrecked when they wreck the Sabbath

The fact that the 7 day week continues even in secular nations proves it to be a unalterable Divine decree. During the French Revolution (1793-1805) France established a 10 day week which lasted only lasting 12 years.⁸ The new week was “designed in part to remove all religious and royalist influences from the calendar.” But they were forced to abandon it because workers became over exhausted, and it threw their market into complete confusion because they were not aligned with the rhythms of trade that the rest of the world practiced. Likewise Russia from 1929-1940, under the control of Stalin eliminated the Sabbath in order to boost productivity as a nation. But they didn’t make the same mistake as the French, they made the week shorter. Called “The Soviet Experiment,” a system was developed which gave every citizen a day off based

⁷ Now it is no argument to say that *if* a particular individual, or a particular family, or even a particular society failed to see this in the same way as the Bible has described it *then* is proof positive for not being revealed by the light of nature. If man has misinterpreted natural revelation, it is no argument that the Sabbath was not created for rest and worship of God for all men at all times. Paul asks in **Romans 3:3-4** “What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God? By no means! Let God be true though every one were a liar, as it is written, “That you may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are judged.”

⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/French_Republican_Calendar#Criticism_and_shortcomings

“The calendar was abolished because having a ten-day working week gave workers less rest (one day off every ten instead of one day off every seven); because the Southward equinox was a mobile date to start every new year (a fantastic source of confusion for almost everybody); and because it was incompatible with the secular rhythms of trade fairs and agricultural markets.”

on an assigned color. In 1929 it began as a 5 day week. In 1931 it changed to a 6 day week. In 1940 it was dropped altogether. Why? Because “the effect on social life was disastrous...with such a large segment of the country’s population at work on any given day, the result was that it isolated friends, church members and families from each other. If the husband rested every Red day, the wife rested every Blue day and the children were out of school every Green day, there were very few opportunities for socializing together even within the family unit, except after a long day of work.”⁹

The Sabbath command was put into the very fabric of creation, and to alter it unravels society itself.

The second epoch: The sabbath at Sinai

When God engraved the Sabbath command on the stone tablets alongside of the other commands, He was making a statement.¹⁰ John Owens sees God’s action of placing the 4th commandment alongside the other 9 as a way of distinguishing it from other parts of the ceremonial and judicial law. Here is a summary of his reasoning.

1. “The ten commandments, unlike the ceremonial or judicial laws, were spoken immediately by the voice of God [thundering down from Mt. Sinai¹¹]

⁹ Source: http://www.4angelspublications.com/articles/The_Soviet_Experiment.pdf accessed November 8, 2017

<http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,828481,00.html>

¹⁰ Jonathan Edwards remarks “The mind of God in this matter is clearly revealed in the fourth commandment. The will of God is there revealed, not only that the nation of Israel, but that all nations, should keep every seventh day holy; or, which is the same thing, one day after every sixth. This command, as well as the rest, is doubtless everlasting and of perpetual obligation, at least, as to the substance of it, as is imitated by is being engraven on the tables of stone. Nor is it to be thought that Christ ever abolished any command of the ten, but that there is a complete number ten yet, and will be to the end of the world.” Jonathan Edwards *The Perpetuity and Change of the Sabbath* from *The Works of Jonathan Edwards Vol.2* (Carlisle: The Banner of Truth Trust, Reprinted 2009), p.95

¹¹ This is significant because when God finished speaking, the people immediately begged Moses to “not let God speak to us, lest we die.” Exodus 20:19 These commands carried with them “...the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking”

2. The fourth commandment, along with the other nine, was written down twice by God's "finger" on the tablets of stone.
 - a. God did this, first, in order to republish objectively the law that was first implanted in Adam's heart in the state of innocence. This was necessary because the intrusion of sin meant that the law written on Adam's heart, and the heart's of his descendants, had been effaced.
 - b. The objective law of God written on the tablets of stone pointed to the spiritual reality of the law being written by the Spirit on the hearts of the elect. The promise of the new covenant includes God's law being written on the hearts of God's people. And since the Sabbath commandment is part of the moral law, it is necessarily written upon the hearts of the elect under the new covenant.
3. The Ten Commandments, unlike the ceremonial ordinances were preserved in the ark of the covenant. "And the reason of the different [locations], of the moral law in the ark, and of the ceremonial in a book by the side of it, was to manifest... accomplishment; the answering of the one law in Christ, with the removal and abolishing of the other by him."¹²

The third epoch: The sabbath at the cross

[Please turn to Isaiah 56:1-8] Isaiah 56 regarding the Sabbath for it shows us two things. 1) It separates the Sabbath from the ceremonial law. 2) It points to the Sabbath being in effect during the gospel times.

Isaiah 56

1 Thus says the LORD:

"Keep justice, and do righteousness,

¹² Joel Beeke & Mark Jones *A Puritan Theology: Doctrine For Life* (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books: 2012), pg. 658

for soon my salvation will come,
and my righteousness be revealed.
2 Blessed is the man who does this,
and the son of man who holds it fast,
who keeps the Sabbath, not profaning it,
and keeps his hand from doing any evil.”

3 Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the LORD say,
“The LORD will surely separate me from his people”;
and let not the eunuch say,
“Behold, I am a dry tree.”

4 For thus says the LORD:
“To the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths,
who choose the things that please me
and hold fast my covenant,

5 I will give in my house and within my walls
a monument and a name
better than sons and daughters;
I will give them an everlasting name
that shall not be cut off.

6 “And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD,
to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD,
and to be his servants,
everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it,
and holds fast my covenant—

7 these I will bring to my holy mountain,
and make them joyful in my house of prayer;
their burnt offerings and their sacrifices
will be accepted on my altar;
for my house shall be called a house of prayer

for all peoples.”

8 The LORD God,
who gathers the outcasts of Israel, declares,
“I will gather yet others to him
besides those already gathered.”

Looking at these 8 verses from an aerial perspective we see some very interesting things.

First Consider that Isaiah is looking forward to gospel times. To *our* times.¹³ Look at v. 1 “Thus says the LORD: “Keep justice, and do righteousness, for soon my salvation will come, and my righteousness be revealed.” Soon my salvation will come. Soon my righteousness will be revealed. No doubt God could be applying this to Judah’s deliverance from future captivity, their temporal salvation; but the ultimate time God is pointing to is Christ—the Anointed One who would be the salvation to come and would be the embodiment of righteousness itself.¹⁴

The second hint that Isaiah is looking forward to the gospel times is found in **v.3-8**. In these verses we see the fulfillment of the ceremonial law. The ceremonial law forbid the uncircumcised or the eunuch from entering the assembly of the LORD (Deut. 23:1¹⁵). But look at **v.3** says “**Let not** the foreigner who has joined himself to the LORD [Christ!] say, “The LORD will surely separate me from his people”; and let not the eunuch say, “Behold, I am a dry tree.” **v.7** further speaks of the Gentiles, who would be called from all nations. God calls His house “...a house of prayer for all peoples.” And **v.8** shows the united peoples—Jews and Gentiles—“The Lord GOD, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, declares, “I will gather yet others to him besides those

¹³ This is clear from the overall context including the previous chapter “Come, everyone who thirst, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat!” [55:1] It is also clear this points to the gospel times from the immediate context.

¹⁴ That is who Isaiah was pointing to all over his book(cf. 9:7; 16:5; 28:17; 32:1; 16; etc.)

¹⁵ “No one whose testicles are crushed or whose male organ is cut off shall enter the assembly of the LORD.”

already gathered.”” So it seems unmistakably clear that this is pointing towards the gospel times.

So what do we see Isaiah telling us about the Sabbath in the gospel times? We see that although the ceremony law has been abrogated, the Sabbath remains. v.2 “Blessed is the man who does this, and the son of man who holds it fast, who keeps the *Sabbath*, not profaning it, and keeps his hand from doing any evil.” God blesses the man, during the gospel times who does not profane the Sabbath.

Look at v.4-5 “For thus says the LORD “To the eunuchs who keep my *Sabbaths*, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, I will give in my house and within my walls a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off.” Christ gives His people—His covenant people—better promises and He commends them for keeping His sabbath.

Look at v.6-7. He speaks of the Gentiles “And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants, everyone who keeps the *Sabbath* and does not profane it, and holds fast my covenant—these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make

them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar;”¹⁶

Now this is just one passage from the old testament showing the continuance of the Sabbath even during gospel times. Let’s look now turn to the NT and consider what *changes* took place in the Sabbath command when Christ came.

¹⁶ **Objections made against the continuance of the Sabbath**

1. The Sabbath command is part of the ceremonial law and not the moral law.

REPLY 1: Even it if is allowed that the 4th commandment is not part of the moral law, this does not prove that it does not continue today. Both of the sacraments, the Lord’s table and Baptism are perpetual until the consummation of all things.

REPLY 2: The 4th commandment is different than the other commands in that it is a composite of both positive and moral law. In arguing for the continuance of the Sabbath, we are not arguing that the ceremonial/judicial elements be continued.

It *is* a moral duty to worship God with undivided and unfeigned devotion. It *is* a moral duty to rest from our own works so that we can attend with full attention to delight in God. It therefor is a moral duty to worship Him for a special set aside *time*. It is this thing, the *time* imposed by the command, that may be fuzzy in general revelation. But it is not for that reason to be placed into the category of ceremonial law. God has seen fit to declare to us what would the appropriate amount of time would be. The fact that we cannot determine 1 day in seven *a priori* is no argument against the perpetual obligation we have to keep the Sabbath. Edwards again comments

“The difference between this command and others, does not lie in this, that other commands are founded in the fitness of the things themselves, arising from the universal state and nature of mankind, and this not; but only that the fitness of other commands is more obvious to the understandings of men, and they might have seen it of themselves; but this could not be precisely discovered and positively determined without assistance of revelation. So that the command of God, that every seventh day should be devoted to religious exercises, is found in the universal state and nature of mankind, as well as other commands; only man’s reason is not sufficient, without divine direction, so exactly to determine it”
Jonathan Edwards *The Perpetuity and Change of the Sabbath from The Works of Jonathan Edwards Vol.2* (Carlisle: The Banner of Truth Trust, Reprinted 2009), p.95

II. The Change of the Sabbath

THE BIG IDEA...the Sabbath was the last day of the week under the Jewish dispensation, and now is on the first day of the week under the Christian dispensation.

Argument 1

“The words of the fourth command do not determine which day of the week we should keep as a sabbath; they merely determine, that we should rest and keep as a sabbath every seventh day, or one day after every six.”¹⁷

In other words, the moral law is included in the commandment but not the positive law. Our duties and the regulation of time is included in the command *but* not the specific day. Under the Old Covenant, God appointed them a particular day(positive law), which was the seventh day of the week—Saturday.¹⁸ Exodus 16:23 “This is what the Lord has commanded: ‘Tomorrow is a day of solemn rest, a holy Sabbath to the Lord.’” [cf. v.24-25]¹⁹ Yet, there is no logical necessity forcing us to conclude that Saturday is also the Sabbath on this side of the cross. The spirit of the Jewish Sabbath and the Christian Sabbath are equivalent—6 days of work, 1 day of rest. The difference is the day, which rests on positive law.

Argument 2

¹⁷Jonathan Edwards *The Perpetuity and Change of the Sabbath from The Works of Jonathan Edwards Vol.2* (Carlisle: The Banner of Truth Trust, Reprinted 2009), p.96

¹⁸ Edwards speculates that appointing the day was necessary for no doubt the Egyptians were cruel taskmasters and forced them to work 7 days a week and any semblance remaining of the creation ordinance of the Sabbath had been severely effaced.

¹⁹ Nehemiah 9:14 “...you made known to them your holy Sabbath and commanded them commandments and statutes and a law by Moses your servant.” Ezekiel 20:10-12 “So I led them out of the land of Egypt and brought them into the wilderness. I gave them my statutes and made known to them my rules, by which, if a person does them, he shall live. Moreover, I gave them my Sabbaths, as a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord who sanctifies them.”

weekly sabbath in commemoration of the work of re-creation (redemption) and not any reason against it.”²⁰

There are two creations in Scripture. The first is the original creation, and the second is the re-creation through Christ. When the new comes it is because the old passes away.²¹ The N.T. testifies to this idea of re-creation: Ephesians 2:10 *“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus...”* Likewise 2 Cor. 5:17 *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”* It is for this reason that we should remember and honor this work of re-creation on the Christian Sabbath, just as the ancient church honored the work of the old creation on the Jewish Sabbath.

Argument 3

Just as God created the world and then rested from His work, setting apart the 7th day for a Sabbath; so Christ re-created and then rested from His work setting apart a new day. What happened after Jesus finished the work of redemption? He sat down—He rested at the right hand of God the Father.

Argument 4

If the ancient church was to keep the Sabbath because of their deliverance out of Egypt, how much more so are we to keep the Sabbath because of our deliverance out of sin, and hell, and the wrath of God? Everything about the Exodus and deliverance out of Egypt is a picture of God through Christ saving us out of the world. Egypt was a type of the world (1 Cor. 10:1-11) This is why we could look at the preface as we did a few weeks ago “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery” and apply it to us.

²⁰ Jonathan Edwards *The Perpetuity and Change of the Sabbath* from *The Works of Jonathan Edwards Vol.2* (Carlisle: The Banner of Truth Trust, Reprinted 2009), p.97

²¹ Consider how the old creation has passed away. Jeremiah 4:22-23 *“For my people are foolish; they know me not; they are stupid children; they have no understanding. They are ‘wise’—in doing evil! But how to do good they know not.”* I looked on the earth, and behold, it was without form and void; and to the heavens, and they had no light.” This seems to be an allegoric expression of a reversal of the creation order found in Genesis 1.

Argument 5

The Jewish Sabbath has been abolished because Christ was not finished from *His work* on that day. He who is Lord of the Sabbath was still in the tomb. He wasn't resting, He was still in the chains of death on the Jewish Sabbath. Furthermore the Sabbath is supposed to be a day of rejoicing for it commemorated God's great works. But how can the church rejoice when her husband lay dead in the grave? It is fitting that God recreated the Sabbath to be on the day when the Church's husband is raised from the dead which is on the 1st day of the week, or Sunday.

Arguments 6

That the Sabbath or the Lord's day has been changed to Sunday is the argued from the NT itself.

1. Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week-Sunday, **Mark 16:1**, and appeared to His disciples that same day-**John 20:19**.
2. Jesus second appearance to his disciples was on the following Sunday-**John 20:26**.²²
3. The birth of the church was on Sunday-**Acts 2:1**. This was Pentecost which is exactly 50 days from Passover which works out to be a Sunday (cf. Lev. 23:15-16)
4. Paul says in **1 Cor. 16:1-2**²³ "Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. On *the first day of*

²² Jesus third appearance also seems to be on the first day of the week according to John 20:21 and the ESV Study note that accompanies it.

²³ Paul wrote this letter while in Ephesus-1 Cor. 16:5-8; 19 (Acts 19:20-21)

every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come.”²⁴

5. After²⁵ Paul wrote the letter to the Corinthians and instructed the other churches to do the same, he followed His own direction and met with the Church in Troas on the Lord’s day. **Acts 20:7** “On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight.”
6. Jesus chose to give John his revelation specifically on the Lord’s day. And He calls attention to the fact. **Rev. 1:10** “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet” Edwards answers the skeptics who would question this to actually be the first day of the week since every day belongs to the Lord. He points to several places in Scripture where a thing is called the Lord’s, and how that signification sets it apart from other things. For instance, although there are many suppers, there is one Lord’s supper. Although there are many peoples, and all belong to God, there is one people of God. We are the Lord’s people. (cf. Deut. 7:6; 14) Likewise, all cities belong to God, but Jerusalem of old was called by God’s name (cf. Jer. 25:29). All religious temples belong to God, but the temple in Jerusalem was called by God’s name (1 Kings 8:43). All of these things signify the fact that they are set apart in distinction from other things. They are made holy because God attaches His name to it. No doubt the same is true in the case of the Lord’s day.

²⁴ This verse is very enlightening because it says that Paul directed the other churches to do the same thing. This duty was proper to perform when the saints came together, and God was pleased to have it on the first day of the week to commemorate Christ’s rising from the the dead. *“We may observe the time on which the apostle directs that this should be done, viz. “on the first day of the week.” By the inspiration of the Holy Ghost he insists upon it, that it be done on such a particular day of the week, as if no other day would do so well as that, or were so proper and fit a time for such a work. Thus, although the inspired apostle was not for making that distinction of days in gospel times, which the Jews made, as appears by Gal. 4:10 “You observe days, and month,” &c. yet, here he gives preference to one day of the week, before any other, for the performance of a certain great duty of Christianity.”* Jonathan Edwards *The Perpetuity and Change of the Sabbath from The Works of Jonathan Edwards Vol.2* (Carlisle: The Banner of Truth Trust, Reprinted 2009), p.93

²⁵ This was in Troas which was in Asia (52-57 a.d.). This was after he had written the letter to the Corinthians.

Argument 7

This is confirmed by the historical church. Edwards says this

“We find by all accounts, that it has been the universal custom of the christian church, in all ages, even from the age of the apostles, to keep the first day of the week. We read in the writings which remain of the first, second, and third centuries, of the the Christians keeping the Lord’s day; and so in all succeeding ages: and there are no accounts that contradict them.—This day hath all along been kept by Christians, in all countries throughout the world, and by almost all that have borne the name of Christians, of all denominations, however different in their opinions as to other things.”²⁶

Objections from the N.T. about keeping certain days...

Romans 14:5 “One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.”

Colossians 2:16 “Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath.”²⁷

If everything that I have argued up to this point is true, then these verses will find a harmony with them. I believe that both of these verses are talking about the old Jewish Sabbath. We know that the early churches had both Jew and Gentile converts alike in them. When different cultures collide into one body, and sin is the common DNA that all share, there is no doubt going to be conflict. The Jews had two thousand years of history celebrating the original Sabbath.

²⁶ Jonathan Edwards *The Perpetuity and Change of the Sabbath from The Works of Jonathan Edwards Vol.2* (Carlisle: The Banner of Truth Trust, Reprinted 2009), p.100

²⁷ cf. also Galatians 4:10

There was still some deep culturally engrained beliefs in the Jewish community regarding the Sabbath. The same thing could be said about meat sacrificed to idols. Paul himself wrote that meat sacrificed to idols was nothing in **1 Cor. 8**, *yet* the Jerusalem counsel in **Acts 15** wrote to some churches to avoid such things. Why? Because God was being gentle with those Jews who were not yet mature. I believe this is why the doctrine of the Lord's day was eased out over time in the days of the Apostles, because of God's tenderness towards those Jewish Christians.

Now in the **Romans 14:5** passage, no doubt there were some Jews who still esteemed the Jewish Sabbath as a very special day. Paul said these were weaker Christians. But their esteeming of it does not violate Scripture in and of itself. The strong are to lovingly bear with them, and each man must be fully convinced in his own mind. On the other hand, I believe it would go too far to say that Paul had in mind that all days including the Lord's day were alike. This would have gone against his teaching and his practice. Paul Jewett additionally says this

“It is unconvincing . . . to press Paul's statement in **Romans 14:5** so absolutely as to have considered John [the apostle] a Judaizer for having called one day in the week the Lord's Day (**Rev. 1:10**), thus giving it the preeminence.” (The Lord's Day, p. 78). Nor is John among the weaker brothers because He steams that day. He does not call one day in the week “the Lord's Day” as one option among many. He calls it “the Lord's day” because he and the early church treated it in a special way above all other days.

In the Colossians passage, the context is Paul's rejection of asceticism. Again **Colossians 2:16** reads “Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath.”²⁸

²⁸ It seems so clear from the context that Paul is talking about Jewish shadows here. The Jewish festivals, the Jewish new moons, and the Jewish Sabbaths. He is not talking about the Lord's day.

The very next verse is helpful v. 17 “These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.” Apparently there were some who were claiming that keeping certain shadowy laws constituted the real substance of religion. The Sabbath that Paul is referring to is the Jewish Sabbath because it is linked with foods and drink, and festivals and new moons which were all things that the Jews had in their ceremony law. There was, like the other NT epistles indicated, always a faction that was sought to bring the church back under the law. Here Paul flatly shows that those things have no power to restrain the power of the flesh. It is only through Christ that true power is found. That is the context. When Paul was arguing against this here, he was not arguing against the Lord’s day, but against the old Jewish observance on Saturday. For Paul to be arguing against the actual Lord’s day would be for Paul to argue against himself. He would be writing not only against what he wrote elsewhere, but against how he personally practiced the Lord’s day.