

Exodus 20

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[0 : 0 0] This is why Christians continue to keep Sunday special. The Bible says it's to be kept holy, not out of a legalistic bondage, but because at creation God takes a moral obligation of keeping holy one day in seven.

This is what we have read in Exodus chapter 20. He blessed the Sabbath day and he made it holy.

When we think on the subject of the Christian Sabbath, it's important to remember that the seventh day Sabbath, the Sabbath of the Jews, a Saturday, was not part of the original requirement of the creation ordinance.

Because this day could be changed. Now that may seem strange to you if you haven't thought about this before.

You may never have thought that the seventh day Sabbath, Saturday, was not part of the original requirement of the creation ordinance and could be changed.

[1 : 1 4] Now why do we say this? How do we know this? How do we know the proper day of worship and rest in the New Testament dispensation? Well of course it's taught to us in the scriptures.

It's told us in the Bible. This is why we read in verse 8 of Exodus 20, Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

We do not read there, remember the seventh day, but remember the Sabbath day. And Joseph Pippa says in his book, The Lord's Day, The particular day was not part of the requirement so the day could be changed.

Every seventh day is a memorial to the creation of the world in six days. So the change of day did not alter the moral precept to keep the day holy.

That's what's been challenged today, but that will be asserted now from the Word of God that the change of day does not alter the moral precept to keep the day holy. In the Ten Commandments, the Sabbath is not equivalent to Saturday.

[2 : 3 1] The Sabbath is one day of rest after six days of labour. And the word itself, Sabbath, simply means rest.

Now when we get to the New Testament, we see that the New Testament repeals the seventh day ordinance. If you want to see that and follow it with me, turn to Colossians chapter 2.

Paul's epistle to the Colossians and the second chapter. And we read verses 16 and 17. Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a new moon, celebration, or a Sabbath day.

These are the shadow of things that were to come. The reality, however, is found in Christ. Colossians 2 and these verses are key verses on the Christian Sabbath Lord's Day question.

Some people have suggested that Jesus did away with the Sabbath observance and maintained that the New Testament church is no longer to observe a special day of worship and rest.

[3 : 52] Some people even go as far to say that to keep Sunday as a Sabbath day on the first day of the week is legalism. According to them, Sabbath keeping robs them of their Christian liberty.

And what's more, they appeal to Colossians 2 verse 16 for the proof of what they say. But we believe that this is the wrong way to think about these verses.

It misunderstands Paul who is saying here that the believers in the New Testament church are under no obligation to keep the Jewish Sabbath.

They are under no obligation to keep the seventh day Sabbath. Now that the new covenant has come. He is not setting aside the principle of one day and seven involved in the keeping of Sunday as the Lord's Day.

Paul is reinforcing the fact that Christ has come to set us free from the law as a way of salvation. So the New Testament repeals the seventh day ordinance but never the obligation of the moral principle of one day and seven as a Sabbath unto the Lord.

[5 : 11] The Puritan John Owen said this was fixed and determined by the law of creation. We find as we read the New Testament the apostles never disputed the change from Saturday to Sunday.

There was no debate in the New Testament church. This we believe is because the apostles had dominical consent for Sunday worship and rest.

They believed the Lord had led them this way. One theologian called R.L. Dabney says in my quote there is no record in church history of a dispute over the change of day or a record of diversity at the beginning of the Christian church in this matter.

Now on the theological side the Puritans were positive in their answer to the question did the apostles institute this day? Let's just mention three well-known Puritans in this regard.

First of all there is John Owen. John Owen was the great theologian of the Puritan era. And he said in my quote it is not to be imagined that the apostles fakes on another day without the immediate direction from the Lord Christ.

[6 : 41] For indeed they delivered nothing but to be consistently observed in the worship of God but what he had his authority for.

And he quotes 1 Corinthians 11 you'll know it well. For this is read when we have communion. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 11 verse 23 I received of the Lord what that which I have delivered to you.

He had received it from the Lord. He was delivering it to the church. And so we see that they were led by the Lord in the things that were instituted in the church.

He goes on to say the apostles had the infallible guidance of the spirit. What they ordained was no less of divine institution if it had been appointed by Christ in his own person.

Another Puritan John Bunyan also attributes a change of day to the Holy Spirit and the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Lord's day. Bunyan says this is the chosen new Sabbath confirmed by the Holy Spirit.

[8 : 00] He meets with them at the close of day and he's thinking of John 20 and verse 26 for the apostles have met together. He says there a beginning of an established pattern of New Testament worship.

He reminds us that Pentecost was on the first day of the week and so the Holy Spirit poured out his blessing upon the church on the first day of the week and it was always on the next day that his Pentecost was always on the next day after the seventh day Sabbath.

Bunyan notes too that the apostles came together as they had the week before to worship the Lord and he says this is the start of a sanctified pattern of worship.

This became the custom of the first church in Jerusalem. Now in the time of New Covenant worship is revealed Bunyan has no hesitation after the time of worship and he writes in a quote They were all filled with the Holy Spirit Acts 2 After this the apostles never made mention of a seven day Sabbath.

After Acts 2 the apostles never mentioned the seventh day Sabbath except in Colossians here in the writings of Paul. This was a custom of the Gentile churches too that is to worship on the first day.

[9 : 25] They came together upon the first day of the week and so he says Christ began it that is the new Sabbath on that day then the Holy Ghost seconded it that is in Pentecost on that day then the churches practiced it on that day they came together for worship 1 Corinthians 6 and then in Revelation 1.10 continues the sanction of that day to the churches to the end of the world.

And so every first day then was sanctified to the gathered church and worship while all the other days are buried in everlasting oblivion.

And he makes this point that the New Testament just speaks about the first day of the week. He doesn't speak about Wednesday. He doesn't read about Tuesdays what he did on Friday afternoon.

He read about the Lord's Day in the New Testament. That's where the Holy Spirit concentrates the record, the historical record. Then you've got Richard Baxter, that famous pastor of Kidderminster.

He concurs with Owen and Bunyan here. As if the fourth commandment is now enforced to Christians, Baxter answers to the quote, the seventh day of corporal rest is changed by Christ into the Lord's Day appointed for Christian worship.

[10 : 50] End quote. The change of day, Baxter is sure, is a change by Christ to the Lord's Day and appointed for Christian worship. Looking to put all that aside, Baxter says, Christ, who commands not two weekly Sabbaths, hath appointed and sanctified the first day of the week instead of the seventh day Sabbath.

Not calling it Sabbath, but the Lord's Day. So when it comes to the change of day from the seventh to the first, Baxter argues at length for the intervention of the Holy Spirit.

He believed that the change of day is by dominical authority. And it was, and I quote, it was separated to holy worship by the apostles by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost.

So these great theologians and preachers of the past had worked through the challenge of what day do we worship God in the times of reformation, in the times of the new commonwealth in England and the time of the second reformation in Scotland.

This subject was in the melting pot. Our forefathers thought about this, they wrote about this, they debated this, and they come down on the side all the Lord day as a Christian Sabbath.

[12 : 12] And then our text in Exodus 20 confirms that Sunday is special. For we read in verse 11, For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and he rested on the seventh day.

Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. That is, God not only made it holy, but by blessing it, he declared it holy.

And that takes us back to Genesis, doesn't it? To the very first book of the Bible. To chapter two, we read these words in verse three, then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it.

Professor John Currie said that he consecrated it. He said the Hebrew verb is based on a stem that means to be holy. And this is the first time in Genesis two the word is used in the Bible.

But it bears the meaning of to be set apart, to be unique or distinct. So the seventh day, in other words, is to be different from the other six days.

[13 : 24] On the seventh, he rested. Now Douglas Kelly agrees with John Currie saying, the incompatible significance of the Lord's day is shown in this.

In that this is the very first time the word holy is used in the Bible. The seventh day was lifted up above the plane of the other days.

This makes Sunday special. So that's my first reason this evening. asking why is Sunday special?

And the answer is this, it is special because God has lifted it up and separated it from the other six. He made the Sabbath day holy.

There was a distinction made. There was a division made. It was deliberate. and it is for us. The second reason is why is Sunday session?

[14 : 33] God arranged his creative activity specifically to set the structure for human life. Now Moses confirms here that the Bible teaches the earth and all that it contains was made in six days.

Now that's not as absurd as some might think. We read here in Exodus in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth the sea and all that is in them and he rested on the seventh.

Here is a reminder then that God blessed the seventh day and thus the seven day week was born. Ray Bruce in his book called Celebrating the Sabbath commented the week was established by the sovereign appointment of the creator and from the very beginning God arranged the lives of his people around the Sabbath day.

And isn't it true as believing people our lives are arranged around the Lord's day? How important it is to us and for us and to our families?

Now why did God create the world in six days? It's an interesting question. In Exodus 20 we have the giving of the ten commandments. And the fourth commandment deals with the Sabbath day and it's the longest of the ten.

[16 : 08] I want you to note that we're reminded that the Sabbath day was an ordinary day of twenty-four hours. the Bible says in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth.

Why did God take so long? Six days? Couldn't he have made the world in six seconds? Or six milliseconds?

Is he not God? Is he not the Almighty? The creator of all things? Or he could have made the world in six years. But why did he make it in six days?

Verse 11 here in Exodus 20 agrees with the rest of the Bible. It agrees of course with the creation account in Genesis 1 and 2 which discloses that the creation took six days and God was happy with six days.

He rested in the seventh day. He said apart from the other six as we've seen. But how long was the Sabbath day?

[17 : 15] How long should he rest? Should we rest just 24 hours? You may think it's not a relevant question. But as we approach the exegesis of the Lord's day, I want you to note then that verse 11 says God took six days.

How long did he rest? He rested one day. So this time period is the length of the Sabbath day's rest. for those who are not sure about six day creation, some think that God could mean a thousand years.

One day with God is like a thousand years and a thousand years like one day second Peter. If it's a thousand years then the Sabbath would need to be a thousand years long.

And our employers wouldn't be too pleased with us if we didn't turn up on a Monday morning. If it's a million years, if there's a long period of time described by these days, then what day is the Sabbath?

Well you see the Hebrew word for day is the word Yom. And in the Bible when the word Yom, day, is modified by a number, the first day, the second day, the third day, it always means 24 hours.

[18 : 35] In Genesis, evening and morning equals a 24 hour day. So it's universal scriptural usage normally means a 24 hour solar day.

Henry Morris says, when God called the light day and the darkness he called night, he was carefully defining his terms.

God was trying to guard in every way possible against any of his readers deriving the notion of a non-little day from his word.

If God wanted to convey six little days, how would he do it, says Morris? The answer is Genesis chapter 1. The liberal scholars agree that the book of Genesis and the Hebrew text intends to say six little days.

Professor James Barr, who is no friend of evangelicals, said in 1984 in a letter written to David C.C. Watson, said this, As far as I know, there is no professor of Hebrew or Old Testament at any world-class university who does not believe that the writer of Genesis 1 to 11 intended to convey to their readers the idea that creation took place in a series of six days, which were the same as the days of 24 hours we now experience.

[20 : 13] So even this liberal scholar says a clear reading, a simple reading, the plain reading of the Hebrew text is quite simple, that God is speaking about six little days and the Sabbath day rest is one full day.

Now of course it is true sometimes the word day in a Hebrew Bible means a general period of time. For instance Job says in Job 7 6, my days are vanity, my days are meaningless.

Or in Psalm 90 verse 9, our days are passed away in wrath. But here the word yom is linked with the lifespan of a human being.

My days are passed away in wrath. It's not linked with millions of years. No such idea fits with the Bible. Now some people want to make Genesis 1 and 2 poetry.

But there's no indication that the Hebrew text here is that it is poetry or allegory. There's no indication that it is meant to be taken non-literal or non-historical or non-chronological.

[21 : 26] But the opposite is true. To indicate this the Hebrew language uses a literary device called the while consecutive. The while is the letter W in Hebrew.

I doubt you've heard this before. But in Biblical Hebrew it's used to indicate the events happening in sequence. And it's used only in narrative. It's not used in poetry.

It's placed before the imperfect verb. It becomes the first letter of the word. Now the second edition of the Oxford University Press's Hebrew grammar says progress in the sequence of time is regularly indicated by a pregnant and called the while consecutive.

So when you turn to Genesis 1 you see and God said and God did this and God that. It's proving that Genesis should be read as a straightforward history. This literary device is used in Hebrew prose but not Hebrew poetry.

It's being said this is awkward in English but good Hebrew. So we see then that God made the world in six literal days but why?

[22 : 42] Here's my point. Why did he do that? God made time. God created a seven day week.

Time is God's creation. The hebdominal cycle, the seven day cycle goes back to Genesis 1. The weekly pattern of six days work and one day rest comes from the origin in creation.

Time itself doesn't exist independently but is a product of the creation week. When it comes to the explanation of the origin of the week, natural signs and historians don't have an answer.

They don't know where it comes from. But it's the Bible that gives us this origin. God blessed the seventh day and he made it holy. Thus the seventh day week was born.

Some of you will know that at the end of the French revolution decided that they would scrap a seven day week and have a ten day week.

[23 : 55] And so you had to work for nine days and get one day's rest. And the people weren't very pleased. It only lasted twenty years. It's interesting to know that in every society, every culture in the world there's this abdominal cycle.

it's inbuilt into a creation, it's inbuilt into a psyche, it's inbuilt into a necessity for rest and work. So how long is the seventh day?

Well it's twenty-four hours. God worked creatively for six days. This was followed by rest. He established a pattern for man to follow. Professor Douglas Kelly puts it this way apparently mankind is so important to the infinite God that he arranged his creative activity specifically to set the structure for human life.

That must be a major reason why God created over six days rather than in a split second or a hundred billion years.

End quote. So God had a good reason to take six days. God had a good reason to give us this pattern. God organized the time phase of the creation week around the interests of the human race.

[25 : 26] So God took six days for us. He did it for humanity. He did it for our prosperity, for our dignity and for our unity.

unity. Indeed it was an act of love as well as an act of power. It was an act of condescension as well as an act of glory. The Sabbath rest is a pattern to be followed.

It's a provision to be welcomed. It's a gift to be accepted. Why did God make Sunday special? Why is it special?

God arranged his creative activities specifically to set up the seven day week. That's why it's special. God has done this. Why is it special?

It's special because God has lifted it up and separated it from the other six days making it holy. He's made it holy. And thirdly and lastly, why is Sunday special?

[26 : 32] Well Sunday is special because it's a sign. It's a sign to both Jews and Gentiles that there is a new covenant between God and sinners.

The Sabbath day was given to the world as a sign. In Psalm 19 God speaks about different voices. Psalm 19 perhaps you want to turn to it now with me.

Psalm 19 verse 1 says the heavens declare the glory of God the skies proclaim the work of his hands day after day they pour forth speech night after night they display knowledge there is no speech or language where their voice is not heard for the creation itself declares the very existence of God the intelligent designer glorious creator the heavens declared and the heavens then speak don't they there are people who refuse to accept the voice of the sign of creation but we know that it speaks of God most holy and most wise in Psalm 19 from verse 7 we hear the law the Lord is perfect reviving the soul he's another voice

God speaks he speaks through creation he speaks through his word he's speaking to men and women at all signs look at verse 12 Psalm 19 who can discern his errors forgive my hidden faults Psalmist knows his errors but he can't understand why he's like this this is the work of conscience we have a conscience a conscience speaks to us when we break that law of God we know we have done wrong God has a voice that speaks to us in verse 14 may the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight we have the words of our mouth to speak to our neighbour to talk to our children to proclaim the mystery of the grace of God in Christ all these are voices all these are signs they're from

God they're telling men and women to believe all over the world believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved and similarly I say the Sabbath is also a sign it's a sign from God to the unbelieving world and if the church stops meeting on the first day of the week it will destroy the powerful witness of a Christian Sabbath at a sign if there's no Sabbath then the sign will be lost if believers stop coming to the gathered worship on the Lord's day then a powerful testimony will be silenced we must continue to become or to be the gathered church we must be here worshipping together every time you come to church you're testifying to your neighbors that the Lord is risen indeed and Christ has saved your soul now in the

[30 : 09] Old Testament the Sabbath was a sign it was a covenant sign a sign between God and Israel Exodus 20 verse 10 to 12 I give my Sabbath to be a sign between me and them says God so God's Sabbath was a sign and all the nations around Israel knew that when Israel stopped and rested that they were worshipping the living God Calvin says on Exodus 20 the Sabbath was proof of God's favour instituted on the seventh day and given to the ancient people that they should rest from their works and so conform themselves to God's example and God is still calling us dear friends to conform ourselves to his example like father like son holiness was to be the essence of the

Sabbath day but in the New Testament gospel Sabbath is a sign the cleansing of the temple was a scattering act by which the Jews discern the messianic claim of Jesus and accordingly they saw the sign in John chapter 2 if you want to read it John 2 verses 18 and 19 the Jews said to Jesus what sign do you show us Jesus answered and said to them destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up we know that he speaks of course of his resurrection and John makes it clear that the sign would be the resurrection of Christ from the dead so Jesus would raise the temple of his body on the third day according to the scriptures this agrees with the synoptic gospels where Jesus pointed to his resurrection as the only sign that would be given to the

Jews Matthew 12 verse 39 and even an adulterous generation seek after a sign and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah and the sign of the prophet Jonah was Christ's resurrection on the third day and so it follows that the sign of the new covenant he is this is the day the Lord of May let us rejoice and be glad in it we come to church on Sunday because of the resurrection it's a sign the world knows nothing of that reality they don't want to think about it Easter is becoming a secular holiday in England but it's a sign up from the grave he arose every Sunday it's a sign that

Jesus Christ is alive and thus those who keep the Lord's day holy proclaim it as a sign we proclaim it as a sign to our own generation there's a new covenant between God and sinners and every time we attend Sunday worship and sanctify one day and seven to God we testify to the world that Sunday is one special day on which the Lord's people are called to gather together for worship do you find it hard to witness to your friends and relatives to speak the words of the gospel to them well be encouraged when you come to the Lord's house on the Sabbath you're witnessing every week you're saying I love the Lord this is the Lord's day Jonathan Edwards once wrote if it were not for the Sabbath there would be little public and visible appearance of serving worshipping and reverencing the supreme invisible being we're witnessing today we're witnessing to a saviour that should give us hope that should give us joy that we are testifying to his love and his mercy through his gospel and God has given us an opportunity to do that the sign of Jonah was also assigned to unbelieving

Israel and today the church witnesses to God's ancient people it reminds them of God's grace in the gospel it reminds them that we are being grafted in to the vine one writer called T.J.

[35 : 03] Denison puts it very well when he says behold Israel the supreme sign an empty tomb and the streaming of the Gentiles to the city of the great David's greatest son behold people not a people the son of God offers you repentance unto life through his own life death and resurrection let the Jews and Gentiles embrace the son for he has given us a sign from death to life and so today as we have come to church to worship Christ on the Lord's day we have proclaimed Jesus as Lord and as Messiah it's a sign Sunday is special because it's a sign I met an evangelist not so long ago American who said he has stopped worshipping with the church he was planting on the Lord's day they now meet on Wednesday and they worship on Wednesday and on

Sunday he plays golf so that he might reach the lost my friend where did they get that from the Bible the sign is lost and the church doesn't gather together it's an Old Testament sign it's a New Testament gospel sign and lastly and briefly it's a weekly eschatological sign now I need to quote two theologians to help us hear the first is Geheras Vos who wrote and they quote the universal Sabbath law received a modified significance under the covenant of grace the old covenant was still looking forward we under the new covenant look back upon the accomplished work of Christ we therefore first celebrate the rest in principle procured by Christ through the Sabbath also still remains a sign although the Sabbath also still remains a sign looking forward to the final eschatological rest he says we do not significantly realize the profound sense of the early church of the epiphany making significance of the appearance and especially of the resurrection of the

Messiah this is a great historical event which is to be remembered and its commemoration is a sign in itself the Jewish Sabbath was buried in Christ's grave as he entered upon his rest on the first day of the week he says the Sabbath looks forward it looks forward to the end of time it's a sign it's a sign speaking of heaven itself the eternal rest our joy and peace in eternity the second theologian is Richard Gaffin he said the shift from the seventh day to the first day reflects the present eschatological situation of the church the change of days an index of eschatology already existing of the new creation rest inaugurated by Christ especially at the resurrection so

Gaffin says the Sabbath is not merely an arrangement to ensure time each week for public and private exercise of God's worship it is preeminently an eschatological sign it points to the end dear friend and every time we have a Sabbath day every time we worship we're pointing to a great reality to come that there is a heaven to gain and a hell to shine it points to Christ but it's also pointing forward in Hebrews chapter 4 that we read together it points Hebrews 4 points to the continuing place of the Sabbath sign under the new covenant it contrasts the author of the Hebrews makes here is with rest the people of God he says did not enter into that rest because of unbelief is anyone here tonight who comes to the house of

God and doesn't believe it's possible to hear the Bible read and the word of God preached and to walk out the same as you came in unbelief and condemned forever we must mix what we hear with faith we must believe it it is not the word of the preacher it is not the word of the church it is the word of the eternal God it's the gospel of God it's the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes God we must embrace it we must receive it and accept it of course we don't have all the answers but God who cannot lie reveals what we need to know God says that the weekly Sabbath remains in force under the new covenant and that it is prescriptive as well as descriptive somehow still to enter that rest

[40 : 35] I wonder if there are some here who need to enter the rest look at verse 6 Hebrews 4 it still remains that some will enter that rest are you going to enter that rest Bible says since the promise of entering the rest still stands the promise still stands today if you hear his voice do not harden your heart today the only day we have is today we are not promised tomorrow today if you hear his voice do not harden your heart there remains then a rest a Sabbath rest for the people of God for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work as God did from his so the

Sabbath rest is a resting from our work just as God did after creation here we have a description of the blessing of the forgiveness of sins but here we also have a prescription of the solution to the sinner's condemnation make every effort verse 11 Hebrews 4 let us therefore make every effort to enter that rest are we making an effort to enter that rest are we looking to Christ alone are we believing his words are we repenting are we repenting of our sins are we seeking cleansing in the precious blood of the lamb today if you hear his voice do not harden your heart now why is Sunday special we have given three reasons this evening

I hope that my thesis has been proved to you it's a sign a sign for this generation that there's a new covenant between God and sinners and God who has made that covenant will welcome sinners through repentance and faith that they may know forgiveness and eternal life and they may find God himself who is our destiny Amen