

The Lord's Day | Messianic Publications

Daniel Botkin

| *"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day" -Rev. 1:10*

John's mention of "the Lord's day" is often quoted by Christians who worship on the first day of the week, Sunday, instead of on Saturday, the Sabbath. These well-meaning Christians sincerely believe that John was referring to Sunday when he wrote "the Lord's day." However, there is absolutely nothing in John's text, or in the entire Bible, to indicate that "the Lord's day" refers to Sunday. As a matter of fact, this three-word phrase "the Lord's day" does not appear anywhere else in the New Testament. In spite of the absence of any Biblical evidence whatsoever, Christians assume that by the time John wrote Revelation, the seventh-day Sabbath had been changed to Sunday and dubbed "the Lord's day" by the Apostles.

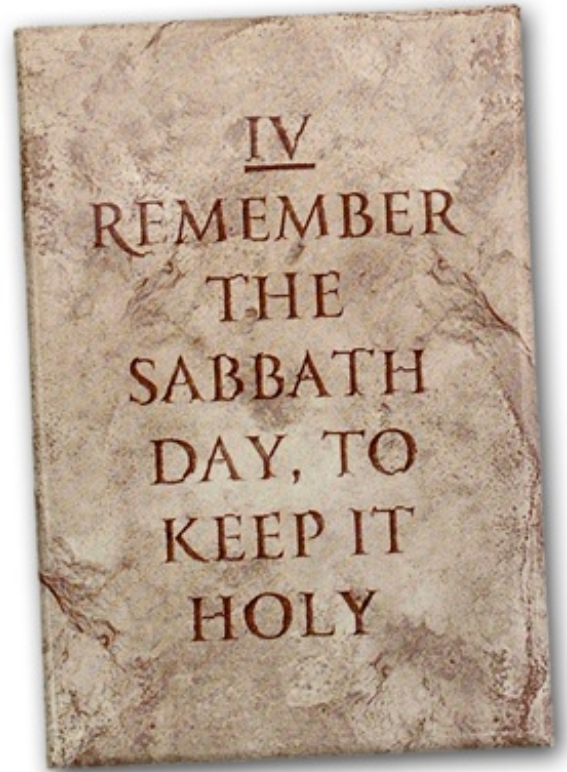
New Testaments with cross references in the margin usually refer the reader of [Revelation 1:10](#) ("the Lord's day") to [Acts 20:7](#), where the disciples came together "on the first day of the week." However, this is a mistranslation of [Acts 20:7](#): the Greek text actually says "on the first of the sabbaths." Cross references in Bibles can be helpful, but cross references are neither inspired nor infallible. In this case, the cross references cause Christians to erroneously assume that there is some connection between John's "Lord's day" and an imagined Sunday meeting in Acts 20.

It is true that later in history, some post-Apostolic Gentile church leaders referred to Sunday as "the Lord's day" in their writings. However, this is not proof of an earlier Biblical or Apostolic mandate to abolish the Sabbath and replace it with Sunday worship. As David Stern remarks, "This only shows how quickly the Jewish roots of the New Testament were forgotten or ignored."^[1]

If "the Lord's day" of [Rev. 1:10](#) does not refer to Sunday, what did John mean by the expression? One possible explanation is that John was simply referring to the seventh-day Sabbath. I do not believe we can say that this is so with absolute certainty, but it is certainly a more plausible explanation than the Sunday theory. The conclusion that "the Lord's day" refers to the seventh-day Sabbath is arrived at by asking a few questions:

The possessive form ("Lord's") is used to tell us that the day belongs to the Lord. So, which day of the week, according to the Bible, belongs to the Lord in a special way? Which day of the week did the Messiah declare Himself to be Lord of? Using the Bible alone as our only authoritative guide, which day of the week is most likely to have been called "the Lord's day" by a First-Century Jew like John? To those familiar with the Scriptures, the answer should be obvious: the seventh day, not the first day of the week.

Of course the above explanation is valid only if John was referring to a literal 24-hour day of the week. Some people, including many Bible scholars, believe that "the Lord's day" does not refer to any particular 24-hour day of the week, be it Saturday or Sunday. Rather, it refers to the end-time "Day of the Lord" of



which the Prophets wrote – that period of history when God’s wrath and judgments will be poured out upon the earth, followed by the arrival of the Messiah and the setting up of the Messianic kingdom. One only needs to read the rest of the Book of Revelation to see that the end-time Day of the Lord is certainly the major theme of John’s Revelation. Those who accept this interpretation, then, would understand “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day” to mean “I was transported in vision, by the Spirit, to behold the events that will take place during the period of history known as the great Day of the Lord.”

Some people have raised a legitimate question about the above view. If John meant “the Day of the Lord,” why did he write “the Lord’s day”? In the Septuagint, the Hebrew יום יהוה (*yom YHWH*, “day of YHWH”) was rendered by the Greek expression ἡμέραν θυμοῦ κυρίου (“day of the Lord”), but John rearranges the words and uses a different form, τῆ κυριακῆ ἡμέρᾳ (“the Lord’s day”). Why does John translate “the Day of the Lord” in a slightly different way than the translators of the Septuagint did?

There is no difference in the meaning of the two expressions; there is only a difference in emphasis. “The wife of the President” and “the President’s wife” refer to the same person. If I use the first form, I am emphasizing whose wife she is (“the wife of THE PRESIDENT”). If I use the second form, I am emphasizing her role as a wife (“the President’s WIFE”). This same rule holds true in Greek. The Prophets who wrote about the Day of the Lord were emphasizing who the Day belongs to (THE LORD): John was emphasizing THE DAY more than the Lord to whom the day belongs.[2]

John’s use of “the Lord’s day,” then, refers to either the seventh-day Sabbath or to the end-time period of history known as the Day of YHWH, or perhaps to both – it is possible that John was given his Revelation of the Day of YHWH on a Sabbath day. Whichever is the case, one thing is certain: [Revelation 1:10](#) cannot be used to support the false notion that the seventh-day Sabbath was abolished and replaced with Sunday. The only place one can find Sunday referred to as “the Lord’s day” is in the anti-Semitic writings of the post-Apostolic Gentile church leaders who led the Church, a step at a time, away from the Torah.

| “...all His commandments are sure. They stand fast forever and ever.” -[Psalm 111:7, 8](#)

Notes

[1] Stern, David. *Jewish New Testament Commentary*. Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications, 1992. Print. Comment on [Revelation 1:10](#).

[2] See for example E. W. Bullinger’s *The Lord’s Day (Revelation 1:10)*. Bible Search Publications Inc., 2008.