

Benefits Team:

Construct six raindrops: 3 describing benefits with reference verses and 3 containing life application examples for each benefit.

Allow each team 5 minutes to present. Each team (including Effects Team) must show their raindrops are important to our doctrine of the Holy Spirit and how they help "moisturize" our daily lives. Decorate classroom as desired.

R E F L E C T I O N & P R A Y E R



Praying with the Holy Spirit is not only critical in doing church work; it is essential to our livelihood as Christians. An elder once compared reading the Bible to eating solid food and praying in spirit to drinking water. Of course it is not good to neglect either. However, while we may only become weak and feeble without food for an extended period of time, we can easily faint or die if we stop drinking water. Therefore, we must make the conscious effort to retreat to the garden of prayer often and drink from the living fountain of God. Only when we root ourselves near the source and drink our fill of the Holy Spirit will we be able to "take root downward, and bear fruit upward" (Isa 37:31).

Lesson 8

The Doctrine of the Sabbath (1)

Listed Scriptures

Gen 2:1-3; Ex 16:23-32; 20:8-11; Isa 56:1-7; Jer 17: 24-27; Mk 1:21; 6:1

Lesson Aim

- 1) To explore Christian beliefs regarding Sunday worship
- 2) To uphold the validity of Sabbath worship

Memory Verse

"Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters." (1 Cor 7:19)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

Romans 9-13

Note to teachers: This quarter's lessons do not contain the Bible Background section since they pertain more to the history of our church.

W A R M U P



Ask the students if they have ever missed a birthday party, a homecoming game or sports practice because of church. Have they ever had to explain to others why they go to church on Saturday instead of Sunday? In the lesson today, we will explore the arguments for Sunday worship and why we insist on worshiping on the Sabbath.



Part 1 The Definition of the Lord's Day

Many churches believe that Christians should worship on the Lord's Day instead of the Jewish Sabbath. In the New Testament, the term "Lord's day" is found in Revelation, in John's testimony, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day...." (Rev 1:10). Because of John's revelation on the "Lord's Day," churches believe that New Testament worship should be on Sunday instead of the Saturday. However, this passage in Revelation never defines the "Lord's Day" as the first day of the week; nor does it command us to remember the Lord's resurrection on this day. Instead, the "day of the Lord" is actually a day in the future in which John entered through a vision (*Note: in the R. F. Weymouth translation of this verse reads, "In the spirit I found myself present on the day of the Lord."*). As a result, he was able to record apocalyptic (prophetic) events in Book of Revelation. Therefore, the "Lord's Day" does not refer to one of the seven days of the week. It simply refers to the "day of the Lord" which has been described many times in the Old Testament (Isa 13:6, 9; Ezek 13:5; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 31; 3:14; Amos 5:18; Zach 14:1; Mal 4:5).



Part 2 Justification for Worshiping on Christ's Resurrection Day

Since Christ resurrected on a Sunday, Christians believe that special emphasis should be placed on this day. The three main arguments for Sunday worship are as follows:



A . The Lord Appeared to His Disciples on Sunday

The Book of John records, "Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace be with you" (Jn 20:19). Since Jesus appeared on the Sunday after crucifixion, some believe first day of the week should be set aside to remember His resurrection. Yet, this passage does not justify Sunday worship. First, the main point of the passage

is not to emphasize the day of the week that Jesus Christ appeared to His disciples, nor imply future worship on this day. Instead, it is to indicate to the disciples that Jesus Christ had truly resurrected. Second, Sunday was not the only day of the week in which Jesus Christ appeared to His disciples. From John 20:26 we can see that Jesus Christ also appeared on a Monday. Third, the disciples were not assembling in celebration of Christ's resurrection. They were hiding behind closed doors in fear of the fury of the Jews, who had just crucified Christ. In fact, many of them were still in disbelief toward the women's testimonies of Christ's resurrection (Mk 16:9-11; Lk 24:5-11).



B . The Early Church Met on Sunday to Break Bread

Acts 20:7 records, "Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight." The verse is used to argue that the early church met on Sunday to hold Holy Communion. A closer examination of this verse will prove otherwise. First, the passage never mentions the commemoration of Christ's resurrection. The mere act of "breaking of bread" is not enough to claim that the early church replaced the Sabbath with Sunday. Second, the breaking of bread here was clearly part of a fellowship meal (Acts 2:46; Jude 12) as opposed to a Holy Communion (1 Cor 11:23-25). Because Paul was ready to depart the next day, the breaking of bread was most likely a fellowship meal to send him off. Even if it was a Holy Communion, the purpose would be to remember the death instead of the resurrection of Christ.



C . The Early Church Met on Sunday to Collect Offerings

In 1 Corinthians 16:2, Paul writes, "On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come." Because of this, Christian churches claim that the early church met on Sundays to collect special offerings. The context of the verse shows that this was not the case. First, the passage does not indicate that the church met together on every Sunday to pool their offerings. It only instructs the Corinthians to set aside a portion of their earnings for future offering. Second, this collection of offerings consisted of a special charity, not a normal tithe. The purpose of the collection was to help the distraught Jews in Jerusalem (Rom 15:25-26). That is why Paul refers to the "collection for the saints" in 1 Corinthians 16:1 and "whomever you approve...I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem." Third, the purpose of setting aside money every weekend was not to give Sunday offering but to simplify the process of collecting so that Paul would not have to waste time when he visited.



Part 3

Reasons Not to Worship on Saturday

Now that we have covered the arguments for observing Sunday, we will explore the reasons behind why many believe the Sabbath should be abolished.



A. We Are No Longer Bound By Old Testament Law

Some may point to the claim in Romans 6:14 that we are "not under law but grace" (Rom 6:14). Therefore, since the command to "remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Ex 20:8) is part of the Old Testament law, it no longer pertains to us. However, Romans 6:14 does not negate the validity of the Sabbath. First, the syntax of the verse shows that the phrase "not under law but grace" cannot be isolated. It is merely supporting evidence for the first part of the verse, which reads, "For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but grace." Second, the context of the verse is a debate about sin, not the Sabbath. A person who lives under the law has knowledge of sin (Rom 3:20) but cannot escape from its control (Rom 7:18-23). Therefore, they transgress against God (Rom 4:15) and earn death as their wage (Rom 6:23). On the other hand, to be "not under law" is to not be under the judgment of God (Rom 3:19). Because the law is the criteria by which God judges (1 Jn 3:4; Rom 2:12), everyone in the world is "confined to sin" by the Scripture (Gal 3:22). The reason why Jesus Christ was born under the law was to become a ransom for those under the law, so that He may "redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons" (Gal 4:4-5). Once we receive baptism, our sins are remitted (Rom 6:4-7). Therefore, we are freed from sin and the laws associated with it. The salvation of Christ thus puts us "not under law but grace."



B. God's Love is Sufficient

Jesus Christ said that the two greatest commandments are to "love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind" and "love your neighbor as yourself." He also said, "On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets" (Mt 22:37-40). Some Christians interpret this passage to mean that Christians no longer need to obey any commands as long as they love God and others.

Nonetheless, we must not forget that loving God means keeping His commands.

As 1 John 5:3 tells us, "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome." By keeping the Ten Commandments, we not only fulfill our duty toward God, but also toward men (Rom 13:9-10).

We must also remember that the observation of the commandments was emphasized in the New Testament. When someone asked Jesus Christ how to have eternal life, He replied, "if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments" (Mt 19:17). Paul also wrote, "Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters" (1 Cor 7:19). Moreover, God revealed to John that the saints at the end times will be "those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. Therefore, we should continue obeying the commandments (Rev 14:12).

Finally, we should not negate any of the commandments for our own convenience. If the nine other commandments (1-3, 5-10) continue to be observed by Christians today, why should the fourth one be omitted? There is no reason for us to get rid of the Sabbath while we continue to refrain from idol worshiping, murder, adultery and theft (Jas 2:10-11).

C. Jesus Christ Abolished the Sabbath

Many times, two of the Lord Jesus' actions are incorrectly interpreted as being anti-Sabbatarian. First, the Lord Jesus healed on the Sabbath (Mt 12:9-14; Lk 14:1-6; Jn 9:13-16). Second, Jesus Christ allowed His disciples to pluck and eat grain on the Sabbath. These actions of work clearly broke the Sabbath laws that demanded total rest.

Jesus Christ's work of healing cannot be interpreted as an abolition of the Sabbath. In fact, the Lord Himself observed the Sabbath by customarily visiting the synagogue (Lk 4:16). In Matthew 12:9-14, Jesus Christ healed a cripple in order to correct the Jews' misconception that good works such as healing could not be done on the Sabbath. The validity of healing on the Sabbath was again confirmed in Luke 14 and John 9. Just as it was wrong for the Pharisees to condemn Jesus Christ for healing on the Sabbath, it is incorrect for us to use His healing to negate the Sabbath.

Likewise, it is incorrect for us to condemn the Sabbath on account of the disciple's action of plucking grain. By plucking heads of grain, the disciples violated the Sabbath law, "on the seventh day you shall rest; in plowing time and in harvest

you shall rest" (Ex 34:21). However, allowing the disciples to eat is not enough evidence to claim that Jesus Christ abolished the Sabbath. In fact, He was trying to teach the Jews that it was all right to eat on the Sabbath because "the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath" (Mk 2:27.) As "Lord of the Sabbath," Jesus Christ also had authority to change the method by which the Sabbath was kept. However, we must continue to observe the Sabbath even if we keep a Sabbath of grace (Jn 1:17; Rom 6:14).



D. The Sabbath Was Nailed on the Cross

One of the most popular passages used in condemning Sabbath worship is Colossians 2:14-17, "having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it. So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ."

When reading this passage, we must be aware that the "Sabbath worship" here refers to the "Sabbath under law." Under Old Testament law, God's chosen people had many restrictions on food (Lev 11), the Sabbath (Ex 16:25-29; 35:1-3; Num 15:32-36) and sacrifice (Num 28:9-10). But because Christ freed us from the law, all the food restrictions were abolished in the New Testament (Acts 10:9-16; Rom 14:1-3; 1 Tim 4:3-5). Likewise, all Sabbath restrictions were lifted. Therefore, Christians may observe a "Sabbath under grace" instead of a "Sabbath under law." Under grace, we may continue to eat and drink on the Sabbath, but we are not bound by the legal restrictions. In the same way, we can now worship the Lord on the Sabbath without sacrificing animals or refraining from work.



Part 4

Neither Saturday Nor Sunday

"One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and give God thanks" (Rom 14:4-5).

Some people interpret Romans 14:4-5 to mean that every day is the same. Therefore, it doesn't matter whether or not one worships on Saturday, Sunday or any other day of the week.

An examination of the passage proves this view wrong. First, the background of the book of Romans would not support a debate between Sabbath and Sunday. Paul wrote the book circa 57-58 A.D., at the end of his third missionary voyage (Rom 15:25-28; Acts 19:21; 20:1-6). In that period of time, there was no debate mentioned in the Bible regarding the correctness of the Sabbath and Sunday. Second, the juxtaposition of "one day above another" with the issue of food (Rom 14:1-6) suggests that the "days" in this passage refers to special days and festivals dictated by Jewish law. That is why Colossians tells us, "So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths (festival sabbaths, covered in the next lesson), which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ" (Col 2:16-17). Third, the purpose of this passage is not to dismiss the Sabbath, but to encourage the Roman Christians to accept each other in love. Even though Old Testament laws (note: not excluding the Commandments) had been abolished in the New Testament (Acts 10:9-16), many of the new converts from Judaism had questions and quibbles regarding the old laws on food. Therefore, Paul needed to remind them to "receive one another," regardless of each other's observance of Judaic laws (Rom 15:7).

Moreover, Paul's other writings also show him as a person who would not undermine the validity of the Sabbath. When Paul worked in Thessalonica, he entered the synagogue three Sabbaths in a row in observance of the Sabbath. He was also very blunt about changes from the Old Testament. Because of his view against the Old Testament circumcision, Paul was greatly persecuted (Gal 5:11, 6:12). As a result, he wrote extensively to defend the replacement of the circumcision with water baptism (Rom 3:30; Gal 5:1-6; 6:15; Phil 3:2-3). Therefore, if Paul believed in something as controversial as the replacement of Sabbath with Sunday, he would have vehemently defended it in his epistles. Yet, he never clearly states that the Sabbath should be obliterated. Therefore, the Sabbath should be kept as declared by the Lord.

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING



1 What is the "Lord's Day"? Why do we not worship on the Lord's Day?

2 "Sabbath for Jews, Sunday for Christians" is a common phrase. What are the three main justifications for Sunday worship? Why are they misleading?

3 List the four main arguments against Sabbath worship. What are the counter arguments?

4 Some people think that neither Saturday nor Sunday should be singled out to worship God because of Romans 14:4-5. What would you say to them?

LIFE APPLICATION



Divide students into two teams. Team 1 will fill out Chart 1, and Team 2 will fill out Chart 2 (charts are already in student workbook).

How Much Do You Love Me?

Chart 1: Worshiping on Sunday, the Lord's Day			
Claim	Supporting Verses	Counter Argument (TJC)	Supporting Verses
1. The Lord appeared to His disciples on Sunday			
2. The early church met on Sunday to break bread			
3. The early church met on Sunday to collect offerings			

Chart 2: Not Worshiping on Saturday			
Claim	Supporting Verses	Counter Argument (TJC)	Supporting Verses
1. We are no longer bound by Old Testament Law			
2. The only commandment is to love one another			
3. Jesus Christ abolished the Sabbath			
4. The Sabbath was nailed to the cross			

Using each chart, ask each team to write a skit describing an encounter of a Sunday school teacher and a religious education teacher of the True Jesus Church. Allow each team 5 –10 minutes to present their skit. You may also want to videotape the skits and play them back for the students.

REFLECTION & PRAYER



The Sabbath is indeed a blessed day that cannot be replaced by Sunday. It not only reminds us of God's grace in creation (Gen 2:1-2), but also allows us draw closer to Him in true rest. As the Lord tells us in Isaiah 56, "Blessed is the man...who keeps from defiling the Sabbath" because "Everyone who keeps from defiling the Sabbath, And holds fast My covenant...I will bring to My holy mountain, And make them joyful in My house of prayer." May we continue to enter God's holy mountain on the Sabbath to celebrate His peace and rest.