

When Does the Lord's Day Begin?

By R. Andrew Myers

The first table of the Decalogue has been nicely summarized in this way by Thomas Vincent in his Exposition of the Westminster Shorter Catechism:

“The first commandment hath a respect unto the *object* of worship; the second commandment hath a respect unto the *means* of worship; the third commandment hath a respect unto the *manner* of worship; but this fourth commandment hath a respect unto the *time* of worship.”

God alone regulates whom, how and by what means, and *when* we are to worship him. With respect to time, although we are the recipient of daily mercies and he is to be worshiped privately and in families daily, he particularly in the fourth commandment appointed one day in seven, the Christian Sabbath or the Lord's Day, to be devoted to his worship in a special way. Christians acknowledge that Christ changed the Sabbath day from the last day of the week to the first, by example, if not explicit precept in the Word. Most Christians also believe that the reckoning of the Sabbath day was also changed from the Jewish manner (sundown to sundown) to the Roman (Gentile) manner (midnight to midnight), and on the same basis as the change of day itself, that is, by the example of when Christ arose from the dead, although practically speaking, in the modern church, Sabbath observance is largely assumed to be a matter of personal preference, rather than an objectively-measured standard. It is this question which I aim to explore in this post.

God has commanded that the whole Sabbath day is to be consecrated to him, not just a

portion, although in his mercy he allows us time for food, sleep and other necessities. But since the whole day belongs to him, it behooves us to consider whether we are recognizing his authority over the whole day of his appointment. Far from being legalistic or an instance of vain sophistry, the question of when the Lord's Day begins and ends is, or ought to be, an example of commendable scrupulousness, when it aims to honor the Lord during the time of his appointment. For example, when the Sabbath is reckoned has a bearing on what activities may be lawful on a Saturday evening or the Lord's Day evening. Things that are lawful during the week may not be lawful on the Sabbath. How the Sabbath is to be reckoned is a question that many divines have addressed and I have here compiled some of their wisdom (in the Puritan era, Robert Cleaver, wrote a whole treatise defending midnight-to-midnight Sabbath observance, and in modern times, Greg Price has also done so, but the following extracts are much shorter). Some, such as the New England Puritans, have observed a Sabbath that runs from sundown on the seventh day of the week (Saturday) to sundown on the first day of the week (the Lord's Day). Thomas Shepard and John Cotton, for instance, have written able -- though I believe, erroneous -- treatises defending this view. Below are some Puritans and others who take the majority Christian position that the Christian Sabbath ought to be reckoned as we reckon other days, that is, from midnight to midnight, for midnight is when the morning begins.

Thomas Vincent, *The Shorter Catechism Explained From Scripture*, pp. 139-141:

Q. 6. When doth this holy day or Sabbath begin, in the evening before, or that morning from midnight?

A. In the evening before, by virtue of that word, "Remember to keep holy the seventh day," we ought to begin to prepare for the Sabbath; but the Sabbath itself doth not begin until the evening is spent, and midnight thereof over, and the morning after twelve of the clock begins.

Q. 7. Doth not the Scriptures require us to begin the Sabbath in the evening, when it is said, "The evening and the morning were the first day" (Gen. 1:5); and, "From even unto even shall ye celebrate your Sabbath?"— Lev. 33:32.

A. 1. It doth not follow that the evening of the first day was before the morning, though it be first spoken of; no more than that Shem and Ham were elder than Japheth, because they are reckoned up in order before him. "The sons of Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth (Gen. 10:1); and yet Japheth is called the elder brother. — Verse 21. But Moses, reckoning up the works of God on the first day, retires back from the evening to the morning, and saith, they both make up the first day. Surely in the account of all nations, and in Scripture account too, the morning is before the evening. "The same day at evening, being the first day of the week, came Jesus," &c. (John 20:10), where the evening following this day, and on the evening before the day, is called the evening of the same day. 2. That place in Leviticus, concerning the celebration of the Sabbath from evening to evening, hath a reference only unto a ceremonial Sabbath, or day of atonement, on the tenth day of the seventh month, wherein the Israelites were to afflict their souls; but it hath not a reference unto the weekly Sabbath.

Q. 8. How do you prove by the Scripture that the weekly Sabbath doth begin in the morning?

A. That the weekly Sabbath is to begin in the morning, is evident— 1. by Exod. 16:23: "This is that which the Lord hath said, to-morrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord." If the Sabbath had begun in the evening, Moses would have said, This evening doth begin the rest of the Sabbath; but he saith, To-morrow is the rest of the Sabbath. 2. Most evidently it doth appear that the Sabbath doth begin in the morning, and not in the evening, by Matt. 28:1: "In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn towards the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, to see the sepulchre." If the end of the Jewish Sabbath were not in the evening, when it began to grow dark towards the night, but when it began to dawn towards the first day of the week, which must needs be towards the morning, and in no rational sense can be interpreted of the evening, then the Sabbath did also begin in the morning, and not in the evening, for the beginning and ending must needs be about the same time. But the former is evident from this place, concerning the Jewish Sabbath's ending; and therefore, consequently concerning its beginning. 3. Further, it is also said in this place, that the first day, which is the Christian Sabbath, did begin towards the dawning, as it grew on towards light, and not as it grew on towards darkness; therefore the Christian Sabbath doth begin in the morning. 4. Moreover, the resurrection of Christ, in commemoration of which the Christian Sabbath is observed, was not in the evening, but early in the morning ("Now when Jesus was risen early, the first day of the week"— Mark 16:9); therefore the Sabbath is to begin in the morning. 5. If the Sabbath did begin in the evening before, it would end in the evening after; and it would be lawful for men to work in their callings, or to go to their recreations, on the evening of the Sabbath, which surely would be very unsuitable after the holy employments of that day.

Richard Greenham, *A Short Forme of Catechising*:

“Rehearse the fourth Commandement.

Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy, &c.

What is here generally commanded?

I am commanded to make it my whole delight, to sanctifie the holy Sabbath of the Lord from morning to night.”

William Gouge, *The Sabbath's Sanctification*:

Question 48. When begins the Lord's Day?

Ans. In the morning, Acts 20:7.

When Paul came to the Church at Troas, he had a mind to spend a Lord's day with them, though he was in great haste to depart so soon as he could. He came, therefore, to their assembly at the time that they came together according to their custom; but he kept them till the end of the day (for he would not travel on the Lord's day); and having dismissed the assembly, he departed. Now it said that he continued his speech "till midnight" (Acts 20:7), even "till break of day" (verse 11), and then departed; which departure of his is said to be "on the morrow." By this punctual expression of the time, it appears that the first day of the week, the Lord's day, ended at midnight, and that then the morrow began. Now to make a natural day, which consisteth of twenty four hours, it must begin and end at the same time; for the end of one day is the beginning of another. There is not a minute betwixt them. As, therefore, the Lord's day ended at midnight, so it must begin at midnight, when we count the morning to begin. Which is yet more evident by this phrase, Matt. 28:1, "In the end of the Sabbath" (namely, of the week before which was the former Sabbath) "as it began to dawn" (namely, on the next day, which was the Lord's day). Or, as John 20:1, "when it was yet dark" there came divers to anoint the body of Jesus, but they found him not in the grave. He was risen before; so as Christ rose before the sun.

Question 49. What reasons may be given of the Lord's day beginning in the morning?

Ans. Other days then begin.

That they do so with us is evident by the account of our hours. For midnight ended, we begin with one o'clock; then the first hour of the day beginneth. And it appears to be so among the Jews; for when Aaron proclaimed, Exod. 32:5, 6, "Tomorrow shall be a feast to the Lord," "they rose up early on the morrow." I deny not but that sundry of the Jewish feasts began in the evening, as the Passover (Exod. 12:6). But it cannot be proved that their weekly Sabbath so began. There were special reasons for the beginning of those feasts in the evening, which did then begin. As for the supposed beginnings of the first days gathered out of this phrase: "the evening and the morning were the first day;" they cannot be necessarily concluded to be at the evening. For the evening and the morning there importeth the moment of the evening and morning parting from one another, and the return to the same period; which moment is rather at the beginning of the morning than of the evening. The evening useth to be referred to the end of the day and the morning to the beginning, as Exod. 29:38, 29; 1 Sam. 17:16; John 20:19.

Question 50. What other reason is there of the Lord's day beginning in the morning.

Ans. Christ then rose, Mark 16:2, 9.

Of Christ's rising in the morning, no question can be made; all the evangelists agree in the narration thereof. Now the Lord's day being a memorial of Christ's resurrection, if it should begin in the evening, the memorial would be before the thing itself, which is absurd to imagine. As all God's works were finished before the first Sabbath, so all Christ's sufferings before the Lord's day. His lying dead in the grave was a part of his suffering. Therefore, by his resurrection was all ended. With his resurrection, therefore, must the Lord's day begin.

To make the evening before the Lord's day a time of preparation thereunto is a point of piety and prudence; but to make it a part of the Lord's day is erroneous, and in many respects very inconvenient.

William Perkins, *Cases of Conscience*, in *Works*, Vol. 2, p. 111-112:

When doth the Sabbath begin?

To this some do answer, in the evening, and some in the morning. My answer is this, that the Sabbath of the new Testament amongst us is to begin in the morning, and so to continue till the next morrow, and not in the evening till the evening.

The reasons be these:

1. The Sabbath is to begin when other ordinary days begin, according to the order and account of the Church wherein we live.

2. It was the practice of Christ and the Apostles. For Christ (as it hath been thought of ancient times) consecrated the Sabbath, in that he rose from the dead early in the morning, when the first day of the week began to dawn, *Matth.* 28.1. and therefore it is fit that the Sabbath day should then begin when he rose, for as much as it is kept in remembrance of his resurrection. The same was the practice of the Apostles. For *Acts* 20.7. the first day of the week the Jews came together at Troas in the morning, and there *Paul* preached from that time till midnight; being the next morning to depart, having stayed there, as is plain out of the sixth verse, seven days. In that text I note two things.

First, that the night there mentioned was a part of the seventh day of *Paul's* abode at Troas. For if it were not so, then he had stayed at least a night longer, and so more than seven days, because he should have stayed part of another day.

Secondly, that this night was a part of the Sabbath which they then kept. For the apostle keeps it in manner of a Sabbath, in the exercises of piety and divine worship, and namely in preaching. Yea further, he continues there till the rest was fully ended: *he communed with them till the dawning of the day, and so departed, verse 11.* Besides this text, David saith in his Psalm of the Sabbath, that he will declare *God's loving kindness in the morning, and his truth in the night, Ps. 92:2,* making the night following a part of the Sabbath.

Against this doctrine it is alleged, first, that the Sabbath is to begin in the evening, because in the first of *Genesis*, it is said, six several times, the evening and the morning made the first day, and so the second, and third, &c.

Answ. *First*, in that text when it is said, the evening and the morning made such and such day, by the evening is understood the night, and by the morning the day, and the evening was the end of the day, and the morning the end of the night. This exposition is ancient, and yet in Scripture we find not one place where the evening is put for the night.

Secondly, I answer, that the collection from that place is of no force: for thus the reason must needs be framed. That which God did in appointing of days, the same must we do in using of them: But in appointing of days, began the day at evening, Erg. &c. The consequent is false. For the case is otherwise in the constitution of time, than it is in the use of time constituted: and there is not the same reason of things in doing, as there is of the same things in being and use.

Thirdly, this did not bind the Jews. For they in all likelihood began their Sabbaths in the morning. Indeed their solemn feasts, as the Passover and such like, began and were kept from evening to morning, as we may read, *Levit.* 23.5. But their ordinary Sabbath was kept from morning to morning. Whence it is, that *S. Matthew* calls the dawning of the first day of the week, the end of the Sabbath of the Jews, *Mat.* 28.1. and there is nothing (I take it) that can be brought to the contrary.

It is objected that *Moses* says, *Lev.* 23.32. *From even to even shall ye celebrate your Sabbath.*

Answ. The words must be understood of the feast of reconciliation, being the tenth day of the seventh month, which was solemnized and kept from even to even. And it is called a Sabbath, because it was by special commandment appointed to be kept as the Sabbath day, and that in two respects. First, because it was to be kept holy by the Jews, in humbling themselves and offering sacrifices, vers. 37. Secondly, because upon that day it was not lawful to do any servile work upon pain of death, vers. 25. 30.

Again, it is alleged that *Joseph* of Arimathea could not embalm Christ, by reason that the Sabbath was at hand, and this was the evening. I answer, that the Jews Sabbath there meant concurred with the day of their Passover, and hence it was that their Sabbath began in the evening.

By this that has been said, the answer to the third Question is plain, to wit, that in the new Testament the Sabbath is to begin at the morning, and so to continue to the next morning, and not as some suppose, to begin at the even and continue till the next even.

Samuel Rutherford,

A Catechism Containing the Sum of Christian Religion (cited in *Catechisms of the Second Reformation*, by Alexander Mitchell, 1886, p. 232)

“Q. What is it to sanctify the Sabbath?

A. It is to set all apart from the dawning of the day until midnight (Jn. 20:1; Acts 20:7) for God’s service.”

John Owen, *An Exposition to the Hebrews*, vol. 18, p. 531

8. Of the beginning and ending of the Sabbath — The first rule about time.

8. It may seem to some necessary that something should be premised concerning the measure or continuance of the day to be set apart to a holy rest to the Lord; but it being a matter of controversy, and to me, on the reasons to be mentioned afterwards, of no great importance, I shall not insist upon the examination of it, but only give my judgment in a word concerning it. Some contend that it is a natural day, consisting of twenty-four hours, beginning with the evening of the preceding day, and ending with the same of its own. And accordingly so was the church of Israel directed, Leviticus 23:32, “From even unto even shall ye celebrate your Sabbath ;” although that does not seem to be a general direction for the observation of the weekly Sabbath, but to regard only that particular extraordinary Sabbath which was then instituted, namely, the day of atonement, on the tenth day of the seventh month, verse 27. However,

suppose it to belong also to the weekly Sabbath, it is evidently an addition to the command, particularly suited to the Mosaical pedagogy, that the day might comprise the sacrifice of the preceding evening in the services of it; from an obedience whereunto we are freed by the gospel. Neither can I subscribe to this opinion; and that because, —

(1.) In the description and limitation of the first original seven days, it is said of each of the six that it was constituted of an evening and a morning, but of the day of rest there is no such description; it is only called “the seventh day,” without any assignation of the preceding evening unto it.

(2.) A day of rest, according to rules of natural equity, ought to be proportioned to a day of work or labor, which God has granted to us for our own use. Now, this is to be reckoned from morning to evening:

Psalm 104:20-23.

“Thou makest darkness, and it is night: wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep” (from whose yelling the night has its name in the Hebrew tongue.) “The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God. The sun arises, they gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens. Man goes forth unto his work and to his labor until the evening.”

The day of labor is from the removal of darkness and the night, by the light of the sun, until the return of them again; which, allowing for the alterations of the day in the several seasons of the year, seems to be the just measure of our day of rest.

(3.) Our Lord Jesus Christ, who in his resurrection gave beginning and being to the especial day of holy rest under the gospel, rose not until “the morning of the first day of the week,” when the beamings of the light of the sun began to dispel the darkness of the night, or “when it dawned toward day,” as it is variously expressed by the evangelists. This, with me, determines this whole matter.

(4.) Mere cessation from labor in the night seems to have no place in the spiritual rest of the gospel to be expressed on this day, nor to be by any thing distinguished from the nights of other days of the week.

(5.) Supposing Christians under the obligation of the direction given by Moses before mentioned, and it may entangle them in the anxious, scrupulous intrigues which the Jews are subject to about the beginning of the evening itself, about which their greatest masters are at variance; which things belong not to the economy of the gospel. Upon the whole matter, I am inclined to judge, and do so, that the observation of the day is to be commensurate to the use of our natural strength on any other day, from morning to night And nothing is hereby lost that is needful to the due sanctification of it; for what is by some required as a part of its sanctification, is necessary and required as a due preparation thereunto. This, therefore, is our first rule or direction : —

I. The first day of the week, or the Lord's day, is to be set apart to the ends of a holy rest unto God, by every one, according as his natural strength will enable him to employ himself in his lawful occasions any other day of the week.

There is no such certain standard or measure for the observance of the duties of this day, as that every one who exceeds it should by it be cut short, or that those who, on important reasons, come short of it should be stretched out thereunto. As God provided, in his services of old, that he who was not able to offer a bullock might offer a dove, with respect to their outward condition in the world; so here there is an allowance also for the natural temperaments and abilities of men. Only, whereas if persons of old had pretended poverty, to save their charge in the procuring of an offering, it would not have been acceptable, yea, they would themselves have fallen under the curse of the deceiver; so no more will now a pretense of weakness or natural inability be any excuse to any for neglect or profaneness Otherwise, God requires of us, and accepts from us, "according to what we have, and not according to what we have not," And we see it by experience, that some men's natural spirits will carry them out to a continuance in the outward observance of duties much beyond, nay, double perhaps to what others are able, who yet may observe a holy Sabbath unto the Lord with acceptance. And herein lies the spring of the accommodation of these duties to the sick, the aged, the young, the weak, or persons any way distempered. "God knows our frame, and remembers that we are dust ;" as also that that dust is more discomposed and weakly

compacted in some than in others. As thus the people gathered manna of old, some more, some less, "every man according to his appetite," yet "he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack," Exodus 16:17,18; so is every one in sincerity, according to his own ability, to endeavor the sanctifying of the name of God in the duties of this day, not being obliged by the examples or prescriptions of others, according to their own measures.

James Ussher, *A Body of Divinitie*, p. 244-245:

Why doth our Sabbath begin at the dawning of the day?

Because Christ rose in the dawning; and to put a difference between the Jewish, and the true Christian Sabbath. For as the Jews begun their Sabbath in that part of the day, in which the Creation of the world was ended, and consequently in the Evening: so the celebration of the memory of Christ's Resurrection, and therein of his rest from his special labors and the renewing of the world, being the ground of the change of that day into this; it is also, by the same proportion of reason, to begin when the Resurrection began, which was in the morning.

Can you see this by example?

Yea. Paul being at Troas, after he had preached a whole day, until midnight, celebrated the supper of the Lord the same night, which was a Sabbath dayes exercise: and therefore that night following the day was apart of the Sabbath. For in the morning he departed, having staid there seven dayes: by which it is evident, that that which was done, was done upon the Lords day. Acts 20.7-10.

Robert Cleaver, wrote a book which was posthumously published in 1625 entitled:

A Declaration of the Christian Sabbath: wherein the Sanctifying of the Lord's Day is proved to be agreeable to the Commandment of God, and to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Whereunto is added a brief Appendix touching the limits of the

Christian Sabbath., the Lord's Day: that it beginneth and endeth after Midnight, not after the Sun Setting in the Evening."

A note by James Gilfillan in his *The Sabbath Defended*, p. 121:

"We have not read this volume, which, we suppose, is now rare. The title is given from the second edition, which we have seen in the Marsh Library, Dublin. Both editions are marked in the Catalogue of the Bodleian."

William Ames, *The Marrow of Theology*, pp. 297-298:

35. Just as the beginning of the old sabbath occurred in the evening because the creation also began in the evening (the formless earth being created before the light) and the cessation of the work of creation also began at evening, so also the beginning of the Lord's Day appears to begin in the morning because the resurrection of Christ was in the early morning, Mark 16:2; John 20:1.

William Fenner, *Treatise of the Sabbath*:

Another reason is this: God rested the seventh day: now look what time God rested, that time we must sanctify: now God rested the seventh day, all of it, he left none of the creation to do upon the seventh day; he had finished the creation in six days, and rested all the seventh day, therefore we must keep the whole day. Thirdly, because this is the nature of a Sabbath to be 24 hours, not to be an artificial day, but to be a natural day, 24 hours together, as you may see Lev. 23.32 *you shall keep the Sabbath from evening to evening*; then the days were reckoned from evening to evening from the creation; though now under the gospel, because Christ arose in the morning, they are reckoned from morning to morning.

John Flavel, *An Exposition of the Assembly's Shorter Catechism*, re: Q. 57-59:

Q. 6. When doth the Christian Sabbath begin?

A. It appears that this day is not to be reckoned from evening to evening, but

from morning to morning; because the Christian Sabbath must begin when the Jewish Sabbath ended, but that ended towards the morning, Matthew 28:1. In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn towards the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalen, and the other Mary, to see the sepulcher.

George Swinnock, *The Works of George Swinnock*, Vol. 1, pp. 245-246:

Observe how exact God is in expressing a whole natural day: "From evening to evening you shall keep the Sabbath," Lev 23:32. Their days were reckoned from evening to evening, from the creation; but ours, because Christ rose in the morning, from morning to morning.

Lewis Bayly, *The Practice of Piety*, pp. 163-164:

The Jews kept the last day of the week, beginning their Sabbath with the night (Gen 2:2; Lev 23:32; Neh 13:19), when God rested; but Christians honour the Lord better, on the first day of the week (Matt 28:1), beginning the Sabbath with the day when the Lord arose (Acts 20:7,11) They kept their Sabbath in remembrance of the world's creation; but Christians celebrate it in memorial of the world's redemption; yea, the Lord's day being the first of the creation and redemption, puts us in mind, both of the making of the old, and redeeming of the new world.

Matthew Poole, *Annotations Upon the Holy Bible*, Vol. I, p. 249, re Lev. 23.32:

The Jews are supposed to begin every day, and consequently their sabbaths, at the evening, in remembrance of the creation, Gen. i. 5, as Christians generally begin their days and sabbaths with the morning, in memory of Christ's resurrection.

Thomas Ridgley, *A Body of Divinity*, Vol. 3, pp. 495-497:

IV. The proportion of time that is to be observed as a weekly Sabbath. Thus it is said in this answer, we are to keep holy to God, one whole day in seven. A day is either artificial or natural. The former is the space of time from the sun's rising, to it's setting; the latter contains in it the space of twenty four hours. Now the Lord's day must be supposed to continue longer than the measure of an artificial day; otherwise it would fall short of a seventh part of time. But this has not so many difficulties attending it, as that has which relates to the time of the day when it begins. Nevertheless, we have some direction, as to this matter, from the intimation given us, that Christ rose from the dead *on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, while it was yet dark*, John xx.1. Luke xxiv.1. Therefore the Lord's day begins in the morning, before sun rising; or, according to our usual way of reckoning, we may conclude, that it begins immediately after midnight, and continues till mid-night following; which is our common method of computing time, beginning the day with the morning, and ending it with the evening; and it is agreeable to the Psalmist's observation; *Man goeth forth to his work, and to his labor in the morning, until the evening*, Psalm 104:23. Rest, in the order of nature, follows after labor; therefore the night follows the day; and consequently the Lord's day evening follows the day, on which account it must be supposed to begin in the morning.

Again, if the Sabbath begins in the evening, religious worship ought to be performed sometime, at least, in the evening; and then, soon after it is begun, it will be interrupted by the succeeding night, and then it must be revived again in the following day. And, as to the end of the Sabbath, it seems not so agreeable, that, when we have been engaged in the worship of God in the day, we should spend the evening in secular employments; which cannot be judged unlawful, if the Sabbath be then at an end. Therefore, it is much more expedient, that the whole work of the day should be continued as along our worldly employments are on other days; and our beginning and ending the performance of religious duties, should in some measure, be agreeable thereunto. Again, this may be proved from what is said in Exod. xvi.23. To-morrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord. Whereas, if the Sabbath had begun in the evening, it would rather have been said, this evening begins the rest of the holy Sabbath.

Another scripture generally thought to prove this argument, is in John xx.19. *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, came Jesus, and stood in the midst, and said unto them, Peace be unto you; it is called the evening of the same day; so that the worship which was performed that day, was continued in the evening thereof. This is not called the evening of the next day, but of the same day in which Christ rose from the dead; which was the first Christian Sabbath.*

Object. To this it is objected, that the ceremonial Sabbaths under the law, began at evening. Thus it is said, in Lev. xxiii.5. *In the fourteenth day of the first month, at even, is the Lord's passover*; and ver. 32. speaking concerning the feast of

expiation, which was on the tenth day of seventh month, it is said, *It shall be unto a Sabbath of rest; and ye shall afflict your souls in the ninth day of the month, at even; From even unto even shall ye celebrate your Sabbath.*

Answ. To this it may be answered; that the beginning of sacred days is to be at the same time with that of civil; and this was governed by the custom of nations. The Jews' civil day began at evening; and therefore it was ordained that from evening to evening, should be the measure of their sacred days. Our days have another beginning and ending, which difference is only circumstantial. Whereas, the principal thing enjoined, is, that one whole day in seven, be observed as a Sabbath to the Lord.

John Brown of Haddington, *Systematic Theology*, Book VI, Chap. 1, p. 475:

The Christian Sabbath begins in the morning after midnight. 1. Christ rose early in the morning, Matt 28:1; Mark 16:2,9. 2. It begins where the Jewish sabbath ended, which was when it began to dawn towards the first day of the week, Matt 28:1,3. 3. The evening which follows the day of our sabbath pertained to it, John 20:19.

John Willison, *A Treatise Concerning the Sanctification of the Lord's Day*, pp. 78-79:

But all these things being absurd, I do upon solid ground, assert, that the whole natural day, consisting of twenty-four hours, is to be set apart for the Sabbath day; and that we ought to measure this day, and begin and end it, as we do other days, that is, from midnight to midnight; during which time we are abstain from our own works, and sanctify the Lord's Sabbath: For the fourth command binds us to consecrate the seventh part of every week to the Lord, who challenges a special property in one of seven, and asserts his just title thereto, saying, "The seventh day is the Lord's:" And also Isa. lvii.13 he expressly calls it, "My holy day." It is all holy; and therefore no part must be profaned or applied to common uses. It is all the Lord's: and so it is unlawful for us to rob him of any part of it, and alienate it to our private use.

John Willison, *An Example of Plain Catechising Upon the Assembly's Shorter Catechism*, p. 188:

Q. *How much of the day appointed for the sabbath is to be kept holy to the Lord?*

A. One whole day in seven; a whole natural day, consisting of twenty-four hours, commencing from midnight to midnight, ought to be dedicated unto the Lord, seeing he claims a seventh part of our time. It is true, time for eating and sleeping must be allowed upon the sabbath as well as on other days, being works of necessity, seeing without these we cannot perform the duties of the sabbath.

Fisher's Catechism, Q. 58:

Q. 1. To what about the Worship of God has this command a reference?

A. It refers to the special TIME of God's worship.

Q. 2. Is the TIME of God's worship left arbitrary to the will of man?

A. No; we are to keep holy to God such set times as he hath appointed in his word.

...

Q. 7. What is the special and stated time, which God has expressly, appointed in his word, to be kept holy?

A. One whole day in seven, to be a holy Sabbath to himself.

Q. 8. What is meant by a whole day?

A. A whole natural day, consisting of twenty-four hours.

Q. 9 What do you understand by one whole day in seven?

A. A seventh part of our weekly time; or one complete day, either, after or before six days' labour.

Q. 10. When should we begin and end this day?

A. We should measure it just as we do other days, from midnight to midnight, without alienating any part of it to our own works.

Thomas Boston, *An Illustration of the Doctrines of the Christian Religion, With Respect to the Faith and Practice, Upon the Plan of the Assembly's Shorter Catechism, Comprehending a Complete Body of Divinity*, Vol. 2, p. 470 (Commentary on the Shorter Catechism, 1993 SWRB ed., pp. 189-190:

Thirdly, The day to be kept holy is one whole day. Not a few hours while the public worship lasts, but a whole day. There is an artificial day betwixt sun-rising and sun-setting, John xi.9; and a natural day of twenty-four hours, Gen. i. which is the day here meant. This day we begin in the morning immediately after midnight; and so does the sabbath begin, and not in the evening, as is clear, if ye consider,

1. John xx.19. *The same day at evening, being the first day of the week* .where ye see that the evening following, not going before this first day of the week, is called the evening of the first day.

2. Our sabbath begins where the Jewish sabbath ended; but the Jewish sabbath did not end towards the evening, but towards the morning, Matt 28:1. *In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn towards the first day of the week, &c.*

3. Our sabbath is held in memory of Christ's resurrection, and it is certain that Christ rose early in the morning of the first day of the week.

Let us therefore take the utmost care to give God the whole day, spending it in the manner he has appointed, and not look on all the time besides what is spent in public worship, as our own; which is too much the case in these degenerate times wherein we live.

Alexander McLeod, *The Ecclesiastical Catechism; Being a Series of Questions, Relative to the Christian Church, Stated and Answered, With the Scripture Proofs:*

140. At what period of the twenty-four hours does the Lord's day or sabbath commence?

Our Lord arose from the dead on the morning of the first day of the week [a]: it is more conducive to solemnity to observe one whole day, than parts of two laboring days [b]: the fourth commandment requires not a part of two days, but one whole day [c]; and the evening after Christ's resurrection, upon which he appeared in the midst of his worshipping disciples, is called, in scripture, the evening of the same day [d]: the christian sabbath comprehends twenty four hours, from midnight to midnight.

[a] John 20. 1. "The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark—and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre." [b] Deut. 5. 14. "The seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord—in it thou shalt not do any work." [c] Exod. 20. 8. "Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy." [d] John 20. 19. "Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week—came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you."

John Wallis, *A Defense of the Christian Sabbath*, p. 28:

I have insisted the longer on this, because I find him afterward moving another question about what time the Sabbath is to *begin* and *end*, and lays great stress upon it, as we shall see anon.

Of which I think we need not be further solicitous than to begin and end this day, according as other days are accounted to begin and end in the places where we live....

...I take it to be very plain from what I have said, that at the time of Christs Death and Resurrection, it [the Christian Sabbath] was accounted to begin *very early in the morning*, while it was dark, and continue till *very late at night*, according as we now account our days, from Mid-night to Mid-night.

Alexander Smith Paterson, *A Concise System of Theology: Being the Shorter Catechism of the Westminster Assembly of Divines, Analyzed and Explained*, p. 221:

Obs. 220. -- *The Fourth Commandment requireth us to sanctify one whole day in seven, which God hath expressly appointed to be a holy Sabbath to himself.*

By *one whole day*, as the stated time of worshipping God, we are to understand the same that we are to understand by any other whole day -- namely, a period consisting of twenty-four hours, or what is commonly called a *natural day*. And this day we should begin and end at the same time that we begin and end any other day, -- namely, at midnight.

William Plumer, *The Law of God, as Contained in the Ten Commandments, Explained and Enforced*, pp.309-310:

When does the Sabbath begin?

There is some diversity in the Christian world respecting the time, at which the Sabbath begins. Some date it from sunset on Saturday till sunset on Sabbath. When asked for their authority, they refer to a phrase which occurs several times in the first chapter of Genesis: "And the evening and the morning were the first day." This has not been considered sufficient proof by the great mass of the Christian world. Nor ought it to be, as all the world knows that no day of creation began in the evening; but all of them began in the morning. That saying of Moses therefore only declares that the day was made up of two parts, the after part, and the fore part. Indeed the evidence in the New Testament seems to be clearly against this view. "Our Sabbath begins where the Jewish Sabbath ended; but the Jewish Sabbath did not end towards the evening, but towards the morning. Matt. 28:1. 'In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn towards the first day of the week,' etc. In the New Testament, the evening following, and not going before this first day of the week, is called the evening of the first day, John 20:19. 'The same day, at evening, being the first day of the week,' etc. Our Sabbath is held in memory of Christ's resurrection, and it is certain that Christ rose early in the morning of the first day of the week."

Reformation Principles Exhibited, Part II (1806), Chapter 23, Section 6

“The Lord of life and time, hath set apart one seventh part of time, from the common work of life, to be employed, exclusively, in the public and private exercises of God’s worship, except so much of it as may be taken up in the works of necessity and mercy; and since the resurrection of Christ, the first day of the week, comprehending twenty-four hours from midnight to midnight, is the weekly Sabbath.”

[This quote was compiled by Sean McDonald]

Alexander Whyte, *An Exposition on the Shorter Catechism*, pp. 173, 176:

“It is well known that the Hebrew Sabbath began at sunset on Friday and ended at sunset on Saturday....

And He who was the Lord of life and the Lord of the Sabbath lay in the grave all that fatal seventh day, and we may say that the dead Sabbath of Judaism was buried beside Him, and, unlike Him, never saw a resurrection. But when He rose from the dead, a new Sabbath, a better rest, a true Lord's day rose with Him.”

A.W. Pink, *The Ten Commandments*:

"The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God". Note well it is not said (here, or anywhere in Scripture) "the seventh day of the week," but simply "the seventh day," that is, the day following the six of work. With the Jews it was the seventh day of the week, namely, Saturday, but for us it is—as the "another day" of Hebrews 4:8 plainly intimates—the first day of the week, because the Sabbath not only commemorates the work of creation, but it now also celebrates the yet greater work of redemption. Thus, the Lord so worded the fourth Commandment as to suit both the Jewish and the Christian dispensations, and thereby intimated its perpetuity. The Christian Sabbath is from midnight Saturday to midnight Sunday: it is clear from John 20:1 that it began before sunrise, and therefore we may conclude it starts at Saturday midnight; while from John 20:19 we learn (from the fact it is not there called "the evening of the second day") that it continues throughout the evening, and that our worship is also to continue therein.

But though the Christian Sabbath does not commence till midnight on Saturday, yet our preparation for it must begin sooner, or how else can we obey its express requirement, "in it thou shalt not do any work"? On the Sabbath there is to be a complete resting the whole day, not only from natural recreations and doing our own pleasure (Isa. 58:13), but from all worldly employment. The wife needs a day of rest just as much as her husband, yea, being the "weaker vessel," more so. Such things as porridge and soup can be prepared on the Saturday and heated on the Sabbath, so that we may be entirely free to delight ourselves in the Lord and give ourselves completely to His worship and service. Let us also see to it that we do not work or sit up so late on the Saturday night that we encroach on the Lord's day by staying late in bed or making ourselves drowsy for its holy duties.

Francis Nigel Lee, *The Covenantal Sabbath: The Weekly Sabbath Scripturally and Historically Considered*, pp. 273, 327:

Counting the 'three days' as Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, it is clear that Christ must have been in 'the heart of the earth' on part of Friday as well as on part of Sunday. But as He was not buried until Friday *evening* (Mt. 27:57-60), it seems clear that the end of each of the three days does not run from evening to evening (as Jews and Seventh-day Adventists allege), but from a point between evening and dawn—probably midnight—to the corresponding point twenty-four hours later. The 'three days and three nights in the heart of the earth' of Matt. 12:40 etc. would then be: sunset on Friday to midnight after Friday = the first 'day and night;' the midnight after Friday to the midnight after Saturday = the second 'day and night;' the midnight after Saturday to the sunrise on Sunday = the third 'day and night;' and the whole period in the grave from sunset on Friday to before dawn on Sunday morning = 'three days and three nights,' which expression is an idiom denoting a period of exactly three days and three nights (seventy-two hours) OR denoting any consecutive shorter parts thereof, such as the approximately thirty to thirty-six hours during which Christ was in the tomb. The answer to the fourth sub-query: "When was Sunday first observed, and how?", must be that Christ and His Spirit progressively taught its observance in the hearts of God's children by example rather than by precept particularly from Resurrection Sunday onwards. And in so teaching, They then probably indicated that, like the Adamic sabbath before the fall and like the Resurrection Sunday of Christ the Second Adam, the New Testament Sunday observance was to run from midnight to midnight (Matt. 28:1,6,13; Mark 16:1-2,9; Luke 24:1, 13, 24-36; John 20:1, 19; Acts 20:6-7, 11 cf. Ex. 11:4; 12:6, 12-16, 27-29, 42 cf. Gen. 1:3-5, 31; 2:1-3);...

Brian Schwertley, *The Christian Sabbath: Examined, Proved, Applied*:

5. The time of the Lord's day

The sabbath law teaches that man is to sanctify to the Lord one whole day in seven. A question that needs to be answered is: "When does the Christian sabbath begin?" Some argue that the Christian sabbath begins on Saturday evening, while others argue that it runs from midnight Saturday to midnight Sunday. Those who argue that it runs from evening to evening point to the Jewish ceremonial sabbaths for support: "On the fourteenth day of the first month at twilight is the Lord's Passover" (Lev. 23:5). The Hebrew word translated "twilight" (NKJV, NASB, NIV, NTHSMT [114]) or "evening" (RSV) literally means "between the evenings." "The meaning of the phrase is much discussed. Most commentators think it means 'in the evening' (cf. Deut. 16:6, 'at sunset'), or more precisely, the period between sunset and complete darkness. The orthodox Jewish view is that it means 'between midday and sunset,' and this is supported...on the grounds that it would have been impossible to kill all the passover lambs in the temple between sunset and darkness. In NT times the passover sacrifice began about 3 p.m." [115] The evidence for an old covenant evening-to-evening sabbath is quite strong (cf. Lev. 23:32; Ex. 12:6, 30:8). Hendriksen believes that the Jewish sabbath began at 6 o'clock Friday evening: "According to the ancient Hebrew way of speaking, there were 'two evenings' (cf. Exod. 12:6 in the original). The first 'evening' which we would call 'afternoon' began at 3 p.m., the second at 6 p.m. Something of this is probably reflected in the phrase 'When evening fell,' for we cannot imagine that Joseph of Arimathea, a Jew, would have approached Pilate on Friday, 6 p.m., asking for the body of Jesus when the sabbath was beginning." [116]

Although the Jewish sabbath was probably from evening to evening (or sunset to sunset), the passages in the New Testament which discuss the Lord's day (the new covenant sabbath) point to a midnight-to-midnight observance. A passage which indicates that the inspired apostles no longer held to the old covenant system of a sunset-to-sunset sabbath is John 20:19: "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'" John is very specific in noting that this event took place on the first day of the week. "On that day' would be enough, yet John adds, 'the first one of the week.'" [117] "It was evening. In light of Luke 24:29, 33, 36 we have a right to conclude that it was no longer early in the evening when the great event recorded in the present paragraph took place. As the Jews compute the days, it was no longer the first day of the week. But

John, though a Jew, is writing much later than Matthew and Mark, and does not seem to concern himself with Jewish time-reckoning.” [118] It is very significant that John emphasizes that the disciples gathered on the first day of the week, yet also records that it was evening, for if the apostolic church had maintained a sunset-to-sunset sabbath, then John would not have regarded it as the first day, but as the second. There then would be no reason at all for John to emphasize the time, for while the New Testament often emphasizes and singles out the first day (Mt. 28:1; Mk. 16:2; Lk. 24:1; Jn. 20:1, 19, 26; Ac. 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2; Rev. 1:10), the second day holds no significance at all.

Another passage which indicates that the apostolic church had forsaken the sunset-to-sunset sabbath for a midnight-to-midnight [119] sabbath is Acts 20:7: “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.” Luke describes a church service that occurred on the first day of the week, yet says very specifically that Paul did not finish his message until midnight. If the Christian church had followed the Jewish synagogue practice, Paul would have concluded his message before sunset on Sunday, and not late at night. [120] “Certainly, one would almost expect the midnight-to-midnight demarcation, not only in the light of the particulars surrounding Resurrection Sunday, but especially considering that Troas was a Roman colony possessing the Jus Italicum and which therefore certainly followed the Roman midnight demarcation as a colony. It is clear that the congregation at Troas met for worship at night well after sunset, for ‘there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together’ (Acts 20:8). Seeing that ‘the disciples came together to break bread’ in ‘the upper chamber,’ and seeing that there is no instance whatsoever in Scripture of religious meetings on Saturday night after sunset, it is reasonably certain that the disciples at Troas gathered on Sunday nights perhaps even before and certainly after sunset, even as their risen Lord had appeared to His Emmaus disciples on Resurrection Sunday and broken bread with them in the late afternoon, and long after the sunset of ‘the same day at evening, (still) being the first day of the week,’ had congregated with the Jerusalem disciples in the upper room.” [121]

Furthermore, it is recorded that Paul departed at daybreak, or the break of the next day. If Luke had been following the sunset-to-sunset day demarcation system of the Jews, Paul would be described as leaving “later on the same first day of the week.” [122] But Luke says of Paul on Sunday evening that he was “ready to depart the next day” (i.e., early Monday morning at daybreak). Thus there is considerable evidence that the inspired apostles abandoned the Jewish method of day demarcation for a midnight-to-midnight system. Although the matter of sabbath day demarcation may seem trivial, it is important that the church and society follow the inspired apostles’ example for the sake of uniformity, determining when church discipline is appropriate, preparing properly for the Sabbath, and refuting heretics (such as Seventh-day Adventists). “The Jews are supposed to begin every day, and consequently their sabbaths, at the

evening, in remembrance of the creation, Gen. i. 5, as Christians generally begin their days and sabbaths with the morning, in memory of Christ's resurrection."
[123]

Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Christian Church*, Vol. I, p. 223, 293

Hughes Oliphant Old discusses the continuity of the pattern of morning and evening worship that existed in the transition from Jewish to Christian Sabbatarianism, In regards to Jewish practice he mentions: "By long Jewish tradition the *Shema* was recited every morning and evening, 'when you lie down and when you rise.'" p. 35. With regard to Christian Sabbatarianism:

"179. Just when the Church began to hold its principal service on the Lord's Day morning is not clear. The meeting in the Upper Room on the evening of the first Easter Sunday may have included the sharing of the Supper. One might regard that meeting as the first Lord's Day service. More than likely the first Lord's Day morning service would not have been held until after the Christians had been expelled from the synagogue."

...

"We have echoes of both in the New Testament.

First, there are the evening appearances reported in both Luke and John: at Emmaus Jesus made himself known in the breaking of bread (Luke 24: 13-35); in Jerusalem he appeared to the disciples on the evening of the first day of the week (Luke 24: 36-43; John 20:19-23); then he came to the disciples precisely a week later (John 20:26-29).

Second, there are the morning appearances reported in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John (Matthew 28:1-10; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-12; John 20:1-18). Jesus appeared to the women, Peter, and Mary Magdalene. Both in regard to the morning and the evening the Gospels make a point of telling us that it was on the first day of the week that Jesus took the initiative and

met with the disciples. The implication seems to be that both the morning and the evening Lord's Day services were of dominical institution."

Old also makes reference to *Pliny's Letter to Trajan* (112 AD) which recounts the practice of the Christians to assemble for worship on the Lord's Day morning, to depart, and then to assemble again for the Lord's Supper.

W. Rordorf, *The History of the Day of Rest and Worship in the Earliest Centuries of the Christian Church*, pp. 236-237

"We are, therefore, almost compelled to conclude that there was a direct connection between these (post-resurrection) meals on the one hand and the breaking of bread on the other. There does exist, then, good reason for supposing that in the primitive community the breaking of bread, for which no definite date is mentioned in Acts 2:42, 46 took place weekly on Sunday evening."

J.I. Packer describes how the Puritans carried on this practice of consecrating the whole day (morning to evening) unto the Lord:

"(b) Public worship must be central on the Lord's Day. The day must be built round public worship, morning and afternoon or evening ('the publike exercises are twice at the least to be used every Sabbath').²⁵ Private devotions must take second place to this, if one or the other for any reason has to go.

²⁵ Richard Greenham, *Works* (1611), p. 208."

Edward R. Lambert, *History of the Colony of New Haven, Before and After the Union with Connecticut* (1838), p. 188:

Concerning the subject of keeping Saturday night as holy time or as part of their Sabbath, some difference of opinion existed among the first ministers of New England. Messrs. [Thomas] Hooker and [Samuel] Stone, of Hartford, considered

that the day commenced at midnight, but their opinions were overruled by the Mosaic order, "that from even to even shall ye celebrate your Sabbaths."

George Bancroft, *The Apostolic Church and the Gospel Ministry*, p. 235:

Preparation is to be made for the Sabbath Day on the evening before (Exo. 16:15-23); but the actual observance of the day, biblically, begins in the morning and ends at bedtime or midnight. (Exo. 16:23; Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:9; Acts 20:7).



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