

**“Of the Sabbath Day”
(WCF 21.7)**

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

VII. The Lord has appointed a day of rest and worship.

A. What does God show us through nature as to how often, what day, and how long we should worship?

1. God shows us in nature that He exists (see 21.1).
2. Since God exists, we should worship Him and worship requires time.
 - a. The fact that there is a Being who made us, to whom we owe everything, who is also personal, and who has given us the desire to worship, shows that He intends that we worship Him.
 - b. He does not, however, tell us through the creation how often we should worship or how long (He also doesn't tell us how to worship Him through nature, as we've already seen).

B. What does God show us through His Word as to how often, how long, and what day we should worship Him?

1. He has appointed one day in seven as moral and perpetual command.

“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; *in it* you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy” (Ex. 20:8-11).

 - a. The commandment to observe the Sabbath is morally binding:
 - (i) It is morally binding since it is included in the Ten Commandments.
 - (ii) The day we are to worship (positive element) is also morally binding, unless and until the Lord changes it.
 - b. The command to observe the Sabbath is also perpetual:
 - (i) It's inclusion in the Ten Commandments also shows us this: “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished” (Matt. 5:17-18).

- (ii) The fact that it was predicted in the Old Covenant to be in force in the New further shows us it is perpetual: “How blessed is the man who does this, and the son of man who takes hold of it; who keeps from profaning the sabbath, and keeps his hand from doing any evil. Let not the foreigner who has joined himself to the LORD say, ‘The LORD will surely separate me from His people.’ Nor let the eunuch say, ‘Behold, I am a dry tree.’ For thus says the LORD, ‘To the eunuchs who keep My sabbaths, and choose what pleases Me, and hold fast My covenant, to them I will give in My house and within My walls a memorial, and a name better than that of sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name which will not be cut off. Also the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to Him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be His servants, every one who keeps from profaning the sabbath and holds fast My covenant; even those I will bring to My holy mountain and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar; for My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples” (Isa. 56:2-7).
 - (iii) The fact that it is repeated and enforced in the New Covenant leaves this beyond doubt:
 - (a) “For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath” (Matthew 12:8).
 - (b) “But pray that your flight will not be in the winter, or on a Sabbath” (Matt. 24:20).
 - (c) “So there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God” (Heb. 4:9; cf. Heb. 4:1-16).
 - (iv) As long as we are in this present world before the consummation, we are to observe this commandment.
2. The fourth commandment gives us the frequency and duration of our worship. “Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God” (vv. 9-10).
 - a. We are to work for six days and in those days complete our weekly labor.
 - b. But we are to rest on the seventh and keep it holy to the Lord.
 3. There is also a positive element, not contained in the commandment itself: the day we are to worship. Where the sequence begins and ends must be found outside the commandment.
 - a. From the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ the saints were to worship on the last day of the week.
 - (i) God established the day at the end of His creation week. “And by the seventh day God completed His work which He had done; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made” (Gen. 2:2-3).
 - (ii) We see its early observance in the lives of Adam and Eve and their children: “So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an

offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground. Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering; but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell” (Gen. 4:3-5).

- (iii) He reinstated that day after He brought His people out of Egypt, since there they were not allowed to observe it. “Now on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for each one. When all the leaders of the congregation came and told Moses, then he said to them, ‘This is what the LORD meant: Tomorrow is a sabbath observance, a holy sabbath to the LORD. Bake what you will bake and boil what you will boil, and all that is left over put aside to be kept until morning.’ So they put it aside until morning, as Moses had ordered, and it did not become foul nor was there any worm in it. Moses said, ‘Eat it today, for today is a sabbath to the LORD; today you will not find it in the field. Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, *the* sabbath, there will be none” (Ex. 16:22-26).

b. From the resurrection of Christ to the end of the world we are to worship on the first day of the week.

- (i) This was predicted in the Old Covenant: “The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief corner *stone*. This is the LORD’S doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day which the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it” (Psalm 118:22-24).

- (ii) It was fulfilled by the resurrection of Christ: “Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first *day* of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave. And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it. And his appearance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. The guards shook for fear of him and became like dead men. The angel said to the women, ‘Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying. Go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going ahead of you into Galilee, there you will see Him; behold, I have told you.’ And they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy and ran to report it to His disciples” (Matt. 28:1-8).

(iii) We see its observance in the New Covenant:

- (a) “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come” (1 Cor. 16:1-2).
- (b) “On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul *began* talking to them, intending to leave the next

day, and he prolonged his message until midnight” (Acts 20:7; cf. v. 11).

- (iv) This day is now called in Scripture the Lord’s Day:
 - (a) “I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like *the sound* of a trumpet” (Rev. 1:10).
 - (b) There are only two things in Scripture Christ owns in this particular way: The Lord’s Supper, to remind us of His death, and the Lord’s Day, to remind us of His resurrection.
 - (c) The Old Covenant Sabbath commemorated the completion of the work of the Old Creation, and the New Covenant Sabbath the work of the New Creation in Christ (Heb. 4:9-10; Rom. 8:19-22).
 - (d) This is the day we are now to keep holy to the Lord through rest and worship. “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Ex. 20:8).
 - (e) The Confession fills out what this day should look like in the next section.