

## “The Lord’s day in the Modern day”

### *Introduction: The Modern Problem of the Lord’s day*

Once upon a time, the city of Toronto was regarded as a city of good people, known to many by the moniker, ‘the city of the good.’ But what is more, it was also considered a Sabbath-keeping city. John G. Paton, 19<sup>th</sup> century Scottish Presbyterian missionary to the cannibalistic peoples of the New Hebrides, later in his life came to Toronto to promote awareness and support for the ongoing mission post. Under his ministry among these pagan natives of Australasia, many had been converted and had themselves become devout Sabbatharians, even excelling their European brothers in zeal. But in Toronto, the Rev. Paton witnessed something comparable. And so he writes of his impressive visit to the ‘City of the Good’ in 1892:

Never, since I left the Christian Islands on the New Hebrides, such as Aniwa and Aneityum, have I seen the Sabbath Day kept so well, and the Churches so largely attended, as at Toronto and in the chief towns of Ontario. In that Capital, the Public-Houses are closed from seven o’clock on Saturday night till eight o’clock on Monday morning. No confectioners, tobacconists, fruiterers, or the like, are open on the Lord’s day. The street Electric Car, and the Omnibus are at rest. All workmen are enjoying their Sabbath privilege, like other Citizens. And all this is carried through by the will of the People themselves, and by the vigilance and influence of the servants of God. Surely, men of Christian principle, of grit, and of public spirit, could, by keeping their hand on the helm, secure in the same way the blessed Day of Rest for all, in every City throughout the Christian world.<sup>1</sup>

But alas, Toronto, as with the rest of modern Europe and America, has lost touch with the Lord’s day. Or, if we would listen to the spin-doctors of our age, the Lord’s day has lost touch with the modern day.

The Sabbath was an institution from the ancient world. But our world is profoundly different. The Lord’s day was an institution of the Christian West. But we live in a post-Christian age and in which the West is fast losing its political and cultural position of privilege. It was an institution of pre-modernity, and we live in a postmodern world. It was an institution of an agrarian culture, but we live in a post-agrarian, even a post-industrial world, a technological world, a virtual world . . . a global village! The Lord’s day is outdated, old-fashioned, unneeded, unwanted, and is – perhaps the blackest mark with which modern man can brand it – unmarketable! It is a relic, an artifact, a fossil – of historical interest and nothing more.

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<sup>1</sup> John G. Paton, *John G. Paton: Missionary to the New Hebrides* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1994), pp. 457-58.

Consequently, if we would listen to the gurus of the modern day, the Lord's day is only relevant to an irrelevant people. While we may have represented the vast majority on this subject in the Netherlands, Great Britain, and North America two or three hundred years ago, this is no longer the case today. We are now a fringe - out of touch with the mainstream. And sadly, even within evangelicalism, we as Reformed believers represent a small fraction. Our culture surely can't take such paltry numbers seriously! Nor do we, as Sabbatarians, have big names to boost our image in the cultural arena. One is reminded of the scorn of the power brokers of Jesus' day, "Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him" (Jn. 7:48)?

And so, the Lord's day seems irrelevant in the present time. But is it irrelevant, or are we missing the relevance?

The Lord's day, and all that it entails, would be irrelevant if there was no God who is "eternal, immortal, invisible," standing above and over time and space. But if there is a God, and He has spoken in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, if the Church is God's prophetic mouthpiece in the modern world, and if the institution of the Lord's day is indeed an abiding institution of Christ, then it is not the Lord's day that is out of touch with the Modern day. Rather, the Modern day is out of touch with the Lord, the Lord of the Sabbath.

But regardless of popular opinion, there is such a God, the *I AM THAT I AM*, who is sovereign at once over the ancient world and the 'Global Village' of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We affirm and confess that holy and lasting truth, "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, our Lord!" Yes, we grant that the Bible is the product of men from the ancient near east. Many things have changed since then. Yet the Bible is also the product of God. He revealed Himself by all the holy prophets who spoke since the world began. He still speaks as that ancient, yet timeless Text is read, expounded, and proclaimed by the Church, which is, as the Apostle Paul calls it, the "pillar and ground of the truth."

We cannot so quickly assume that the Lord's day has nothing to say to the modern day, for the resurrected and ascended Christ, King of kings and Lord of lords, has not abnegated his throne. Jesus reigns! Instead, we must ascertain exactly what the Lord's day says now, that is, to discern its timeless truths and apply those particular truths that our age most needs to hear.

This is what we want to accomplish tonight - or, at least to make a beginning. I am not going to defend the biblical warrant for the Lord's day as the Christian Sabbath. For the time being, I'm going to assume that you have been taught well on this topic. But tonight, the great question is, what is the relevance of that ancient institution of to ourselves as a modern-day church and to the modern culture in which we live? What is the relevance of the Lord's day in the modern day?

But first, a few prefatory matters are in order.

### *The Statement of the Lord's Day – Some Preliminaries*

As the community of the faithful living in a world of lies, one of our chief callings is to confess, to make faith-statements. What is it that we believe?

We have many instances of this self-conscious reflection and articulation of the things God had revealed to His ancient people and which they had cordially embraced. There was the great *Shema*, repeated in the synagogues every Sabbath. “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD” (Deut. 6:4). Also, upon the gathering of the first fruits of harvest, the devout Hebrew would confess to the priest, “A Syrian ready to perish was my father,” and would then recount the narrative of the bondage in Egypt, the deliverance, and the divine guidance into the promised land (Deut. 26:4-10). And throughout the ages, the devout God-fearers could always proclaim, “Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth” (Psa. 124:8). To be a follower of Jehovah was to be a confessor of Jehovah.

This was no less the case with the New Testament community of faith. For example, we read in 1 Cor. 15:3-6, “For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: and that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: after that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.” Here we have a kind of point-by-point series of propositional truths that were ‘most assuredly believed’ among the followers of the Way. We also often find confessional echoes of the believing community embedded in the course of the apostle’s writings, introduced by the formula, ‘we know that.’ For example, we read in Rom. 8:28, “And *we know that* all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” Or, in 2 Cor. 5:1, “For *we know that* if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” And again in the writings of the beloved disciple, 1 Jn. 5:20, “*And we know that* the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true.”

These statements of conviction, considered together as a system of truth, have always defined the community of faith. It has always been our standard, our rallying cry. For these things we live, and for them we would willingly die. And these defining faith-statements serve a dual purpose for us – first, they benefit those on the outside of our community by way of proclamation (or, evangelization). But they also benefit those within the community as well by way of reaffirmation. Our creed tells the world who God is and who we are in relation to Him; at the same time it refortifies our conviction by re-impressing these familiar, timeless truths upon our hearts and souls again and again.

But the community of God's people articulates its faith in more than one way. In addition to the witness of the mouth, there is the witness of hand and foot. There are certain God-given rites and institutions that visibly communicate the same truths. We might here think of the Passover observed among the ancient Hebrews. The slaying of the lamb, the application of the blood, the leavened bread – all of these silent actions were symbolically representative of the great salvation that Jehovah had wrought for the enslaved sons of Abraham. The Passover spoke. And so does the observance of the Lord's Supper. The broken bread and the outpoured wine convey through the senses things that had been taught and received through the Word. Eating the bread and drinking the wine was a confession of faith, among other things. Paul makes this explicit in 1 Cor. 11:26, "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, *ye do shew* [or, 'proclaim'] *the Lord's death* till he come."

Now, while the Sabbath or the New Testament Lord's day has not typically been classed as a sacrament, nevertheless, the institution functioned as a visible sign of truths that the community of faith embraced and proclaimed. "Moreover also I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD that sanctify them" (Ezek. 20:12). The onlooking world saw these believers consciously setting aside one day in seven, and devoting the whole time to restful worship and adoration of their Redeemer and Lord. It was and continues to be a unique institution that by its very observance communicates divine truth.

So, because we believe the Lord's day is an ongoing institution of Christ, as we observe it, we are saying something to the world and to ourselves. Our abstaining from work and common recreation speaks. Our attendance at church speaks. Sunday-keeping has something to say.

We could treat many things to which Lord's day observance speaks. But to narrow our focus, let us look at what this institution has to say to our modern culture and to ourselves within it about the subject of time. Certainly, the very title of this institution, the Sabbath *day* or the Lord's day, immediately involves us in the consideration of time. So what this holy time have to say to our modern time? Let us look at three considerations in this respect – what Lord's day observance has to say about the genesis of time, the passage of time, and the redemption of time.

### *Observing the Lord's Day – A Faith-Statement About the Genesis of Time*

First, our observance of the Lord's day, or what our Reformed forbears often called, 'the Christian Sabbath,' makes a forceful statement about the origins of time. Now, this statement is made against the backdrop of a pagan culture that has its own notions about the origin of time.

More often than not in our consumerist Western cultures, the origins relegated to the periphery of thought. We are not so much concerned about the

*then* as we are about the *now*. But there has long been a very strong movement among our intellectual elite to propagate the unintelligent and accidental origin of time. I am thinking especially of the Big Bang Theory and Darwinian evolution. Time, in these unbelieving theories, was unplanned, originating without an intelligent Cause behind it all. In the beginning, a great cosmic burst of energy randomly occurred. And man, whose movements are measured by time, originated not on the sixth day by divine Intelligence, but by the blind process of natural selection many millions of years after the Bang. So, God is not the author of time, its divisions, and much less what time measures, that is, man and all things in motion in this world. Time, according to secular humanists, has no original reference to God.

But we, in our subculture, make a radical counter-statement about the origin of time. The very first word of the Bible takes us to its infancy, “in the beginning.” And this beginning of time is explicitly attributed to the design and purpose of God. “In the beginning, *God* created the heavens and the earth.” Further, we infer from this verse that God was before time was. God did not emerge with time, nor has He ever been subject to time. “In the beginning, *God!*” Instead, He devised it as a measurement of the heavens and the earth that He created out of nothingness. He, as the Author of time, set time in motion.

We also confess that it was God who created the fundamental units or measurements of time. Having divided the light from the darkness, He divided and demarcated two parts, “the evening and the morning” (Gen. 1:5). Then He originated the second basic unit of time, the day. He then divided day one from day two, and day two from day three, and so on. Neither was confused with the other, and each was made of equal length. Next, He designed the physical mechanisms that would permanently fix these two divisions of night and day, and one day from the next, and that would also regulate longer units of time, such as seasons and years. These were the sun, moon, and stars. Though these heavenly bodies were made to share heat and light with us, Moses makes it clear that they also served as temporal dividers and rulers. We read in Gen. 1:14-18, “And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven *to divide* the day from the night; and let them be *for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years*: and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And God made two great lights; the greater light *to rule* the day, and the lesser light *to rule* the night: he made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, and *to rule* over the day and over the night, and *to divide* the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good.” And after God had created all things in six days – again, units of time that He had devised – He rested the seventh, bringing to completion that final great unit of time, the seven-day week.

The origin of time, then, unlike the critical ideas of modern man, does not have some reference to God. It has absolute reference to God! God created time, its divisions, and all those created things in motion that it measures. Time is not

an arbitrary human contrivance imposed on matter in motion in a random universe. No! Evening and morning are *God's* measurements. Solar days are *God's* measurements. The seven-day week is *God's* measurement. "The day is thine, the night also is thine: thou hast prepared the light and the sun" (Psa. 74:16). And God devised these measurements for the benefit of man as he would live and move and have his being in God's time.

Now, as a believing subculture in our pagan age, we do not only confess these truths about time verbally. We also confess them symbolically. In two days, you and I, unlike the broader culture, will declare these great truths about the origins of time by our outward conduct. You and I will cease from work and common recreation and set aside a special unit of time, distinct from the other units, for a special purpose. Why? "For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it" (Ex. 20:11). By our actions, we are telling the world and reaffirming for ourselves that our time, even our modern time, must be understood in reference to God's time. It cannot be the other way around. God should never be an afterthought, but always a 'beforethought.' "Remember," says God.

#### *Observing the Lord's day – A Faith-Statement About the Passage of Time*

We turn now our attention to the second great faith-statement that we make by sanctifying the Christian Sabbath. Moving from the origins of time, what does this institution have to say about the passage of time?

Now, since we are trying to grasp the significance of the Lord's day for the modern day, we look at the outset at our culture's views. First, they view the passage of time, the measurement of matter in motion, as operating within a closed universe – that is, there is nothing supernatural outside, much less influencing, nature. Just as they rule out God at the beginning, they rule him out in the middle as well. As believers, we espouse God as Creator and Providence. We say that He creates all things, as well as time, and governs all things in the process of time. But they deny Providence over this process. There is nothing before or over time. All things in time are, to use the words of Ecclesiastes, "under the sun."

Second, the process of time is viewed as the absolute possession of man. Our culture tells us that we are sovereign over our time, and no one can tell us how to spend it. The main assumption of the child of our age who never gives God a passing thought on Sunday – or any other day for that matter – is that time is his private property. God is an intrusion upon *his* time.

Third, our culture typically views the passage of time as measuring man's progress in this world. Overall, man is developing and improving. Time traces his evolution. He is developing physically, overcoming diseases. He is developing intellectually, vastly expanding his grasp of the world he lives in, by

science and technology. He is developing commercially, unleashing unparalleled wealth and prosperity through entrepreneurial venture and collaboration.

Fourth, time is often personified and viewed as the enemy of man's progress. Our world is moving faster and faster, because we feel that we must to survive. Ware on the move with mobile phones and mobile computing. Not only do we have instant soup and instant coffee, but we now have instant replay, instant searches, instant downloads, instant messaging, instant billing, and instant credit reports. There can be no delay, no lag, but everything must be live, with live chat rooms, live support, and live webcasts. We want it on-time in real-time. And when we can't buy more time, we turn to time-management, to squeeze out the inefficiencies in time. Then only after you've managed your time can you manage your stress!

Ours is a fast-paced world, and only the fast will endure. Thomas Friedman, in his best-selling book *The World is Flat*, warns Westerners that they must quicken their pace in education and innovation, with countries like India and China becoming global players. He writes,

We need to get going immediately. It takes 15 years to train a good engineer, because, ladies and gentleman, this really is rocket science. So parents, throw away the Game Boy, turn off the television and get your kids to work. There is no sugar-coating this: in a flat world [meaning, a much more competitive world because of increased global access to information technology, communications, and innovation], every individual is going to have to run a little faster if he or she wants to advance his or her standard of living. When I was growing up, my parents used to say to me, 'Tom, finish your dinner – people in China are starving.' But after sailing to the edges of the flat world for a year, I am now telling my own daughters, 'Girls, finish your homework – people in China and India are starving for your jobs.'<sup>2</sup>

So, you see, our culture tells us that the clock is ticking. He who waits becomes the victim of time.

Not surprisingly then, some end up in despair and nihilism. This is because the thinking individual can just as easily reason that there is no such thing as man's progress in a world that has no ultimate direction or meaning. If there is no meaningful goal, why are we running? In fact, it would appear as though we are running in circles, because there is no end in sight. Eccl. 1:9, "The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun." If there is no Providence over time, governing it, leading it on purposefully, and thereby giving it meaning, then the grim words of the popular song ring true, 'all we are is dust in the wind.'

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<sup>2</sup> Thomas Friedman, *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2005).

We, on the other hand, make a counter-cultural statement on the passage of time. By receiving and observing the Christian Sabbath, we proclaim precisely the opposite.

First, by it we in faith confess God's government of the ongoing, repetitive cycles of time. The passage of time measures matter in motion *under divine Providence*. God "hath determined the times before appointed" (Acts 17:26). The divisions, order, and succession of time that we read of in Genesis 1 are exactly identical to what we experience today. There is evening and morning *today*; sunrise and sunset *today*. One solar day follows another solar day. We observe months, seasons, and years by these fixed heavenly bodies today just as it was at the very beginning. And how can we explain this amazing regularity? Divine providence. When God divided time in the beginning, He laid down a pattern for the passage of time that would follow. The reason we don't have to wonder whether the sun will rise tomorrow – assuming for the moment that our Lord does not come – is because of God's establishment of time as a pattern and His constant superintendence over it. Because of Him, "seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease" (Gen. 8:22).

Second, we also acknowledge by Sabbath-keeping that God rules over men's use of time. Time is not man's private property, a fund of the future that is his to spend. God owns our time, as he owns everything else; and it is to Him that we shall give an account. In the Fourth Commandment, He exercises His right to reserve one day in that weekly cycle as His in a special way, so that we may remember him throughout our life. R. L. Dabney rightly observes, "Unless . . . spiritual thoughts and exercises were attached to some special season, they would inevitably be pushed out of the minds of carnal and sensuous beings like man, by the cares of the world."<sup>3</sup> So by keeping one day holy, the rest of our days are made more sacred.

The passage of time, furthermore, does not so much measure man's progress in this world, but rather his spiritual regress. "Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions" (Eccl. 7:29). The story of man ultimately is a story of defection and deterioration. While we do not deny the great physical, intellectual, and commercial progress that mankind has made in the providence of God, yet the Sabbath is a statement that man needs rest. He needs rest all the more after the fall because he has troubled himself. Life lived in this world is troublesome because of man's sin and its consequences. His body has need of special rest – even more than what he gets every night. Further, the Sabbath is a statement that man needs a rest for his restive soul. In the words of Augustine, "Our hearts are restless until they find rest in thee." It is this rest that Jesus offers in Matthew

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<sup>3</sup> R. L. Dabney, *Systematic Theology* (St. Louis: Presbyterian Publishing Company of St. Louis, 1878), p. 376.

11:28, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

Nor do we, as with our culture, personify time as the great enemy. Yet we do affirm that time measures matter in motion *under the curse*, which *is* the enemy of man’s progress. God put all creation under the curse because of man’s rebellion in the garden. “Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life” (Gen. 3:17). And even the progress of man biologically, by the propagation of the race, is afflicted with sorrow. “Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception” (Gen. 3:16). At that point, the whole creation was “made subject to vanity” (Rom. 8:20). And on this point we find the primitive New Testament church making yet another corporate confession. “We know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now” (Rom. 8:22). The Sabbath rest, while being created before the fall, nevertheless stands as a mighty testimony to the curse under which we pass all our days. There is no escaping it, except by divine grace.

#### *Observing the Lord’s day – A Faith-Statement About the Redemption of Time*

Last, we look at the third faith-statement that the church makes about time by observing the Lord’s day – that is, about redemption. It stands against our culture’s idea of what I would call ‘self-redemption.’

Despite the fact that time is often personified as an enemy, because of natural selection and the law of survival of the fittest, mankind will ultimately overcome his deadlines. Time is beatable – at least, for those who have the will to beat out the weak and inefficient. With time, we’ll figure out how to overcome the afflictions and limitations measured by time.

But we do not indulge in this wishful thinking. For every one step forward, we have gone at least a step if not two or even three backward. Consider a few blackening the record of humanity over the last century. December 7, 1941, the day on which the Japanese surprised and devastated the Pacific fleet docked at Pearl Harbor, remains, in the words of President Roosevelt, “A day that will live in infamy.” On January 22, 1973, the have day of the infamous Roe vs. Wade decision. And then of course, there is the black mark of September 11, 2001. Is mankind *really* progressing and able to free himself from his troubles?

The universal church confesses with the psalmist in Psa. 90:3-7, “Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest, Return, ye children of men. For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night. Thou carriest them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep: in the morning they are like grass which groweth up. In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down, and withereth. For we are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled.” Rather, redemption must come from God, and it is from this heavenly source that we

seek help from the painful limitations of time. Psa. 90:14-17, "O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil. Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it."

Ancient Israel, by observing the Sabbath, remembered and proclaimed not only God's creation of all things in time, and that He is sovereign over the passage of time, but that He also performs redemption in time. We have this recorded for us in the Fourth Commandment as found in Deut. 5:15 where we read that the reason for keeping the Sabbath was to remember God's salvation. "And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the LORD thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the LORD thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day." A Sabbath rest pictured salvation for the Old Testament church. The land of promise was a place of rest. God said to Moses, "And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest" (Ex. 33:14). And so, redemption was the gift of rest. "For thus saith the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel; in returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength" (Isa. 30:15).

The Lord's day, replacing the Jewish seventh-day Sabbath, also commemorates the Lord's redemption in time. It presumes the incarnation of the Son of God in the fullness of time (Gal. 4:4). It presumes the cursed death of the cross at the appointed time (Jn. 17:1), at the end of the world. It explicitly testifies to the bodily resurrection of the Savior on the third day, on which day commenced the 'end of the age' (Heb. 9:26). That resurrection we celebrate every week is the force that renews and regenerates the elect on the acceptable day of salvation. And by observing the Lord's day, we anticipate the resurrection of the body on the last day, the consummation of all time. And so Paul writes in 1 Cor. 15:23, "But every man in his own order [or, 'time']: Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming."

But in this anticipation, we also wait on God's time. We do not – we cannot – predict or preempt the time of this full salvation. Jesus said to his disciples, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power" (Acts 1:7). But we patiently wait, knowing that He will make everything beautiful in his time (Eccl. 3:11). Jesus has risen the third day in victory, yes, but now we live in the time-in-between, waiting until all things shall be made His footstool. Heaven has received the ascended Jesus "until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began" (Acts 3:21). We celebrate on the Lord's day what Jesus has done for us *in the now*, and at the same time wait for

what He will do *in the not yet*. But one day, those who believe shall enter the final Sabbath rest in glory, which eternal day shall never end.

### *The Implications of the Lord's Day in the Modern Day*

Having treated these things, we turn to make some closing applications. First, for the world. If all these things are true – and they are – then the world of the modern day had better get in touch with God's time. It is now irrelevant to God; and what is irrelevant to God is fit for the eternal flame.

Now, God is forbearing. Saving rest is offered to the weary, peace is offered to the troubled and those at odds with God. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2). But that day is quickly coming to an end. And the Lord's day, which celebrates the resurrection, also guarantees the finality of the great Day of Judgment. Paul makes this clear to the Athenians on Mars Hill, "Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained." And on what basis are we sure of this? "Whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath *raised him from the dead*" (Acts 17:31).

Let me at this point make a special remark to the unconverted here tonight. Mere outward observation of the Lord's day is no proof that you are prepared for the Day of the Lord. If your heart is not coordinated with God's time, if you have not discovered the acceptable time of salvation by repentance and faith, then your outward duties are an abomination. We are here reminded of the Lord's scorching rebuke of Israel in Isa. 1:13, "Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting."

There are many sure tests by which you can tell if you are unprepared. One is how your heart views the Lord's day. If you view it as a burden, a dark and dreary day, you are weary of God's rest. And you are still in your sins. You cannot call the Sabbath a delight. What joys does it offer you? What pleasures are in it for you to anticipate? What consolation can you gather from the preached Word? What light, guidance, and stirring of soul can you obtain from the conversation of the godly? What foretastes of glory are there for you? What elevation of heart in the praise of God?

You may be compelled to observe the day. Or, you may go to church for other reasons. Your friends are there. Or, you fear the social consequences of breaking the Sabbath. Someone, maybe a godly elder, will come asking for you. Your parents will reject you. Or, you do it simply to pacify conscience, or worse, to earn the favor of God by your husk of religiosity. And so you grin and bear it. But while you are in church, your heart is in the world. Secretly you want the day over. "When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat" (Amos 8:5)? O poor soul, what wearies

you? You are weary *of rest!* You are as the sick man who denies his medicine, the man of sores who refuses the balm, the hungry who will have no food. Can't you see that what you loathe is what you need the most? O sinner, Christ has a yoke. But it is an easy yoke. Take His yoke upon you and learn of Him, and you shall find rest for your weary souls.

Finally, let me make an application to the church of the faithful. You can respond in one of three ways, two of which are denied you by the Lord of the Sabbath. You may neither assimilate nor retreat.

First, you may not compromise and so assimilate with the world. This is to be out of touch with God. He has called you to a subculture, and yes, a counterculture. Many are called, but few are chosen. You don't fit in, nor can you fit in to the modern world. "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (Jn. 15:19). You may not give up the Lord's day because you cannot give up the Lord of that day. Despite pressures on your time, despite the demands of ungodly employers, despite the whispers or taunting of faithless friends, you must bear testimony to your resurrected Redeemer. "For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living" (Rom. 14:9).

But alternately, you do not have permission to retreat. You may not retreat into your nice, cozy little subculture, simply to hear some nice sermons, sing some nice, familiar songs, talk some nice theology among nice people, and go home to your nice, warm dinner. This is to be out of touch with the world. Herein lies a grave danger for modern day Reformed people. Church can all too easily become a bomb shelter where we can safely descend, fasten the door, and resign the world to its own dismal fate. So we would say as the Jews did to Judas, "What is that to us? See thou to that." But this is not what we ought to be affirming by our observation of the Lord's day.

Rather, we must reaffirm to ourselves and confess before a perishing world that Jesus, the resurrected Christ, is Lord! Jesus is the Author of time, the Governor of time, and the Redeemer of time. He and the central moments of His humiliation and exaltation in time are the central moments of human history. On these moments life and death depend. That is what we must proclaim by observing the Lord's day each and every week.

We must not hide our candle under a bushel. What Jesus tells us in darkness, that we must speak in light: and what we hear in the ear, we must preach upon the housetops. We must compel them to come from the highways and byways, that His house might be filled. Can you, dear Christian, keep the Lord's day holy if you never invite an unbeliever to church? If you never remind him that as a creature, He is bound to adjust Himself to God's time?

*Conclusion*

We may look at the Toronto of today, as well as the rest of our culture, and weep. God is not in all their thoughts, and His Sabbath is trampled upon as a useless nothing. But let us not forget that the Toronto of yesterday was the work of God's Spirit, and that the wind bloweth where it listeth.

It was God who made a small Jewish sect, following a despised and crucified carpenter, the official religion of Rome. It was God who, not by force of arms, but by a simple message, made Constantine officially consecrate Sunday as the Lord's day throughout the Roman Empire. It was God who dispelled the Medieval darkness and enlightened our European ancestors with the Gospel, thus spreading Sabbath-observance across many lands. It was God who turned an island of cannibals in the South Pacific an island of devout Lord's day observers.

We may be living in the days of small things. But He who is over time has a set time for all things. And He has promised that in due time, every foe shall submit to His Son, the Lord of the Sabbath.