



# My Apology

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## **The Biblical Basis for Calling the Church to Assemble Sunday and Wednesday Or, *The reason we gather for worship on Sunday and Wednesday***

The tradition of the Lord's churches gathering for preaching and prayer on Sunday am, Sunday pm and on Wednesday pm was established in the beginning of the Gospel [Mark 1:1; Philippians 4:15].<sup>1</sup> While there is no law that stipulates when we must assemble the church, Scripture does plainly instruct us to assemble [Hebrews 10:25], and therefore it is appropriate that believers would want to know whether there is any biblical tradition that can guide us in knowing how often and when the Lord would have us call the church to assemble? Some would object to following any traditions [Colossians 2:8] — and we would agree that any tradition of man that is contrary to the Scripture has no authority. But the Spirit told us to follow the tradition of the Apostles [2Thessalonians 3:6]. We believe the best tradition to follow is that which we find in the Scripture, and that is Sunday am and pm worship with a mid-week evening service. The following explains our biblical basis for this practice that has roots, we believe, all the way back to beginning of the Gospel.

**Sunday am and pm services are a tradition that is fairly easy to establish.** We are told that Jesus arose on the first day of the week [Mark 16:9], which is Sunday.<sup>2</sup> And we note that, after His resurrection, each time Jesus met with His disciples, it was the “first day of the week” — or Sunday [John 20:19, 26].<sup>3</sup> The believers gathered on the first day of the week to break bread and hear preaching [Acts 20:7], and the Apostle Paul's instruction to the church at Corinth regarding the collection for the saints given in 1Corinthians 16:1 shows that this was already firmly established among the churches.

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<sup>1</sup> The expression “beginning of the Gospel” is used in Mark 1:1, referring to the preaching of John the Baptist, and in Philippians 4:15, referring to the beginning of Paul's ministry. The period from John the Baptist through Paul's ministry is therefore understood to be the period the Spirit calls *the beginning of the Gospel*.

<sup>2</sup> The Jewish day begins at sunset meaning the first day of the week began at sunset on Saturday. Jesus was already out of the grave when Mary came to the tomb early Sunday morning [Mark 16:2; John 20:1].

<sup>3</sup> John 20:19 says “Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week ...” Because the Jewish day begins at sunset, we might think this is a reference to Saturday night. However, we know from John 20:1 that “this same day” refers to Sunday. And therefore, specifically in order to guide us away from making that mistake, the Spirit says expressly, that we are talking about the evening of that “same day.” The reference back to the “first day of the week” merely emphasizes our point about the significance of that day.



We know the early church patterned its worship services after the Synagogue and the Jewish custom was to have morning and evening worship.

**Why did the believers decide to have church on Sunday instead of Saturday?** Jesus and the Apostles regularly assembled with the Jews on the Sabbath in the Synagogue during their ministries. However, throughout Jesus' ministry, He clearly challenged the Jew's legalistic perspective on "Saturday (Sabbath) worship" which was established by the Lord Jesus Himself through Moses. Our Lord repeatedly asserted His Lordship over the Sabbath day, and He did this for a reason.<sup>4</sup> When we come to the time of the New Testament, we learn that Jesus is our Sabbath, and to insist on a Saturday Sabbath today would be to suggest Jesus did not complete the Law. Therefore, we follow the Spirit of Jesus out from under the Law of Moses to take our place with Him "under the law to Christ."<sup>5</sup> This transition is clearly indicated by the churches establishing our day of worship on Sunday, the day Jesus arose from the grave. Indeed, we believe this is the reason after Jesus arose He met with His disciples on Sunday, and we believe that it is also the reason the Holy Spirit refers to Sunday as "the Lord's day" [Revelation 1:10].<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The Sabbath was misunderstood and misused by the Jews. Hebrews 4 helps us understand that the Sabbath was proscribed by Law as a gift from God to His people commemorating the glorious truth that God had completed all His works on the seventh day. Hebrews 4 makes it clear this completing of all His works included the work of redemption [Compare Hebrews 4:3, and Revelation 13:8]. So the Sabbath was made "for man" and not "man for the sabbath" [Mark 2:27]. The completion of "all His works" is marked by the slaying of the Lamb [Revelation 13:8 with Hebrews 4:3]. After Jesus, the Lamb of God, was slain, the believer *enters into God's rest* [Hebrews 4:4-11]. The believer is *in the Sabbath* of God if he is in Christ. While the principle of working six days and resting one day is certainly a valid biblically based principle, it is no longer the case that believers "keep the Sabbath" by observing the law of Moses. Today, the Sabbath is kept by resting in Christ as He who completed the works of God on the Cross of Calvary. The issue of worshipping on Saturday or Sunday is, therefore, an important one. To insist on worshipping on Saturday is effectively to deny the completion of God's works and a refusal, therefore, to enter into His rest. We believe this is the reason Jesus went out of His way to meet with His disciples on Sunday and not Saturday, Saturday is "Moses' day" and Sunday is "the Lord's day."

<sup>5</sup> See 1 Corinthians 9:21. Under the law to Moses the believers were obligated to worship on the Sabbath. But, under the law to Christ, we are no longer obligated to serve the ceremonial aspects of the law, but only the moral aspects of it — note that each of the moral aspects of the law are repeated in the New Testament as obliging the obedience of Christ's disciples, but the "ordinances" are specifically named as having no power of force among New Testament saints [Colossians 2:10-23; with Galatians 5:16-20; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 and etc.].

<sup>6</sup> The expression "the Lord's day" in Revelation 1:10 is interesting since it does not appear anywhere else in Scripture. Some have associated it with the famous *day of the Lord*. However, the context of the reference does not support that interpretation. The surrounding text does not speak to any of the circumstances that are associated with *the day of the Lord* — namely, the signs in the heavens, the battle of Armageddon, and so forth. The reference to the "voice, as of a trumpet" declaring He is "Alpha and Omega" might be taken together with Revelation 1:7-8 where this revelation concerning Jesus Christ is associated with His coming in the clouds. However, that passage is clearly declaring a future event, and the identification of Jesus as the Alpha and Omega cannot be said to be limited to His manifestation to the world at the last day. It is clearly a revelation concerning Jesus Christ that is manifested to His churches today. The text of Revelation 1:9-20 very clearly manifests Christ Jesus working in the midst of His churches on the earth during the time leading up to His coming "with clouds." There is no doubt that the prophetic fulfillment of the *day of the Lord* began at Pentecost, since Peter clearly indicated as much in Acts 2:14-21. But Peter did not declare the "day of the Lord" had come, but indicated that it was coming. John clearly states in Revelation 1:10 that he was in the Spirit "on the Lord's day." That Pentecost is part



Therefore, believers have gathered for prayer and preaching on Sunday from the very beginning of the Gospel, and it is the reason we continue to follow this tradition today.

**Wednesday is signaled out as an important day to assemble the church because three significant events occurred on Wednesday:** Jesus died upon the Cross on a Wednesday; He ascended into heaven on a Wednesday; and it was on a Wednesday that the Holy Ghost came on Pentecost. Let's examine each of these.

**Jesus died on a Wednesday.** We know that Jesus arose three days and three nights after He was buried [Matthew 12:40]. We know He arose on the first day of the week [John 20:1]. The Jewish day begins at sunset and that would mean Jesus arose Saturday night, after the end of the Sabbath. Three days and three nights before Saturday night lands on Wednesday. Believers regard Wednesday with special consideration because it was on a Wednesday that Jesus died on the Cross for our sins.

**Jesus ascended into heaven on a Wednesday.** The Scriptures teach that Jesus ascended 40 days after His resurrection [Acts 1:3]. Counting 40 days from Saturday night, by Jewish reckoning, takes us to Wednesday night. We remember that the believers gathered in the upper room for prayer after Jesus ascended [Acts 1:13-14].<sup>7</sup> Believers in Baptist Churches have long held Wednesday night prayer and preaching services commemorating the gathering of the believers in the upper room after Jesus ascended into heaven.

**The Holy Ghost was sent down from heaven on a Wednesday.** We know that according to Leviticus 23, Pentecost comes fifty days after Passover. Jesus was crucified on the day of Passover; indeed, He is the Lord's Passover Lamb. Since Jesus died on a Wednesday, fifty days from Passover would land on a Wednesday. In Acts 2, we find all those who assembled together in the upper room on the day of the ascension had gathered again the following Wednesday, "in one place." When "the day of Pentecost was fully

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of the prophecies that lead up to the *day of the Lord*, that day itself is clearly depicted as including events such as the elements melting with fervent heat [2Peter 3:10-12]. Besides all this, the Holy Spirit through John did not say he was "in the Spirit on the day of the Lord" but that he was "in the Spirit on the Lord's day." If the Spirit meant to direct our attention to the *day of the Lord*, you would think He would have done the favor of using that very famous expression and remove all doubt. I would not deny that there is a connection between the *Lord's day* and *the day of the Lord*. But this connection is to be understood in the light of Acts 2:14-21 and the immediate context of Revelation 1:10, which makes it clear it is related to the current dispensation of the churches doing the work of Christ Jesus on the earth anticipating His soon return. In that context, together with the observations offered in this study, we believe the best understanding of this expression is as a reference to the resurrection of our Lord, and refers to the day Jesus Himself sanctified as the day for His disciples to gather after His resurrection — the first day of the week, or Sunday.

<sup>7</sup> We also note that they conducted some business regarding the selection of a replacement for Judas [Acts 1:15-26]. This is the reason many Baptist churches conduct their church business on Wednesday night, during their traditional prayer meeting. We also note, however, that this is the first example of a church business meeting getting it wrong. Although there is no question Peter and the assembly were in earnest, and attempted as best they could to follow the Scripture in what they were doing, they elected the wrong replacement for Judas — later, Jesus chose Paul.



come,” the Holy Spirit came down upon them. Then they preached the gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven for the first time [1Peter 1:12].

Jesus died on a Wednesday, ascended into heaven on a Wednesday, and sent the Holy Ghost on a Wednesday; and so believers have been inclined to regard Wednesday as an important time to assemble the church for prayer and preaching. Because the pattern of the early churches was to gather on Sunday am, pm and Wednesday pm, we believe the Lord’s people should continue this honorable tradition.

**Consider the significance of Hebrews 10:25 in view of these observations.** We believe that we should heed the Holy Spirit’s instruction given in Hebrews 10:25, exhorting us to not forsake the assembling of ourselves together. This verse makes it apparent that the believers had already established some regularly called assemblies to have church; and from what we have studied, it seems obvious that this verse is instructing the believers to support the established pattern of assembling the churches on Sunday am, pm and Wednesday pm. Indeed, we are told in Hebrews 10:25 to be more and more earnest in maintaining this tradition of assembling of ourselves together as we see the day approaching. Since the believers in that day assembled, as we believe, on Sunday am, pm, and Wednesday pm, as we have shown, we believe this verse has very particularly to do with that tradition, and so we believe this tradition ought not to be forsaken. Therefore, the Lighthouse Baptist Church formally calls assembly for Sunday am, pm and Wednesday pm.

**We expect all believers to heed this call to assembly.** Not everyone who identifies with our church is obedient to this tradition. We believe that, apart from those who are providentially hindered from attending, all who insist on attending only one or another of the services will suffer loss on the day of their reckoning before the judgment seat of Christ [1Corinthians 2:11-17]. As pastor, I am often grieved when I think of the many who are missing some of the most precious and wonderful moments with the Lord in His assembly where they would, without doubt, have received from Him the very thing they needed to strengthen their faith for the challenges God knew they were going to face during the week. The expression *three to thrive* comes from this understanding that the Holy Spirit established these three services as the tradition of His churches, and I have observed that believers who fail to avail themselves of this grace, tend to be weak and faltering in their walk with the Lord.

**Some accuse us of violating the spirit of Colossians 2:13-17 by insisting that believers “ought” to gather on Sunday am, pm and again on Wednesday evening.** These are often the same people who resist the Church putting any obligations on any believers whatsoever. They also usually resist the idea of a defined membership,<sup>8</sup> and

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<sup>8</sup> There are many reasons to define a membership for a church. Among them is the example of the early church which kept a record of names as is indicated in Acts 1:15. On Pentecost, 3,000 were “added” to the church, and we may rightly presume their names were added to this list. Acts 5:13 suggests there was a defined membership, as does the fact that the Apostle Paul refers to the practice of one church sending letters (epistles) of commendation to recommend believers to other churches [2Corinthians 3:1]. Besides



they resist, sometimes with deep resentment, if a church presumes to define clear standards for either fellowship or service [Romans 16:17; 1Corinthians 5:11; 1Timothy 5:22, and etc.]. These folks know not what spirit they are of [Luke 9:55; 1Timothy 4:1-4], and we can only pray for them. For others, however, who have been confused by these spirits that encourage the flesh and carnal mind of God's sheep to question the legitimacy of the ministry of His true churches with their "great swelling words of vanity" [2Peter 2:18], I offer the following. We do not make it a "law" that unless everyone attends every service they may not maintain their membership in our church. It is not our practice to take believers before the church for discipline if they fail to attend every service. It is, after all, a tradition, not a law. To assemble with the believers is a direct commandment of Scripture [Hebrews 10:25] and the exhortation to be increasingly earnest about this matter as we approach the end is clearly stipulated in Scripture. But on what days, and how often, is implied but not so clearly stipulated. We trust the believers to follow the Holy Spirit, Who is active in their lives, guiding them to truth [John 16:13]. And we are convinced that believers who are sincerely following the Holy Spirit will find themselves reckoning the value of assembling with their church congregation when the church calls for assembly far outweighs any other activity they might have occasion to participate in during those times. However, we do not present the matter to the believer's conscience based on the idea of a legalistic requirement; but rather we appeal to their conscience to respond to the prompting of the Holy Spirit who guides us to all truth, and since, as Jesus proclaimed, "thy Word is truth," we expect the believer will search the Scriptures for guidance in this matter. A study of the Word of God establishes the legitimacy, and clear biblical basis for assembling on Sunday am, pm and Wednesday pm.

**But let's look at this passage in Colossians.** It is about the Mosaic customs and traditions, not the customs and traditions of the Lord's churches [2Thessalonians 3:6].<sup>9</sup> The warning against getting all hung up on holydays and Sabbaths had to do with remaining under the spirit of "the law." While it is certainly true that the Lord has not proscribed the death penalty for violating the instruction of Hebrews 10:25, as He did for violating the Sabbath of the Old Testament, that does not mean He has no expectation for us regarding the assembling of ourselves together [Hebrews 10:25]. In fact, when Colossians 2:13-23 is read correctly you find the following. First, the contrast is between the Old Testament Mosaic ordinances and "the body" which is of Christ [Colossians 2:13-17]. The Spirit informs us that the term *ordinances* is a clear reference to the ceremonial ordinances of the Mosaic law, and that these were nailed to His cross [Colossians 2:14]. We are told these things were a "shadow of things to come ..." He then says that, however, "the body is of Christ." Most agree that the reference to the *body* here is, in context, referring to His church [Colossians 1:18]. So, the ordinances of the Old Testament were a shadowy reflection of the New Testament revelation. Therefore, we need not be concerned with the various ordinances of the Mosaic law. Then the Spirit,

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the hundreds of practical reasons that may be offered, consider the fact that Jesus clearly expected there to be a defined membership when He gave His instructions regarding church discipline in Matthew 18:17.

<sup>9</sup> It is clear that the Apostle Paul expected the churches to keep the traditions that the Apostles established in the early churches. Attendance is clearly one of those traditions [Hebrews 10:25]. Gathering on Sunday am, pm and Wednesday pm is clearly established as the custom of the early churches.



by Paul, exhorts us to steer clear of the legalistic attitude developed among the Jews with regard to any ordinances. He refers to rules and regulations about "... touch not; taste not; handle not ..." [Colossians 2:18-22]. He refers to these things as "the commandments and doctrines of men ..." [Colossians 2:22]. Then he says something that almost every libertine Christian ignores, but that is absolutely critical if you are going to get the right idea from this passage. Referring to the "doctrines of men" proscribing ordinances in the category of "touch not; taste not; handle not ..." He says, "Which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh" [Colossians 2:23]. In other words, while these ordinances that are developed by godly men guided by their wisdom gained by much use of the Scriptures [Heberws 5:12-14] and established upon clear examples and precedents of the believers before us, are indeed, ordinances and doctrines of men, they are valuable if used rightly. Every household, every club every association, every group, naturally establishes certain traditions by which they come to be identified. It is, therefore, certainly understandable that believers would develop certain traditions, and so on, and these are valuable in will worship, and humility and neglecting of the body. But, unlike what the Jews did with their traditions, we must not follow the path of making these things something that brings honour to the flesh, or to satisfy the flesh desire of pride and self-righteousness. We do not self-righteously vault ourselves above others because we commit to not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together in the manner we see was observed by our forebears. That we keep these traditions, we believe is good, and right, and something we certainly ought to do; but not for any selfish, carnal, flesh satisfying reason. Rather, we keep them to glorify Christ Jesus. That is the correct teaching of Colossians 2:13-23, and those who pick the passage apart and attempt to use it to encourage believers to disregard the exhortation to not forsake the assembling of ourselves together after the tradition of the Apostles are either superficial in their understanding of the Scriptures and ought not to be teaching God's sheep, or they are wolves, attempting to seduce God's people out from under the loving and gentle guidance of the Holy Spirit.

**Finally, some will argue that the Scripture specifically addresses this "day" thing in Romans 14:5 and that the instruction in that verse is that the "day" thing does not matter.** Paul refers to those who esteem one day above another. What does that tell you? It tells you that this matter was already a controversy, even in the days of the Apostles. If someone was "esteeming one day above another" what day do you suppose he was "esteeming"? Our study of the Scriptures indicates that the early believers clearly esteemed Sunday and Wednesday. Perhaps those who argued for esteeming Sunday above every other day were arguing for the tradition that was already established in the early church. Paul also refers to those who argued that "every day is alike ..." In reaction to some who, evidently, went so far in their esteem for one day over others, they tended in the direction of the spirit of the Jews regarding the Sabbath, and sought to impose it upon believers as if it was a law. Perhaps these who argued that no certain day should be esteemed above others were being rightly sensitive to this bad spirit and reacted by arguing we should reckon every day as belonging to the Lord. Jesus showed us the mistake the Jews made regarding the Sabbath, and clearly, we ought not to follow that



spirit in the matter of esteeming Sunday and Wednesday as our preferred days for formally called assembly. Paul would not have us get into debate and argument on this matter; he, and by him, the Holy Spirit, would not have us make this a matter of fellowship. He did exhort us, however, to study the matter and be persuaded in our own mind. If a brother, or a sister in Christ is convinced that we should not esteem any particular day, and, perhaps, thinks that doing so encourages believers to make the mistake of thinking, for example, we worship Christ Jesus on Sunday and Wednesday, but during the rest of the week we can forget about Him — well, God bless him. It is clear that this conviction rises from a love for Christ Jesus and a concern about what we all would agree is an error. On the other hand, if a believer studies the matter and recognizes that the Church must assemble [Hebrews 10:25], and that it is probably not an effective plan to call formal assembly every morning and every evening, and that therefore, the church will need to pick an appropriate time to call a formal assembly of the church, and seeking the Scripture for guidance in the matter discerns that Sunday am, pm and Wednesday pm were special days to the early believers, and that they gathered for preaching and prayer on those days regularly, and upon this decides these are the days the Spirit would have us set apart as days for assembly, then, we think these brothers and sisters are walking according to the Spirit and traditions of the early churches. We don't condemn the other fellow, but neither do we agree with his conclusion. We are not so persuaded. And, we have found that often those sorts who argue for *esteeming every day alike* seem to find no day to dedicate wholly to the Lord and most often use their zeal to obliterate any basis for a believer's commitment to obey Hebrews 10:25 in any practical expression of faith.

**Conclusion** Many people have different ideas about where these traditions come from. I believe this explanation is the best because it is the one that comports most closely with Scripture. The reason we have set aside Sunday am, pm and Wednesday pm for public worship is because this is the pattern we find in the practice of the early church. Since we are commanded to not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, and therefore must distinguish when and where to assemble, we believe following the example set before us in the Word of God is the right course of action.

Your servant for Christ's sake —  
Pastor Scheidbach