

## August 2006 Calling the Sabbath a Delight

God tells us in his Word that he gives ‘us richly all things to enjoy’ (1 Tim.6:17). One of the richest of these gifts is the Sabbath day. It is the first and best day of the week. One of the Puritans wrote of it most attractively:

‘The Sabbath day is God’s market-day for the week’s provision, wherein He will have us to come unto Him, and buy of Him without silver or money, the Bread of Angels, and Water of Life, the Wine of the Sacraments, and Milk of the Word to feed our souls: tried gold to enrich our faith: precious eye salve, to heal our spiritual blindness: and the white raiment of Christ’s righteousness to cover our filthy nakedness’.

No wonder we should call the day a delight! The command to do so comes in Isaiah 58:13, where, interestingly and instructively, the terms ‘sabbath’ and ‘Lord’s Day’ occur together. We are to ‘call the Sabbath a delight’ and to treat what the Lord calls ‘my holy day ... the holy of the LORD’ as ‘honourable’.

We believe in the principle of *‘the day changed but the sabbath preserved’*. That is to say, what began (from creation and in the law) as the seventh day of the week sabbath, became (from the glorious resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ) the first day of the week Lord’s Day. There is no contradiction here. The *creation ordinance* (of rest and refreshment on one day in seven sanctified by and to the Lord) applies for all time. The *moral law* (the ten commandments) abides continually – there is an ill wind blowing around the church again these days which says that it does not, but it does. And *Christ’s resurrection* gives the day a special significance, as well as its name ‘the Lord’s day’ (Rev.1:10). Moreover, the Lord Jesus Christ calls himself ‘Lord of the sabbath’ (Mark 2:28) – and he cannot be Lord of something which no longer exists!

Is this day truly and consistently a ‘delight’ to us? The description ‘delight’ carries many senses. There is *anticipated pleasure* (looking forward all week to the Lord’s Day); *serious preparation* (that our minds and hearts – and our bodies too – would be in a right condition for it); *spiritual observance* (with our whole beings engaged in the worship of God – bowing before him, confessing our sin, singing his praise, calling upon him in prayer, hearing his word); *sanctified guarding* (that nothing inappropriate would be allowed to intrude upon the day, the Lord himself being our helper in this, as in all things); *mutual occupation* (appreciating the likeminded fellowship of other believers on this day and knowing the blessings of it in our families); and *holy joy* (desiring that each earthly sabbath/Lord’s day would be a foretaste of the eternal sabbath with God, in whose presence is ‘fulness of joy’ and at whose right hand are ‘pleasures for evermore’!)