

41. Among the Candlesticks

In what circumstances did God speak with him?

"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day!" Revelation 1:10.

John states that he was in the Spirit "on the Lord's day." Reading this, many have jumped to the conclusion that John received these revelations during his Sunday devotional meditations. It is true that in many Christian communions, Sunday is commonly termed "the Lord's day," but actually there is no warrant for this anywhere in the Scriptures.

If John had called the first day of the week "the Lord's day" in the Revelation, he would surely have given it the same designation in his gospel, which he wrote at a later date. But he does not! He there follows the practice of the other gospel writers in referring to the resurrection day as simply "the first day of the week." (See Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:2,9; Luke 24:1; John 20:19.)

In the book of Acts, Luke likewise speaks only of the "first day of the week" (Acts 20:7), and Paul's reference to the day in 1 Corinthians sixteen, verse two, is consistent with all the other Bible writers.

It will come as a further surprise to many that the use of the term "Lord's day" for the first day of the week is unknown in any of the literature of the early church, until nearly a century after the last of the New Testament books was written. The earliest references to the Lord's day outside the Bible are by Melito, bishop of Sardis, in AD. 170, Dionysus, bishop of Corinth, in AD. 175, and Tertullian in North Africa, about AD. 200.

It is thus clear that the idea of calling the first day of the week the "Lord's day" in honor of the resurrection was something about which John and his contemporaries knew nothing at all. It was, in fact, an invention of the late second century for the purpose of giving a pseudo-authority to Sunday as a holy day in place of the true Sabbath, and which is utterly devoid of scriptural or apostolic support.

There is only one day of the week which can justifiably be called the "Lord's day," and that is the Sabbath, or seventh day. This day of all the days of the week was set apart at creation as "holy unto the Lord." In the fourth commandment it is specifically described as the "Sabbath of the Lord" (Exodus 20:8-11), and through the prophet Isaiah, God designates it, "My holy day!" Isaiah 58:13. The Lord Jesus, who was associated with God in the creation of the Sabbath, pointedly described Himself as "Lord . . . of the Sabbath." Mark 2:27,28; Matthew 12:8. This day, therefore, must be the "Lord's day" to which John was referring and on which he was found meditating upon the things of God.