



FIRST PRESS

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FRIDAY, MARCH 20, 2015

UPCOMING EVENTS:

Mar. 22, 9 a.m.

Sunday School:
Num. 23-24,
"Blessings Assured"

Mar. 22, 10 a.m.

Morning Worship:
Mark 3.23-28, "The
Lord of the Sabbath"

Mar. 22, 4:00 p.m.

Sunday Night Study,
Psalm 17, "Pray with-
out ceasing"

Mar. 25, 5:15 p.m.

Wednesday Night
Bible Study, "The
Communion of Saints
and Union with
Christ"

From the Pastor's Pen...

The Church of the Lord Jesus Christ is the oldest institution in the history of mankind. In the millennia since the Creation of the Universe, only the Church has been in continuous existence since the first week. The Church has looked differently through the ages. She has been very small at times; in the beginning, she was only two people.

The fundamental character of the Church that we see throughout the Scripture beginning in its third chapter is that she is made up of those who profess their hope and trust (i.e., *faith*) in God's covenant promises to save and bless them. That has been the case in both the Old and the New Covenants.

Often we forget that the Church didn't "begin" with Jesus and His Apostles, but was the flowering and fulfillment of God's purposes in the Old Testament. We in the New Covenant Church share a heritage with the

saints of the Old Covenant Church such as Abraham, David, Moses, Nehemiah, Asaph, and countless others.

God's restoration of His people began in Gen. 3 and reached points of greater and greater fulfillment in the Old Covenant Church (Israel) throughout the Old Testament. The promises given to Israel are ultimately fulfilled in the New Covenant Church, the Israel of God (Gal. 6.16).

That is why when we read the Gospels about Jesus, we often hear Him called by Old Testament names, such as the "Son of David" or "House of David" or "Son of Man" or "Rod of Jesse." If we neglect our Old Covenant Heritage, our Hebrew Heritage, we will miss the significance of these names and titles.

One way we can remind ourselves of and acquaint ourselves with our Church's ancient heritage ... **(cont'd on page 2)**

Westminster Shorter Catechism Meditation

The Fourth Commandment concerns God's Holy Day, the Sabbath.

Q58. What is required in the 4th commandment?

A58. The fourth commandment requireth the keeping holy to God such set times as he hath appointed in his Word; expressly one whole day in seven, to be a holy sabbath to himself.

This command flies in the face of much of what American culture today holds dear. The idea that we are to follow God's example by resting and giving rest to others on God's schedule is so strange today. The Sabbath command gives us the opportunity to pattern our lives on God's schedule.

It's easy to make room in your life for an hour or two each week for God. But Christianity is not about obeying God for an hour or two, Christianity is putting faith in God's salvation and repenting of sin, turning from sin unto God in new obedience.

Many people today disregard the 4th Command because they judge it to be unreasonable or because it requires them to do things they don't want to do. But that's an absurd position, isn't it? Can you imagine if someone said the same about the Sixth (murder) or Eighth (stealing) Commands?! Sin, of course, *is* absurd; in all sin we choose what we want instead of what God commands, no less here with the Sabbath Day.

As a Christian, you must never have that kind of an attitude toward God's Law. When God's Law commands and confronts our desires, it is an opportunity to test our faith, love, and repentance toward God: **"do I love God more than shopping or TV or sports or homework or yard work?"**

The Christian Sabbath is so necessary to us all because there is only so far a person can backslide in six days! The Sabbath is a great blessing for our own growth in holiness.

The Church & the Psalms: part of something greater

(cont'd from page 1) is by knowing, reading, and singing the Psalms. Historically, Presbyterians (as well as Episcopalians and Congregationalists) sang many psalms together on a Lord's Day. In fact, if you look at a Presbyterian hymnal, you'll typically find that a third to half of the hymns are actually psalms.

In the Psalms, God provided His Church with her "first hymnal" as well as a pattern for praying to and praising God. The Psalter also includes rich historical accounts of God's salvation, descriptions of Him and His character, and reminders of His purposes for us in the future.

The psalms remind us that the Church didn't just come out of nowhere in the first century; she is the product of God's faithfulness to His people, the Israel of God.

Moses writes of this in Ps. 90, "**Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations...**" The Sons of Korah recount God's giving His people victory in Ps. 44, "**Our fathers have told us what deeds you performed in their days of old: you with your own hand drove out the nations, but them you planted.**" In Ps. 89 we have some of the richest promises of the coming Christ, "**You have said, 'I have made a covenant with my chosen one; I have sworn to David my servant: I will establish your offspring forever, and build your throne for all generations.'**" There we see that the hope of the psalmist is the same hope of the New Covenant believer, which reminds us of our shared hope in

Christ, the Son of David, and for the One who comes to restore David's house.

In Psalms 46, 48, and 87 we read of the glory of Zion and Jerusalem, God's City, the place where God dwells among His people and is worshiped by them. Zion was a foretaste of both the New Testament Church and the New Creation. The promises to Zion belong to the Church. In the New Testament Church, God's Spirit is richly poured out upon us to nourish our souls by His spiritual presence, in a richness and abundance that was unknown in the Old Covenant. In the New Creation, we shall dwell with God forever in worship and service.

When we sing of Zion we remember God's faithfulness to His people in the past, we rejoice at what God has done for us now in Christ as He gathers His church to Himself from throughout the world, and we reflect on what He promised to do in the future: dwell with His people in the New Jerusalem, the eternal Zion.

The psalms provide the New Covenant believer with an ancient *and* eternal perspective. We can so often be fixated on the stuff of this world and this time and grow discouraged, but the psalms remind us of God's continued faithfulness and care for His people, His nation throughout the ages.

The psalms show us that we are a part of an unbroken chain of God's people that dates back to beginning of time and testifies to God's power to fulfill His purpose.

Sermon Snapshot: "Jesus: like no other"

In this section of Mark's Gospel (2.1-3.6), Mark gives us five confrontations between Jesus and the religious leaders of the day. The intensity of the conflicts increase with each occasion, beginning with the scribes merely "questioning" in their hearts and culminating with two opposing factions of religious leaders conspiring together against the Lord Jesus Christ as their common enemy.

When we were last together in Mark's Gospel (2.13-22) we considered Christ's call to Levi the tax collector and the reason why Jesus' disciples don't engage in fasting. In both of these episodes Jesus reveals how He is fundamentally different from any other religious leader.

Levi was a tax collector: a greedy, lowlife swindler who made his living by extorting money from travelers and his own countrymen. Roman tax collectors were despised as scoundrels because they not only cooperated with an occupation, foreign government, but also cheated people out of money to line their own pockets. Jesus Christ comes to one such scoundrel and invites him to turn

from pursuing money and personal fortune to instead follow Jesus and enter fellowship with God.

Levi is called not because he is a righteous, deserving individual, but because he is a sinner in need of salvation. The religious leaders only dealt with those who made an effort, who were clearly trying to be "good Jews"; Levi and his associates were of no interest to the scribes, but Jesus came for people just like them.

Mark then shows how Jesus is the fulfillment Old Testament hopes. His disciples didn't fast, unlike all the other religious people of the day. The reason Jesus and his disciples don't fast is rather unexpected.

Jesus is not opposed to fasting. Jesus, however, reveals that it is inappropriate to fast while He is with them. Jesus is bringing with Him the Kingdom of God in greater fullness. All that had happened up to this point in Israel's history had been preparing the world for this very hour. Jesus' earthly ministry was a time of joy and celebration at what God was doing: making a way for sinners to feast with God eternally. This was no time for fasting indeed!

