

Sabbath or Lord's Day | Unveiling the Biblical Truth! A Biblical Perspective

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Date: 18 September 2025

[0:00] We're talking about from Sabbath to the Lord's Day. It's a topic, sometimes people ask me about this topic, it pops up as a question from people sometimes, ! What is your view about the Sabbath, about the day that we should meet as a church?

And so we're going to talk about the subject from a biblical point of view. And the Old Testament Sabbath was a covenant sign for Israel. That's the link to the notes if you're watching from home. So you can hit the QR code or go to the URL there and you'll be able to download the three pages. So we're talking about the Sabbath and the transition from the Sabbath to the Lord's Day.

So the Old Testament Sabbath was a covenant sign for Israel, a shadow pointing to the true rest in Christ. It was a Mosaic law requirement for Israel, not for Christians today.

The first section there, we're talking about the Sabbath. And the first point we want to make is the Sabbath was for Israel, not for everyone. You hear about the Sabbath first in Genesis 2 at creation, and on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.

[1:14] And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made. In Genesis 2 we see God's creation, the six days of creation, then the seventh day it shows God resting.

But he gave no command to Adam, Noah, Abraham. For over 2,500 years God did not command anyone to keep the Sabbath. And then when Moses came to Mount Sinai, and it talks about that in Nehemiah 9 verse 13, it tells how God made known unto them the Sabbath.

So it was when Moses was given the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai. That was 2,700 approximately years after creation. The Ten Commandments are in Exodus 20, and it tells how the Sabbath is there.

It tells us, Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God. In it thou shalt not do any work. 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. The Ten Commandments there in Exodus 20.

[2:32] Then in Deuteronomy 5 it reads, From verse 15, It links the Sabbath specifically to Israel's redemption from Egypt. And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day.

Specifically there for Israel, as they were saved from the land of Egypt, God commanded them to keep the Sabbath day. Exodus 31 from verse 16, It declares the Sabbath is an exclusive covenant sign between God and Israel.

Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel forever. Interesting the word forever and perpetual there, the same word O Lamb, it denotes a lasting period, not eternity.

So the same word forever is used about, for example, circumcision is used there, everlasting, same word, and also of the Passover, forever, same word.

And you see, both circumcision and the Passover, the church doesn't keep those. They've both been fulfilled in Christ. And it's the same with the Sabbath.

[3:42] It was exclusive to Israel. In Hebrews it says that both of these things have been fulfilled. So the Passover, the circumcision, and the

Sabbath, they've all been fulfilled.

In Hebrews 8 it talks about the new covenant. It made the first covenant old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away. So the new covenant that we're in now makes the old covenant passed away, vanished away.

And the Sabbath was exclusive to Israel. As you see in Ezekiel 20 verse 12, God says, I gave them, Israel, my Sabbaths. So it was a sign exclusive to Israel.

And when you think about it, all of the associated things to do with the Sabbath, they make no sense for us today. But they made sense for Israel's national life. For example, there was all these strict rules, no work, no fire, and there was a death penalty associated with the Sabbath.

But you can't apply those things today. We know that the law was given to Israel alone. So the key point for this section here that the Sabbath was for Israel, not for everyone. It was Israel's covenant sign.

[4:52] It's not a universal command. The second section there talks about how Jesus fulfills the Sabbath. It tells of our Lord that he was born under the law.

He was made under the law. It tells us how our Lord kept the Sabbath, but he redefined it. So it tells how, for example, he went out with the disciples and they plucked the ears of corn and that was strictly kind of a work.

And he declares himself there Lord even of the Sabbath. The Lord of the Sabbath. Also, it tells us elsewhere how he healed people on the Sabbath, showing mercy over rituals.

So it's like he redefined the Sabbath. He fulfilled the Sabbath when he came. And in Matthew 11, he says, Come unto me, all ye that labour on a heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

It's talking about the rest that Jesus is. Really, the Lord is the true Sabbath. As we come to Christ, we find rest. We find that Sabbath. We find that rest. And Christ is the fulfilment.

[6:00] And then we see his resurrection on the first day of the week as it reads in all the different Gospels. So you've got there Matthew and John, the accounts where it was the first day of the week.

They came to the tomb. And it marks that new creation. It was like a whole new revelation, the new covenant, and the old was done away. So the Sabbath was only a shadow, but Christ is the substance.

It talks about that in Colossians there. And it tells us how, if any man is in crisis, a new creature, old things are passed away. Behold, all things have become new.

It's the same like for us, now that we're under the new covenant, the old covenant's passed away.

The Lord blessed the Sabbath day at creation, and he hallowed it.

But now we've got the fulfilment of that in the new creation, in the new covenant. At Christ's resurrection, he completed a greater redemption, and he's brought into effect this new creation, the first day, the Lord's day.

[6:59] Jesus is the true Sabbath. Under this new covenant, the New Testament, we've got freedom. And the New Testament explicitly frees Christians from keeping the Sabbath. It says, One man esteems one day above another, another esteems every day alike.

Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord. He that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. Now really, we don't have a problem with people who might want to worship on a Sabbath.

It's not something necessarily wrong to worship on the Sabbath, or to worship on the Sunday. It says, He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord. So, let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.

But the point is that we're free from the Sabbath keeping. Whereas there's some churches, like the Seventh-day Adventists, or other Sabbath keeping churches that are quite dogmatic on it.

And really, that's contrary to the spirit of this passage here in Romans 14. We've got liberty. And this is in contrast to the Sabbath keeping times. So, for example, in Exodus 31, the rule at the time was, if anyone doesn't keep the Sabbath, they're to be stoned to death.

[8:11] There was very strict penalties. But in the New Testament, people like Paul warned about returning to days and seasons in Galatians 4, from verse 9 through 11.

He warned them about the Judaizers, which were trying to get people to go back to keeping the law. And he says, He observed days and months and times and years. I'm afraid of you, lest I've bestowed upon you labor in vain.

He's saying that we shouldn't turn back to those things of the law, the law keeping. It's interesting, when the early church met, they had a council at Jerusalem and they gave no Sabbath command to the Gentiles.

They just affirmed salvation by grace and they emphasized the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. They didn't talk about keeping the Sabbath as far as what the Gentiles would continue to do.

And Hebrews 4 teaches that the true rest is that spiritual, eternal rest. It talks about, there remaineth therefore a rest, and the word is sabbatismos, so to do with the Sabbath, there is a rest to the people of God.

[9:15] And we can enter into that rest, we cease from our own works.

Whereas the Galatians, they were being troubled by these people who were trying to get them to go back to keeping the law.

They were distorting the gospel, and Paul warned them not to do that, that they were perverting the gospel by imposing this law keeping and also putting a burdensome yoke upon others.

So putting a, really the yoke, speaking of the law keeping, putting a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, these people in Acts 15. And it's contrary to the law of Christ.

James 1 talks about the law of Christ being the perfect law of liberty. And Deuteronomy 4 verse 44 tells how that Moses was the one who brought this law.

It was temporary and specific to Israel. And we see with internal promises fulfilled through Abraham, they were fulfilled through Abraham, not the law. So Galatians 3 talks about how that the law cannot override or cancel the promise of salvation through faith, which is fulfilled in Christ.

[10:20] So in Galatians there, it's talking about Abraham, the righteousness, which is by faith. And that was before the law, before the Sabbath keeping. And it's a picture of that faith, which saves us.

So in the notes there, it's saying, if the Sabbath were a universal law, all would be bound by it. But since Christ fulfilled it, enforcing it today, binds where God has not bound.

So we're not under that bondage, that yoke. We've now got a free conscience. We're free from all that. Galatians 5 verse 1 says that we've got liberty. We're not to be entangled again in the yoke of bondage.

And Romans 8, the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus have made me free. So the point of that section there about the New Testament freedom is that under the new covenant, as Christians, we're free from Sabbath observance.

And we warned really against going back to that. Next section talks about the Lord's Day. Under the new covenant, the Sabbath keeping is no longer for us. Now we're under the Lord's Day.

[11:22] In Acts 20 verse 7, we see an example there of the early church when they met, and it's on the first day of the week. So the first day of the week means Sunday. It's also called the Lord's Day.

In Acts 20 verse 7, it tells us very clearly, and upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them. So we can see there that they were naturally beginning to worship on the Sunday, on the first day of the week.

And another scripture that talks about the first day of the week is this one, 1 Corinthians 16. It says, Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.

Again, it's clear that he's instructing that the early church should put money aside to give on the first day. So it was a practice that they had, that the gatherings that they had were the gatherings on the first day.

And then you've got Revelation 1 verse 10. When John had various revelations from God, it says he was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day.

[12:28] And so this term, the Lord's Day, is the New Testament fulfillment of the Sabbath. The Lord's Day means the day belonging to the Lord. And early Christians, down through ancient church history, they understood that the first day of the week was the Lord's Day.

It was the day of the Lord's resurrection, distinct from the Jewish Sabbath, the Saturday. And other references to the first day of the week. One of the main meetings of the church was the day of Pentecost.

And that was a Sunday. And there was 3,000 conversions there. It says, When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. So they were receiving the word of God, they were baptized, and 3,000 got saved.

And early Christian writers confirmed this pattern too. For example, there's a letter called the Epistle of Barnabas, and that was written about 100 AD. He writes how we keep the eighth day with joyfulness, the day also on which Jesus rose from the dead.

And you can see a reference, a kind of cross-reference to that, in John 20 verse 26. It says, After eight days, again, his disciples were within, and Thomas with them. Then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.

[13:45] So the risen Lord came to the disciples here, and it was on the eighth day. Again, which is the same as the first day. So the seventh day, then the eighth day, which is also the first day.

So it's a reference to the fact that they met again, and this fellow, Barnabas, tells how it was on the eighth day that they met with joyfulness, that the early church met on that day.

So here's some quotes from some of these early Christian writers. You've got this fellow called Barnabas, about 100 AD, so not really that long after the records in Acts.

It says, Wherefore, we keep the eighth day with joyfulness, the day on which Christ rose from the dead. And then this other fellow, Ignatius, again, he talks about how we no longer keep the Sabbath.

He says, We keep the Lord's day, the resurrection day. So that was around 110 AD as well. And another couple of quotes here.

[14:52] We've got Justin Martyr. This was 150 AD. He describes Sunday worship as well. On the day called Sunday, all gather together to one place. And then another fellow, Tertullian, he emphasises Sunday's joy, not legalistic rest.

And Cyprian as well. He talks about the eighth day. That is the first day. After the Sabbath, the Lord's day, the day on which the Lord rose from the dead. And therefore, it is the day of the Christian's festivity.

Some of those who led to the Sabbath-keeping ideas, like people like the Seventh-day Adventists, for one, they make the claim that Sunday is like an invention that was brought in by Constantine, the Emperor Constantine.

Now, Constantine Christianised certain pagan things, which is true. But the keeping of the fellowshiping on a Sunday was happening well before Constantine.

So we can't say that it was brought in by Constantine. It was happening right from the early days of the church, like those quotes from back in 100 AD, 150 AD. The early Christians did worship on a Sunday, and it was really a natural response to Christ's resurrection.

[16:05] Next section, some of the arguments that Sabbath-keepers try to use. And they say it's a creation ordinance. While God rested on the seventh day, he did not command anyone to observe it until, as I say, about 2,700 years later.

There was no command to keep the Sabbath until Mount Sinai, so when Moses was there on Mount Sinai. Some would have the idea the Ten Commandments are eternal.

But we see that in Deuteronomy 5, the Decalogue, which is the technical term, the Ten Commandments, it was specific to Israel. We see there that the Lord our God made a covenant with us.

He's talking about Israel. It was given to Israel. And it's really another very interesting point to answer this question while the Ten Commandments are eternal.

Only nine commandments are reiterated in the New Testament. So all of the others, apart from the keeping of the Sabbath, it's a really important point that they're all repeated as relevant for the Christians under the New Covenant, but that one commandment about keeping the Sabbath is not mentioned at all.

[17:19] It actually removes that. And again, we're told that not to judge anyone about keeping a particular Holy Day or a Sabbath day. It shouldn't

be something that people should get dogmatic about.

And Hebrews 8, again, the idea that it's not forever. Some things are not forever. Once the new covenants come, the old one is taken away.

Another argument that people use is that Jesus or the apostles kept the Sabbath. Of course, we know that our Lord was made under the law, so he was under that system when he was born and through his ministry he was still under that old covenant system.

He kept the Sabbath. But he redefined it and he called himself the Lord of the Sabbath. And then after his resurrection, worship shifted to the first day of the week.

So for example, you see there, this is straight after the resurrection. That is the same night of the resurrection day. It says that it was the first day of the week. Jesus came.

[18:23] And then the week after that, after eight days again, his disciples were with him and Thomas with them. Then came Jesus and stood in the midst of him. You see the first two meetings of the church was the first day and the eighth day.

They met with the Lord Jesus, with the risen Lord there. And we see that it was clearly the case.

Now, there are occasions where Paul visited synagogues, but those visits were evangelistic.

It wasn't a Christian worship service. So you see, for example, there, Paul says that unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews. So he went to the synagogues to evangelize.

Another argument they put, they say Sunday is pagan. That's, that's come by Constantine. But as we talked about, it was happening right there in Acts 20, verse 7, that pivotal scripture there.

It's happening 200 plus years before Constantine. Some would say, well, the Sabbath is a test of loyalty. But under the new covenant, we've got new commandments now.

[19:29] The new commandment I give unto you that you love one another as I have loved you, that you also love one another. This is his commandment that we should believe on the name of his son Jesus Christ and love one another as he gave us commandment.

So we're under those commandments. Another point that Sabbath keepers would say is we need for rest. Yeah, we do need rest. But the ultimate rest is in Christ.

He says, I will give you rest. The true rest we need is Christ. Really, Christ is the total fulfillment of the Sabbath to come to Jesus, to rest in him. They would say, well, it's a perpetual covenant.

They would say the Sabbath is a perpetual covenant. But again, it was for the children of Israel and we are under the new covenant now as we've talked about.

The Sabbath keepers would talk about there's various rules and regulations and commandments about keeping the Sabbath. But really, even modern Sabbath keepers cannot keep the Sabbath as Israel did.

[20:32] Because if they were really keeping the Sabbath like Israel did, while they'd be stoning people to death, they were not keeping the Sabbath. And they're not to do any work therein. Really, that's quite restrictive.

It says that under the old covenant Sabbath keeping rules, you shall kindle no fire. fire. I know someone kind of tongue-in-cheek was telling me, well, if a Sabbath keeper drives their car to church, when they turn their key in the ignition, they're lighting a fire in the engine and the spark plugs, so they're kindling a fire.

And a Sabbath keeper should not be doing any cooking at all on the Sabbath if they're going to be strict about it. And another really interesting one is that last one there, let no man go out of his place.

So if a Sabbath keeper is leaving home to go to church on the Sabbath, they're breaking the rules because they're not to leave home. Obviously, it's quite clear that these kind of Sabbath keeping rules, the Sabbath keepers aren't keeping them anyway.

And really, all of these rules for Israel, they were temporary. You see that it tells us at the cross that the handwriting of the ordinances that was against as he blotted it out, he took it out of the way, nailing it to the cross.

[21:46] So all of these kind of Sabbath keeping rules here, they've really been taken out of the way and now we've got the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free.

So we're not under that yoke of bondage like people who try to keep the Sabbath or if they're trying to keep the Sabbath, they've got to keep all the other things as well that are in the old covenant. So it's just an impossible burden, like a yoke.

But Christ has removed that yoke from us. Next section, we see the new covenant, really it changes everything. That's the point and we can, as Bible-believing Christians under the new covenant now, we've had that complete change from the old covenant to the new covenant now, from Moses to Christ.

And we've got that more excellent ministry, that better covenant, we've got better promises now. So in Christ, it's superseded all of the Mosaic law, all of the law under Moses.

in the transfiguration, as the Lord's there, and he says, this is my beloved son, hear ye him. So we're not to hear Moses anymore, we're to hear the Lord Jesus, hear ye him.

[22:55] He's taken it out of the way. The Sabbath has been nailed to the cross, it's done, it's finished, he's fulfilled it. And then Romans 7, you've become dead to the law. We are dead to the law now as Bible-believing Christians.

Hebrews 4 also talks about that eternal rest that's in Christ. When we've trusted Christ, we've entered into his rest. And we've got assurance of forgiveness of our sins there.

There's sins and iniquities, will I remember no more. And Hebrews 7 talks about that better hope that we have. So now we've got the law of Christ written on our hearts, we don't have those ten commandments written in stone, now his law is written in our hearts.

And there's that spiritual fulfilment. All ten commandments except the Sabbath are reiterated in the New Testament. And that's very significant that it submits it. And the ten commandments are called the ministration of death.

Now we're under the ministration of the Spirit. So everything's been fulfilled in Christ. Exodus 31, you shall keep the Sabbath therefore for it is holy unto you. Everyone that defileth it shall surely be put to death.

[24:04] So obviously we're not under that kind of ministration of death anymore. Christ's law has replaced the old covenant. So the key insight for us is that we're under the new covenant.

Our Lord says as he shared the cup and bread, this is my blood of the New Testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins. The old covenant has gone away.

Page three now, reclaiming the Lord's day. And you think about the world we're living in now where people quite often don't really care whether to go to church, no matter what day of the week it is, they don't care to go to church.

Even Sunday is increasingly secularised by leisure, commerce and entertainment. People treat it just like any other day in our secular culture.

You've got sport, recreation, businesses are open, there's that cultural shift away from the sacred observance. And it's like we should really honour our Lord by giving him time to worship and reclaim the Lord's day in honour of his resurrection and not treat it just like another secular kind of day.

[25:14] And there's this faithful preacher of old called Bishop Ryle and he puts it like this, he says, a Sunday rest should be a holy rest. God ought to be worshipped, God's word ought to be studied.

God's house ought to be attended. Everything which cannot be made holy in this way ought as far as possible to cease. So we should worship, we should attend, we should come to the word of God, to the preaching, to the fellowship and prioritise that over all of the leisure challenges, all of the secular things that could occupy ourselves and have that firm conviction to honour God.

When you think about it, as it says there in Romans 12, really we should want to dedicate ourselves to God, to do his will, be conformed to him, not to the world.

Next section we see what does it all mean for us as far as this subject, this question of a day of worship, that we've got freedom in Christ. It says, stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

It tells us that we're free from the law of Moses, the mosaic yoke and our rest is now in Christ, we've entered into his rest. Again, we've read some of these scriptures before but we've got that liberty to choose what day we worship and to be fully convinced in our own conscience.

[26:37] So again, we wouldn't condemn anyone who chooses to worship on a Saturday or a Sunday. It's a matter of conscience but I'm putting the

case really to you today that there is a valid case we could put that worshipping on the first day of the week is scriptural, it's not unscriptural and we're not under the Sabbath keeping rules of the Jews of Israel.

So we're not Israel. And Hebrews 10 obviously tells us to not forsake the assembling. Acts 20 again, is a classic scripture of the first day gatherings for breaking bread and preaching. And it's interesting that there's no New Testament references that show Christians gathering for worship, so breaking bread, coming for preaching and fellowship or worship on a Sabbath. There's actually none in the New Testament that says that the early church met to worship on the Sabbath. In considering this question, the Sabbath was Israel's sign. I think that's a good observation we can make and that Christ is our true rest when we come unto him. We're not under the yoke, we're not under the law keeping requirements of the old covenant and we're free from that kind of requirement of the Sabbath.

[27:58] and it says not to judge any man in respect to a holy day. But it's quite fitting for us to honour our Lord on the Lord's day and to honour our risen Saviour.

So you've got that example, Acts 20 verse 7, like we've repeatedly talked about. We see the example of that. We see the event that is the resurrection. Clearly, that was the first day of the week.

Everything changed when Christ rose from the dead. Really, everything changed. There's that event and then there's the exhortation again as Paul gave the exhortation to be prepared to come and gather, to give, to worship.

And then we've got the designation. That is the Lord's day. It's what John called it in Revelation 1. And for us that are saved, really it's a joyful privilege we have to worship.

In Psalm 84, verse 10, the psalmist says, I'd rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. There's a joyful privilege to come together and worship.

[29:10] And we see the New Testament superior to the old covenant. We're following Christ now, not Moses. As we read before, God testified of the psalm, in whom I'm well pleased.

Hear ye him. And Christ is superior to Moses. So we can rest in Christ. There's a joy that we have as God's people that we've got that rest in Christ.

And the ultimate rest is to know Jesus, to have that relationship with him. Not a day on a calendar, but to know our Saviour. And we can know his rest every day. Just another quote there from that fellow, Ryle.

He says, It is not too much to ask men to give one day in seven. Go to the house of God and hear the gospel preached. So it's a blessing for us to get to where we can come and hear the word of God, study together and worship and fellowship.

It's our joyful privilege. So last section here. In summary, some of this is repeating over again, some of the things we've covered, but just distill it and to recap, we see the resurrection.

[30:26] Clearly, the first day of the week. All the gospels tell us Christ rose from the dead on the first day. And really, everything changed at the resurrection.

Then we see his appearances. He appeared to the disciples, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary. They went to the tomb and they saw the stone taken away.

It was the first day of the week. Our Lord appeared. The risen Lord came the first day of the week. They were assembled there and he miraculously came into the room.

And again, a second time when Thomas was with them the second time, again on the first day of the week. So there's this repeated theme that he met with them on the first day of the week.

On the first day of the week. And then at Pentecost it was the first day of the week where they met again for worship. So you see, again, just to recap this repeating theme, some would accuse a Sunday worship church as being out of accord.

[31:35] But really, it's actually very biblical that the first day gatherings were Christian worship services. They were tied to the resurrection and the new covenant. And there's, again, no evidence of Christians gathering for worship on the Sabbath.

It explicitly says that they didn't meet on the first day of the week. It's like there was this change, there was this shift that happened as the church met on that first day.

And that's really the, a really good go-to scripture there, Acts 20, like we talked about. And it's interesting how Paul directed offerings.

He directed offerings to be collected on the first day. So 1 Corinthians 16. So this scripture alone, it suggests that this was their practice on the first day of the week.

It suggests that they had regular gatherings on the first day of the week as the offerings were to be set aside weekly. So that's really just a bit of a broad look at the subject of the Sabbath and how we've gone from the Sabbath day to the Lord's day.

[32:48] And we've seen through the scriptures many references, the resurrection, the appearances to the disciples, the Holy Spirit's descent at Pentecost, the early Christian worship, the first day gatherings, the giving instructions of Paul, the revelation of our Lord to John on the Lord's day, delivering the final scriptures.

So the full canon was given to John. The Lord appeared on the first day, on the Lord's day. And then we see records from the early church writings that the early Christians held their services on the Lord's day, the Sunday, the first day.

And so we can think about all of that and hopefully we can encourage our hearts that we should want to gather together on the first day to commemorate our Lord's victory over death and to get to fellowship with one another.

And so there's really to counter that idea of the Sabbath keeping kind of crowd that would contest it. There's lots of scriptural reasons why gathering on the first day of the week is a very scriptural thing to do.

Let's pray. Lord, we thank you that you do help us with these things to learn about you. Lord, we see that the early church loved you enough to put that day aside each week.

[34:11] Lord, help us to have the same heart and to worship you in spirit and in truth. In Jesus' name. Amen.