

Why do we worship on Sunday instead of Saturday?

In the Old Testament, God stated,

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of the lord your god; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you," (Exodus 20:8-10).

It was the custom of the Jews to come together on the sabbath, which is Saturday, cease work, and worship God. Jesus went to the synagogue on Saturday to teach (Matt. 12:9, John 18:20) as did the apostle Paul (Acts 17:2; 18:4;). So, if in the Old Testament we are commanded to keep the Sabbath and in the New Testament we see Jews, Jesus, and the apostles doing the same thing, then why do we worship on Sunday?

First of all, of the 10 commandments listed in Exodus 20:1-17, only 9 of them were re-instituted in the New Testament: five in Matt. 19:18, murder, adultery, stealing, false witness, and honor parents; in Rom. 13:9, coveting; worshiping God properly covers the first three commandments. The one that was not reaffirmed was the one about the Sabbath. Instead, Jesus said that He is the Lord of the Sabbath (Matt. 12:8).

Upon the completion of Creation God rested on the seventh day. However, since God is all powerful, He doesn't get tired. He doesn't need to take a break and rest. So, why did He rest? The reason is simple: Mark 2:27 says, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." In other words, God established the Sabbath as a rest for His people, not because He needed a break, but because we are mortal and need a time of rest, a time to focus on God. In this, our spirits and bodies are both renewed.

The Old Testament system of Law required keeping the Sabbath as part of the overall moral, legal, and sacrificial system by which the Jewish people satisfied God's requirements for behavior, government, and forgiveness of sins. The Sabbath was part of the Law in that sense. In order to "remain" in favor with God, you had to also keep the Sabbath. If it was not kept, then the person was in sin and would often be punished (Ezekiel 18:4; Rom. 6:23; Deut. 13:1-9; Num. 35:31; Lev. 20:2, etc.).

But with Jesus' atonement, we are no longer required to keep the Law. We are not under Law, but grace (Rom. 6:14-15). The Sabbath is fulfilled in Jesus. He is our rest. We are not under obligation, by Law, to keep it and this goes for the Sabbath as well. It is not a requirement that we keep the Sabbath. If it were, then we would still be under the Law, but we are not.

Evidence of the Change of Days can be Seen in the NT

The New Testament has ample evidence that the seventh day Sabbath is no longer a requirement.

- Rom. 14:5-6, "One man regards one day above another, another regards every day alike. Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind. 6 He who observes the day, observes it

for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God."

The entire section of Rom. 14:1-12 is worth careful study. Nevertheless, the instructions here are that individuals must be convinced in their own minds about which day they observe for the Lord. If the seventh day Sabbath were a requirement, then the choice would not be man's, but God's.

- Col. 2:16-17, "Therefore let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day— 17 things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ."

Notice here that time sequence mentioned. A festival is yearly. A new moon is monthly. A Sabbath is weekly. No one is to judge in regard to this. The Sabbath is defined as a shadow, the reality is Jesus. Jesus is our Sabbath.

- Acts 20:7, "And on the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to depart the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight."

The first day of the week is Sunday and this is the day the people gathered. This passage can easily be seen as the church meeting on Sunday. It has two important church functions within it: breaking bread (communion) and a message (preaching). Additionally, Luke did not use the Jewish system of counting days: sundown to sundown. He used the Roman system: midnight to midnight. This is a subtle point that shows the Jewish Sabbath system was not the one utilized by Luke.

- 1 Cor. 16:1-2, "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. 2 On the first day of every week let each one of you put aside and save, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come."

Notice here that Paul is directing the churches to meet on the first day of each week and put money aside. It would seem that this is tithing. So, the instructed time for the church to meet is Sunday. Is this an official worship day set up by the church? You decide.

- Rev. 1:10-11, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like the sound of a trumpet, 11 saying, "Write in a book what you see, and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus and to Smyrna and to Pergamum and to Thyatira and to Sardis and to Philadelphia and to Laodicea."

The New Bible Dictionary says regarding the term, 'The Lord's Day' in Revelation 1:10: "This is the first extant occurrence in Christian literature of τῆς κυριακῆς ἡμέρας, "ta kuriaka hamera". The adjectival construction suggests that it was a formal designation of the church's worship day. As such it certainly appears early in the 2nd century (Ignatius, *Epistle to the Magnesians*, 1. 67). Ignatius was the disciple of John the apostle.

In many churches today, the term "The Lord's Day" is used to designate Sunday, the same as it was in the second century.

I hope this is evidence enough to show you that the Bible does not require that we worship on Saturday. If anything, we have the freedom (Rom. 14:1-12) to worship on the day that we believe we should. And, no one should judge us in regard to the day we keep. We are free in Christ, not under law (Rom. 6:14).

COUNSEL OF ACTS 15 CONVENED

WHEN THE COUNSEL OF ACTS 15 CONVENED to determine what Gentile Christians must observe, **SABBATH KEEPING IS CONSPICUOUSLY ABSENT**. Peter exhorts the leadership of the Church not to place the Gentiles under the Law:

Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are." Acts 15:10-11.

The final judgment of the Jerusalem Council contains no reference to Sabbath keeping. Circumcision was discussed and deemed unnecessary (vss. 5-6; 19-20). If Sabbath keeping were to be an essential part of the New Covenant relationship with God it would have been mentioned in the discussion because it would have been an unfamiliar practice to the Gentiles. Sabbath keeping was not even discussed because it is not a requirement for New Covenant believers:

"For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials; that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication; if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well. Farewell." (Acts 15:28-29).

NOTICE that the Holy Spirit told them **NOT** to lay upon the Gentiles any greater burden than **THOSE ESSENTIALS**. **OBVIOUSLY THE HOLY SPIRIT DID NOT THINK SABBATH KEEPING WAS AN ESSENTIAL THING ANYMORE!**

The 7 post-resurrection appearances of Christ show that Jesus purposefully chose the first day of the week to meet with His disciples to encourage and exhort them. The evidence shows that five of these appearances occurred on a Sunday, the first day of the week. We do not have a record of what the actual day on which the other appearances (John 21 and Acts 1:6-10) occurred to His disciples. What we can say with accuracy is this, after Jesus' resurrection whenever He met with His disciples and the day is identified, it is **NOT** the Sabbath, it is the first day of the week!

1). To Mary, On the morning of the resurrection - Matthew 28:8-10; Mark 16:9; John 20:11-18

2). To two disciples going to Emmaus - Luke 24:13-33; Mark 16:12-13

3). To Simon (Peter) - Luke 24:31-35.

4). To the eleven disciples on the evening of Resurrection Sunday - Mark 16:14-18; Luke 24:36-44; John 20:19-23

5). To the Eleven disciples "Eight days later" - John 20:26-29

Pentecost happened on the first day of the week! The Church was born on the first day of the week! That doesn't make Sunday the Sabbath, it just tells you that after the resurrection of Jesus, the Sabbath is not emphasized.

When a day is mentioned in connection with the appearances of the risen Lord Jesus, it is always the first day of the week. Look at the extremely important events that occurred in the life of the first followers of Christ on the first day of the week.

1). Jesus startled them by appearing to them on the first day (John 20:19).

2). Jesus received worship from Thomas (John 20:27-28).

3). Sunday evening Jesus took bread and blessed it and broke it and gave it to His disciples evidently like He had in instituting the communion meal (Luke 22:19) and their "eyes were opened and they recognized Him" (Luke 24:31).

4). Sunday evening Jesus blessed His disciples twice saying "Peace be with you" (John 20:20; 26).

5). That same Sunday evening Jesus "...breathed on them and said, 'receive the Holy Spirit'" John 20:22.

6). On Sunday evening Jesus gave His disciples the ecclesiastical authority to proclaim forgiveness to those who believe in Him through the Gospel (John 20:23).

NOTE: Why did the Disciples meet on Sunday?

1). Because it now carried a special symbolic/anti-typical significance for them

2). Even if it didn't and was by chance, --Jesus still chose to reveal Himself to them only on Sunday, when we know what day it is. That must also hold some kind of Divine significance.

3). Jesus could have chosen to meet with His disciple on the Sabbath. This would have clearly set a New Covenant precedent. He did not chose to do this. The Sabbath was the sign of a fulfilled covenant (see Exodus 31:17 & Hebrews 8:13).

THE NINE "MORAL" COMMANDS OF THE 10 COMMANDMENTS ARE REITERATED in the New Testament:

- 1). To worship the Lord God only (1st commandment): no less than 50 times
- 2). Idolatry (2nd commandment): condemned 12 times
- 3). Profanity (3rd commandment): condemned 4 times
- 4). Honoring parents (5th commandment) is taught 6 times
- 5). Murder (6th commandment) condemned 6 times
- 6). Adultery (7th commandment) condemned 12 times
- 7). Theft (8th commandment) condemned 4 times
- 8). False Witness (9th commandment) condemned 4 times
- 9). Covetousness (10th commandment) condemned 9 times

Reference Verses for these nine moral commands ⁱ

Why is it that the duty to keep the Seventh day as Sabbath is not mentioned ONCE in the New Testament?

WHEN THE NEW TESTAMENT LISTS SINS, SABBATH BREAKING IS CONSPICUOUSLY ABSENT:

- In Mark 7:21-22 13 sins are listed. Jesus did not mention breaking the Sabbath.
- In Romans 1:29-32 20 sins are listed and not one of them is Sabbath breaking.
- In Galatians 5:19-21 a list of 15 sins are given,
- In 2 Timothy 3:1-4 there's a list of 18 sins, but not once is Sabbath breaking mentioned!

WHY IS IT THAT NOWHERE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT IS IT TAUGHT THAT THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT MUST BE OBSERVED?

-Why is it that nowhere in the New Testament is failure to keep the Sabbath day condemned as sin?

-Why is the fourth commandment itself not repeated even ONCE in the New Testament?

-If the Sabbath keeping is so important for a disciple of Christ, why was it not mentioned in His sermon on the Mount or in ANY of His teachings?

-Why didn't Jesus command Sabbath keeping?

-Why didn't any of the Apostles command Sabbath keeping?

-Why didn't the Jerusalem counsel command Sabbath keeping or condemn Sabbath breaking? (Acts 15)

Some answer that the Jews already knew about the Sabbath so it was taken for granted that

they would continue to keep it, but then why were the other nine commandments reiterated? Would they not be taken for granted as well? It would also seem that with so many Gentiles coming into the Church, that if keeping the Sabbath was so important there would be instruction in the New Testament Epistles somewhere concerning it. There are instructions for them concerning morality, ethics, worship, Church order and family lifestyle. Why would something as important as Sabbath keeping be ignored? Circumcision, which predates the Law and the Sabbath commandment was an issue in the New Testament Church and is addressed repeatedly in the New Testament Epistles and by the Jerusalem Counsel.

Sabbath keepers argue that it is the example of Jesus that gives us the reason for keeping the Sabbath. "He kept the Sabbath, so I must keep the Sabbath. Jesus is my example," they say. Well this kind of reasoning is flawed because it only chooses Jesus' Sabbath keeping and rejects the rest of His Jewish lifestyle. Jesus also kept Kosher laws. He kept the Passover, Sukkot, Hanukkah, and worshipped in the temple. Are we to follow everything He did?

Galatians 4:4-5 says that Jesus lived under the Law to redeem us from the Law.

"But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons." (NIV)

JESUS WAS ALSO ACCUSED OF SABBATH BREAKING. Why, if He wanted to be our "example" in Sabbath keeping didn't He make it clear that He was not breaking the Sabbath? Instead He clearly admits to it. He also admits that His disciples were breaking the Sabbath and He defends them. Read Matthew 12:1- 14 carefully. Jesus is clearly saying that His disciples are like the priests who may work in the temple every Sabbath and be innocent of breaking the Sabbath. When Jesus says that He is "Lord of the Sabbath" He is declaring that He is above the Sabbath. He may do what He wishes on the Sabbath and therefore His disciples may do whatever they wish as well.

Apparently Jesus did break the Sabbath: "Therefore some of the Pharisees were saying, "This man is not from God, because He does not keep the Sabbath."..." John 9:15. If Jesus did not want us to understand that He was breaking the Sabbath why did He not speak against these accusations. It's because Jesus had the right and the authority to break the Sabbath because He is Lord of the Sabbath. The Sabbath does not bind Him. Think about this, if it does not bind Him, are we not "in Christ"? Why would it be any more binding upon us. (Again Read Matthew 12:1-14 carefully).

One of the issues that needs to be honestly faced is the fact that Jesus never commanded anyone to keep the Sabbath and none of His apostles ever commanded anyone to keep it either. Not once in the New Testament are we told to keep the Sabbath. Those commands to the Church are conspicuously absent from the teachings of the New Testament.

EVERY MENTION OF THE SABBATH IN THE BOOK OF ACTS without a single exception is in connection with Jewish worship on that day and not Christian celebration. Paul's evangelistic strategy was to go to the Jews first in a community and share the Gospel with them. Sabbath is the day when he knew he would find the most Jews gathering for worship. He knew

he would have his best opportunity of sharing the good news of the Messiah to the Jews on Sabbath. It was not because he was meeting with a group of believing Christians. He was meeting with non-Christian Jews.

IS THE TEN COMMANDMENT LAW ETERNAL?

No, the Law is not eternal. Galatians 3:19 gives the purpose of the Law. It says: "What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come."

The law was given 430 years after Abraham. "What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise. For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on a promise; but God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise." Galatians 3:17-18.

The Law had a definite beginning time (430 years after Abraham) and a definite ending time, -
-When the promised Seed (Christ, vs. 16) came.

Other Scriptures such as Romans 5:12-14 indicate that there can be sin in the world, even BEFORE the Law was given. "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned -- for until the Law sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of Adam's offense, who is a type of Him who was to come."

CREATION & THE SABBATH: The Scriptures are very clear that the Sabbath of the fourth commandment was not given before Moses:

The Ten Commandments was not made with the fathers. Deuteronomy 5:2-3 says

"The Lord our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. The Lord did not make this covenant with our fathers, but with us, with all those of us alive here today."

Nehemiah 9:13-14 says: "You came down on Mount Sinai; you spoke to them from heaven. You gave them regulations and laws that are just and right, and decrees and commands that are good. You made known to them your holy sabbath and gave them commands, decrees and laws through your servant Moses." (NIV).

WAS THE SABBATH GIVEN FOR ALL MANKIND TO KEEP PERPETUALLY?

No, - Though Genesis 2:1-3 says that after the Lord had ended all His work He rested on the seventh day and blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, there is not a word about it being given to Adam and Eve as a commandment. You don't hear another word about the Sabbath in the entire book of Genesis. All fifty chapters are silent about the Sabbath.

You do not hear that the righteous Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob kept the Sabbath.

There is a conspicuous silence for 2,500 years after the Fall of man. It is not until after the redemption of God's people Israel out of Egypt when they are safely on the other side of the Red Sea that you read in the Book of Exodus that the Sabbath is mentioned again. (Exodus 16:22-30). Abraham was given commandments and ordinances, but the Sabbath is never mentioned as one of them.

Then the Sabbath is given to Israel and Israel alone. The Sabbath is a covenant sign between God and the nation of Israel. "And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "But as for you, speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'You shall surely observe My sabbaths; for this is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the Lord who sanctifies you. 'Therefore you are to observe the sabbath, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people. For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there is a sabbath of complete rest, holy to the Lord; whoever does any work on the sabbath day shall surely be put to death. So the sons of Israel shall observe the sabbath, to celebrate the sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between Me and the sons of Israel forever; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day he ceased from labor, and was refreshed." Exodus 31:12-17

Notice that the reason why the Lord links the Sabbath to creation is that He is identifying Himself to Israel as the true and living Creator God. He is separate and apart from all of the other gods of Egypt and of the Gentile world. "Keep the Sabbath, worship Me, for I AM the true, living Creator of the Universe."

Notice also that this Sabbath "SIGN" (Exodus 31:13) is between God and "the sons of Israel" (Exodus 12:15,17) and not for all of mankind.

Nehemiah 9:13-14 indicates that the Sabbath was not given to be kept by anyone until it was given to Israel in the wilderness. "You came down on Mount Sinai; you spoke to them from heaven. You gave them regulations and laws that are just and right, and decrees and commands that are good. You made known to them your holy sabbath and gave them commands, decrees and laws through your servant Moses." (NIV).

DOESN'T THE BIBLE SAY THAT THE SABBATH WAS MADE FOR MAN?

"And He was saying to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." Mark 2:27. Sabbatarians often use this verse to say that the Sabbath was made for all mankind, but the text doesn't say that. It doesn't say, "The Sabbath was made for "mankind", it says, "the Sabbath was made for man". When the Scripture is meant to be inclusive of all mankind it is clear. See Matthew 28:19; John 3:16; Acts 2:17; I Timothy 2:4; Titus 2:11. These verses clearly indicate that when God offers something to all mankind He clearly offers it to all.

The Sabbath was not offered to all the nations. It was given only to the nation of Israel. Look at Deuteronomy 5:1-15 which gives the commandments to Israel. It is clearly stated that God did not give the Sabbath or other commandments to the fathers before (see verses 2-3).

One writer has brought up the point that this text shows that the Sabbath was not a part of the "moral" Law to be kept by all mankind from the beginning, for it had to be made. It was made in Exodus 16-20. Notice also that this text does not say it was made for man from the "beginning," as was marriage (cf Matthew 19:4ff). WHICH OTHER OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS HAD TO BE MADE? --NOT ONE! (Gerald N. Wright, Sabbatarian Concordance & Commentary, Star Bible & Tract Corp., 1977, pp. 78-79).

Wright commenting on this passage says: "The other nine [commandments] were (and are) inherently right from the beginning, reflecting God's righteous nature and being naturally a part of man's moral character, who was made in the image of God (cf Romans 2:14). Which command other than the sabbath is lower than man--subject to being set aside under certain circumstances? When, or under what circumstances, can man lawfully commit adultery? Obviously, never! Man's life is not above God's holy and moral laws. Yet even a sheep's life is more important than rigid enforcement of the sabbath (Matthew 12:10-12)!"

NO "BURGER KING" SABBATHS - You can't "Have It Your Way" with the Sabbath. God specifies how it was to be kept.

- It was to be kept from sunset to sunset (Lev. 23:32)
- No burden was to be carried (Jer. 17:21)
- No fire kindled (Ex. 35:3)
- No Cooking done (Ex. 16:23)
- The penalty for doing any of these things during the Sabbath was DEATH (Numbers 15).

NO "INSPIRED" WRITER MAKES ANY DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE "MORAL" LAW & THE "CEREMONIAL" LAWS.

"(2) The Sabbath in its nature, is itself a ceremonial law: the moral law is all law which appeals to the conscience, and needs no written revelation; but as to which day to observe, or whether to observe any day at all, conscience is silent. If we are to distinguish between the moral and the ceremonial law, on the ground that one is passed, and the other still in force, then--as the Sabbath is purely ceremonial law--it is passed. But the most important point still remains. (3) I, as a Christian, obey all law that is moral in the Decalogue, not because it is in the Law, but because it is in the Gospel. Worship of God only is enjoined fifty times in the New Testament; idolatry is forbidden twelve times; profanity four times; honor of father and mother is commanded six times; adultery is forbidden twelve; theft six; false witness four; and covetousness, nine times. "The Ten Commandments," as Luther says, "do not apply to us Gentiles and Christians, but only to the Jews." So the Sabbath--except in a single passage where, classing it with the entire law, he declares it has been totally abolished. So the early Church held."

--D. M. Pantou, cited in Heresies Exposed, Compiled by Irvine, pp. 164-165.

SOME SABBATARIANS CLAIM THAT THE SABBATH IS THE SEAL OF GOD

The Seal of God is NOT the Sabbath! The Bible tells us clearly that the Seal of God is the

Holy Spirit indwelling the believer the moment he is saved.

Ephesians 1:13 says, "And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession--to the praise of his glory."

Ephesians 4:30 warns, "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption."

2 Corinthians 1:21-22 states "Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge."

IS A SABBATH KEEPING CHURCH THE "REMNANT" OR COMMANDMENT KEEPING CHURCH THAT IS SPOKEN OF IN REVELATION 12:17?

Rev. 12:17 says, "And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus."

In the New Covenant, what are the "Commandments" of God? Does this mean Ten Commandments? NO! The Greek word used for the Ten Commandments is "NOMOS". That word is not used here. The word used here is "ENTELE" and means "teachings".

John clarifies this and actually tells us what the "commandments" are that we are to keep:

I John 5:1-3 says, "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God; and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome."

These verses are often used to teach people that they must keep the Ten Commandments, especially the Sabbath. However, the Apostle John defines the "commandments" for us. In the prior chapter he defines them explicitly. "Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight. And this is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us. And the one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him..."

I John 3:21-24a.

THE ASSERTION BY SABBATARIANS THAT AT THE COUNCIL OF LAODICEA THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH changed the Sabbath from the Seventh day to the First day is not true. The Sabbath was not changed at that Council.

What did take place at that Council was an anti-semitic move to make it illegal for a Christian to worship on Saturday. But one needs to note that there were thousands of Christians already

worshipping on Sunday, the first day of the week. Many in the early Church worshipped on Sunday:

"Anti-Judaism played its part in second-century Christian polemic against Jewish Sabbath observance, but it does not follow that it motivated the introduction of Christian Sunday worship. For we have already argued that Sunday worship dates back to the first century, while few second-century writers compare and contrast the Jewish Sabbath and the Christian Sunday. Derogatory discussions of the Jewish Sabbath do not usually refer to the Christian Sunday. If Sunday were a recent substitute for the Jewish Sabbath, we should expect far more discussion of the superiority of Sunday to the Sabbath." R. J. Bauckham, *From Sabbath to Lord's Day*, p. 271, edited by D.A. Carson.

Early Church Father quotes on the Lord's day

Some religious organizations (Seventh-day Adventists, Seventh-Day Baptists, and certain others) claim that Christians must not worship on Sunday but on Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath. They claim that, at some unnamed time after the apostolic age, the Church "changed" the day of worship from Saturday to Sunday.

However, passages of Scripture such as Acts 20:7, 1 Corinthians 16:2, Colossians 2:16-17, and Revelation 1:10 indicate that, even during New Testament times, the Sabbath is no longer binding and that Christians are to worship on the Lord's day, Sunday, instead.

The early Church Fathers compared the observance of the Sabbath to the observance of the rite of circumcision, and from that they demonstrated that if the apostles abolished circumcision (Gal. 5:1-6), so also the observance of the Sabbath must have been abolished. The following quotations show that the first Christians understood this principle and gathered for worship on Sunday.

The Didache

"But every Lord's day . . . gather yourselves together and break bread, and give thanksgiving after having confessed your transgressions, that your sacrifice may be pure. But let no one that is at variance with his fellow come together with you, until they be reconciled, that your sacrifice may not be profaned" (*Didache* 14 [A.D. 70]).

The Letter of Barnabas

"We keep the eighth day [Sunday] with joyfulness, the day also on which Jesus rose again from the dead" (*Letter of Barnabas* 15:6-8 [A.D. 74]).

Ignatius of Antioch

"[T]hose who were brought up in the ancient order of things [i.e. Jews] have come to the possession of a new hope, no longer observing the Sabbath, but living in the observance of the Lord's day, on which also our life has sprung up again by him and by his death" (*Letter to the Magnesians* 8 [A.D. 110]).

Justin Martyr

"[W]e too would observe the fleshly circumcision, and the Sabbaths, and in short all the feasts, if we did not know for what reason they were enjoined [on] you—namely, on account of your transgressions and the hardness of your heart. . . . [H]ow is it, Trypho, that we would not observe those rites which do not harm us—I speak of fleshly circumcision and Sabbaths and feasts? . . . God enjoined you to keep the Sabbath, and imposed on you other precepts for a sign, as I have already said, on account of your unrighteousness and that of your fathers . . ." (*Dialogue with Trypho the Jew* 18, 21 [A.D. 155]).

"But Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Savior on the same day rose from the dead" (*First Apology* 67 [A.D. 155]).

Tertullian

"[L]et him who contends that the Sabbath is still to be observed as a balm of salvation, and circumcision on the eighth day . . . teach us that, for the time past, righteous men kept the Sabbath or practiced circumcision, and were thus rendered 'friends of God.' For if circumcision purges a man, since God made Adam uncircumcised, why did he not circumcise him, even after his sinning, if circumcision purges? . . . Therefore, since God originated Adam uncircumcised and unobservant of the Sabbath, consequently his offspring also, Abel, offering him sacrifices, uncircumcised and unobservant of the Sabbath, was by him [God] commended [Gen. 4:1–7, Heb. 11:4]. . . . Noah also, uncircumcised—yes, and unobservant of the Sabbath—God freed from the deluge. For Enoch too, most righteous man, uncircumcised and unobservant of the Sabbath, he translated from this world, who did not first taste death in order that, being a candidate for eternal life, he might show us that we also may, without the burden of the law of Moses, please God" (*An Answer to the Jews* 2 [A.D. 203]).

The Didascalia

"The apostles further appointed: On the first day of the week let there be service, and the reading of the holy scriptures, and the oblation [sacrifice of the Mass], because on the first day of the week [i.e., Sunday] our Lord rose from the place of the dead, and on the first day of the week he arose upon the world, and on the first day of the week he ascended up to heaven, and on the first day of the week he will appear at last with the angels of heaven" (*Didascalia* 2 [A.D. 225]).

Origen

"Hence it is not possible that the [day of] rest after the Sabbath should have come into existence from the seventh [day] of our God. On the contrary, it is our Savior who, after the pattern of his own rest, caused us to be made in the likeness of his death, and hence also of his resurrection" (*Commentary on John* 2:28 [A.D. 229]).

Victorinus

"The sixth day [Friday] is called *parasceve*, that is to say, the preparation of the kingdom. . . . On this day also, on account of the passion of the Lord Jesus Christ, we make either a station to God or a fast. On the seventh day he rested from all his works, and blessed it, and sanctified it. On the former day we are accustomed to fast rigorously, that on the Lord's day we may go forth to our bread with giving of thanks. And let the *parasceve* become a rigorous fast, lest we should appear to observe any Sabbath with the Jews . . . which Sabbath he [Christ] in his body abolished" (*The*

Creation of the World [A.D. 300]).

Eusebius of Caesarea

"They [the early saints of the Old Testament] did not care about circumcision of the body, neither do we [Christians]. They did not care about observing Sabbaths, nor do we. They did not avoid certain kinds of food, neither did they regard the other distinctions which Moses first delivered to their posterity to be observed as symbols; nor do Christians of the present day do such things" (*Church History* 1:4:8 [A.D. 312]).

"[T]he day of his [Christ's] light . . . was the day of his resurrection from the dead, which they say, as being the one and only truly holy day and the Lord's day, is better than any number of days as we ordinarily understand them, and better than the days set apart by the Mosaic law for feasts, new moons, and Sabbaths, which the apostle [Paul] teaches are the shadow of days and not days in reality" (*Proof of the Gospel* 4:16:186 [A.D. 319]).

Athanasius

"The Sabbath was the end of the first creation, the Lord's day was the beginning of the second, in which he renewed and restored the old in the same way as he prescribed that they should formerly observe the Sabbath as a memorial of the end of the first things, so we honor the Lord's day as being the memorial of the new creation" (*On Sabbath and Circumcision* 3 [A.D. 345]).

Cyril of Jerusalem

"Fall not away either into the sect of the Samaritans or into Judaism, for Jesus Christ has henceforth ransomed you. Stand aloof from all observance of Sabbaths and from calling any indifferent meats common or unclean" (*Catechetical Lectures* 4:37 [A.D. 350]).

Council of Laodicea

"Christians should not Judaize and should not be idle on the Sabbath, but should work on that day; they should, however, particularly reverence the Lord's day and, if possible, not work on it, because they were Christians" (Canon 29 [A.D. 360]).

John Chrysostom

"[W]hen he [God] said, 'You shall not kill' . . . he did not add, 'because murder is a wicked thing.' The reason was that conscience had taught this beforehand, and he speaks thus, as to those who know and understand the point. Wherefore when he speaks to us of another commandment, not known to us by the dictate of conscience, he not only prohibits, but adds the reason. When, for instance, he gave commandment concerning the Sabbath— 'On the seventh day you shall do no work'—he subjoined also the reason for this cessation. What was this? 'Because on the seventh day God rested from all his works which he had begun to make' [Ex. 20:10-11]. . . . For what purpose then, I ask, did he add a reason respecting the Sabbath, but did no such thing in regard to murder? Because this commandment was not one of the leading ones. It was not one of those which were accurately defined of our conscience, but a kind of partial and temporary one, and for this reason it was abolished afterward. But those which are necessary and uphold our life are the following: 'You shall not kill. . . . You shall not commit adultery. . . . You shall not steal.' On this account he adds no reason in this case, nor enters into any instruction on the matter, but is content with the bare prohibition" (*Homilies on the Statutes* 12:9 [A.D. 387]).

"You have put on Christ, you have become a member of the Lord and been enrolled in the heavenly city, and you still grovel in the law [of Moses]? How is it possible for you to obtain the kingdom? Listen to Paul's words, that the observance of the law overthrows the gospel, and learn, if you will, how this comes to pass, and tremble, and shun this pitfall. Why do you keep the Sabbath and fast with the Jews?" (*Homilies on Galatians* 2:17 [A.D. 395]).

"The rite of circumcision was venerable in the Jews' account, forasmuch as the law itself gave way thereto, and the Sabbath was less esteemed than circumcision. For that circumcision might be performed, the Sabbath was broken; but that the Sabbath might be kept, circumcision was never broken; and mark, I pray, the dispensation of God. This is found to be even more solemn than the Sabbath, as not being omitted at certain times. When then it is done away, much more is the Sabbath" (*Homilies on Philippians* 10 [A.D. 402]).

The Apostolic Constitutions

"And on the day of our Lord's resurrection, which is the Lord's day, meet more diligently, sending praise to God that made the universe by Jesus, and sent him to us, and condescended to let him suffer, and raised him from the dead. Otherwise what apology will he make to God who does not assemble on that day . . . in which is performed the reading of the prophets, the preaching of the gospel, the oblation of the sacrifice, the gift of the holy food" (*Apostolic Constitutions* 2:7:60 [A.D. 400]).

Augustine

"Well, now, I should like to be told what there is in these ten commandments, except the observance of the Sabbath, which ought not to be kept by a Christian. . . . Which of these commandments would anyone say that the Christian ought not to keep? It is possible to contend that it is not the law which was written on those two tables that the apostle [Paul] describes as 'the letter that kills' [2 Cor. 3:6], but the law of circumcision and the other sacred rites which are now abolished" (*The Spirit and the Letter* 24 [A.D. 412]).

Pope Gregory I

"It has come to my ears that certain men of perverse spirit have sown among you some things that are wrong and opposed to the holy faith, so as to forbid any work being done on the Sabbath day. What else can I call these [men] but preachers of Antichrist, who when he comes will cause the Sabbath day as well as the Lord's day to be kept free from all work. For because he [the Antichrist] pretends to die and rise again, he wishes the Lord's day to be held in reverence; and because he compels the people to Judaize that he may bring back the outward rite of the law, and subject the perfidy of the Jews to himself, he wishes the Sabbath to be observed. For this which is said by the prophet, 'You shall bring in no burden through your gates on the Sabbath day' [Jer. 17:24] could be held to as long as it was lawful for the law to be observed according to the letter. But after that the grace of almighty God, our Lord Jesus Christ, has appeared, the commandments of the law which were spoken figuratively cannot be kept according to the letter. For if anyone says that this about the Sabbath is to be kept, he must needs say that carnal sacrifices are to be offered. He must say too that the commandment about the circumcision of the body is still to be retained. But let him hear the apostle Paul saying in opposition to him: 'If you be circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing' [Gal. 5:2]" (*Letters* 13:1 [A.D. 597]).

ⁱ **References for the 9 "moral" commandments reiterated in the New Testament:**

1st - Worship God - (53 times) Matthew 2:2; 2:8; 2:11; 4:9; 4:10; 14:33; 15:9; 28:9; 28:17, Mark 7:7, Luke 4:7; 4:8; 24:52, John 4:20,21,22(x2),23,24(x2); 9:38; 12:20, Acts 7:43; 8:27; 16:14; 17:23(x2); 18:7; 18:13; 19:27; 24:11, Romans 1:25; 12:1, 1 Corinthians 14:25, Philippians 3:3, Colossians 2:18, Hebrews 1:6; 9:1; 9:6; 10:2; 11:21, Revelation 4:10; 5:14; 7:11; 9:20; 11:1; 11:16; 14:7; 15:4; 19:4; 19:10; 22:8; 22:9

2nd - No Idolatry - (20 times) Acts 15:20,29, Romans 1:25, 1 Corinthians 6:9; Chapter 8; 10:7,14; 12:2, 2 Corinthians 6:16, 1 Thessalonians 1:9, Galatians 5:20, Ephesians 5:5, Colossians 3:5, 1 Peter 4:3, 1 John 5:21, Revelation 2:14, 20; 9:20; 21:8; 22:15

3rd - No Profanity - (4 times) Matthew 12:36, Ephesians 5:4, Romans 2:24, Revelation 16:9

5th - Honor Parents - (6 times) Matthew 15:5, Matthew 19:19, Mark 7:10; 10:19, Luke 18:20, Ephesians 6:2

6th - Murder - (7 times) Matthew 5:21; 19:18, Mark 10:19, Luke 18:20, Romans 1:29; 13:9, James 2:11

7th - Adultery - (12 times) Matthew 5:27,28,32; 19:9,18, Mark 10:11,19, Luke 16:18; 18:20, Romans 13:9, James 2:11, 2 Peter 2:14

8th - Stealing - (6 times) Matthew 19:18, Mark 10:19, Luke 18:20, Romans 2:21; 13:9, Ephesians 4:28

9th - Lying - (4 times) Matthew 15:9; 19:18, Mark 10:19, Luke 18:20

10th - Don't Covet - (9 times) Mark 7:22, Luke 12:15, Romans 1:29; 7:7; 13:9, Ephesians 5:3, Colossians 3:5, Hebrews 13:5, 2 Peter 2:14