

HOW WAS THE SABBATH CHANGED?

The Bible begins with a garden of Eden which was lost when Adam and Eve sinned, and closes with a new earth, a new garden of Eden so-to-speak, where every inhabitant is an overcomer of sin. Adam and Eve walked in the first Eden with God, and only overcomers will walk in the new earth with God. The ten commandments which reflect the holy principles of a holy God, were Adam's and Eve's guide to God's will, and will always guide as God will always exist. In fact, the lives of the redeemed will be a perfect reflection of those holy principles. And as Adam and Eve kept the seventh-day Sabbath in holy Eden (Genesis 2:1-3), so the Bible says that the redeemed will keep it forever in the new earth (Isaiah 66:22,23).

In our last four studies we have found that both the Ten Commandments and the seventh-day Sabbath are a part of God's truth throughout all of the ages between the two Edens. This raises two very serious and important questions. First, why do many fine people today believe that the Ten Commandments were done away with at the death of Christ? We have already answered that. But the second question we must also consider. What about the seventh-day Sabbath? Many lovely people believe that it has also been done away with since Christ's death, and that Sunday is to be kept as a memorial of His resurrection. Is this true? In this lesson we need to further examine the Bible to see if a change is really taught by its writers.

1. First, doesn't the New Testament contain texts about the first day of the week? Yes, there are eight of them. Summarize what they say.
 - (a) Matthew 28:1 _____
(Mark 16:1,2; 16:9; Luke 24:1; and John 20:1 all deal with exactly the same thing. But they say nothing about worshipping on that day. So the first five of the eight are simple records of an event.)
 - (b) John 20:19 _____
(Late in the afternoon of the resurrection, they were hiding, not worshipping.)
 - (c) Acts 20:7,8 _____
(This took place about 30 years after the resurrection. As days were counted from sundown in Bible times, Paul was preaching on Saturday night and traveling on Sunday. There is no hint of a special sacredness of a new worship day. Just previously, in Acts 13, 16, 17, and 18, Paul and the apostles were all keeping the Sabbath.)
 - (d) 1 Corinthians 16:1,2 _____
(You will notice that this passage says nothing about church or a day of worship. Rather Paul wanted them to put aside something weekly, probably at home, so that when he came he could quickly gather their gifts and take them to the poor in Jerusalem.)
2. What about the "Lord's day" in Revelation 1:10? Wasn't it Sunday? Quickly review it. Also re-read Matthew 12:8 and Exodus 20:10 and summarize the Bible's only definition of the term.

3. Doesn't the Bible teach us that Sunday was to be kept as a "memorial" of the resurrection of Jesus? The Bible does give us one memorial of the resurrection. What is it in Romans 6:3-5?

4. Two summary statements, one by a Protestant writer, the other by a Catholic writer, help us to understand better what we are trying to clarify.
 - (a) R. W. Dale, a Congregationalist: "It is quite clear that, however rigidly or devotedly we may spend Sunday, we are not keeping the Sabbath. . . . The Sabbath was founded on a specific, divine command. . . . There is not a single sentence in the New Testament to suggest that we incur any penalty by violating the supposed sanctity of Sunday."---The Ten Commandments, pages 127-129.
 - (b) Cardinal James Gibbons, a Roman Catholic: "You may read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and you will not find a single line authorizing the sanctification of Sunday. The Scriptures enforce the religious observance of Saturday, a day which we never sanctify."---Faith of Our Fathers, page 86, 1895 edition.
5. If the Bible is silent about any change in the Sabbath by Christ or the apostles after Christ's resurrection, how, when, by whom, was the Sabbath then changed? Does the Bible say anything about an unwarranted change? Does it predict any attempt by man to change God's holy day?
 - (a) Even in Paul's day, what did he say was happening? 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4,7.

(Terms like "man of sin," "mystery of iniquity," refer to a power characterized by lawlessness. Many Bible translations translate the terms this way. There was COMPROMISE, even in the early, first century Christian church.)

- (b) The slow turning from God's Sabbath to Sunday is the sad record of the second and third centuries, AD. Then in the 300s, AD, a Roman general, CONSTANTINE, ambitious for the throne, adopted Christianity to gain political advantage, and a spirit of worldliness and paganism were incorporated into the faith and worship of the professed followers of Christ. He issued, on March 7, 321, the first law ever given making Sunday a day of rest. It read: "On the venerable Day of the Sun let the magistrates and people residing in the cities rest, and let all workshops be closed. In the country, however, persons engaged in agriculture may freely and lawfully continue their pursuits; because it often happens that another day is not so suitable for grain-sowing or for vine-planting; lest by neglecting the proper moment for such operations the bounty of heaven should be lost."---Codex Justinianus, translated by Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church, Vol. III, page 380.

(The Christian church followed the leadership of Constantine, counseling Christian followers away from "Judaizing" on the Sabbath, and transferred the obligations of the seventh day to the first day of the week, which they called the Lord's day.)

- (c) Do you remember our study of Daniel 7? (See lesson 15.) The fourth, dreadful beast had ten horns, and then a little horn that came up among the ten. Form a description of this little horn power from Daniel 7:19-25.
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(If the fourth beast, pagan Rome, was divided into ten kingdoms, as it was from 350-476 AD, and the little horn power came up to uproot three of the ten, which it did by the early 500s, AD, then the description and timing clearly reveal that it represents papal

Rome. The earliest known pronouncement where papal Rome gives special acknowledgement to Sunday is found in the twenty-eighth Canon of the Third Council of Orleans in 538 AD: "Agricultural labor ought to be laid aside, in order that people may not be prevented from attending church.")

6. The conclusion that we must come to is that millions of sincere Christians today keep Sunday because it is CUSTOM, not because of any Bible command. At first the church COMPROMISED, then CONSTANTINE added pagan ideas to that compromise, the Roman CHURCH advocated Sunday worship, and CUSTOM today prevails. A closing question that we need to ask is, Why has Satan continually attacked God's law and particularly God's Sabbath? How do these three texts help to find the answer?

- (a) Exodus 31:17 _____
 (b) Ezekiel 20:12 _____
 (c) Isaiah 66:22,23 _____

7. In contrast to the little horn's work of seeking to change times and laws, where does loyalty to God in all things lead? Daniel 7:26,27.

