



biblestudy

God's Weekly Sabbath

A Specific Day or Just "One in Seven"?

WorldWatchToday.org
PO Box 578010
Modesto, CA 95357

What is the Sabbath? When is it? Why is it? To answer these questions, let's take a look at what the God of the Bible says on this very important subject.

What is the Sabbath?

For many professing Christians it is important to set aside one day each week to worship God. Many people go to church in order to focus for an hour or two on their religious beliefs. This refreshes them and allows them to maintain a sense of connection to the God they worship. Among professing Christians, the day most set aside for Sabbath observance is Sunday. That is a tradition handed down to them from the "fathers" of their faith, and they accept the observance of a Sunday "Sabbath" (day of rest and worship) as appropriate. Who could argue that taking time away from other activities to worship God is bad? No one could, as long as the God being worshiped does not care which day you observe as the Sabbath. But what if He does care?

The instruction manual for worshipping the true God is the Holy Bible. Based upon today's custom among Protestants and Catholics, one would expect to find God smiling down on them as they come before Him in worship on the first day of the week, Sunday. Since Sunday worship is practiced among professing Christians worldwide, it is presumed one would only have to open the Bible to find many scriptures endorsing the practice. The Muslims worship on Friday in accordance with instruction from the Koran, the Jews worship on Saturday in accordance with the scriptures of the Old Testament, and professing

Christians worship on Sunday in accordance with the instructions from scriptures found in the New Testament...Right? Wrong.

Why are scriptures endorsing Sunday Sabbath observance not found in the Bible?

Is There a Specific Sabbath Day for Worshipping the True God of the Bible?

The ONLY true and reliable answer to this question comes from the Bible. The Bible is the inspired word of God (II Timothy 3:16). Let's see what the Creator and the ONE true God has to say about "one day in seven."

God is both omniscient and eternal (Revelation 1:8, 1:11, 21:6, 22:13). God has no beginning and no end. Is there one particular day of worship significant to the immortal God who has always existed? The book of Genesis records the "creation week" in chapters 1:3-31 and 2:1-3. You will read many times that God says, "And there was **evening**, and there was **morning**," the first day, the second day, the third day, and so on. God created days, starting and ending them at "evening" or sunset. (That is a bit different from how the western world has come to count time.)

The next scripture is crucial to understanding the Sabbath Day as it was given by God to man. Genesis 2:2: *"And on the SEVENTH day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. 3, Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made."*

It's normal to rest after you have worked hard, isn't it? The above picture shows God doing something quite ordinary, quite understandable in terms of how we humans do things. After six days of heavy labor He rested from His labor of creation. God blessed, made holy, and rested on a specific day – the seventh day of the seven-day week that He created. That is significant. Do we read of this practice of resting on the seventh day anywhere else in the Bible?

In Exodus 16 God told the Israelites to observe the Sabbath Day. The Israelites were instructed to gather a double portion of manna on the sixth day in order to have food for the seventh day – the day they were commanded to rest from all labor – just as God did when He rested after six days of creation. The Sabbath Day observance is again commanded in Exodus 20 where God gives the ten basic tenets of His law to mankind:

Exodus 20:8: "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. 9. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: 10. But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: 11. 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." (KJV)

It can be assumed that even "Righteous" Abel (Hebrews 11:4), and Enoch, who "pleased God"

(Hebrews 11:5), and Noah, a "just man" and a "preacher of righteousness" (Genesis 6:9; II Peter 2:5), and Abraham, the father of the faithful, (Romans 4:16), and Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and others kept God's seventh-day Sabbath as well. These men were righteous in God's sight, and the Bible tells us righteousness comes from keeping God's commandments (Psalm 119:172).

Genesis 26:5 reveals that the patriarchs knew and kept God's law. God would not have inspired Moses to write that Abraham kept His commandments, statutes and laws if Abraham had not kept the Sabbath.

In the New Testament Jesus said that His disciples would keep ALL of His commandments (John 14:15, 21). The New Testament also tells us God gives His Holy Spirit only to those who obey Him (Acts 5:32).

Now that we have seen that there is a specific day of the week for Sabbath observance and that the patriarchs of the Bible observed that day, we need to determine which day of our modern week is the Sabbath Day; and, remember, God begins and ends His days at sunset.

Review Questions

1. *Who instituted Sabbath observance? (Genesis 2:3)*
2. *When was the Sabbath Day first observed? (Genesis 2:2)*
3. *Are Christians to keep the true Sabbath in this modern time? (Exodus 20:8-11)*

Which Day of Our Modern Week is the True Sabbath Day?

From the time of creation week until the Exodus, about 2,500 years, there is no specific mention of the Sabbath in the Bible. After the death of Joseph, the children of Israel became slaves in Egypt, a land where time was not measured by weeks but, rather, by months and years. The Israelites were forbidden to worship the true God and were forced to work seven days a week. Therefore, the Israelites lost the knowledge of God's way. Shortly after delivering the Israelites from Egypt, God made it clear to them that they were to rest from their labor on the seventh day of every week.

In Exodus 16:27-30, after Moses gave them clear instruction from God to rest on the Sabbath Day, some of the people disobeyed by trying to gather manna on the Sabbath. The complete absence of manna on the seventh day, and a double portion on the sixth day (to be gathered for the Sabbath) identified exactly which day was the Sabbath and on which day the Israelites were to rest from all their labors. Thus, God miraculously revealed His Sabbath Day to them. As you read the account of the Israelites' journey through the wilderness, you will also notice that God performed several miracles every week to point out the exact day of the Sabbath to the Israelites. He performed these miracles week after week for forty years (Exodus 16:35). This clearly shows how important Sabbath keeping is to God!

God used the tribe of Judah (present-day Jews) to preserve the knowledge of when to keep His

holy Sabbath Day. Paul wrote in Romans 3:1-2 that God used the Jews to preserve the Hebrew or Old Testament Scriptures called "oracles" so that His New Testament, Spirit-begotten church would know when to observe the Sabbath. In Matthew 5:17-18, Luke 16:17 and John 5:46-47, Jesus showed that the Old Testament scriptures had been preserved by the Jews so that "not one jot nor one tittle" of the law had been lost. Also, by Jesus' own words and actions, He showed the Sabbath Day was observed in His day and asserted that the knowledge of the Sabbath would NEVER BE LOST!

One example showing Jesus worshipping on the Sabbath is found in Luke 4:16-17 where it states that Jesus went to Nazareth to a synagogue on the Sabbath Day which was *His custom*, and there He read from the scriptures. Thus, we know that God, through the Jews, preserved the knowledge of the correct day for observing the Sabbath, and that the Lord of the Sabbath, as Christ referred to Himself, customarily went to *synagogues* on the Sabbath Day.

What group of people today holds religious services in synagogues? The Jews, of course! Was Jesus Christ a Jew? Yes. He came from the line of Judah and was labeled the "King of the Jews" (Mark 15:2-26).

Which day of the week do Jews go to their synagogues? Saturday! Have they ever observed a different weekly Sabbath day? No. Jews have always worshiped on the seventh day of the week, the day that we call Saturday.

With everything we have read so far, we know that the Jews of today are observing the same Sabbath Day that Jesus Christ (the God of the Old Testament, as we will see later) blessed and made holy.

To be even more specific, when do Jews begin observing the seventh-day Sabbath? On Friday night at *sunset!* When did God begin the days of the week? At evening, at sunset! Therefore, to observe the Sabbath correctly, we must conclude it has to be observed from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset.

In every nation on earth, Jews have always and will always observe the same Sabbath Day that Jesus kept – the seventh-day Sabbath, Saturday. This observance of the Jews is proof that we have not lost God's true Sabbath Day. (If you want secular confirmation, look at your typical wall calendar to see which day is the seventh day. Check the dictionary, look up *Sunday, Saturday, Sabbath*. You might be surprised at what it says.)

Review Questions

1. *What miracle did the LORD God perform for 40 years to teach the Israelites to observe the Sabbath? (Exodus 16:35)*

2. *Who did God use to preserve His laws? (Romans 3:1-2)*

3. *Did Jesus Christ observe the seventh-day Sabbath? (Luke 4:16-17)*

Why Do We Need To Observe the True Sabbath?

The purpose for keeping God's Sabbath goes far beyond simply resting from our labors every

seventh day. Each week, when Friday sunset arrives, the world is in holy time. It is GOD'S time...the Creator's time...not ours. God made this 24-hour period holy, and it is a time for us to become spiritually rejuvenated through close spiritual contact with Him. It allows us time to think more about God, to pray to and worship Him (both in private and in fellowship with others), and to study the Bible to understand more about His awesome purpose for our lives and how we are to achieve that purpose!

The Sabbath covenant also shows that the Eternal sanctified His obedient people – setting them apart from other people – for His Holy purpose. In the Old Testament God's people consisted of the physical nation of Israel with whom He made His covenant. In the New Testament God's people are *children of Abraham* (Galatians 3:28-29), His spirit-led, spirit-begotten children. God calls His children “firstfruits” (James 1:18) of His divine plan. For these children, the Sabbath foreshadows God's spiritual creation in them, when they will be born into the Family of God as heirs of the Kingdom and the bride of Christ, (Revelation 5:10; 19:7).

Do we *need* to observe the Sabbath Day? Let's look at biblical examples to answer this question.

The Sabbath points back to the creation of the present physical world (Exodus 20:11; 31:17). The Sabbath Day is set aside for assembly and worship of the one true God, the Creator and Ruler of all things! Not only does the Sabbath covenant say, “...that ye may know that I am the

LORD...”, but also “...that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you.” (Exodus 31:13). The Sabbath covenant reveals the Sabbath is a sign that the Eternal sanctifies His obedient people...sets them apart from other people for His holy purpose.

Jesus Christ, the Lord of the Old Testament, is the one who God the Father created all things through (Ephesians 3:9; Hebrews 1:1-2) including the Sabbath (John 1:1-3, 14, Mark 2:27-28). After finishing His work, the Word (Jesus Christ) “rested” on the seventh day (Genesis 2:2-3; Exodus 20:11). By resting on the seventh day, God “sanctified” it, setting it apart for a special purpose. The word “Sabbath” means “rest” in Hebrew. God intended the seventh day to be a period of rest and relaxation from our regular physical and personal work of the previous six days. GOD SET THE EXAMPLE for mankind to follow by ceasing from all His work on the seventh day. By doing so, He created the Sabbath and set apart every future seventh day as a time of rest for mankind. God set the example, and we, as His creation, *need* to follow it.

Jesus Christ said the Sabbath was “made for man” (Mark 2:27), and He had revealed that to His chosen people about 1,500 years earlier, shortly after delivering them from slavery in Egypt. In Exodus 20:8-11 God gave mankind His Ten Commandments, not suggestions, as some professing Christians treat them today.

The fourth commandment states: Exodus 20:8: “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

9, Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 10, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. 11, For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it” (made it holy).

In Exodus 16 we see that Sabbath keeping was a test of the Israelites’ obedience to God. Jesus, the Lord of the Old Testament, made Sabbath keeping an additional and separate covenant or agreement with His people that was binding forever. God told Moses He was going to “prove them, whether they will walk in My law” (Exodus 16:4).

After God had spoken the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai, and His covenant with Israel had been made complete, God made a totally separate and eternally-binding covenant with His people through Moses. This special “Sabbath covenant” reveals that the Sabbath does more than identify the Creator. It is also a sign that identifies the true people of God. The Sabbath was to point out who they were – God’s chosen people. It was the one commandment that would make Israel stand out from all other nations.

Exodus 31:13: *“Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my Sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you.*

14. *Ye shall keep the Sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people.* 15. *Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD: whosoever doeth any work in the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death.* 16. *Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant.* 17. *It is a sign between me and the children of Israel forever: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed."*

We see that the Sabbath is a sign. Observing it is a crucial test of obedience, for it identifies those who have truly surrendered to God, those who obey all of His commandments, regardless of persecution or personal cost! God wanted ancient Israel, and now wants spiritual Israel, to remember that He is the Creator, Sustainer, and Supreme Ruler over all of His creation. He singled out Sabbath observance as the one great sign by which His people would always be reminded of who He is.

It is an interesting fact that many professing Christians acknowledge ALL the commandments should be kept, except one, the TEST commandment! This one commandment is the most disagreed upon and argued over. Yet, ironically, it is the sign between God and His people. God commands us to "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy." God is giving us a

TEST each week, just as He did with the Israelites in the wilderness.

Do we NEED to observe the seventh-day Sabbath? YES! It is COMMANDED BY GOD and is a sign of His true people!

Will we obey and pass His test?

Review Questions

1. *Was Jesus Christ the God of the Old Testament and the Creator of the true Sabbath Day? (John 1:1-3, 14; Mark 2:27-28)*

2. *Was the Sabbath created just for the Jews? (Mark 2:27)*

3. *Does the Sabbath Day reveal the identity of the Creator and the identity of God's true people? (Exodus 31:13; 31:17)*

Who Should Observe the Sabbath?

In Old Testament times God's chosen people were those of the twelve tribes of Israel. Israel was to be set apart as a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation." They, by their example, were to lead the Gentiles to obedience to God so the Gentiles could also receive the blessings that result from keeping God's Law (Exodus 19:5-6; Deuteronomy 4:5-8). However, the Israelites failed because they did not have God's Holy Spirit to guide and direct them.

In early New Testament times, just as today, God's people are called "spiritual" children of Abraham (Galatians 3:28-29). They are members of His Spirit-led church, His Spirit-begotten children, regardless of color, race, or nationality.

Acts 18:1-4 points out that Jews *and* Gentiles worshiped together on the Sabbath Day. The Bible also reveals that a true Christian is a person who has become a child of Abraham, one of Abraham's "seed" through faith in Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:28-29; Romans 4:16, 8:9; Ephesians 2:11-13, 19).

Some might ask themselves, "But isn't Saturday a Jewish day to worship?"

While reading the scriptures about the Sabbath, did you also notice that God said they were, "My (His) *Sabbaths*"? Mark 2:27 states that the Sabbath was made for *man* (all men). This clearly demonstrates that the Sabbath belongs to God and was made for man. He created it for ALL mankind. Isaiah 66:23 speaks of a time that is still future: "*And it shall come to pass that from one New Moon to another, And from one Sabbath to another, All flesh shall come to worship before Me,*" says the LORD."

We see that it is NOT the Sabbath of the Jews or "those Christians who Judaize," as many people and religious groups believe. It is a Sabbath for ALL flesh. It is the Sabbath OF THE LORD your God. God owns the Sabbath. He created it. Therefore, He decides who should observe it; and He commanded that ALL people, not just a select few, need to observe it.

Review Questions

1. *Are God's true people today called children of Abraham? (Galatians 3:28-29)*

2. *Who does the Sabbath belong to? (Mark 2:28) Who was it made for? (Mark 2:27)*

God's Sabbath Day Pictures the Kingdom of God

The Sabbath also foreshadows the coming Millennium, a future time when God's rulership will be restored to this earth. God ordained a period of 7,000 years in which to accomplish His spiritual creation in mankind. The time "pattern" for God's plan is revealed in the first two chapters of Genesis. It is the seven-day week. Besides being a reminder of creation and an identifier of the Creator, the weekly Sabbath is a type or foreshadowing of the coming millennial "Sabbath," a millennial "day," consisting of 1,000 years.

II Peter 3:8 says that a thousand years is as a "day" to God, and a "day" is as a thousand years. Christ and His resurrected saints will begin their rule over the earth on the millennial "Sabbath Day" (the LAST thousand years of the 6,000 years of man's rule, not the first thousand years, as Sunday would depict). (Read also Revelation 20:4-6.)

In God's plan for man, a day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years of human civilization is as one day in His planned millennial "week" of seven 1,000-year "days"! God intended the weekly Sabbath Day to foreshadow and picture the coming 1,000-year period known as the Millennium. The Millennium will be a time of rest and peace for the entire world, a 1,000-year "Sabbath" of rest from Satan's influence and the resultant discontent, strife, and warfare.

It is during this 1,000-year millennial Sabbath that the knowledge of God's great purpose for mankind will spread throughout the world (Isaiah 11:9). All people living at that time will be taught God's ways and will be given the opportunity to qualify to be members of the Family of God. The first six days of the creation week clearly correspond to the 6,000-year period of human civilization that is almost completed. After Adam sinned, God allotted mankind 6,000 years to learn that disobedience to Him results in nothing but suffering and death! Also, God is still permitting Satan to exercise dominion over mankind... continuing his work of deception and evil influence. But when it comes to the seventh 1,000-year period, Satan will not work (see Revelation 20:3).

You might ask, “How can God tell Satan what to do? Isn't there a battle between good and evil going on? Job 1:12 and 2:6 shows that God is in command of Satan.

In Hebrews 3 and 4, Christians are exhorted to continue keeping the weekly Sabbath in light of an interesting and important analogy, that of Israel's entrance into the Promised Land and the Christian's entrance into the Kingdom of God.

The word “rest” in Hebrews 3:7-13, 16-19 and 4:1-2 is translated from the Greek word “katapausin,” which is defined as “rest” or “place of rest.” As used in Hebrews 3:11 and 18, it calls to mind the ancient Israelites' rest from their wanderings, their arrival to the Promised Land. The “rest” Israel finally entered into (Joshua 1:13) is symbolic of

the Christian's spiritual “rest” (Hebrews 4:1), of entering (being born) into the divine Kingdom or Family of God. The Israelites were headed toward the Promise Land, even as God's Spirit-begotten children today are aiming for the goal of entering God's Kingdom.

Hebrews 4:4 mentions God's resting on the day following His work of creation. In Hebrews 4:9 Paul plainly states, in his discussion of the Sabbath that, “There remaineth therefore a rest” (“keeping of the Sabbath” as the margin note states) “to the people of God.”

Unfortunately, the meaning of Hebrews 4:9 has been obscured by the use of the word “rest” in the King James Version. Everywhere else in Hebrews 3 and 4, the word “rest” is translated from the Greek word “katapausin.” However, in Hebrews 4:9, “rest” is translated from “sabbatismos,” which literally means “keeping of a Sabbath.” Most English translations have correctly translated Hebrews 4:9. Even the margin of the King James Version renders it: “There remaineth therefore a keeping of a Sabbath to the people of God.” The Moffatt translation renders this verse: “There is a Sabbath-Rest, then, reserved still for the people of God.” The Lamsa translation really makes it clear: “It is therefore the duty of the people of God to keep the Sabbath.”

There still remains a “sabbatismos,” the KEEPING of God's Sabbath Day, for God's people today. Spirit-begotten Christians will enter the future “rest” (katapausin) of God's Kingdom even as they now keep the weekly Sabbath, which points to it!

Those people who keep God's Sabbath Day holy, (and keep His other commandments as well), are God's "holy nation" today and will become "kings and priests" in the soon-coming Kingdom of God! Christ will then have made His church both "kings and priests" unto Himself and His Father (Revelation 1:6). As members of the ruling Family of God, we will be prepared to teach, serve, and save the world throughout the Millennium and beyond! (I Peter 2:5, 9; Revelation 5:10; 20:6; Matthew 5:14, 16).

Review Questions

1. *How does God's true Sabbath Day relate to the Millennium? (I Peter 3:8); (Revelation 20:4-6)*
2. *Will the whole world keep God's true Sabbath during the Millennium? (Isaiah 11:9)*
3. *Does Hebrews 4:9 say true Christians should keep God's true Sabbath Day?*

Why Is The Kingdom of God Pictured As

A "Rest"? Being a divine member in God's Family will mean "resting" from sin. When born of God's Spirit, we will be free of our present struggles against sin. We will then possess the fullness of the mind and character of God and thus be able to remain sinless forever (I John 3:9).

When spirit-begotten Christians are born into God's Kingdom, when we finally become eternal members of God's divine family, we will possess the same kind of gloriously radiant and powerful spirit body that Christ and the Father now have. We will no longer be limited by our present weak, mortal bodies that tire so easily. We will then

possess the capacity for tireless, never-ending accomplishment (Isaiah 40:28, 31). This is what we can look forward to when we enter God's "rest" when born into the eternal Family of God!

Results of Polluting God's Sabbath

The Sabbath is so important to God that He included it in the first four of His Ten Commandments, which explain what our relationship to Him should be. Let's understand just how important Sabbath keeping is in God's sight.

After delivering Israel from slavery in Egypt, God promised them tremendous blessings if they would keep His commandments. In Leviticus 26:1-12 God specifically mentions "*keeping MY Sabbaths.*" God warned Israel that tragic curses would befall them if they did not keep His commandments, especially the fourth, the great sign identifying Him as their God and identifying them as His chosen people!

In II Kings 17:16-23 we are told Israel did not obey God; and thus God removed them from their land. They were again forced into slavery by their conquerors, the Assyrians! This happened because they rebelled against God, polluting His Sabbaths (Review Ezekiel 20:12-24.) and committing idolatry, which would not have happened if they had kept the Sabbath.

In time, Judah, Levi and Benjamin, the southern tribes of Israel that were not taken captive by the Assyrians, also polluted God's Sabbaths and came under a curse. Over 100 years after the northern tribes of Israel went into captivity, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon in 604 B.C.

conquered Judah and took the southern tribes into captivity to Babylon. This captivity came after God's warning to Judah (Jeremiah 17:21-25, 27). God was patient with all the tribes of Israel, but after their persistent disobedience, He finally allowed them to be militarily defeated and taken into captivity (II Chronicles 36:5-7, 16-21). One of the captives who returned to Jerusalem, Nehemiah, was well aware that the main reason Judah had been punished was for breaking God's Sabbath (Nehemiah 13:15, 17-18).

The punishments that befell ancient Israel and Judah were types of the same punishments that are to befall modern Israel – their modern descendants – for Sabbath-breaking and idolatry. The curses God brought upon His chosen people are dual in their fulfillment for they pertain to this present time as well! The Sabbath-rejecting, modern-day descendants of Israel will reap the same punishments as their ancestors, though worse in intensity; and the resulting cataclysmic events will fall upon all mankind!

Review Questions

1. *What was the result of Ancient Israel's breaking of the Sabbath Day? (Nehemiah 13:15, 17-18)*
2. *What will be the result of modern Israel's breaking of the Sabbath Day? (Exodus 31:16-17, especially notice the word “forever”; Deut 28:15-68)*

What About Sunday Sabbath Observance?

Many churches claim Sunday as the Sabbath, and the vast majority of professing Christians go to church on the first day of the week. Many are

decent, upstanding, law-abiding citizens who claim to fear God. They even claim to follow what is written in the Bible. How can these millions of sincere people be wrong? The answer is, they have been taught that the apostle Paul changed the Sabbath Day from the seventh day of the week to the first day.

Did Paul do that?

The phrase “first day of the week” is found only eight times in the New Testament, and not one of those eight passages changes the seventh-day Sabbath to Sunday. As we go over some of these scriptures, let's keep in mind a few things: 1. the seventh-day Sabbath is the test commandment, identifying the people of God; 2. Christ said that His flock (His church) is small (Luke 12:32); 3. Christ came to fulfill the law, not to destroy it (Matthew 5:17-18); and, 4. The Ten Commandments ARE the laws of God (Exodus 24:12).

Acts 20:6-14 is a scriptural passage that many people believe shows that Paul changed the Sabbath to Sunday. Let's look at this passage:

Paul and his companions sailed from Philippi after the *Days of Unleavened Bread*, and upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached to them. Notice that! *They came together* to break bread, to *EAT* a meal. It was definitely NOT the usual practice to come to a religious service for the purpose of *HAVING A MEAL!* *After the meal was finished, Paul began to preach (speak)*. Paul did not initially come to preach. They gathered to eat.

Ask yourself this: If you had access to the apostle Paul, wouldn't you want him to speak to you at every opportunity?

Let's look at these scriptures in light of what we have already learned. The beginning of the "first day of the week" commenced at sunset Saturday evening. Paul was "breaking bread," perhaps eating dinner. They were not taking "communion." Paul talked until midnight. So in this instance, Paul spoke from sunset to midnight. Paul was to LEAVE in the morning. His companions had left to sail from Troas to Assos (about 50 to 60 miles) after the Sabbath was over. Paul had stayed behind to visit, and decided to walk the 19.5 miles (It was shorter by foot than by boat) to meet them.

Acts 20:13, And we went before to ship, and sailed unto Assos, there intending to take in Paul: for so had he appointed, minding himself to go afoot. And when he met with us at Assos, we took him in, and came to Mitylene. (KJV)

It would seem highly improbable that Paul would have found 19.5 miles an appropriate "Sabbath-day's journey" if he had been a Sunday-keeper. His leaving to travel on Sunday, the first day of the week, would have shown that he did not honor the day at all. Notice he did this in the daylight hours.

The *Wycliff Bible Commentary* makes the following claim, "...these scriptures are the earliest clear reference to the Christian practice of observing Sunday as a day of worship. The first Christians, as Jews, probably continued to observe the Sabbath as well as the first day of

the week. We are not told when or how the practice of Sunday worship arose in the church." (The Wycliffe Bible Commentary, Electronic Database. Copyright (c) 1962 by Moody Press.)

The commentary admits that we are not told when or how the practice of Sunday worship entered the church. That is because it did not! The practice of Sunday worship *never* arose in Christ's church! It was through the influence of Satan, the deceiver of the world (Revelation 12:9), that men began to worship on a different day from the day God commands.

Here is something else to consider. An argument arose over whether to continue the practice of circumcision (a physical law) that took up many scriptures in the books of Acts and Romans. However, changing the Sabbath Day, changing a major commandment of the law of God, the law that Christ came to fulfill, not to destroy, never brought on an argument from anyone.

Is that possible? It is not. It did not happen.

Let's read something important about Paul's character. Paul followed the example of Christ who he said "dwelt in him" (I Corinthians 3:16) through His Spirit. He also commanded the Philippians to do as he did (Philippians 3:17). Paul taught the Gentile Christians to imitate his obedience to God, even as he imitated Christ's obedience (I Corinthians 11:1). The Christian Gentiles of the early Church of God always assembled on the Sabbath Day, just as Christ did while in the flesh.

Even in a predominantly Gentile city, Paul observed the seventh-day Sabbath (Acts 18:1-4, 11). For over one-and-a-half years in Corinth, Paul labored during the first six days of the week as a tentmaker. Then he preached every Sabbath, on Saturday, the seventh day!

Notice how the Sabbath was regarded by Gentile converts in the early church. On one particular occasion Paul preached to both Jews and Gentiles on the Sabbath (Acts 13:14-42). After the Jews left the synagogue, the Gentiles asked Paul to preach to them again on the next Sabbath. Notice that it was the practice of many Gentiles to meet with the Jews on the Sabbath. Because these Gentiles were interested in Paul's message, they asked him to speak about Jesus again on the very next Sabbath. Even though this would have been a good opportunity to do so, Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, did not tell them to cease assembling on the Sabbath for worship.

Read also Acts 17:1-2, Galatians 2:20 and Hebrews 13:8. It is quite plain from these scriptures that the apostle Paul observed the same Sabbath Day that Jesus Christ did. If Christ lives His life in us today, as He did in Paul... through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit... then we must also observe the Sabbath Day.

Also, remember that the book of Acts was written *after* the crucifixion of Christ. Where is the *only* place Paul was found preaching? In the synagogues of the Jews! Who did God entrust with the knowledge of the true Sabbath? The Jews! When do the Jews worship God and

observe the seventh-day Sabbath? SATURDAY! So you see, Paul never changed the day of worship. It has been, and always will be, from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday!

If Christ had done away with any of His Father's laws or changed the Sabbath to some other day, He certainly would have revealed it to His disciples. He made no changes, and Paul taught the Church of God exactly what Christ taught him to preach, as the Bible clearly shows!

Let's keep in mind that Jesus is our perfect example, and He kept the seventh-day Sabbath properly. So did His Church that He founded (Revelation 12:17; 14:12.)

The example set by Christ and His apostles is recorded in the Bible for us to follow today. Jesus taught how to live the Christian way of life. He also showed how He, as Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28) intended the Sabbath to be kept. Christ shows us today, by His recorded example and teaching, how the Sabbath is to be kept as a great joy and blessing. Not once did He allude to the idea of changing the Sabbath Day. What purpose would it serve? Why change one commandment and not others? Keep in mind that God is the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrews 13:8) and not one "jot or tittle" will pass from His law...all of it will be fulfilled (Matthew 5:18, Luke 16:17).

If we could find even one text in the New Testament giving us strong authority for Sunday observance, we would have scriptural authority for observing the first day of the week. There is not one scripture!

If, after having carefully studied the scriptures in this Bible study, you still are not sure if you should keep the Sabbath on Saturday or Sunday, you will need to prayerfully study these scriptures again. Also, you may want to do a study on the Sabbath using reference materials such as the Catholic Dictionary or the Catholic Encyclopedia. Look up "Sabbath," "Saturday," "Sunday," or "pagan holidays." You might just be surprised at how easy it is to determine which day God's true Sabbath is.

Review Questions

1. *Did the Gentiles observe the seventh-day Sabbath in the New Testament? (Acts 13:14-42)*

2. *Find all the scriptures in the Bible which support Sunday as the Sabbath.*

3. *Did the apostle Paul keep the seventh-day Sabbath, or did he change the Sabbath to Sunday? (Acts 18:1-4, 11)*

POINTS TO REMEMBER:

1. Nowhere in the Bible does it say that the Sabbath was changed from the seventh day of the week to the first day of the week. God set numerous examples of hallowing the seventh-day Sabbath throughout the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation.

2. God rested on the seventh day after creation, and He made it Holy.

3. Abraham kept God's "commandments, statutes, and laws" prior to the Mosaic law (Genesis 26:5). The Sabbath has always been observed by the righteous.

4. The law to keep the Sabbath is one of the Ten Commandments and formulates our spiritual relationship with God. It is a sign that identifies us as followers of God.

5. A double portion of manna fell on the sixth day, and none fell on the seventh showing which day was to be kept Holy.

6. Christ set the example of keeping the seventh-day Sabbath, and commanded us to follow His example.

7. The apostles kept the seventh-day Sabbath after Christ's death and resurrection. They did not change to Sunday observance.

8. The Sabbath pictures the Millennial rest, the last thousand years of God's 7000-year plan for mankind.

9. Remember Hebrews 4:9: "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His." We are to keep the Sabbath today. Ω

For additional information on this vital subject, we invite you to visit our web site at WorldWatchToday.org or send your requests and questions to:

World Watch Today
 PO Box 578010
 Modesto, CA 95357

NOTES:

Two columns of horizontal lines for taking notes.

