

# The Lord's Day In the New Testament

## Which day did Christ and His Disciples keep?

As in all other Christian duties the Founder of Christianity, the Lord Jesus Christ, set an example in Sabbath-keeping. He faithfully observed the Sabbath. "And He came to Nazareth where He had been brought up : and, as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read." "And came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee; and taught them on the Sabbath days." Luke 4 :16, 31:

The Sabbath that He observed, and regarding which He established an example, was not Sunday, Sunday is the first day of the week. Our Lord kept the seventh-day.

His disciples, following His example, kept the same day. They knew nothing of Sunday or its observance. Not one of them kept Sunday. When His followers had laid His body in the tomb on the Friday afternoon of His death,. "they returned, and prepared spices and ointments : and rested the Sabbath day according to the commandment." Luke 23 : 56. .

There is no instance in all the New Testament of any person keeping Sunday. The early Christians kept the seventh day.( Luke 23:56; Acts 13: 14, 42, 44; I6: 12,13; 17: I-4; 18:1-4, 11; Revelation 1:10; Hebrews 4: 4, 9,10, margin. )

Indeed, Sunday is not mentioned from beginning to end of the New Testament. It has no place in the Sacred Scriptures, except as one of "the six working days." Ezekiel 46 : 1.

In His teaching and in His example Christ made no alteration in the seventh-day Sabbath, or in the obligation of men to observe it. He emphatically declared that "the Sabbath was made for man." Mark 2: 27.

In their teaching and in their example the first disciples of Christ, the writers of the New Testament Scriptures, made no alteration in the seventh-day Sabbath, or in the obligation to observe it.

It is a fact pregnant with deep significance that in the whole New Testament the first day of the week is mentioned but eight times, and that in no single instance is there any command to keep it: no record of its being appointed as a sabbath, no account of any blessing being placed upon it, no statement that it was ever made holy, no intimation of any sacredness attaching to it, no promise of blessing for observing it, no threat of punishment for its nonobservance, no record that it was ever once called the Sabbath or given any sacred name or title, no record that the apostles ever kept it or commanded anyone else to keep it, no record that any Christian, or anyone else, ever kept it or should keep it.

The change which has taken place in Sabbath observance since New Testament times, the substitution of the first day of the week in place of the seventh day, is wholly without Scriptural sanction, and altogether without divine authority. Christian believers who would follow the Bible, follow Jesus and His apostles and the early church, should instantly discard this anti-scriptural practice and keep the only true Sabbath.

Jesus Christ did not change the Sabbath. As Creator He brought it into existence. (John 1: I-3, 10, 14; Colossians. 1: 13-17.) He designed it to be a memorial to His power in the work of both creation and redemption. When He came into the world to carry out the eternal purpose of human salvation, He did not set aside the memorial that He Himself had established to commemorate His finished work of creation and redemption. Hence "the Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath day." Matthew 12:8; Mark 2:28; Luke 6: 5.

Neither the disciples of Christ nor the early Christian churches ever heard of the divine change in Sabbath observance. Hence the observance of any other day than the seventh as the Sabbath is unknown in the New Testament.

The New Testament mentions the first day of the week eight times. The passages in the New Testament which mention the first day are Matthew 28: 1; Mark 16: 1, 2, 9; Luke 23:56; Luke 24: 1; John 20: 1,19; Acts 20: 7, 8; 1 Corinthians 16: 1, 2. In these texts those who observe the first day must find their warrant for such observance.

These texts speak of "the first day of the week." They unite in declaring that the resurrection of our Lord took place on that day. Sunday observers claim that the occurrence of this event on that day brought about a change of the Sabbath from the seventh day to the first.

In speaking of Christ's resurrection, Mark says: "When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint Him. And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulcher at the rising of the sun:" Mark 16:1, 2. This clearly shows that "the Sabbath was past" when the first day of the week came. Thus the New Testament makes it plain that the Sabbath of the Bible is the day before the first day of the week.

John, speaking of the day on which Christ rose from the dead, makes this statement: "Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples "were assembled for fear of the Jews" came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you." John 20: 19. In this case the Lord's disciples were not gathered together to hold a religious service, but they "were assembled for fear of the Jews" It was not a public gathering, but "the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled." The disciples could not have been gathered there to honour the first day of the week because Christ rose on it, for Mark explicitly says that they were eating the evening meals, and were so hardened in their disbelief of the reports that He had risen, that Jesus had to upbraid them for it. (Mark 16: 14.) And Luke not only says that the disciples were eating their supper when Jesus appeared to them on this occasion, but he adds that because they did not believe that it was Jesus risen from the dead, He showed them His hands and His feet, and even ate broiled fish with a honeycomb to prove that it was He. (Luke 24 : 33-43. )

The New Testament writers speak of the Sabbath, it is true, but they carefully discriminate between the Sabbath and the first day of the week, making it plain that the Sabbath of the New Testament is the day before the first day. (See Mark 16: 1, 2; Luke 23:54, 56; 24:1.) They give no sacred title to the first day. They do give such a title to the seventh day. They do not say Christ rested on the first day, which would have been essential to its becoming a Sabbath. They say nothing about any blessing being placed by Him upon the first day. They do not tell us Christ ever said anything about the first day, either as a holy day or otherwise. He did not even mention it. They give no precept or command regarding its observance. There is nothing in these passages declaring that the first day was to be looked upon by the followers of Christ as anything more than the ordinary work day that it is called, just "the first day of the week."

Instead of its being true that Jesus blessed and hallowed the first day, the fact is that He never once mentioned it. He did not even take its name upon His lips, so far as we have record.

It is plain, therefore, after careful examination of the New Testament, that it contains no evidence of a change of the Sabbath, no divine authority for such a change, and no support for Sunday observance.

A careful examination of the Bible; of history, both civil and ecclesiastical; of theological writings, commentaries, church manuals, catechisms, and the candid admissions of Sunday observers themselves, compel us to conclude that there is no authority in the Holy Scriptures for the observance of Sunday, no authority given to man to make a change from the seventh to the first day, and no divine sanction given the change now that man has made it; but that this substitution of a false sabbath for the true Sabbath of the Lord was entirely the work of

an anti-Christian movement which adopted a purely pagan observance and wickedly brought it into the Christian church; and that this observance has no binding obligation upon Christian believers. The observance of this false sabbath should be instantly discarded as a matter of practice, and the true Sabbath of God restored to its rightful place, both in the hearts of His people and in the practice of His church.

The only Sabbath the Bible commands to be observed is the seventh day of the week. (Exodus 20: 8-11.) The seventh day is God's day. (Isaiah 58: 13, 14; Matthew 12: 8; Mark 2: 28; Luke 6: 5.) It is the only day He ever claimed as His own, the only day He ever blessed (Gen. 2: 2, 3), the only day He ever commanded to be observed.

The New Testament does not change in the smallest degree the obligation to observe the seventh day. Our Lord observed it during the entire period of His earthly life, setting His followers an example. (1 Peter 2: 21.) The disciples observed the seventh day uniformly during the period of their lives while establishing the first Christian churches.

There is no occasion on record in the New Testament where any human being endeavored to keep the first day as a Sabbath. The first day is mentioned in the New Testament, as we have seen, but is never once given a sacred title or name, never once called the Sabbath, or Lord's day, never once commanded to be kept, never once referred to as a day to be honoured or observed. It is mentioned merely as one of the ordinary working days of the week.

In giving His disciples instruction concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, which took place in AD 70, about forty years after the crucifixion of Christ, our Lord said : "But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day." Matthew 24: 20. Far from abolishing the Sabbath, the Lord goes to the extent of commanding His disciples to pray that they may be able to keep it forty years after His resurrection, even in the troublous times of the downfall of the Jewish nation.

Indeed, the Bible makes it plain that no change has ever been made in the original Sabbath commandment, and none has ever been contemplated by the Lord. The blessing placed upon the seventh day was not of a temporary, but of eternal duration. The commandment covering the observance of the Sabbath is to continue for ever. This is made plain in. Ps. 111: 7, 8. Indeed, God designed that His people should not only keep the Sabbath until Christ should come the first time, but until the very end of time. Yes, even throughout eternity His people will keep the Sabbath, for we are told:-

"For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make; shall remain before Me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before Me, saith the Lord." Isaiah 66: 22, 23.

Inasmuch, therefore, as the Sabbath is to be kept by those who are saved in the kingdom of God, and who will live on the new earth, would it not be well for all who desire a home in that land to begin its observance now?

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