

We want to answer the question which so many people have been concerned about the Sabbath question. How did the change take place, substituting [Sunday for Saturday](#) as the [day of worship](#)? This is possibly one of the most disturbing religious questions among thinking Christians today. Unfortunately, the issue is not examined publicly very often for reasons that we'll consider today. But multitudes have wondered when, how and why the change came about. The Bible itself speaks with absolute consistency on this subject.

No Change Documented in the Bible

In both Old and New Testament there is not a shadow of variation in the doctrine of the Sabbath. The [seventh day, Saturday](#), is the only day ever designated by the term [Sabbath](#) in the entire Bible. Not only was Jesus a perfect example in observing the weekly [seventh-day Sabbath](#), but all His disciples followed the same pattern after Jesus had gone back to heaven. Yet no intimation of any change of the day is made. The apostle Paul, who wrote pages of counsel about lesser issues of Jewish and Gentile conflicts, had not one word to say about any controversy over the day of worship. Circumcision, foods offered to idols, and other Jewish customs were readily challenged by early Gentile Christians in the church, but the weightier matter of weekly worship never was an issue. Why? For the simple reason that no change was made from the historic seventh day of Old Testament times, and from creation itself. Had there been a switch from the Sabbath to the [first day of the week](#), you can be sure the controversy would have been more explosive than any other to those Jewish Christians.

History Gives Some Clues

If the change did not take place in the Scriptures or through the influence of the apostles, when and how did it happen? **In order to** understand this, we must understand what happened in that early church soon after the apostles passed off the stage of action. Paul had prophesied that Apostasy ([a falling away, withdrawal or abandonment of Christianity](#)) would take place soon after his departure. He said there would be a falling away from the truth. One doesn't have to read very far in early church history to see just how that prophecy was fulfilled. Gnosticism began to rise up under the influence of philosophers who sought to reconcile Christianity with Paganism. At the same time, a strong anti-Jewish sentiment became more widespread. Very speculative interpretations began to appear regarding some of the great doctrines of Christ and the apostles.

The Conversion of Constantine



By the time [Constantine](#) was established as the emperor of Rome in the early fourth century, there was a decided division in the church as a result of all these factors. I think most of you know that Constantine was the first so-called Christian emperor of the Roman Empire. The story of his conversion has become very well known to students of ancient history. He was marching forth to fight the battle of Milvian Bridge when he had some kind of vision, and saw a flaming cross in the sky. Underneath the cross were the Latin words meaning “In this sign conquer.” Constantine took this as an omen that he should be a Christian, and his army as well. He declared all his pagan soldiers to be Christians, and became very zealous to build up the power and prestige of the church. Through his influence great blocks of pagans were taken into the Christian ranks. But, friends, they were still pagan at heart, and they brought in much of the paraphernalia of sun-worship to which they continued to be devoted. We mentioned in a previous broadcast about the adoption of Christmas and Easter into the church. At the same time, many other customs were Christianized and appropriated into the practice of the church as well.

Sun Worship

You see, at that time the cult of Mithraism or [sun-worship](#) was the official religion of the Roman Empire. It stood as the greatest competitor to the new Christian religion. It had its own organization, temples, priesthood, robes—everything. It also had an official worship day on which special homage was given to the sun. That day was called “[The Venerable Day of the Sun](#).” It was the first day of the week, and from it we get our name [Sunday](#). When Constantine pressed his pagan hordes into the church they were observing the day of the sun for their adoration of the sun god. It was their special holy day. In order to make it more convenient for them to make the change to the new religion, Constantine accepted their day of worship, Sunday, instead of the [Christian Sabbath](#) which had been observed by Jesus and His disciples. Remember that the way had been prepared for this already by the increasing anti-Jewish feelings against those who were accused of putting Jesus to death. Those feelings would naturally condition many Christians to swing away from something which was held religiously by the Jews. It is therefore easier to understand how the change was imposed on Christianity through a strong civil law issued by Constantine as the Emperor of Rome. The very wording of that law can be found in any reliable encyclopedia. Those early Christians, feeling that the Jews should not be followed any more than necessary, were ready to swing away from the Sabbath which was kept by the Jews.

Historical Accounts

Some of you may be greatly surprised by the explanation I’ve just made, and I’m not going to ask you to believe it blindly. I have before me a multitude of authorities to verify what has been said. Here are historians, [Catholics and Protestants](#), speaking in harmony about what actually took place in the fourth century. After Constantine made the initial pronouncement and legal decree about the change, the Catholic Church reinforced that act in one church council after another. For this reason, many, many official statements from Catholic sources are made, claiming that the church made the change from Saturday to Sunday. But before I read those statements, I shall refer to one from the Encyclopedia Britannica under the article, Sunday. Notice: “It was Constantine who first made a law for the proper observance of Sunday and who appointed that it should be regularly celebrated throughout the Roman empire.” Now you can check these statements in your own encyclopedias or go to the library and look into other historical sources.

Here is a statement from Dr. Gilbert Murray, M.A., D.Litt., LL.D., FBA, Professor of Greek at Oxford University, who certainly had no axe to grind concerning Christian thought on the Sabbath question. He wrote: “Now since Mithras was the sun, the Unconquered, and the sun was the Royal Star, the religion looked for a king whom it could serve as a representative of Mithras upon earth. The Roman Emperor seemed to be clearly indicated as the true king. In sharp contrast to Christianity, Mithraism recognized Caesar as the bearer of divine grace. It had so much acceptance that it was able to impose on the Christian world its own sun-day in place of the Sabbath; its sun’s birthday, the 25th of December, as the birthday of Jesus.” History of Christianity in the Light of Modern Knowledge.

Looking a bit further into historical statements, Dr. William Frederick says: “The Gentiles were an idolatrous people who worshipped the sun, and Sunday was their most sacred day. Now in order to reach the people in this new field, it seems but natural as well as necessary to make Sunday the rest

day of the church. At this time it was necessary for the church to either adopt the Gentile's day or else have the Gentiles change their day. To change the Gentiles day would have been an offense and stumbling block to them. The church could naturally reach them better by keeping their day." There it is, friends, a clear explanation by Dr. Frederick as to how this change happened. Another statement very parallel to this one is found in the North British Review.

But let's move on to a statement from the Catholic Encyclopedia, Vol. 4, p. 153. "The church after changing the day of rest from the [Jewish Sabbath](#) or seventh-day of the week to the first, made the third commandment refer to Sunday as the day to be kept holy as the Lord's day."

Catholicism Takes Credit for the Change

Now a quote from the Catholic Press newspaper in Sidney, Australia. "Sunday is a Catholic institution and its claims to observance can be defended only on Catholic principles. From the beginning to end of Scripture there is not a single passage that warrants the transfer of weekly public worship from the last day of the week to the first."

The Catholic Mirror of September 23, 1894, puts it this way: "The Catholic Church for over one thousand years before the existence of a Protestant by virtue of her divine mission, changed the day from Saturday to Sunday."

To point up the claims we're talking about, I want to read from two Catechisms. First, from the Convert's Catechism of Catholic Doctrine by Reverend Peter Giermann. "Question: Which is the Sabbath day? Answer: Saturday is the Sabbath day. Question: Why do we observe Sunday instead of Saturday? Answer: We observe Sunday instead of Saturday because the Catholic Church in the Council of Laodicea transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday."



Second, from Reverend Steven Keenan's Doctrinal Catechism we read this: "Question: Have you any other way of proving that the Church has power to institute festivals of precept? Answer: Had she not such power, she could not have done that in which all modern religionists agree with her; she could not have substituted the observance of Sunday, the first day of the week, for the observance of Saturday, the seventh day; a change for which there is no Scriptural authority."

Then from Cardinal Gibbons' book, The Question Box, p.179, "If the Bible is the only guide for the Christian, then the Seventh-day Adventist is right in observing Saturday with the Jew. Is it not strange that those who make the Bible their only teacher should inconsistently follow in this matter the tradition of the Catholic Church?"

One more statement taken from the book, The Faith of Millions, p. 473. "But since Saturday, not Sunday, is specified in the Bible, isn't it curious that non-Catholics who profess to take their religion directly from the Bible and not from the Church, observe Sunday instead of Saturday? Yes, of course, it is inconsistency but this change was made about fifteen centuries before Protestantism was born, and by that time the custom was universally observed. They have continued the custom even though it rests upon the authority of the Catholic Church and not upon an explicit text from the Bible. That observance remains as a reminder of the Mother Church from which the non-Catholic sects broke away like a boy running away from home but still carrying in his pocket a picture of his mother or a lock of her hair."

That is a most interesting statement, is it not, friends? And it is a very true statement. There is some inconsistency somewhere along the line, because we have examined the statements of history, and you can check them for yourself in any library. I'm not reading anything one-sided here at all. I've tried to give you an unbiased picture. Although we have seen the claims made by the Catholic Church in their publications, we are not reading them to cast

any reflection upon anyone, by any means. We are simply bringing you a recital of what has been written and what claims have been made.

- From the Joe Crews Radio Sermon Library

One of the strangest omissions in our modern life revolves around the calendar which hangs on the wall at your house and mine. Astronomy can supply most of the answers relating to the measurement of time, even when it touches the earliest years of human history. But even the calendar experts can give us no scientific reason for the division of time into seven day weekly cycles.

Neither the stars, planets nor sun seem to provide any logical clues as to this arrangement of time. The days and months are based on predictable laws of planetary movements but why does our calendar today count days off in units of seven?

Creation and the Seven Day Week

Friends, there is only one answer for this question. The Bible says that God created the world in seven days and established a divine command for all time to come — that mankind should so reckon his time by weeks. Here's the text in Exodus 20:8-11: "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work. But [the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God](#); in it thou shalt not do any work, thou nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor the maidservant, nor they cattle, nor the stranger that is within thy gates. 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."

Please notice that God Himself is the author of the calendar week of seven days. It has passed down to us from time immemorial, and was included in the most ancient forms of calendars, regardless of race or language. There can be little question that we are dealing with an arrangement which the Creator established in the very beginning of human history. And the most amazing thing is, that no time has been lost since the great God gave His command about keeping the seventh day Sabbath in honor of creation. What He commanded, He has enabled man to perform. Miraculously the same seven day weekly cycle has been preserved through the ages so that man might enjoy the spiritual blessing which was placed upon the seventh day in the beginning.

So Which Day Is It?

Today there is no serious question from either clergy or layman as to which day the seventh day really is. Astronomers assure us that the seventh day today is the same seventh day which Jesus kept when He was here over 1900 years ago. Now we come to that strange omission I mentioned in the beginning. Why do the majority of Christians break the Commandment of God by refusing to keep the Sabbath He ordained, blessed, and sanctified? The seventh day, or Saturday, has been made a day of labor and commerce in direct violation of the law written by the very finger of God.

Surely every believer knows that the Creator rested on the seventh day and hallowed it as the Sabbath. And all know that the fourth commandment enjoins the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath. Most followers of Christ know that He never kept any other day than the Sabbath day. Yet, in spite of these Bible evidences, the majority of the Christian world observe Sunday, the first day of the week, and worship on that day. No change from seventh-day to first day worship is recorded in the Bible. If the change were catalogued there, it would no longer be so perplexing. But our Creator says, "I am the Lord, I change not." Malachi 3:6.

The commandment must still stand; for the Saviour declares that "it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail." Luke 16:17. Since heaven and earth are still standing and very much in evidence, the fourth precept of that law must still be obligatory. Jesus said: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law;" and, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandment." Matthew 5:17; 19:17.

Who Changed The Day?

Notwithstanding all this, an attempt has been made to change the day of rest. The majority today are not keeping the day that Jesus kept. And the question is, Who changed the Sabbath day from the seventh to the first day of the week, and by what authority? Every Christian who desires to “enter into life” should be concerned about this. We ought to know how this change came about, and if the greater part of Christendom is right in observing Sunday instead of the Sabbath day. There is light on this question in the very etymology of the word “Sunday.”

In early ages, mankind, forgetting the true Creator of the heavens and the earth “and all that in them is,” and being possessed, as all men are, with that inherent instinct which goes seeking after an object or being to worship, began to look about for such an object or being. Their choice rested on the biggest and brightest thing their eyes could see. They chose the sun as god. With its brightness and welcome warmth, it caused earthly life to bud, blossom, and bring forth; surely it must be the true god and the author of man’s being.

Thus we find in history sun god’s a-plenty. They are pictured on temples and monuments of Assyria, Babylonia, Egypt, Persia, Greece, and Rome. Ra, Isis, Osiris, Baal, Mithras, Hercules, Apollo, and Jupiter all are heathen gods of the sun. Even in the Bible, sun worship is mentioned. In Job 31:26-28, we read: “If I beheld the sun when it shined, . . . and my heart hath been secretly enticed, or my mouth hath kissed my hand: this also were an iniquity to be punished by the judge: for I should have denied the God that is above.”

Again in Ezekiel 8:16: “At the door of the temple of the lord, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the Lord, and their faces toward the east; and they worshiped the sun toward the east.” The pagans had “gods many and lords many.” Besides the sun, they worshiped the moon, Mars, Mercury, Venus, and Saturn. And they bestowed upon the days of the week the names of their gods. The sun, whence come the first day of the week was given over to this first and foremost of all gods, and called the sun’s day, or Sunday.

The moon took second place and also the second day; hence Monday. Saturn held Saturday, the last day. So from antiquity, Sunday has been held as a day of worship. Paganism was worshiping the sun on Sunday when Christ came. When the gospel from Judea came to our own ancestors in Europe, it found them paying homage to the sun on the first day of the week. As the Spirit of God, manifested in Christ, began to work upon the hearts of men, many left the worship of Apollo, the sun god, and joined the Christians. After Christ’s return to heaven, the great majority were still pagans worshiping the sun on Sunday, while the followers of Jesus worshiped God on the true Sabbath, or seventh day.

With mighty manifestations of God’s Spirit, Christianity mounted, and paganism began to wane. The Spirit-filled preaching of Paul in Asia, Macedonia, and Italy won thousands to the ranks of Christ. The church at that time was powerful, because of its zeal and earnestness and consecrated lives. The worship of the true God and the following of His commandments spread over the whole world. Before Paul laid down his life, however, he wrote to the Thessalonians: “Now we beseech you, brethern, ... that ye be not quickly shaken from your mind, nor yet be troubled, ... as that the day of the Lord is just at hand; let no man beguile you in any wise: for it will not be, except the falling away come first, and the man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, he that opposeth and exalteth himself against all that is called God or that is worshiped; so that he sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God. ... For the mystery of lawlessness doth already work.” II Thessalonians 2:1-4, 7, R.V.

The Man of Sin

Here is warning of apostasy. Paul saw it working in the church. A “falling away” was to come “first”. A “mystery of lawlessness,” or a spirit of making void the law of God, was already at work. A “man of sin” was to be revealed sitting right in the church, “setting himself forth as God.” It is quite evident that from this one source was to come the tendency to change the law of God. There can be but little doubt that Paul was acquainted with the prophecy of Daniel 7:24, 25, regarding that “little horn” which was to come up out of Rome, with eyes and mouth like a man’s (verse 8) and “speak words against the Most High,” and “wear out the saints of the Most High,” and “think to change the times and the law.”

The same Bible consistency works here. Daniel had prophesied of a man of sin that was to “think” to change the law; and Paul, by the same Spirit, prophesied of the man of sin that had the mystery of lawlessness. Daniel had prophesied of a man of sin that was to “think” to change the law; and Paul, by the same Spirit, prophesied of the man of sin that had the mystery of lawlessness. God, who made eyes, is not blind; and through these two seers, He

made known to the people of God the fact that there was to come into the church a power that would “change the times and the law.” And true to the prophecy, we find its fulfillment.

Soon after Paul was put to death, there swept over the church, in the midst of its prosperity, a sharp rivalry among the bishops of the leading churches as to whom should be the greatest. They became thirsty for more power. They did almost anything to inflate their membership, increase their bishoprics, and add to their power. They lowered standards of truth to raise membership. Multitudes joined the church. The white horse of purity and simplicity that the church had ridden, “conquering and to conquer,” was exchanged for the red horse of strife and worldliness.

She traded her “gold tried in the fire” for the tinsel of popularity. Paganism stalked into the church without a changed heart or life. Scarcely a century after his death, Paul’s prophecy was meeting its fulfillment. There was a “falling away” from purity, and an induction of pagan principles and philosophies into the church.

Constantine's Influence

In the early dawn of the fourth century, Constantine, a Roman general, ambitious for the throne, adopted Christianity as a matter of political advantage. He saw paganism declining. In reality, it was being absorbed by the church. Merely as a measure of popularity, he proclaimed himself a Christian. The fawning bishops acclaimed him. Constantine faced this situation: More than half the people worshiped on Sunday—pagans. The others observed the Sabbath—professed Christians. He conceived the idea of cementing the two factions.

Though professing Christianity, he did not want to conflict with the prejudices of his pagan subjects. Artfully balancing himself between the two, he allayed the “fears of his subjects by publishing in the same year two edicts, the first of which enjoined the solemn observance of Sunday, and the second directed the regular consultation of the aruspices” —a pagan practice. (Gibbon’s *Decline and all of the Roman Empire*,” Chapter 20) Here we are then, face to face with the first law, human or divine, ever given for the purpose of making Sunday a day of sacred rest.

And it is entirely a man-made law, uninspired by Divinity. On the seventh day of March, 321, Constantine gave forth his Sunday law: “Let all the judges and town people and the occupation of all trades rest on the venerable day of the sun (Dies Solis); but let those who are situated in the country, freely and at full liberty, attend to the business of agriculture; because it often happens that no other day is so fit for sowing corn and planting vines; lest the critical moment being let slip, men should lose the commodities granted by Heaven.” Right there we find the genesis of Sunday keeping in the Christian Church.

The Council of Laodicea

The church followed the leadership of Constantine, and in the year 364, at the council of Laodicea, passed a law requiring that Christians must “not Judaize by resting on Saturday.” Eusebius, a noted bishop of the church, states, “All things whatsoever that it was duty to do on the Sabbath, these we have transferred to the Lord’s day.” Here, then, it is plain that a human hand, and not a divine, changed the Sabbath. Eusebius says, “We have transferred.” Finally the Sabbath was crushed, and Sunday, the pagan holiday, was instituted.

Henceforth, it was espoused by the church, and supported, as it is in our day. Doctor Eck, the astute lawyer and champion of the Church in its controversy with Martin Luther, admits, “The church has changed the observance of the Sabbath to Sunday on its own authority, without Scripture, doubtless under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.”

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