



The Sinaitic Light

Are You Observing God's Sabbath?

Study Article No. VI

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This article uses the English terms for Elohim (God), Yah (Father) and for Yahoshua (Christ).

Objective and Learning Outcome

Objective:

The objective of this article is to better understand the origin and significance of the Sabbath day according to how God revealed it to His servants.

Learning Outcome:

Upon completion of this study, the reader will:

1. Understand what day of the week is the Sabbath;
2. Understand why God gave the Sabbath day;
3. Understand what Sabbath means in Hebrew;
4. Understand how, why and when the seventh day Sabbath (Saturday) was changed to the first day Sabbath (Sunday);
5. Observe the penalties assessed by the neo-Christian church for attempting to observe God's Sabbath;
6. Note the similarities pagans saw in the worship of neo-Christianity with their veneration of Sunday and;
7. Understand the importance of acknowledging and worshiping God collectively on His Sabbath day.

Introduction

For nearly two thousand years, following the second century AD, there have been numerous questions surrounding the Sabbath. One question is, which day of the week should we observe as the Sabbath, or should one observe a Sabbath at all since we are in the body of Christ? Finally, other arguments pertaining to the Sabbath have developed, such as, what can or cannot be done on the Sabbath. These questions are often quite prevalent in one's theological discourse. This article was written to shed light on this subject, so you, as the researcher and servant of God will be properly informed on which day is God's Sabbath, and what He expects from you on this day.

First, let's understand that the Sabbath day is the seventh day of the calendar week (Sunday - Saturday), according to God's Word (Gen. 2:1-3). God began work on the first day of the week (Yom Rishon), which we now call Sunday, and He labored for six days, resting on the seventh day called Shabbat or Sabbath. It is the only day of the seven-day Hebrew calendar with a name, "Sabbath" from the Hebrew word "Shabbat", meaning "to cease or to rest" (Gen. 2:2). The rest of the days of the week were represented by numbers, which is to say, day 1 (Yom Rishone), day 2 (Yom Shaynee) day 3 (Yom Shlishi) day 4 (Yom Revee) day 5 (Yom Khamishi) day 6 (Yom Shishi), and day 7 (Shabbat).^{1 2 3}

Adam was created by God to work in His garden-temple and to represent Him on earth as His divine imager. The command that was given to Adam was that he works in God's garden-temple for six days. On the seventh day he was to rest from his labors because God had created the heavens and earth in six days and rested on the Sabbath (Gen. 2:1-3). Thus, Adam was to rest in memorial of God's creation and to become refreshed after working six days (Gen. 2:5,8). Adam represents the whole of humanity, and thus, this commandment became applicable to all humans since Adam (Ex. 20:8-11; Lev. 23:1-3; Deut. 5:12-15; Is. 56:1-8). According to British Assyriologist, Dr. Archibald Sayce, the seventh day of the week was observed by many nations before the nation of Israel was formed, and thus it is not, as many promote, a Jewish institution. It is a divine institution given by God to mankind. This is the reason Mark writes in the New Testament, "And he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27). In Hebrew, the word for man is either Ish or Adam. Therefore, the Messiah reinforces the premise that the Sabbath day was made for Adam and his descendants (all human beings), not the Jews alone as many presuppose.^{4 5 6 7 8}

The Babylonians observed a seventh-day rest as did other ancient pre-Israelite nations, i.e., the Akkadians, Assyrians, and Sumerians (Sayce: 74-75). We see the Sabbath day was

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1. What does Shabbat mean?
 2. What were the days of the week called before reaching the Sabbath?
 3. What day did God begin His work upon?
 4. Which day of the week is the Sabbath?
 5. What day of the week did God give Adam to rest?
 6. What day did Christ say God assigned to man to cease from his work and to rest?
 7. How does one say man in Hebrew?
 8. Why was Adam created?

observed amongst the clans of the Canaanites (Philipson: 6) whom scholars believe influenced the nations of Mesopotamia, according to Dr. G.W. Bromiley (Bromiley: 248). Dr. John Bergsma, Professor of Theology at Franciscan University writes, “The Lewys pointed out that many Amorite documents from as early as the middle of the third millennium B.C.E. calculated time based not only on days, months, and years, but also by seasons of fifty days. The number fifty seemed derived from a set of seven weeks (49 days) plus 1 day to make a round number. . . . The ancient Amorite year seems to have consisted of seven *pentecontads* (350 days) plus an intercalary period of varying length called a *sappatum* (Bergsma: 35).⁹

Where did these ancient pre-Israelite nations get the idea or concept of creating a calendar based upon seven days and seven weeks? The idea and concept of establishing a weekly sabbatical period originated from God who gave it by ordinance to Adam. Adam passed it to his descendants and on to Noah, who passed it on to his three children, and they passed it on to their respective children, who later formed the nations. Herein is the explanation for how the ancient world, before the Israelite nation was formed, knew to observe the sabbath.¹⁰

The issue that lies at hand is that mankind has been bound by the seventh-day of the week Sabbath legislation since its inception. This day was never abrogated by God, Christ or the apostles. Today, as Christians, we are still bound by this holy decree to hold our holy gatherings, fellowship, praise, worship and rest on the 7th day of the week, not the first. To affirm this thesis, God said that to be a part of His holy covenant, one must observe His Sabbath day, which was given to mankind as a memorial of His creation. Observing the sabbath would serve as a sign between God and those who honored Him (Ex. 16:12-31; 20:8-11; 31:12-17; Is. 56:1-8). Christ observed the Sabbath day as a part of his righteousness, and our observing God’s commandments demonstrates our righteousness (Deut. 6:24-25; John 15:10; 1 John 5:3; Luke 4:16; Acts 13:42-46; 17:2; 18:4). We see in the preceding Scriptures that Christ, the apostles and the early Christians, kept the Sabbath that was made for mankind. This is the testimony that Christ gave to the Jews. Then why do Christians praise and worship, fellowship, and rest on the first day of the week, Sunday, instead of the seventh day of the week, God’s Sabbath?^{11 12}

As we have just previously supported in Scripture, the first era Christians called Judeo-Christians, primitive Christians, or Nazarenes (Acts 24:5) observed the Sabbath as a commandment from God, and passed this edict to their Gentile converts, the patristics as seen in the following passages. Irenaeus (AD 130-202), Greek bishop of France says, “These [things promised] are [to take place] in the times of the kingdom, that is, upon the seventh day, which has been sanctified, in which God rested from all his works which he created, *which is the true Sabbath*, in which they shall not be engaged in any earthly occupation” (Against Heresies V, 33). Irenaeus understands that the seventh day of the week is the true Sabbath, the day in which work ceases. This is in contradistinction to the fact that they had already begun to hold their services

9. Name three pre-Israelite nations that were observing the sabbath day commandment.

10. How did pagan non-Israelite nations know to observe the sabbath?

11. What Bible verse says that anyone who wants to be God’s people will observe His Sabbath?

12. What was the Hebrew name for the first day of the week?

on the first day of the week, which one can call the *untrue Sabbath* based upon Irenaeus's designation of the seventh day of the week.¹³

Origen (AD 184-253), Scholar, biblical commentator and apologist writes in his refutation of a neo-Christian opposer, Celsus, "For he [Celsus] knows nothing of the day of the Sabbath and rest of God, which follows the completion of the world's creation, and which lasts during the duration of the world, and in which all those will keep festival with god who have done all their works in their six days" (Against Celsus, LXI). Origen demonstrates to his readers that the seventh day Sabbath has been enjoined to mankind. This is the day that has been establish for humanity to cease from their labors and to commune (keep festival) with God as the law commands. Origen does not demonstrate to his readers that any other day of the week has been given this type of reverence to God.

So why and when was there a change to "Sunday worship?" The answer is very simple. The change came because those who replaced the Nazarene church (Christ's church) sought to remove emblematic elements of Judaism from the Christian faith. Therefore, the first emblem to remove was the Sabbath day commissioned by God for all mankind to practice as a sign between Him and those who love and serve Him. The Sunday edict was issued in the second century AD by Ignatius (AD 35-107), a patristic (church father) and early neo-Christian writer, who stated that after the weekly Sabbath was observed, one was to observe Sunday as the "queen and chief of all days" (Epistle of Ignatius to the Magnesians, IX).¹⁴ Ignatius acknowledges the fact that it was necessary to convene one's Sabbath on the seventh day of the week to honor God's commandment, but to also convene a meeting on the first day of the week to honor Christ.¹⁵

This letter would become the impetus for initiating a divestment from Nazarenism or apostolic Christianity, the church that Christ established, built upon the laws of morality and the observance of the Sabbath and holydays (Passover, Pentecost, Trumpets, Day of Atonement, and Tabernacles). Later, the famed Christian apologist Justin Martyr (AD 100-165) writes:

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. For He was crucified on the day before that of Saturn (Saturday); and on the day after that of Saturn, which is the day of the Sun, having appeared to His apostles and disciples, He taught them these things, which we have submitted to you also for your consideration (The First Apology of Justin, LXVII).

Justin Martyr explains to his readers why the patristical Church is observing their Sabbath convocation on Sunday instead of Saturday. He states that God began making the world on Sunday (first day) and finally, Christ rose from the dead on this day. Justin Martyr does not say

13. Who refers to the seventh day as the true Sabbath?

14. What day is called the queen and chief of all days?

15. Name two patristics who knew that the Sabbath day was supposed to be held on the seventh day of the week.

they are observing it because God, Christ or the apostles commanded it. He says because this is what the neo-Christian church decided to do.¹⁶

At a mass in 2007, Pope Benedict XVI said Sunday calls to mind “the day of the dawning of creation” and is therefore “the church’s weekly feast of creation.” The ecclesiastical (church) decree was made by Ignatius, Justin Martyr, and many others in the second century AD. This decree would be ratified by the Roman Emperor Constantine by his royal decree on March 7, AD 321. Constantine issued a worldwide edict deposing God’s covenantal Sabbath for *venerable die Solis*, the “honorable day of the Sun”, Sunday, thereby annulling what God had ordained in the beginning of man’s creation. Today, nearly three billion people observe Sunday as their day of worship in honor of Christ’s resurrection instead of God’s covenantal Sabbath.^{17 18 19}

God’s covenantal Sabbath was designed to honor Him as Creator and God. However, when the Eastern European (Eastern Orthodox) church led by the patristics decided to divest themselves from Christianity’s foundation, “the Law, Prophets, Christ, and the apostles” they introduced another Sabbath day called Sunday. This act not only repelled any notion of being Jewish by observing the seventh day weekly Sabbath, but it also appeased and invited pagans of the second century who were sun worshipers and already worshiping their gods on Sunday to honor them. In defense of worshiping on Sunday, the patristic Tertullian (AD 155-220) argues with a Sunday pagan and says,

Others, with greater regard to good manners, it must be confessed, suppose that the sun is the god of the Christians, because it is a well-known fact that we pray towards the east, or because we make Sunday a day of festivity. What then? Do you do less than this? Do not many among you, with an affectation of sometimes worshiping the heavenly bodies, likewise move your lips in the direction of the sunrise? It is you, at all events, who have admitted the sun into the calendar of the week; and you have selected its day, in preference to the preceding day [Saturday], as the most suitable in the week for either an entire abstinence from the bath, or for its postponement until the evening, or for taking rest and banqueting (Tertullian, AD Nationes, XIII).

Tertullian defends his worship on Sunday by deflecting. He states that pagans observe Sunday opposed to Saturday, and demonstrate their reverence and veneration for Sunday by postponing their baths, taking a rest, and banqueting. As the patristics evangelized their new Christian faith, it became very apparent that Sunday could be used as a feature in neo-Christianity to persuade pagans to join their reformed Christian faith.²⁰

Sunday observance is not a commandment from God. It is a commandment from the patristics who were not apostles or disciples of Christ. They were men who were hostile to

16. What reasons did Justin Martyr give for moving the seventh day Sabbath to a first day Sabbath?

17. When did Sunday become the official day of neo-Christian gatherings?

18. Who passed the decree making Sunday the official day of neo-Christian gatherings and worship?

19. Approximately how many people in the world observe Sunday as their Sabbath?

20. Name two patristics who decreed that the Sabbath day should be held on Sunday (first day of the week) and no longer Saturday (seventh day of the week).

Messianic Sinaiticism because the doctrine was considered Jewish in its content and context. Thus, its primary emblem had to be removed in order to introduce a new faith, doctrine, and theology. However, many people knew this was wrong and attempted to restore Sabbath keeping as God had intended. This upset the new Christian church (neo-Christianity) raised by the patristics and thus, a decree was issued by the Council of Laodicea held in the fourth century (AD 363 - 364). The council wrote, “Christians must not Judaize by resting on the Sabbath, but must work on that day, rather honoring the Lord's Day; and, if they can, resting then as Christians. But if any shall be found to be Judaizers, let them be anathema from Christ” (Synod of Laodicea, Cannon XXIX, AD 343-381).

Judaizers were those who practiced the faith of Judaism or Messianic Sinaiticism (such as keeping the weekly seventh day Sabbath) and those who attempted to practice what the apostles and Christ taught. The council stated that these people were to be anathema (excommunicated, cursed, removed, or shunned). However, the Bible says that if anyone does *not* follow the doctrine that Christ and his apostles taught, *they* are to be anathema (Gal. 1:6-9).^{21 22 23}

One can notice that some early neo-Christians were trying to reclaim God's holy Sabbath. However, the church refused to allow it and subsequently excommunicated and cursed anyone who tried. Later the Catholic church would admit that they changed God's holy day from Saturday to Sunday. The Catholic Encyclopedia writes: “The Church, on the other hand, 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” (Catholic Encyclopedia: 1913). The Catholic Press writes: “Sunday is a Catholic institution, and . . . can be defended only on Catholic principles. . . From 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” (Catholic Press, Aug. 25, 1900).

At New Covenant Congregation of Israel Charlotte, we affirm that part of God's will is to memorialize His weekly Sabbath as He initiated it at creation, confirmed with Moses, observed and practiced by Christ and propagated by the apostles. God did not nullify His decree to have humans rest and worship on the seventh day of the week, Saturday. The second century Church conceived of this idea for theological, political, and sadly racist reasons. As a consequence, nearly three billion people are oblivious to this history and have been enticed by tradition and dogma to worship on a day that is unsanctified by God, and considered untrue by the sincerest of the church fathers (patristics).²⁴

There are several New Testament passages that Sunday observers will submit to justify their practices. However, upon close examination of these passages, one will find that they have nothing to do with the Sabbath commandment. The late Dr. Abram Herbert Lewis (1832-1908), Professor of Church History at the Theological Department at Alfred University writes that,

21. What was the penalty assessed by the church for keeping the seven-day Sabbath?

22. Who stated that if a person introduces a different doctrine pertaining to Christ that they were to be cursed?

23. What is a Judaizer?

24. What source says that Sunday worship or Sunday convocation is a Catholic invention, institution?

Six passages are quoted in favor of such observance. Only three of these passages mention the first day of the week in any manner. Neither of them speaks of it as sabbatic, or as commemorative of any event, or sacred, or to be regarded above other days, and it is only by vague and illogical inferences that either of them is made to produce a shadow of proof for such a change. Concerning the other three, it is only supposed by the advocates of the popular theory, that they in some way refer to the first day. To this, therefore, does the 'argument from example' come, when carefully examined. The New Testament never speaks of, or hints at, a change of the Sabbath; it contains no notice of any commemorative or sabbatic observance of Sunday (Lewis:172-73).²⁵

At NCCI we are a biblical and cultural assembly teaching all of God's commands in the context and dispensation to which it is applicable. We realize that merely keeping the Sabbath does not make one holy, righteous or will grant salvation. However, it is one of the principles we observe, as commanded by God, to memorialize our relationship with Him. There is much more to discuss on this subject. If you have questions about this study, or others, feel free to join us in fellowship, prayer, praise, and study every Saturday at 11:30 am. You may also call us for a consultation pertaining to this subject, or any other you might find intriguing. We are a Messianic Sinaitic assembly teaching the doctrine of Sinaiticism. This means that we keep God's Word in the faith of Christ (Rev. 12:17; 14:12-13) and proclaim God's gospel to the world and to those who are seeking His truth without interpretation or church tradition. May the blessings of the Most High be with you and thank you for reading our article.

25. What scholar states that there is no passage found in the New Testament that could warrant the transfer of the Sabbath from the seventh day of the week (Saturday) to the first day of the week (Sunday)?

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