

Chapter 10 - From Sabbath to Sunday

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Her priests do violence to my law and profane my holy things; they do not distinguish between the holy and the common; they teach that there is no difference between the unclean and the clean; and they shut their eyes to the keeping of my Sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them.

– Ezekiel 22:26

Most Christians believe that Sunday is the Lord's Day. They believe that Jesus transferred the sacredness of the seventh day Sabbath to Sunday, the first day of the week, at the time of His resurrection. If Jesus made such a change, there should be sufficient evidence in the Bible to support this claim.

Bible Review

Eight texts in the New Testament mention the first day of the week. Biblical support for the sacredness of Sunday, if it exists, has to come from these verses.

Here are the texts:

- Matthew 28:1
- Mark 16:2
- Mark 16:9
- Luke 24:1
- John 20:1
- John 20:19
- Acts 20:7
- 1 Corinthians 16:2

Six of these texts refer to Jesus being resurrected on the first day of the week – a well-known fact. However, none of these texts indicate anything about Sunday sacredness. In fact, Luke 23:56 points out that a group of women delayed preparation of Christ's body for burial on Friday evening because of the nearness of the Sabbath.

They rested on the Sabbath "according to the [fourth] commandment." Therefore, it would be fair to say that the women had no prior knowledge that the fourth commandment was voided that Friday afternoon.

Since the first six texts simply date the resurrection of Jesus on the first day of the week and say nothing about Sunday being sacred, we will investigate the remaining two verses.

Acts 20:7

Some people use Acts 20 as evidence to support that Sunday worship was practiced by the

apostles. “On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight.” (Acts 20:7) Let us consider the details surrounding this verse.

The event recorded in Acts 20:7 took place about 30 years after Jesus ascended. During this 30-year interval, there is not one text in the Bible that describes how Sunday had become the day of worship or that the disciples worshiped on Sunday.

Surely, if Jesus’ death on the cross had made such a profound change concerning the day of worship, this would have been a very controversial issue. All of the disciples, including Paul, were Jews and as such, were Sabbath keepers! Paul’s writings leave no doubt that the question of *what* was nailed to the cross was a matter of intense discussion for early believers.

I find it interesting that nothing is written in Acts or the New Testament about the sudden sacredness of Sunday or the sudden obsolescence of the Ten Commandments.

The Apostle Paul stayed in Athens some length of time preaching the gospel. (Acts 17) When Paul finally left Athens, he went to Corinth. There he lived with Jewish believers, Aquila and Priscilla, who had been evicted from Rome by Claudius because they were Jews. (Acts 18)

Actually, Aquila and Priscilla were converts to Christ, but Emperor Claudius could not distinguish between a Christian and the “repugnant” Jews, so the Romans evicted all Christians and Jews from Rome at this time. For a period of 18 months, Paul sustained himself in Corinth by making tents and he preached in the synagogue “every Sabbath” attempting to make believers of Jews and Gentiles alike. (See Acts18.)

If the seventh day Sabbath had been nailed to the cross, and if Sunday was God’s holy day, why is there no record of Paul teaching this new doctrine? Paul wrote 14 of the 27 books in the New Testament and he says nothing about the sacredness of Sunday! (**Luke wrote the book of Acts.**)

In Bible times, a day began at sunset and ended the following evening. Since Creation, Earth’s rotation has produced this great clock. (See Genesis 1.) The Jews in Christ’s time regarded a day from “evening to evening” and observed Sabbath from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday. Compare Luke 23:50-56 with Leviticus 23:32. So, the actual timing described in Acts 20:7 is as follows: Paul stayed with the believers in Troas for seven days. (Acts 20:6)

At the beginning of the first day of the week, at supper time, the believers came together to eat supper with Paul and say good-bye to their dear friend. The first day of the week for Paul began at sundown, or what we call Saturday evening. Therefore, according to Scripture, Paul preached Saturday night until midnight.

A few hours later, what we call Sunday morning, the first day of the week, Paul departed Troas for Assos. If Sunday had been a sacred day, Paul would not have departed for Troas. (See Acts 1:12)

Paul met with believers for supper and preached to them until midnight, Saturday night. A farewell supper and a Saturday night Bible study do not change or abrogate God's fourth commandment. Even if Paul chose to worship on Tuesday night, his actions could not make God's law void.

Only God can make His law void. Some people claim that the term the "breaking of bread" indicates Paul's visit was a communion or worship service. This is not true! The disciples broke bread every day! (Acts 2:46,47 [KJV]) In Luke 24:13-31, Jesus "broke bread" at supper time with two of His disciples after walking with them more than seven miles to Emmaus.

To this day, *breaking* bread is a custom in the Orient because bread is often baked so firm that it has to be literally *broken* in order to eat it. As was the custom at Passover, Jesus "broke bread" with His disciples on Thursday night during His last Passover and it was there that He instituted the "Lord's Supper." (John 13)

Jesus' actions on Thursday night did not make Thursday a holy day. If this is true, Paul's actions in Troas could not make Sunday holy!

Paul did not confirm or authorize "Sunday sacredness" in Troas. Actually, he held a farewell meeting on Saturday night because he was leaving the following morning. The point here is that if Christians wish to exalt Paul's farewell at Troas as proof of Sunday sacredness, they should follow Paul's example and worship on Saturday night (between sundown and midnight).

1 Corinthians 16:2

Some people insist that Paul required offerings for the poor be collected on the first day of the week (as in a church service). Notice: "Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made. Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them with your gift to Jerusalem." (1 Corinthians 16:1-3)

When this text was written, Rome was severely persecuting Jews and Christians. (Jerusalem's destruction in A.D. 70 occurred about 10 years after this appeal was written.) Paul appeals to the believers in Corinth, where he had lived for 18 months, to help fellow Christians suffering in Jerusalem.

Paul does not hesitate to make this request because it was customary among Jews to use a portion of their tithe to help those in financial need. (Deuteronomy 26:12) Further, it was customary among the Jews to convert the tithe of their herds, flocks and harvest into money. Money was much easier to carry to distant places like Jerusalem. (Deuteronomy 14:24-26)

In Paul's day, money was not a common medium of exchange like it is today. The exchange of goods and services was done with barter; that is, a person might trade a chicken or something for cloth or pottery. Since Paul would not be able to travel to Jerusalem with a menagerie of

roosters, goats, pottery and other things of value, he asked the believers in Corinth to convert their gifts into cash, "first thing after the Sabbath has passed." Paul suggested they begin each week by selling something at the bazaar so that he might be able to gather up a sum of currency.

Paul indicated that "the first day of the week" was the appropriate day for conducting this business. Paul did not suggest doing this on Sabbath because it would have been inappropriate. (See Nehemiah 13:15.) Obviously, Paul's instruction did not change or make the fourth commandment void.

Thoughts on Romans 6

Some people suggest that Sunday worship is proper because Jesus arose from the dead on Sunday morning, the first day of the week. Yes, the resurrection is important, and the Bible does provide a celebration of the resurrection! It is called baptism. Notice what Paul says, "What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means!

We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life." (Romans 6:1-4)

Baptism absolutely does not make the fourth commandment null and void. Jesus was baptized at the beginning of His ministry and He faithfully observed the Sabbath afterwards! (Luke 4:16; Mark 2:27,28)

What was Nailed to the Cross?

It is a common, but not substantiated argument that the Ten Commandments were nailed to the cross. However, if this is true, then whatever happens to the fourth commandment, also happens to the other nine! "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. For he who said, 'Do not commit adultery,' also said, 'Do not murder.' If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker." (James 2:10,11)

If we do away with the fourth commandment that declares the seventh day to be a holy day, then the seventh commandment that says adultery is wrong must be void as well. Paul wrote, "What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, 'Do not covet.'" (Romans 7:7)

Many people are surprised to learn that the ceremonies of the sanctuary services, which were a shadow or explanation of the Plan of Salvation, were nailed to the cross. The key word here is shadow. Notice what Paul said, "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority . . .

When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross . . . Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ. Do not let anyone who delights in false humility and the worship of angels disqualify you for the prize . . .” (Colossians 2:9-18)

If we look at these verses carefully, we see that Paul is writing about the regulations regarding *religious feasts, New Moon observances and Sabbath days*. The Sabbath days that Paul is talking about is not the seventh day Sabbath of the fourth commandment. Rather, the term “Sabbath days” in this context applies to Sabbath “feast days,” such as the Feast of Unleavened Bread, or the Day of Atonement. (Exodus 12:16; Leviticus 16:31) The feast days of the Jews fell on different days of the week (like our birthday).

These feast days were declared to be “special sabbaths” because they pointed forward to different aspects of the death and ministry of Jesus. For example, the Passover not only reminded the Jews of their deliverance from Egypt, but it also pointed forward to the time when the Passover Lamb – Jesus Christ – would die and all who put their faith in Him could be delivered from the bondage of sin!

The Jews confused the Ten Commandment law of God with the laws of Moses, much like Christians do today. Even though one set of laws was written with God’s finger on two tablets of stone, and the other penned by the hand of Moses, the Jews did not understand the relationship between the moral law (written by the finger of God) and the ceremonial laws (written by the hand of Moses).

One law is permanent and enduring while the other was temporary.

Understanding Shadows

Paul speaks plainly in Colossians 2 and Ephesians 2 disclosing that the laws nailed to the cross were those laws that were *shadows* of the real thing. Laws that governed the constitution of Israel ended at the cross. Since the shadows have been voided, there is neither Jew nor Gentile in Christ. The ceremonial laws requiring the observance of new moons, feast days and the sacrifice of lambs became unnecessary because the Lamb of God had died and the shadow of salvation’s process was now fully disclosed.

In other words, ceremonial laws were temporary until Jesus revealed their meaning. Moral laws are not temporary, because love never ends. One set of laws was written on paper; the other on stone. One law was penned by man; the other, by God. Surely this reveals something about their enduring nature.

A time is coming during the Great Tribulation when everyone living on Earth will see the ark that contains the covenant, the Ten Commandments. In Revelation 11, the Bible says that God’s

temple in Heaven was opened and everyone saw the ark of the covenant. (Revelation 11:19; Deuteronomy 4:13)

Which is the Greatest Law?

As you might expect of a legalistic society, the Jews loved to argue about their laws. An expert lawyer challenged Jesus asking which law was the greatest. (Matthew 22:34-40) Of course, Jesus answered wisely saying that “loving God” with all of our heart, mind and soul is the greatest commandment, and the second is like the first, we are to “love our neighbors as ourselves.” The Ten Commandments actually define the reciprocal of love.

If we love God, we will want to comply with the first four commandments and more! The first four commandments define what love for God produces. Likewise, if we love our neighbor, we will want to comply with the last six commandments and more. When we love our neighbors, we will not want to steal from them because we will want the best for them. Love is expressed in giving, not taking.

If we become self-centered and love ourselves more than God or our neighbor, our relationship with God’s law changes 180 degrees. Instead of loving God’s law, it becomes a legal standard for behavior rather than love serving as the standard for righteousness.

Self-righteousness *focuses* on conformity to the law, whereas a life of love and faith focuses on fulfilling the principles of love. When the widow gave her mite, Jesus said she had given more than anyone else present. She responded out of love and she gave all that she had while the others had given out of obligation. (Luke 21:3,4)

Because of their carnal hearts, the religion of the Jews degenerated into a great legal system of darkness. When God’s law is imposed on the carnal heart, the response is either defiant rebellion or the religious experience that follows is miserable and unbearable. (Matthew 23:2-15)

What About Romans 14?

Romans 14 is also used to prove that it does not matter which day of the week we worship God. Notice the text: “Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters. One man’s faith allows him to eat everything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables.

The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him. Who are you to judge someone else’s servant? To his own master he stands or falls. And he will stand, for the Lord is able to make him stand.

One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. He who regards one day as special, does

so to the Lord. He who eats meat, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God.

For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. For this very reason, Christ died and returned to life so that he might be the Lord of both the dead and the living.

You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat." (Romans 14:1-10)

The context of these verses does not imply that a person can worship God whenever he or she feels like it. Instead, it is addressing specific problems that early Roman believers had to deal with; namely, the numerous customs of the Jews that have nothing to do with salvation through faith in Christ.

In other words, if a Jewish believer felt the need to continue observing Passover, Paul did not condemn him except to say that his faith was weak. Also, if a new believer could not consciously eat meat purchased in the marketplace for fear it had not been killed correctly or that it may have been offered before idols, Paul said to leave him alone! (The Jews would not purchase or eat meat unless it was killed according to Mosaic code. Leviticus 19:26)

The point here is that Paul is not condoning lawlessness. Paul does not declare the fourth commandment null and void. Paul is advocating tolerance because he knew that the more a person understands Jesus, the greater will be his religious experience.

Pentecost on Sunday

Another argument used to support Sunday worship is that Pentecost came on Sunday during the year that Christ died. Somehow, this is supposed to prove that Sunday is God's holy day. Interestingly enough, Pentecost always falls on Sunday! The wave sheaf offering was made on the first Sunday after Passover and after seven full weeks or seven Sabbaths had passed, Pentecost occurred on the 50th day (counting inclusively).

This means that Pentecost *always* occurred on a Sunday. (Leviticus 23). The annual Feast of Weeks occurred on Sunday for more than a millennium before Jesus came to Earth. The fact that the Feast of Weeks was regularly celebrated on Sunday cannot make the fourth commandment void.

One last point. Some people claim that nine of the Ten Commandments are mentioned in the New Testament, but the fourth commandment is missing. This statement is not true. Even if it were true, does the absence of the fourth commandment in the New Testament prove that the commandment is void.

A more reasonable explanation of this absence is that New Testament writers never doubted

the continuing presence of the seventh day Sabbath. Paul removes any doubt for us when he wrote in A.D. 63, "There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his." (Hebrews 4:9,10)

Grace and Faith Versus Law?

Many Christians think that faith and grace make the law unnecessary. The love between husband and wife does not eliminate the necessity for fidelity nor does living together make two people married. The relationship between love and obedience is simple.

God grants salvation to everyone who becomes willing to do His will. He does not grant salvation to us based on our ability to do His will. We demonstrate our willingness by receiving strength from God to do what He wants. Paul understood this process. (See Romans 7.)

All through his life, Paul faithfully observed the seventh day Sabbath. (See Acts 13:44; 16:13; 17:2; 18:4,11.) Even more, when Jesus predicted the destruction of Jerusalem (which occurred in A.D. 70), He indicated the Sabbath would still be sacred at that time! (Matthew 24:20)

Cannot Break Just One Commandment

If we take the position that Jesus nailed the fourth commandment to the cross, then we must conclude that He also nailed the remaining nine as well. Whatever we do with the fourth commandment, we must also do with the other nine.

This issue will become the all-important distinction between those people who love God and those who rebel against Him during the outpouring of God's judgments. The Ten Commandments are nonnegotiable. They stand as one unit representing the will of God.

The Ten Commandments were written on two tables of stone because they are based on two enduring principles: love to God and love to man. The first four commandments explain how we are to love God. The last six commandments explain how we are to love our neighbor.

One more point: Maturity in Christ begins when we acknowledge the binding claims of God's law, and realizing our great weaknesses, we place our faith in Jesus so that we can fulfill His law through His indwelling power.

Paul knew that all Ten Commandments were intact. He said, "For I would not have known what it was to covet if the law had not said, 'Do not covet.'" (Romans 7:7) James wrote, "If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, 'Love your neighbor as yourself,' you are doing right! But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers.

For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. For he who said, 'Do not commit adultery,' also said, 'Do not murder.' If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker." (James 2:8-11)

James brings us to an important and fundamental conclusion regarding the royal law, or the King's law. He says we must obey all the commandments. If we break any one of them, we are guilty of breaking them all, because the King's law is only fulfilled by love.

We must first love God with all our heart, mind and soul and then our neighbor as ourselves. Jesus shared how we should express our love for God by saying, "If you love me, you will obey what I command." (John 14:15)

Submissive Loyalty

I have said many times, "keeping the seventh day Sabbath holy cannot save anyone" because salvation comes before works. When a person becomes *willing* to submit his or her life to God's sovereign authority, salvation is granted, full and free to that individual *before* he or she can do anything!

The thief on the cross is an excellent example of this. The works of every person reveal faith or rebellion! This is why God designed the human race's final exam to test our faith in Jesus: The basis of salvation is faith. Faith produces submissive loyalty; doing what God requires at any cost.

Ask Noah as he stands in the doorway of the ark. Ask Abraham as he is about to slay his son. Ask Moses as he stands at the Red Sea. Faith produces submissive loyalty. Because eternal life only comes by faith, and since every means of human survival will be cut off in days to come, you and I must have faith in God to remain loyal to Him!

If it is hard to obey God now, what will it be like when our lives are at stake? Faith is like a mustard seed. It can grow. It can develop. Although it is tiny at the beginning, it can become great! (Matthew 13:31)

The Seventh Day of Creation was Saturday

God has expressed in the Bible how His subjects are to worship Him. This is not a matter left to human design. Unfortunately, the devil, during the past 6,000 years, has obscured God's truth, infiltrated every religion, and implemented many false ideas, concepts, and doctrines throughout the world.

For example, Moslems regard Friday, Jews regard Saturday, and Christians regard Sunday as a holy day! These three religious bodies represent 50% of Earth's inhabitants, and each religious body claims to have the truth about God. Each religious system also declares that the other two religious systems are false – and yet, all together they unwittingly confirm a simple truth.

Their diversity confirms that the weekly cycle is intact. Let me explain.

The sixth day of the week is adjacent to the seventh day, which is also adjacent to the first day

of the week. In other words, each religious system worships on unique days that are adjacent to each other. This fact confirms the perpetuity of Creation's week ever since Jesus was on Earth and it shows that the weekly cycle has not been altered.

Furthermore, God confirmed which day of the week was the seventh day to the children of Israel in the wilderness by the cessation of manna (no manna fell on the seventh day). Thus, the Israelites have formally worshiped on the seventh day ever since the Exodus in 1437 B.C.

Christians in Rome, according to Justin Martyr, have formally worshiped on the first day of the week since A.D. 150, and Moslems have formally worshiped on the sixth day of the week since the sixth century A.D. If the weekly cycle had been altered, the holy days of worship would not be adjacent to each other!

This diversity proves the weekly cycle has not been altered. The seventh day (Saturday) is still God's holy day ***just as it was at creation***.

So, What Happened?

So, how did Sunday become the Lord's Day? Who made the change and when did it occur? Material containing the history of Christianity during the first century is meager and imperfect. The best records for this time period have been collected and are known as the writings of the Apostolic Fathers.

These records are not part of the Bible, nor do they have the authority of the Bible. However, they do offer a glimpse into the religious thinking of that era.

Apostolic Age

Several ancient references are included in this chapter for you to consider because a great number of scholars have used these ancient writings to show that Sunday observance was widely practiced by those living during the Apostolic Age (A.D. 30 - A.D. 100). The writings of early Christians, however, reveal a sinister process. They reveal how the Word of God soon became corrupt, even in the hands of well-intentioned people. You can study these references and draw your own conclusions.

The first mention of worship by the Apostolic Fathers occurs around A.D. 97. Clement of Rome wrote to the believers in Corinth:

These things therefore being manifest to us, and since we look into the depths of the divine knowledge, it behooves us to do all things in [their proper] order, which the Lord has commanded us to perform at stated times.

He has enjoined offerings [to be presented] and service to be performed [to Him], and that no thoughtlessly or irregularly, but at the appointed times and hours. (*Clement of Rome, Epistles to Corinthians, Vol I Ante-Nicean Library*, (Buffalo, 1887) p. 16, insertions mine.)

As you can see, Clement does not specifically endorse any particular day of week. This early quote, however, is included because some scholars claim that Clement of Rome openly defends Sunday observance in A.D. 97.

Another early reference often used to support Sunday observance in the early Christian Church was written by Pliny the Younger about A.D. 107. Pliny the Younger was the pagan governor of Bythinia at the time. He wrote to Emperor Trajan asking advice about Christian assemblies in his province.

At that time, civil revolt was anticipated in a number of provinces by Roman leaders and Pliny was especially cautious of a new sect of Jewish people called Christians. He wrote:

They [the Christians] affirmed that the whole of their guilt or error was that they met on a certain stated day before it was light and addressed themselves in a form of prayer to Christ as to some God (*Pliny the Younger, Pliny's Letter to Trajan, Harvard Classics, Vol 9, (New York, 1937) p. 404, insertions mine.*)

Pliny does not say which day of the week the Christians were meeting. All that we can learn from this quotation is that they were meeting for prayer before it was light. Regardless of the day he refers to, whether the Christians were secretly meeting to pray on Sabbath, Sunday or Monday makes no difference.

Post Apostolic Age

As Christianity spread throughout the Roman Empire, certain compromises and transformations were made within Christianity for a variety of reasons. In Rome, Christians were regarded as a dangerous sect since they were considered to be offshoots from the Jews and second, they refused to regard Caesar as a divine god. As time passed, however, Christianity began to appeal to the educated and wealthy people who lived in Rome.

These people could afford manuscripts containing copies of Scripture and even more importantly, they also had influence within the government of Rome. By A.D. 150, Christians and converts of Mithraism (a small pagan sect) had some areas of compromise and mutual respect. About this time, a well-educated man by the name of Justin Martyr became a Christian.

As a Christian, he tried to soften the hostility that existed between Romans and Christians. One area of compromise concerned the issue of religious meetings on Sunday. The followers of Mithra regarded Sunday as a holiday. (*The Mysteries of Mithra, Chicago Open Court Publication Co., (Chicago 1911) p. 167, 191*)

Christians in Rome, anxious to separate themselves from their Jewish heritage (Jews were despised), found that the pagans interpreted their religious services on Sunday as something akin to their holiday festivities. Justin Martyr writes:

But 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. (Justin Martyr, *First Apology of Justin Martyr, Ante-Nicean Christian Library*, (Boston 1887) p. 187 Chap 67)

The justification he used for holding a common assembly on Sunday is interesting. First, he cites the separation of darkness and light on the first day of Creation as grounds for holding a common assembly, and then the resurrection of Jesus. Martyr offers no scriptural authority for holding an assembly on Sunday, but his remarks do suggest how anxious Christians in Rome were to divorce themselves from the womb of Judaism.

In those days, Christianity had no “central office” and each geographical location adjusted doctrine as they chose. During the last part of the second century A.D., Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons, became alarmed at a number of heresies that had infiltrated the Christian movement. He was aware of how the Christians in Rome had begun to meet on Sunday and abandon the seventh day Sabbath and he spoke out against it. He wrote:

For He [Christ] did not make void, but fulfilled the law [Ten Commandments]. (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies, Vol 1 Ante-Nicean Christian Library*, (Boston, 1997) p. 471, insertions mine.)

Tertullian, another church father, wrote extensively concerning Christian doctrine. He, like Irenaeus, was alarmed at the practices of certain Christians, especially those who lived in Rome. In regard to the seventh day Sabbath he wrote:

Thus Christ did not at all rescind the Sabbath. He kept the law [Ten Commandments] thereof . . . He restored to the Sabbath the works which were proper for it. (Tertullian, *Book IV, Chap 12, Vol 3 Ante-Nicean Christian Library*, (Boston, 1997) p. 362, insertion mine.)

Considerable discussion on Sunday observance took place in those early days. Archelaus, a bishop wrote in his disputation with Manes:

Again as to the assertion that the [seventh day] Sabbath has been abolished we deny that He [Christ] has abolished it plainly. For He Himself was also Lord of the Sabbath. (Archelaus, *The Disputation with Manes, Vol 4 Ante-Nicean Christian Library*, (Boston 1887), p. 217, insertions mine.)

By A.D. 320, confusion and compromise took a heavy toll on early Christian doctrine. Christians had been scattered by persecution to every province throughout the Roman empire. Christians in Alexandria, Egypt (the South) were beginning to defend views that were different from those in Rome (the North). Church authority was discussed, debated and argued. Most church leaders agreed that church doctrine needed to be more clearly defined and controlled, but who was going to be in control?

Many questions and issues were raised for which there was little agreement. In short, distance, culture, language and social factors were beginning to define Christendom according to geography. Thoughtful men anticipated the result – a highly fractured church. Christianity

needed a strong leader and Constantine felt that he was divinely appointed to lead a universal Christian Church.

When Constantine came to the throne as sole ruler of the empire around A.D. 312, he had transformed himself into a Christian for political advantage. Constantine was cunning and he saw Christianity as a means of unifying the Roman empire. When he endorsed the “Roman version” of Christianity, Constantine set a powerful sequence of events into motion. In future years, the church in Rome would come to dominate all factions of Christianity.

Hopefully, this information satisfies your curiosity about how Sunday observance began. The Romans were the first to merge Sunday observance into Christianity. Strange as it may seem, they never claimed to have divine authority for this action. In fact, Roman Christians did not consider labor on Sunday as sinful or contrary to the will of God.

Of course, this attitude stands in stark contrast to the fourth commandment which forbids work on Sabbath. The attitude toward Sunday observance in Rome was a carryover from the pagan worship of Mithra. Sunday in Rome was regarded as a holiday by many Romans long before Christianity arrived in Rome. Sunday was not a day of fasting or reflection.

When Constantine became “a defender of the faith,” he had his army baptized into Christianity by marching them through a river. To promote the universal acceptance of a day of rest, Constantine implemented a Sunday law in March, A.D. 321. This law was a clever compromise. Constantine patronized Christians and pagans alike by declaring a national day of rest.

The political benefit of this law was well received by the Romans. Constantine endorsed the desire of the Christian church in Rome by setting Sunday aside as a day of rest and this law also favored a large population in Rome who worshiped the pagan god of Mithra on Sunday. So, the Sunday law meshed with customary Roman practice.

It also aligned the desires of the church at Rome and everyone in Rome was quite happy with a national day of rest. Notice that the decree issued by Constantine does not mandate worship on Sunday:

Let all judges and all city people and all tradesmen, rest upon the venerable day of the Sun. But let those dwelling in the country freely and with full liberty attend to the culture of their fields; since it frequently happens, that no other day is so fit for the sowing of grain, or the planting of vines; hence the favorable time should not be allowed to pass, lest the provision of heaven be lost. (Cod. Justin, III Tit 12, L.3., March 7, A.D. 321)

There is a World Out There

Although the Roman church was already meeting on Sunday when Constantine sent out his decree, other Christians in other locations were not! Most Christians were still observing the seventh day Sabbath. Socrates writes near the turn of the fourth century:

Such is the difference in the churches on the subject of fasts. Nor is there less variation in regard to religious assemblies. For although almost all churches through the world celebrate the sacred mysteries on the Sabbath of every week, yet the Christians of Rome and Alexandria have ceased to do this. (Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History*, Book V, Chap. 22, *Ante-Nicean Christian Library*, Vol II, (Boston, 1887) p. 132)

Even Constantine's decree did not shut out the importance of the seventh day Sabbath. Something else would have to occur before that could be accomplished. The leaders from the church in Rome needed an elaborate doctrine that dealt directly with the issue of the "Lord's Day" to present a strong case before the Christian body.

So, the doctrine of Sunday observance was masterminded by Eusebius, a Christian confidant and adviser of Constantine. Carefully notice his anti-Semitic argument for the observance of Sunday:

Wherefore as they [the Jews] rejected it [the Sabbath law], the Word [Christ] by the new covenant, translated and transferred the feast of the Sabbath to the morning light, and gave us the symbol of true rest, viz., the saving Lord's Day, the first [day] of light, in which the Savior of the world, after all his labors among men, obtained the victory over death, and passed the portals of heaven, having achieved a work superior to the six-days creation.

On this day, which is the first [day] of light and of the true Sun, we assemble, after an interval of six days, and celebrate holy and spiritual Sabbaths, even all nations redeemed by him throughout the world, and do those things according to the spiritual law, which were decreed for the priests to do on the Sabbath.

And all things whatsoever that it was the duty to do on the Sabbath, these we have transferred to the Lord's Day, as more appropriately belong to it, because it has a precedence and is first in rank, and more honorable than the Jewish Sabbath. All things whatsoever that it was duty to do on the Sabbath, these we have transferred to the Lord's Day.

(Eusebius's Commentary on the Psalms 92, quoted in Coxe's Sabbath literature, Vol I, p. 361, insertions mine.)

Eusebius was a spiritual advisor to Constantine. He is the first man to claim in writing that Christ changed the day of worship. THEN, Eusebius testifies that he (and others, namely Constantine) had "transferred all things, whatsoever that it was duty to do on the Sabbath" to Sunday. Also notice that Eusebius offers no scriptural authority for the change.

Further, no church father or authority from that time period supports Eusebius' claims and notice that he does not quote from another source. As it turns out, Eusebius took the thorny problem of worship in hand and became the father of a false doctrine, which favored the practices of the church at Rome. We need to ask ourselves, "Can mere mortals change the law of Almighty God by making a simple declaration? Who has the higher authority – God or man?"

Christians have repeated the failure of the Jews and have dismissed or altered the plainest statements of God's Word. Jesus said of the Jews, "They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men." (Matthew 15:9)

Even with the Sunday law imposed by Constantine, the seventh day Sabbath did not suddenly disappear in Christian churches. By the year A.D. 460, Sozomen writes:

Assemblies are not held in all churches on the same time or manner. The people of Constantinople and almost everywhere assemble on the [seventh-day] Sabbath as well as the first day of the week, which custom is never observed at Rome or Alexandria.
(Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History, Book VII, chap 19, Ante-Nicean Christian Library, Vol II, (Boston 1887) p. 390, insertion mine.*)

Every student of church history knows that the church in Rome eventually gained complete dominion over Christianity. Eventually the Roman Empire was transformed into the Holy Roman Empire and the bishop at Rome became the "Bishop of the Universal Church." For nearly 13 centuries, the kings and queens of Europe were subservient to the Bishop of Rome.

This great period of church dominion is appropriately called the "Dark Ages" because religious dominion is a cruel master. I thank God that I live in the United States which has a pluralistic democracy and a Constitution that continues to separate church from state!

Summary

Sunday observance came about for three reasons. First, the majority of early Christians in Rome were not former Jews. Consequently, the imposing culture and religious practices of Judaism, which included the seventh day Sabbath, were not considered as important in Rome as they were in Jerusalem. Actually, converts from Mithraism brought Sunday observance into the Christian church in Rome.

Second, the seventh day Sabbath had been a distinguishing mark of the Jews for about 1,500 years. Anti-Semitism was an enormous motive in those days for distinction and separation between Christians and Jews. Last and most important, the union of church and state produced an enormous surprise.

When Constantine converted to Christianity to strengthen his political control of the empire, he initiated a process that ultimately subjected the nations of Europe to the dominion and doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church for 1,260 years!

Satan often works in subtle ways and he was masterful when he led the minds of carnal men to profane God's law. Now, the vast majority of Christians worship on Sunday. Through the ages, experts have hammered on the Bible to make it say that the fourth commandment was nailed to the cross, but their creative claims are hollow.

These claims are as silly as the priests of Baal who danced around the altar on Mt. Carmel.

Protestant denominations who continue to exalt the sacredness of Sunday show, perhaps naively, submission to the doctrines and authority of the Church in Rome. There is no biblical basis for Sunday sacredness.

There is no biblical basis for saying the Lord's Day is Sunday. All that supports the observance and sacredness of Sunday as the Lord's Day is a heap of tradition and the arrogance of man. God's law does not change and the Ten Commandments stand without impeachment.

The fourth commandment still points to the seventh day of the week as God's holy day. What will God say to you and me on Judgment Day about our regard and treatment of His holy day?

I would like to close this chapter with three texts. The first text is from King Solomon. He wrote, **"Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man for God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil."** (Ecclesiastes 12:13,14)

Jesus said, **"If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love."** (John 15:10) Since these Scriptures are true, why not surrender your life to Jesus and resolve to keep holy His Sabbath of rest *at any cost*.

Think of it this way, God offers you and I a one-day vacation from the cares of this world each week. He promises to sustain everything that we are doing until we return after our rest, so that nothing will be lost. Put your faith in God to the test and make up your mind to obey Him. When you carefully and prayerfully consider His gift, what is keeping you from accepting such a fine offer?

Jesus says, **"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest [Sabbath]."** (Matthew 11:28, insertion mine.)